**Opening Statement**

**Rep. Paul D. Tonko, Ranking Member**

**Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight**

**Committee on Science, Space and Technology**

**Subcommittee on Investigations & Oversight and Energy & Environment Joint Hearing on:**

*Continuing Oversight of the Nation’s Weather Satellite Programs: An Update on JPSS and GOES-R*

June 27, 2012

This Committee has been holding hearings to ask critical questions of these satellite programs since at least 2003. We have seen cycles of disaster, as when we witnessed the JPSS--in its prior NPOESS guise—double in cost before the entire enterprise was redesigned and rebase-lined. We have witnessed herculean efforts to restructure acquisition plans to get problems under control. Frankly, despite those efforts, we have not had much to cheer about with JPSS and even GOES-R has been a source of concern. However, my sense is that both of these programs are on sustainable paths. That said, it appears that an auditor at GAO could build a pretty good 20-year career out of simply tracking the weather satellite program, and that is a sorry state of affairs.

The group that sits before us today is not responsible for the mess. Rather, we are counting on them to get us out of a mess they inherited. It is our job to probe the answers they offer, assess whether the programs appear robust, and offer whatever advice and support we can to get these satellites launched and operating. Believe me, if we could have halted these acquisitions, we would have. But these satellites, and the instruments that are to fly on them, are too important to our nation to abandon this program.

I want to come away from this hearing with an understanding that there is solid planning going on to fill any data gaps. I want a firmer grasp of where remaining risks lie in each of these programs, and I want to know there are reasonable strategies for dealing with those risks. In short, I want to leave with confidence that the management teams running the JPSS and GOES-R satellite programs are up to the challenges.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to express my hope that we not leap to conclusions—either good or bad--about either of these programs. We should be cautious about these programs, but it appears that nothing staff learned in preparing for this hearing and nothing in GAO’s testimony, lead us to condemn either program or to conclude that things are off the tracks again. I thank the witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.