

**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION POLICY, INTERGOVERNMENTAL**  
**RELATIONS AND THE CENSUS**  
**CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN**



**OVERSIGHT HEARING**  
**STATEMENT BY ADAM PUTNAM, CHAIRMAN**

**Hearing topic:** *“Geospatial Information: A Progress Report on Improving Our Nation’s Map-Related Data Infrastructure.”*

**Tuesday, June 10, 2003**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building**

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**OPENING STATEMENT**

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Good morning and welcome to today’s hearing on geospatial systems and improving our nation’s map-related data infrastructure.

As many of our witnesses today will likely convey, getting our arms around the array of geospatial systems issues and the technical minutiae surrounding geospatial data and geospatial technology is a monumental task. Geospatial not only provides the same challenges we have discussed at past IT information sharing hearings, but geospatial takes those challenges one step further in terms of adding a mapping component, location issues, data standards, and intergovernmental interoperability issues. In other words, one dimensional IT becomes three dimensional.

Some of our witnesses, and many in our audience here today, have spent full careers on geospatial issues. And yet, emerging technology has perhaps created as many new geospatial management challenges as it has provided benefits or opportunities.

But before we try to go too far down the path on technical details, it is important for this Subcommittee to hold this hearing to get an overview and understanding of the geospatial issue and the role that key stakeholders play in meeting our long-term geospatial goals.

Today, we will be examining the progress being made by the federal government to consolidate and improve utilization of the masses of geospatial data being collected by departments and agencies across the federal government and by state and local governments.

We need to understand what programs exist across our federal government, how much we are spending on programs and where we are spending that money, how we efficiently (or perhaps inefficiently) share data across traditional federal agency boundaries, how we separate security-sensitive geospatial data from those open for public use, and how we efficiently (or perhaps inefficiently) coordinate with state and local governments.

We also need to evaluate the important role that the private sector plays to meet some of these difficult management and technological challenges.

The first and most critical challenge involves data standards and interoperability. In most cases, information is collected in different formats and standards for one specific mission, with little attention to subsequent intergovernmental data sharing. This is true across the federal government, as well as in states and towns across our country. This results in wasteful redundancies and a reduced ability to perform critical intergovernmental functions.

Within an atmosphere of an infinite amount of collectable data and tens of thousands of entities securing and utilizing data for individual goals and missions (not to mention emerging “new” uses of geospatial data), the development and use of common data standards and an organizational/management structure to coordinate these investments is more essential than ever towards reducing redundant expenditures, providing the most up-to-date information, and improving the utilization and availability of accurate data for public and private uses.

As simple as it sounds, it is absolutely critical that we are all singing from the same sheet of music. Geospatial systems and our geospatial infrastructure worldwide cannot operate without resolving this “standards” issue. And it is my initial feeling that developing a unified game-plan is generally not technology-driven, but rather management and people-driven.

I am especially pleased that we will have a chance today to discuss progress being made on the Geospatial Information One-Stop Initiative, one of the President’s key E-Government initiatives intended to simplify the process of locating, accessing, sharing and integrating geospatial information in a timely and efficient manner.

I am equally interested, however, in the end result. It is important that taxpayers – and those of us involved in deciding how to spend their hard-earned money – understand the return on the investments being made; how we are using geospatial information to solve everyday problems; how we plan to better utilize geospatial data; and how we plan to coordinate and share data across all levels of government to improve the quality of life for all citizens.