
MEMORANDUM

TO: GLOS STEERING COMMITTEE
FROM: ERIKA JENSEN, JON MACDONAGH-DUMLER
SUBJECT: IOOS APPROPRIATIONS & AUTHORIZATION
DATE: 7/13/2006

As a result of the disbandment of the ad hoc Ocean Observing System Coalition, those parties interested in continuing advocacy work for IOOS have been encouraged to begin working with the new CORE Ocean Observing Coalition and continue lobbying efforts in coordination with this group. The Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education's (CORE) membership appears primarily comprised of those in the academic field and it is unclear whether this group is sensitive to the variety of issues the Regional Associations hope IOOS appropriations and authorization might address. This could be of special consequence to GLOS as CORE's interest likely lies predominantly with ocean issues and not necessarily with Great Lakes issues. It is therefore important that we continue our own efforts as well as beginning coordination with this new Coalition. There are two major areas which concern our lobbying efforts in regards to IOOS and GLOS: appropriations and authorizing legislation. The following will serve as an update on the status of these two areas within the US Congress.

Appropriations

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the Congress will not reach a joint Budget Resolution agreement by the October 1 deadline. The contentious politics of recent months has slowed the budget process in both houses of Congress. As it stands, both the Senate and the House have passed independent budget resolutions, albeit recently. Despite both houses having passed their own resolutions, they have not yet entered into a conference committee to reconcile differences in spending limits. Currently the Senate has proposed a bottom-line much greater than that proposed by the House. In fact, the Senate passed a resolution with a discretionary spending cap \$16 billion greater than requested by the President and in the House resolution.

With the passage of independent resolutions, Appropriations subcommittees have begun work on their own bills, actions which are complicated by the absence of a joint budget resolution that would set a spending cap for each of the Appropriations Subcommittees. While the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, Commerce and Related Agencies is expected to pass their bill by the end of the month, it will likely reflect the FY2006 bill as a result of the absence of a new spending cap.

All of this is further complicated by the fact that 2006 is a mid-term election year. The impending elections, compounded with the delays in the budget process, have significantly decreased the motivation for moving quickly to pass a joint budget resolution. It is being predicted by those on the Hill that come October 1, a Continuing Resolution will be passed that will carry on FY2006 spending through the mid-term elections. It is then likely that the results of the election will determine whether there is a push by members to pass the budget before December 31, or to pass further CRs that will allow more time to reconcile the House and Senate resolutions during next year's 110th Session of Congress. Another prediction is that of an omnibus bill that would package

the various appropriations bills within a handful of other legislation, creating an all-or-nothing situation for members of Congress. An omnibus bill could be the result of an inability of the House and Senate to reconcile their spending priorities.

For the interests of IOOS and GLOS, this means it is unlikely that we will see any significant increase or change in IOOS funding in the near future. Our best hope is for FY2006 spending levels to be maintained into FY2007.

Authorizing Legislation

It was the hope of the recently disbanded Coalition that IOOS authorizing legislation might be passed by the end of the 109th Congress. Unfortunately, while the Senate was able to pass such legislation, things have not progressed as smoothly as once hoped in the House. This is a result of increasing tension between certain members of the House. The chair of the House Resources Committee, Rep. Pombo (R-CA), has proved to be a significant player in the move to get authorizing legislation through the House. Unexpectedly, relations between Rep. Pombo and Rep. Gilchrest (R-MD), chairman of the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans and sponsor of the IOOS authorizing legislation, have significantly deteriorated. As a result, Rep. Pombo has yet to bring the legislation up in Committee and it is unlikely he will do so or will allow the legislation to pass if it is brought before the Committee.

An alternative plan for the Coalition, were it unable to get Rep. Pombo on board, was to divide the legislation into several pieces which would allow them to be attached to other bills that were expected to go through this session. One opportunity for this was a bill, HR 4686 (the Fisheries Act), which would reauthorize various fisheries management laws. It was thought that the bill would pass with relative ease through the Committee; however, the relations between Rep. Pombo and Rep. Gilchrest have also strained action on this bill. While HR 4686 was eventually reported to the House, the Coalition seems to have missed its opportunity to attach IOOS authorizing legislation to the Fisheries Act. Further, as fallout from the tensions between Rep. Pombo and Gilchrest, the fisheries bill will likely not come to the floor for a vote as the House leadership does not want to allocate substantial floor time to the contentious debate. Finally, it is unclear whether the opportunity to attach authorizing legislation to other bills during this session would be available to us as Congress seems almost deadlocked and unwilling to act on a majority of issues at this time.