

# Coalition of Geospatial Organizations

March 27, 2026

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The Honorable John Thune, Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Thune and Senator Schumer,

The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations, comprised of 14 national geospatial organizations representing more than 170,000 geospatial practitioners, wishes to express support for continued investments in federal programs that rely on geospatial data. These are investments in critical infrastructure that act as a foundation upon which other government and private sector entities rely to produce information for many important purposes, with the very real potential to affect the entire population of the country. Two such programs that are facing significant threats right now are the Geodesy program of the National Geodetic Survey, which is modernizing the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS), and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

NOAA's National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has been working for 20 years to modernize the NSRS to improve its accuracy and GPS compatibility, and to better serve the diverse positioning needs of the U.S. geospatial community. Development and implementation of the modernized NSRS has already been constrained. Limitations on NGS in terms of its budget and through personnel loss of more than a quarter of its staff have delayed phased NSRS rollouts, extended beta testing, decreased the establishment of industry partnerships to advance progress, and left the government without essential geodetic tools needed for effective, efficient NSRS implementation.

The National Geodetic Survey produces geospatial products and services used by millions of U.S. citizens generating billions of dollars in national benefit. Private industry depends on these products, which support jobs and economic activity. The modernized National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) is projected to deliver more than \$1 trillion in national benefits over 10 years (with greater gains for early adopters). Those benefits stem from lower costs, improved safety (e.g., more accurate floodplain mapping and emergency routing), greater data uniformity, and accelerated private-sector geospatial innovation. Continuing the modernization process for NSRS is essential.

Counted among its many benefits, the NSRS is foundational for the National Center for Atmospheric Research, established in 1960. NCAR is an NSF-sponsored institution managed by the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, a nonprofit consortium of 131 colleges and universities. NCAR serves as a national resource for atmospheric science, providing research facilities, supercomputing capabilities, and foundational data infrastructure to the scientific community. The critical research and services of NCAR provide location-based weather and atmospheric information used every day by millions of geospatial applications and informing tens of millions of people. Investment in NCAR should be continued.

NCAR research has broad applications across public safety, the economy, and national security, spanning all levels of government (i.e., city, county/parish, state), including Tribal Nations:

- **Aviation safety:** NCAR's discovery of microbursts—powerful downdrafts that can force aircraft toward the ground during takeoff and landing—led to wind shear warning systems now deployed at over 100 U.S. airports and adopted worldwide.
- **Weather forecasting:** The Weather Research and Forecasting Model, developed with NOAA, the Air Force, Navy, and FAA, is now used by the National Weather Service and forecasters in over 150 countries.
- **Wildfire response:** NCAR's coupled weather-fire modeling helps emergency responders and communities predict and prepare for wildfire spread.
- **National defense:** NCAR provides meteorological support for U.S. Army test ranges and helps military planners assess weather and climate conditions worldwide.
- **Industry and academic partnerships:** NCAR collaborates with the private sector on cutting-edge applications, from helping farmers, truckers, and airlines anticipate severe weather disruptions to understanding the impact of weather conditions on autonomous vehicles. They also build workforce through UCAR and other academic partnerships.

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Sending various parts of NCAR to other cities, as is currently being planned, will isolate expertise and reduce the synergies and enhanced productivity that results when people work together. NCAR is an incredible resource and losing it would hurt the economic health of the nation and the safety of its people. A better option would be to work to maintain and strengthen NCAR, including through enhanced cooperation with Federal science agencies, academic institutions, and private sector researchers. A strong NCAR will lead to further forecast improvements that enhance our national well-being.

We believe that smart investments in federal geospatial programs like the NSRS and NCAR directly support the Nation's key priorities, delivering valuable and cross-cutting benefits that lead to:

- **Boosting American Economic Competitiveness:** Geospatial data allows businesses to strategically choose the best locations, optimize supply chains, streamline logistics, and drive innovation across every industry. Strengthening federal geospatial programs gives American businesses a globally competitive edge and creates high-paying jobs.
- **Modernizing Critical Infrastructure:** Accurate and up-to-date location data is essential for planning, building, and maintaining our nation's roads, bridges, energy grid, and broadband networks. Enhanced geospatial data is essential to technologies like self-driving vehicles, improves project efficiency, and makes the nation's infrastructure more resilient.
- **Strengthening National Security:** Geospatial intelligence plays a crucial role in protecting our borders, responding to disasters (at any level of government), and supporting national security efforts. Strong federal geospatial programs are vital for maintaining situational awareness and preparedness, and are critical to safeguarding our Nation.

Sincerely,



Tony Spicci, 2026 Chair  
Coalition of Geospatial Organizations  
Executive Director, GIS Certification Institute



## COGO Member Organizations

American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)	American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS)
American Association of Geographers (AAG)	Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CaGIS)
American Association for Geodetic Surveying (AAGS)	Geographic Information Systems Certification Institute (GISCI)
International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO)	Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)
National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS)	National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)
United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF)	University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS)
Geospatial Professional Network (dba URISA)	National Tribal Geographic Information Support Center
MidAmerica GIS Consortium	

Cc: Dr. Timothy Petty, Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, NOAA