

Opening Statement
Chairman Jim Costa
House Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources Oversight Hearing on
H.R. 2489, “*AmericaView Geospatial Imagery Mapping Program Act*”
July 23, 2009

We will turn now to H.R. 2489. This bill would authorize the AmericaView Program at the U.S. Geological Survey. We have just heard about the need for better coordination on federal geospatial data activities in general. H.R. 2489 lets us examine one specific way in which a federal agency is expanding the use of some of the geospatial information it collects.

AmericaView is a program that USGS has been involved in for about a decade. A core program of the USGS is maintaining a vast archive of satellite imagery. Through AmericaView, USGS provides that satellite data about the earth, along with grants, to state partners--typically colleges or universities. Those state partners, in turn, provide training and technology to help all sorts of people, from farmers to resource managers, use that “remote sensing” information to answer policy and management questions. For example, what fields should be irrigated? What can the images and maps tell an agency about how to plan for wildfires?

The program also helps students of all ages learn how to work with mapping technologies and satellite images. For example, in California, state partners in AmericaView are developing a remote sensing certificate program to enable community colleges to certify geospatial mapping technicians. As an added bonus, this certificate program can be used by AmericaView partners in all states.

I look forward to learning more about H.R. 2489, which---in nutshell--directs the Secretary of the Interior to advance the availability, distribution, and use of geospatial imagery through its AmericaView Program. I am sure the USGS, and the witnesses who hail from three different state “partner” programs with AmericaView, can tell us what impact this legislation could have on the ground.