

External Relations Committee Annual Report

July 2021

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The External Relations Committee with Stephen Hirtle, University of Pittsburgh (Chair), Linna Li, Cal State University, Long Beach, and Bob Vos, University of Southern California met on a monthly basis with the stated purpose to:

- provide interpretation and communication to UCGIS membership about federal, state, and non-governmental policy and legislation initiatives;
- assist the Executive Committee and Board in providing feedback and communication to entities regarding ongoing national and international geospatial policy and legislation development initiatives;
- advocate on behalf of the UCGIS membership for UCGIS developed policy positions or other positions UCGIS supports; and develop and advance UCGIS-derived policy on geospatial research and education.

Items discussed in meetings of the committee during the past 12 months are noted below:

1. The Committee assisted UCGIS in submitting a timely joint response from UCGIS, URISA and AAG, regarding response regarding the use confidential data by the EPA.
2. Robert Vos and Jochen Albrecht are serving as UCGIS representatives to the GIS Certification Institute (GISCI) board and have been in regular attendance at board meetings and retreats. In Fall 2020 GISCI announced Dr. Candice Luebbering as the new Executive Director. Dr Candice Luebbering unexpectedly stepped down for personal reasons after at the start of 2021. GISCI has now hired Anthony A. Spicci, GISP CGMP as executive director. Former Executive Director, Bill Hodges has been providing support and continuity with these transitions.
3. Linna Li attended a four-hour COGO Annual Business Meeting via Zoom on July 14th, 2020. The organizations unanimously approved a letter of support for the "RETAIN GPS and Satellite Communications Act of 2020", as sponsored by Senator Inhofe, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Armed Services. There was also discussion on possible procurement language in the Digital Coast Act, as well as a request for volunteers to work on Report Card on the U.S. National Spatial Data Infrastructure for 2022.
4. The Federal News Network (August 4, 2020) reported that "The U.S. Census Bureau is cutting its schedule for data collection for the 2020 census a month short, as legislation that would have extended the national head count's deadlines stalls in Congress. The move is worrying researchers, politicians and others who say the change will miss hard-to-count communities, including minorities and immigrants, and produce less trustworthy data."
5. Regarding COVID-19 and GIS, we point to an NSGIC statement <https://nsgic.memberclicks.net/joint-statement-on-the-value-of-gis-in-the-pandemic>, which argues for the importance of GIS as "the spread and effects of COVID-19 can be best understood considering space and time". In addition, ACM SIGSPATIAL has announced that it is putting together Part 2 of a special issue on "Modeling and Understanding the Spread of COVID-19." <https://www.sigspatial.org/publications/newsletter/>
6. ACM SIGSPATIAL 2020 opened registration with up to 800 free registrations for their virtual conference, which was held November 3-6, 2020. The virtual conference ran from 8:00am to 6:00pm PST (11:00am to 09:00pm EST) each day, See <https://sigspatial2020.sigspatial.org/> for additional details.
7. In terms of legislative actions, one bill of possible interest that passed is S. 881: PROSWIFT Act, which is a bill to improve understanding and forecasting of space weather events, and for other purposes. Sponsored by Gary Peters, Junior Senator for Michigan and signed by the President on Oct 21, 2020.
8. Monitored Federal legislation related to the use of spatial data and spatial privacy:
 - S.3300 - Data Protection Act of 2020 including the privacy for geospatial data.
 - S.1822 - The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability Act.
 - H.R.3220 - Kids Eat Local Act, relating to the purchases of locally produced food.