

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 21, 2012
Contact: Jesse Broder Van Dyke 202-224-7045
jesse_brodervandyke@akaka.senate.gov

STATEMENT OF SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA

Retooling Government for the 21st Century: The President's Reorganization Plan and Reducing Duplication

Hearing Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

As our Nation's space shuttle program comes to an end, I believe we must shift our focus to Earth's vast, unexplored, oceanic and atmospheric frontiers, known as inner space. The devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan last year demonstrated the incredible power of the Earth and her oceans, and serve as a reminder that an America built to last must be able to understand and anticipate changes in the Earth's environment.

Any reorganization plan submitted to Congress affecting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) must protect and enhance NOAA's organizational structure and scientific independence. This Committee's experience with the severe consequences resulting from the difficult integration of the Federal Emergency Management Agency into the Department of Homeland Security is a stark reminder of the high risks associated with moving a relatively independent, effective agency into a much larger Department, with a different culture. I believe moving NOAA into the Department of the Interior would repeat this costly mistake.

I strongly urge the Administration to follow the 2003 recommendation of the Pew Oceans Commission, led by my good friend, the Honorable Leon Panetta, to remove NOAA from the Department of Commerce and make it a strong, independent agency.