

Testimony of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
Hearing on H.R. 5350
Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Thursday, April 24, 2008
10:00 A.M.

Chairwoman Bordallo, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate you holding this hearing on H.R. 5350, which would authorize the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration property to the City of Norfolk, Virginia.

Over the last decade, the City of Norfolk has experienced tremendous economic growth. Downtown Norfolk has reemerged as the urban center of the Hampton Roads region through revitalization and new commercial and residential development. For several decades, NOAA has been an important Federal partner in Downtown Norfolk’s development. NOAA’s Atlantic Marine Operations Center and NOAA’s Chesapeake Bay Office are both located in Downtown Norfolk.

The bill that I introduced in February, along with my colleague Congresswoman Thelma Drake, would authorize the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange a small piece of underutilized NOAA property located at 538 Front Street in Norfolk, consisting of 3.78 acres, to the City of Norfolk. This land sale would allow Norfolk to continue its tremendous economic growth by developing the land for commercial and residential purposes. At the same time, the bill clearly states that NOAA may only sell or exchange the property if the Secretary of Commerce determines that the conveyance would be in the best interest of the Federal government. The bill does not delineate or support any particular agreement or contract; the details of any future agreement between NOAA and the City of Norfolk would have to be worked out. This legislation would simply permit that process to get started. In addition, any sale or exchange would have to have little to no impact on Federal revenue or the deficit. The bill requires that the property be sold at a value that is not less than the fair market value as determined by the Federal government. Furthermore, it authorizes NOAA to retain any proceeds from the sale or exchange.

I hope that this bill will be reported favorably by this subcommittee and the full committee soon. Shortly you will hear from Roderick Woolard, Norfolk’s Director of Development, and Bill Broglie, NOAA’s Chief Administrative Officer. My staff and I worked very closely with NOAA and the City to draft this legislation in a way that is non-controversial and protects both the interests of the Federal government and the citizens of Norfolk.

At this time, I would like to submit for the record a statement from Congresswoman Drake, an original cosponsor of the bill.

Thank you again for holding this hearing.