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FIFTH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

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November 18, 2015

The Honorable Paul K. Martin
Inspector General
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, SW
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Inspector General Martin:

I am writing to express my concerns about the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) policy with respect to full and open competition in its acquisition process. NASA is in the midst of an up-to ten-year \$1.3 billion dollar technology purchase known as the NASA Integrated Communications Service (NICS) contract. Such a large and important technology purchase should follow both the letter and spirit of full and open competition laws, regulations, and Office of Management and Budget guidelines to ensure that NASA, and the taxpayer, get the best value for their investment, as well as the best and most cost-effective solutions to meet mission requirements.

In 2011, NASA awarded the NICS contract to Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC). Under the contract, SAIC provides managerial and technical expertise to support NASA's Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for corporate and mission communications needs, including local area network (LAN) management at all NASA centers. Functions include corporate and mission enterprise services, center and associated component facility services, infrastructure projects, and contract management services.

It has come to my attention that, pursuant to NICS, there is an Approved Products List (APL) developed by the contractor. The APL governs which products can be purchased for NASA systems and networks, and likely will impact NASA acquisitions for years to come. Interestingly, every approved product listed on the NICS LAN wired and wireless network APL belongs to a single manufacturer. At the same time, alternate vendors that have supplied network equipment to NASA and successfully met mission requirements have not been evaluated for inclusion on the APL for current and future purchases, despite requesting an opportunity to be evaluated.

I also have learned that a June 17, 2015 NASA presentation explains how network equipment purchases under NICS would be made. NASA's Communications Service Office gave the presentation in connection with the External Border Protection project. This presentation purportedly indicates that a preference will be given to the products of a single manufacturer.

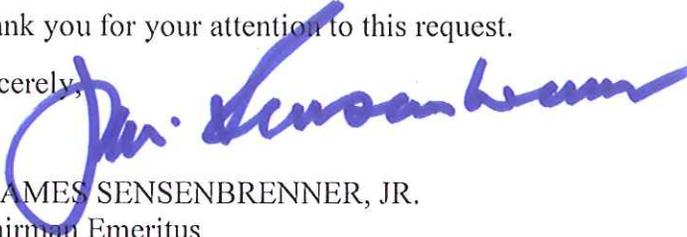
As Chairman Emeritus of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, and a member of its Subcommittee on Oversight, I am concerned that NASA may be proceeding with major acquisitions without considering the benefits of competition, the best value for the taxpayer and end user, and the security benefits of avoiding a single vendor network. To this end, I request that you review NASA's practices with respect to:

1. How the NICS APL was developed and why its LAN wired and wireless network approved products list includes the products of only one manufacturer;
2. NASA's role in the development and modification of the NICS APL; and
3. Whether a June 17, 2015 presentation, believed to be delivered at NASA's Langley Research Center by Kevin Boswell in connection with the External Border Protection (EBPro) project, recommends giving preference to a specific vendor.

I would like your assurance that you will investigate the concerns that I have listed. Please reply to my letter by December 2, 2015 and send your response to Todd Washam (todd.washam@mail.house.gov) on my staff.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,



F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Chairman Emeritus
House Science, Space and Technology Committee