



Urban & Regional Information Systems Association · 1460 Renaissance Drive, Suite 305 · Park Ridge, Illinois 60068-1348
(847) 824-6300 · Fax (847) 824-6363 · info@urisa.org · www.urisa.org

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**Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)
Board of Directors' Position in MAPPS, *et al.* v. the United States of America**

Background. The Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS) and three other associations filed suit in US federal court in June 2006 to compel US federal agencies to rewrite the definition of "surveying and mapping" used in federal procurement regulations for architectural and engineering services. The case was slated for a hearing on February 2 (since postponed to mid-February or later).

Specifically, the plaintiffs ask the court to order the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Council to:

...define "surveying and mapping" in such a way as to include contracts and subcontracts for services for Federal agencies for collecting, storing, retrieving, or disseminating graphical or digital data depicting natural or man made physical features, phenomena and boundaries of the earth and any information related thereto, including but not limited to surveys, maps, charts, remote sensing data and images and aerial photographic services'.

Response of the URISA Board of Directors

The URISA board opposes the plaintiffs' claims because of their potential to harm our professions and our industry:

1. Their claims, if accepted, would expand the scope of architectural-engineering surveying and mapping far beyond the scope of any professional expertise certified by registration or licensing as a surveyor, engineer, or architect.
2. These claims are thus in fundamental conflict with the norms of professional practice across the geospatial professions.
3. The claims contradict the NCEES Model Laws and Rules, which URISA (and MAPPS, among others) have endorsed for several years.
4. The claims, if accepted by the federal courts, would not affect state licensing directly, but they would set an important precedent that would likely influence the development of state licensing and registration laws.
5. Acceptance of these claims would cause significant harm, in a variety of ways, to the majority of geospatial professionals—those who are not licensed surveyors, engineers, or architects.
6. Acceptance of these claims would place under the responsible supervision of licensed surveyors, engineers, or architects crucial federal geospatial services requiring expertise in geography, remote sensing, information science and technology, and numerous other specialties, all well outside the licensed professional competence of surveyors, engineers, or architects.
7. Placing these federal services under the control of persons lacking the professional expertise to oversee them would cause inefficiency and waste of public funds, and would risk significant harm to the public health, safety, and welfare.
8. Encouraging licensed professionals to claim competence in areas outside their professional expertise violates a fundamental tenet of professional ethics.
9. By seeking to expand via court order the scope of the surveying, engineering, and architecture professions, the plaintiffs are attempting to achieve by regulation what cannot be sustained through competition in a free market economy. Such regulation could only stifle innovation and growth in a high-growth industry that is crucial to research, defense, and economic development.

The Board's opposition is rooted in URISA's core values as well as our professional interests. URISA is a non-profit professional and educational association that promotes the effective and ethical use of spatial information and information technologies for the understanding and management of urban and regional systems. It is a multidisciplinary association where professionals from all parts of the spatial data community can come together and share concerns and ideas. Such a community requires respect for the specialized expertise of the various professions that have contributed to our industry and to URISA. The plaintiffs' claims would undermine those values by subordinating all geospatial professions to surveying and engineering, thereby disenfranchising the majority of URISA's members and threatening the quality of spatial data available to the public.

Our opposition does not reflect in any way on the professions themselves, but simply on the plaintiffs' claims in this court case. Likewise, while we disagree in court on this case, URISA and MAPPS will continue to find many issues where we agree and work together. And on this issue we will remain open to further discussion with the plaintiffs in alternate forums.

Contact: URISA Board of Directors, urisaboard@urisa.org