

Satellite shelved after 2000 election to now fly

April 10 2013, by Seth Borenstein

President Barack Obama is proposing dusting off and finally launching an old environmental satellite championed by Al Gore but shelved a dozen years by his 2000 rival George W. Bush.

Obama proposed Wednesday spending nearly \$35 million in his 2014 budget to refurbish a satellite, nicknamed GoreSat by critics, that has been sitting in storage after it was shelved in 2001, months after Bush became president. It cost about \$100 million by then with NASA's internal auditors faulting its cost increases.

In 1998, Gore, then vice president, proposed the idea of a satellite that would head nearly 1 million miles (1.6 million kilometers) out in deep space in a special gravity balancing area between Earth and the Sun. The satellite would gaze at Earth, beam down a continuous picture of our planet and take what scientists said was needed climate change measurements.

It originally was named Triana after the sailor on Christopher Columbus's crew who first sighted land in the Americas. NASA later changed its name to Deep Space Climate Observatory or DISCOVER. But it often got called GoreSat by opponents who called it an expensive screensaver for the vice president.

Since it was canceled, the satellite has been at Goddard Space Flight Center near Washington. In 2009 and 2010, NASA spent another \$14 million to refurbish its instruments. NASA this year has spent \$3.4 million to test it. Obama put \$9.9 million in NASA's budget for two

[science instruments](#) and \$23.7 million in the budget of the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) or NOAA.

The new launch, paid for by the Air Force, is set for November 2014. It will be run by NOAA. Acting NOAA chief Kathryn Sullivan said its main mission will to give Earth warning when [solar storms](#)—which can zap power systems on the ground and fry satellite electronics—are on the way. That job is now being done by a [NASA satellite](#) that has surpassed its scheduled lifetime, she said.

"It is indeed still a valuable instrument," said Sullivan, a former astronaut.

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