



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Research and Technology Hearing:
Setting the Standards: Strengthening U.S. Leadership in Technical Standards

March 17, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Feenstra, for holding this morning's hearing on U.S. leadership in technical standards. I want to welcome and thank the expert witnesses for their testimony.

The Science, Space, and Technology Committee has long championed the U.S. approach to standard setting based on open, voluntary, industry-led, and consensus-based processes. In this system, the government plays a supportive role by funding research and development, providing technical inputs, identifying gaps, and adopting standards wherever possible. While agencies across our government have roles to play, the single most important agency for standards is the aptly named National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). As the Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives with sole jurisdiction over NIST, we similarly have a unique and important role in advancing good standards policy for U.S. competitiveness. And we have always taken care to consult widely with standards development organizations, industry, and NIST when crafting legislation that would affect standards. That wide consultation is reflected in today's excellent panel.

Because of the strength of the U.S. science and technology enterprise, the vibrant domestic standards development ecosystem, and the leadership of NIST, U.S. stakeholders have been dominant in international standards bodies for the last century. However, the global landscape of competition in science and technology is changing, and U.S. leadership no longer a given. We should be as concerned about losing our leadership in standards as we are about losing our leadership in research and development. We must also be prepared to play effective defense against any unfair practices by other nations in international standards bodies.

I appreciate that other committees across Congress have been waking up to the critical importance of standards to our nation's competitiveness, and I welcome their interest. However, I would caution that the issues surrounding standards are complex, and sustained attention to those issues is critical to understanding how standards work and what policies might be required. There may not be simple answers to the challenges we face in international standards

development. Moreover, we must be careful not to offer solutions in search of problems. Turning the American standards system into something closer to that of our adversaries will not ensure U.S. competitiveness—it will undermine it. Instead, we should look to further strengthen a system that has served us very well for 100 years. That starts with properly resourcing NIST to do its job, but I know that our witnesses have many other good ideas to share with us today.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses' insights on how we can maintain U.S. competitiveness in international standard setting without compromising the Nation's open, consensus-based approach. I also look forward to continuing the bipartisan work of this Committee to advance bold and thoughtful policies to address these challenges.