



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Full Committee Hearing:
Reimagining Our Innovation Future

April 15, 2021

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing. And welcome to our distinguished panel of witnesses. I look forward to hearing your expert insights on how we can ensure continued United States leadership in science and technology and harness our research enterprise and all of our nation's talent to develop solutions to our most pressing challenges.

This morning the Committee will discuss the current state of the American science and technology enterprise, the challenges posed by both increasing global competition and shortcomings in our own system, and the opportunities to reimagine and recommit to our innovation future. I understand the depth of the challenges we face. But I remain hopeful because I see the commitment, passion, and talent of our scientists and engineers, especially our students and early career researchers. I am inspired to do everything I can to support them.

For many decades, the United States was the unquestioned leader in science and technology. This primacy was firmly established through a massive investment in the 1950s and 1960s to build national laboratories and entire agencies like the National Science Foundation and NASA, and to support unfettered research at U.S. universities. That commitment paid real dividends, allowing the government, the private sector, and indeed the world to reap the technological benefits. However, since that peak, our commitment to nondefense R&D fell rapidly, then plateaued as a share of our discretionary budget. As a share of our GDP, it has continued to decline.

In the meantime, many other countries have increased their investments and built innovation systems based on our own successful models. One of those, on the minds of many here today, is China. China is already outspending us. It may only be a matter of time before they are out-innovating us, including in critical technologies that underpin our economic and national security.

I agree that China's rise in science and technology creates real challenges for us. We have good reason to be worried about research integrity and how research will be used. However, we should not let those concerns misguide our thinking about how we will lead into the future. We will lead by being our own best selves, not by emulating China. In a forthcoming issue of *Issues in Science and Technology*, a scholar of innovation policy writes, "competitiveness is neither a necessary nor a sufficient basis for equity, sustainability, or security...China's industrial policy

has improved neither equity nor sustainability. Russia's economic collapse has done little to erode its national security.”

I believe we can do both. We can compete globally, and we can inspire innovation that confronts long-standing societal challenges. We can build from the institutional foundations established decades ago and work together to re-envision a bold and more inclusive model for American innovation in the 21st century.

There are a lot of big ideas to discuss, and I am sure that today's hearing will be a valuable and constructive conversation for all. In particular, we will be looking to the expertise on this panel as we continue to develop bipartisan science and innovation legislation in the coming weeks and months.

With that, I now recognize Ranking Member Lucas for his opening statement.