



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Research and Technology Markup of:
H.R. 2225, the “National Science Foundation for the Future Act”

Thursday, May 13, 2021

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens and Ranking Member Waltz, for holding this markup.

In March, I was joined by my colleagues Ranking Member Lucas, Chairwoman Stevens, and Ranking Member Waltz, in introducing the “*National Science Foundation for the Future Act*.”

This bill is the culmination of over a year of close bipartisan collaboration and thoughtful deliberations with a wide range of stakeholders. We heard from over 100 universities, scientific societies, student groups, and individual policy experts and thought leaders, including Nobel laureates and past NSF directors and National Science Board chairs.

First and foremost, the research community has the capacity to pursue many more compelling research ideas than NSF can fund. We cannot afford to miss out on these good ideas, particularly in an increasingly competitive global environment. The NSF for the Future Act authorizes a \$3 billion increase in year one, and a doubling of the NSF budget in five years. I have no doubt we could authorize an even faster doubling and still spend that money well.

We are also facing an urgent shortage of STEM workers and research talent that is constraining our innovative capacity. This bill has many provisions to address persistent STEM pipeline challenges at all education levels.

Federally funded research must be accessible to researchers and to the public. At the same time, threats to research security have the potential to undermine the integrity NSF funded research. The legislation builds on NSF’s leadership in addressing both of those realities.

Finally, we need to think about the long-term trajectory for NSF. At this critical juncture in NSF’s history, we must reexamine our assumptions about how research is translated into benefits for society, and who benefits. Federally funded research has led to discoveries and innovations that have vastly improved our quality of life and boosted prosperity and security. But that is not the full picture. Many people have been left behind. Many critical challenges remain. And, in some cases, unfettered technology development has caused real harm.

Racing ahead to beat China in developing cutting edge technologies with blinders on to the consequences for society is both shortsighted and misguided. U.S. global competitiveness is important, but it cannot be our singular goal. Rather than emulating China's model for accelerating technology development, we should lead by striving to be our best selves. In the NSF for the Future Act, we push NSF to be its own best self, not to become an entirely different agency.

The legislation creates a new Directorate for Science and Engineering Solutions that promotes new opportunities for researchers to help drive lasting solutions to the challenges we face as a nation. In expanding our view of who is a stakeholder in our research enterprise, we promote new kinds of partnerships. Such partnerships will inspire new research questions and spur innovations and technologies that provide maximum benefit. The directorate will enable the Foundation to take big risks and experiment with new approaches while preserving its fundamental research mission.

This is the first comprehensive reauthorization of the NSF in a decade. After years of stagnant budgets, this agency is bursting at the seams with untapped potential. We have a rare opportunity to think big. NSF has demonstrated that it has the capacity and the track record of excellence to rise to this challenge.

I am proud of this bill, and the transparent, bipartisan, and inclusive process that will make it even better. I thank Ranking Member Lucas for his partnership in this effort, and I urge all of my colleagues to cosponsor and support this bill.

I would also like to enter into the record the full list of 30 organizations that have endorsed this legislation.