

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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November 22, 2019

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives
394 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Lucas,

I want to thank you and your colleagues for your letter of November 21, 2019. During your time as Ranking Member, you have worked hard to set a constructive and collaborative tone on the Committee, and it is greatly appreciated. It has been a pleasure to work with you on important hearings and legislation that will promote U.S. competitiveness, advance knowledge, protect public health, and respond to the challenge of climate change. As you note in your letter, there is much more to be done, and I look forward to a busy and productive second session in 2020.

Without going into exhaustive detail, I would like to respond briefly to several of the points you raise in your letter. You state that “we believe that there is much to be done to improve our federal R&D enterprise to make America more competitive and productive.” I could not agree more. That is why one of the first hearings that I held as Chairwoman was a full committee hearing in March 2019 on “Maintaining U.S. Leadership in Science and Technology”, which included discussion of the competitive challenge presented by China. That hearing helped define our agenda for this first session of Congress, and we have followed with hearings and bipartisan legislation that attempt to address many of the concerns raised at that hearing. That work will continue in the coming legislative year.

In your letter, you also raise the concern that our Committee has “shifted its attention to tangential issues that serve parochial interests of its Democratic members”. I am a bit surprised by that comment, as all of the legislation that has passed out of the Committee in this first session of Congress has been bipartisan, and has addressed issues raised by both Republican and Democratic Members, including legislation such as H.R. 617, the DOE Veterans Health Initiative Act sponsored by Mr. Norman; H.R. 988, the NEAR Act sponsored by Mr. Posey; and

of course H.R. 4979, the Rural STEM Education Act sponsored by you—a bill I was proud to cosponsor.

It was equally puzzling to me that your letter raises the concern that instead of focusing on basic scientific and technological research, the Committee has “expanded or created new applied research programs at the expense of basic research priorities...” While improving our weather forecasting capabilities, conducting research to help prevent suicides and opioid abuse, and research to deal with “deep fakes” and other malicious uses of social media technology are most definitely applied research areas, there has been broad bipartisan support on the Committee for legislative and funding initiatives in each of these areas.

Finally, I must respond to the comment in the letter suggesting the Democratic leadership has focused on “messaging bills that will never pass the Senate.” As you and your colleagues are undoubtedly aware, more than 275 bipartisan House bills remain stalled in the Senate, including bills that were passed out of this Committee. These bills have been blocked by the Senate Majority Leader from even receiving consideration by the Senate. I hope that he will allow those bills to receive a vote, so that they can stand or fall on their merits.

In closing, I value the positive vision and cooperative approach you have brought to our Committee as Ranking Member. There will be areas of honest disagreement on some issues as we move forward, but I hope and believe that we will continue to function with the bipartisan approach that has marked our efforts this year.

Sincerely,



Eddie Bernice Johnson

Chairwoman

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Cc:

The Honorable Brian Babin, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics
The Honorable Roger Marshall, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Environment
The Honorable Randy Weber, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Energy
The Honorable Ralph Norman, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
The Honorable James Baird, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Research and Technology
The Honorable Mo Brooks
The Honorable Bill Posey
The Honorable Andy Biggs

The Honorable Michael Cloud
The Honorable Troy Balderson
The Honorable Pete Olson
The Honorable Anthony Gonzalez
The Honorable Michael Waltz
The Honorable Jaime Herrera Beutler
The Honorable Francis Rooney
The Honorable Gregory Murphy