

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:
Frontiers in Innovative Research, Science, and Technology Act
November 13, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to our witnesses for being here this morning.

The Science Committee, perhaps more than any other Committee, is where we lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth and prosperity. It is here where we make the decision to continue, or to cede U.S. leadership in science and technology. It is here where we make the decision to plant the seeds for the fruits of U.S. science to grow into new companies and jobs, improved health, strengthened national security, and improved quality of life for all Americans.

The 2005 *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report was a call to action that brought us all together in this common cause, Democrat and Republican, Congress and the Administration. In 2007 Congress enacted the America Competes Act with an overwhelmingly bipartisan majority. That bill set three of our agencies, NSF, NIST, and DOE's Office of Science, on a doubling path and it created the very successful ARPA-E. Unfortunately, as we all know, the vision of Competes was not fully realized. Across the board cuts magnified by all of the budget uncertainty over the last few years are causing deep and in some cases irreparable harm to our leadership in S&T.

Last week, Republican Senator Lamar Alexander, one of the champions of the original Competes Act, testified before his colleagues during a hearing on reauthorization of the Competes Act. He said "there are plenty of things that we do that are less important than this, if we want to keep a high standard of living." Senator Alexander went on to urge his colleagues "to authorize what our goals should be..." I couldn't agree more. This is not the time to be timid. This is the time to send a clear message to the appropriators of our priorities as authorizers.

While all of the feuding about the budget goes on around us, the Science Committee is one place where we should be able to agree more than we disagree. We did so successfully for many years, even during divided government, and it is my hope that we can do so again. I have been troubled by occasions over the past year where that spirit of bipartisanship has broken down, and where science has at times seemed to be under siege. We need to get back to the approach to legislating that has served this Committee well for many years.

Unfortunately, the draft legislation before us today leaves me puzzled. For one thing, it appears to cede our responsibility as authorizers to the appropriations committee by leaving out the funding levels that we think are necessary to carry out the provisions of the bill. Perhaps more concerning are the policy directions in this bill. There are some provisions on which we can agree. However, it troubles me that this draft seems to be dominated in both tone and volume by everything that some of my colleagues believe NSF and scientists are doing wrong, and contains very little in the way of a vision for the future. I am also confused why the draft strikes two sections of existing law establishing broadening participation as an important part of NSF's mission when the changing demographics of this country should make efforts to broaden participation in STEM a no-brainer. I worry that this discussion draft reflects a lack of imagination that will not help this nation meet the competitive challenge we face.

A few weeks ago I circulated a comprehensive Competes Reauthorization draft bill that I hope captures the Competes principles laid out earlier this year by the scientific community. I am in the process of gathering feedback and more ideas from stakeholders and Democratic Members and I welcome the witnesses' thoughts on my discussion draft. As we move forward, I would be very happy to work with the Chairman and with all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to craft a bipartisan bill that truly sets a vision for continued U.S. leadership in science and technology.

Thank you again to the witnesses for being here this morning and I look forward to your testimony.