

**Committee on Science, Space, and Technology**  
**Subcommittee on Technology**  
*Examining the Effectiveness of NIST Laboratories*  
March 20, 2013

Opening Statement  
By  
Ranking Member Frederica Wilson

Thank you, Chairman Massie for holding this hearing to examine the effectiveness of the laboratory programs at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Today's hearing provides us with the opportunity to review the important work being conducted at NIST's laboratories as part of the Subcommittee's efforts to reauthorize this agency through the *America COMPETES Act*.

Although I am excited to hear from our two witnesses this afternoon, I think it is unfortunate that we do not have a member from NIST's advisory committee – or V-CAT as it is commonly known – testifying here today. I understand there were scheduling conflicts, but having an oversight hearing without a witness from the group specifically tasked by Congress to review and make recommendations regarding NIST management and policy is regrettable.

NIST is a relatively small agency, but is an extremely important player in federal efforts to spur innovation and economic prosperity in this country.

For more than 100 years, NIST has supported the competitiveness of U.S. industry by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology. NIST's broad and deep technical expertise, as well as its ability to serve as a bridge to U.S. businesses, is unparalleled.

The *America COMPETES Act of 2010* included the first major reorganization of the agency in decades, streamlining NIST's laboratories from ten labs to six. The purpose of the reorganization was to create mission-focused laboratories that were vertically integrated so a single lab would be responsible for everything from basic research to the delivery of products and services to its customers.

VCAT supported the reorganization and reviewed it positively including acknowledging the importance of the new position of Associate Director for Laboratory Programs, a position held by one of our witnesses, Dr. Willie May.

Since the reorganization is relatively new, it is important that we continue to follow its progress and the activities of the new laboratories. I look forward to hearing how the reorganization is going from the witnesses.

In addition to learning more about the research and activities happening in each of the six labs, I am interested in hearing about NIST's cross-cutting research efforts.

Under this Administration, NIST has taken on a prominent role in ensuring that American manufacturers remain competitive in the global marketplace. Manufacturing in the United States has changed from an industry losing jobs to an industry adding jobs. And NIST's activities have the potential to continue that trend by helping manufacturers develop innovative products and processes.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about the manufacturing programs at NIST and what—if any—policies they would recommend to help promote those programs as the Subcommittee discusses reauthorizing NIST.

Another cross-cutting research effort NIST is undertaking is in the field of bioscience. During the last few decades, we have seen an explosion in biological knowledge—knowledge that has the potential for new cures and treatments for diseases. This exciting time brings along with it new measurement challenges. To ensure those new biological innovations, we need new measurement technologies and standards. I am interested in hearing more about what NIST is doing in this area from our witnesses today.

Both these cross-cutting research programs highlight the important work NIST is doing to promote innovation, commercialization, and business growth for our nation. At a time when we should be doing everything to ensure our nation's leadership position in innovation, we are talking about cutting the budgets of agencies like NIST. The *America COMPETES Act* put science agencies, including NIST, on a double funding path so that the United States could maintain its competitive edge, but unfortunately those levels have not been appropriated.

Additionally, sequestration will have real impacts on NIST, including the elimination of grants and contracts, delayed or canceled equipment purchases, and deferred repair and maintenance of NIST facilities. We need to be making smart investments that will help our nation's economy grow. I hope we will focus on making those needed investments when we reauthorize NIST.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing and I look forward to working with you and our colleagues to ensure that NIST has what it needs to fulfill its important mission.