

## Opening Statement

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House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing:  
*Prizes to Spur Innovation and Technology Breakthroughs*

April 9, 2014

Good morning, I would like to thank the Chairman for holding today's hearing to explore the use of prize competitions to spur innovation and technology breakthroughs.

We are all very aware of the economic climate and budget constraints that the nation is facing. While tough choices have to be made, cuts to our federal R&D enterprise weaken the country's ability to be a leader in innovation. Our competitors have the same tough budget choices to make, yet they are not just maintaining their R&D investments, but doubling and tripling down.

Though they are no substitute for the sustained investment and long-term national outlook that traditional federal R&D funding provides, prize competitions could play a more prominent role in how the government funds R&D than they have in the past. The broad federal prize authority granted to all federal agencies in the 2010 COMPETES Reauthorization supports agencies' increased use of prizes to incentivize more high-risk, high-reward research and reach out to a new audience of researchers and innovators across all areas of science and technology.

NASA has established itself as a leader in public-sector prize competitions. In a survey of nearly 3,000 competitors for NASA prizes, 81% reported that they had never before responded to NASA or other government requests for proposals. If we are to pull ahead of the competition, we must create opportunities for creative minds from all corners of our nation to make the next scientific or technological breakthrough. Prize competitions are yet another effective tool to tap into our nation's brainpower.

Two of our witnesses here today have spent years perfecting the design of prize competitions, and I am interested in learning how they develop specifications and parameters for challenges while still encouraging what may seem to be "pie-in-the-sky" ideas. Henry Ford once said, "if I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." Finding the next Model T is critical for our nation's competitiveness, and I look forward to exploring how public-private collaborations in prize competitions might help. I thank our witnesses for their testimony.

Thank you Mr. Chairman, I yield back.