

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Donna Edwards
An Overview of the National Institute of Standards and Technology
Budget for Fiscal Year 2013
March 6, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Quayle. And thank you for holding today's hearing to examine the Administration's fiscal year 2013 budget request for the National Institute of Standards and Technology. I'd like to thank Dr. Gallagher for appearing before us this morning and for his leadership at NIST.

Although NIST is a relatively small agency, it 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.

I am pleased that the President's fiscal year 2013 budget request draws on the strengths of NIST and gives the agency a prominent role in the Administration's strategy to revitalize American manufacturing.

Since 2000, the U.S. has lost over 650,000 high-tech manufacturing jobs. Our trade deficit in advanced technology products is growing and China is now the world's biggest exporter of high-technology goods. The truth is that our position as the global leader in innovation and technology is being threatened as developing countries build up their capabilities to become not only the technology assembly line, but also the creator of new and innovative technologies.

The Administration's budget proposal includes a number of initiatives that can reverse these disturbing manufacturing trends. For instance, the establishment of industry-led public-private consortia is exactly "what the doctor ordered" to address precompetitive challenges faced by U.S. companies. The Advanced Manufacturing Technology Consortia, or AMTech, program included in the budget request will tackle technical issues that are prohibiting the growth of advanced manufacturing here at home, and will provide a foundation for new and existing companies to flourish—producing high-quality, well paying jobs which are key to the growth of our economy and the middle class.

I'm interested in learning more today about the Administration's proposal to launch a National Network for Manufacturing Innovation.

From what I gather, this proposal is based in part on a successful model — the Fraunhofer Institutes — implemented in Germany with the support of its government. This is certainly a promising model that I believe we should fully explore in this country and I'm eager to hear whether the Network is in fact intended to spur these sorts of public-private research partnerships.

Whether you agree with it or not, the truth is most of our competitors are putting significant and targeted resources towards helping businesses — small and large — accelerate the commercialization of innovative technologies. The current budget request finalizes the termination of the Technology Innovation Program, or TIP. And it marks the first time in 25 years that NIST lacks a mechanism to provide competitive grants to U.S. companies to accelerate the development of promising technologies that hold the potential for significant commercial payoff and widespread benefits for the U.S. I'm troubled by the void that will be left by the termination of TIP and am interested in exploring with the Chairman and Under Secretary Gallagher the possibility of establishing a new program, or even reconstituting a previous one, at NIST for this important purpose.

I'm also interested in learning more today about how the current budget request will advance NIST's efforts in forensic science. As you know, the National Research Council released a report in 2009 that highlighted the fragmented nature of forensic science in the U.S., and expressed concern over the lack of a rigorous scientific base for the field. The NRC also emphasized the role NIST can and should play in addressing the identified weaknesses. I applaud the strategic initiative outlined in NIST's budget proposal and look forward to hearing how this initiative will strengthen forensic science in the U.S.

I am equally interested in NIST's cybersecurity activities and am interested in hearing more about how the FY 2013 request will help ensure that NIST continues to play an important role in the Federal Government's cybersecurity efforts, particularly as it relates to the development of cybersecurity standards and guidelines for Federal agencies and U.S. industry.

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 the resources it needs to fulfill its critical role in promoting innovation, commercialization, and business growth. I yield back the balance of my time.