

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Full Committee Markup

“H.R. 2996, the Revitalize American Manufacturing and Innovation Act of 2013”

July 25, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am very pleased we are considering this important piece of legislation this morning. I'd like to thank my colleagues, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Reed, for their bipartisan work to develop this legislation. I would also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your own contribution to the bipartisan efforts to advance this legislation. Finally I want to thank your staff, and especially Cliff Shannon, for working so closely and openly with Democratic staff to help get us to this point.

The decline of U.S. manufacturing is a threat to middle class jobs and to our entire economy. We have been losing lower-skilled jobs for decades. More than 2 million manufacturing jobs, including higher-skilled jobs, were lost during the recent recession.

The good news is we are experiencing a slight rebound in higher-skilled jobs as our economy continues to recover. However, those gains are modest, and with the significant loss of infrastructure and talent in recent years, I am deeply concerned that we could reach a tipping point beyond which it will be nearly impossible to rebuild a vibrant manufacturing sector. In the meantime, our key competitors are focusing their full attention on their own manufacturing capacity. They are implementing the policies and programs necessary to build 21st century economies now.

We too must take appropriate steps to ensure that American companies maintain their capacity to be the most sophisticated in the world, using transformative technologies and manufacturing processes. The Revitalizing American Manufacturing Innovation Act – or RAMI - is one of the most critical steps Congress can take to help secure the future of American manufacturing. This bill makes strategic investments, in partnership with the private sector, in advanced manufacturing research, development, and education.

To some of my colleagues who are concerned about Federal industrial policy, I remind them that our entire history of innovation has been a partnership between the public and private sector. This bill does not displace or encroach on the private sector's role. It fosters an important partnership for the benefit of all Americans.

I am also pleased that the bipartisan ANS includes the National Strategic Plan for Advanced Manufacturing introduced by Mr. Lipinski and the reauthorization of the Regional Innovation Program introduced by Mr. Hultgren and Mr. Kilmer. These too are important steps in the right direction.

In summary, I believe this is one of the most constructive and significant pieces of legislation considered by this Committee all Congress. It is also a great example of how we can work together and compromise for the greater good when we put our minds to it. I support this legislation, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.