

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Donna Edwards
Promoting Innovation, Competition, and Economic Growth: Principles for Effective Domestic and International Standards Development
February 29, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Quayle. And thank you for calling this important hearing on standards development and the role of standards in global competition.

Although issues surrounding standards do not often get attention in Congress, they have an incredibly significant impact on the ability of U.S. companies to innovate and compete in the global market and have a much greater bearing on future economic growth than most would imagine. I'm pleased that we're taking the time to focus on these issues and thank the witnesses for their willingness to join us today.

As the global marketplace has grown over the last 30 years, we have learned how important it is that the playing field is level and that all of the players on that field are playing by the same rules. Standards can open up new or expanding markets to a U.S. company. However, standards can also serve as a barrier to trade, keeping U.S. companies out and sending profits elsewhere. When things go awry in the international standards realm – when someone tries to manipulate the standards system or rig it to their own ends – it really matters for U.S. companies and the U.S. economy.

As we continue to look for opportunities to spur economic growth in this country and keep the U.S. competitive in the global marketplace, it is critical that we preserve the ability of our companies – big and small alike – to export their products to markets throughout the world. To make that happen, we need to do what we can to ensure that the standards that are being put in place worldwide do not unfairly disadvantage our home-grown businesses.

We have a very successful standards development system in this country. It has been, and continues to be, the envy of the world. Our system is characterized by unparalleled transparency, openness, and engagement. As a result, we produce incredibly high quality standards.

Unfortunately, not everyone does it our way. And the task of promoting our standards internationally or harmonizing our standards with those developed elsewhere, while also weeding out those that leave something to be desired or disadvantage our companies, is certainly not an easy one.

Last Congress, this Committee recognized the importance of international standardization to our economy and sought to determine if there were ways that the Federal Government could more effectively help the private sector in its standards harmonization efforts. We explored ways for the federal government to get its own house in order, so that our agencies are coordinating and not unintentionally getting in each others' way. We wondered if there was value to the federal government stepping up and helping industry and the standards community by serving as a watchdog, looking out for situations where the international standards development process might be taking a turn for the worst. And we wanted to ensure that the federal government was prepared to offer assistance to our private sector standards community, if such assistance was needed and would prove helpful.

As you may know, these efforts culminated in a provision in the House version of the *America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010*. Although this language did not make it into the final version, these are issues that I remain interested in. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today about what, if anything, can be done to make the federal government a better partner to industry and the standards development community.

I am also interested in hearing from the witnesses about the importance of the U.S. remaining on the leading edge of standardization in new or emerging areas of technology. I am pleased that the federal government is working closely with the private sector and the standards development community to ensure that the U.S. is leading the world on standards development for smart grid, nanotechnology, health information technology, cloud computing, and public safety communications. We should continue to join efforts to identify new areas of technology with significant transformative potential and come together as quickly as possible to develop the needed standards and promote those standards internationally.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for holding this hearing on this important topic. I yield back the balance of my time.