

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Full Committee Markup of
“Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Modernization Act”
May 24, 2016

When the original High Performance Computing Act was enacted in 1991, I don’t think any of its sponsors could begin to imagine how central networking and information technologies would become to our lives, and to our society.

The explosion of wireless technologies and software applications has profoundly changed how we communicate with each other, how we shop and travel, how teachers teach and students learn.

Networking and information technologies are improving health outcomes and lowering costs, including through telemedicine, advanced surgical tools and personalized medicine. Medical research is being transformed by high-performance computing and data analytics.

NIT is a major contributor to economic growth- not just through the companies like Texas Instruments and Google that develop the NIT technologies and services but through every other sector that relies on NIT to increase their productivity and grow their customer base.

NIT protects our brave men and women in the military by improving intelligence gathering and providing real-time information to soldiers in the field. In short, networking and information technologies have created a whole new world, especially for those of us who still remember the world before the IT revolution.

The Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Program – or NITRD is a 25-year old program that supports the full range of research and development to grow the foundations of scientific understanding and accelerate the development of advanced information technologies, including high-end computing systems and applications.

The Program also advances NIT to accelerate discovery in many other areas of science and engineering, from astronomy to biomedical research. Importantly, the NITRD program also addresses the cross-cutting issues of cybersecurity and privacy. Opportunities also bring challenges, of course, and the federal government must continue to be a leader in all aspects of NIT research.

The legislation we are marking up today, the Networking and Information Technology R&D Modernization Act, represents the first comprehensive update of the 1991 Act that created NITRD. As such, the bill modernizes the terminology used throughout the underlying law. It expands the purposes to capture important areas of NIT research that have emerged in recent years. In addition, it encourages large-scale interdisciplinary and cross-agency collaborations in “grand challenge” areas of R&D.

On the management and oversight front, the bill requires a 5-year strategic plan, updates reporting requirements to strengthen oversight, and codifies the National Coordination Office and its important functions.

This legislation was vetted with NITRD Program staff, agencies, and external stakeholders. We incorporated much of this feedback to generate an even better bill.

I want to thank Rep. LaHood, Chairman Smith, and committee staff for an open, collaborative, and good process, which has led to a very good bill. I will be pleased to cosponsor this bill and urge my colleagues to support it.