

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Subcommittee on Research and Technology

*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Institute of Standards and Technology
(NIST) for Fiscal Year 2017”*

March 16, 2016

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman for holding this important hearing.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is an agency that is central to the federal role in advancing science, promoting innovation, and creating a more prosperous nation. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witness, Dr. May, this morning.

It would be almost impossible to overstate the importance of NIST, the federal agency that promotes U.S. innovation and competitiveness by advancing measurement science, standards, and technology.

In his first address to Congress, President George Washington said that, “Uniformity in the currency, weights, and measures of the United States is an object of great importance, and will, I am persuaded, be duly attended to”. This responsibility was first given to an office in the Treasury Department, but then was moved over to the National Bureau of Standards (NIST’s predecessor) in 1901.

Every industry and nearly every technology relies on the measurement and standards work at NIST—from the smart electric power grid to computer chips to building safety. NIST supplies industry, academia, government, and other users with thousands of Standard Reference Materials, in addition to doing much of the testing and validation work in their own laboratories.

Along with working with industry, academia, state and local governments, and consumer groups to develop U.S. standards, NIST accomplishes its mission of promoting U.S. innovation and competitiveness through their research laboratories, Centers of Excellence, and manufacturing

programs. I was happy to see the proposed increases in the FY 2017 budget request for those programs, and I hope that Congress will fully support the request.

In particular, I was happy to see the proposed increases for NIST's programs to develop the measurement tools needed to support engineering biology research and biomanufacturing. Engineering biology research and technologies are very exciting and have the potential to solve some of society's greatest challenges, including providing food for a growing population, improving human health, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and dramatically transforming manufacturing.

Given the promise of this research and its applications, I introduced the *Engineering Biology Research and Development Act of 2015*, with my Science Committee colleague, Mr. Sensenbrenner.

Additionally, I am pleased the President's budget recognizes the importance of NIST's role in American manufacturing. The budget proposes an increase for both the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program and the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation (NNMI).

Finally, I am happy to see NIST's leadership in the area of forensic science and standards. The partnership between NIST and the Department of Justice must continue to recognize NIST's critical role in the development of technical standards for forensic evidence.

However, I would like to emphasize that NIST must ensure that the forensic standards being developed are consistent with NIST's long-standing commitment to science and a fair and balanced standards setting process.

As I have said in the past, NIST may be the most important federal agency that most people have never heard of. I appreciate that there are many worthy programs across the government and we cannot fund everything, but supporting the agency that promotes U.S. innovation and competitiveness should be an easy choice.

Madam Chairwoman, 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. Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.