

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Science and Technology

*Averting the Storm: How Investments in Science Will Secure the Competitiveness and Economic
Future of the U.S.*

Wednesday, September 29, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm beginning to feel like these hearings with you and my good friend, Norm Augustine, are just episodes of déjà vu. We all agree that a strong, skilled and STEM-educated workforce is critical to our Nation's ability to compete, and our ability to remain the leader in innovation our key to economic success.

Almost four years ago we sat in this room with almost this same panel and "officially" kicked off what was to become the America COMPETES Act. As everyone here is aware, America COMPETES was the culmination of recommendations from the oft-quoted *Rising Above the Gathering Storm (Gathering Storm)* Report, former President Bush's American Competitiveness Initiative, and efforts begun by this Committee under Republican leadership and continued by you, Mr. Chairman. We all worked in a bipartisan fashion on this endeavor, and I am proud of our accomplishments.

My message is the exact same today as it was then and has been throughout our current reauthorization of COMPETES: If America is going to remain on top in the evolving world economy, we must be dedicated to encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, while simultaneously cultivating a scientifically and technologically astute future workforce.

While my message hasn't changed, and seemingly neither has the message of the *Gathering Storm* Committee members before us today, unfortunately, our economy has.

I am pleased to see that the *Gathering Storm Revisited* Report acknowledges "the great difficulty of carrying out the *Gathering Storm* recommendations, such as doubling the research budget, in today's fiscal environment...with worthy demand after worthy demand confronting budgetary realities." However, I take some issue with not doubling the budget being analogous to "making an over-weight aircraft flight-worthy [by removing] an engine." Rather, I would suggest that the prudent approach would be to ensure that our current investments are creating a successful return on investment and are being more efficiently utilized. Perhaps the better analogy would be that in order to make an over-weight aircraft flight-worthy, one needs to offload excess baggage. Particularly in today's economic uncertainties, we need to make sure that we are reaping the benefits of the numerous initiatives called for in the initial *Gathering Storm* report and set forth in America COMPETES before creating others.

I am sure it troubles all of us on this Committee to hear that we continue to be on a decline in a variety of science and technology areas, particularly when we have already legislated numerous recommendations set forth in the 2005 report. This reinforces my belief, however, that other issues beyond funding levels are holding us back. I believe much more needs to be done by all of us, not just the federal government, to keep, and in some cases restore, the United States to science and technology innovation prominence across the board. Everyone has a role. The

private sector needs to step up, our schools and teachers need to step up, parents need to step up, and our children need to step up.

I look forward to the testimony of our distinguished panel today, because there is no doubt that we still have much to accomplish. Everyone here knows of my deep admiration and respect of Norm Augustine, and I am eager to hear what he has to say, as well the rest of our witnesses. I sincerely expect we will hear that it takes a lot more than just throwing money at R&D to help us achieve our goals and that America COMPETES is just one aspect of improving America's competitiveness. I hope to hear them speak at length on the other areas raised in their revised report, a majority of which are not within this Committee's jurisdiction, that are major contributing factors to our competitiveness. Encouraging private sector innovation through tax credits, a positive regulatory environment, tort reform, protection of intellectual capital, and other such programs will catapult the American economy, make us more competitive globally, and bring new products and jobs to the American people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.