

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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November 21, 2019

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
House Committee on Science, Space and Technology
2321 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Johnson,

In the first session of the 116th Congress our Committee has passed 10 bipartisan bills on the House floor on issues including STEM workforce diversity, opioid research, and the energy-water nexus. You have set a productive and cooperative tone that has allowed us to make progress where other committees have stalled in partisanship. We are proud of the work we have done thus far, and we look forward to working with you on many more important bills.

We are concerned, however, that the work being done by our Committee is being overshadowed by the Democratic leadership's persistent focus on political theater and messaging bills that will never pass the Senate. This is a disservice to the substantive policy agenda we share of keeping America at the forefront of technological development.

American superiority in science and technology is foundational to our economic competitiveness, our national security, and our way of life. And yet, although the U.S. has long led the world in investments in research and development, our leadership is being challenged. China has made it an explicit goal to surpass the U.S. in critical technologies like quantum information science, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing. According to the National Science Board, China now accounts for more than 20 percent of the world's R&D expenditures. Chinese scientists are publishing more peer-reviewed scientific studies than American scientists, and China graduates twice as many students with four-year STEM degrees than the U.S. does. It's no wonder we have evidence that they may already be surpassing us in certain areas of technological expertise. If we are not careful, the U.S. will fall behind our competitors and adversaries.

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is critically positioned to provide authorization, direction, and strategic guidance for the agencies and policies that support American innovation and technological growth. However, our focus has strayed from these core issues and we have not made as much progress as we would like.

Rather than maintaining our focus and holding hearings or producing legislation on critical science and technology issues like cybersecurity, encryption, artificial intelligence, quantum information science, and 5G, the Committee has instead shifted its attention to tangential issues that serve parochial interests of its Democratic members, including programs and priorities that fall wholly outside of this Committee's jurisdiction. In doing so, it appears that we have lost sight of the threats posed by our geopolitical adversaries and what it takes to make America truly competitive on a global scale.

The Committee has long agreed on the importance of funding basic research that is too risky for the private sector to undertake, research that can greatly expand our scientific understanding and enable the next generation of technological breakthroughs. But instead of maintaining our focus on basic scientific and technological research at our core agencies—including the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology—we have expanded or created new applied research programs at the expense of basic research priorities within this Committee's jurisdiction. Our time and our money would both be better spent elsewhere.

We should begin by reauthorizing the key agencies within our jurisdiction, and by giving them updated guidance. We should direct a greater and more strategic investment in core basic scientific and technological research, infrastructure, and workforce programs, all of which will help support and develop the industries of the future. We should cut red tape to increase our return on investment, improve our R&D infrastructure, enhance our STEM workforce, and improve coordination and collaboration between and among federal research agencies. We should remain focused on the issues most critical to American competitiveness, like advanced computing, quantum information sciences, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, materials and advanced manufacturing, clean and affordable energy technologies, biosciences, and space exploration. This is what it takes to maintain American competitiveness on the global scale and how we preserve American scientific and technological superiority over China and other geopolitical adversaries for future generations.

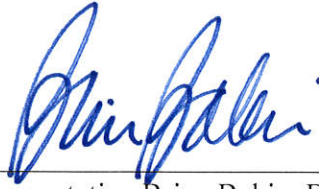
We believe there is much to be done to improve our federal R&D enterprise to make America more competitive and innovative. A good way to start making progress on these priorities is to convene a hearing where we can gather specific information on China's R&D agenda, objectives, tactics, and technological prowess, at which we can compare U.S. progress in those areas and evaluate the security of our scientific enterprise. As one of the most bipartisan Committees in this Congress, we have an opportunity to make innovative and competitive policies that can actually become law. Our hope is that we can work together on our shared priorities.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to our continued work on our shared goal of maintaining American scientific and technological superiority.

Sincerely,



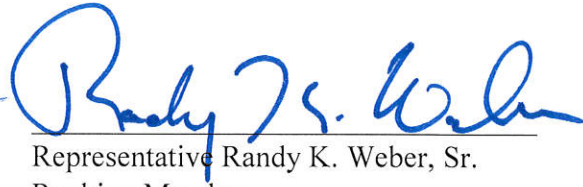
Representative Frank D. Lucas
Ranking Member



Representative Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics



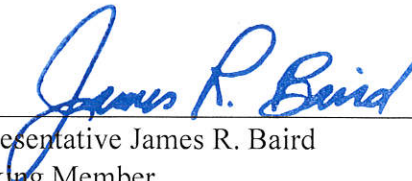
Representative Roger Marshall, M.D.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Representative Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy



Representative Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight



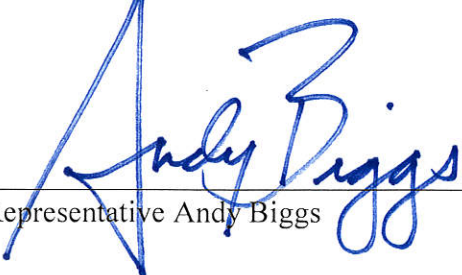
Representative James R. Baird
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Research and Technology



Representative Mo Brooks



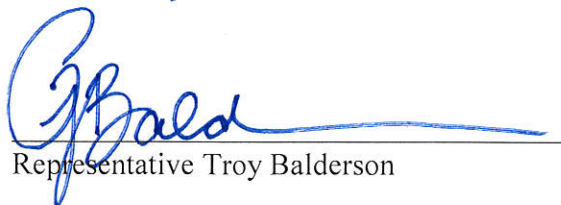
Representative Bill Posey



Representative Andy Biggs



Representative Michael Cloud



Representative Troy Balderson



Representative Pete Olson



Representative Anthony Gonzalez



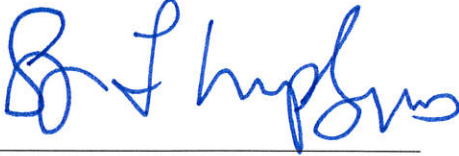
Representative Michael Waltz



Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler



Representative Francis Rooney



Representative Gregory Murphy, M.D.