



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

For Immediate Release
April 17, 2018

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Statement from Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

Markup of the *Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act* (H.R. 5509)

Chairman Smith: This morning the committee will consider H.R. 5509, the Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act. This legislation was introduced by Majority Leader McCarthy. I have cosponsored this measure and I hope others will too.

H.R. 5509 is the product of a hearing held by the Research and Technology Subcommittee in February. Members and witnesses discussed innovative workforce training approaches aimed at boosting STEM education and careers in order to meet current and future STEM professional and technical workforce needs. A special thanks to Chairwoman Comstock and Ranking Member Lipinski for holding that hearing.

Meeting our growing workforce needs in all areas of science and technology is essential for our economic competitiveness.

For instance, according to a recent study, there will be a need for 3.5 million skilled manufacturing workers over the next decade. But it is anticipated that 2 million of those jobs will go unfilled unless we recruit and educate a whole host of high-skilled manufacturing workers.

H.R. 5509 continues the bipartisan progress this committee has made to improve and expand science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education programs and create new pathways to STEM careers.

Research shows that direct knowledge and hands-on work experience with STEM occupations and opportunities stimulate interests in STEM studies and careers among students at every level. To this end, H.R. 5509 directs the National Science Foundation (NSF) to fund initiatives that support innovative partnerships between academic institutions and local industries.

The NSF is to offer at least \$5 million per year over the next four years for competitively awarded grants to community colleges to develop new STEM courses and degrees. These programs will combine formal education with on-the-job work experiences, such as apprenticeships and internships, by partnering with local employers.

The bill also requires at least \$2.5 million per year over the next four years for the NSF to award research grants to measure student outcomes and the effectiveness of computer-based and online courses for technical skills training.

Successful workforce development programs extend beyond the four walls of classrooms and laboratories. One primary example is at Wichita State University, which Mr. Marshall and I visited last year.

During his testimony, Dr. John Bardo, the president of Wichita State University, discussed the university's testing of its applied learning initiative.

The university found that, on average, newly graduated engineers take two years to contribute to the bottom line for their employers. However, when Wichita State University students were given an opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship program prior to graduation, that timeline to profitability was cut to six months.

The pending legislation directs the NSF to award at least another \$2.5 million per year for the next four years for universities to partner with local employers and offer paid apprenticeships and other applied learning experiences to STEM students.

Not only can we learn from successful programs here in the United States, it is also important to examine how other developed nations address their skilled technical workforce needs. This bill directs the NSF to commission research that compares and contrasts skilled technical workforce development between the United States and other developed nations and to report the results to Congress.

H.R. 5509 requires the NSF to conduct research to improve the efficiency of the skilled technical labor markets and examine the skilled technical workforce to have a clear understanding of workforce trends and needs.

The Innovations in Mentoring, Training, and Apprenticeships Act, H.R. 5509, is a significant step in the right direction towards ensuring the United States' competitiveness in the global economy of today.

The initiatives in this legislation will leverage the hard work and ingenuity of women and men of all ages, education levels and backgrounds to grow and meet the demand for a STEM-capable workforce.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill and I yield back the balance of my time.

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