

COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND  
TECHNOLOGY**  
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)  
Hearing on Prizes to Spur Innovation and Technology Breakthroughs**

**Chairman Smith:** Thank you, Chairman Bucshon, for holding today's hearing. Scientific prizes have long played a role in advancing technology. They encourage creative thinking, spur innovation and expand our economy.

The Longitude Prize of 1714, offered by the British government, resulted in the marine chronometer and drastically improved shipping safety. Napoleon Bonaparte's 1800 Food Preservation Prize resulted in the development of canning food as we now know it.

A top priority of the Science Committee is to encourage such innovation and technological advancements. To maintain our competitive advantage, we must continue to support fundamental research and development that encourages the creation and design of next generation technologies.

But there are many other technological problems that could be solved by taking a different approach with the use of prizes. These include transforming kidney dialysis treatments, developing better surface oil cleanup technologies, and generating a potential cure for Alzheimer's disease. Prizes also engage the brightest minds to solve a problem—scientists, entrepreneurs, inventors and yes, even teenagers.

A great example of creative problem solving was illustrated recently when a 14-year-old student in Pennsylvania came up with a simple way to save the federal government hundreds of millions of dollars. He figured out that by changing the type of font used by government workers the federal government could save more than \$130 million each year. This great idea was the product of a science fair.

Prizes also encourage individual incentive, so the burden of risk, as well as the opportunity for success, is on the team or individual competitor. This will encourage more people to engage in high-risk, high-reward research.

Federal science agencies have not fully utilized their prize competition authority to pursue breakthroughs in areas such as health care, advanced manufacturing and agriculture. The FIRST Act improves federal science prize authority. It allows federal science agencies to better partner with the private sector to maximize the value of every taxpayer dollar invested in research and development.

In the words of one witness, Mr. Christopher Frangione, "Policymakers can continue this great progress in prize-based, public-private partnerships by supporting prize language such as that included in the FIRST Act."

I thank our witnesses for being here this morning and I look forward to their testimony.