

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



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Media Contacts: Kim Smith Hicks, Zachary Kurz
(202) 225-6371

**Statement of Research and Technology Subcommittee Chairman Larry Bucshon (R-Ind.)
Hearing on Keeping America FIRST: Federal Investments in Research, Science, and Technology
at NSF, NIST, OSTP and Interagency STEM Programs**

Chairman Bucshon: I am pleased to call to order this morning's hearing to examine the fundamental science and research activities at the National Science Foundation, known as the NSF, National Institutes for Standards and Technology, known as NIST, and the Office of Science and Technology Policy, OSTP.

We have circulated a discussion draft of legislation that would reauthorize basic research and education programs at NSF, NIST, and OSTP, and strengthen coordination of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education programs across the federal government.

I am pleased the majority and minority staff had an opportunity to review the discussion draft carefully and identify areas of agreement. We have asked NSF, NIST, and OSTP, as well as other stakeholders in the university and business communities for their comments about the discussion draft. We look forward to a thoughtful and productive dialogue.

Scientific research is essential fuel for America's engine of innovation. Research-driven innovation is critical for American businesses to remain competitive and world-class in a global marketplace. Additionally, educating our children in the STEM fields is crucial to their futures and our nation's.

NSF spends nearly \$7 billion of taxpayers' money every year. Congress has a responsibility to work with leaders at the NSF and the National Science Board to ensure that these taxpayer dollars focus on high priority research.

The FIRST Act discussion draft affirms our commitment to high-integrity science and transparency of research results. The proposed legislation improves transparency of taxpayer-funded research by making more information available to the public about awarded grants and how they promote the national interest. Furthermore, it is consistent with steps the NSF is already considering to improve accountability, which have been approved by the National Science Board.

As it relates to STEM education, if leading the world in the high-tech sector and achieving the innovations of tomorrow are an imperative goal of the US, American students and America's education system must excel in the STEM fields.

Unfortunately, America lags behind many other nations when it comes to STEM education. American students rank 23rd in science and 31st in math. We must improve these numbers substantially if we expect to remain a world leader. We must engage our nation's youth to study science and engineering so they will want to pursue these careers.

Private and nonprofit stakeholders are also working to engage students in STEM subjects. Understanding and leveraging those resources is an important aspect of strengthening federal support for STEM education. The FIRST Act discussion draft improves coordination for federal STEM programs and recognizes the importance of industry investment in outcome-oriented STEM education efforts.

Another key part of this discussion draft is the “Technology and Research Accelerating National Security and Future Economic Resiliency Act,” or TRANSFER Act, of which I am a cosponsor, and which has been endorsed by a long list of business and non-profit organizations.

The research and development conducted at our nation’s universities, research institutes, and national laboratories have served as the basis for many technology breakthroughs that have driven American innovation and our economic growth.

In order to bolster American economic competitiveness, the TRANSFER Act will improve technology transfer and accelerate commercialization of federally funded research and development at our nation’s research universities and laboratories – in part, by encouraging stronger R&D partnerships among universities, national laboratories, and businesses.

Basic research funded through our nation’s science agencies has provided the basis for many of the technology breakthroughs that have kept America and our universities at the scientific forefront. They have also helped create new industries, innovations, and jobs that have boosted our economy and strengthened our economic competitiveness.

As our country continues to face a fiscal crisis, part of our challenge is how to achieve the most benefit from our limited resources - both now and in the years ahead.

We recognize that returns on these long-term investments, including expanding STEM education, may take many years to be realized fully.

Also, as we all anxiously await the results of the work done by our colleagues who are taking part in the budget conference negotiations, we also recognize that in a time of tight budgets in Washington, it’s even more important to preserve as much stability in federal funding as possible.

I want to reiterate what we are reviewing is a discussion draft, not final legislation. I look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses and having a productive discussion.

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