

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
Science and Technology Committee

America COMPETES: Big Picture Perspectives on the Need for Innovation, Investments in R&D, and a Commitment to STEM Education

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's been nearly three years since we sat in this room with Norm Augustine 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 *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 to get to where we are today with this measure, and I am proud of our accomplishments.

My message hasn't changed much since then: 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, unfortunately, our economy has.

America COMPETES was a step in the right direction to accomplish what needs to be done. In H.R. 2272, we set out to double funding for the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the DOE's Office of Science over a 10-year period. But by the time we got through Conference, this timetable was accelerated to 7 years. Plus, these agencies received enormous amounts of stimulus funding, the results of which have yet to be seen. This goes for COMPETES and for the stimulus funding.

Therefore, I'm very much looking forward to the testimony of our distinguished panel today, because there is no doubt that we still have much to accomplish. At the same time, I would urge you, Chairman Gordon, to proceed cautiously through this reauthorization process, as I believe it is prudent for us to ensure that we are reaping the benefits of the numerous initiatives already set forth in America COMPETES before creating others. Furthermore, and I hope our witnesses will attest to this today, COMPETES is just one aspect of improving America's competitiveness.

President Bush once said, "*The role of government is not to create wealth; the role of our government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which minds can expand, in which technologies can reach new frontiers.*"¹ Encouraging private sector innovation through tax credits, a positive regulatory environment, and other such programs will also improve the American economy, make us more competitive globally, and bring new products and jobs to the American people.

I look forward to working closely with you, Mr. Chairman, on this reauthorization and to hearing what our esteemed witnesses have to say on the subject.

¹ – President George W. Bush, May 2001