

OPENING STATEMENT

THE HONORABLE RALPH HALL (R-TX) Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science

“The Administration’s FY2008 Research and Development Budget Proposal”
Wednesday, February 14 at 10:00 pm
2318 Rayburn Office Building

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Dr. Marburger. It’s good to have you before us this morning.

I am sure that we are all in agreement that we are challenged with achieving a delicate balance between adequately funding our nation’s priorities while at the same time exhibiting fiscal constraint in an effort to reduce the deficit and bring our budget under control. Likewise, I know we also are all in agreement that if we are to remain the world leader in competitiveness and innovation, we must make the appropriate investments in research, development, technology, and math and science education.

I am pleased to see that the FY2008 Budget Request continues to build upon many elements of the President’s American Competitiveness Initiative (ACI), particularly with regard to substantially increasing the funding for physical sciences and engineering at the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Office of Science at the Department of Energy. The returns that we receive from our investments in these agencies far exceed the costs. Whether it is fighting the war on terror abroad or at home, ending our dependence on foreign oil, or inspiring our children to enter high-tech fields so that the United States can continue to push the frontiers of innovation, these agencies have critical roles to play.

I am especially pleased to see that the Advanced Energy Initiative at the Department of Energy is funded at \$2.7 billion in the FY 2008 budget—a 26 percent increase over the FY 2007 request. As I have said on many occasions, America needs to be more energy independent and Federal programs such as these, combined with private sector initiatives, will help us achieve this vital goal. Whether we explore hydrogen fuel cells, cellulosic ethanol, clean coal technology, or advancements in oil and gas drilling, we are moving America away from a dependence on foreign oil and increasing our national competitiveness.

I am also pleased to see an increase over the FY 2007 request for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. NOAA provides valuable national services, including weather forecasts and warnings that affect the daily lives of every citizen.

As for NASA, a 3.1 percent increase is good, but it still may not be sufficient to ensure we meet the 2014 goal to launch the new crew Exploration Vehicle. Mike Griffin is doing a great job at NASA, but the Administration must acknowledge that the budgets being provided to him are fostering additional delays in fielding the new Exploration Vehicle. I hope that you can address my concerns that further reductions in exploration systems funding will jeopardize the transition from the Shuttle to the CEV. I am hopeful our committee will continue to examine the effects of underfunding this vital initiative.

I look forward to your testimony.