

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

**The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Chairman**

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*STEM Education in Action: Inspiring the Science and Engineering Workforce of Tomorrow*

September 13, 2011

Good morning, I would like to welcome everyone here today for the second in a series of *STEM in Action* hearings. The purpose of this hearing will be to showcase a variety of public/private partnerships and initiatives across the Nation that are successfully inspiring the future Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) workforce.

The federal government is investing several billion a year on STEM education. While there may be a federal role, industry, philanthropic organizations, non-profits and local governments have also acknowledged the importance of making investments in STEM. Partnerships and initiatives formed by these investments are critical. Particularly in this difficult budget climate, we want to highlight some of these efforts and partnerships that are thriving with little or no federal investment. Specifically, the witnesses before us are all involved with tremendously successful STEM-related competitions.

As we can all agree, a well educated and trained STEM workforce is imperative and key to our future economic prosperity. But we have to capture and hold the attention of our Nation's youth in science and engineering so they will want to pursue these careers, not simply be forced into them simply because we need them. Sitting in a classroom and just memorizing text or taking notes can often drain the enthusiasm from even the most promising student. That is why it is important for us to hear from these folks about their creative alternatives to teach and inspire kids, who may not even realize they are learning.

Today, we have witnesses from the corporate, foundation, and non-profit worlds showcasing their creative efforts to inspire, motivate, and produce our next generation of scientists and engineers with little or no federal funds.

Our Nation has always been number one in science and innovation; in order to maintain this prominence, we must have an "all hands on deck" attitude. Everyone, in some way, shape, or form has a role to play in STEM education so that our children and grandchildren can also experience a vibrant economy with access to good, solid jobs.

I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses, and thank you for being here with us today.