

Remarks of Representative Judy Biggert, IL-13

Fermi Roundtable

September 28, 2011

Thank you, Randy. I am pleased to join you, Pier, Dr. Brinkman and others from academia to discuss the outlook for Fermilab and the Office of Science particle physics research efforts.

Just a couple of years ago, as Energy Subcommittee Chairman, I held a similar roundtable.

At that time, Fermilab was helping build the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland, which was to have an energy level seven times that of the Tevatron.

I said then that I wanted Fermilab – the largest U.S. laboratory for particle physics – to continue to play a significant role in the field once the new machine was up and running.

Now, here we are today discussing that future on the heels of groundbreaking news that an experiment at the Swiss collider broke the speed of light by sixty billionths of a second.

While every headline called this “groundbreaking” or proclaimed “Einstein wrong”, I found the real news to be in reports that reveal Fermilab has done this before. And, more importantly, that Fermi would be one of the few institutions in the world capable of refuting or verifying the new discovery.

That’s why I believe Fermilab is so important to U.S. and international research. And, it’s why I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress and at the DOE to secure a viable role for Fermilab in the future of particle physics research.

In part, that role is already secure. With the Tevatron at the forefront of high energy physics research in this country, a strong base of talent and infrastructure on which to build the next generation of major accelerator facilities is right here in Batavia, Illinois.

Maintaining this talent and infrastructure is critical to our leadership in education and university research, where the next generation of minds will be inspired to remain here in the U.S. and work on the challenges confronting our nation.

Unfortunately, we face a tough economy, a tight budget, and fierce international competition.

I know everyone here recognizes the fragile state of our nation's finances, and supports efforts to reduce our deficit and create jobs for the millions of Americans who remain out of work.

But to do so, we must set priorities and make smart, strategic decisions about federal funding. We need to look at the future of American particle physics, not through the lens of politics, but through the lens of science, and figure out where we can make the greatest impact with finite resources.

That is why I look forward to working with all of you to articulate a vision for the future of federal research efforts in our country -- a future in which Fermi will continue to make critical contributions.

These strategic investments will be the foundation for the innovations that will help us overcome the challenges of the 21st century – from economic stagnation and dependence on foreign energy to new diseases and threats to our national security.

By prioritizing funding for scientific research -- supporting both human and physical capital -- we will preserve our capacity to innovate and create good American jobs well into the future.

And today's discussion is part of a vital step in that process, where we determine how those investments will turn into hard science here at Fermi and at national laboratories around America.

Thank you.