

**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

HEARING CHARTER

*Competitiveness and Innovation on the Committee's 50th Anniversary
with Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft*

Wednesday, March 12, 2008

10:00 p.m. – 12:00 p.m.

2318 Rayburn House Office Building

1. Purpose

This year, the Committee on Science and Technology will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. On Wednesday, March 12, 2008, the House Committee on Science and Technology will hold a hearing to highlight this occasion and receive testimony from Bill Gates, the Chairman of the Microsoft Corporation, to discuss our country's technological advances over the past 50 years, the current state of our country's competitiveness, and a look ahead to the challenges we face.

2. Witnesses

Mr. William H. Gates, Chairman, Microsoft Corporation

3. Brief Overview

Following World War II and throughout much of the 20th century, the United States became a world leader in science and innovation, and economic indicators demonstrated that the United States offered a high standard of living to its citizens. In fact, the US economy grew substantially, and economists estimate that about half of US economic growth was the result of technological innovation.

In the 1990's however, during a period in which the United States was known as the world's lone "superpower", a number of indicators suggested that US prosperity was diminishing. In 1990, the United States had a trade surplus in high-technology products of \$54 billion. That surplus turned into a trade deficit of \$50 billion by 2004. A number of iconic American companies moved assets, jobs, and ownership overseas. And American students performed poorly in several international assessments of math and science achievement.

On October 12, 2005, The National Academies released a report on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century entitled *Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future*. The *Gathering Storm* report quickly

became influential in promoting a national agenda on innovation and competitiveness. Ultimately, recommendations included in the *Gathering Storm* report, as well as some of the suggestions included in the President's American Competitiveness Initiative, became the basis for legislation signed into law last August – the America COMPETES Act. This legislation, authored by this Committee, makes a significant commitment to our country's future by investing in math and science education and federal research.

In what is likely to be his final congressional testimony before devoting the majority of his time to his philanthropic work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates will appear before the Science and Technology Committee to share his thoughts on efforts needed to further strengthen our country's competitiveness in the global marketplace, discuss what policies are needed to encourage innovation, and address the role of technology in our country's economic growth.

The Committee looks forward to hearing the unique perspective of Mr. Gates, both as Chairman of Microsoft and as Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, on strengthening our country's competitiveness in the global marketplace. More specifically, the Committee expects Mr. Gates to address issues crucial to our country's competitiveness including a commitment to math and science education, federal investments in research and development, policies that encourage innovation, and the role of technology in our economic growth.