COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY
Lamar Smith, Chairman

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Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

A Review of the Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD) Program

Chairman Smith: The Networking and Information Technology Research and Development program that we review today – otherwise known as NITRD – oversees federal investment in fundamental research areas such as supercomputing, cybersecurity, big data, and cyber physical systems.

These research priorities help spur technologies that protect our country and grow our economy. For example, a cybersecurity attack is one of the greatest security challenges that America faces today. It threatens all of our federal agencies and even our private computer systems. This is just one area of federal R&D that the NITRD program addresses.

In the digital age, threats to our country's computer networking systems constantly evolve. We must effectively coordinate R&D efforts in order to protect and improve cyber and data security nationwide. Better network security promotes U.S. competitiveness, enhances national security and creates high-tech jobs.

In fact, the most recent President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology report predicts that more than half of all new science, technology, engineering, and mathematics jobs will be related to information technology.

A healthy and viable workforce, literate in all STEM subjects including computer science, is critical to American industries. Today, a variety of jobs in industries from banking to engineering to medicine require a familiarity with computer science.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Computing and Mathematics will be one of the top ten fastest growing major occupational groups from 2010 to 2020, with a growth rate of four percent annually compared to one percent for all other industries.

Encouraging innovation and technological advancements is a priority of the Science Committee and is important to high-tech communities across our country, including those in my district.

The NITRD program focuses on research and development of new technologies that create more high-tech jobs in STEM fields. Technological innovation is what drives America's economy and success. Since the invention of the world's first supercomputer 50 years ago, the United States has held a competitive advantage in the field of supercomputing.

In fact, in Austin, Texas, we have seen great achievements in supercomputing. The Stampede supercomputer at the Texas Advanced Computing Center at the University of Texas is the number one open access supercomputer in the country.

Stampede will be used by more than 1,000 scientists from the United States and around the world to solve problems that affect our daily lives. This is a tremendous accomplishment not only for the innovators at the University of Texas but also for all Americans.

But to maintain this competitive advantage, we must continue to support the fundamental research and development that encourages innovation, particularly the creation and design of supercomputers and the applications those computers support.

It has been two years since this Committee last reviewed the NITRD program and passed our Committee's bill to reauthorize the program.

The Advancing America's Networking and Information Technology Research and Development Act of 2013 provided for the coordinated R&D efforts necessary to improve cyber and data security nationwide. Our legislation also authorized the participating agencies to support large-scale, long-term, interdisciplinary research.

Unfortunately, that legislation stalled in the Senate. I thank our witnesses today for testifying on the NITRD program and appreciate their testimony on the current state of the program, recommendations for how to improve the program, and future R&D priorities.

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