



January 13, 2022

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

We write to encourage swift consideration and reconciliation of Senate and House differences regarding legislation that will boost American competitiveness and innovation. The package of bills being considered, including S.1260, the United States Innovation and Competition Act (USCIA), will be strengthened by inclusion of important provisions to support commercialization.

The Bipartisan Policy Center has worked across project areas to support public policy that increases innovation, invention, and entrepreneurship in a more diverse array of communities and regions across the country, and in a variety of technology sectors. Bipartisan alignment on seeking to maintain U.S. competitiveness is encouraging. As the Congress works toward a final bill, we urge you to keep in mind the following: It will be important to clearly articulate roles and responsibilities among different agencies, such as the National Science Foundation and Department of Energy to ensure coordination and avoid duplication of ongoing work.

We ask also that the conference package maintains the Sens. Coons, Graham, Lujan, and Barrasso amendment which would create a nonprofit foundation at the Department of Energy (DOE). This amendment overwhelmingly passed the Senate and passed the House in H.R. 4447, the Clean Economy Jobs and Innovation Act. Such a foundation would help accelerate commercialization of next generation energy technologies. This is in line with recommendations from BPC's American Energy Innovation Council to foster private and public collaboration to accelerate U.S. energy innovation.

Given the long history of DOE's support for commercialization programs, we also ask that the conference package include support for:

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- Regional clean energy innovation ecosystems, such as those authorized in H.R. 5488, the Regional Innovation Act of 2021, to ensure that our public investments in energy innovation result in economic development for communities across our nation;
- Provisions in H.R. 4606, the Energizing Technology Transfer Act, which will help advance the commercialization of critical clean energy technologies;
- DOE programs to advance commercialization of the key technology areas identified in USICA, including through public-private partnerships with DOE national labs; and
- Changes to DOE's newly established Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations to help clarify the role of this new office within DOE's existing organizational structure and provide the hiring and financial flexibility needed for this office's success.

This past April, BPC hosted a [discussion](#) on competitiveness, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Several [takeaways](#) from that event remain relevant as Congress determines the ultimate shape of legislation:

- **Understand the entire landscape of competitiveness:** “Invention is the substrate from which innovation is born—without that invention, innovation will run dry,” said Carol Dahl, former executive director of the Lemelson Foundation.
- **Make inclusion a key objective:** To compete with China, we need broad participation and a wide pipeline of potential innovators. Overall competitiveness will be reduced if only a fraction of the population engages in innovation.
- **Build experimentation and failure into institutions:** Current competitiveness legislation laudably includes programs to incentivize, among other things, improved commercialization at universities. Congress and federal agencies must ensure that those institutions explore many new and diverse ways of commercializing technology.

American leadership in science and technology faces significant challenges over the next few decades. Encouragingly, there is bipartisan recognition of those challenges and desire to have the federal government support our innovative corporations, startups, national labs, and universities in meeting them. We urge Congress to come to resolution thoughtfully yet speedily on the various pieces of competitiveness legislation.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kim Dean in black ink.

Kim Dean
Director, BPC Action

Handwritten signature of Michael Kelley in black ink.

Michael Kelley
Director, BPC Action