

OPENING STATEMENT

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Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Full Committee Markup of: H.R. 1806, the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2015

April 22, 2015

Thank you, Chairman Smith. Today we are marking up H.R. 1806, a bill that you have referred to as a reauthorization of the America Competes Act. Sadly, it is anything but. Instead, H.R. 1806 is the combination of two bad bills from last year -- the FIRST Act and the Department of Energy R&D Act -- into one doubly bad bill.

The Competes Act of 2007 was landmark bipartisan legislation that was based on the recommendations of the esteemed National Academies and was vetted with dozens of stakeholder organizations through a multi-month, transparent process.

The same is true for the 2010 Reauthorization. In contrast, the bill before us today was kept behind closed doors until less than a week before today's markup. Neither the agencies that are being authorized nor the stakeholder community at large had any opportunity to see it or to provide feedback. Bipartisan negotiations were limited to a few pages in the STEM title.

The Competes Acts of 2007 and 2010 sought to ensure America's continued scientific preeminence and to grow our innovation economy. In contrast, H.R. 1806 is preoccupied with questioning the motives of the National Science Foundation and the integrity of the scientists it funds. In addition, it would put up multiple roadblocks to progress in clean energy R and D, under the guise of preventing "picking winners and losers", even as H.R. 1806 picks its *own* winners and losers.

The Competes Acts of 2007 and 2010 focused on reinforcing America's commitment to the sciences across the board.

In contrast, H.R. 1806 seeks to pit different scientific disciplines against one another and to prevent research in fields to which the Majority is ideologically opposed.

The Competes Acts of 2007 and 2010 sought to provide sustainable increases for R and D. In contrast, H.R. 1806 would flat fund R&D overall and impose severe cuts in certain fields. The Competes Acts of 2007 and 2010 sought to attract a new generation of STEM researchers across all fields. In contrast, H.R. 1806 would direct funding cuts and policies that will discourage an entire generation of American students and researchers.

Last year I described the FIRST Act as an opportunity lost. Today, I want to be clear that H.R. 1806 is much worse than an opportunity lost. It is a tragedy in waiting. While I take some comfort from knowing that H.R. 1806 stands little chance of becoming law, that fact does not in any way mitigate my disappointment—and quite frankly, my

embarrassment—at what we are doing today. The plain truth is that we would be much better off with no bill than with this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I'm hardly alone in my concerns. The Competes Acts of 2007 and 2010 received hundreds of endorsements from scientific organizations, universities, companies, and industry organizations.

This time, even though they had only a few days to respond, a number of significant organizations have already written to the Committee expressing concern or outright opposition to H.R. 1806, and I'm confident we'll see many more letters if this bill is ever brought to the Floor of the House.

Among those organizations expressing serious concern are the American Physical Society, the Computing Research Association, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Mr. Chairman, I'm genuinely baffled. If the very scientists and engineers you wrote this bill for want nothing to do with it, why are we even here today?

It should be clear by now that I will strongly oppose this bill. However, before I close, I do want to note that there are a few positive provisions in the bill, including much of the NIST title, which was negotiated on a bipartisan basis *last year*, and Title II, the STEM title, which is the only other title that reflects bipartisan discussions.

Finally, the DOE Technology Transfer title and supercomputing research provisions incorporate bipartisan bills that have already moved through the Committee this year. I just wish that cooperation had extended to the rest of this bill.

In closing, I would like more than anything to be able to support a bipartisan reauthorization of the Competes Act. Unfortunately, that's not what we have before us today, and I can't support a bill that violates every one of the basic principles that underlay the original Competes Act.

Before I yield back, I have 28 letters from various scientific, academic, and environmental associations and societies expressing concern or opposition to H.R. 1806 that I ask be inserted into the record.

With that, I yield back.