



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

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Statement by Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)
Artificial Intelligence – With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility

Chairwoman Comstock: I would like to say first that one of our witnesses, Dr. Jaime Carbonell from Carnegie Mellon University, is unable to be here today due to a medical emergency. We wish him well and a speedy recovery, and without objection will ensure his written testimony is made part of the hearing record.

One of the reasons I have been looking forward to today's hearing is to get a better sense from our witnesses about the nuances of the term artificial intelligence (AI), and implications for our society in a future where AI is ubiquitous.

Of course, one might say AI is already pervasive. Since the term was first coined in the 1950s, we have made huge advances in the field of artificial *narrow* intelligence, which has been applied to many familiar every-day items such as the technology underlying Siri and Alexa.

Called ANI for short, such systems are designed to conduct specific and usually limited tasks. For example, a machine that excels at playing poker wouldn't be able to parallel park my car.

Conversely, AGI, or artificial *general* intelligence, refers to intelligent behavior across a range of cognitive tasks. If you enjoy science fiction movies, this definition may conjure up scenes from any number of classics such as "Blade Runner", "The Matrix" or "The Terminator".

For many individuals, the term AGI invokes images of robots or machines with human intelligence. As it turns out, we are decades away from realizing such AGI systems. Nevertheless, discussions about AGI and a future in which AGI is commonplace lead to some interesting questions worthy of analysis.

For example, Elon Musk has been quoted as saying that AI "'is a fundamental risk to the existence of human civilization' and poses 'vastly more risk' than North Korea." Does that mean that AGI may evolve to a point one day when we will lose control over machines of our own creation? As far-fetched as that sounds, great minds are certainly discussing such questions.

For the short term however, my constituents are concerned about less existential issues that usually accompany new or evolving technologies—topics such as cybersecurity, privacy and impacts to our nation's economy and American jobs.

I am an original cosponsor of a bill introduced earlier this year titled the AI JOBS Act of 2018 to help our workforce prepare for the ways AI will shape the economy of the future. I will also introduce legislation today to reauthorize the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which includes language directing NIST to support development of artificial intelligence and data science.

There is immense potential for AGI to help humans. But that potential is also accompanied by some of the concerns I just referenced. I look forward to what our panel has to share with us about the bright and the dark side of a future with AGI.

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