



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

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Media Contact: Kristina Baum
(202) 225-6371

Statement of Chairwoman Barbara Comstock (R-Va.)

National Science Foundation Part II: Future Opportunities and Challenges for Science

Chairwoman Comstock: For nearly 70 years, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has served a mission that made the United States a world leader in science and innovation. The key question before us today: how can NSF keep us at the forefront of science and innovation for the next 70 Years?

Today we will hear perspectives on how NSF can meet the challenges and opportunities of the future, and ideas for ways that NSF can improve.

We will examine particular challenges such as setting priorities during a time of budgetary constraints, and ensuring that all taxpayer-funded research is high quality, reproducible and conducted with integrity.

We will also look at the vast opportunities created by technology, which allows science to be more accessible, and has created more data than ever before. I look forward to hearing how we can make science more open and harness that data to solve real world problems.

There are also great opportunities for innovation where science disciplines intersect. How can we encourage more transdisciplinary approaches to solving some of our toughest challenges, from cybersecurity to traumatic brain injuries? The best breakthroughs come when we break down silos.

And finally, we have a great opportunity *and* challenge to develop a new generation of STEM workers. A study by Georgetown projects 2.4 million job openings in STEM through 2018, where Virginia will lead the nation with 8.2 percent of its jobs being STEM related.

By 2018, there are projections that Virginia will need to fill 404,000 STEM jobs. These are good paying jobs – and we need to prepare students to fill them.

This is the second of two hearings the Research and Technology Subcommittee is holding on the National Science Foundation (NSF) this month, to provide input into a reauthorization of NSF later year. The first hearing held on March 9 with Director France Córdova covered issues addressed in the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA), including accountability and transparency, large facility construction management reform, research misconduct and STEM education coordination.

The AICA, signed into law in January, demonstrates that there is a strong bipartisan commitment on both sides of the aisle to the mission of NSF and to supporting basic and fundamental research.

I hope this Committee can continue to work together on making sure we maintain our nation's leadership in science. Innovation is about seeking new methods, new ideas, and new breakthroughs. We want to make sure that the way we fund, support and conduct science is as innovative as the research it produces.

And with that, I look forward to hearing the testimonies of our guests.

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