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SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Hearing on:
The National Institute of Standards and Technology's Role in Supporting Economic Competitiveness in the 21st Century
Thursday February 15, 2007

Good morning. I am very excited for our Subcommittee's first hearing of the 110th Congress. I thank my friend from Oregon, Mr. Wu, for organizing this hearing and look forward to working with him over the next two years on technology and innovation issues that are vital to our economic competitiveness.

It is quite appropriate that the first hearing of the Technology and Innovation Subcommittee is about one of our Nation's scientific stars – the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Almost every Federal agency and U.S. industry sector uses the standards, measurements, and certification services that NIST labs provide. The breadth of NIST's applications stretch from guidelines to the accuracy and reliability of electronic voting machines to research into the causes of building and structural failures, and to making healthcare information technology interoperability a reality in our healthcare delivery system. A must do, in my opinion, to deliver the kind of radical reforms needed to improve the quality and lower the cost of delivering healthcare in this country.

The future of many cutting-edge technologies also depends on the research and technical expertise of NIST's laboratories. Emerging fields such as nanotechnology and bioengineering will not become mature industries and markets without the existence of scientifically-based industrial measurements and standards.

Beginning last year, the President recognized the important role NIST plays in our Nation's economic security and started NIST on a path to double its core research and facilities budget by 2017. I fully support the President's American Competitiveness Initiative to double not only NIST's budget but also those of the National Science Foundation and the Office of Science at the Department of Energy. I look forward to hearing more details today about the role NIST will play in the President's American Competitiveness Initiative.

I am interested to hear the Administration's rationale in requesting only $46 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program. The MEP program helps small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers optimize their operations and remain competitive in the global economy and it is a critical program that is worthy of taxpayer dollars. It deserves the $106 million Congress has provided in recent years and I intend

to work with my colleagues to see that it once again receives an adequate appropriation for FY 2008.

Chairman Wu, I am pleased to have Mike Ryan, President and CEO of TUG Technologies, company that is located in my district in Marietta, Georgia, with us today to discuss the importance of the MEP program. He has vast experience with a variety of MEP programs in different states of this great country and has some exciting success stories to share with this subcommittee.

I thank all the witnesses for taking the time to be here today and wish I could stay to hear what I know will be a fruitful and productive debate. However, a good friend and colleague, Dr. Charlie Norwood, passed away this week and his funeral is this afternoon in Augusta, GA. In order to offer my condolences to his wife and family, I need to leave to fly back for the services. Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers and I yield back the balance of my time.