

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE VERNON J. EHLERS
RANKING MEMBER
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Oversight of the National Science Foundation

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2318 Rayburn House Office Building

In the fiscal year 2009 budget request, the Administration has requested increases for both the research and educational mission of the National Science Foundation. However, the proposed increases fall short of the authorizations provided in the COMPETES Act of 2007, which established a 7-year doubling path for the NSF. After a below-inflationary increase provided in FY08, NSF has fallen off the doubling path. With a 13 percent increase requested for the agency coupled with less-generous budgets for other agencies, some even within the same funding subcommittee, NSF is going to have to work hard to defend and justify the reasoning behind the substantial increase. In order to return to the doubling path in FY09, I believe NSF should be funded at the level authorized by the COMPETES Act.

Unfortunately, we know first hand what shortfalls mean for NSF. For the remainder of FY08 NSF must defer solicitations and facilities maintenance, will award 1,000 fewer research grants, fund 230 fewer research fellows, and negatively impact more than 3,000 students and teachers. These are just a few of the known impacts of the unanticipated shortfall created by the FY08 omnibus. I am very concerned that federal apathy to NSF is encouraging young scientists to choose another career.

Finally, while I recognize NSF has defended the successes of the Math and Science Partnerships, I am disappointed that only a \$2.5 million increase is requested for this program. As reauthorized by the COMPETES Act, the MSP program has the potential to make a great impact on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in this country. This is simply not possible with its current budget.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the new initiatives proposed in the FY09 budget, the thriving programs bearing consistent fruit, and how we can work together to implement the COMPETES Act.