

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Ranking Member
House Committee on Science and Technology
Full Committee Markup
HR 5116, America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010
April 28, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this full committee markup of America COMPETES. Our nation's ability to compete in the global marketplace depends on many factors. Witnesses who have appeared before our committee this year have stressed the need for lower taxes, streamlined Federal regulations, a reduced national debt, and greater market choice to remain competitive. Investments in basic science research and development also spur long-term growth and are of particular interest to our Committee. It is not surprising then that the National Academies report, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, and President Bush's American Competitiveness Initiative focused on these types of scientific investments.

In 2007, our committee also responded by passing the America COMPETES bill, which was a 3-year authorization that placed three agencies, the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and the Office of Science at the Department of Energy (DOE) on a 10-year "doubling path."

The bill before us today reauthorizes these agencies for 5 years at a cost of over \$93 billion. It establishes seven new programs and initiatives, including energy innovation hubs at DOE, a loan guarantee program at the Department of Commerce, regional innovation clusters at the Department of Commerce, and a new user facility at NIST. The concern that I have is that some of these new programs are potentially duplicative of current efforts and divert funding away from basic science research and development. They also increase the cost of the bill by billions.

I remain committed to investing in basic science research and development, but I am also mindful of our current dire economic situation. The percentage of our nation's debt is now greater than the percentage of our gross domestic product (GDP) and our nation's budget deficit has increased 50% since the last authorization of this bill three years ago. These numbers are truly unsustainable and threaten America's ability to compete globally.

As stewards of the taxpayers' dollars during these times, we need to be even more vigilant with how we allocate our resources. During the subcommittee markups, Republican Members offered good amendments to, among other things, shorten the length of authorization from 5 years to 3 years to ensure proper oversight, strike new and potentially duplicative programs, and clarify the mission and direction of programs. While these did not pass at the subcommittee level, several Members today will be offering similar amendments, in addition to others, in an attempt to continue the goals outlined in *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* while protecting taxpayers against potential waste and ballooning deficits. I am hopeful that they will get a favorable reception today.

I would like to thank the Chairman and his staff for working with me and the Republican staff throughout this process. As I have said before, I have enjoyed working with you over the years and will truly miss your presence in Congress after your retirement this year.