

## OPENING STATEMENT

**THE HONORABLE RALPH HALL (R-TX)**  
**Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Science**

*Science and Technology in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Economy*  
Tuesday, March 13 at 1:00 pm  
2318 Rayburn Office Building

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon. We just wrapped up a press conference to highlight the importance of innovation and the role that Congress and others can play in promoting American competitiveness. I have not changed my mind in the last few minutes, so I think I will stick with the same message. It's pretty simple.

If America is going to remain on top in the evolving world economy, we must be dedicated to improving our workforce. We don't have time to stop for a breather because countries like China and India are breathing down our necks, pumping out doctors and engineers.

Today's workers increasingly require a solid academic foundation in science and math, as well as technical know-how, in order to succeed in today's high-tech workplace. Despite these growing demands, nationally, only one out of every 50 high school graduates will ever obtain an engineering or technical degree. Further, most American high school graduates are either not sufficiently prepared or not sufficiently motivated to pursue advanced study in science, math, engineering or technology fields.

This is a problem.

While there are no quick fixes, we can take steps now to reexamine and improve how teachers teach and students learn math and science, and I am pleased to see the Science Committee doing just that.

As a part of H.R. 362, which I believe is on the agenda for today, I am particularly pleased to see that we are using the University of Texas UTeach program as a basis for a scholarship program for STEM students who commit to teaching K-12 science and math classes after graduation. This program has been replicated and expanded at the University of California, and I look forward to hearing more about it from Dr. Dynes.

Along with improving education, Congress should also work to promote competitiveness by increasing Federal R&D funding, while simultaneously stimulating private sector R&D. The Administration's American Competitiveness Initiative is working to do just that on the Federal level, but there is still room for creativity on how to increase private sector basic research. The government's role for the latter should be to create a system of incentives.

As the President said, *"The role of government is not to create wealth; the role of our government is to create an environment in which the entrepreneur can flourish, in which minds can expand, in which technologies can reach new frontiers."*<sup>1</sup> Encouraging private sector innovation through tax credits and other such programs will improve the American economy, make us more competitive globally, and also bring new products to the American people.

I have seen first-hand America's innovative capabilities, and I know we can do better. American preeminence in the global economy depends on what all of us do today. Each of us...all levels of government, industry, academia, parents and students...has an important role to play in keeping America competitive and ahead of the innovation curve.

I look forward to working closely with you, Mr. Chairman, on these competitiveness issues and to hearing what our esteemed witnesses have to say on the subject.

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<sup>1</sup> – President George W. Bush, May 2001