



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)

Examining Federal Science Agency Actions to Secure the U.S. Science and Technology Enterprise

February 15, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Lucas, for holding today's hearing. I would also like to welcome our distinguished panel of witnesses.

For several years now – and really for the history of this committee – we've taken the lead in Congress on grappling with hard questions around emerging technologies and implications for U.S. competitiveness, national security, and society.

Specifically, the question of when and how to secure Federally funded research is not new. We've been supporting research behind closed doors for decades – because it is deemed classified, proprietary, or otherwise subject to access restrictions. Everything else – certainly everything else labeled as “fundamental research” – is carried out and published in the open, as affirmed by President Ronald Reagan in National Security Decision Directive-189, and reaffirmed several times since.

Two things have changed. One is that the United States is no longer the unquestioned leader in science, technology, and innovation. When we were, our risk calculus was different than it is now. In addition to our worthy but mostly like-minded competitors around the globe, we face a growing strategic competitor – and threat – in China. The second thing is the confluence of several emerging technologies with dual-use potential, including AI, biotech, and quantum.

As the landscape continues to evolve, what's most important is that we continue to approach this challenge thoughtfully and clear-eyed about the tradeoffs we are willing and not willing to make.

I'm proud of our history on the Science Committee of doing just that. Chairman Lucas was a great partner to then-Chairwoman Johnson in developing thoughtful, widely vetted policy proposals in response to well defined problems. For example, this Committee developed the requirement for OSTP to lead in updating and coordinating the disparate and confusing disclosure requirements across Federal agencies. We also developed the requirement for research security training for all Federally funded researchers.

A primary purpose of this hearing is oversight, and we are prepared with some questions for you about why implementation of some of the requirements we put in law has been so slow. I'd also like to know how we can help. But in addition to oversight, this hearing presents an opportunity for this Committee to continue to lead in the more esoteric but equally important debate about the risk calculus of what happens if we push too far in the wrong direction.

I have long been a champion for high-skilled immigration to the U.S. Let me just cite a couple of quick facts for you. Since 2000, 40% of all U.S. Nobel laureates have been foreign-born. In addition, according to an analysis from the National Foundation for American Policy, more than half of startups valued at \$1B or more were started by immigrants. We do not have to close these doors in the name of securing our research. We can instead choose to preserve the global vision of the United States being the best country in the world to be a researcher.

Furthermore, when it comes to scientific collaborations across borders, we all know that we cannot do the biggest things alone. To solve global challenges, we need to pool global minds and resources. The Covid pandemic surely reminded us of that.

And finally, we have witnessed that the rhetoric around research security itself has been enough to send a chill across our colleges, universities, and start-ups. In particular, it has left many Asian Americans and Asian nationals feeling unwelcome and even frightened. Shamefully, our nation has gone down that dark road before. We must address real risks to our security and competitiveness. However, in doing so we must make every effort possible to avoid profiling based on race, ethnicity, or nationality. And that starts with our rhetoric.

I thank the distinguished panel for being here with us this morning and I look forward to the discussion.