Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Full Committee Hearing
The State of U.S. Science and Technology: Ensuring U.S. Global Leadership

February 5, 2025

Welcome everyone to the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee's first hearing of the 119th Congress.

I want to thank our witnesses for taking the time to be here this morning.

Today's hearing presents an opportunity for this Committee to assess the current condition of the United States' entire science and technology (S&T) enterprise and discuss how we can continue to shape and enhance its future.

America has positioned itself as the global leader in science and technology due to the rich ecosystem we have created here. While the federal government is the primary jurisdiction of this Committee, we must recognize that it is only one aspect of our larger S&T enterprise. The federal government, academia, philanthropic, and private sectors each have unique and equally important roles to play.

Over the past twenty years, we have seen a shift in how the U.S. research enterprise operates. The share of research funded by private and philanthropic entities is rising, playing a crucial role in funding exploratory work.

According to the most recent National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics data, the United States spent nearly $800 billion on research and development in 2021. Of that, private sector businesses supported over $600 billion. Such investments drive advancements in critical technologies like AI, quantum, and semiconductors, ensuring we are at the leading edge.

However, these investments by industry are not only in applied research and development. The business sector now funds 36 percent of America's basic research, which is very close to the 40 percent share that is funded by the federal government.

These growing investments by industry suggest that U.S. firms see opportunities to capitalize on their research and development efforts thanks to our free market economy. It is critical we do not allow the government to hinder this progress. I believe that over the rest of this decade, we will see incredible growth in our science and technology sectors, and the last thing Congress should do is slow that down.

We should look for ways to protect, promote, and support such investments – through tax reform, reducing bureaucratic red tape, and safeguarding patents and intellectual property rights.

The growing role of industry and private philanthropy in R&D does not mean that the federal government does not have a role to play. Federally funded research is the foundation on which major technological innovations are built, including smartphones, GPS, and the internet.

It is critical for maintaining a healthy baseline over generations by supporting fundamental basic research, infrastructure, and facilities; creating new research disciplines; and training generations of scientists and engineers. The government also has a critical role in supporting high-risk, high-reward initiatives with no obvious business cases. NASA and the eventual creation of the commercial space industry are great examples.

America's economic strength, national security, and quality of life all fundamentally depend on ongoing scientific progress and the strength of our S&T enterprise.

While the United States continues to lead in the innovation race, we face fierce global competition.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) poses an especially formidable and growing strategic challenge.

We know the CCP is aggressively pursuing plans to dominate the next generation of technology, including stealing our research and innovations.

Ceding leadership to the CCP will place our national security at risk, limit opportunities for U.S. industries to compete in the global economy, and pave the way for critical technologies like AI, quantum, and advanced semiconductors to be tainted with CCP values.

But let's be clear – we can't beat China by becoming them. Today, the United States is at an inflection point, and it is critical for Congress to make strategic investments and reforms to bolster our S&T enterprise and enhance American competitiveness while leveraging the free market.

We must build systems that promote coordination and cooperation across the entire U.S. S&T enterprise and put America first by unleashing our innovation and ingenuity.

America stands at a precipice, and this Committee has the opportunity to make a once-in-a-lifetime impact on our nation's future.