



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Full Committee Hearing
H.R. 3168, H.R. 8437, H.R. 9326 and H.R. 8981
Tuesday, July 21, 2026

Good morning. Today's markup highlights the breadth of this Committee's work. The four bipartisan bills before us strengthen our research enterprise, improve public safety, support domestic energy development, and reinforce American leadership in critical and emerging technologies. From the science that protects our communities from natural disasters to the energy resources that will power the next generation and the technologies shaping our economic future, these measures demonstrate what can be achieved when Congress works alongside innovators, researchers, and stakeholders to put America first.

We often think of American leadership in terms of the technologies making headlines, such as artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing. But true leadership is built on more than breakthrough technologies.

It also depends on quieter, foundational work: showing up at the table when international standards are written, maintaining the scientific programs that protect our communities from catastrophe, and investing in the energy resources that will power our economy for decades to come.

The first bill is H.R. 3168, the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program Reauthorization Act of 2025, which strengthens our nation's earthquake preparedness. Earthquakes are one of the most destructive natural disasters facing our nation. According to a USGS-FEMA report, earthquakes caused nearly \$15 billion in damages in 2023. This bill reauthorizes a program that has protected American lives for nearly five decades while modernizing our earthquake early warning systems and enhancing coordination across Federal, State, and local partners.

Next, we have H.R. 8437, the Geo POWER Act, which helps expand next-generation geothermal energy in the United States. This legislation establishes a milestone-based demonstration program that will ensure taxpayer dollars are invested in projects that show measurable progress. Additionally, it authorizes DOE to use innovative financing mechanisms to support promising projects that may not otherwise move forward. Advancing next-generation geothermal will strengthen America's energy independence and diversify our domestic power supply.

This morning, we will also consider H.R. 9326, the USA Act, which ensures that American industry and Federal agencies have the tools and support they need to participate meaningfully in the international bodies that set technical standards for AI and other rapidly growing technologies. According to the U.S.-China Business Council, citing French Association for Standardization data, the number of Chinese-held secretariat positions within the International

Organization for Standardization increased 58 percent between 2011 and 2021, while American-held positions have remained flat. If we are not in the room, others will write the rules that shape the future of these technologies.

And finally, we have H.R. 8981, the SCALE Biology Act, which expands upon the important work NIST is already doing in the areas of biometrology, biomass, and biomanufacturing by formalizing a laboratory program at the agency. Like so many advanced technical fields, engineering biology is an area where we are in a global race with China and other nations, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on this legislation.

Overall, these bills embody the consistent focus of this Committee—reducing risk, expanding opportunity, and keeping America prepared for whatever comes next. Whether it is a fault line beneath our feet, the energy demands of a growing economy, or competition from overseas, these measures help ensure America is ready to lead.

I am pleased to bring this legislation before the Committee today and welcome thoughtful amendments as we work together to ensure these bills are as strong and effective as possible.