

OPENING STATEMENT

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-IL)
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

*Overview of the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Proposals for the National Science Foundation and National
Institute of Standards and Technology*
Subcommittee on Research and Technology Hearing

February 26, 2015

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman for holding this important hearing. The National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Standards and Technology are both agencies that are central to the federal role in advancing science, promoting innovation, and creating a more prosperous nation. I look forward to hearing from the distinguished witnesses before us this morning. I only wish they could each have their own hearing because there are so many important topics to discuss for each agency.

I am pleased with the budget requests for both NSF and NIST. I hope Congress will have the wisdom to fully fund both requests. There are many worthy programs across the government, and we cannot fund everything. However, I believe that funding science and innovation should be an easy choice. This is about our future, and even more important, it is about our children's future.

That said, there are a few programs in the budget requests that I would like to highlight. First, I am pleased to see NIST's and NSF's increased investments in engineered biology. Many of the experts believe that biology will be the driver of economic prosperity in the 21st Century as physics was in the 20th Century. Mr. Sensenbrenner joined me in introducing the Engineering Biology Act of 2015, which would create a framework for a coordinated federal initiative in engineering biology. I hope we have the opportunity to move the bill this Congress.

Next, I am happy to see NIST's leadership in the area of forensic science and standards. The partnership between NIST and the Department of Justice must continue to recognize NIST's critical role in developing technical standards for forensic evidence. The justice system must be just for all, including the wrongfully accused. I will be reintroducing my Forensic Science and Standards Act soon, and I welcome my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation with me.

Also, while public access is not addressed in the budget request directly, it is a timely issue. I am pleased to see that several agencies, including NIST, have released their public access plans for federally funded research, a process that this Committee started back in 2009. Dr. Córdova, I understand you are still negotiating with OSTP on your plan. I encourage you to resolve that as soon as possible.

Let me conclude with a few words about the debates in this Committee regarding our support for different fields of science and for merit-review. We all have beliefs we hold very strongly whether or not there is evidence to support them. Some of my colleagues believe very strongly that some fields of science are less valuable than other fields, and that some grants are less worthy than other grants. Personally, I do not

presume to have the expertise to make that determination. I trust the merit-review process, and I trust NSF to make those decisions.

The experts before us today will have an opportunity to educate us as to why we must invest in all STEM fields, and why it is so important to keep the merit-review process free from political review. I just hope that all of my colleagues truly listen and consider what they have to say.

I very much look forward to the testimony and with that I yield back.