



COMMITTEE ON

SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Randy Feenstra

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing – Setting the Standards:
Strengthening U.S. Leadership in Technical Standards

March 17, 2022

Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens. It is wonderful to be with you here in person for this Subcommittee's first hybrid hearing. Also, thank you to our witnesses for joining us today to share your expert testimony on how the U.S. can strengthen its leadership in technical standards.

When we consider the policies that keep American businesses competitive, standards sometimes fly under the radar. But they are foundational to U.S. industry and manufacturing. They make it possible for cell phones to connect calls; for electronic devices to plug into outlets; and for laptops to connect to wi-fi around the world. They serve as the building blocks for product development and help ensure functionality, interactivity, and safety. And that, in turn, helps keep America efficient and competitive.

Unlike most countries that have a top-down, government-led approach, the United States has a bottom-up, industry-led approach to standards-setting. We employ a voluntary system in which both standards development and implementation are driven by stakeholder needs. This market-driven approach enables competition, ensures transparency, and takes advantage of building consensus to drive us to the best possible outcomes.

Through the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), the government supports this industry-led work. NIST is a trusted, unbiased partner to industry and provides technical assistance through reference materials, data, and instrumentation, which often directly inform voluntary standards.

The NIST Director is designated by Congress to be the President's principal adviser on standards policy as it relates to the Nation's technological and innovation competitiveness. NIST also helps us coordinate processes and policies between multiple government agencies to improve efficiency.

NIST chairs the Interagency Committee on Standards Policy, which is currently examining and coordinating federal agencies' standards policies for advanced communications and artificial intelligence. NIST is also directly engaged in standards-

setting bodies, including in international standards bodies, and is often regarded as a leader in the global standards arena.

International technical standards provide a consistent set of rules which enables global market competition, precludes trade barriers, and allows innovation to flourish. It's critical that these global standards are workable for American businesses. And so, the United States must continue to play an active role in international standards-setting and work to counter undue foreign influence within standards development organizations.

As new technology innovations such as AI and quantum sciences evolve, new technical standards will be needed. The U.S. must be an active participant in shaping the standards and specifications that will guide the global deployment of these groundbreaking innovations. If we do not, other countries will be there to fill the vacuum, and that will hurt American competitiveness in these industries of the future.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recently released a national strategy for technical standards. They have announced that they want to be the nation that sets the global standards for next-generation technologies by 2035. We cannot allow China to dominate the international standards for the technologies of tomorrow.

That's why the bipartisan NIST for the Future Act this Committee passed will prioritize NIST's role in supporting U.S. leadership in international standards development. We will ensure that international standards are created in a transparent and democratic manner, and we won't allow the CCP to put their thumb on the scale and dominate global standards.

The NIST for the Future Act was one component of our bipartisan effort to double down on our investment in basic research and scientific competitiveness. Despite the strong bipartisan support for these efforts, competitiveness legislation is currently stalled because Democratic leadership in the House and Senate has piled on partisan provisions and dragged their feet on conferencing the legislation. I hope they take action soon so we can move forward on this important legislation.

In the meantime, I'm excited for today's hearing, which will provide insights into how we can work together to increase U.S. companies' participation in the setting of international standards.

I'm looking forward to hearing how NIST can help drive U.S. innovation and competitiveness. Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.