



Opening Statement of Chairman Brian Babin

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing
Robots Made in America: Advancing U.S. Leadership in Manufacturing and Automation
April 21, 2026

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Obernolte, for convening today's hearing. I also thank our witnesses for joining us to discuss the state of robotics research in the United States.

Robotics is not a new field. American engineers have built industrial robots since the mid-20th century, and today those machines are the backbone of U.S. manufacturing.

What is new is the convergence of artificial intelligence with robotics—opening the door to machines that can perceive, adapt, and operate in unstructured environments far beyond the factory floor.

This convergence matters for two reasons. First, it represents an enormous economic opportunity. From warehouses and logistics to agriculture, construction, and healthcare, intelligent robots have the potential to boost American productivity, fill labor gaps, and create entirely new industries.

Second, robotics is a domain of intense strategic competition. The Chinese Communist Party made robotics a national priority, committing over \$100 billion to technologies including robotics and supporting roughly 140 firms focused on humanoid robots alone.

American companies are already driving innovation in robotics. Firms across the country are developing robots for everything from last-mile delivery to elder care and disaster response. Standard Bots' industrial robots, Tesla's Optimus humanoid, Boston Dynamics' Atlas platform, and a growing ecosystem of startups show that American industry recognizes the opportunity at hand.

The question for Congress is whether our federal research and policy infrastructure is keeping pace with that private-sector ambition.

But we should also be clear-eyed about where our supply chains stand. Too many of the components that go into American robots—sensors, actuators, and chips—are sourced from abroad, including from adversary nations. If we want to build a strong domestic robotics industry, we need to understand where those vulnerabilities are and take steps to address them. The Trump Administration's convening of robotics companies last month was a good start, and I look forward to hearing what came out of those discussions.

Furthermore, agencies within this Committee's jurisdiction are already doing important work. The Administration's AI Action Plan noted the link between AI, robotics, and American

manufacturing. The National Institute of Standards and Technology researches collaborative robots, autonomous vehicles, and robotic perception and manipulation.

In fact, as robots move from controlled factory settings into less predictable environments—homes, hospitals, and public spaces—the need for safety standards will become even more critical. Getting the standards right early will help American companies lead globally rather than play catch-up to foreign regulatory frameworks, making NIST’s work all the more important.

These are encouraging steps from this Committee’s agencies. But as these technologies advance, so must our workforce. Building, programming, and maintaining intelligent robots requires skills spanning mechanical engineering, computer science, and AI. Our universities and technical colleges will be central to preparing the next generation of American workers for these jobs—and federal research partnerships with academia are a key part of that pipeline.

I’m interested in hearing from our witnesses about whether current training programs are keeping pace with what employers actually need on the factory floor.

But Congress must understand where the gaps are—in research, workforce development, standards, and policies that will determine whether the next generation of robotics is built in America or imported from abroad.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the most promising areas of U.S. robotics research, the challenges facing innovators, and what role Congress should play in ensuring American leadership in this field.

I thank Chairman Obernolte for his support and efforts in advancing American robotics. Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.