

OPENING STATEMENT

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Subcommittee on Research and Technology
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Joint Subcommittee Hearing
Reducing the Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research

June 12, 2014

Thank you Chairman Broun and Chairman Bucshon for holding this hearing on reducing the administrative workload for researchers.

There have been numerous reports, including some we will hear about this morning, that have found that researchers face significant administrative burdens. That is concerning because time spent on administrative tasks—from applying for grants, to submitting progress reports, to complying with rules for human participant requirements—is time not spent on conducting research. This could mean a delay in research progress and lengthening the time for the next scientific breakthrough.

I want to stress that many administrative requirements are very important. We must have a system that ensures that human participants are being protected and that federal resources are being used wisely. That being said, we need to find the right balance that meets those goals and allows researchers to focus on what they do best—advancing science. I am concerned that we might not be striking the appropriate balance. If researchers are spending over 40 percent of their time on administrative tasks and not research, that is not productive.

At a hearing in 2012, the Research subcommittee heard testimony from university witnesses expressing concern about the growing toll of administrative burdens. As a result, in May of last year I made several recommendations along the lines of the issues raised in the Board's report in a letter to OMB as the agency sought to reform federal grants policies. While the OMB has not adopted these recommendations in full, I do feel that substantive progress has been made and I hope that we can continue to address these matters moving forward. I look forward to working with research groups, the university community, science agencies, and other interested parties to identify and act on additional opportunities for reform.

Although this Committee cannot solve all the problems associated with administrative burdens, we do have an important role to play in working on and highlighting these issues. Both the *America Competes Reauthorization Act of 2014* and the *FIRST Act* include language that would establish a working group under the National Science and Technology Council to make recommendations on how to harmonize, streamline, and eliminate duplicative federal regulations and reporting requirements. I am interested to hear from the witnesses their thoughts on these legislative proposal.

I am also interested in hearing from the witnesses about how other legislation such as the DATA Act, which has just been enacted, and the GRANT Act, which has been proposed, would affect administrative burdens for researchers.

Finally, I am interested in hearing about the progress that is already being made to streamline and harmonize administrative tasks. For example, I know that federal agencies have been working on harmonizing the grant proposal process and progress reporting requirements. Additionally, I understand that agencies have started exploring ways for researchers to submit only the information needed for the initial peer review phase and then requiring administrative information from the researchers only if the proposal is likely to be awarded. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about these efforts and other proposals that could help reduce the administrative burden for researchers.

In closing, Federal agency and institutional requirements have been put in place to protect human participants and animal subjects in research, ensure integrity in the research enterprise, and eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse. There is no question that we need to have these requirements in place. But there is room to make changes to the implementation of these requirements. We must strike the right balance that both protects our research enterprise and enables scientists to spend more time on their important research.

I look forward to all of the witness testimony and the Q&A, and I thank you all for being here today. I yield back the balance of my time.