ABUNDANCE INSTITUTE

Securing American Technology Leadership Through American Freedom

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Hearing on American Global Competitiveness at 250: Legislative Proposals to Secure U.S. Technology Leadership

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Chairmen Guthrie and Bilirakis, Ranking Members Pallone and Schakowsky, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am Neil Chilson, Head of AI Policy at the Abundance Institute. We are a mission-driven nonprofit dedicated to creating the cultural and policy environment necessary for emerging technologies to germinate, develop, and thrive, and to thereby expand widespread human prosperity.[1] The views I express today are my own.

I commend the Committee for treating American competitiveness as an economy-wide question rather than the concern of any single company or industry. The ten legislative proposals before the Subcommittee cover artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual and augmented reality, quantum technology, semiconductors, automobiles, and biotechnology, and they extend to supply-chain resilience and the treatment of American firms abroad.[2] The bills differ in topic and form, but they share a foundational belief: American technological leadership is crucial to our success as a nation.

I share that belief. I think most Americans do, too. But it can be easy to take our technological leadership for granted. Our success is the product of key American principles and institutions. As we approach America's 250th birthday, we will not secure another quarter millennium of technological leadership by abandoning the principles that have brought us this far. We will secure it only by remaining the best place in the world for people to invent, build, deploy, and improve new technologies. Government should protect that system from foreign coercion and genuine national-security threats, and it should resist broad interventions that discourage entry, competition, and investment.

AMERICA AT 250: A RECORD WORTH EXTENDING

In its first 250 years, the United States has proven unusually good at transforming scientific discoveries into widely used products and entire industries. The telegraph, mass electrification, powered flight, agrotechnology, semiconductors, personal computing, the internet, and pharmacology each followed a different path. Yet their American stories share a pattern. Ambitious research met deep capital markets. Workers and entrepreneurs moved and

experimented freely in a large, contestable home market. Legal institutions protected property, contract, and the freedom to create a business. Users were free to solve problems with new tools as they were developed.

Government was not absent from those stories. Public support for basic research, defense procurement, and the rule of law often mattered enormously. But government did not design or drive the commercial applications. Entrepreneurs, engineers, investors, and users discovered those through decentralized trial and error. That division of labor still holds. Government should supply genuine public goods, protect the country and the legal order, and address harms the market cannot manage on its own. It should then leave broad room for people to test ideas no central authority could have predicted.

Because of our adherence to these principles, America remains an innovation leader. Indeed, in areas where we have most closely followed them, we dominate. But the field is competitive. In the 2025 Global Innovation Index, the World Intellectual Property Organization ranked the United States first in both market and business sophistication, but only third overall. China, meanwhile, entered the top ten, ranked first in knowledge and technology outputs, led the world in patent filings, and hosted more top-100 innovation clusters than the United States.[3] Our continued leadership must be earned, year after year.

An old shorthand held that America innovates, China imitates, and Europe regulates. The phrase is memorable, perhaps even an accurate description of the past, but it is not a strategy. China now innovates and scales, often with its government's backing and direction. And Europe increasingly imposes its regulatory choices beyond its borders, hitting American companies with penalties based on global revenue.

America must therefore compete in at least three distinct races.

→ **The discovery race:** generating new scientific knowledge and technical capability.

→ **The commercialization race:** turning discoveries into useful, affordable products and durable firms.

→ **The deployment race:** putting new technology into the hands of users and to work across the economy.

The third race is too often neglected. A breakthrough sitting in a laboratory or waiting for regulatory approval cannot raise wages, lift productivity, or strengthen national security.[4] To stay globally competitive, America must deploy and use its leading technologies.

A PRO-INNOVATION FRAMEWORK FOR COMPETITIVENESS POLICY

The legislative proposals before the Subcommittee today aim to help America better compete in these races. These five principles can guide how the Subcommittee evaluates and improves these bills.

First, promote competition rather than protect particular incumbents. A policy is not pro-innovation merely because an established technology company supports it, nor anti-innovation merely because an established company bears some cost. The central question is whether a proposal enables new ideas, new firms, and better products to help customers solve problems. High compliance costs, opaque licensing, and discretionary approvals favor firms that already have lawyers, lobbyists, and scale while imposing burdens that many new competitors cannot afford to navigate. Congress should evaluate proposals by how they will ultimately benefit or harm consumers.

Second, preserve openness while addressing threats narrowly. Trade, investment, immigration, and scientific exchange rank among America's greatest strengths. Each expands the talent, capital, and ideas available to American innovators. Government interventions should therefore target identifiable harms that cannot be addressed through market mechanisms.

Third, build resilience through diversification and substitutability, not autarky. No advanced economy can efficiently produce every input at home. A resilient system relies on multiple suppliers, real substitutes, and strong ties to allies. Self-sufficiency and resilience are not synonyms. An economy that relies on a single protected domestic producer may be less

resilient than one served by several competing suppliers in the United States and allied countries.

Fourth, insist on clarity, proportionality, and due process. Definitions should be objective enough that firms can plan around them. Duties and penalties should track risk and culpability. Regulated parties should have notice, a chance to cure ordinary compliance failures, and a real avenue for appeal. Emergency authority is sometimes necessary, but it should be bounded and subject to prompt review.

Fifth, make government initiatives temporary and accountable. Commissions, strategies, and advisory panels should carry concrete deadlines, named agencies, measurable goals, and sunsets. They should protect confidential information but report publicly where possible. A report is not, by itself, an accomplishment. Success is measured by whether a policy lowers barriers, sharpens competition, strengthens resilience, and speeds deployment.

Each of these principles reflects a market-forward, growth-oriented approach to innovation policy. Below, I have grouped the ten bills into three clusters based on similarity and apply the above principles to each.

DEFENDING AMERICAN FIRMS AGAINST FOREIGN REGULATORY OVERREACH

Each country has the sovereign authority to govern conduct in its own market. The United States should respect that authority, just as it expects foreign governments to respect ours. However, a problem arises when a foreign government turns market access into leverage over conduct everywhere else: imposing worldwide mandates on American firms, enforcing the rules unequally, extracting penalties untethered from local harm, or overriding choices the American people made through their elected representatives.

The European Union has pursued this path with "anti-competitive and anti-American business regulations."[5] Take, for example, its Digital Markets Act. Having failed to generate its own large digital technology companies, the EU has turned to handicapping those of other countries through economically-unsupportable regulation and fines. The DMA only applies to companies

that meet certain user and revenue thresholds. No European companies meet the criteria. As a result, six of the seven designated DMA gatekeepers are headquartered in the United States.[6] First time penalties can reach up to 10% of global revenues regardless of the harm. In April 2025, the European Commission fined Apple 500 million euros and Meta 200 million euros under that law.[7] And just last week, the EU declared that Amazon and Microsoft's cloud computing platforms were the latest American innovations to reach "gatekeeper" status.[8]

The EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive likewise "appears to be disadvantaging American and other non-EU businesses to the benefit of European firms."[9] The CSDDD requires companies to address human rights and environmental risks in their supply chains - an inherently extraterritorial regulation. The framework applies to certain non-EU companies based on their EU turnover, permits fines tied to global turnover, and is set to take effect beginning in 2029.[10] A rule nominally aimed at European activity instead imposes EU values on American companies and dictates how they should run their supply chains and business practices worldwide.

The Administration has rightly recognized the problem these types of overreaching laws present. President Trump, in a February 2025 presidential memorandum, directed federal officials to identify and respond to foreign measures that are discriminatory, disproportionate, or structured to transfer resources or intellectual property away from American companies.[11] No foreign government should be able to use extraterritorial rules and extraordinary penalties to dictate a company's global conduct or capture the returns from American innovation.

H.R. 9385, THE PROTECT USA ACT

The PROTECT USA Act seeks to address the EU CSDDD requirements. The bill changes the default: American firms would no longer absorb the costs of certain foreign sustainability due-diligence mandates while the United States stands passive. It limits compliance by covered American firms, shields them from certain adverse actions, blocks recognition of specified foreign judgments in U.S. courts, and creates a hardship process.[12]

The bill is a valuable statement of national policy. It tells foreign governments that market access does not confer unlimited authority over American companies' worldwide operations.

It also recognizes that a single firm often cannot resist a foreign sovereign on its own. Federal backing can break a collective-action trap in which each firm complies only because it expects its competitors to comply. The ordinary-course exception in the bill is important to preserve company autonomy. Congress should state it broadly enough to protect voluntary corporate practices, ordinary due diligence, and actions a company would take on its own, apart from any foreign mandate. A company should not have to abandon a useful practice merely because a foreign government requires it.

ACCELERATING INVENTION AND DEPLOYMENT

The robotics, immersive-technology, and open-source-AI proposals promote coordination, voluntary collaboration, and existing authority. That is the right starting point, but cannot be the end. Their value will depend on how they produce concrete gains in deployment.

H.R. 7334, NATIONAL COMMISSION ON ROBOTICS ACT

H.R. 7334 would support the development of America's robotics strategy. The bill would establish an 18-member commission to examine advances in robotics, U.S. competitiveness and deployment, workforce needs, and supply-chain dependencies, among other topics. It calls for an interim report after one year and a final report after two years.[13]

While consumers may think of robotics as a futuristic technology, it is actually a general-purpose productivity tool with existing applications across manufacturing, logistics, agriculture, construction, and health care. These industries need a thriving, AI-powered robotics ecosystem to keep pace with China—but currently we're behind. The International Federation of Robotics reports that China installed 295,045 industrial robots in 2024, versus 34,164 in the United States, and China accounted for 54 percent of global installations, while the United States accounted for a mere 6 percent.[14] U.S. leadership in robotics cannot be measured by the extent American firms design sophisticated robots. We need to ensure American businesses can afford, integrate, and improve them.

The Commission should therefore draw substantial representation from users and integrators, not only from robotics manufacturers, academics, and government officials. Small and midsized

manufacturers, logistics operators, and agricultural producers can spot adoption barriers that a technology developer may miss.

H.R. 2321, UNITED STATES LEADERSHIP IN IMMERSIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT

I also support H.R. 2321, which would create a principal adviser and an Immersive Technology Advisory Panel to coordinate federal activity and study augmented, virtual, and mixed reality. The bill directs the panel to weigh economic opportunity, privacy and safety, standards, and commercialization, and to report in two years.[15] Immersive technologies may prove especially valuable where the cost of physical training, travel, or failure runs high. Likely industrial uses include workforce training, industrial design, medical simulation, and remote maintenance. Federal coordination can reduce duplicative pilots, incompatible definitions, or fragmented procurement.

A few drafting changes could sharpen the bill. The definition of augmented reality as a "changed version of reality" is imprecise; it should instead describe a computer-mediated view of the physical environment onto which digital information is overlaid or registered. Private-sector developers, startups, and researchers should have a strong voice on the Panel, not a token one drowned out by agency representatives. An interim product after one year would beat waiting two years for the first real deliverable. Finally, voluntary practices should stay voluntary; they should not harden into de facto licensing or procurement mandates without separate legal authority and proper procedure.

OPEN-SOURCE AI LEADERSHIP ACT

The Open-Source AI Leadership Act begins to address one of the most important issues in AI policy. Right now, China dominates the world in open weights models.[16] Chinese companies produce the best-performing, most commonly used open weights models.[17] While these models have historically lagged the largest U.S. closed models in capability, recent releases are impressive.[18]

This bill is a good first step toward getting U.S. open model development back on track. The discussion draft directs the Secretary of Commerce to support qualified American open models, identify barriers to adoption, encourage benchmarks and standards, and assess risks from models developed or controlled by foreign adversaries. It also calls for annual public reporting.[19]

Open AI ecosystems are vital sources of competition, innovation, and even security.[20] Publicly available models let businesses and researchers customize systems, run them locally, and build new products without lasting dependence on a single vendor. They widen access for startups, universities, and smaller firms. They also spread American technical practices and values by putting high-quality domestic models in the hands of users around the world. Protecting the development and advancing the deployment of open AI models is critical to continued U.S. AI leadership.

The affirmative side of the bill could be more concrete. Commerce could back voluntary security and interoperability benchmarks, map the policy barriers that may hinder open model development and adoption, expand access to evaluation resources, and run limited federal pilots on qualified open models.

Risk assessments of foreign-adversary models should be technical and model-specific. National origin can properly trigger heightened scrutiny. But nationality should not replace evaluation. Common benchmarks should compare security, capability, accuracy, and cost. The United States should also keep collaborating with trusted allies. Open ecosystems are not a concession in the technology race; they are one way to widen the field of competitors and innovators.

RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS THROUGH OPENNESS

The quantum, semiconductor, biomanufacturing, memory, and automotive proposals address different markets, but they should share one thematic foundation: supply-chain policy should reduce brittle dependencies without trying to eliminate every foreign input. Resilience comes from competition, diversification, substitutes, and trusted trade. Domestic capacity strengthens resilience, but resilience does not require every stage of production to happen within U.S. borders.

AMERICAN QUANTUM COMPETITIVENESS ACT

The American Quantum Competitiveness Act has the right objective: advancing U.S. commercial leadership while building trusted supply chains for quantum technology. The discussion draft asks the Secretary of Commerce to advise the President, identify barriers and critical components, promote investment and cooperation with trusted suppliers, and propose a strategy for commercial leadership and supply-chain resilience.[21]

Quantum technologies sit at varying stages of commercial maturity, and their supply chains can depend on specialized materials, fabrication tools, cryogenics, and photonics. A focused inventory can help government and industry identify true chokepoints before they become crises. The bill is also right to treat trusted foreign partners as part of the solution.

The draft's definition of "critical component," though, is broad enough to sweep in almost any input related to quantum technology. Congress should tie that term to scarcity, substitutability, supplier concentration, and security relevance. A component is "critical" when its disruption would materially impair a significant capability and no reasonable alternative exists, not merely because it appears in a supply chain. A more targeted definition would keep the analysis focused on genuine problem areas.

H.R. 6207, THE CHIP EQUIP ACT

I support H.R. 6207 as a way to improve the efficacy of the CHIPS and Science Act. The Chip EQUIP Act would condition certain federal semiconductor assistance on a ten-year commitment to not buy semiconductor manufacturing equipment from any foreign entity of concern or its subsidiary. Waivers would apply where capable equipment is not reasonably available from the United States or an allied or partner country.[22]

Taxpayers ought not subsidize the very foreign dependency the CHIPS Act aims to reduce. At the same time, the waiver process is essential, because semiconductor fabrication depends on highly specialized equipment and trusted alternatives may not yet exist at the needed scale, quality, or delivery time. That waiver process should be prompt, transparent, and available when trusted alternatives fall short of the needed capability or would cause material delay.

THE BEDROCK ACT

The BEDROCK Act addresses key concerns about U.S. biomanufacturing capacity. The discussion draft directs Commerce to identify commercialization barriers, supply-chain chokepoints, foreign-adversary dependencies, and opportunities for private investment. It requires recurring assessments, a prioritized action plan, a map of federal processes, protection for nonpublic information, and has a five-year sunset.[23]

Biomanufacturing is not a niche laboratory pursuit. It is a general-purpose way to make things, using engineered biology to produce medicines, industrial chemicals, materials, and food. The National Security Commission on Emerging Biotechnology reports that the U.S. bioeconomy already contributes more than $210 billion to GDP and supports nearly 644,000 jobs, with applications spanning agriculture, energy, industrial production, and health.[24] The same Commission warns that American firms now rely on Chinese contract manufacturers for ingredients in widely used medicines. Commerce should assess the degree to which U.S. regulatory and other barriers have made it prohibitively expensive to produce such ingredients in the U.S.

Better coordination in this area is also important. Currently, a biomanufacturer may face duplicative or sequential decisions from the Food and Drug Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, or other federal agencies, with no clear lead. The Act could help reduce regulatory uncertainty, spurring investment through a clearer path to commercialization.

MEMORY CHIP COMPETITIVENESS ASSESSMENT ACT

Due to the enormous and growing demand for AI workloads in addition to the lag time and high capital costs to build new manufacturing capacity, advanced memory technology has skyrocketed in price. The Memory Chip Competitiveness Assessment Act takes important steps to assess the problem and potential solutions. The discussion draft directs Commerce to study demand, supply constraints, affordability for consumers and small businesses, countries of concern, and capital cycles, among other factors.

The study should examine the United States and trusted partners as one integrated market. It should assess supplier concentration, fabrication and packaging capacity, energy and permitting constraints, and the long investment cycles typical of semiconductors. It should also separate an episodic shortage from normal cyclical adjustment and identify the consumer-price and small-business consequences of any proposed interventions.

The bill prohibits the study from considering acquiring additional supply from countries of concern. This is an understandable instinct. But it should not stop Commerce from accurately measuring existing dependencies, genuine risk, market share, prices, or the time and cost to diversify. The study should evaluate the data on all alternatives even if some are unlikely to be adopted.

AUTOMOTIVE NATIONAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY ACT OF 2026

A properly targeted study of foreign-adversary risks in the automotive sector would help ground future policy in evidence. Modern vehicles integrate highly complicated, computerized systems. Foreign access to sensitive vehicle data or control functions, state-directed acquisition of important technology, and dependence on a concentrated adversary-controlled supplier can all present real national and economic security concerns.

This discussion draft proposes to require the Secretary of Commerce to conduct a study of such risks. Unfortunately, the current discussion draft is not sufficiently targeted. It treats a manufacturer as "controlled by a foreign adversary" if it derives at least 50 percent of its annual revenue from that adversary. It defines “covered activity” to sweep in nearly any ownership stake, commercial partnership, contract-manufacturing relationship, or licensing agreement with any company controlled by a foreign adversary. And it applies to an overly broad list of critical and emerging technologies.[25]

Commercial exposure is not control. A firm may sell heavily into a market without that market controlling its board, its voting rights, or its material decisions. Congress should reserve the term "control" for ownership, voting power, board rights, contractual authority, or state direction. These levers actually determine corporate conduct.

The bill should also set reasonable de minimis and materiality thresholds for investments, ownership interests, licensing, and partnerships. It should also require a nexus to sensitive technology, large-scale or sensitive data, vehicle-control systems, critical infrastructure, or a significant supply dependency. Ordinary commercial contact is not foreign control, and foreign exposure is not in most cases a national-security threat.

Without such changes, any resulting study risks diluting important information in a deluge of information about run-of-the-mill commercial relationships and transactions.

BIOSECURITY AND RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION

The Biosecurity Modernization and Innovation Act presents the most difficult policy balance in this package. The bill directs Commerce to require order and customer screening for nucleic-acid-synthesis providers, detect split orders through privacy-preserving methods, maintain a list of sequences of concern, build a conformity-assessment and audit system, and create a biotechnology governance sandbox, among other duties. The draft contemplates exemptions for nonhazardous sequences, expedited treatment for legitimate institutional customers, and confidentiality protections, but it also authorizes statutory damages up to $500,000 for an individual and $750,000 for an entity.[26]

I support the bill's security objective and its effort to replace fragmented voluntary guidance with a coherent national framework. A pro-innovation approach does not mean ignoring potentially catastrophic externalities. A person trying to obtain a dangerous biological sequence may impose risks on millions of people who never consented and cannot protect themselves through ordinary market transactions. Bad actors might attempt to hide dangerous activity by splitting orders across providers who do not coordinate. These are legitimate reasons for government action.

But the countervailing risk is also serious. Fixed regulatory costs can harden into an incumbent advantage. A screening and audit regime that the largest providers can easily absorb may still discourage startups, small laboratories, and decentralized research. It may also push legitimate activity toward foreign jurisdictions with weaker safeguards.

This bill should seek to create trusted, predictable conditions for responsible commerce. To do so, I recommend the following:

Use risk tiers. The regime should distinguish among large commercial sequence providers, makers of benchtop equipment, resellers, and research institutions. Duties should scale with the capability to synthesize concerning material, the volume and nature of transactions, access to customers, and the realistic risk of misuse. A small academic research facility should not automatically face the same fixed compliance system as a global commercial provider.

Use objective scientific criteria. The list of sequences of concern should rest on transparent standards built with scientific and security expertise. Emergency provisional additions may be necessary, but they should expire unless a timely process confirms them. Regular review should remove or narrow entries as the science improves. Congress should require enough public explanation to permit accountability without publishing information that would itself create risk.

Provide due process. A provider should receive notice, a chance to respond, and an administrative appeal before losing conformity status. The conformity process should establish objective criteria and timelines so that market access does not hinge on open-ended agency discretion.

Make enforcement proportional. The law should separate inadvertent technical violations from knowing, reckless, deceptive, or repeated misconduct. Penalties should track culpability, company size, actual risk, corrective action, and whether a violation enabled harmful conduct. The proposed statutory damages are large enough that the statute should spell out safe harbors, cure periods, and penalty factors rather than leave them largely to enforcement discretion.

Protect privacy and minimize data. Privacy-preserving split-order detection is a promising idea, but the statute should specify retention limits, access controls, secondary-use restrictions, audit requirements, and breach notification. Sensitive customer and sequence information should not become a general-purpose government or commercial database. Collection should reach only what the security function demonstrably requires.

Make the sandbox meaningful. Participation should provide a defined safe harbor, enforcement discretion, or an alternative compliance pathway for approved testing. A sandbox that merely lets firms experiment while leaving them fully exposed to every ordinary requirement will attract few serious participants. Its entry criteria, duration, data handling, and exit conditions should be public and predictable.

Seek national uniformity and retrospective review. A robust federal framework should reduce overlapping federal guidance and resolve conflicts with inconsistent state screening rules. After three to five years, an independent review should assess threats reduction, privacy effects, compliance cost, market concentration, and offshore displacement. Congress should then revisit or sunset provisions that do not perform as intended.

CONCLUSION

The bills before the Subcommittee address different industries and different risks, but one principle can guide them all: strengthen the open American system that has generated world-leading innovation, and apply narrow, effective safeguards where foreign coercion, concentrated dependencies, or serious security externalities threaten it.

America's greatest strategic asset is not a particular company, factory, or technology. It is a system in which free people test ideas, challenge incumbents, learn from failure, and bring useful inventions to market. Innovation, supply-chain, and security policy should protect that system, not replace it with centralized economic control.

I therefore support the Committee's overall legislative direction and encourage it to improve and advance these proposals. At 250, America should resolve to remain the country where the future is invented and put to work.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.

ENDNOTES

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