



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Full Committee Hearing
Examining NIST's Priorities for 2025 and Beyond

May 22, 2024

Good morning. Today's hearing will focus on the priorities of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) for fiscal year 2025. I would like to welcome the Honorable Dr. Locascio back to the Committee and thank her for taking the time to speak with us today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

It has been almost two years since the CHIPS and Science Act was signed into law. This legislation authorized critical research and investments to ensure economic stability and prosperity for the United States. Whether that intent becomes reality is dependent on efficient implementation.

The CHIPS and Science Act provided \$50 billion in federal funding for the Department of Commerce to strengthen the U.S. position in semiconductor research, development, and manufacturing. NIST is home to the CHIPS Program Office and is responsible for overseeing how this funding is allocated and awarded.

Congress appropriated these funds to bolster national security and ensure semiconductors can be produced here in the United States in a cost-competitive way. If we get this right, the global semiconductor supply will be insulated from unstable markets and prevent many of the disruptions that occurred during the COVID pandemic. It would also ensure the U.S. reaps the economic benefit of global leadership in the field.

We in Congress have a responsibility to ensure this effort is a success and that our tax dollars are used effectively. If we burden local governments and industry partners with regulatory requirements and long review timelines, we risk wasting billions in taxpayer funding and weakening our competitive advantage over our adversaries.

The CHIPS and Science Act includes "guardrails" for protecting investments in semiconductor manufacturing, new research security measures, and other provisions that, once fully implemented, will make it harder for adversarial nations to compete with U.S. companies.

I hope today's hearing will provide valuable insight into the implementation of the CHIPS and Science Act, as well as an update on NIST's continued role in strengthening U.S. scientific innovation and competitiveness.

NIST is one of our nation's oldest physical science laboratories. In 1901, Congress established the agency to support U.S. industrial competitiveness by improving measurement infrastructure, which at the time was lagging behind the capabilities of other nations.

Since then, NIST has served as “industry’s laboratory” to advance U.S. leadership in measurement science, standards, and technology to support U.S. competitiveness.

Today, serving as industry’s lab means prioritizing key research areas such as quantum information sciences, microelectronics, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence (AI).

Last year NIST released the AI Risk Management Framework—a set of guidelines required by the National AI Initiative, a bill by this Committee.

I would like to commend NIST for the transparent, bottom-up approach it used to develop this framework, which ensures this voluntary guidance is useful to the broad community of AI stakeholders. I expect NIST to continue to use this process as it develops additional guidance to help manage risks related to Generative AI.

NIST has been recognized as a leader in the AI space for quite some time. Decades of NIST R&D has served as the foundation for many AI advancements, and these capabilities are growing exponentially.

In October, the White House issued an Executive Order on “the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence,” tasking NIST with several new responsibilities to promote the development and deployment of safe and trustworthy AI.

I’m pleased to see the Administration acknowledging and applauding NIST’s expertise in this space. However, while mighty, NIST is a small agency, and its resources are spread exceptionally thin. I am concerned that some of these additional responsibilities may end up taking focus away from core NIST programs.

In addition, given the short timelines provided by the Administration in the E.O., NIST is under a lot of pressure to deliver and can’t afford to fumble. But this work should not be rushed at the expense of doing it right. I hope to hear your thoughts on addressing these challenges.

My opening statement only touches on a fraction of the work NIST does but I look forward to diving into all of it in today’s hearing. Again, I thank Dr. Locascio for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.

I now recognize the Ranking Member for her opening statement.