



# TASK FORCE ON AMERICAN INNOVATION

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Agilent Technologies  
Alliance for Science & Technology Research in America  
American Association for the Advancement of Science  
American Astronomical Society  
American Chemical Society  
American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering  
American Institute of Physics  
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American Statistical Association  
Applied Materials, Inc.  
ASME  
Association for Computing Machinery  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities  
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Center for Policy on Emerging Technologies  
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Semiconductor Industry Association  
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Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics  
Southeastern Universities Research Association  
TechAmerica  
TechNet  
Technology CEO Council  
Telecommunications Industry Association  
Texas Instruments Incorporated  
The Science Coalition

March 31, 2014

The Honorable Lamar Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Science, Space, and  
Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Eddie Bernice  
Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Science, Space, and  
Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Johnson:

On behalf of the members of the Task Force on American Innovation, an alliance of America's most innovative companies, leading research universities, and largest scientific societies, we are writing to express our strong concern with funding levels contained in the *Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology* (FIRST) Act (H.R. 4186), recently voted out of the Subcommittee on Research and Technology of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. The current version of the FIRST Act does not authorize adequate levels of investment in scientific research that are needed to close the nation's innovation deficit and sustain our global leadership position in science and innovation.

The Task Force is a strong advocate of strong investments in key federal agencies because of the critical importance of such investments to long-term economic growth and national prosperity. We have often expressed concern about the nation's fiscal challenges and made clear that the research funded by the federal government is essential to the economic growth we need to help address those challenges. The Task Force is particularly concerned by the funding levels included in the FIRST Act for the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). Under this legislation, funding for these agencies would not keep up with inflation or provide the investment in scientific research that this country needs.

The Task Force on American Innovation strongly supported the 2007 COMPETES Act, its reauthorization in 2010, and *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, the National Academies report that inspired the legislation. That is why the Task Force joined business and academic leaders and numerous other organizations in endorsing the [Guiding Principles for the America COMPETES Act Reauthorization](#) delivered to Capitol Hill in July of 2013. The FIRST Act, as currently written, falls short of these principles, and of the COMPETES Act itself.

The FIRST Act contains a number of other provisions that many Task Force members believe contradict or are inconsistent with the Guiding Principles referenced above. This letter focuses on research funding because that is our primary mission. We are not taking a specific collective position on other portions of the bill.

This Task Force was initiated by technology companies ten years ago based on a recognition that (1) federal funding of basic research was critical to the nation's long-term economic strength and national security; (2) federal research spending, particularly in the non-biomedical arena, was seriously lagging behind the nation's investment needs; and (3) these things were occurring at a time when rising economies around the world in Europe and especially in Asia were beginning to pour resources into research funding in an effort to close the gap with the United States and eventually supplant our global leadership role.

A decade later, we have the very same concerns, except that they are magnified by the continuing erosion of federal support for research and the increasing speed at which other countries are developing their own scientific capacities. The FIRST Act in its current form does little to close our innovation deficit or address the competitiveness threat. We are eager to work with you and your Committee to amend the legislation to provide sufficient funding to help achieve those ends.

Sincerely,

Task Force on American Innovation

CC: Members of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology