

## OPENING STATEMENT

**Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN)**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Science**

**Hearing: *NSF Role in K-12 Science and Math Education***

**May 3, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased we have been able to reach agreement, as we generally do, and are jointly convening this hearing to review NSF's role in Federal efforts to improve K-12 science, technology, engineering and mathematics education.

I know there is little difference between us on the high value we place on NSF as an engine to bring constructive change to science and math education in the Nation's schools.

Science education has been a major component of NSF's activities since the agency's creation over 50 years ago, and the Foundation has a widely acknowledged record of accomplishment in K-12 STEM education improvement.

I was frankly disappointed that the STEM education component of the President's American Competitiveness Initiative totally ignored NSF's potential contributions to STEM education reform. Instead, this initiative places all of the proposed activities at the Department of Education.

Not only does the President's competitiveness initiative ignore NSF, the Administration's overall FY 2007 budget request actually proposes cutting NSF's existing K-12 STEM education programs by 7%.

This is a proposed cut that is part of a request that otherwise seeks to double the overall NSF budget over 10 years. Moreover, the FY 2007 cut is on top of prior reductions that would lower funding for NSF's principal K-12 STEM education programs by 47% over three years.

The witnesses before the Committee this morning all have experience with NSF's education activities and can speak to their value with first-hand knowledge. I look forward to their observations and insights on the kinds of education programs NSF does well and on the factors that lead to successful outcomes.

There is a convergence of views by Congress and the Administration that STEM education improvement is one of the key factors in ensuring the Nation's future well being and economic competitiveness.

The American Competitiveness Initiative was proposed in the President's FY 2007 budget request, several bills have been introduced in the Senate, and I have introduced bills in the House, which are generally based on the recommendations of the recent report from the National Academies, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*.

There is a disagreement regarding priorities between the President's K-12 STEM education provisions and the *Gathering Storm* report's recommendations.

While both recommend about the same level of funding increases for FY 2007, the *Gathering Storm* report directs approximately 70% of the new funding for programs to improve the undergraduate education of new teachers and to increase substantially the professional development opportunities for current teachers, in order to raise their subject knowledge and teaching skills.

On the other hand, the President's initiative places approximately 70% of the new funding on development of math curriculum for elementary and middle school students.

I look forward this morning to hearing the views of our panelists on what ought to be the priorities for any new Federal initiative to improve K-12 STEM education and on the specific kinds of programs that would best implement those top priorities.

I cannot pretend that I do not have a preference in this set of choices. The *Gathering Storm* report states that "laying the foundation for a scientifically literate workforce begins with developing outstanding K-12 teachers in science and mathematics". I believe the report got it exactly right and has identified teachers as the first priority, a goal that can and must be achieved.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I want to acknowledge our witness, Judy Snyder, and her fellow teachers in the audience, who have come to Washington to receive the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. These are the men and women who serve with distinction on the front lines of K-12 science and math education.

As the son of two teachers, I admire the skill and dedication of these outstanding teachers and extend my warmest congratulations to each of them.

Mr. Chairman, I want to join you in welcoming all our witnesses this morning, and I yield back my time.