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"Measuring What Matters: Science, Standards, and Strategic Competition"
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DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Dr. Robert Atkinson

COVER PAGE

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

International Scientific Collaboration

In your testimony, you raised the need for joint research initiatives with allies.

Established entities such as the Defense Innovation Accelerator for North America, DIANA, engage the international academic community to collaborate on hard technological problems related to our collective defense.

However, this culture of scientific exchange is in jeopardy. In February, researchers at the National Institute of Standards & Technology were told that foreign nationals with established careers at the lab, including those from the European Union, would be required to leave their roles.

This policy was walked back following Congressional pushback but is just one example of how this administration is undermining international science collaborations with allies.

Question 1: **Dr. Atkinson, how can we better support international collaboration—both existing efforts like DIANA and new ones—to leverage the best-in-class research and advance the American scientific enterprise?**

DIANA is indeed a model that should be expanded to other areas.

Regarding foreign nationals working in the federal research enterprise, ensuring appropriate scrutiny for Chinese and other nationalities from U.S. adversaries makes eminent sense. Blocking allied researchers does not.

OSTP should take the lead in identifying barriers to greater international S&T collaboration with allies. This should include fast-track visas and streamlined J-1/H-1B treatment for STEM researchers and grad students from allied countries, with reciprocal arrangements so U.S. researchers get equivalent access.

In addition, Congress should make sure that federal grant-making agencies (NSF, DOE, NIH) have clear statutory authority to co-fund research with foreign counterpart agencies as a matter of course. Currently it happens by happenstance, with individual project-by-project MOUs. Standing joint-funding authority and pre-negotiated IP/publication frameworks with a short list of trusted allies (Five Eyes plus Japan, South Korea, key EU states) would let co-funded projects launch in months instead of requiring new negotiated terms each time. Of course, any partnerships with other nations should be more or less reciprocal where U.S. researchers and firms receive similar level of benefits as the foreign country researchers and firms.

In addition, the CFIUS/CUI/export-control regime needs to "whitelist" allied nations so that cooperative efforts are more easily streamlined.

Another key area is coordinating allied participation in international standards bodies (ITU, ISO, IEEE working groups) so the U.S. and allies aren't showing up separately and getting outmaneuvered by coordinated Chinese delegations in technical standards votes. While at its core the standers process should be industry-led and voluntary, there is a gap in coordination. NIST and relevant foreign standards agencies should help fill that gap.

DOE should formalize allied-researcher access to DOE national lab user facilities (light sources, supercomputing allocations, fabs) on the same reciprocal-access model as some existing bilateral science agreements, rather than case-by-case foreign national access review that can take months.

SENATOR LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER (D-DE)

1. **Dr. Atkinson, Congress has invested heavily in strengthening semiconductor supply chains after recognizing the risks of relying on foreign production.**
    a. **As quantum technologies mature, what lessons should we apply now to ensure the United States builds secure and resilient quantum supply chains before similar vulnerabilities emerge?**

The federal government was asleep at the switch when it came to tracking supply-chain vulnerabilities. This is largely because federal policy makers had adopted the globalist view that the entire world was evolving into a single integrated market governed by democracies.

Now they know better. So as a critical technology like quantum emerges, we cannot be left vulnerable again. To date many of the key vulnerabilities relate to Chinese rare earths (a vulnerability that was preventable with the introduction of a price floor on Chinese rare earth imports). As such, efforts to reduce dependencies on Chinese rare earths need to be accelerated.

At the same time, a federal agency, ideally the Department of Commerce, should convene major quantum players in the United States (researchers and companies) to assess other supply chain vulnerabilities and risks (e.g., an allied supplier is in a weak competitive position) and craft a strategy to address these. This will most likely take the form of at least a phased in ban on key Chinese inputs, coupled with support for U.S. production of these components.

2. **The United States is making significant investments in emerging technologies, but those investments will only succeed if we have a strong pipeline of scientists, engineers, technicians, and skilled workers to support them.**
    a. **Beyond increasing research funding, what are the most important actions Congress can take to strengthen America's quantum and broader STEM workforce over the next decade?**

ITIF has written a report on this issue titled "Mobilizing for Techno-Economic War, Part 4: Transforming Education and Workforce Policy." The key recommendation is to embrace more fundamental reforms. This issue has been discussed since the 1980s and very little has been accomplished. Simply encouraging kids to like science has not worked. We proposed a number of steps:

Congress should increase funding for the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act that provides formula grants to states. And states should be able to apply for matching grants to be used to expand technical education in high schools, including engineering courses (e.g., robotics) and maker spaces.

Land grant universities have lost their way and need to go back to focusing on “agricultural and mechanical arts.” As such, Congress should pass a third Morrill Act to incentivize state land grant universities to return to their original mission, including cutting non-science programs, and building build world-class, industry-grade labs to enable applied research and technical training for students.

We need more universities focused on particular industries such the SUNY Maritime College, Kettering University (for automotive engineering) and the Colorado School of Mines. To build on these, Congress should appropriate funds to the Department of Education to establish a competition to establish up to 10 industry- or technology-focused universities.

Finally, it’s not enough to just fund R&D in critical and emerging technology areas. We need to also fund curriculum development. This is what China is doing. In 2025, top universities, such as Tsinghua University, Peking University, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University, added 150 undergraduate places in emerging engineering fields such as AI, integrated circuits, and new energy. These specializations serve national strategy and align with emerging industries. Congress should ensure that NSF has adequate funding to establish an annual funding program for research universities (including land grant colleges) to establish new science and technology curricula in areas of national importance.