



## U.S. Congress renews America COMPETES Act

The U.S. House of Representatives joined the Senate in late December 2010 in passing the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010, which aims to boost the country's economic competitiveness by setting funding guidelines that increase federal support for science education and basic research.

"As Norm Augustine, chairman of the National Academies' *Gathering Storm* panel and former chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin said, in all the years he was an aircraft engineer and dealing

with trying to make an overweight aircraft fly, the solution was never to lop off an engine. Science funding is the engine of a knowledge-based economy. If we remove it, our economy will crash and burn," said Representative Bart Gordon (Dem-Tenn.), then chair of the House Committee on Science and Technology and author of the legislation. "If we are to reverse the trend of the last 20 years, during which our country's technological edge in the world has diminished, we must make the investments necessary today. More than half of our economic growth since World War II can be attributed to development and adoption of new technologies. These investments are the path toward sustainable economic recovery and growth and the path toward prosperity for the next 50 years."

The Senate passed the reauthorization act unanimously on December 17th and the House passed it by a bipartisan vote of 228 to 130 on December 21st.

First passed in 2007, the act is based on the recommendations of the National Academies' report *Rising Above the Gathering Storm*, which recommended investments to support basic research; improve science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education; and foster innovation.

In September, *Rising Above the Gathering Storm, Revisited: Rapidly Approaching Category 5* was released. The updated report highlights progress that has been made in the past five years,

including enactment of the America COMPETES Act, but underscores that the U.S. competitive position in the world now faces greater challenges and that research investments are even more critical today. The report urges reauthorization of COMPETES.

The reauthorized America COMPETES Act continues to double the authorized funding for the National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy's Office of Science over 10 years, which will end in Fiscal Year 2013.

Under the new COMPETES law, Department of Energy laboratories will be partners in this effort in several ways, including "adopting" schools to strengthen their math and science capability. The new law also extends programs that strengthen the skills of math and science teachers and encourages mathematicians and scientists to become teachers.

Senator Jeff Bingaman (Dem-New Mexico), chair of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, said, "When we first passed America COMPETES three years ago, it helped us create a path to ensuring that we can retain our competitive edge in the global economy. Given the difficult economic climate we've been facing for the past few years, I believe it is more important than ever for us to invest in math and science. Extending the America COMPETES Act will help keep us on track—in research and in education—so that we can create the jobs of the future."

Bingaman, Senator Lamar Alexander (Rep.-Tenn.) and then-Senator Pete Domenici (Rep.-New Mexico) were part of a core bipartisan group that began the push for passage of a U.S. competitiveness bill several years ago.

President Obama signed the bill on January 4, 2011.



Representative Bart Gordon (Dem-Tenn.), chair of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science and Technology in 2010, testifies on behalf of the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010.

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