

Holt Helped Write Bill That Would Invest in Research and Development, Strengthen Math and Science Education

(Washington, D.C.) – Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12), a scientist and educator, today joined a majority of the House of Representatives to pass the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act, legislation that would strengthen U.S. scientific and economic leadership through investments in research and development, innovation, and education. In 2005, Holt served on an Innovation Taskforce, convened by Nancy Pelosi, which helped write the original America COMPETES Act. Prior to today's 262-150 vote, Congressional Republicans twice blocked passage of the legislation. The Senate must still pass the bill.

"It shouldn't take three votes to pass legislation to support the research vital to long term economic growth," Holt said. "If half of economic growth in the last half century is attributable to technological developments and innovations, then we can't afford to presume that U.S. leadership in innovation is a given. If we intend to lead the global economy, we must tend to our innovation infrastructure, as this bill does."

The bill would put basic research programs—the Department of Energy Office of Science, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs—on a path toward doubling funding over ten years. The bill would authorize programs like Innovative Technology Federal Loan Guarantees, which address the immediate needs of small- and medium-sized manufacturers to access capital to become more efficient and stay competitive. The bill would create Regional Innovation Clusters to leverage collaboration and communication between businesses.

The bill also includes authorization of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy and Energy Innovation Hubs to help advance the U.S.'s transition to a clean energy economy and to support the growth of new sectors in the economy, and the jobs that come with them. Additionally, the bill would expand and strengthen STEM education programs at all levels of education.

Holt included two amendments to the bill, including one that would require the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to submit to Congress a national competitiveness and innovation strategy. The strategy must include suggested legislative and executive branch actions and a proposal for metric-based evaluation of improvements in U.S. competitiveness and innovation.

“We have the tools and resources to lead the world in science and technology, but we cannot remain complacent as other nations race to the top. We need to know what is working and what needs improvement. We need to understand how we can reallocate our resources to improve efficiency and productivity. And we need to be able to measure whether our actions are having a positive effect,” Holt said. “Our competitors already have comprehensive, coordinated national strategies for improving their economic competitiveness through innovation. We should too.”

More than 750 business, research, and academic organizations have endorsed the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Business Roundtable, the Council on Competitiveness, the Association of American Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, the National Venture Capital Association, TechAmerica, the Biotechnology Industry Organization, and the American Chemical Society.

Last year, Holt helped lead the effort to include nearly \$22 billion of new funding for science research and facilities in the Economic Recovery Bill, including \$10 billion for the National Institutes of Health, \$3 billion for the National Science Foundation, and \$2 billion for the Department of Energy’s Office of Science. Universities and research institutions have used the funding to support scientific discovery and facility construction and upgrades. In New Jersey, Rutgers has received \$42.5 million, Princeton University has received \$27 million, and the Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory has received \$15.6 million.

Research funding supports the repair of outdated research labs, the manufacture of new scientific instruments, the education of bright graduate students, and the acceleration of projects that save energy and create new sources of energy. All of these projects provide jobs not just to scientists but to research assistants, electricians who wire labs, technicians who run instruments, and construction workers who renovate the buildings.

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