

Yesterday evening, Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) joined The Rachel Maddow Show on MSNBC to discuss the promise of federal R&D for creating new jobs. Excerpts from the conversation follow below, and you can [watch the full clip online](#). (Rep. Holt joins the segment at about the 5:17 mark.)



“The lesson is that research and development pay off. They pay off big – not just in nifty devices, not just in better understanding of our universe, but really in dollars and cents and jobs. It is our seed corn, it is the engine for innovation; you can describe it various ways.”

“[The return on R&D] is huge. You never know exactly what it’s going to be, which is why sometimes it is hard to sustain the support for it. And in fact over the last four decades, the federal investment in research... as measured as a percentage of our gross domestic product has fallen by about two-thirds. Defense has stayed pretty flat during that time, so what it means is that civilian R&D has fallen quite a bit. The slashers in Washington, the budget-slashers are saying, ‘Well, but the private industry has grown during that period.’ But not enough to make up for the loss in federal spending, and furthermore, the private industry... just doesn’t do sometimes as well or the same things that have been done with federal support.”

“The Defense Department has maintained a research budget and is one of the principal research funders for breast cancer, for ovarian cancer, for prostate cancer. It is one of the biggest funders for computer science and engineering research. So there are a lot of other things that come out of Defense. It is probably not the most efficient way to improve people’s lives because some of that research is kept secret. If scientists can’t communicate freely, they can’t be as innovative. So the lessons that we can learn from defense research and development are limited, but they’re real.”

“Overall we’re investing only about a percent of our gross domestic product in research. Other countries set a goal of two or three percent. They sometimes meet that goal and sometimes fall short, but we’re far short of that.”