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A Congressional Perspective:

THE HONORABLE BART GORDON (D-TN)
Chairman of the House Committee on Science and Technology
U.S. House of Representatives

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P R O C E E D I N G S

Our last speaker is Congressman Bart Gordon. The Congressman represents the 6th District in the middle of Tennessee. He was first elected to Congress in 1984. He's one of those legislators who loves to describe himself as a problem solver. By that he means he likes to actually find solutions that solve problems. Such a novel concept here in Washington, D.C.

From his start in Congress he's risen to chair the House Committee on Science and Technology. This will be his last year on Capitol Hill because he already has announced his retirement. I guess by definition that makes you a statesman -- a retiring politician.

But he already has had a huge success just a couple weeks ago when the House passed the America Competes Act. That bill is designed to improve U.S. scientific leadership, increase support for basic research, create jobs for small and medium sized businesses, and strengthen regional economies through regional innovation clusters.

So, I want to thank you for your tremendous leadership on that legislation, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the Senate will appreciate the wisdom of all of your hard work in that area.

So, please join me in welcoming Congressman Bart Gordon to the Brookings Institution. (Applause)

MR. GORDON: Thank you, Darryl. Twenty-six years have been a pretty good run, and so I'm grateful to have had that opportunity.

Part of the jurisdiction of the Science and Technology Committee is oversight of and reauthorization of NASA, and NASA clearly is a great inspiration for our youth in what we're talking about here today.

Let me first thank the Brookings Institute for really putting on this important seminar and for -- I know you've had some interesting panels already this morning. I feel honored to be a part of those.

And I want to thank Darryl, too, for your kind introduction. I have to say it was an improvement on one I received from a senior senator from Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, recently. Lamar and I have been working together on a project and he asked me to come over to the Senate

and bring them up to date. And he introduced me by saying, this is my friend Bart Gordon -- this really did happen. He's the dean of our Tennessee congressional delegation. But then he quickly added, dean doesn't mean he's the smartest, just means he's been here the longest. (Laughter)

But I do know that I am -- or at least smart enough to know that it's not a very good place to be between you and lunch. And so, also I have an appointment with the Speaker shortly after 1:00 to talk about really some technology for cleanup in the Gulf and research for future mitigation. So, I'm going to try to be brief here today.

But the charge that I was given was to outline concrete steps that the United States should take to improve the climate for science and technology innovation. And this is important, because 50 percent of the U.S. economic growth since the World War II can be attributed directly to the adoption and adaptation -- or rather, the development and adoption of new technologies.

So the path forward is really simple. Research and education lead to innovation. Innovation leads to economic development and good-paying jobs, and the revenue pays for more research. So my message is really let's stop talking about it and let's have some action.

I have been to seminar after seminar, meeting after meeting about, you know, what do we need to do for the future for technology, for our international competitiveness. Well, we know what to do. It's time to act upon that.

Now, rising above the gathering storm, diagnose a problem, and gave us a remedy. America Competes is the blueprint, so we must move forward with its reauthorization and then future funding.

Now let me -- this is not an intelligence test because if it was I'd probably fail. But just -- I want to know, how many of you have a fairly good understanding of the -- rising above the gathering storm? Raise your hand if you do. Okay. And then if you have a fairly good understanding of the American Peace Act, raise your hand. Okay.

Well, this is a very informed group, so let me just -- for those of you that didn't know quite as much let me give you just a real quick primer. In 2005, I asked the National Academies of Science to do a report on competitiveness in America in the 21st century. The report really was pretty grim. They said that there were almost 7 billion people in the world, half of those that are

working make less than $2 a day. Which means that in our global economy that my nine-year-old daughter and her generation -- your kids and grandkids -- could very well inherit a national standard of living less than their parents unless we take action. And basically that was built around improving our science and technology, STEM education, basic research, and at that time -- this was before the oil shock -- they recommended that we must become more energy independent and gave us recommendations to that.

So being the good legislator that I am, I plagiarized their work with their permission. You can understand that -- which actually was a compliment to them -- and put that together in the Americans Compete Act. So let me give you an overview of specifically what this bill does.

The Competes Act aims to maintain and to strengthen our nation's global economic competitiveness by improving science, technology, engineering, and math -- or STEM education -- at all levels so that all students are prepared for a highly technical, high-paying jobs of the future. This includes provisions to expand and strengthen STEM education, training and broadening participation programs at two-year, four-year, as well as at the graduate level.

Unfortunately, students are not performing up to their potential, especially when it comes to international standards. According to a program for international students' assessment result, U.S. students compared with contemporaries -- or they compared U.S. students with their contemporaries in 49 industrial countries. In that we ranked 19th in science and 24th in mathematics. And in other studies we do even worse. And what's even worse is that the longer we're in school, the worse we do in terms of comparing with other countries.

And one way we try to address that -- and the issue really goes back to -- and this is -- my mother and father are both teachers, so I'm not -- this is not a bad comment on teachers. But what we found at that time was about 50 percent of our math teachers had neither a degree or a certification to teach math. Almost 90 percent of our physical science teachers had neither, again, a certification or a degree to teach that subject. And it's hard to be able to teach and inspire on a subject, no matter how good a teacher you might be if you don't have that core understanding.

And really my father is a good example of that. My father was a -- excuse me -- was a farmer. He went to World War II. And when he came back, like many of his generations, he

went back to school on the GI Bill. He wanted to be a better farmer, so he got a degree in agriculture. I come along and my mother loses her job, and so he has to get a second job. And so he applied to teach school, and he received the last teaching job at Smyrna High School, which was the high school in our county. And so since he was the last one hired, he was required to teach high school science and coach the girls' basketball. And I'm not sure which he knew the least about. (Laughter)

And so 60 years later, basically we're doing it the same. And so we have to have, again, an increased corps of teachers that better understand those core subjects.

And so what we did, rather than try to do a lot of new things we scaled out some existing programs that we know that works. One of those within the National Science Foundation is the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program. It was modeled after a You Teach program which was at the University of Texas; it's been there for more than 10 years. And Noyce really rewards the universities for bringing together their STEM programs and their education programs, so that you have to put together a program that double tracks you. And it also provides scholarships for those students that will go into either math or science and education, and agree to teach for five years. And the five years is important because we find that half of teachers leave in those first five years. So, we're scaling out the Noyce program.

In addition to that there are good teachers that are already there that, again, that need that core work. And so we are expanding stipends to bring those teachers back into school in the summers so they can get their -- either their certification in that area or hopefully AP or advancements. Those are very important.

The Competes authorization also includes programs like Innovation Technology and federal loan guarantees that will address the immediate needs of small and medium sized manufacturers to retool for new innovative products and manufacturing innovation.

The bill will strengthen regional economies through programs like regional innovation clusters. These clusters will support regional economies by leveraging partnerships and communication between businesses and other entities. The bill also includes a reauthorization of the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy, or ARPAE. ARPAE is modeled after DARPA when

the Department of the Defense -- where the Internet was developed, GPS, and many other breakthroughs. It will identify and fund high risk, high reward transformational energy research, not just incremental improvement. That won't get us -- we can't get from here to there in terms of energy independence with incremental improvements. We have to have some transformational type of technology and we have to have a program that will reward us. As we move to a cleaner, more efficient, and more balanced energy portfolio we should not depend -- or trade our dependency on foreign oil for foreign technology. That's why ARPAE is so important to us.

Competes will also foster innovation by directing the National Science Foundation to invest at least 5 percent of the research budget into high-risk, high-reward research. The bill will continue to keep funding on our non-medical basic research programs at a 10-year doubling. That's a very modest doubling, but in these economic times it's a difficult thing to do.

Basic research allows us to discover new technologies that will help maintain our nation's economic strength. Even if scientists don't necessarily know what they're looking for or what they're going to find, it's important that we gain this knowledge. Breakthrough in quantum mechanics contributed to the creation of the iPod, for example, and no one could have predicted that that would be the outcome there.

The legislation also includes support for early career researchers through fellowships for graduate students and postdoctoral research. The legislation also includes a provision to help researchers bring the results of basic research over the valley of death, and commercial application by awarding grants to help universities develop tools and resources required to connect new science discoveries to practical uses.

And we found that the public-private partnership can bring out the best in both. Public investment helps the private sector take risk they might not otherwise and speeds the pace of innovation. And the private sector involvement helps to ensure that new technologies get to the market.

In conclusion, the America Competes Act was designed to bolster basic research, spur innovation, create jobs in the 21st century economy, and to create a workforce for those jobs. I'm very pleased that, as was mentioned earlier, that my colleagues in the House, after a little bit of

razzle-dazzle, we were able to finally get a reauthorization of the Competes last week. Now it's on to the Senate, where we have been really in close contact with them. Our hope is that we're going to see a bill out of their committee by the end of this month.

And my former colleague in the House, Harry Reid, I'm going to be groveling with him to give us a little bit of time in July to get this passed. We then, hopefully, will do somewhat of a pre-conferencing so it won't be too different and we can get something done before the August recess.

But as they say, you know, the tree doesn't fall if you don't hear it. Then it's going to be difficult but important that we get funding in the fall. It's going to be important for all of you to join in with this, so I hope that you will continue through as individuals, through your organizations, whatever it might be to keep pressure on the House as well as to promote the Senate and moving forward, and then our appropriators in the fall.

So, with that let me -- that overview, I'd like to really hear any kind of questions. But, more particularly, any suggestions and answers that you might have. And we'll just have a discussion here before we have to leave and before your stomachs growl too much.

Yes, sir.

MR. MANTI: I'm Dale Manti from EPA's Office of Research. ARPAE is an exciting program.

MR. GORDON: It is.

MR. MANTI: Up until now it hasn't had much of the other E, the environmental consideration. How do you see energy and environment playing out in the America Competes previsions?

MR. GORDON: Well, I think that -- well, first of all, I'm going to just say I'm on my way to talk with the Speaker. And then tomorrow we have a hearing in our committee concerning technologies for mitigation within the environmental concerns in the oil spill. So we are on that process.

I think Competes is going to help in a variety of ways. Certainly ARPAE, as we become more energy independent, is going to have to be clean alternative energies, which is going

to -- again, I think will help us in that regard. As I mentioned earlier, we don't want to trade our dependency on foreign oil for foreign technology. And we've got to get out in front on that.

So I think as we come forward with new clean types of energy it's going to help the environment. I think as we go into basic research, we don't know what the outcome is going to be, but clearly there's going to be some outcomes that are going to be important for us. Nanotechnology, I think, is an area, synthetic biology. These are a couple of areas where we're going to have to lead the world and where we can really have some breakthroughs.

For example, with nanotechnology, in terms of combining nanotechnology with solar it could be much more deployable. Synthetic biologies, we might have algae and other kinds of elements that can help produce alternative energies. But we need to make sure that as we do this that we're looking into the health and safety issues. We do not want to have another Monsanto kind of situation where they were introducing the genetically altered grains in Europe before there was good science and before they were ready to accept it.

So, a part of Competes is something called the National Nanotechnology Initiative, which really is a model for what we've done in solar and water in a variety of different areas. So I'll just tell you quickly.

In nanotechnology, the federal government invests about a billion-eight in that. There are 15 different agencies that are in into the research area, spending money on research, another 10 that are looking at regulation, things of this nature. And so what we did is we have an umbrella that better coordinates this research. One way we can make -- we can get more bang for our buck is to coordinate, so we want to do that.

The other thing that we want to do is make sure that we bring in a private sector advisory group to tell us what are the breakthroughs they need. Not to dictate, but we need to know, you know, what do they need. And then finally, what are the workforce needs? We can have all this new technology, but if we don't have a workforce that's ready to go, then we've got a problem. So what do we do there?

So, we've done this in a variety of areas. Nano is one of them. But the other component of that is that we have put a mandate that a lot of the research goes to health and safety

issues. Not only because if something isn't health and safety we want to get it out of the way, but if it is we want to prepare the public for that.

So I think that the environment is always going to be a beneficiary of basic research and more research.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. WAGNER: Maggie Wagner from the German Embassy.

Could you tell us a little bit more about these regional innovation clusters, and what kind of incentives would be provided for the different stakeholders to form these clusters to generate innovation?

MR. GORDON: Well, we're going to have -- it gets a little confusing. We're going to have hubs, clusters, and a variety of things.

There's something called also "frontier centers," where we are going to incentivize financially a variety of frontier centers where they will be looking at a specific breakthrough that's necessary to sort of get from A to B in some of the -- particularly in the energy areas. Hubs will be longer term where we'll bring together -- whether it's universities, the public sector, the private sector in a broader type of issues, maybe solar, in general.

There'll also be incentives for communities to bring together the assets and communities to be able to, you know, take on different challenges. So it'll approach it in different ways.

But since you're from the German embassy, let me also make this suggestion, too. I just got back from an inter-parliamentary dialogue with some of the EU parliamentarians. And I'll repeat what I said there or generalize what I said there, and a variety of other places. When it comes to really the some of the major scientific breakthroughs that are going to be necessary -- particularly in the energy area -- we can't do it alone. When the United States went to the moon, the first time in the Apollo mission it was all U.S.-financed, U.S. intellectual power. Now we see the model of the International Space Station where it's a combination of variety of countries both contributing resources, financial, and intellectual.

And some of the really tough environmental and energy issues -- like coal, for

example -- the United States, China, Poland, there's a variety of countries that are going to be dependant on coal for a long time, whether we like it or not. And so we're going to have to have new technologies in the use of coal, one of which is carbon capture and sequestration. So, we're going to have to look, I think, at international demonstration, international collaboration in that area.

There's already the ITER reactor in terms of fusion there in France. You know, we have a combination. The Hadron Supercollider in Sweden. I think nuclear energy is going to be, you know, again, like it or not, a part of our future. But we need to have the next generation of nuclear energy, where we're looking at new designs that help us to be able to get reactors built much less costly. We've got to have new types of reprocessing so that we can do away with proliferation problems and which in turn will make storage easier in the future. Once again, I think it's going to take international collaboration.

There are those areas where first to market is important, but in terms of those big, expensive breakthrough type projects -- particularly in the area of energy -- we're going to need to do this on an international basis and we're working on legislation now that will really help coordinate our international collaboration here in this country. But we need to reach out to other nations that have our similar concerns. And quite frankly, that have similar workforce issues that have our similar type of, you know, wages. So, I think that's going to be an important part of these breakthroughs.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. STERN: Thank you. Paula Stern, originally from Memphis. And I'm very proud to say from Tennessee. And I thank you so much for your statesmanship.

My question relates to your discussion about education and the great emphasis that you have in your bill. And it relates a bit to a conversation that started earlier before you came when we were talking about STEM education, women, and diversity.

MR. GORDON: Yeah.

MS. STERN: And the degree to which -- and you mentioned advanced placement courses in your opening remarks. The fact that there is fewer women participating in computer science studies in the high school level and, in fact, there's just less computer science testing going on, and as you know, there's one less advanced placement exam being offered as a result, reflecting

this diminution.

So, my question is, the degree to which your legislation decomposes the STEM field to recognize the particular problems that we're having in the curriculum, particularly for diverse populations, but for all, boys and girls, in computer science and the degree to which we are addressing that particular piece of the STEM demand for workforce that is trained in these areas.

MR. GORDON: Okay. Let me first just -- on a side note. I don't know whether you had a chance to read the New York Times this morning --

MS. STERN: Yes.

MR. GORDON: -- but they had a very interesting subject on that. It hits me somewhat personally. I have a nine-year-old daughter.

MS. STERN: Yes.

MR. GORDON: And, you know, to say that she hates math, I don't know, you know, but she just grimaces about math. And so I -- you know, I was sort of worrying about that. And then they took a test the other day, and I'm really not supposed to tell this, but she had the highest score, you know, in math. But she will -- you know, but she will just grimace at it. And you know, unfortunately, I guess I somewhat reinforce that and I say, you know, I'll -- like, you know, what are we going to do tonight? Well, let's have some fun; let's do some math, or whatever. (Laughter) So, but that is a real problem.

And our committee has been sensitive for that for -- really, for some time. When we start talking about STEM education, STEM professionals really coming out of there in the workforce, you know, it's sort of a cliché. The -- you know, the cleanest energy is that you don't use. The best place that we can make bumps in our workforce in the STEM area is women and minorities. They are the most underrepresented. And so just by bumping them up, you know, again, that's the best bang for our buck. And so we have put -- not just in this bill, but in the past, we have put in a variety of incentives for women and minorities. We have not calibrated that just to computer sciences. You know, it is, you know, in the broader STEM fields. But we certainly need to do that.

And what we're doing in this reauthorization, which I think is important, is, you know, we've been casting a lot of bread on the water, but we want to find out, so what works? And so we

are having, you know -- now we've got all our information out there. We want to know which ones of these programs that we've set up are really demonstrating that they work. And so let's put more money in those and then, you know, we'll let the others sort of atrophy out.

MS. ORCHOWSKI: Thank you. This is kind of a good segue. I'm Peggy Orchowski. I'm congressional correspondent for the Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education.

I (inaudible) in several stories recently on minority engineers and scientists who are saying when they get to the graduate level, they're not getting places, especially research grants. They're not getting postdoc fellowships, they're not getting chances to work with professors because -- and this is the politically sensitive thing -- almost all of those kind of grants that are funded by American public money are going to foreign students. And here we go with, well, the foreign students are the best and the brightest. Are they really better and brighter than our kids or they're paying three and four times more tuition and some institutions, which those grants cover? Is that an advantage they have? Do they have an advantage having majored in math since about the fifth or sixth grade?

You know, is there a level playing field for our minorities? And maybe there are universities -- including my own in California -- where some departments, including computer engineering, all the research grants and all the teaching assistants' grants are all given to foreign students. In fact, they're all from one nationality at one university.

So, there is a feeling among minorities that engineers that they get to this level and then there's not a level playing field for them. And maybe one or two grants out of a department should go to an American?

MR. GORDON: Well, what we have done -- again, in the reauthorization it's not -- there are incentives and requirements with -- from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy to partner with Historically Black Universities as well as the minority serving Hispanic and minority. So, there are specific requirements for that.

But let me -- I want to -- again, as I said earlier, we -- I want to encourage that. And that's where we can get our bump up. But also, I want to encourage the best and brightest from all over the world. And not only to come here, I want them to stay. And, I mean, I wish that we could --

you know, every time that you get a -- you know, a math or a science advanced degree that we could give you a green card, you know, to go with that if it -- you know, you demonstrate that you had a job here. So, you know, we need a big tent. And so -- but I think you'll find -- and we spend a lot of time, and it was a difficult political issue, tell you the truth. But we were able to breakthrough on all of this.

You will find that I think both the Hispanic Caucus and the CBC are pleased with what we have done in that area. But, you know, again, this is -- I'm not trying to kick others out of bed here, you know? You know, we can provide those incentives for all.

MS. ORCHOWSKI: It's sensitive, but American boys aren't going in -- and now we're talking white boys, white boys and girls -- aren't going into engineering either. And you know, maybe they're not feeling they have the opportunities that foreign students hold.

MR. GORDON: Well, I think what you're going to find is that there was a generation of engineers that were inspired by Sputnik and our space program. And you're seeing that generation start to really -- to sort of -- to atrophy out.

I think that the clean energy challenge is going to be the next Sputnik moment, and I think it's going to really inspire a lot of all colors and all sexes to want to be involved here. And we need to provide the platform for them to do so.

I mean, this is about sustainability for the -- really, for the world. And you'll see the same sort of thing, I think, in water and in other areas. And we are -- it was interesting. We have an opening on the Science Committee. We've moved some folks around and so we're hiring another lawyer. And when we had this previous one, I really wanted to get some really bright folks that we could multi-train, they could go into other areas. And so I said, you know, we need to have the same kind of model.

And we were concerned. You know, here we are, the little science committee. You know, can we keep bringing in, you know, these folks? Well, it's extraordinary the caliber of people that have -- you know, that have applied that are leaving. I mean, we're looking at one woman that, you know, was Stanford and then to Harvard. She's leaving a law firm. She wants to come with us because she wants to get into public policy.

So I think, you know, we have that opportunity now. We have to provide, you know,

the platforms to bring them in.

Yes.

SPEAKER: Thank you so much. Continuing the controversial theme of immigration, I actually teach at George Mason. It's one of the most diverse universities in the United States, and immigration is a sensitive topic for me because I am an immigrant myself.

So when we talk about STEM education, the majority of students, I believe, in this country -- in Stanford, MIT, and other universities -- are international students. What does it mean for them? It means that after they graduate they have to either get employed via H-1B work visa with the American employers or they have to leave this country or they can stay in the academia, which is also challenging. And talking about postdocs, for postdocs it's for -- it's challenging because of salary requirements to actually stay on the H-1B.

And we all know the limitations of the immigration policies in this country and how the first component, education, is being fulfilled. How these students receive financial aid, research assistantships and teaching assistantships to stay here and to get the education. And then they have to struggle to stay and actually get assimilated, get utilized, and contribute to innovation in this country.

And my question is about the new initiative that was brought by Senators Kerry and Lugar. It's called StartUp Visa EB-6, to actually encourage innovation and use immigration as a medium of innovation and actually allow entrepreneurs in mostly probably high-tech industry to create their companies, attract U.S.-based innovation, and stay in this country and contribute.

So, what is the link between your committee and probably -- and the immigration reform? And how does this EB6 proposal -- and possibly other proposals -- feed into your innovation agenda?

Thank you.

MR. GORDON: You know, I have seen statistics -- I don't have them at my fingertips now -- about the number of jobs that have been created in this country by immigrants. Whether it's, you know -- whether it's Google, Intel, you can go on and on and on and on about different -- so, its -- you know, we benefit ourselves.

9-11 was a tremendous barrier and threw up a big block to a lot of our best and brightest being able to stay here. I remember shortly or some time after that the head of the Irish college system came to see me. And he really sort of summed it up when that -- he said, you know, for a long time we didn't even try to compete for those kind of students because, you know, we all knew that they were going to the U.S. so we just conceded that. 9-11 comes along; you throw up barriers, so by default we start getting some of them. And then, well, we said great. So then we start competing for them. And then on top of that you're finding that -- you know, India and China are providing incentives for their own folks to stay there or to come back.

So, again, the -- I think it was -- you know, there is an entrepreneurial spirit in the United States that has allowed these best and brightest to come in and to prosper and they help, you know, everyone to prosper.

To try to get to immigration and our link, to some extent, our committee specifically more is a cheerleader for what's going on. And we had been having hearings and have on trying to -- the process of students going back and be able to come back and all that. But the immigration is a delicate issue right now. For lack of better term, let's talk about what we might call "high-end immigration." Again, those best and brightest or those folks that are coming over to go to our schools. Then you have lower kind of immigration, those people that aren't coming here to go to school, but just coming here to make a better life.

You really have -- I mean, you know, they bring also an energy to this country and work ethic that we need. And -- but it -- particularly in a downturn economic situation, every mother and every father has to have some reason why their child is not getting, you know, the best job. And so you have to blame it on somebody. So right now it's -- you know, it's always been illegal immigrants. I guess whether it was Jewish, whether it was Irish, whether it was Italians, you know, now by and large it's Hispanics. And so you're not going to be able to get a high-end immigration kind of solution. The low-end folks are going to hold that hostage.

So, we're going to have to work together. You know, some of that is starting now. But I think it's important that we did -- I saw, interestingly, the -- in the -- read some of the papers at home in the morning. And the Nashville Tennessean had a story this morning where the head of the

Southern Baptist Convention was promoting an immigration path now, which I thought was good. And hopefully, they'll be -- again, we'll be able to have this synergy and get something done. But you're not going to have a high-end immigration until there is a low immigration solution.

Yes, ma'am.

MS. RIZER: Thank you. Mindy Rizer from the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area.

In terms of international work, I wonder if you and your committee have thought at all about links, resources, synergy with the work of UNESCO, with the work of the UN University which has nodes all over the world. Some of the interesting work of the UN agencies in terms of work in science and technology and international exchange. I wonder how that figures into the broader picture of international collaboration on science and technology.

MR. GORDON: You know we have not done that, in all honesty, in that specific area. What we're trying to do -- there was -- and it still is, it's just become dormant during the Bush years, but there is an agency within OSTP that coordinates the State Department, coordinates the Energy Department, and all the various international collaboration in terms of research, education, those sorts of things. We want to see that reactivated. We want to see that sort of coordination come about, again. And certainly the UN would be a part of that.

I think we have to recognize that we are in a period of limited resources, so let's try to, you know, spend that money in a more collaborative way that we then can get more bang for our buck. But we have not looked at the UN specifically.

Any other suggestions or questions? Well, if not let me, again, maybe just close by saying this is an important issue. I'm glad to see that you're here and that you're focused; do more than just keep talking about it. You know, let's act upon it. You know, it may not be perfect, but it's pretty close to being perfect. But we have the America Competes Act. It is on the table now; it has passed the House.

You know, we had -- you know, I thought -- well, I'll just -- I want to give you an example how tough things are right now and why, really, we need you to help. When I first introduced the America Competes Act, we passed it within the first six months of -- in 2007, with the

new Congress that came in. We've got something like 367 in the House. Lamar Alexander, to his credit, got 68 co-sponsors and it passed unanimously in the Senate.

Now, I told him the other day that if he can do that again, I am going to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize and special envoy to the Mid East. (Laughter)

So, here we come back again for the reauthorization. It failed the first time in the House because there was a motion to recommit that combined it with pornography. You know, it was just an effort to try to, you know, to beat it. And people didn't want to vote for pornography, so it went down.

So, then I bring it back on suspension. Suspension you have to have two-thirds. And again, 367 members voted for this, you know, the previous time. We couldn't do that. I tried to -- and I guess part of it was my fault in trying to do it the right way rather than do it the quick way. We had 48 hearings; we had 3 bipartisan subcommittee markups, and a bipartisan full committee markup. The first hearing that we had, we had Donahue from the Chamber of Commerce, Castellani from the Business Roundtable, as well as Engler -- Governor Engler from the National Association of Manufacturers come and talk about how important it was.

So I thought, well, you know, this ought to help us, you know, with those folks that, you know, aren't as interested. We had, you know, almost 1,000 different companies, universities that endorsed it. But in this environment even that wasn't enough. So we had to do again this little razzle-dazzle that got the pornography thing out of it.

So, you know, do not wait for the perfect year. There may be some (inaudible) you won't. We're going to -- we have our hands full trying to get this passed. So you as an individual, you within whatever organizations that you might belong to, need to be promoting this bill again in the House to buck them up. We've got to get through the Senate, and then the funding.

Again, thank you for letting me spend some time with you. And I enjoyed being with you today. (Applause)

Bon appétit.

MR. WEST: Thank you, Congressman. That was terrific. I also appreciate our other speakers from this morning: Ruth Simmons, Eva Feldman, Mike Holston, and Rick Howard.

They were terrific in explaining their views on what they think needs to happen.

We have a buffet lunch out in the hallway, so please help yourself to some food. This closes our Taubman Forum, and we want to especially thank Al and Judy for all of their support. And thank all of you for coming.

Thank you very much. (Applause)

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