INNOVATION TASK FORCE PRAISES CONGRESSIONAL
INNOVATION INITIATIVES

The Task Force on the Future of American Innovation thanks Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and her colleagues for issuing “The Innovation Agenda: A Commitment to Competitiveness to Keep America #1.” It contains important ideas for promoting American innovation, including a significant increase in federal support for basic university-based research. Such research produces discoveries vital to our economic and national security and helps to educate the next generation of scientists and engineers.

We are encouraged that Congress is talking seriously about a subject crucial to the nation’s long-term economic and national security: how to bolster the American innovation engine in an increasingly competitive global marketplace. In addition to the House Democrats’ initiative, there are other important efforts under way by leaders in Congress, including:

- Rep. Frank Wolf’s efforts in the House Appropriations Committee to increase the federal investment in basic research;
- Legislation being developed by Senators John Ensign and Joe Lieberman to implement the recommendations contained in this year’s landmark report by the Council on Competitiveness;
- Legislation being developed by Senators Lamar Alexander and Jeff Bingaman responding to the recommendations contained in the recent National Academies’ “Rising Above the Gathering Storm” report; and

As leaders of this task force have frequently stressed, U.S. investment in the foundations of innovation – basic university research, education, and the availability of a highly trained workforce – is critical to our future competitiveness. While investment in basic research and workforce training has stagnated, nations from Western Europe to East Asia have accelerated their efforts to catch up, and surpass, the U.S. in the global race to develop new technologies, new industries, and high-value jobs. The United States need not cede our leadership position, if our leaders in Congress and the Administration take concrete steps to address deficiencies in national policy.
The two parties have now begun to engage in an important dialogue on these issues. It is time to develop a bipartisan blueprint from the best ideas on both sides of the political aisle and begin to construct an innovation system that meets the economic and national security challenges we will face well into the 21st century.

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The Task Force on the Future of American Innovation (www.futureofinnovation.org), a coalition of high-tech companies, business organizations, scientific societies, and higher education associations, was founded in 2004 to advocate greater federal investments for basic research in the physical sciences and engineering. The group focuses specifically on the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy Office of Science, the Department of Defense research budget, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology labs at the Department of Commerce.