Dear Colleague:

We are writing to ask you to cosponsor bipartisan legislation we plan to introduce soon that will help meet the challenge of ensuring America’s competitiveness in the 21st Century. The “National Innovation Act of 2005” (NIA) aims to make the necessary improvements in research, education of science and technology talent, and innovation infrastructure to allow the United States to maintain the global leadership it achieved in the last century. The NIA responds to the recommendations made in the National Innovation Initiative Report, Innovate America, circulated earlier this year by the Council on Competitiveness. The Council on Competitiveness is a distinguished, non-partisan group of leaders from industry and academia.

The NIA makes appropriate investments in research and development (R&D) to ensure that we revitalize government research in science and engineering as well as energize the entrepreneurial community. The NIA enhances our commitment to frontier research by doubling R&D funding for the National Science Foundation and by establishing the Innovation Acceleration Grants Program, which urges other government agencies to allocate a significant portion of their R&D efforts toward promising high-risk research projects in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. To further spur research investment by the private sector, the NIA makes permanent the research and experimentation tax credit. It is vital that these measures be implemented to encourage risk taking in research and development.

In addition, the NIA provides a framework for a national innovation education strategy because a dramatic increase in the number of highly skilled workers will be essential to maintaining our nation’s leadership in science and technology. Accordingly, the NIA will expand existing physical science and engineering scholarship and grant programs for graduate and undergraduate students. The NIA will also provide new training opportunities for such students. These new programs will provide graduates with technological and entrepreneurial skills that they will apply toward innovative improvements in the workplace.

Finally, the NIA strengthens our innovation infrastructure to enable innovation-based growth. Specifically, the NIA includes provisions to foster innovative American manufacturing R&D and to achieve corresponding productivity and efficiency gains that will keep our industry competitive in the world market.

We ask you to cosponsor the “National Innovation Act of 2005” to help our country secure the advances we need to maintain America’s competitiveness in the 21st Century. Attached is a brief summary document that highlights key provisions in the NIA. A section-by-section analysis of the bill is also available upon request. Please have your staff contact Jason Mulvihill for Senator Ensign at 4-5569 or David Yuvin for Senator Lieberman at 4-9846 by December 14, 2005, for more information or to become an original cosponsor of this legislation.

Sincerely,

JOHN ENSIGN
United States Senator

JOSEPH I. LIEBERMAN
United States Senator