INNOVATION TASK FORCE EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION LEGISLATION INTRODUCED BY SENATORS ALEXANDER, BINGAMAN, DOMENICI, MIKULSKI

Following is a statement by the Task Force on the Future of American Innovation on the PACE Acts, introduced by Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Pete Domenici (R-NM), and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) in response to the National Academies report, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.”

The Task Force on the Future of American Innovation applauds Senators Alexander, Bingaman, Domenici, and Mikulski for introducing the PACE Acts, a legislative package that responds to the landmark report by the National Academies, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm.” We particularly support their efforts to enhance the nation’s investment in basic, university-based research. PACE stands for Protecting America’s Competitive Edge, and this is exactly what we need to accomplish.

For three decades, the nation’s investment in research in the physical sciences and engineering has lagged behind what is needed to maintain America’s long-term economic and national security. Federally sponsored basic research produces discoveries that drive innovation, and innovation drives economic growth and supports national security. But today the nation’s global leadership is challenged by the extraordinary scientific and educational progress being made by emerging economies like China and India as well as by our own complacency.

The PACE Acts are designed to address this challenge. They complement other efforts in the Congress, including the Ensign-Lieberman National Innovation Act, which now is sponsored by 24 Senators, Representative Frank Wolf’s (R-VA) efforts to increase the federal investment in basic research, and the innovation agenda put forward by the House Democratic leadership.

The stage is now set for a major bipartisan federal initiative to ensure America’s global leadership in innovation and maintain our economic competitiveness and national security. It is our hope that the President will provide the leadership that is necessary to move this from introduced legislation to the reality of actual policy reforms and investments in research and education. We appreciate the attention he has already been paying to this issue, and we eagerly await his State of the Union message and FY07 budget.

# # #

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.