

(June 4, 2008) H.R. 5940, legislation reauthorizing the National Nanotechnology Initiative

Today, I rise in support of H.R. 5940, legislation reauthorizing the National Nanotechnology Initiative - known as the NNI.

I want to congratulate Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall for their hard work in crafting this legislation. I also want to acknowledge all of the Members of the Science and Technology Committee on both sides of the aisle for their contributions to this bill and for helping to move it expeditiously and unanimously through the Committee.

Nanotechnology, or the science and technology of building devices from single atoms and molecules, soon will impact nearly every sector of our economy. In just six years, the global market for nanoscale materials and products is expected to reach \$2.6 trillion and to be incorporated into 15 percent of the global manufacturing output. I firmly believe that nanotech represents ONE of the most important, if not THE most important, technological keys to improving our nation's future economic growth and improving our way of life.

The NNI has been effective in supporting productive, cooperative research efforts across a wide spectrum of disciplines. The Initiative has established a network of state-of-the-art national facilities that are conducting groundbreaking work in nanoscale research and development. These Centers have helped the U.S. maintain a strong presence in the development and expansion of nanotechnology, which has been vital to economic development and essential to the creation of innovative jobs leading to a stronger and more competitive America.

I am proud that my home state of Illinois is one of the leaders in nanotechnology research. Illinois boasts two national laboratories, numerous cutting-edge businesses, and some of the nation's preeminent research universities, such as my alma mater Northwestern University and the University of Illinois, which are conducting groundbreaking work in this field.

To keep the US ahead of other nations who are now making substantial investments in nanotech, this reauthorization makes 3 significant adjustments to the NNI.

First, it strengthens the planning and implementation of research on the environmental, health, and safety aspects of nanotechnology, ensuring that possible unintended impacts of nanotech products will not defeat the enormous promise of this technology. Not only is public safety paramount in its own right, but public confidence in these new technologies is also necessary for the success of nanotech industries.

Second, this bill requires the NNI to place increased emphasis on technology transfer; that is, moving basic research results out of the laboratory and into commercial products, materials, and devices. From my own experiences in Illinois with our national labs and research universities, I understand that technology transfer is not simple, but it is critical to ensuring that R&D investments serve the public.

Third, HR 5940 creates new nanotechnology education programs to attract secondary school students to science and technology studies and to help prepare the nanotechnology workforce of tomorrow. As a former teacher, I understand the importance of education in promoting the success of individual Americans and promoting the success of American innovation such as nanotechnology.

Mr. Speaker, as nanotechnology moves from a multi-billion to a multi-trillion dollar industry, there is great promise in store. But it is critical that we do all we can to help ensure that America leads the way in nanotech innovation. H.R. 5940 will keep the United States in a position to drive the development of nanotechnology and will go a long way toward ensuring that America reaps the benefits of our research investment.

I urge my colleagues to support passage of H.R. 5940.