

REP. DAVIS SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO "COMPETE"

December 21, 2010

Staggering unemployment remains at critical mass in many urban and rural areas across the country. As Congress continues to set forth policies to stimulate the economy, I stand in support of the America COMPETES Act. Our nation must maintain economic growth and to be competitive, U.S. companies must engage in trade, preserve market shares, and provide sustainable products, processes, and services. Scientific and technological advances can further economic growth because they contribute to the creation of new goods, services, jobs, and increased productivity. Scientific advances, government activity, and proper implementation all influence technological progress.

Our country is in need of innovative concepts and ideas to strengthen our economy domestically and internationally. The America COMPETES Act will increase the nation's investment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). COMPETES provides critical federal investment in science through research and education. I am pleased that the 111th Congress will reauthorize this law, and I am pleased that it contains some important elements to broaden the participation of groups of Americans who are under-represented in STEM fields, such as women and racial or ethnic minorities.

According to the Census Bureau, 39 percent of the population under the age of 18 is a racial or ethnic minority. Yet, in 2003, only 4.4 percent of U.S. science and engineering jobs were held by African Americans and only 3.4 percent by Hispanics. Further, women represent only a little more than one quarter of our science and technology workforce. Many experts maintain that the ability of the U.S. to produce enough scientists will fall far short unless we take strong action to develop the potential of women and minorities. Thus, broadening participation efforts are critical to meeting the growing demand for U.S. workers with STEM skills and to improving American competitiveness globally.

Although minorities have increased their share of degrees awarded in the sciences, poor preparation in science and mathematics is said to be a major factor limiting the appeal of science and engineering to even larger numbers of these groups. The COMPETES Act helps improve secondary education by requiring federal agencies to report how they are disseminating federally-funded STEM education resources to practitioners, including to teachers and administrators at high-needs schools and establishing an inventory of federally-sponsored STEM education programs that must include an assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and the rates of participation of underrepresented minorities in such programs.

Ensuring that all Americans have access to

high quality STEM education and careers enhance our present practices in science and our economic strength in the global marketplace. Through COMPETE, we will achieve.