

Opening Statement
The Honorable Mike Honda

Roundtable on the Commercialization of Nanotechnology

August 8, 2005

Thank you all for joining me here today for this important discussion about the commercialization of nanotechnology and what the federal government can do to help.

Let me give you some context for today's event. Back in Washington, D.C., the House Science Committee has held 4 hearings on nanotechnology over the past two and a half years.

Some of the witnesses that have come before us in Washington have talked about commercialization, but most were from large companies.

We have not had anyone from a small company testify to tell us what the concerns are from their perspective on the front lines.

We have had only two investors testify - Alan Marty, who gave us some excellent testimony, and Floyd Kvamme, who was really acting in his capacity as co-chair of PCAST, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

Back in 2003, Mr. Marty, executive-in-residence at JP Morgan Partners, reminded us that we need a balanced approach to funding nanotechnology, that it is not enough to focus only on basic research.

Mr. Marty suggested that we include in what was then called the Nanotechnology Research and Development Act Federal funding to promote the commercialization of nanotechnology.

He provided the Committee with a number of reasons, from a venture capitalist's point of view, why Federal efforts in this area are necessary.

He singled out one program in particular, the Advanced Technology Program (ATP), as worthy of support.

ATP is the main federal program uniquely positioned to provide support for U.S. companies engaged in the development of highly innovative and technically challenging technologies that would otherwise not be developed or not be developed in a timely manner for market opportunities.

Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful in my effort to specify that some of the funding from the nanotechnology R&D bill be targeted to nanotechnology grants within ATP.

ATP itself has continued to face the threat of termination in each of the President's last two budget requests, so its utility in the area of nanotechnology is in danger.

Still, I remain concerned about the Federal Government's role in helping to commercialize nanotechnology, because I am aware that other nations that we compete against are focusing their federal funding more on the commercialization of nanotechnology.

To try to address this problem, I have introduced the Nanomanufacturing Investment Act, which would create a public-private investment partnership that would focus on helping companies bring technologies through the pre-competitive stage and get products to market.

I'm not naïve or cocky enough to think this is the only possible answer, though, so I'm seeking your counsel here today.

I look forward to hearing from our esteemed panel of witnesses about what the Federal Government is doing today, and how facilities that are funded by the Federal Government can be leveraged to help small companies bring nanotechnology-based products along.

I am also very interested in hearing from the witnesses who are on the front lines at the small companies trying to develop nanotechnology projects on how their efforts have been helped by the Federal Government and what kinds of additional programs they would suggest.