

Senate committee passes COMPETES successor

June 29, 2016

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation held a markup of the American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (S. 3084) and a number of other bills on June 29. The bills were approved by a voice vote and will now head to the Senate floor for consideration.

The American Innovation and Competitiveness Act would update and reauthorize programs previously authorized through the America COMPETES Act, which expired in 2013. The new bill, introduced by Senators Cory Gardner (R-CO) and Gary Peters (R-MI) in collaboration with the scientific community, authorizes funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) among other federal science agencies. The bill reaffirms the National Science Foundation's merit-based peer review process, expands grant programs for women and minority groups, establishes an interagency working group to reduce administrative burdens on researchers, authorizes a STEM education advisory panel of outside experts to guide federal education programs, and promotes the commercialization of federally funded research.

Although the bill passed with an overwhelming majority, Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE) warned that in order for it to pass on the Senate floor, they would need to include offsets for the increases to NSF and National Institute of Standards and Technology funding.

The House passed its own version of COMPETES (H.R. 1806) in May 2015, but received criticism from Democrats and the science community for cutting funding for the geosciences and ARPA-E. The Senate version, however, has been praised as a bipartisan effort and is largely supported by the scientific community.

Sources: Govtrack.us, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Technology
