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As the dust settled on the latest fiscal crises this October, members of Congress were able to address the lapse in authorization for The America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science Act (COMPETES Act) that occurred at the end of September. However, what was originally a bipartisan bill has succumbed to partisan tensions: Republicans wish to refocus and rename COMPETES to the EINSTEIN (Enabling Innovation for Science, Technology and Energy in) America Act, which would provide funding only for basic research, cut funding for climate science, and selectively defund a number of programs, including the Advanced Research Project Agency-Energy (ARPA-E). Democrats, on the other hand, would like to see COMPETES reauthorized in full, and see more participation in the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) program, which enhances research institution capabilities for states that have historically not received a large number of NSF grants.

America COMPETES was passed in 2007 and reauthorized in 2010 to address declining U.S. competitiveness in an increasingly science- and technology-dependent world. It helped invigorate basic and applied science in the United States, ushering science research into the market, and creating high-risk, high-reward programs including ARPA-E. COMPETES also provided funding for the Department of Energy's Office of Science, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institute for Standards and Technology. Funding for America COMPETES was only authorized through September 2013, and the legislation is currently at a crossroads: stuck in the political and economical mire of the sequester, debt ceiling crises, and increasingly partisan budget negotiations. Without reauthorization the programs and activities funded under America COMPETES could be curtailed.

The House Science, Space and Technology Committee held a hearing on October 30, which addressed America COMPETES. The hearing is available on the committee's website.

Sources: E&E News, the House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate
