



Business Roundtable

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March 29, 2006

The Honorable Cathy McMorris
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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Dear Congresswoman McMorris:

On behalf of Business Roundtable, I commend you for introducing your American Competitiveness Amendment to the College Access & Opportunity Act (H.R. 609). Business Roundtable (www.businessroundtable.org) is an association of chief executive officers of leading U.S. companies with over \$4.5 trillion in annual revenues and more than 10 million employees. They are technology innovation leaders, with \$86 billion in annual research and development spending – nearly half of the total private R&D spending in the U.S.

Maintaining U.S. scientific and technological leadership is essential to our national security, economic growth and high standard of living. Innovation has fueled America's economic growth and extraordinary productivity gains of the last several decades. Although our capabilities are strong today, we are not making the strategic investments needed to keep pace with the rapidly improving capacity of our foreign competitors.

A world-class workforce is critical to our future success. Especially important are the scientists and engineers who will develop the next generation of technologies, push the frontiers of new discoveries and make critical scientific breakthroughs. But we face real challenges:

- Fewer students are pursuing degrees in these critical disciplines;
- The retirement of the baby boom generation will deplete the current science and engineering workforce by more than 50 percent; and
- U.S. high school students perform near the bottom in international assessments of math skills.

For precisely this reason, fifteen national business organizations, led by Business Roundtable, issued the "Tapping America's Potential" (TAP) report in July 2005. The report included five overall recommendations:

- Build public support for making science, technology, engineering and math improvement a national priority;

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- Motivate U.S. students and adults to study and enter science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers, with a special effort geared to those in currently underrepresented groups;
- Upgrade K-12 math and science teaching to foster higher student achievement;
- Reform visa and immigration policies to enable the U.S. to attract and retain the best and brightest science, technology, math and engineering students from around the world to study for advanced degrees and stay to work in the U.S.; and
- Boost and sustain funding for basic research, especially in the physical sciences and engineering.

The McMorris Amendment updates federal student aid and teacher training provisions by enabling funds to be used for training advanced placement teachers and creating adjunct teacher positions in order to strengthen math and science instruction in our schools. It makes sense for Congress to ensure that existing federal education programs are enhancing national competitiveness as well as students' opportunities to succeed in the 21st century.

Business Roundtable urges all Members of Congress to support the McMorris Amendment to H.R. 609.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Castellani", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John J. Castellani