

Increasing competitiveness in the global economy -- May 2007

In his 2006 State of the Union address, President Bush stressed the need for America to stay competitive in the global economy. Some of the goals highlighted in his address included initiatives to keep the economy growing, boost scientific research, and increase the number of students majoring in math and science related fields in this country. It is imperative to encourage our children to study math and science starting at an early age and to ensure that our instruction in those areas is rigorous enough to compete with other nations.

To that end, Congress has recently taken steps to increase funding in math and science education to strengthen students' progress in these disciplines. I recently voted in favor of several bills that I think are essential to improving our nation's competitiveness. One of these bills would authorize \$664 million for the National Science Foundation Robert Noyce Scholarship Program, through which institutions receive grants that can be used as scholarships and stipends for math and science majors who commit to teaching in those subject areas. With shortages of instructors in both these areas, this type of funding is vital for improving the quality of education. Another piece of legislation Congress recently passed authorizes federal grants over the next five years for early-career scientists and engineers at universities. These funds would improve all levels of education specifically by investing in science research programs and training more qualified math and science leaders. Together, these various pieces of legislation will contribute to improving the multiple disciplines that are crucial to increasing American competitiveness.

It is my hope that by focusing greater attention on improving math and science education at an early age, more students will be motivated to pursue higher education degrees in these critical fields. In fact, I am very proud that Delaware is leading the way when it comes to initiatives designed to expand development in many scientific fields. One such initiative includes a program created by University of Delaware researchers who recently founded their own biotechnology company, OrphageniX Inc., which uses UD-patented technologies for repairing genes that cause hereditary diseases such as sickle cell anemia. Additionally, Delaware State University has made great strides in the area of energy research, including the founding of its Center for Hydrogen Storage Research to create alternative fuel options for America's transportation systems.

a nation, it is absolutely vital that we focus greater attention on the quality of U.S. math and science education to compete on an international playing field. I believe this is feasible over time, but it requires support from the U.S. Congress and a continuous effort across the nation at all sectors, including in our businesses, research, and education institutions.