

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 20, 2018
CONTACT: Jeanne Moran, press@sciencecoalition.org



In Case You Missed It: Experts Agree That Federal Funding for Basic Science Research Is Critical For America's Energy Future

Princeton University, Third Way, ClearPath, Bipartisan Policy Center and Siemens Support Federal Investment in America's Energy Research

WASHINGTON – Yesterday, The Science Coalition (TSC) hosted a briefing on “American Energy: How Research Powers Today and Tomorrow” with experts in energy research and policy. Throughout the event, speakers highlighted the need for federal funding of fundamental science research and how such work can safeguard America’s energy independence, nuclear strength, and environmental sustainability.

The event, moderated by TSC President Anna Quider, featured representatives from policy think tanks, universities, and the private sector and specifically focused on how basic research work conducted at the Department of Energy (DOE) laid, and continues to lay, the foundation for innovations in the energy and environment space.

Gregory Scholes of Princeton University noted, “Basic science has enabled technology... In about 1990 some researchers at Cambridge University were studying this curious plastic they obtained from a colleague and it surprised them because it glowed with light when they connected it to electricity. Decades of basic research later you have OLED TVs, the iPhone display and other smartphone displays, and more is yet to come from this technology.”

Bipartisan Policy Center’s Brad Townsend made clear that, “Because of the landscape and the high amounts of risk, the private sector is not going to invest as much as they should, and certainly there are some exceptions, but ultimately that creates a need for the federal government to invest across the innovation cycle in multiple valleys of death. It’s not just being able to get the idea to work, it’s can you get the idea to scale, and that’s a very unique situation in the energy space.”

Erin Burns of Third Way highlighted, “We’ve seen that federal R&D support has created an ecosystem of universities and national labs that has enabled the U.S. to, frankly, be better at energy innovation than most other countries.”

ClearPath’s Jeremy Harrell emphasized that, “To be competitive the U.S. needs to be investing across the technology spectrum and the crux of that is basic research.”

Siemens' Keryl Cosenzo stressed that, "It is very important to Siemens to have a strong innovation pipeline in the United States. Basic Science is a co-creator to our core competencies as an organization."

While federal investment in basic research has a long history of strong, bipartisan support, funding for basic research from the U.S. government has shrunk in recent years. According to ongoing surveys from the [National Science Foundation](#), for the first time since World War II, the federal government no longer funds the majority of basic research in the United States. The federal share, which peaked at 70 percent in the 1960's, has now fallen below 50 percent.

Yesterday's briefing reminds us why federal funding for basic research is critical to our success as a nation. Breakthroughs made by basic science research go on to produce the innovations and technologies that power our industries and ensure our national security. From our energy infrastructure and nuclear capabilities, to environmental stability and global competitiveness, it is imperative that our elected officials prioritize robust funding for basic research.

###

About The Science Coalition

Established in 1994, The [Science Coalition](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of more than 50 of the nation's leading public and private research universities. It is dedicated to sustaining the federal government's investment in basic scientific research as a means to stimulate the economy, spur innovation, and drive America's global competitiveness.