

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Joseph Pitts**  
**Subcommittee on Health**  
**Hearing on NIH**  
**June 21, 2012**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

On behalf of the Subcommittee on Health, I would like to welcome Dr. Francis Collins. I, and I know many of my colleagues, have admired your work as a researcher on the important genome project and now in your leadership role at NIH.

Americans take great pride in the work of NIH whose roots date back to 1887. During that time, NIH has been in the forefront of biomedical discoveries that have revolutionized the field of medicine, including deciphering the genetic code and finding treatments and cures for so many diseases. More than 80 Nobel prizes have been awarded for NIH-supported research. This record clearly shows that NIH is a premiere research institution and a great American achievement.

Since 1887 when it operated as a one room laboratory, NIH is now a large system of 27 institutes and centers. With the passage of the NIH Reform Act of 2006, Congress addressed some of the downside of that rapid growth in order to improve outcomes. I look forward to an update on the implementation of the Reform Act especially the role of the Scientific Management Review Board and the Common Fund.

The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) is a new institute at NIH designed to catalyze technology toward the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Even though this is the first year of its operation, I would like to learn about its progress and the funding of a pilot program which partners with pharmaceutical companies to resurrect older drugs for new therapeutic uses.

Finally, Americans expect us to spend their tax dollars wisely. It is, therefore, very important that we set good priorities. Faced with so many good causes, I would like to know how NIH identifies the highest priorities in biomedical research and then uses the review process to fund the best research.