

[Floor Situation](#) | [Summary](#) | [Background](#) | [Cost](#) | [Staff Contact](#)

[H.R. 1158, Department of Energy Laboratory Modernization and Technology Transfer Act of 2015, as amended](#)

FLOOR SITUATION

On Tuesday, May 19, 2015, the House will consider [H.R. 1158](#), *the Department of Energy Laboratory Modernization and Technology Transfer Act of 2015, as amended*, under suspension of the rules. H.R. 1158 was introduced on February 27, 2015, by Rep. Randy Hultgren (R-IL) and was referred to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, which ordered the bill reported by voice vote on March 4, 2015.

SUMMARY

H.R. 1158 is designed to provide flexibility to modernize our country's national laboratory system and promote the transfer of federal research to the private sector to improve the public-private partnerships and bring innovative ideas to the marketplace.

Title I:

- Requires the Secretary of Energy to report to Congress (not later than one year after enactment) assessing the Department's ability to carry out the goals of Section 1001 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (dealing with the transfer of energy technologies). The report must include an assessment of the role and effectiveness of the Director of the Office of Technology Transitions and recommend policy changes to improve the Department's ability to transfer new technologies to the private sector.
- Establishes the Sense of Congress that the Secretary should encourage the National Laboratories and federally-funded research and development centers to inform small businesses of the opportunities and resources that exist pursuant the bill.
- Requires the Secretary, in consultation with the National Laboratories, relevant federal agencies, and other stakeholders, to report to Congress (within 180 days of enactment) on the Department's capabilities to authorize, host, and oversee privately-funded fusion and non-light water reactor prototypes and related demonstration facilities at department-owned sites.

Title II:

- Requires the Secretary to carry out the Agreements for Commercializing Technology pilot program.
- Directs the Secretary to submit a report to Congress that assesses the effectiveness of the pilot program; identifies opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the pilot program; assesses the potential for program activities to interfere with the responsibilities of the National Laboratories; and provides a recommendation regarding the future of the pilot program.
- Permits the Secretary of Energy to delegate authority to the directors of the National Laboratories to enter into public-private research and development partnerships (under \$1 million) for commercialization.
- Amends the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to include early-stage technology demonstration in authorized technology transfer activities and increase funding competitiveness for institutions of higher education.
- Allows the Secretary to enter into an agreement with the Director of the National Science Foundation (NSF) to enable researchers funded by the Department to participate in the NSF's Innovation Corps Program.

Title III:

- Requires the Comptroller General of the United States (not later than three years after enactment) to submit to Congress a report describing the results of projects developed under the Act, including information:
 - 1) Enumerating the partnerships initiated as a result of those projects;
 - 2) Identifying whether the activities carried out resulted in fiscal savings, expansion of National Laboratory responsibilities, increased efficiency of technology transfers, or an increase in the general efficiency in the National Laboratory system; and,
 - 3) Assessing the scale, scope, efficacy, and impact of the Department's efforts to promote technology transfer and private sector engagement at National Laboratories.

BACKGROUND

In June 2013, the Heritage Foundation, the Center for American Progress, and the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation produced a [report](#) supporting policy changes to update the National Labs. The report noted that “While the pace of innovation and the complexity of national challenges have accelerated, the labs have not kept stride. Although private-sector innovation will remain the cornerstone of economic growth, lab scientists and engineers do important work that can be of significant future use to private enterprise.”¹ The report urged that the “federal government must reform the labs from their 20th century atomic-energy roots to create 21st century engines of innovation.”²

The House passed a similar bill ([H.R. 5120](#)) by voice vote on July 22, 2014. The Senate did not act on that bill before the 113th Congress adjourned.

¹ See Joint Report—“[Turning the Page: Reimagining the National Labs in the 21st Century Innovation Economy](#),” June 2013 at 5.

² Id.

COST

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [estimates](#) that any costs under the bill would be insignificant.

STAFF CONTACT

For questions or further information please contact [Jerry White](#) with the House Republican Policy Committee by email or at 5-0190.