

## Tackling Complex Issues for New Policymakers

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Even before the inaugural edition of *Science Progress* appeared in print this past spring, we at the journal and our companion website already had our eyes set on the inauguration this month of the next president of the United States. At the time, we had no idea who would win the Democratic and Republican presidential nominations, but what we did know was this—whoever became the 44<sup>th</sup> president would need thoughtful guidance on the complex public policy questions we present to you today in this biannual edition of the journal *Science Progress*.

That's why *Science Progress* and our parent organization, the Center for American Progress, in early 2008 began preparing to convene two roundtable task forces, bringing together experts from both sides of the political aisle and from an array of different private- and public-sector perspectives, to discuss patent reform and innovation. One taskforce set out to identify the ingredients needed to incubate regional centers of innovation so that university-based scientific research can result in broad-based economic prosperity. The second sought to delineate the parameters of the possible in patent reform—one of the key issues the incoming Obama administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress will have to tackle this year after the effort fell short in 2008.

Both issues cut to the core of U.S. science and technology policymaking that will be so critical to carrying our deeply troubled economy back to the forefront of global innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We believe this is why we attracted the caliber of participants in both roundtables, including two former U.S. commissioners of patents and trademarks, Gerald Mossinghoff and Bruce Lehman, to our patent roundtable, and the former chief counsel to the House Science Committee, Jim Turner, and (before her appointment by President-elect Barack Obama to head of the Small Business Administration) venture capitalist Karen Mills, to our regional innovation taskforce.

Our task force on regional centers of innovation included venture capitalists and corporate technology officers, university technology licensing directors and workforce development experts, and some of the nation's leading scholars on innovation clustering and commercialization. (To see the complete list of taskforce members and advisory board members, please go to our website). The five essays beginning

on page 7 (and the companion essays on our website) attempt to tease out examples of how policymakers in statehouses and different federal agencies can work together with universities to replicate the success of Silicon Valley and the Route 128 Corridor in Massachusetts in other university cities and towns—in the process detailing how place and history set the stage for specific innovations that policymakers can help commercialize.

The policy recommendations reflect that mosaic of geography and specialization. But they also include 21<sup>st</sup>-century information technology and financial tools to speed development, and include ways to benchmark success—precisely because these are untried policy initiatives that will require prudent monitoring.

Our patent reform roundtable was specifically designed to gather in one room all the different participants in the 2008 debate in order to find common ground to move legislation forward this year. And to a great degree we believe we succeeded. Our four essays beginning on page 59 detail our recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, coping with abusive “patent trolls,” and weaving U.S. and international patent law and enforcement together for more effective and efficient global innovation. “The time is ripe for positive change in the U.S. patent system,” says Science Progress and CAP Senior Fellow Rick Weiss in the opening essay—a conclusion we will work hard to see to fruition in 2009.

A historical debate of a different tenor is the subject of our cover story, “Science’s Troubled Legacy: Government Contracting Run Amok.” The author, Johns Hopkins University professor Daniel Guttman, a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, charts the rise of

the private sector “contracting estate,” which was born to harness scientific inquiry in the interests of national security in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Guttman explains how our nation moved from the success of the Manhattan Project to Blackwater’s armed security units on the streets of Baghdad before presenting a set of principles that re-envision 20<sup>th</sup>-century government contract reforms for the realities of 21<sup>st</sup>-century governing.

Guttman’s bottom line: “If contractors are to continue to do basic government work then not only must laws and reality be reconciled but also the public service ethic must be extended to encompass the entire taxpayer-funded workforce, and not just the civil service.” In his essay beginning on page 47, readers will find recommendations of exactly how to enact these critical reforms—ones that the incoming Obama administration could employ to reverse the dangerous and irresponsible outsourcing of so many different government functions under the Bush administration.

There are, of course, many other science and technology policy arenas in which the Obama administration will set new policy priorities—from stem cells to climate change to space exploration—many of which we examine every day on our website, and many in which we also offer detailed policy recommendations. Inside this journal, however, we have packed lengthy analysis of three complex issues of sweeping economic and historic significance. We believe our recommendations are only the beginning of the progress our nation is about to embark upon. We hope you agree.

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