

Opening Statement of Arden L. Bement, Jr.
Nominee to be Director, National Institute of Standards and
Technology
U.S. Department of Commerce

Mr. Chairman, Senator McCain and members of the Committee:

I wish to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today regarding my nomination to be Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology. I am honored to be nominated to this position by President Bush and wish to thank Secretary Evans for recommending me for this position.

My professional career has included responsible positions directing research and technology in government, industry and academia. These positions have included Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Director of the Office of Materials Science of DARPA, Member of the National Science Board, Vice President of Science and Technology for TRW and professorships at both MIT and Purdue University. As I look back over my career it seems that all of my past work has prepared me for this opportunity of leading NIST into the twenty-first century. If confirmed, I will be greatly honored to add this capstone to my life's work and will devote all of my energies and experiences to leading NIST to the next level of achievement.

I have had the privilege of serving NIST continuously in a variety of advisory appointments over the past twenty years. These have included membership on the NRC Board of Assessment, as Chairman of the NBS Statutory Advisory Committee and the successor Visiting Committee for Advanced Technology, as a member of the Board of Overseers for the Baldrige National Quality Award Program, and as Chairman of the Advanced Technology Program Advisory Committee. In these capacities I have witnessed NIST grow in excellence and scope during the tenure of four of its eleven former directors.

I believe that NIST continues to be a young organization, which has the ability not only to think "out of the box" fundamentally but also "out of the beltway" in its outreach. It has sustained this ability through its extended networks and active collaborations with industry, academia and other government agencies and its longstanding practice of recruiting top graduates from universities through its postdoctoral programs. NIST also has the tradition of adapting to changing environments through its focus on constituent needs. This ability to remain at the cutting edge through continuing interaction is not only demonstrated by the many prestigious prizes won by NIST scientists and engineers but also the prizes won by others based on NIST advances in science and technology. I consider it a great privilege to be associated with an institution that now has two Nobel Laureates.

Finally, the credibility of NIST as an independent standards and technology institute in

the service of the nation I regard as paramount. NIST has served the nation well as an unbiased arbiter and partner in developing standards in matters related to public safety and commerce and as an “honest broker” in promoting national technology leadership and in strengthening small manufacturers through advanced technologies. In my advisory roles I have found that independent assessment studies regularly show that the returns to the public from investments in NIST programs are very high.

If confirmed I will focus on the following objectives:

1. Adding strategic vision and direction to important NIST programs that have high importance to the nation, such as those NIST technologies that support homeland security.
2. Strengthening the momentum achieved by former directors Prabhakar and Kammer in supporting national standards developing organizations to improve their influence on international standards to promote American interests.
3. Being a good steward in maintaining the world-class capability of NIST’s aging infrastructure. In this regard I wish to thank the committee for providing the funding for the Advanced Chemical Sciences Laboratory and the Advanced Measurement Laboratory, and for providing initial funding to begin needed upgrades to the Boulder Laboratories. These additions are coming on line none too soon to address advances in quantum computing, nanoscale devices and sensors, and DNA diagnostic technologies, among many other exciting technological advances. I hope that members of the committee will visit the Advanced Measurement Laboratory when it is completed, and will support our continuing need for upgrades to the Boulder Laboratories.
4. Providing stability to the Advanced Technology Program, improving the impact of the Manufacturing Extension Program, and facilitating the extension of the Baldrige National Award Program to health care and educational institutions.

In closing, I regret that I have not had the opportunity to meet with more members of the committee and their staff directors prior to this hearing. I pledge that if confirmed I will seek your views on the important issues facing NIST and its mission.

Finally, I wish to thank my wife, family, and colleagues at Purdue University for their support during the past three months leading to this hearing. There is much to be proud of these days in being an American, and I am especially proud to be able to serve our great country in this role.