

U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici

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'AMERICA COMPETES ACT' CLEARS CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici, the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, today said they are pleased that a Senate-House conference gave its unanimous approval tonight to legislation designed to make America more competitive globally. Bingaman chaired the conference committee.

Bingaman and Domenici, both conferees on the America Competes Act, offered one of the two amendments which conferees accepted. A major portion of the bill originates from legislation developed by the two New Mexico Senators during last Congress, when the Energy and Natural Resources Committee passed the PACE-Energy Act.

“This is one of the biggest accomplishments Congress has undertaken this year. America Competes will help our country stay competitive for decades to come by investing heavily in education and in scientific R&D,” Bingaman said. “It will help ensure that the jobs of the future are created – and remain -- right here in our own country.”

“This is the type of legislation that doesn’t necessarily get much attention but could have a big impact on our future. This bill is an investment in the future of American brain power. It will improve math and science education for our children, and utilize our national laboratories in new and exciting ways,” Domenici said. “After so much work, I’m very pleased that we’ve reached an agreement to make America more competitive in the global economy. I look forward to final passage and getting this bill enacted into law.”

The America Competes Act would double the authorized funding for the National Science Foundation in seven years and sets the Department of Energy’s Office of Science on a path to double over seven years.

It also provides grants of up to \$6 million to help states create specialty math and science magnet schools. Department of Energy laboratories will be partners in this effort in several ways, including “adopting” schools to strengthen their math and science capability. It also creates a broad range of programs to strengthen the skills of math and science teacher and encourages mathematicians and scientists to become teachers. And it provides resources to encourage students to enroll in Advanced Placement international baccalaureate programs.

The bill makes a concerted effort to involve DOE’s national laboratories by establishing training and education programs at summer institutes hosted by the labs, and by creating

partnerships between labs and high schools to build centers of excellence in math and science education.

The conference committee approved an amendment sponsored by Domenici, Bingaman and Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-TN) which provides Congressional oversight to the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E), which is created in the bill. The Domenici-Bingaman-Alexander amendment makes the director of ARPA-E a Senate-confirmed position, require annual reports to Congress on program spending, and require a forward-looking strategic vision statement to be submitted to Congress every three years.