SPECIAL COMPETITIVE STUDIES PROJECT

U.S. Senate AI Insight Forum

Written Statement of Yll Bajraktari

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Leader Schumer, Senators Rounds, Young, and Heinrich, and distinguished members of the Senate, thank you for inviting us here today.

My name is Yll Bajraktari, and, together with Dr. Eric Schmidt, we co-founded the Special Competitive Studies Project (SCSP).

Founded in 2021, SCSP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit initiative dedicated to bolstering America's competitiveness in an era where AI and emerging technologies are transforming our national security, economy, and society. Inspired by Dr. Henry Kissinger and at his urging, we established SCSP to mirror the influential Special Studies Project of the late 1950s, led by him and Nelson Rockefeller, which was pivotal in shaping America's Cold War strategy. Additionally, we are carrying forward the mission and work of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence (NSCAI), which we spearheaded from 2018 to 2021.

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From the beginning, Congress has played an instrumental role in shaping the AI landscape in the United States and for the world. Your foresight has been critical to positioning our country as the global leader in AI innovation. The creation of the NSCAI in the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act is a prime example. Through NSCAI, Congress recognized AI's profound role and will continue to play in our nation's future.

When I was the Executive Director of NSCAI, I genuinely appreciated the unwavering support of Congress. Members and committees actively engaged NSCAI Commissioners and staff and passed many of our legislative recommendations into law. We were grateful for strong support from Leader Schumer, Senators Rounds,

Young, Heinrich, and others who all led the charge in the Senate to act on NSCAI's AI strategy for national security.

We have entered a time that presents immense opportunities to transform our world. At SCSP's Global Emerging Technology Summit last month, Leader Schumer and Senators Rounds, Heinrich, Young, Bennet, and Hagerty voiced sentiments that resonate not only within their own ranks but transcend politics and extend far beyond the confines of this building. Senator Rounds, in particular, issued a compelling call to action: "In America, we build the future. We don't watch it pass us by." America has always been a beacon of innovation. Our history is not just marked by adaptation but by pioneering breakthroughs.

Today, we stand at a pivotal crossroads. As AI development and new applications transform our nation and the world around us, we must remember that the race is not merely technological. It raises questions about how to develop the technology in accordance with democratic values, ethics, and our partners and allies around the world.

Why is AI so important?

The answer lies at the intersection of innovation and national security, or who maintains innovation power. **Innovation power is the ability to invent, adopt, and integrate new technologies.** By harnessing innovation power, we fortify our national defenses and supercharge our economy.

Each innovation in AI has the opportunity to bolster our nation's resilience, adaptability, and preemptive stance against future challenges. Our commitment to AI is more than just about cutting-edge research. It's about economic security. It's a pledge to safeguard our nation's future. And it's a means to maintain democracy over autocratic rule. That's innovation power.

The stakes have never been higher. The geopolitical landscape is changing significantly, and China has unambiguously signaled its global ambitions. As Beijing refines its strategy, it is clear that the Chinese Communist Party recognizes the crucial

importance of AI. Their strategic integration of the innovation ecosystem directly challenges the U.S.'s historic dominance in these critical fields.

The United States leads the world in AI, especially Generative AI, where we are home to almost all of the leading GenAI models. And we are home to the world's leading biotech, fusion, and quantum companies, using AI to fuel their discoveries.

But we can't take our lead for granted. We cannot seed innovation power. Our response must be resounding: just as the CHIPS and Science Act underscored our commitment to compute, we must assert our unyielding resolve to remain global leaders in AI and send an unequivocal message to the world.

To chart our path forward, **we must take action across five key elements to succeed: funding, tools, people, organization, and governance.**

First, as recommended by NSCAI, Congress must appropriate $32 billion towards AI research and development (R&D) non-defense programs, and this is not just about numbers. It's a clear indication of our commitment to deep research, exploration, and the continuous advancement of AI technologies. Such a massive financial undertaking underscores our dedication to leading in AI.

This $32 billion must include investment in basic and applied R&D. This should start with fully funding the "Science" portion of the CHIPS and Science Act – a critical law led by and passed by this legislative body in August 2022.

Second, Congress should ensure we have the tools to execute our research mission and establish and fund the National AI Research Resource (NAIRR), also recommended by the NSCAI. This valuable resource would allow AI researchers and students to access the data and compute power required to develop safe, trustworthy, and cutting-edge AI tools. It will not only preserve America's competitive edge in AI research and prevent expertise from becoming concentrated in a handful of companies.

Third, the lifeblood of any innovation is talent. People are ultimately America's most important asset. Human ingenuity is the ultimate source of *innovation-driven* economic growth. The U.S.'s talented researchers, engineers, and programmers are leading the AI revolution. We want to keep it that way.

- The U.S. government should **create a National Commission on Automation and the Future of Work** to review AI and automation's impact on our workforce and economic competitiveness, and propose policy changes that address human-machine teaming, upskilling, and reskilling;

- The U.S. government should **increase the H-1B visa cap**, which would elevate the U.S. as a hub of global innovation and ensure we attract and retain the world's brightest minds; and

- The U.S. government should **develop curriculum guidelines** to safely deploy AI technologies, especially generative AI, in the classroom. We must prepare our next generation of workers to use AI to their advantage.

Fourth, the U.S government should organize for the competition by creating a White House-based Technology Competitiveness Council (TCC), complemented by the analytical prowess of an **Office of Global Competition Analysis (OCA)**.

- The **Technology Competitiveness Council**, chaired by the Vice President and driven by senior government leaders, would develop a National Technology Strategy, **oversee a strategic national approach to emerging technologies like AI**, and promote leadership across the scientific, economic, and security aspects of AI and other emerging technologies.

- The **Office of Global Competition Analysis would provide independent horizon-scanning analysis** on global long-term technology trends and identify strategic technologies with national security implications to guide the TCC's action plans and strategies.

Lastly, governance is critical to AI, and our values must serve as the guiding principles to reap the profound benefits of AI and mitigate the worst of its harms. Governments that strike a balance between encouraging innovation and ensuring safe and responsible AI development will gain a competitive advantage and set an example for the world.

In the near term, the U.S. government should leverage its existing, robust regulatory authorities to manage AI by sector. However, even with existing tools, regulators will not be able to regulate every AI model or tool. Therefore, regulators should focus their efforts on AI use cases that are highly consequential to society – be that a consequence with a beneficial or harmful impact. SCSP will release a framework for identifying high consequence AI use cases. In the longer term, a centralized authority could regulate AI issues that cut across sectors and to fill regulatory gaps in sectors.

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This monumental task isn't just for the government, technology companies, or policymakers alone; it's for every American. We are all stakeholders in the AI revolution, and together we can ensure that the United States maintains innovation power, by continuing to lead, innovate, and succeed as a beacon of technological progress, democratic values, and global leadership.

Our future is forged at the intersection of foresight, innovation, and action. The path to sustained AI leadership is clear. It requires the collective will of this esteemed legislative body, the broader U.S. government, industry, academia, and the American public.

We have the tools, the talent, and the vision. What we need now is unwavering commitment. The time to act is now.

Thank you, and I look forward to the discussion.

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