



## **David Rejeski Addresses House Committee on Science on the Environmental and Safety Impacts of Nanotechnology**

WASHINGTON – Today, Director of the Wilson Center's Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, David Rejeski, briefed the Science Committee of the House of Representatives on current concerns about the environmental and safety impacts of nanotechnology and the status and adequacy of related research programs and plans.

The federal government, industry, and environmental groups all agree that relatively little is understood about the environmental and safety implications of nanotechnology and that greater knowledge is needed to enable a nanotechnology industry to develop and to protect the public.

This hearing's purpose was to assess the current state of knowledge of, and the current research plans on the environmental and safety implications of nanotechnology.

In David Rejeski's testimony ([the full text of which can be downloaded here](#)), he addressed the following challenges:

1. **Are we spending enough to understand the risks to workers, consumers, and the environment?** According to Rejeski, "We need a full and transparent disclosure of all government funded environmental, health, and safety related research – every project, not just the sum of the projects." The Wilson Center's Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies is conducting just such an inventory that will be ready for [release on Nov. 29](#). Rejeski also addressed the need for a global strategy to assess the potential risks of nanoscience, what he terms an "International Nanorisk Characterization Project."
2. **The need for the federal government and industry to address the public's perception of risks associated with nanotechnology.** "At the moment, the public is largely ignorant of nanotechnologies, a potentially dangerous situation for innovators and investors. Though studies show people are excited about the potential applications of nanotechnologies, they have little trust in either government or industry to manage risks and consistently ask for more transparency, disclosure, and involvement," Rejeski said.
3. **The public's desire to know "Will government oversight and regulatory policies protect us?"** "We need a systemic analysis across agency statutes and programs, across agencies, and across the international landscape, which looks at regulations, voluntary programs, information-based strategies and state and local ordinances and asks the question: 'Will these measures work not just today but in 5 or 10 years?'" Rejeski noted.
4. **The need to prepare for the unexpected.** According to Rejeski, "We could be surprised in unpleasant ways, either by the technology itself or by people who mishandle, mislabel, or misuse the technology, so we need to anticipate, plan for, and rehearse possible scenarios for misuse or accidents."

In his concluding statement, David Rejeski said, "We need a beefed up and visible federal face for nanotechnologies sending a coherent message to the public and industry. We believe that the National Nanotechnology Coordinating Office can help in this regard but is understaffed and underfunded by orders of magnitude. This is not about creating an additional bureaucracy; it is about creating coherence and the capacity to manage an exceedingly complex enterprise of national importance."

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**David Rejeski** is director of The Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The Project was created in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts.

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars is the living, national memorial to President Wilson established by Congress in 1968 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Center establishes and maintains a neutral forum for free, open and informed dialogue.

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