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Pew Charitable Trusts, Wilson Center Launch Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies

Leaders from Business, Science, and Government Come Together to Anticipate and Address Issues related to Powerful New Technologies

(Philadelphia, Pa.) With nanotechnology hailed by some as the "next industrial revolution," the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars today announce the formation of the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies to help businesses, governments, and the public anticipate and manage possible health and environmental implications. The two-year, $3 million project is located at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and is part of the Trusts' growing portfolio of emerging technology projects, which currently includes reproductive genetics and agricultural biotechnology.

"Nanotechnologies hold tremendous societal and economic benefits, from new cancer therapies to pollution-eating compounds, from super-lightweight materials to detectors for biohazards like anthrax," said Rebecca W. Rimel, president and CEO of The Pew Charitable Trusts. "However, if history is a guide, nanotechnology's long-term success will depend on the willingness to tackle potential health and environmental issues associated with this emerging technology early and collaboratively. This is the goal of the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies."

The project is led by science policy expert David Rejeski, director of the Wilson Center's Foresight and Governance Project, which focuses on long-term, strategic issues facing the public sector. The project's advisory board includes:

- Linda Fisher, former deputy administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and vice-president and chief sustainability officer for DuPont;
- Margaret Hamburg, former assistant secretary for planning and evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and former commissioner of health for New York City;
- Donald Kennedy, editor-in-chief, *Science* magazine;
- John Ryan, director of the Interdisciplinary Research Collaboration on Bionanotechnology at Oxford University; and
- Stan Williams, director of quantum science research at Hewlett Packard.

"Given the national and international investments in nanotechnologies and their potential to drive future economic growth, it is crucial that all parties effectively anticipate and address both their merits and risks," said Lee Hamilton, president and director of the Wilson Center. "The Wilson Center's longstanding mission to provide a neutral, fact-based forum for scholars, policymakers and other concerned citizens makes this a natural and exciting initiative for the Center."

Nanotechnology refers to working with matter at the scale of one billionth of a meter, or less than one-100,000th the width of a human hair. Researchers are exploring ways to see and build at the atomic and molecular level, reengineering familiar substances like carbon and gold to create new materials with novel properties and functions. In just a few short years, nanotechnology has catapulted from being a specialty of a few physicists and chemists to a worldwide scientific and industrial enterprise. Globally, governments and industry are now investing more than $8 billion annually into research and development of nanotechnologies. In the United States investments are already over $2 billion annually. The National Science Foundation predicts that the global marketplace for goods and services using nanotechnologies will grow to $1 trillion dollars by 2015.

"Businesses taking risks to develop nanotechnologies need a clear, transparent, and predictable path to market along with growing public confidence in new technological solutions," said Rejeski. "A forward-looking dialogue can help create that path and provide a competitive advantage for U.S. companies in the global marketplace."

The project plans to bring together leaders from industry, government, research, and other sectors to take a long-term view of what is known and unknown about potential health and environmental challenges posed by emerging nanotechnologies, and to develop recommendations to manage them. The project will be a credible source of information on the topic, producing reports, case studies and analyses about potential nanotechnology risk management strategies. It will regularly convene events with leaders in many sectors.

The Pew Charitable Trusts is a national charitable organization serving the public interest by informing the public, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. The Trusts' national Health and Human Services policy program addresses a range of issues, such as foster care, reproductive genetics technology and retirement security. Its hallmark is investments to engage experts, explore divergent views, identify options and build consensus on policy solutions—all with the goal of improving the health and well-being of the American people. The Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies joins two other Trusts-supported science and technology policy projects – the Genetics and Public Policy Center at Johns Hopkins University and the Pew Initiative on Food and Biotechnology at the University of Richmond.

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. It is a nonpartisan institution, supported by public and private funds and engaged in the study of national and world affairs.

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