



**U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION**
Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair

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Floor Speech: Confirmation of Dr. Arati Prabhakar
September 21, 2022

[VIDEO](#)

I rise today in support of the nomination for Dr. Arati Prabhakar to be the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Since 1976, OSTP has worked to ensure the United States leads in science and technology, to promote STEM education, and to make sure that our science agencies share the common purpose of benefiting America.

Dr. Prabhakar is very well qualified for this job as an engineer, physicist, leader, venture capitalist, and pioneer. She's had a trailblazing career accomplishing lots in a time period where she was director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ("DARPA"), and before that, the first woman to lead the National Institute of Standards and Technology ("NIST").

And under Dr. Prabhakar's leadership, DARPA kick-started the development of a rapid-response mRNA vaccine platform. This platform was the basis for the fast, safe, and effective COVID-19 vaccine development.

Under her leadership at NIST, she worked to expand the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, to boost the competitiveness of small- and mid-size American manufacturers. Just last year, the MEP program helped our domestic manufacturers capture \$3.9 billion in new sales. In my state alone, that translated in to over \$186 million and more than 2,000 jobs created or retained.

Perhaps even more impressive, back in the 1990s—when Dr. Prabhakar was just in her 20s—she helped launch the DARPA program that made essential leaps forward in semiconductor manufacturing technology. Dr. Prabhakar's programs laid the groundwork for five generations of chip manufacturing technologies, to help demonstrate leadership right here in the United States.

Dr. Prabhakar is now ready to lead again, now we are asking her to lead this important agency. We have just passed the CHIPS and Science Act, which is a renewed commitment to domestic semiconductor research and manufacturing leadership in the next-generation chips technology.

Dr. Prabhakar has the exact experience we need to advise the President on semiconductor manufacturing, on bringing the supply chain security that we need here in the United States, and on continued growth in science and technology jobs that come along with it.

The CHIPS and Science Act directs the National Science Foundation to invest in translational research, including through a new NSF Technology Directorate.

Before her nomination, Dr. Prabhakar was an important voice in the support of this effort of a tech directorate – reaching out to our House and Senate colleagues helping to shape the Directorate and its focus on big national security challenges.

And the CHIPS And Science Act reflects our commitment to diversity in science to make sure that the science, engineering, technology, math, or “STEM” fields are included and that we continue to grow a workforce that is needed.

An important aspect of science is not always thought of is growing the next generation. That is why I am so encouraged that Dr. Prabhakar is very committed to increasing the talent pool that we need in our country.

For the first time in our country’s history, the President has elevated the OSTP Director to a cabinet-level post, meaning there will be a scientist in the room for our nation’s most important discussions.

And for the first time in history, with the support of my colleagues here today, Dr. Prabhakar will be the first woman AND first person of color to serve as a Senate-confirmed OSTP Director.

Dr. Prabhakar will have a lot to do, including developing whole-of-government science and technology strategies for issues ranging from research security to commercial space exploration. At a time of growing competition, OSTP needs to tell the President and advise our leaders what we need to do to maintain our competitiveness as a nation.

I know coming from an innovation state how important the Office of Science and Technology Policy strategies can be in helping our nation attract and keep the best and brightest and prioritize collaboration between academia and industry. And since Washington has been a STEM leader, in fact I think we’re the most STEM focused state in the nation, that is by number of people involved in STEM, we know that this partnership between the existing workforce and the workforce of tomorrow needs to grow.

So I know as a former DARPA Director, Dr. Prabhakar will help us with this engine of innovation and growing STEM education in America.

Moreover, I know that Dr. Prabhakar will on many issues help improve the participation of women and girls in the issues of STEM. This is such a big important issue for us today, but just being at the helm of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, being a woman, being there at the cabinet level, advising the President of the United States, I know she will help deliver a message that young women all across America need to be involved in the sciences to help our nation in the next phases of innovation.

I'm so excited that she will be in this position.

Our nation needs devoted, experienced, and exceptional public servants like Dr. Prabhakar to ensure that our research and development investments make America stronger, safer, and more competitive.

I ask my colleagues to support her as a devoted, experienced, and exceptional public servant. Dr. Arati Prabhakar is the kind of person we need in government. These are the kind of people that can make America stronger, safer, and more competitive.

I urge my colleagues to support the confirmation of Dr. Prabhakar as the next Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.