

Quantum Policy (yes it's a thing)

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by Troy M. Keller

We think of AI as the most exciting and transformative technology of our time, and I wouldn't argue with that. However, one of the less talked about aspects is the potential it has to bring viability to Quantum computing by (as I've been told) quickly finding and controlling for the random calculation errors that are inherent in the powerful technology. As a Quantum future becomes more and more possible, governmental policy is also developing around it.

The first meaningful Quantum policy initiative in the U.S. actually came in 2018 in the form of the National Quantum Initiative (NQI) Act. This provided funding for Department of Energy (DOE) and National Science Foundation (NSF) research centers at national labs and universities across the country. It also directed NIST (National Institute of Standards & Technology) to forge industry connections through economic consortia. These were investments and grants that promoted the deep tech R&D that needed to happen if the U.S. wanted to be in a competitive position for this frontier technology.

Late last year, a [White House memo](#) called out the need to prioritize Quantum development, noting the growing commercial viability of the technology: "*As quantum technologies mature and become increasingly available on the commercial market, bolstering U.S. leadership will require advancing fundamental science while also tackling emerging engineering challenges and strengthening the critical technologies enabling the quantum ecosystem.*" It goes on to call on federal agencies to prioritize practical R&D that looks at end user applications. Pre-competitive consortia are to be promoted.

Then, earlier this month, Senators Todd Young (R-IN) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) [introduced](#) the **National Quantum Initiative Reauthorization Act of 2026**. The bill would extend the National Quantum Initiative by five years to December 2034. That's of course good. But the bill also does something else that is noteworthy by expanding focus to commercial applications. It's an important shift in emphasis, reflecting the White House memo in part but going even further. Here are a few ways the bill proposes to do this:

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It would establish a number of new academic and private-public initiatives including three NIST Quantum Centers, five NSF Multi-disciplinary Centers for Quantum Research and Education, a quantum workforce coordination hub and quantum testbeds. This would significantly expand the touch points for the technology both to additional locations across the U.S. but also in some cases beyond the science centers and into the commercial arena. It would bring NASA to the table by authorizing it to pursue R&D in satellite communications and other areas. Again, real world applications. It also focuses on the Quantum supply chain, pushing for the creation of Quantum foundries that would make the technology more accessible.

Funding for these initiatives may be squeezed between efforts by the House to find budgetary savings and pressure from the White House to dramatically increase defense spending. However, given the ample defense applications of Quantum tech, it is always possible the momentum takes Quantum funding the other way. It's worth keeping tabs on. The next Quantum Center, foundry or business consortium could be coming to your city soon!

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