



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

TESTIMONY

October 2012

Philadelphia City Council

COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE CREATIVE/INNOVATIVE ECONOMY

- October 10, 2012 -

Resolution No. 120128

David Oh, Chair

Marian Tasco, Vice Chair

Cindy Bass, Blondell Reynolds Brown, W. Wilson Goode, Jr., Dennis O'Brien



TESTIMONY OF Lawrence A. Husick, Esq., Co-Chair, Foreign Policy Research Institute,
Wachman Center Program on Teaching a New Generation of American Innovators,
1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Chairman Oh, Senator Brubaker and members of the Committee on Global Opportunities and The Creative/Innovative Economy. My name is Lawrence Husick. I am the Co-Chair of the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Wachman Center Program on [Teaching a New Generation of American Innovators](#), an educational program of one of the nation's foremost think tanks, located here in Philadelphia.

I am here today to testify in response to Resolution No. 120128.

While many other speakers have addressed specific programs and projects that may be undertaken to strengthen our city, region and commonwealth's innovation economy, I will address the simple and cost-free changes that I believe must take place if we are to succeed in the economy of the Twenty-First Century. You see, our experience at the Institute is that most of our public sector functions as an innovation-free zone. In fact, innovators are most often treated just as your body treats invading bacteria: we identify, surround, kill, and eject our most innovative thinkers in order to protect the uninterrupted functioning of our bureaucratic institutions. Whether we are discussing governmental offices, our public schools, or even our most esteemed universities, innovation and innovators are paid lip service, but rarely valued and encouraged. My view may offend some, but innovation is my business, and it is, if nothing else, the business of telling the unvarnished and unpopular truth.

In my view, the very first step on the road to the innovation economy that we want for our city, region and commonwealth is the incorporation of innovation as an educational theme at literally every level from preschool to post-graduate work. Doing so requires no expensive tools, no additional textbooks, and very little formal programming. What it requires, however, is a willingness to spend just a bit of time away from cookie-cutter curricula, fact-based instruction, and standardized test scores. In a word, it requires that we allow students time to play.

Now the play of which I speak is not on the sports field or court. It is play of the mind. It is exploration, testing of hypotheses, problem solving, and creativity. Most of all, it is a willingness on the part of every teacher and administrator to allow our students to attempt, to fail, to learn from that failure, and to attempt again. Without failure, there is no real learning. There is no interest, no passion. There is only a less-creative march toward the end of the conveyor belt of education, and this yields drop-outs and graduates who are ill-equipped to perform the tasks demanded of both a globalized workforce, and an involved citizenry.

When I speak of innovation as an education theme, please do not make the mistake of assuming that I mean only in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. Innovation is key to understanding human history (certainly here in Philadelphia, where our Founding Fathers adopted the world's first Constitutional Patent and Copyright provisions). It is key to understanding economics, politics, and every other aspect of human endeavor. By using innovation to teach such diverse subjects, we may also find that students are no longer segregated at an early age into those who can "do" science and math, and those who cannot. We will all be richer for the effort.

I urge each of you to make innovation education a key component and a prerequisite to any other effort you may endorse to enhance our position in the competitive world of today and tomorrow. We at FPRI stand ready to help.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Eli Gilman at 215-732-3774, ext. 255, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.