

Compete Connect

August 2026 Edition

From the CEO's Desk



Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President and CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Dear Council on Competitiveness Community,

As summer winds down and we approach Labor Day, the Council team and I have been reflecting on how much the competitive landscape has changed since the Council's founding in 1986. The global competitiveness landscape has shifted dramatically in 40 years. And unprecedented waves of technological revolutions – and the ensuing innovations in their wake – continue to crest and crash on our shores, further changing the competitiveness ecosystem in which we now live and work. The emerging and converging transformations in AI, quantum, biotechnology, advanced manufacturing, and new forms of energy are reshaping the productivity, prosperity, and security foundations of our society.

Against this backdrop, our Board, Executive Committee, and National Commission are guiding a competitiveness landscape analysis to assess the United States' position across the critical capabilities that enable innovation-based competitiveness, as well as the strategic technologies and industries that will shape the next economy. At the same time, our [Competitiveness Conversations Across America](#) series, now with more than a dozen regional summits complete, is providing a ground-level view of the assets driving the next economy.

These efforts are helping the Council identify where bold action can make the greatest difference in advancing the nation's competitiveness for decades to come, including through the Council-led AIM Zones (American Innovation and Manufacturing Zones) initiative to accelerate development of the "next economy's" manufacturing capitals and regions – with the full research, job creation, and firm creation centered in the United States. We are also developing with partners in our membership a set of "Smart Regulation and Standards Principles" for the "next economy" – ensuring we create the framework of policies that will strengthen manufacturing-based innovation and competitiveness in the United States. And we

will be advancing our work on the future of the U.S. bioeconomy into a new phase – launching early this fall a series of virtual working sessions.

This work is building up to the [40th Anniversary Gala Dinner and 2026 National Competitiveness Forum](#), December 16–17 at the Willard InterContinental in Washington, D.C. During the capstone of our 40th year, we will launch our 2026 Competitiveness call to action and 10X transformative recommendations for the future. [Registration for the 2026 NCF is open](#), and Council members receive a significant registration discount (please email [Chad Evans](#) for your special code).

[NCF sponsorships](#) are also available and provide valuable visibility while supporting our flagship event and broader Council work. I want to thank Procter & Gamble, the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the University of Texas at San Antonio, and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for stepping forward as early sponsors, and I hope all of our members will join them as NCF sponsors.

Let me close with an exciting update. This September the Council team will be packing up and moving into a new headquarters in Washington, DC. Remaining downtown and just steps from the White House, our new home will be a platform for convening our member and policymakers shaping U.S. competitiveness. We will look forward to welcoming you all to the new space in the months to come, as we officially move in October 1.

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Wince-Smith
President & CEO
Council on Competitiveness

Council News

Shaping the Next Economy at the 2026 Competitiveness Forum



Join the Council on Competitiveness for our 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner on December 16, followed by the 2026 National Competitiveness Forum (NCF) on

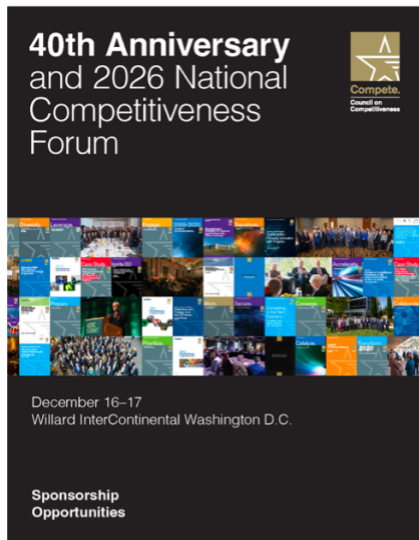
December 17. Both events will take place at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington, D.C.

As we celebrate four decades of advancing U.S. competitiveness, the NCF will bring together leading voices from industry, academia, labor, the U.S. Department of Energy national laboratory enterprise, and government to examine the most pressing challenges and opportunities shaping the next economy...and chart a path forward. Conversations will span the critical priorities at the heart of the Council's competitiveness agenda — from advanced manufacturing and industrial capacity, energy resilience and abundance, economic statecraft and the rules of the road for technology and trade, and developing an innovation workforce. The NCF will also showcase what's possible through AIM Zones (American Innovation and Manufacturing Zones) and the Council's broader work to strengthen the nation's innovation ecosystem.

[Registration is open — click here to join us to celebrate 40 years of impact... and chart the next 40.](#)

(NOTE: Council Members should contact [Chad Evans](#) for your discount code.)

Become a 2026 NCF Sponsor

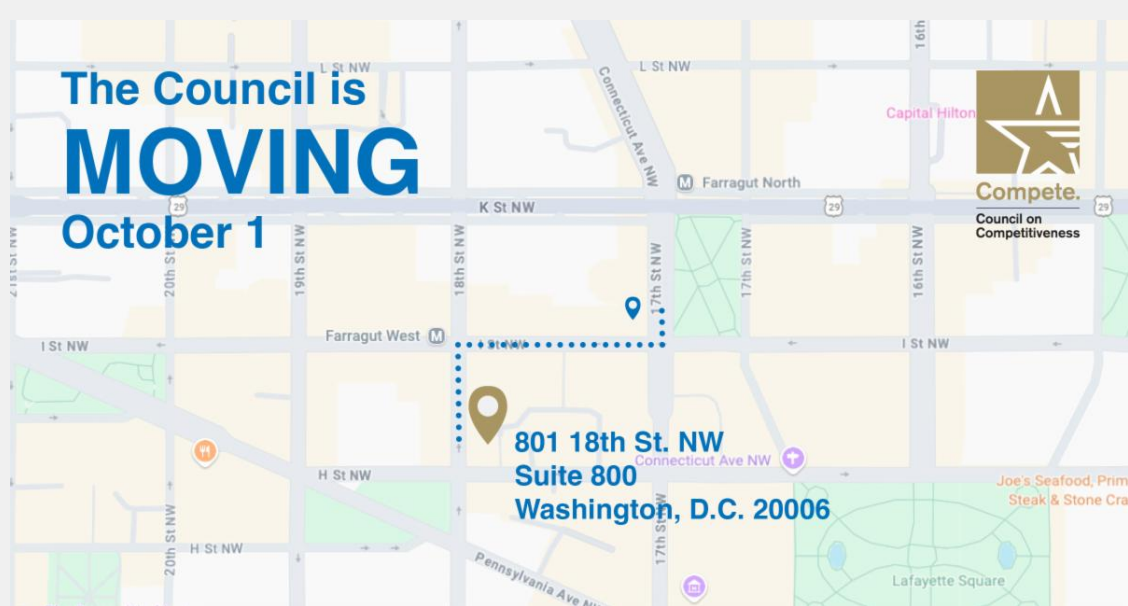


Sponsors gain significant visibility at both the 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner and 2026 National Competitiveness Forum, as well as across the digital platforms surrounding this flagship event, while helping support the Council's ongoing work to advance U.S. competitiveness. The 2026 sponsorship brochure is available [here](#), and sponsorship inquiries should be directed to [Chad Evans](#).

Thank you to our early sponsors:

- Procter & Gamble
- The University of Colorado Boulder
- The University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory
- The University of Texas at San Antonio

The Council Has a New Address Starting October 1, 2026



We are excited to move into our new Washington, D.C., headquarters – officially “opening” on October 1, 2026 and ushering in a fresh start at 40!

Starting on October 1, please make sure to update your records – including accounts payable, payment systems, mailings lists, etc. – with our new address:

Council on Competitiveness
801 18th Street NW
Suite 800
Washington, DC 20006

We look forward to welcoming you to our new home soon!

2026 Global Innovation Summit - Bulgaria on the Horizon



The Council's sister organization, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC), will convene its 2026 Global Innovation Summit (GIS) in Sofia, Bulgaria, on October 19–22.

GFCC Chair Chad Holliday, GFCC President Deborah Wince-Smith, and GFCC Member Glavbolgarstroy Holding (GBS) will co-host the Summit, focusing

participants on: “Powering Competitiveness: Energy, Infrastructure and Digital Innovation for Economic Transformation.”

The 2026 GIS will bring together senior leaders from dozens of nations to explore energy security, next-generation grids, energy resilience, and the infrastructure investments needed to drive economic transformation. Members of the Council on Competitiveness are invited to participate. For more information, including the agenda, please contact Council EVP [Chad Evans](#).

Council Community News

Chancellor Joan Gabel and the University of Pittsburgh Earn Recognition for Outsized Impact



Photo Credit: Alexandra Wimley, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The University of Pittsburgh is experiencing remarkable momentum, with applications to its Oakland campus up 127 percent since 2020 and more than 75,000 students applying for fall 2026. Under Council Academic Vice Chair Chancellor Joan Gabel's leadership, Pitt is expanding its research and health sciences capabilities, including the forthcoming \$250 million Pitt BioForge facility.

[Read the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's* story on Pitt's growing impact here.](#)

Forbes has named Chancellor Gabel to the [2026 Forbes 50 Over 50 list](#) for her leadership in higher education and focus on student success, research, innovation, community impact, and affordability.

Notre Dame and South Bend Break Ground on AI and Data Analytics Innovation Hub



Rendering Credit: Gensler

National Commissioner Josh Parker, Chairman and CEO of Ancora - in partnership with leaders across the University of Notre Dame, including Dr. Jeff Rhoads, Vice President for Research and a member of the Council's Technology Leadership and Strategy Initiative - is helping advance a major innovation hub in South Bend. The University of Notre Dame, the City of South Bend, and community partners recently broke ground on Colfax Corner, a 204,000-square-foot hub focused on AI, advanced computing, and data analytics. The project is expected to generate more than \$750 million in economic impact and nearly 400 high-skilled jobs over the next decade.

Vanderbilt Chancellor Daniel Diermeier to Chair Nashville Chamber



The Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce has elected Vanderbilt University Chancellor Daniel Diermeier as its 2026-2028 chair. Chancellor Diermeier, a Council on Competitiveness Executive Committee Member and National Commissioner, will work with business and civic leaders to strengthen collaboration around talent, innovation, and economic growth, building on Vanderbilt's plans for a mixed-use innovation neighborhood designed to connect the university more closely with Nashville's innovation ecosystem.

Photo Credit: Vanderbilt University

AI Meets Advanced Manufacturing at ORNL

Oak Ridge National Laboratory Director Stephen Streiffer (a Council on Competitiveness National Commissioner) and his team at the Lab are bringing advanced manufacturing, AI, and real-time sensing together to strengthen America's nuclear manufacturing base. A new partnership focused on large, high-integrity nuclear components aims to create "born-qualified" parts that generate quality data throughout the manufacturing process. The effort builds on ORNL technologies such

as Peregrine, an AI-powered system that monitors 3D printing in real time to detect defects, reduce waste, and accelerate qualification. [Learn more about ORNL's advanced manufacturing work.](#)

Innosphere Named Among America's Best

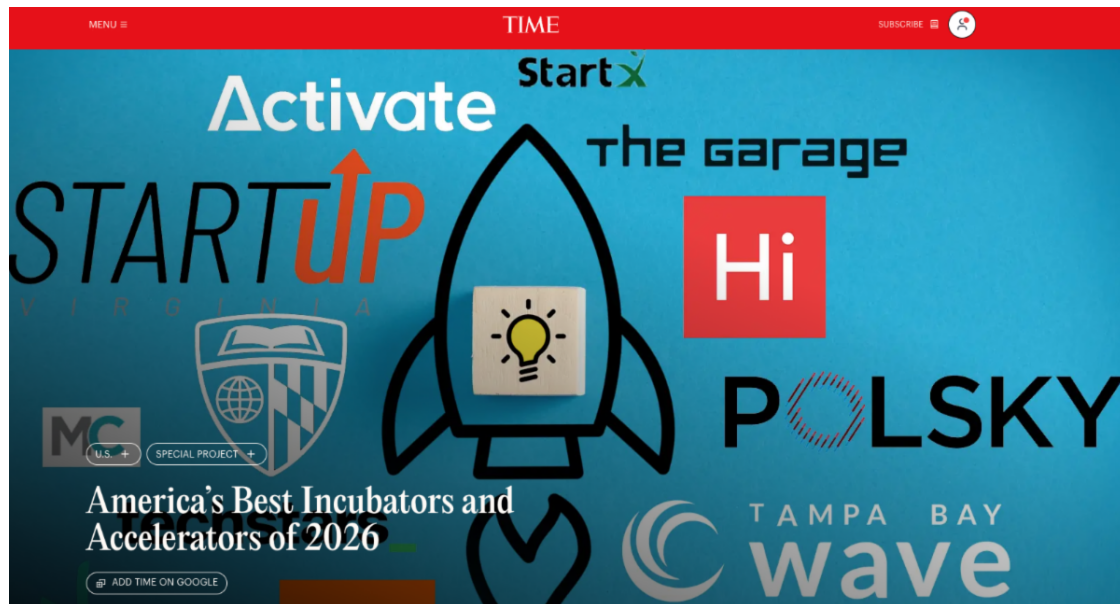


Image Credit: Time.com

Council member Michael Freeman, CEO of Innosphere Ventures, is putting Colorado's innovation ecosystem on the national map. *TIME* has named Innosphere to its 2026 America's Best Incubators & Accelerators list. In 2025, Innosphere helped 102 startups and raised \$248 million in capital while turning technical innovation into companies, jobs, and economic impact. Read the full announcement [here](#).

Competitiveness News

The White House Releases National Security Science & Technology Strategy

The White House has released a new National Security Science and Technology Strategy, establishing a framework for strengthening the nation's science and technology enterprise in support of national security. Maintaining U.S. technological leadership and accelerating innovation across critical science and technology domains is key to the strategy. [Read the National Security Science & Technology Strategy.](#)

DOE Launches Genesis Open Models Initiative

The U.S. Department of Energy has launched the Genesis Open Models Initiative, an effort to develop and release open-weight AI models designed specifically for scientific research. The initiative aims to bring AI and scientific communities together around shared infrastructure and accelerate breakthroughs across areas including

energy, materials, biology, and other scientific fields. [Learn more about the initiative.](#)

NSF Commits More Than \$1.5 Billion to Foundational Research

The National Science Foundation has announced 12 new funding opportunities totaling more than \$1.5 billion for foundational research across science and engineering. The investments span long-horizon, transformative research as well as faster-turnaround efforts. [Read more from NSF.](#)

Report Highlights China's Growing Data Advantage in AI

A U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission report examines how China is treating data as a strategic economic asset, using state-directed policies to expand the commercialization and deployment of data across its economy. The report makes the case that data, AI, and industrial capabilities are becoming deeply interconnected drivers of global competitiveness. [Read the report.](#)

New Signals on the Future of U.S. STEM Talent

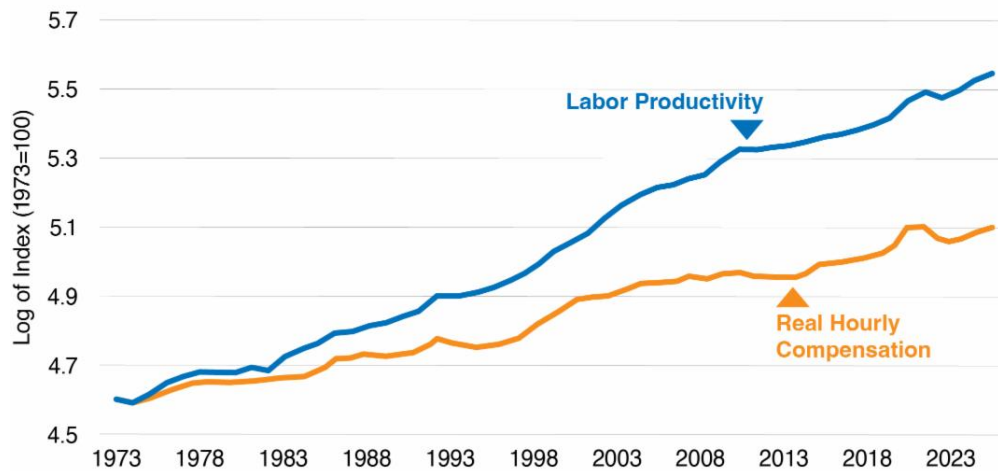
A new National Bureau of Economic Research study finds young scientists are reconsidering both academic careers and remaining in the United States. Surveying 916 PhD students and postdocs across 134 U.S. institutions, the researchers found that the share likely to remain in academia fell from 66 percent to 44 percent, while those likely or very likely to remain in the United States dropped from 93 percent to 72 percent. The authors warn that these shifts could weaken the STEM talent pipeline that fuels both academic and private-sector R&D. Read the full [National Bureau of Economic Research study.](#)

Council Insight

Productivity Gains Alone Do Not Guarantee Broadly Shared Prosperity

Labor Productivity and Real Hourly Compensation, Nonfarm Business Sector, 1973–2025

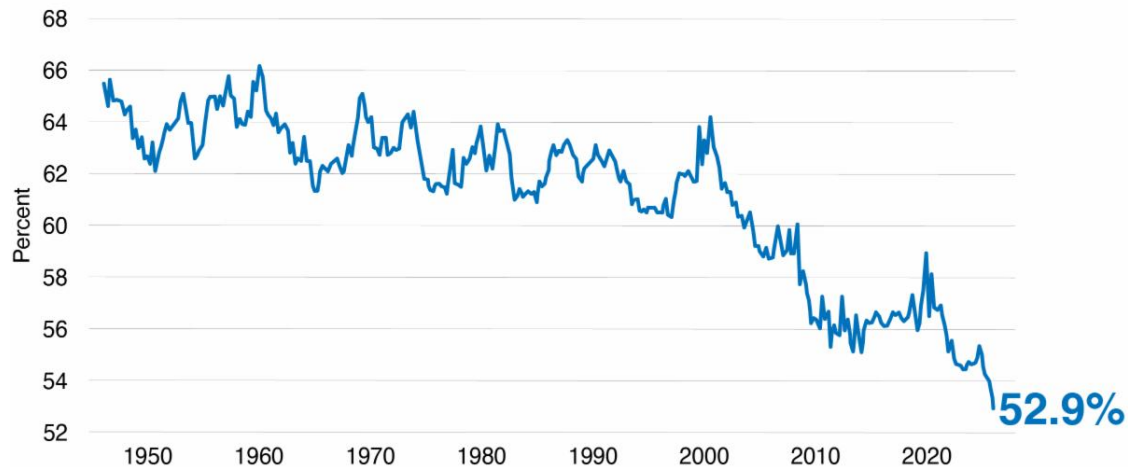
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



U.S. Workers See a Declining Share of Economic Output

The US labor share, or the percentage of output that accrues to workers in the form of compensation, sank again to a fresh record low in the second quarter of 2026.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Reuters.



The Council is highlighting two related trends in the U.S. economy. For much of the modern era, rising productivity and compensation moved broadly together, helping drive higher living standards. Drawing on Bureau of Labor Statistics data since 1973, the first graphic shows the extraordinary gains in U.S. productive capacity over the past five decades alongside a growing divergence between productivity and real hourly compensation in the nonfarm business sector. The second highlights another dimension of this shift: in the second quarter of 2026, labor's share of nominal GDP fell to a record-low 52.9 percent, even as productivity continued to grow.

These trends take on added significance as the United States enters another period of rapid technological change. As AI, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology, quantum technologies, and new forms of energy reshape the economy, the United States will need an ecosystem that can turn innovation into new businesses and industries, attract investment, build productive capacity, and expand opportunities for workers and communities. From entrepreneurship and capital formation to talent, manufacturing, regional innovation, and the policies that govern technology, our ability to turn invention into investment, investment into productive capacity, and

productivity into opportunity will be critical to both U.S. competitiveness and broad-based prosperity.

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