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§ 471. Congressional findings and declaration of purpose

The Congress hereby finds and declares that:

(a) As technology continues to change and expand rapidly, its applications are—

(1) large and growing in scale; and

(2) increasingly extensive, pervasive, and critical in their impact, beneficial and adverse, on the natural and social environment.

(b) Therefore, it is essential that, to the fullest extent possible, the consequences of technological applications be anticipated, understood, and considered in determination of public policy on existing and emerging national problems.

(c) The Congress further finds that:

(1) the Federal agencies presently responsible directly to the Congress are not designed to provide the legislative branch with adequate and timely information, independently developed, relating to the potential impact of technological applications, and

(2) the present mechanisms of the Congress do not and are not designed to provide the legislative branch with such information.

(d) Accordingly, it is necessary for the Congress to—

(1) equip itself with new and effective means for securing competent, unbiased information concerning the physical, biological, economic, social, and political effects of such applications; and

(2) utilize this information, whenever appropriate, as one factor in the legislative assessment of matters pending before the Congress, particularly in those instances where the Federal Government may be called upon to consider support for, or management or regulation of, technological applications.

(Pub. L. 92-484, § 2, Oct. 13, 1972, 86 Stat. 797.)

SHORT TITLE

Section 1 of Pub. L. 92-484 provided: "That this Act [enacting this chapter and amending section 1862 of Title 42, The Public Health and Welfare] may be cited as the 'Technology Assessment Act of 1972'."

TERMINATION OF OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

Pub. L. 104-53, title I, §§ 113, 114, Nov. 19, 1995, 109 Stat. 526, provided that:

"SEC. 113. Upon enactment of this Act [Nov. 19, 1995] all employees of the Office of Technology Assessment for 183 days preceding termination of employment who are terminated as a result of the elimination of the Office and who are not otherwise gainfully employed may continue to be paid by the Office of Technology Assessment at their respective salaries for a period not to exceed 60 calendar days following the employee's date of termination or until the employee becomes otherwise gainfully employed whichever is earlier. Any day for which a former employee receives a payment under this section shall be counted as Federal service for purposes of determining entitlement to benefits, including retirement, annual and sick leave earnings, and health and life insurance. A statement in writing to the Director of the Office of Technology Assessment or his designee by any such employee that he was not gainfully employed during such period or the portion thereof for which payment is claimed shall be accepted as prima facie evidence that he was not so employed.

"SEC. 114. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended [40 U.S.C. 471 et seq.], or any other provision of law, upon the abolition of the Office of Technology Assessment, all records and property of the Office (including the Unix system, all computer hardware and software, all library collections and research materials, and all photocopying equipment), shall be under the administrative control of the Architect of the Capitol. Not later than December 31, 1995, the Architect shall submit a proposal to transfer such records and property to appropriate support agencies of the Legislative Branch which request such transfer, and shall carry out such transfer subject to the approval of the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate."

SECTION REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This section is referred to in section 472 of this title.

§ 472. Office of Technology Assessment

(a) Creation

In accordance with the findings and declaration of purpose in section 471 of this title, there is hereby created the Office of Technology Assessment (hereinafter referred to as the "Office") which shall be within and responsible to the legislative branch of the Government.

(b) Composition

The Office shall consist of a Technology Assessment Board (hereinafter referred to as the

“Board”) which shall formulate and promulgate the policies of the Office, and a Director who shall carry out such policies and administer the operations of the Office.

(c) Functions and duties

The basic function of the Office shall be to provide early indications of the probable beneficial and adverse impacts of the applications of technology and to develop other coordinate information which may assist the Congress. In carrying out such function, the Office shall:

- (1) identify existing or probable impacts of technology or technological programs;
- (2) where possible, ascertain cause-and-effect relationships;
- (3) identify alternative technological methods of implementing specific programs;
- (4) identify alternative programs for achieving requisite goals;
- (5) make estimates and comparisons of the impacts of alternative methods and programs;
- (6) present findings of completed analyses to the appropriate legislative authorities;
- (7) identify areas where additional research or data collection is required to provide adequate support for the assessments and estimates described in paragraph (1) through (5) of this subsection; and
- (8) undertake such additional associated activities as the appropriate authorities specified under subsection (d) of this section may direct.

(d) Initiation of assessment activities

Assessment activities undertaken by the Office may be initiated upon the request of:

- (1) the chairman of any standing, special, or select committee of either House of the Congress, or of any joint committee of the Congress, acting for himself or at the request of the ranking minority member or a majority of the committee members;
- (2) the Board; or
- (3) the Director, in consultation with the Board.

(e) Availability of information

Assessments made by the Office, including information, surveys, studies, reports, and findings related thereto, shall be made available to the initiating committee or other appropriate committees of the Congress. In addition, any such information, surveys, studies, reports, and findings produced by the Office may be made available to the public except where—

- (1) to do so would violate security statutes; or
- (2) the Board considers it necessary or advisable to withhold such information in accordance with one or more of the numbered paragraphs in section 552(b) of title 5.

(Pub. L. 92-484, § 3, Oct. 13, 1972, 86 Stat. 797.)

SECTION REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This section is referred to in section 476 of this title; title 20 section 2423.

§ 473. Technology Assessment Board

(a) Membership

The Board shall consist of thirteen members as follows:

(1) six Members of the Senate, appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate, three from the majority party and three from the minority party;

(2) six Members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, three from the majority party and three from the minority party; and

(3) the Director, who shall not be a voting member.

(b) Execution of functions during vacancies; filling of vacancies

Vacancies in the membership of the Board shall not affect the power of the remaining members to execute the functions of the Board and shall be filled in the same manner as in the case of the original appointment.

(c) Chairman and vice chairman, selection procedure

The Board shall select a chairman and a vice chairman from among its members at the beginning of each Congress. The vice chairman shall act in the place and stead of the chairman in the absence of the chairman. The chairmanship and the vice chairmanship shall alternate between the Senate and the House of Representatives with each Congress. The chairman during each even-numbered Congress shall be selected by the Members of the House of Representatives on the Board from among their number. The vice chairman during each Congress shall be chosen in the same manner from that House of Congress other than the House of Congress of which the chairman is a Member.

(d) Meetings; powers of Board

The Board is authorized to sit and act at such places and times during the sessions, recesses, and adjourned periods of Congress, and upon a vote of a majority of its members, to require by subpoena or otherwise the attendance of such witnesses and the production of such books, papers, and documents, to administer such oaths and affirmations, to take such testimony, to procure such printing and binding, and to make such expenditures, as it deems advisable. The Board may make such rules respecting its organization and procedures as it deems necessary, except that no recommendation shall be reported from the Board unless a majority of the Board assent. Subpenas may be issued over the signature of the chairman of the Board or of any voting member designated by him or by the Board, and may be served by such person or persons as may be designated by such chairman or member. The chairman of the Board or any voting member thereof may administer oaths or affirmations to witnesses.

(Pub. L. 92-484, § 4, Oct. 13, 1972, 86 Stat. 798.)

§ 474. Director of Office of Technology Assessment

(a) Appointment; term; compensation

The Director of the Office of Technology Assessment shall be appointed by the Board and shall serve for a term of six years unless sooner removed by the Board. He shall receive basic pay at the rate provided for level III of the Executive Schedule under section 5314 of title 5.