from the office of

AC-0400

Senator Edward M. Kennedy

of Massachusetts

SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY SAYS OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT
A PROMISING TOOL IN SHAPING NATION'S TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

For Immediate Release
December 31, 1974

Senator Edward M. Kennedy said today that the new Congressional Office of Technology Assessment is not only off to a promising start but shows every indication of becoming "a key Congressional tool in shaping technology for the nation's economic and social needs."

In his final report as first chairman of the Technology Assessment Board, the Senator described the year-old organization as "a major experiment in the social control of technology," OTA, he said, is an institutional innovation to meet the needs of Congress in developing its own sources of unbiased technical expertise."

Forecasting the impact of OTA studies, already underway, on Congressional action, Senator Kennedy stated: "The fields we have chosen to focus on reflect the problems of our times: energy, food, health, transportation, oceans, materials, technology and world trade. Our studies seek answers to such critical questions as:

- "How should we allocate our resources to energy R&D?
- "How economical is solar energy for the generation of electric power?
- "What are the economic, social, and environmental impacts of drilling for offshore oil and gas? Of the use of deep water ports? Of nuclear power plants at sea?
- "How can we strengthen the technology of our fisheries industry?
- "What is the impact of the energy shortage on fertilizers and food production?
- "What is the impact of automated mass transit technology -- not only on movement of people and goods, but on jobs and the economy?
- "How can we use our high technology products to strengthen America's international competitive position?"

Established by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972, which Senator Kennedy cosponsored, OTA is one of only 4 agencies created within Congress to aid in Congressional decision making. The others are the General Accounting Office (GAO), the Congressional Research Service (CRS), and the new Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

With a full-time staff of 50, supported by over 100 expert consultants and the use of contractors from industry and the universities, OTA has the job of advising Congress on the consequences -- both pro and con -- of complex technical proposals and programs.

The Office is directed by former Congressman Emilio Daddario who originally conceived the idea of technology assessment in 1966. In his statement, Senator Kennedy emphasized the outstanding leadership furnished by Director Daddario in the first year of OTA's operations. The governing Board consists of the Director, along with 6 Senators and 6 House Members (evenly split between 6 Democrats and 6 Republicans), which was chaired by Senator Kennedy during its formative period in the 93rd Congress, and which by statute rotates to House chairmanship in the forthcoming 94th Congress.

Senator Kennedy noted that "the one study completed to date, the Drug Bioequivalence Project, had highly significant results which substantially reshaped legislation in my Health Subcommittee." Senator Kennedy said the study found: "(1) that the drug industry needs a substantial improvement in quality control; and (2) that widescale reliance on generic drugs needs to be carefully planned and implemented in phases over a sufficient time period."

In his statement, Senator Kennedy singled out the extraordinary quality of the Advisory Committees which OTA had assembled, terming their members among "the most outstanding people in the country including a Nobel Laureate in medicine, the Dean of the Yale Medical School; the presidents of MIT, Cal Tech and Michigan State; the Manager of the Chicago Transit Authority and other state and local officials; the executive vice presidents of DOW Chemical, Texas Instruments Bell Laboratories and other leaders in engineering, the behavioral and life sciences; the President of the International Association of Machinists and other labor officials; the first woman to serve as Assistant to the President of the United States for Consumer Affairs; and a noted authoress and lecturer on environmental, economic, and consumer, issues."

In concluding his report, Senator Kennedy stated: "My most satisfying achievement as Chairman is the demonstration that we can effectively operate a non-partisan Board with conservatives, moderates, and liberals from all regions of the country; that we can work together to provide Congress with the objective information it needs so desperately. OTA is off to a promising start and shows every indication of becoming a key Congressional tool in shaping technology for the nation's economic and social needs."

The full text of Senator Kennedy's report follows:

Congress of the United States
OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

EMILIO Q. DADDARIO
DIRECTOR
DANIEL V. DE SIMONE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

December 31, 1974

Fellow Members of the Technology Assessment Board:

As the 93rd Congress draws to a close and I prepare to turn over my chairmanship to a House Member of our Board, I should like to share my thoughts with you about what we have accomplished thus far, and what still needs to be done.

The Office of Technology Assessment is an experiment in Congressional thought and action. The questions it addresses are critical.

-Can we shape modern technology to meet human needs?

-Can we create energy sources which are cheap and non-polluting?

-Can we expand productivity while generating more jobs, and jobs which are more meaningful?

-Can we transform the wonders of modern medical science into the delivery of excellent health care to all our citizens?

-Can we find a way to feed the hungry throughout the world, while meeting the needs of our farmers and consumers here at home?

-Can we design practical mass transit systems for our cities and suburbs?

In every technical area there are questions like these crying for solution; and there is important legislation which hinges on the answers that are uncovered.

But OTA is not only an experiment in technical analysis, it is also an experiment in institutional reform.

Can the Congress redress the imbalance of information with the Executive Branch? In an age in which technical knowledge is power, the capability of the Congress to cope with complex technical issues has been woefully inadequate. Decisions on weapons systems, on major programs like the Supersonic Transport (SST), and on the shape and direction of the nation's research and development programs have all been made on the basis of information furnished by the Executive Branch--by the very agencies having the most to gain or lose by the decisions made by Congress.

Congress needs its own source of unbiased technical expertise, and OTA is an institutional innovation to meet that need. But even more than a technical or institutional experiment, OTA is an experiment in how to make democracy work.

It is not just a matter of whether Congress can utilize technical information and advice. The crucial point is whether Congress can do so in the full glare of public scrutiny--and with the full participation of the varied public groups that have a stake in the outcome of the decisions.

Thus the Advisory Committees we have established contain not only the technical experts, and the economists, lawyers, and sociologists--but also the representatives of labor and industry, consumers, environmentalists, and other interested segments of the public.

All these varied elements participate in shaping the studies and in appraising their results. The efforts of these panels are neither pandemonium, nor panaceas, but a major experiment in the social control of technology.

We will not know the outcome of this experiment for some time to come. But in the one study which has been completed to date--the Drug Bioequivalence Project--we obtained results which were highly significant: (1) that the drug industry needs a substantial improvement in quality control procedures; and (2) that any wide-scale reliance on generic drugs

needs to be carefully planned and implemented in phases over a sufficient period of time.

I can attest that my own thinking was strongly affected by the findings of this study, and that legislation in my Health Subcommittee was substantially reshaped as a result.

I believe this excellent beginning is a reliable forecast of the future impact of OTA studies on Congressional action.

The fields we have chosen to focus on reflect the problems of our times: energy, food, health, transportation, oceans, materials, and technology and world trade.

As the results of our studies start to come in over the coming year, we will begin to get answers to critical questions in all these priority areas.

-How should we allocate our resources to energy R&D?

-How economical is solar energy for the generation of electric power?

-What are the economic, social, and environmental impacts of drilling for offshore oil and gas? Of the use of deep water ports?

-How can we strengthen the technology of our fisheries industry?

-How can we strengthen overall food technology systems? What is the impact of the energy shortage on fertilizers and food production?

-How can we assure the nation adequate supplies of materials resources?

-What is the impact of automated mass transit technology--not only on movement of people and goods, but on jobs and the economy in general?

-How can we use our high technology products to strengthen America's international competitive position?

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These are but a few examples of the critical issues addressed by OTA studies. I fully expect that the results of these studies will significantly clarify future Congressional debate on such issues.

Over the past year, with the outstanding leadership furnished by Director Daddario, we have built a powerful team for tackling these problems. Mim Daddario is one of those fortunate figures in history who have not only the imagination to conceive a novel idea of significance to society, but who also have the concrete opportunity to put the idea into practice.

Under his leadership, OTA has assembled a high quality, highly motivated staff, and has pulled together an outstanding array of talent on our Advisory Committees in special areas and on our statutory Advisory Council. We are fortunate to have on these panels some of the most outstanding people in the country, including a Nobel Laureate in medicine, the Dean of the Yale Medical School; the presidents of MIT, Cal Tech and Michigan State; the Manager of the Chicago Transit Authority and other state and local officials; the executive vice presidents of DOW Chemical, Texas Instruments, Bell Laboratories and other leaders in engineering, the behavioral and life sciences; the President of the International Association of Machinists and other labor officials; the first woman to serve as Assistant to the President of the United States for Consumer Affairs; and a noted authoress and lecturer on environmental, economic, and consumer, issues.

Welding this diversity of professional talent into an effective team has been our most tangible accomplishment over the first year.

But an intangible accomplishment of perhaps even greater significance -- and especially gratifying to me personally -- is the demonstration that the Congress can mount and manage a fully non-partisan effort to direct the nation's technology toward our citizens' needs.

Even before the Technology Assessment Board had organized itself, various news commentators were speculating that OTA would strangle itself in a web of political ambition and partisan interest.

We have demonstrated that we can effectively operate a non-partisan Board, evenly split between the parties, with conservatives, moderates, and liberals from all regions of the country, and that we can amicably and constructively resolve our different points of view and work together to provide Congress with the objective information it needs so desperately. This has been most satisfying to me as Chairman.

This is the challenging experiment on which we have embarked. Can man rationally control his scientific knowledge and put it to work to solve human problems? Can we bring together the best brains in the nation? Can we blend their deliberations with the interests of industry, the consumer, the environment, the economy, and the quality of life in our society?

Can we forge from these facts and these divergent points of view a rational set of alternatives for Congress to consider? Can we set out clearly and objectively the consequences of each alternative -- the benefits as well as the costs and the risks? This is what OTA is all about. I believe OTA is off to a promising start and shows every indication of becoming a key Congressional tool in shaping technology for the nation's economic needs.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve as your chairman during OTA's first critical year and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

EDWARD M. KENNEDY
Chairman

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