

STATEMENT OF SENATOR EDWARD M. KENNEDY
CHAIRMAN, TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT BOARD,
OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT,
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON
CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

July 30, 1974

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Joint Committee:

I welcome this opportunity to discuss with you the activities of the Office of Technology Assessment and its role in meeting the Congress' need for information on the impacts of technology on public policy questions.

Your staff has compiled a useful compendium on "Congressional Research Support and Information Services" which includes extensive materials on OTA. I will supplement this for the record by a copy of our first full year's OTA Annual Report, -- the blue booklet attached to my statement.

It has been a rewarding experience to participate personally in building a new institution to strengthen the decision making process in the Congress. The need for technology assessment, -- the examination of the direct and secondary impacts of technologies and the analysis of alternative methods to achieve the goals involved and to handle the impacts of technologies -- is evident for most of our committees in both Houses. Early committee requests to OTA reprinted at pages 9-23 of our Annual Report include those from the Judiciary, Ways and Means, Foreign Affairs, Science and Astronautics, Public Works and Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committees in the House, and from the Commerce,

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Agriculture, Finance and Appropriations Committees in the Senate.

In addition to these early requests, OTA also received a request from the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Health Subcommittee on bio-equivalence of drugs and from the Senate Committee on Aeronautical and Space Sciences on solar generation of electricity. An OTA panel has already completed the study requested on drug bio-equivalence and testified before our Health Subcommittee last week. Its report, which I also submit for the record, was an outstanding piece of work and will prove useful in shaping both HEW regulations in this area and the legislation we have under consideration.

You will see the thirteen members of the Board of the Office of Technology Assessment listed on the opening page of the OTA Annual Report. It has been tremendously helpful to have such strong representation from both Houses. There has been good attendance at meetings of the Board and keen interest in shaping the office's work program.

As Congress made clear during passage of the OTA legislation in the House, OTA is to be the instrument of the Congress and under its exclusive control. We in the Senate completely endorsed this position. This has been achieved in the Technology Assessment Act by giving the Congressional Board the oversight function for OTA and responsibility for all policy decisions. The Director of the Office, Mr. Daddario, as the chief executive officer of OTA and a member of the Board, has the responsibility for executing these policies. The Act further provides for a 12 man Technology Assessment Advisory Council, whose function is

to provide advice to OTA, upon request of the Board. In addition to the Advisory Council we have established blue ribbon panels of experts for the areas being assessed by OTA because we believe it is important to have the counsel of scientific, educational, business, consumer, labor and public interest leaders from around the country as well as strong liaison with Congress' other information arms, -- the GAO and the Congressional Research Service. The Advisory Council and our Advisory Panels have been giving us helpful advice on our early assessments, recommendations as to criteria for future technology assessments, contract proposals and related matters. At this point in the record I will insert a list of the names and affiliation of the members of our Advisory Council and our blue ribbon Assessment Panels.

We have been fortunate in being able to set up OTA under the leadership of our former colleague, Mr. Daddario, who authored the Technology Assessment Act in the House. He has brought together a very capable core staff who are presently at work on developing assessments in the energy, food, mass transportation, health and materials areas. We believe that by initially concentrating in these high priority areas we can build expertise and important links with our user committees.

Ultimately it will be the usefulness of OTA's work to the committees of Congress that will shape its development and agenda. At the present we are hard at work on turning out some solid assessment products. The results are only beginning to take shape. I believe that when they are available, our Congressional Board and our colleagues throughout the Congress will take satisfaction in having launched

this experiment in Government. OTA has the capability to make the legislative process not only more knowledgeable about technological questions, but also more perceptive about fundamental choices about our future.