

STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE CHARLES A. MOSHER  
VICE CHAIRMAN, TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT BOARD, OFFICE OF  
TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT, BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON  
CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

July 30, 1974

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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Joint Committee:

We members of the Technology Assessment Board from the House, where the technology assessment legislation began, are very pleased at the way this concept has taken hold with our Senate colleagues. I want to endorse what Senator Kennedy has said about the good start that has been made in OTA's operations and our good fortune in having our friend and former colleague, Congressman Daddario, as the first Director of the Office.

One point I think worth mentioning that augurs well for the future usefulness of OTA and the acceptance in Congress of its products, is the nonpartisan character of the Technology Assessment Board and OTA's operations. The Board is by statute evenly divided between parties and includes the OTA Director as well. You will notice that we have established the precedent of having the Vice Chairman from the other party than that of the Chairman. Similarly, with regard to the staffing of OTA, we have consistently been looking for the best people, independent of party considerations. Requests for assessments originating with Republican Members of the Congress have been given the most careful consideration and are responsible for a number of OTA's active projects.

I would like to give you an example of how we have laid the groundwork for one assessment area.

From the perspective of my work on the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, I have been particularly interested in the development of OTA's assessment activity in the oceans area. The first request to OTA for an assessment related to the proposed acceleration of Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas development came from the House Judiciary Committee (which authorized the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act in the House in 1953).

Moreover, Senator Hollings and the Senate Commerce Committee called for a comprehensive assessment of oceans issues including the multiple uses of the U.S. Coastal Zone.

OTA monitored the hearings of both the Judiciary Committee and the Senate Commerce and Interior Committees on this subject to pinpoint the issues and assembled a group of experts in May to review these issues and the great number of existing OCS reports, including the most recent year-long study done by the Council on Environmental Quality. Dr. Don Kash, who led the University of Oklahoma technology assessment on Outer Continental Shelf issues, chaired this OTA group. The Kash group recommended that for useful results the OTA study should be "site specific," focussing on impacts on a given stretch of coast. This has been the course our Congressional Board has just approved, selecting the coasts of New Jersey and Delaware because of the prospect of early OCS development as well as the likelihood of early deployment of offshore nuclear plants and deepwater ports which we also want to assess.

From our experience in developing this study, I see an OTA ability to serve the needs of several committees at one time, an ability to tap the best of available expertise and existing studies, and an ability to formulate an assessment which will have concrete usefulness.

In short, I feel that as we have been feeling our way in setting up this new institution, we have been building soundly. Congress will face great problems in the years ahead; I believe we will do a better job because we have OTA.