

February 24, 2010

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Chair, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
118 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert B. Aderholt
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

As public health, scientist, labor, public interest, environmental, faith-based, civil liberties and transparency organizations that believe good government depends on access to reliable and independent scientific and technological advice, we are writing to urge you to include funding for the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in the legislative branch appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2011.

The public health, national security, and environmental challenges that face our nation can be met only if members of Congress are able to make fully-informed decisions. With the rise of the Internet, more information is available than ever before—yet it is difficult if not impossible to separate facts from agenda-driven spin. Congress needs an independent body of experts to offer guidance on issues directly related to public health and safety, national security, the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars, and how innovation and competitiveness can create viable American jobs.

For 23 years, the OTA provided trustworthy, non-partisan information on scientific and technological issues from Alzheimer's disease to acid rain. Despite its good work, OTA was the victim of budget cuts in 1995, a move that saved the government a little more than \$20 million annually. Since then, the government has spent billions on new technologies that have not worked as promised.

Revitalizing the OTA would enable Members of Congress to more fully understand the advantages and implications of the science and technologies in which they are asked to invest.

The OTA was never abolished, just stripped of its funding. We urge you to restore its funding to ensure Congress has adequate guidance on emerging science and technology issues.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Baish
Director of Government Relations
American Association of Law Libraries

Laura W. Murphy
Director, Washington Legislative Office
American Civil Liberties Union

John Arthur Marshall
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Arthur R. Marshall Foundation

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Ari Schwartz
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Center for Democracy and Technology

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Michelle De Mooy
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Executive Director
Endangered Species Coalition

John Richard
Director
Essential Information

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National Council for Science and the Environment

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National Research Center for Women & Families

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Lewis Maltby
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Patient Privacy Rights

Deborah Pierce
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Privacy Rights Clearinghouse

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Cc:
The Honorable Tom Cole
The Honorable Michael Honda
The Honorable Steven C. LaTourette
The Honorable Jerry Lewis
The Honorable Betty McCollum
The Honorable David R. Obey
The Honorable Ciro Rodriguez
The Honorable C.A. "Dutch" Ruppertsberger
The Honorable Tim Ryan