

r e c o r d  
*of OTA's organization, operations, and abolishment*

The beginning of FY95 found management and staff of the Office of Technology Assessment involved in adjusting to and continuing the implementation of a major reorganization. The major structural and personnel actions of that reorganization took place during FY94, but as OTA learned, any major restructuring is an ongoing process of adaptation and adjustment. New policies and procedures designed to complement the reorganization—such as a formal project tracking system and a process of project-long internal peer review (shadow panels and “project kibitzers”)—were also being developed and put in place.

In addition, the analytical agenda of the agency was a full and challenging one. Due to the elections of November 1994, OTA staff were beginning the process of ascertaining the research needs of the new Republican chairpersons, and planning the year’s research agenda in ways that could accommodate new requests from them. Thus, the activities at the opening of FY95, in early fall of 1994 had a double focus: the conduct of a wide range of important research and the continuing challenge of guiding a newly reorganized agency.

This focus was blurred in December 1994, when the Senate Republican Caucus voted in favor of the elimination of OTA, and shifted entirely in the ensuing months, as further legislative actions moved closer and closer to a formal decision for elimination.

*[Organization]*

The Office of Technology Assessment was established by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 [86 Stat.797] as a congressional support agency with the mission of helping Congress deal with policy issues affected by the complexities of science and technology, from biotechnology to fusion energy, from telecommunications to space launch capabilities. OTA was designed to operate in a uniquely expert, objective, and nonpartisan fashion.

OTA's staff represented every major field of science and technology. It was organized into two major divisions (down from three in previous years) comprising six research programs (down from nine); these are described in the next section.

Administrative support offices supported the analytical work of OTA. There were offices for budget and finance, personnel, contracts, information services, telecommunications and information systems, building services, and publishing. The Congressional and Public Affairs Office handled much of the agency's congressional liaison and press work, and relations with the Board and the Technology Assessment Advisory Council.

OTA was governed by a 12-member, bipartisan congressional Technology Assessment Board of six Senators and six Representatives, equally divided by party. In addition, a distinguished council of 10 leaders from science and technology, business and industry, and education provided advice as the Technology Assessment Advisory Council.

OTA undertook assessments at the request of any congressional committee Chairman or Ranking Minority Member. The OTA Board could also request work, as could OTA's Director. In practice, most assessments were requested by the Chairman and the Ranking Minority Member of a committee, and a great many were supported by more than one committee. The Technology Assessment Board made the final decision on whether OTA could proceed with an assessment and reviewed all reports prior to their release.

Most of OTA's work concentrated on in-depth assessment that took one to two years to complete. Drawing on past and current work, OTA also met immediate congressional needs with a variety of analytical support such as briefings, testimony, and special reports.

*[Fiscal Year 1995 Activities]*

The key overlay for the agency's activities was a nearly physical sense of uncertainty, a 10 month long environment of clear and immediate uncertainty about the agency's entire future. It was a period of extreme ups and downs, with the "ups" being a sense that the agency would continue to exist in some form but with the loss of a substantial proportion (from 20 to 50 percent) of its resources and, especially, staff. The "downs" were periods when OTA's termination seemed the most likely outcome.

We mention the mood, or climate, of the agency during most of FY95 because the agency's operations took place in that context. Despite the uncertainty of each staff person's future and the decision by the Congress that OTA was not worth saving, or perhaps because of these factors, the agency's productivity reached all time highs. As indicated in the Director's statement, OTA produced and released in some form a total of 61 research Reports and Background Papers plus the usual administrative documents (an Annual Report and catalogs of publications).

The 61 research documents delivered to the requesting Committees and the Congress as a whole comprise several classes of products. Many were finished as originally planned, with scope, format, and timing unchanged. Others, however, were revised—some in depth of analysis, some in scope of topics addressed—and some were unchanged in scope but collapsed in time by working many many extra hours—in order to deliver before OTA's elimination. Some of the projects OTA had underway at the beginning of FY95 had to simply be dropped, or had one or more of multiple planned documents dropped, and these projects are thus not in the 61 completions.

The 61 Reports and Background Papers completed and delivered are listed, along with the requesting and endorsing Members and Committees, at the conclusion of this statement.

*[Abolishment]*

The decision by the Congress to abolish OTA effective September 30, 1995, followed a year of uncertainty and ever changing prospects for survival. The process began in December 1994 with a vote by the Senate Republican Caucus to recommend termination of the agency and gathered momentum with the naming of Senator Mack as Chairman of the Senate Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee. Senator Mack co-authored the Caucus report and had publicly vowed to abolish the agency. Considerable debate followed in both houses of the Congress, beginning with a joint hearing between the House and Senate Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittees. The Subcommittees discussed alternative proposals for trimming the \$1.3 billion legislative branch budgets.

Although OTA represented less than 1 percent of the legislative branch budget (1/20th the size of the General Accounting Office alone), early in the 104th Congress OTA became a symbol of the Congressional Leadership's ability to reduce the size of government—a function, an agency, and its associated cost within the legislative branch of government. This became the principal argument behind the House and Senate Leadership's decision to debate the future of OTA in the appropriations process rather than through the agency's authorizing and oversight committees, the Senate Rules and House Science Committees. In the House, most questions put to the leadership regarding OTA's fate were referred to Representative Bob Walker, Chairman of the House Science Committee and close colleague of Speaker Gingrich. Chairman Walker, nonetheless, was silent in all open Committee and floor debates regarding OTA's fate although he occasionally made statements to the press praising the quality of OTA's work but expressing concern about synchronization of OTA's work products with the "Congressional rhythm." In the Senate, only Senator Mack seemed openly intent on eliminating OTA with virtually all others professing an open mind on the subject.

With proposed elimination on the table, OTA's supporters in Congress, led by the members of the Technology Assessment Board and many others, argued the case for OTA's unique contributions to the legislative process, including its nonpartisan oversight and management, its outreach-oriented research process (reaching over 5,000 distinguished experts annually), the exceptional quality of its staff and the work they produced (over half of OTA's professional staff held PhDs spanning the science and technology-related disciplines—unique in the legislative branch), and the importance of the function in today's increasingly technology dependent world (OTA's structure is being emulated in governments around the world), especially when few in Congress come from science and technology backgrounds. The science and technology community also registered its support for OTA with strong letters of endorsement from the National Academy of Sciences, The National Academy of Engineering, the Institute of Medicine, The American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the American Physical Society, the Federation of American Scientists, and many others from academia, industry, and overseas.

[HOUSE DEBATE]

The formal process for elimination began in the House Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee. In their testimony the heads of the Legislative support agencies as well as Members of TAB, including Reps. Houghton, Oxley, Brown, Dingell, and McDermott sharply distinguished the roles of these agencies. Chairman Packard, however, delivered an appropriations bill eliminating funding for OTA arguing that the information provided by OTA can be acquired elsewhere. This position did not prevail; Mr. Houghton, Chair-designee of TAB, and Mr. Fazio, ranking minority member of the Legislative Branch subcommittee, and a long time OTA supporter, fashioned a floor amendment (actually two different versions with Mr. Fazio subsequently deferring to Mr. Houghton's version) designed to preserve

the function of OTA and making it a part of the Library of Congress. However, the House Rules Committee would only allow floor debate on amendments that were revenue-neutral compared with the Committee-passed bill, though that bill was below the legislative branch allocation included in the draft House budget resolution. As a result, Mr. Fazio and Mr. Houghton chose, as a placeholder, to propose reducing the Library of Congress appropriation by several percent to provide for OTA since that line item was the only amount increased over the previous year in the Committee-passed bill, vowing to restore the amount reduced in the House-Senate Conference on the bill. Apparently, the LOC feared the restoration of the reduction might not be delivered in the conference since the Librarian of Congress began to counsel members against the Houghton-Fazio amendment.

The floor debate on this amendment was heavily in favor of OTA with only Chairman Packard arguing against the amendment. The amendment prevailed by a wide margin. Floor statements in support of the agency came from both sides of the aisle including Representatives Weldon, Boehlert, Hyde, Houghton, Clinger, Walsh, Morella, Fazio, Brown, Dingell, Kennedy, Engel, Moran, and Skaggs.

EXCERPTS FROM STATEMENTS OF SUPPORTERS ON A PROPOSED  
AMENDMENT TO RESTORE FUNDING TO OTA DURING THE HOUSE  
FLOOR DEBATES INCLUDED:

*[Representative Brown]*

At a time when budget cuts are a priority, some have questioned whether Congress needs a support agency whose primary mission is to assess technology and its implications for society. I hope you will answer that question with an emphatic yes because I believe today we need OTA more than ever before. I have been involved with OTA from the very beginning and have watched its development from my vantage point on the OTA Board since 1975. Congress established OTA because there was a great need to have our own independent and objective source of

information on complicated scientific and technological issues. I am convinced that this need is stronger than ever because science and technology permeate so many of the issues that we consider, such as space, energy, environment, and health. When OTA was created, no one knew exactly how it was going to work. There were times during the early years when we were not quite sure it would work at all. I think few of us would have predicted what a vital role OTA would play in the legislative processes over the years, and how valuable its work would be to so many different committees and to Members from both sides of the aisle.

*[Representative Houghton]*

We should not go blind into the 21st century thinking about a whole variety of things, not understanding science. There are only 3 scientists in this body. Most people do not consider the scientific implications here. They are critically important. I have been involved as a businessman, before I came here, in cutting, cutting, cutting all my life. That is the nature of what business does. Never once did we cut the research, because it not only affects the cost but particularly it affects the revenues. If we are going to go into this next century and our major war will be economic rather than military, we must know what our legislative body can do and what other people are going to do in the world around us. Therefore, I plead either to support the Fazio amendment or my particular amendment in terms of preserving an element of scientific understanding without which I think we are going to be in terrible trouble.

*[Representative Fazio]*

I think is important to restore the Office of Technology Assessment to that group of agencies that have shown an outstanding ability to assist this Congress in its workload. There is no question in my mind that this is an organization that, if eliminated, would be seriously missed by this institution and I think by the people who elect us and send us to Washington

to serve every 2 years. Mr. Chairman, this is a very complex world we are part of. Many of us are trained in the social sciences and humanities. We are not physicists, chemists. There are very few of us that have scientific degrees. Yet we as a Congress, in almost every committee of jurisdiction, are assigned a responsibility of very frequently, particularly in the appropriations process, making fundamental judgments about questions relating to science and technology that are beyond our ability to understand without the assistance of people who are expert. What have we done? Instead of going out and hiring a group of people who are standing by to advise us, we have created a small entity with a core staff that works with thousands of people, from the academic world, from the private sector, from national laboratories, from any number of places where scientists are employed in this country, to help us solve the problems that come to us on a regular basis. We have had this agency, which has a \$22 million budget, pay for itself hundreds of times over by giving this Congress the kind of advice it needs to prevent mistakes from being made. Some are, anyway. We have not always used OTA to the extent we should. But my suggestion is, rather than eliminate it, let's let the new majority, if they are so inclined, to change it, to reform it, to mold it, to make it more useful. I think this meat ax approach should be rejected.

*[Representative Weldon]*

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak to one issue during the brief time that I have here today, and that is the issue of the elimination of the Office of Technology Assessment. As a senior member of the Committee on Science and as chairman of the Subcommittee on Military Research and Development of the Committee on National Security, it is extremely important that we not take this short-sighted approach to eliminate what amounts to approximately a \$22 million item in our legislative branch appropriations bill. The Office of Technology Assessment touches the acts of this Congress in ways



that none of us really are aware of or understand. In the area of defense, the subcommittee that I chair oversees approximately \$35 billion of expenditures. That is more than five Cabinet-level agencies. Much of the research that we do is dependent upon the long-term work that has been done by the Office of Technology Assessment. Just last week we marked up the 1996 authorization bill for the military and we plussed up the national missile defense accounts and theater missile defense accounts by \$800 million. Much of the documentation and the arguments to justify that plus-up came from reports and studies done by the Office of Technology Assessment; their study on missile proliferation around the world, their work on the development of arms and the need for arms control and the needs of defending the American people. All of that factual investigative work that took in some cases months and years was done by OTA. It would be extremely short-sighted for us to eliminate this agency. And, in fact, we and the taxpayers would be the losers in the end. And there is no other agency that can do that work.

*[Representative Dingell]*

[I]n a time when we are talking about risk assessment and cost-benefit analysis, getting the Congress the best possible information we can get is a very important undertaking. And having OTA to provide that kind of assistance to the Congress is absolutely indispensable. OTA, because of the fine technical work and because of the careful research which it has done on advanced questions involving technology and advanced information systems, has saved the Congress literally hundreds of millions of dollars over the time of its existence. To cut it back at a time when other nations are beginning to recognize the importance of this kind of advice to a legislative body would be a great shame, and would indeed cost us vastly more than any piddling savings that could be made by eliminating that agency. I would urge my colleagues to recognize this is a cost-benefit, efficient, and desirable step in continuing the existence of OTA.

*[Representative Boehlert]*

I rise in strong support of this amendment to preserve the Office of Technology Assessment [OTA] I fail to see precisely what problem the elimination of OTA is supposed to solve. Is the problem that we suffer from a surfeit of clear, objective, analysis on the complex technical issues confronting the Nation? Is the problem that we expect that the questions facing the Congress are likely to become simpler and less related to technology? Is the problem that as individual Members we have more time, energy, and staff to delve into perplexing scientific and technical materials? Obviously, the answer to all these questions is a resounding no. And for that reason, the response to the proposal to eliminate OTA should also be a resounding no. OTA is the Agency that gives Congress half a chance at making sense of the growing welter of complex, technical issues we must consider. Without OTA, we will be ever more at the mercy of special interests, who appear at our doors with their particular take on the issues, their own tailored explanations, their specifically crafted data. Now of course I know why some Members want to eliminate OTA—to save a little money. But as I have said before, the public has asked us to do more with less—not to do more knowing less. There are other items we should examine before limiting our access to the most precious commodity in Washington—reliable information. The writer Kurt Vonnegut once defined the ‘information revolution’ as the ability of human beings to actually know what they are talking about, if they really want to. OTA has given us the ability to participate in that revolution. It is a revolution we should embrace, not reverse. Support this amendment, and support the ability of Congress to know what it is talking about.

*[Representative Kennedy]*

Since its inception in 1972, OTA has served as the scientific arm of Congress. In the effort to spend the dollars more wisely, it seems to me that OTA is more critical today than ever before. OTA helps Congress determine what

projects should be undertaken, streamlined and made more effective. It is often said that knowledge is power. Having the right information, the right knowledge, will allow us to better be able to make the right decisions. In this case, OTA provides us with the knowledge, gives us the power.

*[Representative Clinger]*

I think it really does not make a whole lot of sense as we move into a more technologically driven era to be taking away the tool that really give us in Congress the opportunity to assess the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of various technologies. I know as the chairman of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight that we rely, in doing that oversight as to the effectiveness of programs, OTA provides us with invaluable information. So, you know, we seem to be going in the wrong direction when we really are going to have a much more scientifically, technically driven society, to be taking away the resource that enables us to make rational decisions as to what we should be investing in. I think it would be a terrible mistake to do away with OTA entirely.

*[Representative Morella]*

As the chair of the Science Subcommittee on Technology, I can attest to the importance of OTA. It provides in-depth analyses of science and technology issues for Congress on a bipartisan basis. Reports are initiated only after OTA's congressional governing board, consisting of an equal number of Republicans and Democrats, agrees to proceed. OTA is a small agency that is able to do its job effectively because of its access to expertise from across the country, calling on industry, academia, and other experts to obtain free assistance. It has voluntarily reduced its management staff by 40 percent since 1993, and it continues to save Federal dollars by relying on temporary experts on staff. OTA's reports have led to important cost-saving innovations for our agencies as well. OTA's continued existence is critical to our resolution of complicated policy questions through an

objective analysis of difficult issues. Currently, OTA is working on reports examining weapons proliferation, the human genome project, air traffic control, nuclear waste cleanup, and advanced telecommunications networks.

*[Representative Engel]*

Yes, let us cut waste. Let us cut the things that do not work. But let us not throw the baby out with the bath water. Eliminating OTA? Give me a break. That is one of the things that has worked. It is one of the things that has been good.

*[Representative Skaggs]*

So much of the work of this place now goes on really in a second language, the language of science and technology, whether it is space issues or research issues or environmental issues. Without OTA, essentially, to do simultaneous translation of the language that is very inaccessible to most of us who have not been trained in technical fields, we will essentially be engaging in an act of unilateral disarmament on very, very key national issues. Far from being a luxury that we could do without, this is a necessity that we would be foolish to try to do without. The idea that there is play or leeway in the budgets of any of the other support agencies, GAO or CRS, is simply not true. Those budgets are being held static. There is no place else to put these functions. We need to keep them alive and well at the OTA.

*[Representative Hyde]*

It just seems to me in this era of fiber optics and lasers and space stations, we need access to an objective, scholarly source of information that can save us millions and billions. We should not eviscerate everything that makes us a more effective Congress. So, I support the Houghton amendment.

*[Representative Moran]*

The Office of Technology Assessment has done a great job over the years in supplying us with the information we need to make difficult decisions.

*[Representative Walsh]*

Efforts to eliminate funding for this program are a short-sighted move that Congress will regret as the OTA is an invaluable resource in determining the budgetary impact of new scientific developments. The OTA is a bipartisan agency that relies on technical and scientific expertise from a broad cross-section of industry, academia, and other well-respected institutions. The reports that OTA submits to congressional committees are thorough, top-notch documents that provide expert guidance in advising how Congress should adapt to emerging technologies. Furthermore, OTA is an efficient, unbiased organization that has made recommendations which have saved the U.S. Government millions of dollars. For example, the OTA's study of a Social Security Administration plan to purchase computers helped save the Government \$368 million. Other OTA recommendations have been influential in public policy decisions. OTA's reports on preventative Medicare services validated the benefits of mammography screening in the elderly. Another study demonstrated how cost prohibitive it would be to institute cholesterol screening in the elderly. The point I am trying to make is that OTA is a proven organization that provides tangible benefits, expertise, and savings to Congress. Efforts to eliminate all of the functions and personnel of the OTA are misguided.

[HOUSE DEBATE: FINAL ACTION]

The leadership, seemingly surprised by the vote supporting OTA, required a second vote this time, according to Members, with instructions from the leadership's whip organization to defeat the amendment. Mr. Houghton's amendment was actually accepted as a substitute amendment for Mr. Fazio's amendment on the first vote so, technically, a second vote was required to insert the amendment, but in virtually all circumstances such a vote would be handled by a routine voice vote since the same language would be the subject of both votes. The effect of the whip action narrowed the gap and near the

end of the time allocated for the vote with passage of the amendment losing by one vote, the speaker pro-tem “gaveled down” the vote on signal, according to Members, from a member of the House whip team. At the time, two Members intending to vote aye were dashing down the aisle wishing to cast their votes. The House erupted in pandemonium; the leadership called for recess until the next day. At that time, the House leaders, commenting that they did not wish to have even a perception that Members might be cut off voting, proposed a de novo vote on the Houghton amendment that, this time, passed by a substantial margin. By the end of House action, members had voted on exactly the same amendment three times within twelve hours. OTA had survived House action with a 25 percent budget cut.

[SENATE DEBATE]

The debate then moved to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Legislative Branch Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Mack and accompanied by Senator Bennett, heard testimony prior to the final House action on the legislative appropriations bill from Senators Grassley, Hatch, and Kennedy as well as Director Herdman. Sen. Grassley argued that Sen. Mack, in presenting the host of recommendations he co-authored with Senator Domenici included in the Republican Conference Resolution of December 1994, had agreed to revisit the OTA issue on March 1 as he had revisited the issue of elimination of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC). Senator Mack stated that Sen. Grassley had misunderstood and no such discussion was planned and that the JEC case was different from the OTA case since the House Appropriations Committee agreed to preserve the JEC. Senators Hatch and Kennedy made strong presentations for OTA’s appropriation and Senators Mack and Bennett commented that there were plenty of reports available on subjects OTA has studied.

Senator Mack presented a Chairman’s mark to the full Appropriations Committee that included the closing of OTA. Senators Hollings and Stevens offered an

amendment to preserve OTA with a one percent reduction in the appropriations of the other support agencies, necessary to preserve revenue neutrality of the bill. They repeated the arguments for preserving the agency but the LOC had continued to express concern to members in the Senate, arguing that even a 1 percent reduction of its budget was too much. At the final Appropriations Committee meeting the amendment failed to pass once again, setting the stage for a floor amendment debate. Senator Hollings offered the amendment on the floor, co-sponsored by Senators Hatch, Stevens, Robb, Lieberman, Wellstone, and Kennedy. Forceful support was offered in favor of the amendment by Senators Stevens, Hatch, Grassley, Kennedy, Glenn, Pell, Moynihan, and Murray (and subsequent extension of remarks by Senator Inouye, who was not present for the vote), but the amendment was tabled and Senator Mack's close-out budget mark was approved.

EXCERPTS FROM STATEMENTS OF SUPPORTERS ON A PROPOSED  
AMENDMENT TO RESTORE FUNDING TO OTA DURING THE  
SENATE FLOOR DEBATES INCLUDED:

*[Senator Stevens]*

When it comes down to it, we have used technology in this country to stay ahead militarily, to stay ahead economically, to meet the needs of our people, and yet here we are about ready to do away with the one entity in the Congress that tries to collate and analyze and deliver to Members of Congress credible, timely reports on the development of technology. I believe, more than most people realize, that we are changing the course of history in this Congress, but this is not one of the hallmarks of that change. This entity [OTA] ought to be out in the forefront of that change, and it will not be unless it is properly funded and maintained.

[*Senator Hollings*]

Those who are frustrated and say, 'If I cannot cut this, where can I cut?' I cannot understand those who are committed to ignorance. We are trying to find out. We are trying to learn. We, who have been dealing with the Office of Technology Assessment, study very closely and look at their particular commitments. We just do not take anything and everything. In fact, all of the requests made are bipartisan. They come from the chairmen and the ranking members of the committees themselves. We get way more requests than we respond to and cannot take on each and every question that would come. So it comes with a real need from the Congress itself. OTA has responded. It has done a professional job. There is no criticism in this debate about the quality of work. I am not going to try to overwhelm you and bring all the studies and everything else. But we can get into a few of them. I am pleased—I have checked this amendment through with our distinguished ranking member, the Senator from Washington, and I will be glad to adjust it. Do not tell me that we can give everything to GAO; we know GAO can do it. That is not true. I worked closely for years as chairman of the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee, working with Elmer Staats and everything else. What we had to do was cut out all the term papers that were being made for high school graduates and everything over there. They will take on anything to keep the work going. Let us not do that. Let us keep the Office of Technology Assessment at an economical price and continue it and not abolish it in the political urge to get rid of something here.

[*Senator Grassley*]

By statute, OTA must secure unbiased information regarding the impact of technological application. OTA is one of the few truly neutral sources of



information for the Congress. In a very real sense, OTA is our source of objective counsel when it comes to science and technology and its interaction with public policy decision making. There are plenty of places for information in this town, but so many of these sources of information come from the private sector—and there is nothing wrong with the private sector; there is nothing wrong with organizations protecting their own interests, even if it is in the area of science and technology. But if we do not have an unbiased source of information, then we have to rely on organizations with a stake in keeping alive programs that benefit their interests.

*[Senator Kennedy]*

The Office of Technology Assessment has performed the task we assigned to it superbly. It continues to serve an indispensable role. It should bear its fair share of the current budget crisis—but it should not be abolished.

*[Senator Hatch]*

I do not think we should make the mistake of cutting OTA yet. I am the first to admit that we have to make cutbacks here. I think OTA has to suffer its fair share. So I am not arguing for 100 percent of OTA's budget. I wish we could because I think it is working over the long run, because this is the one arm of Congress that does give us, to the best of their ability, unbiased, scientific and technical expertise that we could not otherwise get where most everybody has confidence in what they do.

*[Senator Pell]*

I am in support of the effort to preserve the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. The OTA, on whose board I currently sit, has been of profound and indispensable use to the Congress in the carrying out of its function of an independent source of complex, unbiased analysis

of the technology issues facing our country today. I firmly believe that it would be short-sighted and unwise for us to eliminate entirely this agency, even as we strive to effectuate budget savings with the Legislative Branch.

*[Senator Murray]*

OTA is a unique and valuable asset of the Congress. For many years it was also unique to the United States; but within the past few years, it has been used as a model by many democratic nations for establishing their own technology assessment organizations.

*[Senator Glenn]*

[T]he OTA has proved itself time and again in hundreds of studies across the board spectrum of technology assessment. Throughout its tenure, it has become recognized around the world of its cogent, professional, and unbiased work. It would be foolhardy to shelve that expertise now in a blind effort to simply slash budgets.

*[Senator Moynihan]*

I am sure most of us will also agree that the Office of Technology Assessment has an important role. It has been here a quarter century. It was established for a role and it ought to continue.

[CONFERENCE COMMITTEE ACTION]

OTA's last chance for survival was in the House-Senate conference committee to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the Legislative Appropriations bill. Chairman Packard offered to accede to the Senate position for elimination but Representative Fazio introduced an amendment to fund OTA without a reduction in the LOC appropriation. The Committee registered a tie vote; thus the amendment failed to be approved.

The Senate mark for closing down OTA was thus agreed to in conference and any possibility of additional attempts would be frustrated by the overall federal budget impasse with the White House; OTA quietly began preparations for suspending operations, transferring assets to other support agencies as instructed in the legislation, and out-placement of OTA staff to other careers. It should be noted that the Senate mark included funds for 60-day severance for all OTA employees and arrangements for a closeout staff of seventeen during fiscal year 1996. This provision enabled OTA staff to concentrate up to the last days on completing almost all pending requests for committees, issuing 61 reports (sixteen of which were distributed after October 1) and also allowed the closeout team to carry out necessary final tasks, such as proper archiving to the National Archives and to create a set of CD-ROM's comprising all 755 of OTA's reports from 1972 to closure. Furthermore, with the help of the Architect of the Capitol, physical assets were made available to other congressional agencies. Recognition for this constructive provision, which maximized responsible preservation of OTA assets and responsibilities, is due to Senator Mack and the Appropriations Committees.

[A NOTE ABOUT FISCAL YEAR 1996 ACTIVITIES]

Because OTA's research activities were terminated as of the end of FY95, there will be no Annual Report for fiscal year 1996. As mentioned in the Director's statement, OTA was given an appropriation sufficient to conduct agency closeout activities and authority to continue 17 staff members for a few months for that purpose. Most of those activities are described elsewhere in this Annual Report, but they comprise personnel and financial recordkeeping and processing; delivery to Congress and dissemination to a wider audience of the reports finished at the close of FY95; preparation of the archival CD-ROM and establishment of continuing Internet sites for OTA OnLine; distribution of OTA's computers and other information

technology, furniture, and other physical assets, through the administrative control of the Architect of the Capitol; distributing to the extent possible the remaining stocks of OTA's publications; closing out and paying final invoices for contracts and purchase orders; and the archiving of OTA's records and other essential papers for inclusion in the National Archives.

[IN CONCLUSION]

Five aspects of the final year and termination stand out dramatically in retrospect. First, the staff of OTA worked extremely hard, when some would argue they had little reason to, to finish as many of the projects as possible before the shutdown. The result is an impressive body of work that will be of value to Congress and the public for years to come. The actions of the staff clearly and convincingly demonstrated their belief in the importance of the work they were doing.

Second, the staff of the agency conducted themselves during this trying period with an unmatched level of professionalism that serves only to enhance the reputation of the agency and stands as a true piece of evidence of the dedication of those individuals. No individual lashed out in the media at the Congress or its Members or staff, even when frustrated or angered by some of the misinformation about OTA that was circulating from time to time or simply by the idea that the staff's work was of insufficient value to continue. And no one threw down work in progress and walked away.

Third, in general, staff members have found new employment in good positions. OTA evidently is, as we have been told often, a very good place to have been in terms of career prospects. This excellent record of finding new positions holds in spite of the fact that a great many project staff, as mentioned above, continued working up to the very last days in September, although there is some correlation with how long it is taking some individuals to find new jobs with how long they delayed their job search in order to complete work.

Fourth is the sense of frustration that permeated these final months, as staff struggled to understand the decision to eliminate the agency despite their efforts over the years to operate in a nonpartisan fashion, building relationships and working for both Republicans and Democrats, both House and Senate, and conducting what we believed to be accurate, independent, valuable research.

The fifth, and last, aspect that stands out is the sense of pride all OTA staff feel at the often heroic efforts undertaken by those who knew us best: the Members of the congressional Board, their staffs, the Technology Assessment Advisory Council, and a great many of our peers and colleagues in academia, industry, and other sectors. It made a difference in the attitude of staff, and was personally rewarding to see those efforts, even though they ultimately failed, on OTA's behalf.