

Appendixes

Appendix A

Requesting Letters

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Dr. John H. Gibbons
Director
Office of Technology Assessment
U.S. Congress
Washington, D.C. 20510

Jear Dr. Gibbons:

The Committee on Government Operations is concerned about the potential for abuse of the telecommunication and related information systems used by the Federal Government. Despite the existence of laws requiring court orders to tap and/or tape telephone communications, there appear to be growing capabilities for surveillance of Federal phone calls and data transmissions, posing both security as well as individual privacy problems. A preliminary investigation indicates that presently there are no laws or regulations that adequately guide the proper use of this information and none that specifically prohibit the abuse of much of this information. Indeed, it is apparent that little has been done to determine the overall capacity for abuse of these communications systems or to develop methods of stopping such abuse.

A number of changes are occurring in the Federal telecommunication and other information systems that may be further contributing to this problem. First, the fundamental technology of telecommunications is changing, as are the ways in which information systems are being used and managed. Second, the number and types of applications of computer and communications technologies are increasing at a rapid rate, many of which have few safeguards against abuse. Finally, deregulation of the telecommunications services industry has shifted responsibility for the operating portions of the communications system from the telephone companies to the Federal agencies.

As we all know, it has been possible for decades to record telephone conversations surreptitiously. Today's technology, however, makes possible data collection and monitoring with an ease and on a scale never before realized. Tracing incoming calls; automatically recording the numbers, times, and durations of all incoming and outgoing calls; and recording prearranged conference calls are now features of many telephone systems. Other information systems used by the Federal Government, such as personal computer work stations as well as mainframes and centralized computer service systems, provide even more avenues for surreptitious data collection.

Although modern information technology is an essential ingredient in today's environment, its misuse would pose grave threats to our individual freedoms. As a result, I request that OTA undertake a review to determine the potential for abuse of Federal telecommunications and related information systems, considering both current and expected future technology, and weigh the prospects for limiting such abuses through technology and/or legislation. I appreciate your prompt attention to this request.

Sincerely,



JACK BROOKS
Chairman

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

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April 23, 1985

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U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on the Judiciary
 Washington, DC 20515
 Telephone: 202-225-3951

June 3, 1985

Dr. John H. Gibbons
 Director
 Office of Technology Assessment
 U.S. Congress
 Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Dr. Gibbons:

I would like to add my voice to that of Chairman Brooks in requesting that your office review the potential for abuse of Federal telecommunications and related information systems. I would like to request that such a study, to the extent practicable, cover private as well as government systems.

The Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, which I chair here in the House of Representatives, has long been concerned with the need to preserve traditional civil liberties in the context of advancing communications and computer technology.

It would be most helpful to have from your office a study of current and expected developments in information technology and the prospects for protecting privacy and other civil liberties through legislation or through the technology itself.

I look forward to receiving the benefits of your office's expertise in this important area.

Sincerely,



Don Edwards
 Chairman
 Subcommittee on Civil and
 Constitutional Rights