Section V

ORGANIZATION
AND OPERATIONS
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Created by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 (86 Stat, 797), OTA is a part of and is responsible to the legislative branch of the Federal Government. OTA received funding in November 1973 and commenced operations as the second session of the 93rd Congress convened in January 1974.

The Act provides for a bipartisan congressional Board, a Director, a Deputy Director, and such other employees and consultants as may be necessary to conduct the Office’s work. The Board is assisted by a Technology Assessment Advisory Council comprising 10 public members eminent in scientific, technological, and educational fields, the Comptroller General of the United States, and the Director of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. When requested, the Council may offer the Board advice on technology assessment matters.

The congressional Board sets the policies of the Office and is the sole and exclusive body governing OTA. The OTA Director is the chief executive officer and is responsible solely to the Board, on which he serves as a nonvoting member.

The congressional Board is made up of six senators, appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and six representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House, evenly divided by party. In 1977, Senator Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Congressman Larry Winn, Jr., R-Kansas, served as the Chairman and Vice Chairman respectively of the Board. The two posts rotate between the Senate and House in alternate congresses. The Board members from each house select their respective officer.

In providing assistance to Congress, OTA is to: identify existing or probable impacts of technology or technological programs; where possible, ascertain cause-and-effect relationships; identify alternative technological methods of implementing specific programs; identify alternative programs for achieving requisite goals; estimate and compare the impacts of alternative methods and programs; present findings of completed analyses to the appropriate legislative authorities; identify areas where additional research or data collection is required to provide support for assessments; and undertake such additional associated activities as may be directed.

Initiation, Processing, and Flow of Assessments

OTA functions primarily to provide congressional committees with assessments or studies which identify the range of probable consequences, social as well as physical, of policy alternatives affecting the uses of technology. Requests for OTA assessments may be initiated by:

- The chairman of any standing, special, select, or joint committee of Congress, acting for himself, at the request of the ranking minority member, or a majority of the committee members;
- The OTA Board; or
- The OTA Director, in consultation with the Board.

The authorization of specific assessment projects and the allocation of funds for their performance is the responsibility of the OTA Board. The Board has established priority areas of study, and has approved individual assessment projects within those areas. To facilitate these decisions, the Board considers recommendations and plans developed by OTA staff, and applies the following general selection criteria developed in consultation with the Advisory Council:

- Is this now or likely to become a major national issue?
- Can OTA make a unique contribution, or could the requested activity be done effec-
An information Services staff, which maintains an in-house library of books, reports, journals,
### Office of Technology Assessment
Organizational Structure

### Fiscal Year Summary of Obligations
By Program Area, 1974-1979

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<th>Program</th>
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*Estimated and Projected Obligations*
and other materials on science, technology, and related areas, supports OTA activities. The library serves as a liaison to the Library of Congress as well as to other libraries and organizations throughout the Nation in order to meet the information needs of the OTA staff.

Current awareness tools and a computerized literature search service, the latter providing access to more than 75 computerized data bases, provide staff members with an extensive array of information services. The library is available to members of the general public who have a specific interest in technology assessment or in the work of the Office.

Public Participation and Public Affairs

Public involvement constitutes an important part of OTA’s technology assessment process. In addition to the wide use of citizen advisory groups and consultants, the Office disseminates information to the various parties-at-interest so that they may become more effectively involved in OTA assessments. In keeping with this objective, meetings of OTA’s congressional Board and Advisory Council are open to the public. An officer for public participation and a public affairs officer advise the OTA Director.

To support public involvement, the public affairs office through its mail list and the news media continually informs the general public, Congress, and affected or interested parties, of the initiation, status, and completion of assessments. The office responds to requests from both Congress and the general public for information about its activities. To further inform Congress and the public about OTA’s activities, the public affairs office prepares and distributes the annual report.

Other Activities

OTA participates with the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress, and the General Accounting Office (GAO) in an interagency Research Notification System designed to coordinate the activities and exchange of information among the four congressional service organizations and avert duplication of effort. Representatives of the four agencies meet regularly, and each of the offices submits biweekly status reports on their program activities for publication in a central directory of congressional research activity.