

to the Office of Technology Assessment staff

Message to the OTIA Staff

October 13, 1995

"I do not think we can impose limits on research.

Through hundreds of thousands of years, man's intellectual curiosity has been essential to all the gains we have made. Although in recent times we have progressed from chance and hit-or-miss methods to consciously directly research, we still cannot know in advance what the results may be. It would be regressive and dangerous to trammel the free search for new forms of truth."

Margaret Mead

American Anthropologist

Politicians are famously ill equipped to make scientific decisions. That's precisely why the Office of Technology Assessment was established.

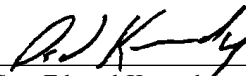
History is replete with examples of shortsighted political decisions in the research field. Everyone knows the vital role King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain played in financing the crucial voyages of Christopher Columbus. Few can identify the people in the other countries who refused to finance Columbus' research. They are deservedly anonymous.

Yet the people who turned Columbus down probably were making sound political decisions for their time. It was only later those decisions proved disastrous.

As avid supporters of the Office of Technology Assessment, we fear a similar mistake has been made by the current Congress.

Politics is about today's vote. Research is about the future. The ability of Congress to harness science for the good of the American people will be diminished in your absence.

It would be a great favor to us if you would please accept our deep appreciation for your years of extraordinary service in behalf of this country.



Sen. Edward Kennedy
Senate Co-Chair
Technology Assessment Board



Rep. Amo Houghton
House Co-Chair
Technology Assessment Board