

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

Jeff Chester  
Executive Director  
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Lisa Graves  
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David McCabe, Ph.D.  
Climate Science Specialist  
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Dave Werntz  
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Conservation Northwest

Michelle De Mooy  
Senior Associate, National Priorities  
Consumer Action

Mary Beth Beetham  
Director of Legislative Affairs  
Defenders of Wildlife

Kevin Bankston  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Electronic Frontier Foundation

Leda Huta  
Executive Director  
Endangered Species Coalition

John Richard  
Director  
Essential Information

Joe Volk  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Mark Cohen  
Executive Director  
Government Accountability Project

Peter Saundry, Ph.D.  
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National Council for Science and the Environment

Diana Zuckerman, Ph.D.  
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National Research Center for Women & Families

Amy Allina  
Program Director  
National Women's Health Network

Lewis Maltby  
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National Workrights Institute

Rick E. Melberth, Ph.D.  
Director of Regulatory Policy  
OMB Watch

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Bruce McIntosh  
Staff Ecologist  
Western Nebraska Resources Council

Pam Dixon  
Executive Director  
World Privacy Forum

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