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ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND GOVERNMENT

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February 24, 1995

The Honorable Newt Gingrich  
Office of the Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Gingrich,

We are aware that Congress is reviewing the role of OTA, the Office of Technology Assessment. The Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government issued a report on the Congressional support agencies in 1991, and we are attaching a copy of that report in the hope that it will be useful to you and the Committee that is reviewing OTA.

In sum, we believe that as it deals with the challenges facing the country, Congress will confront more and more complex technical issues. Congress will need reliable technical advice to enable it to make the best decisions and to respond to technical initiatives from the Executive Branch. We believe that OTA can perform this valuable function, providing essential support to Congress, and we urge that the Congressional review take account of this and of the strong support that OTA has gathered from the technical and political communities, particularly in the past dozen years of its existence.

We will briefly review the process that produced the report to emphasize the involvement of many thoughtful individuals. We should also mention that one of the signers of this letter, Joshua Lederberg, has served as chair of OTA's Technology Assessment Advisory Council and therefore has had special experience with the agency. The other signer, William T. Golden, was heavily involved in the original decision to establish a science advisor in the Executive Office of the President.

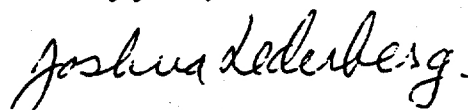
In 1988, the Carnegie Commission established a Committee on Science, Technology, and Congress, chaired by Dr. John Brademas and including former Senators Mathias, Chiles, and Evans, former President Carter, and Dr. Guy Stever, Science Advisor to President Ford. In order to make the Commission reports more effective, Dr. Brademas established an advisory

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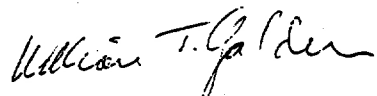
committee of 44 Senators and Representatives who met with him regularly to review reports and advise on issues that the Commission might address. Congress members Boehlert, Morella, and Walker were active members of the group. (The full list of members may be found on pp.7-8 of the report.) The draft report on the support agencies was reviewed by this advisory committee, and was modified as a result, before being brought to the Commission for approval. The Commission reviewed the document further, and with minor changes, endorsed its publication as a Commission report. We believe that this process ensured a constructive bipartisan report.

The Commission found that OTA performs a critical role in the development of science and technology policy, serving an essential analytic and advisory function for Congress. It also serves as an important reservoir of institutional memory for Congress. Nonetheless, the Commission recommended changes in the way that the OTA produces and delivers its reports, to make them more effective and timely. The Commission also recommended that the resources made available to OTA be commensurate with the demand for OTA's products. At that time we foresaw an increase in the demand and called for modest staff increases to meet it. If OTA's budget is to be reduced, we urge that there be ways to reduce the demand, so that the OTA can continue to provide essential high-quality advice to Congress. Even with a constrained budget, we continue to recommend the changes that would make OTA's reports more effective, and we do not believe that these changes should require significant funding increases.

Sincerely yours,



Joshua Lederberg



William T. Golden

Enclosure: *Science, Technology, and Congress:  
Analysis and Advice from the Congressional Support Agencies*