

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 2556

To amend chapter 7 of title 31, United States Code, to provide for a technology assessment capability within the General Accounting Office, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 22, 2004

Mr. BINGAMAN (for himself and Mr. LIEBERMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs

A BILL

To amend chapter 7 of title 31, United States Code, to provide for a technology assessment capability within the General Accounting Office, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE TECHNOLOGY**
4 **ASSESSMENTS.**

5 (a) FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.—

6 (1) FINDINGS.—Congress finds that—

7 (A) it is important for Congress to be bet-
8 ter informed regarding the impact of technology
9 on matters of public concern, including implica-

tions for economic, national security, social, scientific, and other national policies and programs;

(B) on a pilot basis, the General Accounting Office has demonstrated a capacity to perform independent and objective technology assessments for Congress; and

(C) the development of a cost-effective and efficient capacity for timely and deliberate technology assessments by the General Accounting Office requires the commitment of additional resources and administrative flexibility given the current resource constraints of the General Accounting Office.

(2) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this Act are to—

(A) direct the establishment of a technology assessment capability in the General Accounting Office;

(B) ensure the quality of such technology assessments in order to enhance the ability of Congress to address complex technical issues in a more timely and effective manner; and

(C) condition the development of a technology assessment capability in the General Ac-

1 counting Office on the provision of adequate ad-
2 ditional resources and administrative flexibility.

3 (b) TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENTS.—Chapter 7 of title
4 31, United States Code, is amended by inserting after sec-
5 tion 720 the following:

6 **“§ 721. Technology assessments**

7 “(a) The General Accounting Office shall establish a
8 technology assessment capability to coordinate and pre-
9 pare information for Congress relating to the policy impli-
10 cations of applications of technology.

11 “(b) The Comptroller General may establish stand-
12 ards and procedures to govern technology assessments
13 performed under this section as the Comptroller General
14 determines necessary.

15 “(c) Technology assessments performed under this
16 section shall—

17 “(1) provide Congress with timely and objective
18 information to contribute to legislative consideration
19 of technology applications and their policy implica-
20 tions, including thorough reports, in-depth studies,
21 and short-term consultations;

22 “(2) be undertaken by the Comptroller General
23 with special attention to the technical expertise and
24 policy analysis skills needed to perform a prospective

1 assessment of technology applications and policy im-
2 plications;

3 “(3) be designed, to the extent practicable, to
4 review an application of technology to an issue of
5 public interest, including consideration of benefits,
6 cost, and risks from such technology; and

7 “(4) include peer review by persons and organi-
8 zations of appropriate expertise.

9 “(d) In performing technology assessments, the
10 Comptroller General shall be properly apprised of Federal
11 and non-Federal entities providing information to Con-
12 gress to—

13 “(1) enable effective coverage of critical issues;
14 and

15 “(2) avoid duplication of effort.

16 “(e) Technology assessments performed under this
17 section may be initiated as provided under section 717(b).

18 “(f)(1) In consultation with the National Academy of
19 Sciences, the Comptroller General shall establish a tech-
20 nology assessment advisory panel to provide advice on
21 technology assessments performed under this section,
22 methodologies, possible subjects of study, and the means
23 of improving the quality and timeliness of technology as-
24 sessment services provided to Congress.

1 “(2) The advisory panel shall consist of 5 members,
2 who by reason of professional background and experience,
3 are specially qualified to advise on technology assessments.

4 “(3) Terms on the advisory panel shall—

5 “(A) be for a period of 2 years; and

6 “(B) begin on January 1, on each year in which
7 a new Congress is convened.

8 “(4) Notwithstanding section 1342, for the purposes
9 of establishing a technology assessment advisory panel, the
10 Comptroller General may accept and use voluntary and
11 uncompensated services (except for reimbursement of
12 travel expenses). Individuals providing such voluntary and
13 uncompensated services shall not be considered Federal
14 employees, except for purposes of chapter 81 of title 5 and
15 chapter 171 of title 28.

16 “(g)(1) In order to gain access to technical knowl-
17 edge, skills, and expertise necessary for a technology as-
18 sessment performed under this section, the Comptroller
19 General may utilize individuals and enter into contracts
20 or other arrangements to acquire needed expertise with
21 any agency or instrumentality of the United States, with
22 any State, territory, or possession or any political subdivi-
23 sion thereof, or with any person, firm, association, cor-
24 poration, or educational institution.

1 “(2) Contracts and other arrangements under this
2 subsection may be entered into—

3 “(A) with or without reimbursement; and

4 “(B) without regard to section 3709 of the Re-
5 vised Statutes (41 U.S.C. 5) or section 3324 of this
6 title.

7 “(h) The Comptroller General shall submit to Con-
8 gress an annual report on technology assessment activities
9 of the General Accounting Office.

10 “(i)(1) There are authorized to be appropriated to the
11 General Accounting Office to carry out the activities de-
12 scribed in this section, \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years
13 2004, 2005, and 2006.

14 “(2) Technology assessments under this section may
15 not be performed during fiscal years 2004, 2005, and
16 2006, unless a sufficient annual appropriation is provided
17 for such fiscal years.”.

18 (c) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—
19 The table of sections for chapter 7 of title 31, United
20 States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relat-
21 ing to section 720 the following:

“721. Technology assessments.”.

