

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2509

To rename the Office of Technology Assessment as the Congressional Office of Technology, to revise the functions and duties of the Office, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

Mr. TILLIS (for himself and Ms. HIRONO) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration

A BILL

To rename the Office of Technology Assessment as the Congressional Office of Technology, to revise the functions and duties of the 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. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Office of Technology
5 Assessment Improvement and Enhancement Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. RENAMING OF OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESS-**
2 **MENT AS CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE OF TECH-**
3 **NOLOGY.**

4 (a) RENAMING.—Section 3 of the Technology Assess-
5 ment Act of 1972 (2 U.S.C. 472) is amended—

6 (1) in the section heading, by striking “OFFICE
7 OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT” and inserting “CON-
8 GRESSIONAL OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY”; and

9 (2) in subsection (a), by striking “the Office of
10 Technology Assessment” and inserting “the Con-
11 gressional Office of Technology”.

12 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 5(a) of
13 such Act (2 U.S.C. 474(a)) is amended by striking “Direc-
14 tor of the Office of Technology Assessment” and inserting
15 “Director of the Congressional Office of Technology”.

16 (c) REFERENCES IN LAW.—Any reference in any law,
17 rule, or regulation to the Office of Technology Assessment
18 shall be deemed to be a reference to the Congressional Of-
19 fice of Technology.

20 **SEC. 3. REVISION OF FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF OFFICE.**

21 (a) BASIC FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES.—Section 3(c) of
22 the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 (2 U.S.C. 472(c))
23 is amended—

24 (1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by
25 inserting after the first sentence the following: “This
26 information should be provided as expeditiously, ef-

1 fectively, and efficiently as possible while maintain-
2 ing a forward-looking, holistic, and rigorous ap-
3 proach to the assessment of the impacts of tech-
4 nology.”;

5 (2) in paragraph (6), by striking “completed
6 analyses” and inserting “completed analyses, as well
7 as preliminary findings of ongoing analyses,”;

8 (3) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph
9 (7);

10 (4) by striking the period at the end of para-
11 graph (8) and inserting a semicolon; and

12 (5) by adding at the end the following new
13 paragraphs:

14 “(9) provide information to Members and com-
15 mittees of Congress in the form of briefings, infor-
16 mal conversations, documents, and similar formats
17 which may be provided expeditiously on the basis of
18 existing research and staff expertise without the
19 need for review by the Board;

20 “(10) provide technical assistance to Members
21 of Congress on legislation related to science and
22 technology which may be provided expeditiously on
23 the basis of existing research and staff expertise
24 without the need for review by the Board; and

1 “(11) when requested, provide objective policy
2 options to Members on how Members may achieve
3 goals with respect to science and technology policy.”.

4 (b) REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIATION OF ASSESS-
5 MENT ACTIVITIES.—Section 3(d) of such Act (2 U.S.C.
6 472(d)) is amended to read as follows:

7 “(d)(1) Assessment activities undertaken by the Of-
8 fice may be initiated upon the request of—

9 “(A) subject to paragraph (2), any Member of
10 Congress (including a Delegate or Resident Commis-
11 sioner to the Congress), any standing, special, or se-
12 lect committee of either House of Congress, or any
13 joint committee of Congress;

14 “(B) the Board; or

15 “(C) the Director, in consultation with the
16 Board.

17 “(2) A Member of Congress or committee requesting
18 that the Office undertake an assessment activity under
19 paragraph (1)(A) shall submit the request to the Board,
20 which shall review the request. The Office shall determine
21 whether or not to undertake an assessment activity in re-
22 sponse to such a request in accordance with such policies
23 and procedures as the Office shall establish, under
24 which—

1 “(A) the Office may give priority to those re-
2 quests which, in the Board’s determination, relate to
3 technology issues of the greatest relevance and im-
4 portance;

5 “(B) to the greatest extent practicable, the Of-
6 fice shall ensure that the number of assessment ac-
7 tivities undertaken during a year in response to re-
8 quests which are submitted by members of one polit-
9 ical party is equal to the number of assessment ac-
10 tivities undertaken in response to requests which are
11 submitted by members of another political party;
12 and

13 “(C) to the greatest extent practicable, the Of-
14 fice shall provide the Member or committee submit-
15 ting the request with information regarding how the
16 Office reached its determination in response to the
17 request.”.

18 (c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF FINDINGS OF COM-
19 PLETED ANALYSES.—Section 3(e) of such Act (2 U.S.C.
20 472(e)) is amended by inserting after “may be made avail-
21 able to the public” the following: “(and, in the case of
22 findings of completed analyses, shall be made available to
23 the public)”.

24 (d) AUTHORIZING APPOINTMENT OF TECHNICAL
25 AND PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ON LEAVE FROM ACA-

1 DEMIC, INDUSTRIAL, OR RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS.—Sec-
 2 tion 6(f) of such Act (2 U.S.C. 475(f)) is amended by add-
 3 ing at the end the following new sentence: “The Director
 4 may, under the authority provided by this subsection and
 5 in accordance with such policies as the Board chooses to
 6 prescribe, appoint for a limited term, or on a temporary
 7 basis, scientists, engineers, and other technical and profes-
 8 sional personnel on leave of absence from academic, indus-
 9 trial, or research institutions to work for the Office.”.

10 (e) AVOIDING UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION OF RE-
 11 SEARCH ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER OFFICES.—

12 (1) CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE.—Sec-
 13 tion 8 of such Act (2 U.S.C. 477) is amended by
 14 adding at the end the following new subsection:

15 “(e) The Office and the Congressional Research Serv-
 16 ice shall coordinate technology assessment activities to
 17 avoid unnecessary duplication or overlapping of research
 18 activities.”.

19 (2) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.—
 20 Section 9 of such Act (2 U.S.C. 478) is amended by
 21 adding at the end the following new subsection:

22 “(e) The Office and the Government Accountability
 23 Office shall coordinate technology assessment activities to
 24 avoid unnecessary duplication or overlapping of research
 25 activities.”.

1 **SEC. 4. TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT BOARD.**

2 (a) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF BOARD BY CON-
3 GRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP.—Section 4(a) of the Tech-
4 nology Assessment Act of 1972 (2 U.S.C. 473) is amend-
5 ed—

6 (1) in paragraph (1), by striking “appointed by
7 the President pro tempore of the Senate” and in-
8 serting “appointed jointly by the majority leader and
9 the minority leader of the Senate”; and

10 (2) in paragraph (2), by striking “appointed by
11 the Speaker of the House of Representatives” and
12 inserting “appointed jointly by the Speaker and mi-
13 nority leader of the House of Representatives”.

14 (b) INVITATION TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO AT-
15 TEND ANNUAL MEETING OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT
16 BOARD; ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 4 of such Act (2
17 U.S.C. 473) is amended by adding at the end the following
18 new subsections:

19 “(e) At least once during each calendar year, the
20 Board shall hold a meeting at which Members of Congress
21 may appear and present information to the Board regard-
22 ing any technology assessment activities the Members may
23 wish the Board to undertake.

24 “(f) Not later than 90 days after the end of each cal-
25 endar year, the Board shall submit to the Subcommittees
26 on the Legislative Branch of the Committees on Appro-

1 priations of the House of Representatives and Senate a
2 report on the activities of the Office during the year, and
3 shall include in the report a description of the technology
4 assessment activities undertaken by the Office during the
5 year, including the number of requests received from
6 Members and committees of Congress under section
7 2(d)(1)(A), the number and type of assessment activities
8 undertaken in response to such requests, and the current
9 status of such assessment activities.”.

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