

108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BINGAMAN introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on _____

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-
10 tions for economic, national security, social, sci-

1 entific, and other national policies and pro-
2 grams;

3 (B) on a pilot basis, the General Account-
4 ing Office has demonstrated a capacity to per-
5 form independent and objective technology as-
6 sessments for Congress; and

7 (C) the development of a cost-effective and
8 efficient capacity for timely and deliberate tech-
9 nology assessments by the General Accounting
10 Office requires the commitment of additional
11 resources and administrative flexibility given
12 the current resource constraints of the General
13 Accounting Office.

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

16 (A) direct the establishment of a tech-
17 nology assessment capability in the General Ac-
18 counting Office;

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

23 (C) condition the development of a tech-
24 nology 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) ensure coordination of efforts with Federal
8 and non-Federal entities providing information to
9 Congress to—

10 “(A) enable effective coverage of critical
11 issues; and

12 “(B) avoid duplication of effort.

13 “(d) Technology assessments performed under this
14 section may be initiated as provided under section 717(b).

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

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

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

- 1 “(A) be for a period of 2 years; and of the Re
- 2 “(B) begin on January 1, on each year in which
- 3 a new Congress is convened.
- 4 “(4) Notwithstanding section 1342, for the purposes
- 5 of establishing a technology assessment advisory panel, the
- 6 Comptroller General may accept and use voluntary and
- 7 uncompensated services (except for reimbursement of
- 8 travel expenses). Individuals providing such voluntary and
- 9 uncompensated services shall not be considered Federal
- 10 employees, except for purposes of chapter 81 of title 5 and
- 11 chapter 171 of title 28. documents under this section may
- 12 “(f)(1) In order to gain access to technical knowl-
- 13 edge, skills, and expertise necessary for a technology as-
- 14 sessment performed under this section, the Comptroller
- 15 General may utilize individuals and enter into contracts
- 16 or other arrangements to acquire needed expertise with
- 17 any agency or instrumentality of the United States, with
- 18 any State, territory, or possession or any political subdivi-
- 19 sion thereof, or with any person, firm, association, cor-
- 20 poration, or educational institution.
- 21 “(2) Contracts and other arrangements under this
- 22 subsection may be entered into—
- 23 “(A) with or without reimbursement; and

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

4 “(g) The Comptroller General shall submit to Con-
5 gress an annual report on technology assessment activities
6 of the General Accounting Office.

7 “(h)(1) There are authorized to be appropriated to
8 the General Accounting Office to carry out the activities
9 described in this section, \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal
10 years 2004, 2005, and 2006.

11 “(2) Technology assessments under this section may
12 not be performed during fiscal years 2004, 2005, and
13 2006, unless a sufficient annual appropriation is provided
14 for such fiscal years.”.

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

 “721. Technology assessments.”.