**Office of Technology Assessment Improvement and Enhancement Act**

**Background** The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) was created in 1972 “to provide early indications of the probable beneficial and adverse impacts of the applications of technology and to develop other coordinate information which may assist the Congress.” From 1972 to 1995, OTA produced nearly 750 full technology assessments, background papers, technical memoranda, case studies, and proceedings across a wide range of S&T issues. Just as the digital era was unfolding, OTA was de-funded under Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America”.

In the decades since, the speed and breadth of technical innovation supporting the digital era has been astonishing, while creating new opportunities and greater dilemmas for society. For example, facial recognition software not only can find missing children or lost relatives, but also can be employed as a tool for mass surveillance and discrimination. The notable success of ChatGPT has prompted a frenzy to draft legislation to address the promise and peril of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Crafting policy to address the impacts of AI technology requires a sophisticated understanding of large language model tools and how to apply this knowledge to a legislative framework. Without non-partisan advisory information and support, any gaps in lawmakers’ technical expertise may provide an easy opportunity for the corporate sector to fill the S&T support role that should otherwise remain unbiased, independent, and non-partisan.

A recent Congressionally Directed Review by the National Academy of Public Administration underscores a clear need for authoritative, non-partisan, and comprehensible S&T products that can be completed in line with the rapid tempo of Congress and the fast pace of innovation.

**About the Legislation** The Office of Technology Assessment Improvement and Enhancement Act introduces enhancements to the existing Office of Technology Assessment statute (2 US Code §472) to:

* **Provide expertise with quicker turnaround times by** emphasizing that information should be provided as expeditiously, effectively, and efficiently as possible; and requiring preliminary findings of ongoing assessments in addition to completed analyses.
* **Serves all Members of Congress by** enabling any Member to request a technology assessment to be considered by the Board.
* **Enhances transparency by** updating existing language to require final reports of assessments to be made publicly available whenever possible; and requiring an annual report on requests received, assessments completed and ongoing, and other activities.
* **Maintains the Office’s forward-looking and rigorous approach by** introducing a program to hire experts from academia, industry, or research institutions; and by requiring coordination with CRS and Government Accountability Office to avoid duplication or overlapping activities.