



## *Office of Technology Assessment Improvement and Enhancement Act – 118<sup>th</sup> Congress*

For more than twenty years, the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), an independent, bipartisan agency set up to provide information on technology and its potential impacts, supported Congress in its lawmaking activities. However, in 1995 the agency was defunded, stripping Congress of the ability to access unbiased tech advisors as we entered the digital age. Today, as Americans are feeling the effects of emerging technologies—including issues around data privacy and artificial intelligence—we are experiencing the repercussions of the decision to defund this vital piece of the Congressional support system.

Congress' technology assessment needs will only continue to grow as it works to anticipate the potential benefits and effects of emerging technologies. As Congress considers the use of technologies such as AI, facial recognition, quantum computing, and emerging energy storage and generation in both the private and public sectors, it is increasingly important that Members of Congress have access to unbiased assessments of what is on the horizon.

This legislation introduces enhancements to the existing Office of Technology Assessment statute (2 US Code §472) to:

### **Provide expertise with quicker turnaround times by:**

- adding language to emphasize that information should be provided as expeditiously, effectively, and efficiently as possible;
- adding Congressional Research Service-style deliverables to the Office's function and duties such as providing briefings, informal conversations, and technical assistance to Members on science and technology issues without the need for Board review, as well as objective policy options when requested; and
- requiring preliminary findings of ongoing technology assessments in addition to completed analyses.

### **Serve all Members of Congress by:**

- enabling any Member to request a technology assessment to be considered by the Technology Assessment Board;
- updating Board appointment so that members are appointed by bipartisan party leadership in each chamber;
- directing the Office to be as open and transparent with Members about the request review process as possible; and
- requiring at least one annual Member Day.

### **Enhance 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.

### **Maintain the Office's forward-looking and rigorous approach by:**

- introducing a rotator program to hire experts from academia and industry modeled after the rotator program at the National Science Foundation.

### **Complement existing Legislative Branch agencies including GAO's new Science, Technology Assessment, and Analytics team by:**

- requiring coordination with CRS and GAO to avoid duplication or overlapping activities.