

October 7, 2004

The Honorable Rush Holt
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Amo Houghton
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 205115

Dear Representatives Holt and Houghton:

The following engineering professional organizations are writing to express our support for your bipartisan bill, H.R.4670, to establish a Center for Scientific and Technical Assessment (CSTA).

America's national security and economic well-being demand that the United States remain the world's leaders in advanced technology in the 21st century. However, technological development is advancing with unprecedented speed and complexity in a truly global environment and other countries, for the first time in U.S. history, are now threatening America's scientific and technological preeminence. Members of Congress, now more than ever, need to have access to objective, timely, and sound science, engineering and technology-related assessment pertinent to legislation and the complex policy issues before them.

The sheer volume and complexity of the technological data facing federal legislators necessitate some mechanism for balanced, non-partisan and technologically-informed analysis provided in a judicious manner. A Center for Scientific and Technical Assessment as envisioned in H.R.4670 would satisfy these criteria by operating under the highly respected Government Accountability Office (GAO), being overseen by a bipartisan, bicameral Technical Assessment Board (TAB) consisting of Members of Congress and the Comptroller General of the GAO, to provide non-partisan peer reviews of all CSTA reports.

We are encouraged that this bill takes into consideration the GAO's successful technical assessment pilot program as well as the GAO study "*Technology Assessment: Providing Independent Assessments of Technologies*," for guidance when crafting this legislation. We feel that H.R.4670, if passed, would provide a valuable service to member of the House and Senate in making informed decisions on the complex technological issues of the times.

We look forward to working with you and your staff in advancing this important legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

American Association of Engineering Societies (AAES)
American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)
American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)
American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)
Federation of Materials Societies (FMS)
The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers-United States of America (IEEE-USA)
National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)
Optical Society of America

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