

**Rep. Mark Takano**  
**Testimony to the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee**  
**April 17, 2018**

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Chairman Yoder, Ranking Member Ryan, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I am here to express my strong support for restoring funding to the Office of Technology Assessment, commonly known as the OTA.

The foundation for good policymaking is accurate and objective analysis, and for more than two decades the OTA set that foundation by providing relevant, unbiased, technical and scientific assessments for Members of Congress and staff.

But in 1995, the OTA was defunded, stripping Congress of a valuable resource to understand emerging technologies as well as the nuances of the legislative process.

In its absence, the need for the OTA has only grown. Last week's hearings on Facebook's data security practices exemplified the increasingly complex, technical issues that this Congress – and future Congresses – will be responsible for addressing.

If we are going to be effective policymakers in the digital age, we must develop a better understanding of the technologies that are transforming our daily lives. Existing sources of research and information, including the Government Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service, provide excellent support to Members and Staff. But no entity has both the capacity and the expertise to provide in-depth analysis of complex technological issues.

A relatively modest investment in the OTA will not only fill a critical void, it will also save us money.

In the last year that it operated, the OTA's budget was \$23 million, but its studies on the Synthetic Fuels Corporation saved taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

Perhaps most importantly, the OTA is an intentionally bipartisan organization. Before it was defunded, it was governed by a Director and a Technology Assessment Board. The Director was non-voting, and the Board was comprised of six Members from the Senate and six Members of the House, split evenly between the Majority and the Minority.

This bipartisan governance ensures that studies remained unbiased and looked into issues of relevance for both parties.

Members of Congress bring a great deal of experience and expertise on a number of issues, but we must acknowledge our blind spots. When it comes to the policy challenges presented by new technology – we are not seeing all the relevant issues.

With that in mind, I urge you to support funding for the Office of Technology Assessment.