



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

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15507 GGM
GAO 00044

B-200171

November 18, 1980

[Comments on H.R. 7689]

The Honorable Harrison ^{A.} Williams
Chairman, Committee on Human Resources
United States Senate

SEN 06700

Dear Mr. Chairman:

ID'S
In response to your request for comments, we believe that H.R. 7689, the Research and Development Authorization Estimates Act, would be an important step toward multi-year planning, authorizing, and funding of research and development programs. Over the years, (GAO has strongly encouraged the Congress to think, debate, and act with a longer term perspective and to focus more attention on crosscutting national policy areas such as science and technology.) I strongly supported an earlier version of the Research and Development Authorization Estimates Act in my testimony to the House Science and Technology Committee on June 4, 1980, which I have enclosed. I am also enclosing a copy of my response to supplementary questions from the Committee following the testimony.

HSE 03500
The 2-year budget estimates required by H.R. 7689 would be an important step toward longer range planning and more stable management for research and development. Because the executive branch would be required to identify and defend budget decisions over a longer time period than the annual budget cycle, congressional committees would be in a better position to make the longer range assessments necessary for multi-year authorizations. This longer range perspective is particularly important for looking at similar research and development programs in different agencies and for examining management issues that cut across agency lines.)

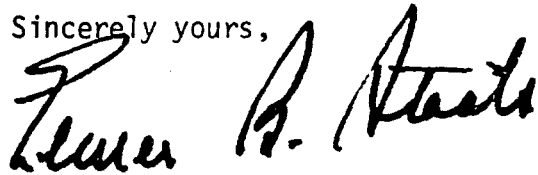
The research and development budget is currently pieced together from numerous independent entities in the executive branch, so it lacks sufficient information about many important questions. The present budget does not have enough data and analysis to compare similar or related programs in different agencies, sufficient rationale for decisions made concerning changes in priorities, or adequate explanation of relationships between Federal and industrial support of research and development. The Federal research and development funding should reflect a long-term investment plan and provide a stable base of funding. When we responded to the House Science and Technology Committee's supplementary questions, we noted that the most appropriate form of multi-year authorization may be different for different types of research and development programs. We described a "rolling" multi-year authorization process that could increase stability and continuity by always projecting authorizations a year beyond the current budget year.

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The current version of the Act, H.R. 7689, is a further refinement of the principles contained in an earlier bill. This version incorporates some reporting requirements in the 4-year outlook report that are now part of the Science and Technology Annual Report and it more accurately reflects the advisory status of the Federal Coordinating Council for Science, Engineering, and Technology.

AGC 00754

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

Enclosures