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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Two hundred years ago, one of this Nation's Founding Fathers and a man of great intellect -- Thomas Jefferson -- observed, "Knowledge is power, knowledge is safety, knowledge is happiness."

Jefferson knew, as did the other great leaders who established this republic, that the pursuit and wise application of new knowledge are essential to any nation's progress. They encouraged exploration, new methods of agriculture, the establishment of scientific societies and institutions of higher learning, and protection and improvement of the Nation's health. They supported those who sought to expand America's physical and intellectual frontiers -- our explorers, scientists, inventors, engineers, and teachers.

This strong emphasis on progress through knowledge has continued throughout our history. It has been instrumental in helping develop the America we know -- its agriculture, industry, economy, health, national security, and many of the amenities we enjoy. Science, engineering and technology have combined to become a basic underlying force in American life -- a force that America has shared with the world to the ultimate benefit of all mankind.

Now as we enter our Third Century science, engineering and technology are more important than ever in meeting the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead for this Nation and the world.

The bill that I am signing today -- the National Science and Technology Policy, Organization and Priorities Act of 1976, H.R. 10230 -- will help us in meeting those challenges. It outlines a comprehensive policy for achievement of our national objectives through the effective utilization of science and technology.

The key provision of the bill is the creation of a new Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President. I first proposed legislation to authorize this office in June 1975. I attach great importance not only to a strong national effort in science and technology but also to the availability of expert advice at all levels in the Federal government. This new office will provide an important source of advice on the scientific, engineering, and technical aspects of issues that require attention at the highest levels of government.

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The bill also calls for a two-year study of the overall context of the Federal science, engineering and technology effort. This study should provide the basis for reassessing the organization and management of Federal research and development activities. It should help to ensure that government efforts are properly related to those of private enterprise which has the primary responsibility for turning new ideas into new and improved products and services for the marketplace.

Finally, the bill calls upon the Director of the new office to establish an intergovernmental science, engineering and technology advisory panel to identify problems of the State, regional and local levels where science and technology can contribute.

Along with continued, vigorous support from the private sector, a strong Federal effort in science, engineering and technology is critical to our future. My 1977 Budget calls for \$24.7 billion for Federal research and development programs -- an increase of 11 percent over 1976 estimates. I am hopeful that the Congress will approve my funding requests, particularly those to increase Federal support of basic research.

The National Science and Technology Policy Organizational and Priorities Act of 1976 reflects a renewed recognition of the importance of scientific, engineering and technological contributions. It symbolizes the confidence we Americans have in our ability to improve our way of life and to find better solutions to the problems of the future. I take great pleasure in signing this bill into law.

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