



# NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

Affiliated with the International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, AFL-CIO

May 28, 2014

Hon. Lamar Smith, Chairman  
Science, Space, and Technology Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member  
Science, Space, and Technology Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Smith and Johnson,

On behalf of the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) and the 110,000 federal employees we represent throughout the United States and abroad, **I am writing to strongly oppose amendment number 067, being offered by Rep. Bridenstine (R-Okla.), to H.R. 4186, the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology Act of 2014, during markup.** This amendment would senselessly eliminate the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), a small but critical federal agency that promotes American innovation and economic growth by collecting and disseminating scientific, technical, and engineering information to the public and industry. NTIS provides businesses, universities, and the public timely access to approximately 3 million publications covering over 350 subject areas. Eliminating this agency would stifle innovation that is absolutely critical to our nation's economic recovery.

The Bridenstine amendment implies that the National Archives and Records Administration, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the Library of Congress currently perform the same tasks as those mandated to the NTIS, when they do not. None of these agencies perform tasks under a non-appropriated funds mandate and if this amendment was enacted into law, these agencies would be forced to provide services at a fee or absorb the costs associated with these tasks. Either process would lead to a cost to end-users or American taxpayers. Any notion that eliminating the critical functions performed by NTIS could simply be absorbed at no cost by other federal agencies is false.

It is doubtful that the National Archives, GAO, and Library of Congress are equipped or prepared to perform all of the functions currently performed by NTIS, including, but not limited to, the storage, acquisition, processing, order fulfillment, archiving, and bibliographic control of the 3 million documents and reports within its repository. This means that critical tasks performed by NTIS would most likely have to be broken up and distributed to several agencies which would destroy the unique benefits that result from a strong, centralized servicing agency. Such centralization is critically important in the public's ability to locate and have access to the government's scientific and technology resources.

It should be stressed that the NTIS is tasked to archive, and to maintain its archives, in perpetuity. The issue of long-term and permanent access to valuable scientific and technical information must be carefully considered before hasty decision is made to eliminate NTIS.

The fact that the NTIS sold only 8% of the 2,500,000 reports from its collection between 1995 and 2000 does not negate the historical importance or potential value of any one of the remaining 92% of archived reports. Information is a key byproduct of the United States' more than \$100 billion federal research and development investment. Undoubtedly, these scientific and technical information byproducts are well worth protecting and nurturing. The perceived lack of marketability of any one

report cannot be used to compromise the integrity of the overall archive collection. This collection must be preserved, maintained and allowed to continue to grow. It must be accepted that some of the services provided by the NTIS be viewed as for the public good. This is accepted for many other federal agencies. For example, the Smithsonian Institution displays only about 2% of its 137 million artifacts and works of art, and that does not diminish the value of the other 98%. The same can be said for NTIS; the collection of information housed at NTIS has value to the American people regardless of the percentage of reports that are sold.

The GAO estimates that 74% of the reports added to the NTIS's repository during fiscal years 1990 through 2011 were readily available from other public sources. This statement seems to dismiss and nullify the 26% of reports that were not available from other public sources. The unique value of the NTIS's centralized service means that government information which can be difficult and time-consuming to identify and locate on the web may be more readily available utilizing the NTIS's services. If a user cannot locate the information he or she desires, its inherent value is lost. This could result in millions of dollars wasted on repetitive research and development.

Those who support the concept of eliminating NTIS often argue that no federal agency should use taxpayer dollars to purchase a report from NTIS that is available through the internet for free. Superficially, this appears to be a logical premise. It does appear to be common sense that the employee of one federal agency would attempt to utilize free search tools to find, download and print reports whenever possible rather than paying another federal agency to perform the same task. However, it is highly inaccurate to call the process of self-searching, downloading and printing to be free. There are obvious costs associated with the process including labor, equipment, and supplies. These costs vary significantly based on the grade level of the employee performing the process and the skill of the employee; nonetheless, there is nothing free about federal agencies duplicating work that NTIS has already done for them in many instances.

While I respect Rep. Bridenstine's effort to find cost-savings for American taxpayers, eliminating NTIS is not sensible way to achieve savings. Eliminating NTIS would stifle innovation and make our federal government operate less efficiently, not more efficiently. The services provided by NTIS are critical to our economy, and Congress must more fully consider how the gaps created by the elimination of NTIS are going to be filled before it takes reckless action to eliminate this critical federal agency.

Once again, I urge you oppose amendment number 067 being offered by Rep. Bridenstine (R-Okla.), to H.R. 4186 during markup. If you have any questions, please contact NFFE Legislative Director Randy Erwin at (202) 216-4451 or [rerwin@nffe.org](mailto:rerwin@nffe.org).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William R. Dougan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William R. Dougan  
National President  
National Federation of Federal Employees