NEWS & COMMENT

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MAJOR INDUSTRIAL INNOVATION
BILL, S. 1250, SIGNED INTO LAW

S. 1250, the "Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980," was signed into law by President Carter on October 21st. The bill establishes "Centers of Industrial Technology" which would acquire title to inventions resulting from joint university-industry research.

Introduced last year by Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill.), S. 1250 is designed to improve: (1) the ability of universities and industry to collaborate in generating new ideas; and (2) the Government's ability to identify specific problems and opportunities in order to advance socially and economically important technologies. In addition to authorizing the joint university-industry centers, the bill creates a new Office of Industrial Technology in the Department of Commerce. See 432 PTCJ A-5, E-1.

As originally passed by the Senate (see 482 PTCJ A-1, D-1), S. 1250 permitted the Centers of Industrial Technology to acquire title to inventions resulting from joint research. The House, however, in passing its version of the bill (see 495 PTCJ A-7, D-1), voted to delete the patent rights provisions on grounds that they were incompatible with the Administration-backed patent policy articulated in H. R. 6933 (see 493 PTCJ AA-1). Another House-passed amendment requires federal laboratories (with certain exceptions) to devote one-half of one percent of their research budget to technology transfer.

An informal compromise was subsequently struck by Senator Stevenson and Representative George Brown (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Science, Research & Technology. An agreement was reached to accept substantially all of the changes recommended by the House in exchange for reinstatement of the patent rights provisions proposed by the Senate.

Acting on this compromise, the Senate approved the amended version of S. 1250 on September 26th and the House followed suit on October 1st. See 499 PTCJ A-15.

S. 1250 appears in text at page E-1.

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