

**APPENDIX 7. LETTER FROM NCLIS CHAIRPERSON MARTHA B. GOULD TO SECRETARY OF COMMERCE NORMAL Y. MINETA, OCTOBER 10, 2000**

United States National Commission on Libraries and Information Science

October 10, 2000

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Mineta:<sup>291</sup>

Thank you for your letter of September 1, 2000 in response to my correspondence describing the studies of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science aimed at updating and strengthening the government's public information dissemination laws, policies, and programs, including the mission and programs of NTIS. You indicated that Ms. Laureen Daly, Senior Advisor, Office of Policy and Strategic Planning, would be the Department's Liaison to work with the Commission on these studies. I am pleased that Ms. Daly will be meeting with the Commission's deputy director and our project consultant next week.

However, I want to take this opportunity to share my deep concern that NTIS is rapidly falling below the minimum satisfactory level of staffing needed to sustain it as an effective program to support federal R&D information dissemination to the public. In our report last March, we warned the President and the Congress this situation might occur if corrective actions were not taken.

Specifically, we have learned from a number of federal agencies that the hiring freeze imposed on NTIS (despite the ability of that agency to compensate in part for the loss of key direct-hire professionals with contractor assistance) is being viewed with alarm; these agencies rely on NTIS to disseminate their scientific and technical information and they are fearful that the freeze's continuation will adversely impact their missions. We also have evidence of increasing concern by the nation's corporate and federal depository library communities—as well as private contractors—which heavily rely on the scientific and technical information products and services of NTIS.

I think you will agree that, no matter where, ultimately, NTIS is located organizationally, its functions and operations must continue. We cannot afford to lose the skills and experience of key NTIS staff as personnel, uncertain of their agency's future, seek opportunities in environments far less unsettled; yet if key staff do leave, we must insure adequate and speedy replacement. If you concur in that reasoning, would it not be prudent to bring the agency to the minimum satisfactory level of staffing and service? Wherever NTIS ends up, we should be confident that skilled workers, along with their equipment and real property, could then be transferred as a fully functioning operating entity.

The alternative, it seems to me, will be the continued, gradual erosion of the agency's capability, inevitably reaching a point where it will have become so dysfunctional that revitalizing it would be

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<sup>291</sup> Available at <http://www.nclis.gov/govt/assess/mineta2.html> and <http://www.nclis.gov/govt/assess/assess.appen7.pdf>.

## **A Comprehensive Assessment of Public Information Dissemination**

extremely daunting, if not impossible. Whether NTIS remains in Commerce or is transferred to another agency such as the Library of Congress as originally proposed, this situation would affect all of us concerned with the information handling capabilities of our government and our nation.

I urge that you look into the matter and take swift action to remove the hiring restrictions before the situation becomes any more critical.

Sincerely yours,

/signed/

Martha Gould  
Chairperson

cc: Lauren Daly