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December 5, 1978

Senator Harrison M. Schmitt  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schmitt:

Thank you for your letter of November 15th asking for Princeton's views on your proposed legislation the "Science and Technology Research and Development Utilization Policy Act."

I agree with you that a statutory solution is needed both to correct existing disincentives to innovation and to establish a uniform Federal patent policy for inventions arising out of government sponsored research. The current situation is unnecessarily confusing and unproductive since now there are more than twenty different Federal statutory and administrative policies covering the allocation of patent rights. Frequently these policies are contradictory; therefore, any meaningful attempt to effectively manage and develop innovations are hopelessly mired in the hedgehogpodge of agency regulations.

The importance of the Federal government's role in the sponsorship of research cannot be denied but one would have to contend that government performance in the patent area has been less than successful. I believe the common practice that permits the government to retain patent rights on all processes and products discovered during federally funded research inhibits commercial development. It is the responsibility of the government to assure that all inventions discovered during publicly funded research are developed and utilized for the benefit of the nation but unfortunately current procedures do not achieve that goal. Clearly, these practices must be changed.

Your interest in legislation to reform Federal patent policies are greatly appreciated. If I may be of additional assistance on this issue please let me know.

Sincerely,

Allen J. Sinigaglia

AJS:plr

cc: R. May

bcc: H. Wells  
R. Durkee  
H. Bremer-SUPA ✓

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