Seemingly in order to demonstrate its concern with huge trade deficits, Congress passed the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988. While the object of the legislation is ostensibly to reduce trade deficits and enhance American competitiveness, the new statute actually responds to all sorts of pressure groups. This report examines the impact of the new trade law on a multitude of government agencies.

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IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS, CONGRESSIONAL STYLE

by

Murray Weidenbaum, Director
Center for the Study of American Business

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In order to demonstrate its concern with the massive trade deficits, Congress passed in the latter part of last year the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (Public Law 100-418). Ostensibly, the object of the legislation is to reduce U.S. trade deficits and enhance the competitiveness of American industry. But the statute would flunk a truth-in-labeling test.

A careful reading of the 467 page law reveals that, in practice, the Act is an example of the inability of Congress to control itself. Under the guise of dealing with trade and competitiveness, the new statute responds to all sorts of pressure groups and personal curiosities of members of Congress. The Act mandates a host of new studies, reports, advisory committees, interagency groups, meetings, seminars, and conferences to feed the insatiable curiosity of members of Congress. Nowhere is there any indication that all this paperwork will be costly. Table 1 categorizes the 272 different reporting and paperwork requirements contained in the new law.

The inference seems clear -- Congress has ignored its concern with enhancing the productivity of the United States by burying public and private decision makers in a mountain of paperwork. It is ironic that a legislative body that is so alert to shortcomings in the rest of the economy is oblivious to the impacts of its own actions.

In quite a few instances, of course, it appears that Congress votes for a new study or report as a "consolation prize" for a member whose substantive legislative proposal is rejected. The report or study serves to keep the idea alive. Surely, the sensible approach

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*a* Excludes routine reports required to carry out foreign trade laws.

bCovers detailed annual report for each country with whom U.S. maintains "economic relations."

*c* Includes one joint FDIC and Federal Reserve study.

under these circumstances is for Congress "to just say no."

In meeting the requirements of Public Law 100-418, the executive branch departments and agencies will be forced to reverse the recent trend toward reducing the paperwork burden of the federal government. Ecologists should mourn for all the trees that will be cut down to provide the paper for what will literally be an endless array of studies, reports, and meetings, few of which will enhance U.S. trade or competitiveness. The sections that follow illustrate the paperwork requirements of what is mis-labeled the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act.

**Mandatory New Studies**

**Department of Commerce**

The Secretary of Commerce is required to do a variety of studies. But Congress does not seem to think that the department is up to doing the research on its own -- or that it does not have the sense to ask other federal agencies for help. For example, the Secretary of Commerce, "in consultation with the heads of other appropriate federal agencies," is required to undertake a study of the "new market orientation" of the People's Republic of China. Congress not only tells the Commerce Department that it wants a study, but specifies the contents of the study. The statutory requirements include studying the effect of the "new orientation" on Chinese market policies and price structure and on the relationship between domestic Chinese prices and world prices. (Section 1336(a))

In another section of the law, the Secretary of Commerce is ordered to study the competitiveness of the U.S. telecommunications industry, "in consultation with the FCC and the Trade Representative." (Section 1381)

The Census Bureau (in the Department of Commerce) is charged with conducting a study to determine the feasibility of developing an index that measures the real volume of merchandise trade on a monthly basis. In the same section of the law, Congress provides that trade statistics shall be reported both before and after being adjusted for inflation.
(Sections 1931 and 1932) Micro-management is alive and well in Congress.

The Secretaries of Commerce and Defense must jointly contract with the National Academies of Science and Engineering to conduct a comprehensive study of the adequacy of the export control system in "safeguarding U.S. national security while maintaining U.S. international competitiveness and Western technological preeminence." (Section 2433)

The Secretary of the Treasury must study the feasibility and advisability of establishing an international debt management authority. (Section 3111(a))

The Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology of the Department of Commerce is authorized to contract with the National Research Council for advice and studies on topics including the following:

1. The competitive position of the United States in key areas of manufacturing and emerging technologies and research activities which would enhance that competitiveness;

2. Potential activities of the Institute, in cooperation with industry and the States, to assist in the transfer and dissemination of new technologies for manufacturing and quality assurance; and

3. Identification and assessment of likely barriers to widespread use of advanced manufacturing technology by the United States workforce, including training and other initiatives which could lead to a higher percentage of manufacturing jobs of United States companies being located within the borders of our country. (Section 5114)

The Secretary of Commerce is instructed to conduct a nationwide study of current state technology extension services. The study shall include:

(a) A thorough description of each State program, including its duration, its annual budget, and the number and types of businesses it has aided;

(b) A description of any anticipated expansion of each State program and its associated costs;

(c) An evaluation of the success of the services in transferring technology, modernizing manufacturing processes, and improving the productivity and profitability of businesses;

(d) An assessment of the degree to which State services make use of Federal programs, including the Small Business Innovation Research program and the programs of the Federal Laboratory Consortium, the National Technical Information Service, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Productivity, Technology, and Innovation,
and the Small Business Administration;

(e) A survey of what additional Federal information and technical assistance the services could utilize; and

(f) An assessment of how the services could be more effective agents for the transfer of Federal scientific and technical information, including the results and application of Federal and federally funded research.

The Commerce Secretary is also told to award contracts to the National Academies of Science and Engineering for a thorough review of the arrangements under which the private sector and the federal government cooperate in civilian research and technology transfer. (Section 5131)

Department of State

Other departments are not neglected in the paperwork burdens imposed by the new trade law. For example, the Secretary of State is charged with conducting an "in-depth study" of the required annual reports on the status of internationally recognized worker rights in foreign countries to improve the "breadth, content, and utility" of the existing studies. In other words, the State Department is given the challenging assignment of studying studies. (Section 2207)

Department of the Treasury

The Secretary of the Treasury is charged with conducting a study of the feasibility and efficacy of reducing the foreign debt of the poorest of the heavily indebted countries. This would be done through a one-time allocation by the IMF of limited-purpose Special Drawing Rights. (Section 3123)

Department of Agriculture

The Secretary of Agriculture is instructed to perform a variety of specialized studies. A study of the Canadian Wheat Board's import licensing program is designed to estimate the resultant reduction of U.S. wheat and wheat product exports to Canada. (Section 4501(b))
The Secretary is also to conduct a study to determine the effect of imported honey on U.S. honey producers. The study is to cover the availability of honey bee pollination within the United States and whether the imports interfere with the honey price supports program. (Section 4503)

The Secretary of Agriculture is also required to study whether the milk price support program would be affected by permitting increases in the imports of dairy products. (Section 4504) He must also submit a report on providing intermediate credit financing and other trade assistance in importing countries to increase their demand for U.S. agricultural products. (Section 4505) Another required report covers imported meat, poultry, and eggs. Congress is concerned about the level of residues of pesticides and drugs in their food items. (Section 4506)

The Secretary of Agriculture is told to conduct a study of the market for lamb products in the United States. The study is to focus on production, demand, return on investment, marketing, and import trends. "If appropriate, the report should include proposals on ways to bring about a long-term increase in per capita consumption of lamb meat products . . ." (Section 4508)

Department of Education

The Director of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education is required to study the effectiveness of transfers and conversions of federal education and training software for the public and private sectors and to analyze national needs for other methods to correct education and training software. The Director has two years to prepare a report on this study. (Section 6104)

Department of Labor

The Secretary of Labor is told to conduct a study, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to identify the extent to which countries recognize and enforce internationally recognized worker rights. The study, which is to be performed biennially, is also to identify
the extent to which "producers" fail to "comply" with those rights. (Section 6306(b))

The National Commission for Employment Policy (housed in the Labor Department) is told to conduct research on the role of the state employment services and on techniques for "managing production cutbacks without permanently reducing workforces." That sounds like an anti-productivity approach -- encouraging companies to produce less with more workers. One must wonder what contribution that makes to enhancing competitiveness. (Section 6306(c))

Other Agencies

The Comptroller General is instructed to conduct a study on the costs incurred by small businesses in pursuing rights and remedies under the trade laws. (Section 8010) The Comptroller General will be conducting a study as to whether imported items containing dairy products (such as milk chocolate) or sugar products (such as candy) are circumventing limits on imports. (Section 4507)

The International Trade Commission is to study the domestic rose-growing industry. The study is to include competition from imports, the effect of the European Community's tariff on roses on world trade of roses, and the extent to which unfair trade practices and foreign trade barriers are impeding the exports of U.S. grown roses. (Section 4509)

Apparently Congress is not satisfied by wrapping U.S. agencies in red tape. It also has research projects for others. The U.S. Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund must request the Fund to review and analyze the debt burden of the developing countries. Particular attention is to be given to alternatives for dealing with the debt problem, including new lending instruments, rescheduling and refinancing existing debt, securitization and debt conversion techniques, and discounted debt repurchases. Duplication of effort doesn't worry our legislators. The new law instructs the U.S. Executive Director of the World Bank to request the Bank to undertake an identical study
to the one requested of the IMF. (Section 5333)

Requiring Additional Reports

The President

The reporting requirements imposed by the new trade law are awesome. Every time that the President enters into a trade agreement with a foreign country, he must -- in addition to telling Congress what if anything they must do to implement the agreement -- send them a report on the efforts he has made to obtain international exchange rate equilibrium. The report must also indicate what effect the agreement will have on "increased international monetary stability." In addition, his report to Congress should describe the extent to which any country signing the agreement maintains a "non-commercial state trading enterprise" that may impair the benefits which the United States would receive under the agreement. (Section 1103(a))

Every 13 months, the President must send the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee a report of the trade barriers facing United States wine, describing the status of consultations on the subject. (Section 1125) The President must also submit an annual report to Congress estimating the additional defense expenditures arising from illegal technology transfer, focusing on illegal transfers that result in "a serious adverse impact on the strategic balance of forces." (Section 2445)

The President is also told that, when he submits the fiscal year 1990 budget to Congress, he must include a report on Federal research in semiconductors (including a discussion of the roles of the various federal departments and agencies), on federal research and acquisition policies for fiber optics and optical-electronic technologies
generally, and on policies and budget proposals regarding super-conducting materials. The latter section of the report is to include all of the following:

- descriptions of research priorities, the scientific and technical barriers to commercialization which such research is designed to overcome, steps taken to ensure coordination among Federal agencies conducting research on superconducting materials, and steps taken to consult with private United States industry and to ensure that no unnecessary duplication of research exists and that all important scientific and technical barriers to the commercialization of superconducting materials will be addressed.

The final section of the President's technology report is to focus on Federal research to assist U.S. industry to develop and apply advanced manufacturing technologies for the production of durable and nondurable goods. (Section 5141)

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*Can the taxpayer expect members of Congress to read the detailed reports they require?*

Does Congress really expect the President to read this technical report before he sends it to them? Can the taxpayer expect the members of Congress to read the detailed reports they require?

**Department of the Treasury**

Each year, the Secretary of the Treasury -- together with the Trade Representative -- must jointly send to Congress an "annual trade projection report." The preparation of the report should provide employment for a goodly number of economists and statisticians. The reports are to start with a review and analysis of the merchandise trade balance, the goods and services trade balance, the current account balance, the external debt positions, exchange rates, economic growth rates, the federal budget deficits and the impact on U.S. trade of market barriers and other unfair trade practice of the major trading partners.

All that is prelude to the required forecast of each of the eight items identified for review and analysis. Separate projections are to be made for each of the United States'
major trading partners, together with conclusions and recommendations for changes in trade policy, exchange rate policy, fiscal policy, etc. (Section 1641)

The Secretary of the Treasury must send each year to Congress a report on international economic policy, including exchange rate policy and must update it after six months. Once again, the new trade law goes into great detail in specifying the contents of the reports:

(1) An analysis of currency market developments and the relationship between the United States dollar and the currencies of our major trade competitors;

(2) An evaluation of the factors in the United States and other economies that underlie conditions in the currency markets, including developments in bilateral trade and capital flows;

(3) A description of currency intervention or other actions undertaken to adjust the actual exchange rate of the dollar;

(4) An assessment of the impact of the exchange rate of the United States dollar on –
   (a) the ability of the United States to maintain a more appropriate and sustainable balance in its current account and merchandise trade account;
   (b) production, employment, and noninflationary growth in the United States;
   (c) the international competitive performance of United States industries and the external indebtedness of the United States;

(5) Recommendations for any changes necessary in United States economic policy to attain a more appropriate and sustainable balance in the current account;

(6) Key issues in United States policies arising from the most recent consultation requested by the International Monetary Fund under article IV of the Fund's Articles of Agreement; and

(7) A report on the size and composition of international capital flows, and the factors contributing to such flows, including, where possible, an assessment of the impact of such flows on exchange rates and trade flows. (Section 3005(b))

The federal banking regulatory agencies (the Treasury Department's Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Reserve System, and the Federal Deposit Insurance
Corporation) are not overlooked. The three agencies are instructed to jointly submit an annual and very detailed report on foreign loan risks.

In addition, the three banking agencies are required to conduct a study to determine the extent of any regulatory obstacle to negotiated reductions in the debt service obligations associated with foreign debt. The study shall include an analysis of regulatory and accounting obstacles to various forms of debt restructuring, including negotiated interest reduction, the amortization of loan losses, securitization and debt conversion techniques, and discounted debt repurchases, as well as an analysis of the profitability of commercial bank lending to developing countries during the 10-year period ending on December 31, 1986. The analysis should include an assessment of the impact of the various forms of debt restructuring on the development of a secondary market in developing country debt and on the safety and soundness of the United States banking system.

One reporting requirement is so burdensome that the new law says that, all by itself, it may be cited as The Financial Reports Act of 1988. Under this provision, the Secretary of the Treasury is required to report to Congress on the following:

(1) The foreign countries from which foreign financial services institutions have entered into the business of providing financial services in the United States,

(2) The kinds of financial services which are being offered,

(3) The extent to which foreign countries deny national treatment to United States banking organizations and securities companies, and

(4) The efforts undertaken by the United States to eliminate such discrimination.

Because of the onerousness of this reporting requirement, the Treasury only has to do it every four years. However, the report is to be prepared in conjunction with the Departments of Commerce and State, the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Reserve System, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, and the Securities and Exchange Commission. (Section 3602)
Department of State

In addition, each year the Department of State is to prepare for Congress a detailed report regarding "the economic policy and trade practices" of each country with which the United States has an economic or trade relationship. Again, Congress is not shy on specifying the content of each report: (1) its macroeconomic policies and their impact on U.S. exports, (2) the impact on the exchange rate and on the price competitiveness of U.S. exports, (3) any change in its structural policies (tax incentives, regulation, patterns of industrial ownership) that may affect its growth rate and its demand for U.S. exports, (4) the management of its foreign debt and the implications for trade with the United States, (5) significant barriers to U.S. exports or foreign direct investment, (6) government support for its exports, (7) its protection to U.S. patents, trademarks, copyrights and "mask works," and (8) the country's enforcement of "internationally recognized worker rights."

Because the law makes no exceptions, each of these detailed reports has to be prepared annually for literally each of the estimated 216 nations on the globe.

Because the law makes no exceptions, each of these detailed reports has to be prepared annually for literally each of the estimated 216 nations on the globe. That includes some of those newly independent islands that are so thinly populated that the United States sends one ambassador to cover a group of them. For example, Turks and Caicos Islands have a population of 9,000 while Anguilla boasts 7,000 and St. Pierre and Miquelon claim 6,000 inhabitants. The idea that the State Department is required to study their macro and microeconomic policies is simply ludicrous.

Department of Commerce

The Secretary of Commerce is also required to issue a series of 24 monthly reports
on the exports of processed and unprocessed wood to all countries of the Pacific Rim. For each item monitored, the report must include information on the destination by country, the domestic and worldwide price, supply and demand. (Section 2432)

The Commerce Department's Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology is directed to prepare a plan detailing how the Institute will make small business more aware of its research and how it will increase the use by small business of its research. (Section 5163)

The new trade law runs from the general to the specific. Immediately after authorizing competitiveness impact statements, it requires the Advisory Council on Federal Participation in Sematech to conduct a study and issue an annual report concerning federal participation in Sematech. Congress goes on to specify that the study and report "shall be conducted under the direction of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs." (Section 5422)

Department of Agriculture

Few federal departments are ignored by the new law. The Secretary of Agriculture must prepare each year a Long-Term Agricultural Trade Strategy Report. To be submitted together with the annual budget, the report is to "establish recommended policy goals" for U.S. agricultural trade and exports. It must also contain recommended levels of spending on international activities of the Agriculture Department for 1, 5, and 10 year periods. In this instance, too, Congress specifies in great detail the contents of the required report:

(1) Findings with respect to trends in the comparative position of the United States and other countries in the export of agricultural commodities and products, organized by major commodity group and including a comparative analysis of the cost of production of such commodities and products;

(2) Findings with respect to new developments in research conducted by other countries that may affect the competitiveness of United States agricultural commodities and products;
(3) Findings and recommendations with respect to the movement of United States agricultural commodities and products in nonmarket economies;

(4) As appropriate, the agricultural trade goals for each agricultural commodity and value-added product produced in the United States for the period involved, expressed in both physical volume and monetary value;

(5) Recommended Federal policy and programs to meet such agricultural trade goals;

(6) Recommended levels of Federal spending on international programs and activities of the Department of Agriculture to meet such agricultural trade goals;

(7) Recommended levels of Federal spending on programs and activities of agencies other than the Department of Agriculture to meet such agricultural trade goals; and

(8) Recommended long-term strategies for growth in agricultural trade and exports —
   
   (a) taking into account United States competitiveness, trade negotiations, and international monetary and exchange rate policies; and

   (b) including specific recommendations with respect to export enhancement programs (including credit programs and export payment-in-kind programs), market development activities, and foreign agricultural and economic development assistance activities needed to implement such strategies.

Each year, the Secretary of Agriculture is also instructed to report statistics on the total value and quantity of imported raw and processed agricultural products. The Secretary is also to report on the total quantity of production and consumption of domestically produced raw and processed agricultural products. (Section 4502)

Department of Labor

The Secretary of Labor is required to issue an annual report on displaced farmers and ranchers, drawing on five specified types of data which he and the Secretary of Agriculture are charged with developing. (Section 6306(a))
Other Agencies

The Office of Management and Budget, each year as part of the budget submission, shall include a new analysis of the budget's impact on the international competitiveness of U.S. business and the U.S. balance of payments. The statement, which is to be prepared after consulting with the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, shall include the following projections:

(a) The amount of borrowing by the Government in private credit markets;
(b) Net domestic savings (defined as personal savings, corporate savings, and the fiscal surplus of State and local governments);
(c) Net private domestic investment;
(d) The merchandise trade and current accounts;
(e) The net increase or decrease in foreign indebtedness (defined as net foreign investment); and
(f) The estimated direction and extent of the influence of the Government's borrowing in private credit markets on United States dollar interest rates and on the real effective exchange rate of the United States dollar. (Section 5301)

Ever since environmental impact statements were invented, other interest groups have been urging Congress to mandate other "impact" statements. Public Law 100-418 follows that tradition requiring the President or head of each federal department and agency to provide Competitiveness Impact Statements in every report or recommendation they make on legislation if it "may affect the ability of United States firms to compete in domestic and international commerce." (Section 5421)

Each year the Export and Import Bank must submit to Congress a report identifying and analyzing the tied aid credit practices of other countries, together with making recommendations for dealing with those practices. (Section 3302(c)) The Bank must also prepare a one-time report on U.S. exports to developing countries, assessing the effectiveness of recent program changes by increasing such exports. The report is also to identify additional policy and program changes which would enable the Bank to increase the financing of U.S. exports to developing nations and to encourage more private sector
financial participation. (Section 3303)

The Federal Reserve Board is ordered to submit a report on the issues raised by including loan loss reserves as part of banks' primary capital for regulatory purposes. (Section 3604)

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No paper-shuffling is too specialized to be ignored in the new trade law.

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The Small Business Administration is directed to send Congress a report on the globalization of production. This one-time report is to cover the following:

1. Analyze the effect of increased outsourcing and other shifts in production arrangements on small firms, particularly manufacturing firms, within the United States subcontractor tier and to the extent that such data is not available determine methods by which such data may be collected;

2. Assess the impact of specific economic policies, including procurement, tax and trade policies, in facilitating outsourcing and other international production arrangements; and

3. Make recommendations as to changes in Government policy that would improve the competitive position of smaller United States subcontractors, including recommendations as to incentives which could be provided to larger corporations to maximize their use of United States subcontractors and assist these subcontractors in changing production and marketing strategies and in obtaining new business in domestic and foreign markets. (Section 8009)

No paper-shuffling is too specialized to be ignored in the new trade law. The Federal Communications Commission must send to "appropriate" Committees of Congress the data collected under Report No. DC-1105, Information Reporting Requirements Established for Common Carriers.

Finally, Congress gives itself an assignment, to accompany the annual concurrent resolution on the budget with an analysis of its impact on the same six factors as OMB will have analyzed in its new impact statement. (Section 5302)
Establishing Advisory Committees

Every time that the U.S. Trade Representative decides not to take action against countries who "target" their exports, he must set up an advisory panel to recommend measures to promote the competitiveness of the domestic industry affected by the export targeting. (Section 3005(b))

The Director of the Institute for Standards and Technology is told to establish a visiting committee on advanced technology with a very broad charter. In its annual report, the committee is charged with identifying areas of research of the Institute of potential importance for the long-term competitiveness of U.S. industry in which the Institute possesses special competence and which could be used to assist U.S. enterprises. (Section 5131)

Every time the U.S. Trade Representative decides not to take action against countries who "target" their exports, he must set up an advisory panel to promote the competitiveness of the domestic industry affected.

Congress directly establishes a new National Advisory Committee on Semiconductors to devise a national semiconductor strategy. (Section 5142) The President is told to appoint a National Commission on Superconductivity to review all major policy issues regarding U.S. applications of recent research advances in superconductors. (Section 5143)

Congress also establishes a Competitiveness Policy Council to develop national strategies to enhance American productivity and international competitiveness. This advisory committee of twelve private citizens is authorized to establish subcouncils of public and private leaders to recommend "long-term strategies for sectors of the economy and for specific competitiveness issues." (Section 5204) The Council is charged with preparing a rather ambitious annual report, which sets forth the following:
The goals to achieve a more competitive United States economy;

The policies needed to meet such goals;

A summary of existing policies of the Federal Government or State and local governments significantly affecting the competitiveness of the United States economy; and

A summary of significant economic and technological developments, in the United States and abroad, affecting the competitive position of United States industries.

Each committee to which the Council submits its annual study must submit a report on the Council’s report to its respective House. (Section 5208)

Setting Up Interagency Committees

The President is required to establish an interagency group on countertrade, to be chaired by the Secretary of Commerce. This new committee is supposed to review and evaluate U.S. policy on countertrade and offsets, in light of "current trends in international countertrade and offsets, and the impact of those trends on the U.S. economy." It is not apparent why a separate group is needed. Surely, an existing inter-agency committee on trade or economic policy (there is no shortage of them) could tackle the problem. Then again, Congress also establishes a new Office of Barter in the Commerce Department. (Section 2205(a) and (b))

Congress directly established a new Interagency Trade Data Advisory Committee to advise the Secretary of Commerce on the National Trade Data Bank which is also mandated by the new trade law.

The Data Bank shall consist of two data systems, the International Economic Data System and the Export Promotion Data System. Public Law 100-418 goes on to enumerate the 16 categories of data which the Economic Data System "may include," as well as other data that the Secretary of Commerce -- who rarely is a noted statistician -- determines to be useful.

The Export Promotion Data System, however, "shall include" information on 13 designated categories as well as any other "similar" information that is approved by the
Secretary of the Treasury. Invariably, Congress requires the Secretary of Commerce to submit several reports on the Data Bank's operations. (Sections 5401-5412)

**Calling for More Meetings**

In addition to the many meetings that will be called by the interagency committees and advisory groups set up by the new trade law, Congress directs the Small Business Administration to conduct a National Seminar on Small Business Exports. In addition to developing recommendations to stimulate exports from small companies, the Seminar is charged with studying the desirability of holding a subsequent International Conference on Small Business and Trade. (Section 8011)

**Final Note**

The listings in this report are above and beyond the host of normal research and reporting that is required in connection with the operation of the international trade laws. This tabulation may not be exclusive; it may have missed some of the committees or studies mandated in the new trade law. Nevertheless, it illustrates the unrestrained nature of congressional mandates at a time when national policy ostensibly is to focus on improving U.S. efficiency and productivity.