

## Memorandum of October 10, 1963

## [GOVERNMENT PATENT POLICY]

*Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies*

Over the years, through Executive and Legislative actions, a variety of practices has developed within the Executive Branch affecting the disposition of rights to inventions made under contracts with outside organizations. It is not feasible to have complete uniformity of practice throughout the Government in view of the differing missions and statutory responsibilities of the several departments and agencies engaged in research and development. Nevertheless, there is need for greater consistency in agency practices in order to further the governmental and public interests in promoting the utilization of federally financed inventions and to avoid difficulties caused by different approaches by the agencies when dealing with the same class of organizations in comparable patent situations.

From the extensive and fruitful national discussions of government patent practices, significant common ground has come into view. First, a single presumption of ownership does not provide a satisfactory basis for government-wide policy on the allocation of rights to inventions. Another common ground of understanding is that the Government has a responsibility to foster the fullest exploitation of the inventions for the public benefit.

Attached for your guidance is a statement of government patent policy, which I have approved, identifying common objectives and criteria and setting forth the minimum rights that government agencies should acquire with regard to inventions made under their grants and contracts. This statement of policy seeks to protect the public interest by encouraging the Government to acquire the principal rights to inventions in situations where the nature of the work to be undertaken or the Government's past investment in the field of work favors full public access to resulting inventions. On the other hand, the policy recognizes that the public interest might also be served by according exclusive commercial rights to the contractor in situations where the contractor has an established non-governmental commercial position and where there is greater likelihood that the invention would be worked and put into civilian use than would be the case if the invention were made more freely available.

Wherever the contractor retains more than a non-exclusive license, the policy would guard against failure to practice the invention by requiring that the contractor take effective steps within three years after the patent issues to bring the invention to the point of practical application or to make it available for licensing on reasonable terms. The Government would also have the right to insist on the granting of a license to others to the extent that the invention is required for public use by governmental regulations or to fulfill a health need, irrespective of the purpose of the contract.

The attached statement of policy will be reviewed after a reasonable period of trial in the light of the facts and experience accumulated. Accordingly, there should be continuing efforts to monitor, record, and evaluate the practices of the agencies pursuant to the policy guidelines.

This memorandum and the statement of policy shall be published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

JOHN F. KENNEDY

## STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT PATENT POLICY

## BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

A. The government expends large sums for the conduct of research and development which results in a considerable number of inventions and discoveries.

B. The inventions in scientific and technological fields resulting from work performed under government contracts constitute a valuable national resource.