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Foundation for Applied Science and Technology

March 5, 1985

The Honorable D. Bruce Merrifield
Assistant Secretary for Productivity,
Technology and Innovation
U. S. Department of Commerce
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Merrifield:

I am writing to express the Foundation for Applied Science and Technology's (FAST) unqualified support for Norman J. Latker as Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks. Mr. Latker has been a leading advocate for collaboration between private industry, research universities and agencies of the Federal government throughout his distinguished career, often at great personal and professional risk. His considerable experience in patent and technology policy management, his knowledge of the legal and scientific issues impacting on society, and his outstanding reputation in Washington and in the university and business communities, will make Mr. Latker a singularly effective Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks.

In the 1960s, first as a patent examiner at the National Institutes of Health and then as Senior Patent and Copyright Attorney at HEW, Mr. Latker encouraged academic administrators to develop mechanisms for effectively transfering technology from university laboratories to private sector firms. In addition, he developed the Institutional Patent Agreement, enabling universities to retain ownership of inventions derived from their NIH sponsored research. Later, he was instrumental in the passage of the University Small Business Patent Act, through which universities gained ownership of inventions derived from research supported by any branch of the Federal government.

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More recently, as Director of the Office of Federal Technology Management Policy, Mr. Latker was instrumental in developing a Presidential memorandum directing all Federal agencies to provide for contractor ownership of federally-funded technology. Senator Dole later developed this directive into legislation that earmarked billions of federally-funded research dollars for private sector commercialization.

Mr. Latker's background as a driving force in the development of enlightened technology and patent policy, together with his administrative experience, make him an outstanding candidate for Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks. I urge you to lend your full support to his efforts to gain this important position, and I would ask that you convey FAST's enthusiastic recommendation of Mr. Latker to Secretary Baldridge and the White House.

Sincerely,

Richard K. Olson
President