

## *ANSI—A nongovernmental approach to standards writing*

As we write about international standards activities, we often mention ANSI in passing. This month we will take an in depth look at the American National Standards Institute, a non-profit, non-government organization founded 70 years ago by manufacturers to prevent confusing and duplicative standards writing. ANSI is usually referred to as the U.S. representative to the International Standards Organization (ISO) and it is interesting to note philosophically that ANSI is the only non-government member of ISO. All the other national members of ISO are governmental or government controlled bodies.

Within the U.S., ANSI is unique because it does not formulate or write voluntary standards, but rather acts as a clearinghouse for its 220 members' standards writing efforts. ANSI approves standards written by other qualified technical and professional societies and trade groups that voluntarily submit their work for approval.

After careful review for due process and consensus, ANSI will approve the work as an "American National Standard." Some 1,000 companies are also members of ANSI and it is their employees, serving as representatives to professional and technical societies, who volunteer to do the actual standards writing.

In addition to this approval role, ANSI also serves as the U.S. source and information center for all American National Standards, making copies of over 8,500 American National Standards available. It further manages and coordinates U.S. participation in ISO and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) and acts as the U.S. source of ISO and IEC standards and draft international standards. National standards from 88 other countries are likewise available from the International Order Department at ANSI.

Although ANSI is non-governmental, it maintains close ties with local,

state, and federal governments. American National Standards are widely incorporated in local building codes, for example. In addition, the Defense and Energy departments are members of ANSI as is the National Bureau of Standards. Many personnel in these organizations participate in standards writing activities in professional and technical societies that then turn to ANSI for approval, rather than writing their own government standards. It is generally agreed that this is a more cost effective approach both to standards writing and to the purchase of goods meeting voluntarily approved standards by the government.

For more information about ANSI and its role in standardization, single copies of a "Guide to Submitting Standards to ANSI for Approval," "Q and A on ANSI," and "ANSI and the Consumer" are available free by writing the Communications Department, American National Standards Institute, 1430 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10018.

—Robert E. Parks

## CAPITAL EYE

## *Mixed feelings on rewrite of technical data export regs*

**A**n early rewrite of federal regulations on the administration of technical data export controls is a top priority for the Reagan Administration, according to Commerce Department officials.

Addressing a day-long policy forum on Feb. 11, Paul Freedenberg, acting under secretary in the Bureau of Export Administration, said he anticipated a rewrite in the next few

months so that the White House can leave behind a "legacy of clarification."

Much of the legal testimony focused on the need for at least limited revision of the export rules. However, most industry representatives testifying before the review panel expressed what one participant called a "considerable amount of nervousness" that the effort to revamp the system

will make it harder to deal with.

Moreover, responding to a draft proposal of the Militarily Critical Technologies List Implementation Technical Advisory Committee (MITAC), APS and SPIE representatives voiced concern that further restrictions would hamper scientific progress. M.J. Soileau, speaking for SPIE, argued that "research would be stifled and the photonics industry would be crippled if this draft becomes law."

Copies of the MITAC proposal are available from Toni Jackson at (202) 377-8760. To comment on the issue or for further information, please