



American Institute of CPAs  
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004-1081

April 23, 2012

The Honorable Darrell Issa  
Chairman  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
Ranking Member  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: AICPA Support for H.R. 2146, the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

Thank you for your strong leadership in promoting new technologies to better understand and compare reported financial information. On behalf of the 377,000 members of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), I am writing in support of H.R. 2146, the "Digital Accountability and Transparency Act," or DATA Act, because it includes important provisions that will enhance transparency. Specifically, we support the provision requiring that information reported under the Act utilize nonproprietary data standards, such as eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL).

The DATA Act calls for a newly-created Financial Accountability and Spending Transparency (FAST) Commission to facilitate clearer, more accurate data reporting among Federal agencies, recipients of Federal grants, contracts and loans. Further, the FAST Commission will designate common data elements and data reporting requirements for the information provided by recipients and agencies. The legislation specifies that the FAST Commission "shall, to the extent practicable, incorporate existing nonproprietary standards, such as eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL)." XBRL creates "intelligent data" by attaching a tag to each piece of data in a financial or business report.

The benefits of using data tagging to enhance transparency and to analyze financial and other data have been proved time and time again. XBRL provides a detailed yet customizable approach to gathering data. XBRL will provide significant transparency to the Federal government and the American people regarding the use of taxpayer funds. The legislation would take many of the lessons learned by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, and would expand the current reporting, which encompasses only recipients of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, to include essentially all recipients of Federal funds. By utilizing consistent data standards for the information submitted, such as XBRL, the FAST Commission will be able to compare information from the Federal agencies to information from recipients, providing an unprecedented level of transparency for Federal spending.

Last September this Congress enacted H.R. 2883, the "Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act." That bill included a similar XBRL provision because Members understood that the efficiencies of using XBRL could also improve reporting under child and family services programs. The DATA Act would do the same for all government spending, so that the remainder of our Federal government is not left behind.

We are also happy to discuss with you additional areas where implementation of data standards can further enhance reporting and make it more valuable to all types of stakeholders of data. If you have any questions, or if we can be of any further assistance, please contact Diana Huntress Deem at 202.434.9276 or [ddeem@aicpa.org](mailto:ddeem@aicpa.org).

Sincerely,

Barry C. Melancon, CPA  
President and CEO

cc: All Members of the U.S. House of Representatives