



AMERICANS for TAX REFORM



COST OF
GOVERNMENT
CENTER

April 23, 2012

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Issa,

We write to encourage your colleagues to support the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2012 (DATA), H.R. 2146. This bill would reaffirm the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA), create an independent Federal Accountability and Spending Transparency Commission (FAST Commission) and standardize government data reporting.

The DATA Act builds on the successes of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA)—a landmark transparency bill that created USASpending.gov, the first searchable online database for taxpayers to track contracts and spending. The DATA Act will modernize reporting, creating a comprehensive portal that enables data sharing across all agencies and departments.

In the wake of revelations regarding the spending abuses at the General Services Administration, government transparency must be reformed to root out this kind of waste, fraud and abuse. The status quo has produced mediocre data reporting amongst an obscure network of reporting websites and oversight agencies. This has squandered millions of taxpayer dollars and allows wasteful spending to go unchecked. The DATA Act simplifies and modernizes this process, making government more accountable to taxpayers.

The bill creates a Federal Accountability and Spending Transparency Board (FAST Board) which streamlines the accountability practices by creating a five person FAST Commission in the same model as the SEC, CFTC, FEC, FCC and FTC. The Commission will mimic the RAT Board and hold agencies accountable for publishing their spending data.

The DATA Act centralizes agency reporting to the FAST Commission. Recipients who receive grants and contracts from multiple agencies would save significant compliance costs if they could report to a single authority instead of simultaneously reporting to multiple agencies. By establishing consistent deadlines for contract and spending recipients, DATA represents a major step forward in federal transparency.

The importance of data coherence and standardized reporting has gone unrecognized for too long and has resulted in millions in wasted taxpayer dollars. The DATA Act is an important step towards rectifying this problem; we urge your colleagues to support your effort to take transparency in governance to new heights through the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act. We look forward to working with you to further advance accountability in federal finance.

Sincerely,

Grover Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

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