

To the Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman, House Oversight and Reform Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
April 24, 2012

Dear Chairman Issa,

I am writing this letter in support of The Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2011, H.R. 2146. The standardization of and structure of data is a crucial component in enabling future use of data. As a researcher I am well aware of how easy it is to use structured data as opposed to unstructured data. Not only does structured data provide for a much easier analysis, but in the context of government spending it would allow for an improved way to evaluate and control different government programs. In addition, the use of structured data opens the door for uses we sometimes cannot imagine at present. For example, as it refers to grant information in the academic arena, structuring and standardizing data may enable a tool that would help me to more easily know about grants and more easily apply for them. I am aware this may be outside the intended benefits of the Act, but I argue that its benefits may be far beyond evaluating and controlling government spending.

Like in other cases, the implementation of new standards may cause stakeholders to spend some resources adapting and updating their systems to be able to accommodate the new standards. Research has shown in similar cases of adopting data standards, that these costs are mostly one-time costs and do not tend to linger over time. Moreover, data standards may increase efficiencies in both government and for example universities. In universities these standards may enable the academic institutions to better control and manage their grants for example.

In conclusion, I think there are substantial benefits to be gained from adopting data standards. Moreover, I believe that any costs resulting from this Act would be greatly outweighed by the benefits.

I would be happy to discuss the importance of structured data and provide you with more information or details.

Sincerely,

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