



April 25, 2012

The Honorable Darryl Issa  
US House of Representatives  
Chair  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
2347 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
US House of Representatives  
Ranking Member  
Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
2235 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

We are writing to thank you for introducing and co-sponsoring the H.R. 2146, the Digital Accountability Act and Transparency Act (DATA Act). For too long, the federal government has segregated agencies' spending information in at least six separate compilations. By imposing consistent identifiers and markup languages and by setting up a single platform for all information reported by the agencies, the DATA Act will deliver complete, accurate, and searchable spending data for the first time. Moreover, the DATA Act's universal reporting requirement for recipients of federal funds will allow agencies' data to be checked against submissions from grantees and contractors. As the Oversight Committee's investigations have revealed, the agencies frequently use manual processes to submit their spending information. Automatic comparisons against recipients' filings will illuminate the agencies' failure to automate their processes and help generate public pressure for solutions. Finally, we are pleased that the current manager's amendment includes a requirement for the Department of the Treasury to submit its disbursement data to the same platform.

It's hard to overstate the value of complete, accurate, and searchable spending data. Indeed, federal data reform carries so many benefits that DATA Act advocates have had difficulty choosing which ones to focus on. Americans will have access to the same spending information as their government, encouraging citizens and civic groups to collaborate with agencies on ways to improve services and save money. Entrepreneurs will invent new ways to visualize and analyze spending data, helping both government and private clients make better decisions and creating new high-tech jobs. Inspectors general will be able to apply predictive analytics and zero in on inappropriate and ineffective use of taxpayer resources. Federal executives will use electronic dashboards to make better management decisions. The media will break stories about spending patterns. The DATA Act lays the foundation for centralized financial reporting by recipients, grantees and contractors. Centralized reporting will eliminate the need for these parties to submit duplicate data to multiple agencies.

We joined the Board of Advisors of the Data Transparency Coalition because we know that the DATA Act and future reforms like it will be hard to pass and harder to implement. Congress is slow to embrace technological innovation. Agencies' business processes do not change easily. The technology industry

must lead the campaign for federal data reform. The Data Transparency Coalition stands ready to promote the standardization of federal identifiers and markup languages to the public and Congress; advise the executive branch as it tries to uproot decades' worth of paper forms; and create demonstration projects that show immediate uses of standardized data.

We are hopeful for passage of the DATA Act by the House of Representatives this week and look forward to working with members of both parties in the Senate to improve it - for instance, by strengthening recipients' corporate parent identification. We are similarly hopeful that, should President Obama be presented with the bill, he will sign it into law, and will commit ourselves to helping government agencies implement it so that the promise of data transparency is fully realized.

Sincerely,

Greg Bateman  
Senior Director, Senior Director, Acquisition Programs, Policy and Strategy, Microsoft

Earl Devaney  
former Chairman, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board

Eric Gillespie  
Partner, Viano Capital

Beth Noveck  
former United States Deputy Chief Technology Officer

Campbell Pryde  
President and CEO, XBRL US