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**Data Transparency Coalition Applauds House Passage of DATA Act,  
Which Opens Federal Spending Data to the Public**

***Tech Coalition—Including Microsoft, SAP & Teradata—Urges Senate Consideration and Passage***

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 25, 2012) – [The Data Transparency Coalition](#), the only group unifying the technology industry in support of federal data reform, today applauded the U.S. House of Representatives for passing H.R. 2146, the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA Act). The legislation, which will now be sent to the Senate, will establish consistent electronic identifiers and markup languages for all federal spending information and set up a complete, accurate, and searchable web-based platform to allow Americans access to the data.

Hudson Hollister, executive director of the Data Transparency Coalition, helped write the DATA Act during his former position as counsel to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Hollister formed the Data Transparency Coalition to rally the technology industry around the DATA Act and other proposals to make federal data easily searchable and downloadable. To pursue the consideration and passage of the DATA Act in the Senate, the Data Transparency Coalition will work with its members to prepare and promote demonstration projects that show the benefits of standardized federal spending data.

“The DATA Act is a critical step toward getting America’s fiscal house in order,” said Hollister. “By transforming the way the government reports its spending, the DATA Act will bring more transparency and better accountability, while presenting new opportunities for tech start-ups to analyze federal data and help prevent waste, fraud and abuse.

“The DATA Act will help government agencies and private clients make better decisions while creating high-tech jobs for technology companies that invent new ways to visualize and analyze spending data. Citizens will be able to scrutinize federal expenditures, both internal and external, and inspectors general will be able to use analytics to quickly and efficiently identify fraudulent or wasteful behavior.”

Earl Devaney—who served as Chairman of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board until his retirement in December 2011 and joined the Board of Advisors of the Data Transparency Coalition at its founding—cheered the House passage of the DATA Act: “At the Recovery Board, we proved that data-driven transparency and accountability are technologically possible,” said Devaney. “It’s now up to the Senate to demonstrate that they are politically possible.”

**The DATA Act includes the following key reforms:**

- **FAST Commission.** The bill builds on the record of Devaney’s Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, (RAT Board) by creating the new Federal Accountability and Spending Transparency Commission (FAST Commission), which is a successor to the RAT Board (Section 201), and establishing a universal reporting requirement for grantees and contractors modeled on that of the stimulus (Section 101).

The RAT Board successfully tracked the spending of the 2009 fiscal stimulus package by publishing—on a single, searchable website, Recovery.gov—filings from the recipients of stimulus grants and contracts. Unlike the other federal spending websites, Recovery.gov provided highly reliable data and was used by federal inspectors general to open nearly 2,000 investigations, leading to hundreds of indictments.

- **One public platform, standardized data.** Following the recommendations of President Obama’s Government Accountability and Transparency Board, the DATA Act establishes a single public platform to host federal spending information for public access (Section 103) and imposes consistent electronic identifiers and markup languages—to be developed and identified by the new FAST Commission—on all of its data (Section 102). The bill requires the FAST Commission to publish all grantee and contractor reports on the platform.
- **Consolidation of agencies’ spending data.** Federal agencies report different types of spending data to at least six different compilations. The DATA Act requires the agencies to submit all of these separate types of data, encoded using the same consistent electronic identifiers and markup languages, to the FAST Commission’s platform (Section 101 – “Agency reporting requirement”). The DATA Act also consolidates the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (Section 305), the Consolidated Federal Funds Report (Section 304), USASpending.gov (Section 104), and Recovery.gov (Section 201) into the FAST Commission’s platform.
- **Treasury Department to publish disbursement data.** The DATA Act requires the Department of the Treasury and the new FAST Commission to agree on a way to make Treasury’s disbursement data compatible and report it alongside the other types of data on the FAST Commission’s platform (Section 101 – “Treasury reporting requirement”).
- **Consolidation of grantee and contractor reporting.** The consistent data identifiers and markup languages established by the FAST Commission will permit agencies’ grant and contract systems to retrieve financial data from the FAST Commission’s public platform, instead of requiring their grantees and contractors to report it directly. The DATA Act sets a three-year deadline for agencies to start doing so (Section 101 – “Consolidated financial reporting”). This provision relieves the compliance burden for grantees and contractors who receive funds from multiple federal agencies, particularly state and local governments and universities.
- **Travel and conference restrictions.** The DATA Act limits agencies’ spending on travel expenses to 80 percent of 2010 levels until 2016, caps conference spending at \$500,000, and limits agencies’ conference sponsorships (Section 308). These provisions more than offset the cost of fully implementing the bill’s transparency and accountability provisions, as estimated by the Congressional Budget Office.

### **About the Data Transparency Coalition**

The Data Transparency Coalition is a non-partisan, nonprofit trade association of technology companies, nonprofit organizations, and individuals supporting the publication of government data online in consistent machine-readable formats. The coalition is steered by a board of advisors. Members include large companies such as Microsoft, SAP and Teradata; leaders in foreign financial reporting, including IRIS

Business Services Limited of India and Invoke of France; and recent start-ups such as BrightScope and Rivet Software. For more information, visit <http://datacoalition.org/>.

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