

June 3, 2008

The Honorable Barack Obama
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Coburn
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Obama and Coburn,



1634 I Street, NW Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006
202.637.9800
fax 202.637.0968
<http://www.cdt.org>

CDT is writing to offer our support to the Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Federal Spending Act of 2008, which would significantly improve upon the implementation of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (the Transparency Act) that you both helped to enact in 2006.

The Transparency Act directed OMB to create a publicly accessible website, called USASpending.gov, which includes information about entities that receive federal grants, loans, and contracts. The Transparency Act provided for information to be taken from the Federal Assistance Award Data System (FAADS) and the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS). While the new Web site is a major step forward in the information available on public grants and procurement, it has also highlighted inaccuracies and incompleteness of the information available in FAADS and FPDS. The follow up legislation would take steps to improve the data quality published through routine audits and creation of error-reporting mechanisms.

CDT is also supportive of the bill's push to broaden the scope of USASpending.gov to include information about the performance of contract and grant recipients. This would allow the public to see how well recipients of federal funds are following through with their obligations.

CDT is especially pleased to see that the new provisions also include a requirement that the data be created using machine-readable formats such as XML. By adding this provision, the follow-up bill will make it substantially easier for users to find and access specific information available at USASpending.gov, and empower users to create tools to better sort the data themselves.

CDT appreciates your leadership in improving public transparency on government spending and supports the improvements to the Transparency Act in this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Leslie Harris
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ari Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ari Schwartz
Vice President and Chief Operating Officer