



American Institute of CPAs  
1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004-1081

June 20, 2011

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa, Chairman  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: The Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2011, H.R. 2146

Dear Congressman Issa:

On behalf of the 360,000 members of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), I am writing in support of your legislation, H.R. 2146, the "Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2011," which calls for a newly-created Financial Accountability and Spending Transparency Board (FAST Board) to collect information from Federal agencies, as well as from recipients of Federal grants, contracts and loans, and to designate common data elements and data reporting requirements for the information provided by recipients and agencies. The legislation specifies that the FAST Board "shall, to the extent practicable, incorporate existing nonproprietary standards, such as eXtensible Business Reporting Language (XBRL)."

The benefits of using data tagging to enhance transparency and to analyze financial and other data have been proved time and time again. XBRL provides a detailed yet customizable approach to gathering data and will provide significant transparency to the Federal government and the American people regarding the use of taxpayer funds. The legislation would take many of the lessons learned by the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, and would expand the reporting from just the recipients of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to essentially all recipients of Federal funds. Utilizing consistent data standards for the information submitted, such as XBRL, the FAST Board will be able to compare information from the Federal agencies to information from recipients, providing an unprecedented level of transparency for Federal spending.

XBRL has been used for a number of years by portions of the Federal government in areas such as Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation call reports and public company financial reporting to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Importantly, such standardized business reporting is also expanding in the United States by state governmental agencies and worldwide, where data standards are being leveraged to significantly reduce the compliance reporting burden and, at the same time, enhance the usability and transparency of reported information. The remainder of our Federal government should not be left behind.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue. We are also happy to discuss with you additional areas where implementation of data standards can further enhance reporting and make it more valuable to all types of stakeholders of data. If you have any questions, or if we can be of any further assistance, please to contact Diana Huntress Deem at 202.434.9276 or [ddeem@aicpa.org](mailto:ddeem@aicpa.org).

Sincerely,

Barry C. Melancon, CPA  
President and CEO

cc:  
The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
Members of House Oversight & Government Reform Committee