
Murphy, Souder, Oversight Committee Members Introduce "Google for Government" Bill; Mirrors Senators Obama and Coburn's Legislation to Update USASpending.gov

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Representatives Chris Murphy (CT-5), Mark Souder (IN-3) House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Henry Waxman (CA-30), Subcommittee on Government Management, Organization, and Procurement Chairman Ed Towns (NY-10), Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Chairman Wm. Lacy Clay (D-MO-1), Virginia Foxx (NC-5), and John Shadegg (AZ-3) introduced bipartisan legislation to make it easier for the public to find out how their tax dollars are being spent.

Currently, USASpending.gov acts as a clearing house for this information; this legislation would expand the information available on the web site, as well as make the data more accessible and readable. The Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Federal Spending Act of 2008, also known as the "Google for Government" Act, is identical to a bill introduced in the Senate by Senator Barack Obama of Illinois and Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, with the support of Senator John McCain of Arizona and Senator Tom Carper of Delaware.

"In the past year and half, we've opened up the books on how the Congress does business. This bill makes it even easier for taxpayers to see how their government is operating," said Representative Murphy.

"Government transparency is fundamental to our democracy, and I am pleased to cosponsor this bipartisan legislation, which will enhance the amount, and type, of information available to the American public. Simply put, this bill would make the federal government more accountable," said Representative Souder.

Updating USASpending.gov would allow visitors to view copies of Federal contracts, as well as information about competitive bidding, government lease agreements, earmarks, Federal audit disputes, work quality, Federal tax compliance, any violations or criminal activities, and government reports.

USASpending.gov was launched in December 2007. It currently allows taxpayers to view approximately \$1 trillion in Federal grants, contracts, earmarks, provides updates of data concerning Federal spending, and displays spending data according to contractor, grantee, and congressional district.

"Our government took an important step last year by launching USASpending.gov and giving ordinary citizens an important tool to hold Washington accountable for its spending," said Senator Obama. "While USASpending.gov has had tremendous success, we can make it even more accessible by expanding the information available on the website and improving the quality of government financial data. I commend my colleagues in the House for offering bipartisan companion legislation, and I look forward to Congress passing this legislation soon."

"In our system of government, the best ethics reform has always been frequent elections and the ability of citizens to hold their elected officials accountable. This legislation will give the American people valuable new tools in that effort," said Senator Coburn.

"This bill continues our work to bring more sunshine to where taxpayer dollars go. I am happy to join Senators Obama and Coburn in boosting oversight of contractors," said Chairman Towns.

"Taxpayers deserve full accountability and easy access to see how their money is spent. This bill makes tracking federal spending easier, more complete and more accurate," said Chairman Clay.

"Strengthening government accountability and ensuring that average taxpayers can access up-to-date information on government spending is just plain common sense. Throwing open the doors of government to the sunshine of public access and accountability will make government more responsive to the American citizenry and this legislation advances that critical goal," said Representative Foxx.

"The American people have a right to know how we're spending their money. This legislation is a first and important step to improving fiscal accountability in the federal government. The more accountable our government becomes, the less it will waste," said Representative Shadegg.

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