

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government

June 13, 2011

Re: FY 2012 Appropriations for the **Electronic Government Fund**

Dear Chairman Emerson, Ranking Member Serrano, members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and individuals, we are writing to urge you to restore funding to the Electronic Government Fund, which provides critical support for the construction of a more transparent and efficient government and serves as a building block for private-sector innovations that create high-tech jobs.

The E-Gov Fund has a proven track record of successful transparency projects that have delivered efficiency improvements and increased government accountability. For instance, USAspending.gov and the IT Dashboard have helped root out government waste and inefficiency and recently led to the elimination of some \$3 billion in failing technology projects. PaymentAccuracy.gov shines a light on improper federal payments, which total billions of dollars each year, and Challenge.gov provides a low-cost platform to help agencies bring the public in to identify more efficient solutions to problems facing the country.

In addition, E-Gov Fund projects provide the framework for vibrant private-sector business and job creation. The thousands of government data sets now available through Data.gov are building blocks for innovative new IT products. For instance, the search engine Bing now integrates Medicare quality ratings into searches for hospitals. Brightscope, a start-up company, has raised \$2 million in venture capital and created 30 jobs through their analysis of retirement plan data from the Department of Labor. From improved travel information to disaster relief, many benefits come from the federal government sharing information with the public in user-friendly ways.

Unfortunately, cuts to the E-Gov Fund in FY 2011 have already hurt successful projects. Needed upgrades to increase transparency and improve data quality have been delayed or abandoned, and two projects have already been terminated. Funding uncertainties have also contributed to delays in launching Performance.gov, the website mandated by the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 to make agency performance information transparent.

These cuts are penny-wise and pound-foolish. The E-Gov Fund supports powerful tools for reducing waste, fraud, and abuse and for creating private-sector jobs, and given appropriate funding, these projects result in benefits far in excess of their costs.

To support continued transparency, efficiency, and job creation, **we respectfully urge you to restore full funding for the Electronic Government Fund.** We appreciate your time and attention to this issue. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please contact Sam Rosen-Amy of OMB Watch at (202) 683-4806.

Sincerely,

America Speaks
American Association of Law Libraries
American Association of University Professors
American Library Association
American Society for Information Science and Technology
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Defending Dissent Foundation
Good Jobs First
Government Accountability Project
iSolon.org
Liberty Coalition
MapLight
OMB Watch
Open Knowledge Foundation
Open Society Policy Center
Open Source for America
OpenTheGovernment.org
Participatory Politics Foundation
Progressive Librarians Guild
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
Publish What You Fund
Sarapis Foundation
Special Libraries Association
Students for Free Culture
Sunlight Foundation
Union of Concerned Scientists
U.S. PIRG
World Wide Web Foundation

Experts (*affiliation for identification purposes only*)

James A. Hendler, Professor of Computer Science and Cognitive Science, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Lawrence Lessig, Professor of Law, Harvard Law School
Andrew McLaughlin, Executive Director, Civic Commons, and Fellow, Stanford Law School
Craig Newmark, Founder, craigslist.org and craigconnects.org
Beth Simone Noveck, Professor of Law, New York Law School
Norman Ornstein, Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute