



AAG

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
of GEOGRAPHERS

AAG Announces Support for Geospatial Data Act of 2017

November 15, 2017

WASHINGTON, DC – The American Association of Geographers (AAG) is pleased to announce our support for the Geospatial Data Act (GDA) of 2017 (S. 2128/H.R. 4395). This vital legislation recognizes the growing importance and would ensure Congressional oversight of the government’s rapidly-expanding geospatial programs and assets.

We commend the legislative sponsors, Senators Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Mark Warner (D-VA) and Congressmen Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Seth Moulton (D-MA), for their bipartisan efforts to highlight and promote these important issues. “The AAG appreciates the hard work of the bill’s sponsors. Their leadership is especially critical given that geospatial technologies are considered to be a high growth industry by the U.S. Department of Labor. A recent study showed that geospatial services are directly creating four million jobs per year. The Geospatial Data Act could not be more timely,” said Douglas Richardson, the AAG’s Executive Director.

If enacted, the bill would codify two critical organizations that deal with interagency approaches on geospatial issues: The Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) and the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC). Dr. Richardson is an NGAC member and chaired a recent NGAC subcommittee that released a report on “Emerging Technologies and the Geospatial Landscape.” The FGDC does important work to ensure federal agencies are playing a key role in harvesting the power of geospatial data and technologies to benefit American businesses and citizens.

The GDA has the potential to save U.S. taxpayers millions of dollars. There is substantial duplication across agencies as independent geospatial data programs are developed and utilized. The legislation will help agencies work in concert to undertake geospatial initiatives. Furthermore, the GeoPlatform would be strengthened by the bill to ensure public and commercial access to a wide and growing range of geospatial data. This would directly benefit and promote public safety, emergency response, community planning, and job growth.

The legislation also ensures that all government agencies and private-sector companies can access the productivity, talent, scientific and technical skills, and the creativity and innovation of the full range of the U.S. GIS and mapping workforce as they procure

geospatial data and services. This will stimulate continued growth in the vibrant GIS industry in our nation and promote U.S. geographic information science, research capacity, and competitiveness.

About the Association of American Geographers

The AAG is a nonprofit professional association representing 12,000 leading practitioners, researchers, and educators in geography and GIS. Founded in 1904 as an educational and scientific society, its members share interests in the theory, methods, and practice of geography, GIScience, and geographic education. For more information, visit the AAG website at www.aag.org, or contact John Wertman, the AAG's Senior Program Manager for Government Relations, at jwertman@aag.org.