

Rep. Derek Kilmer

OPEN Government Data Act, H.R. 1770

The federal government has access to an enormous amount of data. The goals of this bill are to provide the federal government with the tools it needs to better manage, utilize, and share this data so that it can be used to support innovative public policy, improve the delivery of services, save taxpayer money, and support third party breakthroughs. The OPEN Government Data Act is a bi-partisan and bi-cameral bill that seeks to empower agencies, individuals, and private sector partners to utilize public data in a safe and productive way. The legislation is currently supported by more than 86 advocacy, industry, and good government groups and was highlighted by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee this past March. A similar bill, S. 2852, was passed by the Senate in the 114th Congress.

Making Data Available to the Public

Perhaps the best example of government data being used to benefit the public is the National Weather Service. By making weather data freely available, the government is not only providing lifesaving information, it is spurring economic growth and innovation. This bill would codify several open government policies adopted by the Obama Administration and would require agencies to:

- Encourages agencies to engage with the public, educational institutions, industry, and other agencies to leverage public data to support innovation.
- Make government data available in a machine-readable and open format by default under open licenses so the private sector can use it to develop new apps, enhance analysis, and build new businesses;
- Requires agencies to develop, maintain, and update a list of data they hold to know what they have, what is available for public release, and how to best protect it;
- Establishes a website to make government data accessible to the public and other government agencies in line with security, personal privacy, and other protected information limitations; and
- Directs agencies to implement Open Data Plans to ensure the public's access to data and that agencies release accurate data in a timely and complete fashion.

Using Data to Support Government Efficiency:

The scandal surrounding appointment wait times at the Department of Veterans Affairs illustrates why efficient data use is important. Schedules were recorded in different formats across the country with no clearinghouse to sort through what mattered and how to fix it, which hurt care for our nation's veterans. Federal agencies are currently missing a key tool. Quality data they collect could be used to root out waste, fraud, and abuse or improve the delivery of services to citizens. But there is no requirement in statute that directs agencies to make use of valid data in their decision-making process. This bill would require agencies to:

- Facilitates agency assessment of their use of data to support decision-making, cost savings, and performance.

Staff contact: Aaron.Wasserman@mail.house.gov