

March 16, 2017

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

The undersigned groups are proud to support the “Contractor Accountability and Transparency Act of 2017” (S. 651). For many years, we have worked in a bipartisan manner urging the federal government to enhance transparency in the area of federal contract spending. Your legislation will expand the information available on USASpending.gov, make the contract information more accessible and readable, and help reduce Freedom of Information Act backlogs.

In fiscal year 2016, the federal government spent \$472 billion for the acquisition of goods and services. In order to rein in spending and regain public faith in the contracting system, the government must provide public access to information on the contracting process. Posting copies of contracts—rather than summary data that offers little, if any, insights into the goods and services being purchased—is essential to learning about government activities and eliminating waste, fraud, abuse, and substandard performance.

When contract information is publicly accessible, genuine competition will increase, and the government will be better situated to get better deals, especially as budget constraints take hold. Simply stated, the government will be in a much improved position to leverage its robust buying power.

Public posting of contracts and related records should have happened years ago, and it can be accomplished without compromising national security information or contractors’ proprietary and confidential commercial or financial information.

We find it highly unlikely that contractors will stop doing business with the federal government if contract information is disclosed. Some states have already adopted a more transparent contracting system without negatively impacting their ability to do business with contractors. According to a recent Project On Government Oversight report, at least 33 states proactively post some contracts online. That means two-thirds of the states are ahead of the federal government when it comes to contract transparency.

In summary, our groups support your efforts to increase disclosure of federal contracts. Disclosing government contracts on USASpending.gov will greatly improve transparency and accountability in federal spending.

Sincerely,

Coalition to Reduce Spending
Government Accountability Project
National Taxpayers Union
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight
Sunlight Foundation
Taxpayers for Common Sense
The Rootstrikers Project at Demand Progress
Transparency International-USA