



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION of  
REALTORS®

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Dear Senator:

The Senate may soon take up for consideration of "Digital Accountability and Transparency Act" or DATA Act, H.R. 2146, which passed the House of Representatives on April 25, 2012. On behalf of the more than one million members of the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, I urge you to consider revisions to provisions of this bill affecting government travel and event attendance. Without revision, these provisions will place severe restrictions on government employees' ability to attend nongovernmental meetings and conferences that are vital to the dialogue between private industry and federal policy-makers.

The National Association of REALTORS® fully supports the intent of Congress to improve transparency and accountability in government spending. However, as written, the provision in H.R. 2146 may reasonably be interpreted to limit federal agency employees to attending just one event sponsored by an association per fiscal year – so, for example, if one FHA staff member attends a conference sponsored by NAR, no other HUD employee could attend any NAR events for the remainder of that fiscal year.

This provision will have a chilling effect on government employees' participation in non-governmental meetings and conferences. Industry organizations, including the National Association of REALTORS®, are host to many educational events each year, addressing the current legislative issues and priorities that affect their industries. The dialogue that takes place at such conferences and meetings between government employees and association members is essential to the development of informed policymaking.

To prevent these unintended consequences and maintain the valuable exchange of ideas between government employees and the industries they oversee, we urge you to support the following specific changes to the bill:

1. Change the definition of a conference to apply only to government-sponsored meetings, and not include meetings and conferences held by associations and other private sector organizations.
2. Strike the provision that restricts agencies from attending more than one conference held by a private organization per fiscal year.

These changes will preserve the intent of Congress to curb government spending by employees while still allowing necessary dialogue between agencies and the industries they regulate. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to resolve the problems unintentionally created.

Sincerely,

Maurice "Moe" Veissi  
2012 President, National Association of REALTORS®



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