

Dear Colleagues:

I regret that a scheduling conflict will prevent me from attending this week's VGIN Board meeting. However, I did want to go on record in being opposed to the adoption of a proposed position on legislation pending in Congress, known as the Geospatial Data Act. I would respectfully urge the VGIN Board **NOT** to take a position on this legislation at this time.

My reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

- The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (www.cogo.pro), the umbrella group of all the major national geospatial trade and professional associations, has not yet taken a position -- either to endorse or oppose -- the Geospatial Data Act. At this point, it is the feeling of this group that there is division among the organizations and that the geospatial community should not air those differences before the U.S. Senate. Instead, COGO is attempting to come up with a set of major principles the coalition could agree upon that it can recommend to the Congress. COGO has not yet reached such agreement. Once COGO has developed and agreed upon that document, it will be transmitted to the Congress so there is a common or consensus position among all the COGO member organizations. In other words, there should be "peace in the valley" before any action on such a bill.
- Groups such as MAPPS and NSPS have expressed their gratitude to Senators Hatch of Utah and Warner of Virginia for recognizing the importance of geospatial data, the need for a better governance and coordination structure in the Federal government, and their introduction of the Geospatial Data Act, S. 740, but have not yet endorsed the bill.
- While reform of the Federal geospatial structure and governance is necessary and desirable in order to fully unleash the power of geospatial data to make government more efficient and effective, to address societal challenges, and to promote growth in the geospatial sector and our economy as a whole, the bill in its present form does not accomplish that goal.
- Unfortunately, the sponsors of Geospatial Data Act did not consult with major stakeholder organizations in the drafting of the bill. A position on the bill should not be taken until that dialogue takes place and amendments to the bill are agreed upon.
- The bill does not attempt to reach a compromise with the approach taken by Rep. Doug Lamborn in the "Map It Once, Use It Many Times" Act, [H.R. 1604](https://www.congress.gov/bills/113/house/1604), that was introduced in the 113th Congress and may be re-introduced in the current Congress.
- The Geospatial Data Act codifies a governance system (FGDC and NGAC) few are happy with and which previous GAO reports and Congressional hearings have shown to be ineffective. Rather than codifying an unsuccessful system, a better, more workable governance structure should be enacted in legislation. For example, merging FGDC and NGAC into one policy and priority-setting body where all stakeholders have equal voice and representation would be an improvement. Models to consider include the National Capitol Planning Commission (NCPC) (40 U.S.C. 8701 et. seq.), the National Geospatial

Policy Commission (title II of H.R. 1604), or a non-FACA entity, such as the Federal Aviation Management Council under the Federal Aviation Administration (49 U.S.C. 106(p)).

- The bill should require each agency with significant geospatial activity (e.g. above \$1 million per year) to designate a chief geospatial information officer or geospatial management officer (GIO-GMO), as recommended by NGAC.
- The bill should establish as initial priorities the most pressing data framework layers of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), with others added when the original layers are “complete” and as national priorities require. The initial layers should be orthoimagery, parcels, elevation, transportation, administrative, hydrography, geodesy, and infrastructure (surface and underground). The bill should include an authorization for the initial NSDI or for each layer.
- In order for geospatial activities to be as efficient as possible and to reduce duplication and lack of coordination, the bill should establish as Federal policy that any governmental entity receiving Federal funds “will not start or carry on any commercial geospatial activity to provide a service or product for its own use, or for use by others, if such product or service can be procured from private enterprise through ordinary business channels” and as recommended by the Office of Management and Budget (Report of the Federal mapping Task Force on Mapping, Charting, Geodesy and Surveying, 1973) and the National Academy of Public Administration (Geographic Information for the 21st Century: Building a Strategy for the Nation, 1998), and section 109, and titles III and IV of H.R. 1604.
- The bill should seek to consolidate various disparate Federal surveying, mapping and geospatial agency activities, as provided in section 102, 104, 107, 201 and 203 of H.R. 1604, and as recommended by the Office of Management and Budget (Report of the Federal mapping Task Force on Mapping, Charting, Geodesy and Surveying, 1973), the National Research Council (Federal Surveying and Mapping: An Organizational Review, 1981) and the National Academy of Public Administration (Geographic Information for the 21st Century: Building a Strategy for the Nation, 1998).
- To facilitate the coordination and strategic expenditure of Federal geospatial funds, a coordinated funding pool (an interagency budget crosscut and coordination report) should be established in the bill, such as is provided in 42 U.S.C. 4101c and section 103(e) of H.R. 1604.
- The bill should clarify for all government agencies expending Federal funds for geospatial activities that to assure the quality of data and the competence of data providers that the qualifications based selection process for contracts be used in accordance with the selection procedures in 40 U.S.C. 1101 et. seq. and section 303 of HR. 1604.

- S. 740 does contain some commendable provisions. They should be be combined with the Map It Once, Use It Many Times Act to forma consensus bill. Among the meritorious provisions in S. 740 are:• Duties, pages 6-9
- Reports, page 9, line 16 through page 10, line 8
- Performance Report, page 23, lines 7-13
- Existing data before new collection, page 28, lines 12- 17
- Budget, page 29, line 7 through page 31, line 5
- Standards, page 31, lines 7-12
- It would be premature for VGIN to take a position on S. 740. The bill has not gathered a significant number of cosponsors, has not earned the support of the major geospatial organizations, does not have a companion House bill, and has not yet had a hearing in the Senate committee. It is my understanding that there will not be a hearing on the bill until some of these aforementioned points are addressed.

It would be my recommendation that VGIN table this agenda item until we know more about any compromise or consensus provisions, whether it earns support from geospatial stakeholder groups, and whether any other geospatial reform bills are introduced in Congress.

Respectfully,

John Palatiello

On Tue, Oct 6, 2015 at 3:57 PM, Widner, Dan (VITA) <Dan.Widner@vita.virginia.gov> wrote:

VGIN Advisory Board,

Attached you will find reference materials for the Board meeting scheduled for **Thursday October 15, 2015 10:00 AM to 12:00** at VITA offices in Chester.

- Agenda
- Coordinator's Report
- Draft minutes from April 2015 meeting
- Draft resolution of support for the federal Geospatial Data Act
- Senate bill s740 Geospatial Data Act

After the meeting is adjourned we will be having a reception in honor of Senator Watkins service to the VGIN Advisory Board.

Thank you.

Dan Widner

Coordinator, Virginia Geographic Information Network

Service Management and Delivery

Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA)

VITA - Enabling the Business of Government

Dan.widner@vita.virginia.gov

www.vita.virginia.gov

[804-416-6198](tel:804-416-6198)

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John M. Palatiello, President
John M. Palatiello & Associates, Inc.
1856 Old Reston Avenue, Suite 205
Reston, VA 20190
(703) 787-6665
www.jmpa.us