December XX, 2017

<Address>Sens Harris, Feinstein

I am writing on behalf of the California Geographic Information Systems Council to voice our support for the Geospatial Data Act of 2017, S.2128.

The California Geographic Information Systems Council members represent cities, counties and state government, as well as academia, the public sector, and non-profit service organizations. Geospatial data includes aerial photography, road centerlines, elevation, streams and water bodies, government boundaries, land ownership, geodetic control, and much more. Our Council members rely on these kinds of data to do their work.

Geospatial data are critical to maintaining our national infrastructure and our economy. Unfortunately, multiple versions of these data are routinely acquired, at duplicative cost, by various levels of government to meet specific agency missions. It is feasible to build multi-purpose national data layers that meet the requirements of most stakeholders, but more oversight and accountability are needed to coordinate these efforts.

This important legislation will give Congressional oversight of federal geospatial activities, while requiring collaboration, reducing duplication of effort, saving taxpayer money and enabling greater consistency of policy, and actions among government agencies.

Federal efforts regarding geospatial technologies have been guided over the past twenty-three years by E.O. 12906 which was first issued in 1994 to direct the development of a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI). It called for a national geospatial data clearinghouse and partnerships for data acquisition among federal agencies and others. When fully implemented, the NSDI would assure that spatial data from multiple sources (federal, state, local, tribal governments, academia and the private sector) are readily available and easily integrated through shared data themes, metadata documentation and shared standards. Additionally, OMB Circular A-16 (last revised in 2010) provided executive branch authorization for the Federal Geographic Data Committee to outline requirements and implement the NSDI.

The Federal Geographic Data Committee has worked since the 1990s to coordinate the development of the NSDI, but has never had the necessary authority to hold agencies accountable for collaborating with other agencies before acquiring new data, nor for conforming to shared data standards that would enable the data to be used by multiple government agencies. In its current form, S.2128 is a bi-partisan, positive response to the GAO report that documents this weakness in our national geospatial information system, "Geospatial Data - Progress Needed on Identifying Expenditures, Building and Utilizing a Data Infrastructure, and Reducing Duplicative Efforts" (<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-193>). The geospatial data inefficiencies which weaken our entire nation are also documented by the Coalition of Geospatial Organizations' "Report Card on the U.S. National Spatial Data Infrastructure" http://www.cogo.pro/uploads/COGO-[Report\_Card\_on\_NSDI.pdf](http://www.cogo.pro/uploads/COGO-Report_Card_on_NSDI.pdf))

The Geospatial Data Act of 2017 will:

1. Codify the existing executive orders and other guidance documents that direct work by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC) toward the NSDI.
2. Provide FGDC with the authority to make other agencies follow existing common sense rules, like creating metadata for all framework data layers.
3. Provide Congressional oversight over geospatial activities of FGDC members and other agencies, and require reporting to allow Congress to track progress on the NSDI and ensure funding is spent wisely.
4. Require Federal agencies to coordinate and work in partnership with other Federal agencies, agencies of state, tribal and local governments, institutions of higher education, and the private sector to efficiently and cost-effectively collect, integrate, maintain, disseminate and preserve geospatial data.
5. Direct the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of the Interior to oversee a coordinated implementation of the NSDI.

In addition this bill seeks to assure:

1. the privacy and security of the personal data of individuals
2. free access for the public to framework geospatial data
3. the protection of proprietary interests related to licensed information and data
4. the interoperability of Federal information systems

We need strong national leadership in the development of the NSDI to reduce waste and duplication of effort. It will come from passage of this bill. The California Geographic Information Systems Council encourages your support of this legislation.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I may be reached by e-mail at [NathanielRoth@gmail.com](mailto:NathanielRoth@gmail.com)or by phone at 530-304-8353. You may also contact Phil Beilin, California Geographic Information Systems Chair, at pbeilin@walnut-creek.org or 925-256-3544.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Roth, Ph.D, GISP, California Geographic Information Systems Council Vic-Chair

Phil Beilin, California Geographic Information Systems Council Chair

*CC: The Honorable Sen. John Thune, Chairman*

*Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*

*United States Senate*

*Washington, D.C. 20510*