



**Written Statement from Nicholas (Nick) Hart, Ph.D.,  
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**For the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
"Hearing on the FY 2027 Legislative Branch Appropriations"**

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Chair Valadao, Ranking Member Espaillat, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I am Nick Hart, President & CEO of the Data Foundation, a national non-profit that works to improve government, business, and society through open data and evidence-informed public policy. I submit this testimony on behalf of the Data Foundation and our Data Coalition members.

This year, I urge Congress to take a targeted, practical step: **fund the development and maintenance of a Legislative Branch Technology Data Map**. The groundwork for this low-cost, high-value activity has already been laid by the Congressional Data Task Force and the House Digital Service. What is needed is the appropriations support to transform a promising prototype into a durable institutional resource.

**What Is the Legislative Branch Technology Data Map?**

At the 2025 Congressional Hackathon, the House Digital Service and the Congressional Data Coalition unveiled version 0.1 of a *Legislative Branch Data Map*—a project specifically requested by appropriators. The map catalogs data sources across the Legislative Branch: committee records, Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyses, legislative histories, floor

proceedings, and more, describing each dataset's source, format, provenance, and access conditions. By December 2025, the prototype had grown to more than 130 datasets, with a public-facing search interface in development.

This work builds on a decade of collaboration catalyzed by the Legislative Bulk Data Task Force, and its successor, the Congressional Data Task Force. The Legislative Branch Data Map is the natural next chapter: moving away from publishing individual datasets toward mapping the full landscape, so Congress can understand and govern its own data as an ecosystem.

### **Why Appropriations Support Is Needed**

Version 0.1 was built through a hackathon from motivated supporters, but that cannot be a substitute for sustained institutional effort. A reliable data map requires dedicated support to:

- Systematically inventory data and technology assets across House and Senate offices, committees, and legislative support agencies (GAO, CBO, CRS, GPO, and others);
- Document each dataset's location, format, access conditions, update frequency, and quality standards;
- Identify gaps, redundancies, and opportunities for better data sharing across the congressional enterprise; and
- Maintain a public-facing interface and keep the map current as systems evolve.

Congress cannot govern what it cannot see. Without a map of its own data landscape, Congress will continue to duplicate requests, miss existing resources, and lack the foundation for strategic IT investment. Consider the practical benefits:

**Reducing Duplication and Waste.** Congressional offices repeatedly request the same analyses and datasets from support agencies and from the Executive Branch. A data map—like the enterprise data catalogs that Executive Branch agencies are required to develop—enables staff to find what Congress already has before re-requesting it.

**Strengthening Oversight.** In a period of significant and changing government capacity and organizational structure, Members and staff need to know quickly what data Congress can access, where it comes from, and under what conditions. The data map provides a foundation for accountability.

**Enabling Responsible AI Adoption.** The Government Publishing Office’s (GPO) launch of a Model Context Protocol server in late 2025—which allows AI tools to draw from authoritative GPO publications in real-time—is an excellent model. But AI tools are only as reliable as the data they draw from. The data map provides the inventory and documentation layer that makes responsible AI use by Congress possible: identifying which datasets are suitable for AI-assisted analysis and which require additional governance first.

### **A Model for Implementation**

The Data Foundation encourages the Subcommittee to direct the appropriate Legislative Branch support agency—in coordination with the House Digital Service,

Senate technology offices, and the Congressional Data Task Force—to develop and maintain a comprehensive Legislative Branch Technology Data Map, with an initial version published within one year of enactment and an annual status report provided to the Committee.

### **Additional FY 2027 Priorities**

- **Adequate Funding for GAO, CBO, and the Congressional Research Service (CRS).** Congressional support agencies are the backbone of Congress’s independent analytical capacity. At a moment when Congress must evaluate significant changes across the Executive Branch, reductions to these institutions directly undermine the legislative function. The Data Foundation strongly supports full funding for each, including for enabling effective oversight and transparency with the Executive Branch.
- **CBO Data Sharing Act Implementation.** P.L. 118-89 authorized CBO to access Executive agency data more efficiently when allowable under current law, and requested by CBO. Effective implementation with strong, transparent privacy safeguards requires continued oversight and adequate resources.
- **Establishment of a Congressional Chief Data Officer (CDO).** In 2018, Congress established CDO roles across the Executive Branch through the OPEN Government Data Act (P.L. 115-435, Title 2). Congress should apply these same data governance principles to its own operations by designating a CDO for the Legislative Branch to coordinate data standards and interoperability across offices, committees, and support agencies—without replacing existing functions at GAO, CBO, or committee offices.

- **Machine-Readable Legislative Branch Budget Justifications.** Legislative branch agencies must publish annual budget justifications in structured, machine-readable formats on their websites.
- **Congress.gov Modernization.** The Library of Congress’s ongoing user experience research for Congress.gov is welcome and to be applauded. We encourage the Library of Congress to share public timelines for planned improvements, engage systematically with civil society, and expand committee video availability on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

## **Conclusion**

Congress faces a clear challenge: conduct robust oversight during a period of substantial government change, modernize its own operations for the AI era, and demonstrate fiscal responsibility—all at once. A Legislative Branch Technology Data Map is a practical, low-cost investment that advances all three goals. The work is underway, the community is interested and engaged, and a prototype already exists. Appropriations support can make this effort available long-term to guide effective data governance and bolster transparency for years to come.

The Data Foundation stands ready to support Congress in this work. Thank you for your consideration.