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The Honorable Senator Steve Daines
1 Russell Senate Courtyard
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Daines:

As Montana State Librarian and chair of the Montana Land Information Advisory Council, I'm writing to express strong support for S. 740 which has been assigned to the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. I believe this legislation will help our nation regain its place as the World leader in geospatial technologies. Federal agency efforts have been guided over the past twenty-one years by E.O. 12906, OMB Circular A-16 and various plans that have flowed from the Geospatial Line of Business. Federal agencies were never given a clear mandate or the authority to do the job, and there has been inadequate monitoring and enforcement of their activities. They have failed to build the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) as clearly evidenced by the latest in a series of related GAO Reports (<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-193>) and the Report Card on the U.S. National Spatial Data Infrastructure (<http://www.cogo.pro/uploads/COGO-Report Card on NSDI.pdf>).

The Geospatial Data Act of 2015 (S. 740) will help to resolve these issues through the various provisions of the bill and Congressional oversight of Federal activities is a critical component. It will also increase the voice of the stakeholder community through the language related to the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) which is comprised of the various sectors of the stakeholder community. The DATA Act was passed last year to deal with accountability and transparency issues related to Federal data and information. However, geospatial data was not addressed by the DATA Act. These types of data (e.g. aerial imagery, road centerlines, parcels, elevation, streams and water bodies, government boundaries, and geodetic control) are critical to maintain our federal infrastructure and our national economy. Multiple versions of these data are routinely duplicated, at great cost, and used throughout all levels of government to meet agency missions and provide services to our citizens. It is very feasible to build multi-purpose national data layers that meet the requirements of all stakeholders, but more authority, responsibility and accountability will need to be given to Federal agencies to make this happen.

We need strong national leadership in the development of the NSDI to reduce waste and duplication of effort and to improve state and local stakeholder engagement. It will come from passage of S. 740. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I may be reached by E-Mail at jstapp2@mt.gov or by phone at 406-444-3117.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J Stapp".

Jennie Stapp
Montana State Librarian