



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, & TRANSPORTATION

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Source Code Harmonization And Reuse in Information Technology (SHARE IT) Act

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What is Custom Software?

Each year, the federal government buys approximately \$12 billion worth of software, including both “off-the-shelf” products like Microsoft Word and code that is “custom developed” for agencies. Examples of custom code include websites, public databases of government activity (e.g., grants.gov), computer models for regulatory analyses, and even mobile apps for making reservations at national parks. But agencies generally do not share custom software or its underlying code with each other. This results in duplicative government contracts and needless spending, as agencies hire contractors to reproduce code that another agency has already purchased. In addition, if agencies allow contractors to keep sole control of computer models used for regulatory analysis, that code does not count as “government records” for purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

How Sharing Custom Software Saves Money

Custom software created for one agency can be [reused](#) by other agencies performing the same tasks. For example:

1. A shareable federal website template introduced in 2015 has saved over [\\$18 million](#).
2. Code.gov, a website for government code sharing, gives agencies access to more than [\\$1 billion](#) of software developed for other agencies.
3. A pilot program for sharing geospatial software between government agencies reduced acquisition costs [by 5%](#) by cutting administration and other red tape.

Why Legislation is Needed

Despite the benefits of code sharing, [many agencies only allow their code](#) to be used or seen within that agency. In 2016, [a new federal source code policy](#) recognized the problem and instructed federal agencies to share code with each other. But the policy had no accountability mechanisms, no uniformity in procedures for accessing code, and no requirements to report agencies that refused to share their code. As a result, after seven years of effort by both Republican and Democratic administrations, [thirteen federal agencies](#) still do not share code they buy with the rest of the government.

Solution: The SHARE IT Act

The SHARE IT Act improves and updates federal source code policy. The bill:

1. [Mandates Code Sharing](#). Requires agencies to publicly list custom code they make or buy, and share this code with the rest of the government.
2. [Increases Transparency](#). Ensures that code created by contractors for the government is subject to the Freedom of Information Act.
3. [Protections for Sensitive Code](#). Exempts from disclosure code for national security systems, classified code, or code whose disclosure would create an identifiable risk to individual privacy.
4. [Ensures Accountability](#). Agency Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are responsible for overseeing code sharing. They also must submit annual reports to Congress documenting compliance.
5. [No Additional Funding](#). Agencies have flexibility to choose how to share code via existing government infrastructure like code.gov, open-source tools like Git, or commercial platforms like GitHub or Bitbucket.