Bill to increase transparency of US aid could still face roadblocks

By Ashlee Betteridge
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After unanimously passing the House of Representatives in December last year but failing to make it to the Senate, a bipartisan bill to increase the transparency of US aid might still face stumbling blocks if the Obama administration is unwilling to support it.

The Foreign Aid Transparency and Accountability Act was reintroduced to both the House of Reps and Senate last week. It has now been referred to committee for investigation.

If passed, the bill would mandate the release of a large volume of data on US aid spending. It would also introduce compulsory evaluation not only of development and humanitarian assistance, but also security assistance.

The NGO sector is firmly behind the bill, with everyone from Oxfam to Mercy Corps highlighting its importance. George Ingram from the Brookings Institution said the bill would help donors, recipients, policymakers, practitioners, media and citizens to be better informed.

Lately, there seems to be increasing bipartisan support for aid transparency in the US Congress, which may generate enough momentum to see the bill through. For example, during Obama's recent Africa visit, Republican and Democrat reps sent a letter to the administration calling for more aggressive efforts on foreign aid transparency.

About the author/s

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Ashlee Betteridge was the Manager of the Development Policy Centre until April 2021. She was previously a Research Officer at the centre from 2013-2017. A former journalist, she holds a Master of Public Policy (Development Policy) from ANU and has development experience in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. She now has her own consultancy, Better Things Consulting, and works across several large projects with managing contractors.

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