

SB 1002 – YEE

CA OPEN DATA STANDARD

PROBLEM

Often when government agencies post electronic records online or provide electronic copies of documents in response to a public records request the data is simply a scanned graphic image file that is not searchable or able to be sorted. Even though the agency itself has the file in a searchable format.

Forests Forever was advocating for a certain kind of forestry report to be online in a searchable format so that it could be reviewed against other data sources to prevent destructive deforestation in the Sierras. Under Schwarzenegger, some of the reports were published, but in formats that were useless for analysis.

Producing a 2,000 page electronic document that cannot be searched or sorted is inadequate and almost useless. For too long, many government agencies – either by choice or inertia – have been living in the Stone Age when it comes to producing public documents. This bill will not only bring public agencies into the 21st Century, but will ensure greater transparency and accountability.

EXISTING LAW

The California Public Records Act requires state and local agencies to make their records available for public inspection and, upon request of any person, to provide a copy of any public record unless the record is exempt from disclosure. The act requires any agency that has information that constitutes an identifiable public record not otherwise exempt from disclosure that is in an electronic format to make that information available in an electronic format when requested by any person. The act requires the agency to make

the information available in any electronic format in which it holds that information.

BILL SUMMARY

The California Open Data Standard will provide greater access to government records by requiring public documents and data that are electronically available to be user-friendly and searchable by commonly used software.

Under this bill, such electronic documents would need to be produced in an open source file, word processing document, spreadsheet, or other format in which keywords or names could be easily searched using commonly used software, which is often the format internally used by the public agency.

This bill will ensure an assessable transparent government by providing a clear guideline with a reference standard so that when new mandates pass, or new documents are published online as a matter of course under existing law or regular business, they are in accessible formats.

SUPPORT

Common Cause

OPPOSITION

None at this time.