



THE PARTNERSHIP FOR
A More Perfect Union



PREPARING FOR THE 112TH CONGRESS **GOLD MOUSE** PROJECT

Becoming One of the Best Websites on Capitol Hill

This training is made possible by support from:

AdvocacyData
political data you can trust

Agenda

1. About the Gold Mouse Project
2. What to Focus on First
3. What's Next (After the Basics)
4. Managing a Successful Website
5. Top 10 Improvements To Make Today
6. Additional Resources

About the Gold Mouse Project

Identify best and innovative practices
in House & Senate offices

Since 1998, CMF has assessed the
quality of congressional websites



Based on:

- Focus groups with constituents
- Interviews with congressional staff, industry research, and
- Surveys of political reporters and advocacy groups

About the Criteria

- **Quantitative (Y / N)** : whether or not a site had something

*"Does the site have
a THOMAS search box?"*

- **Qualitative (1 – 5)**: how well the site did something





*"To what extent does the
site provide information about
major national issues?"*

Translated into Grades and Awards

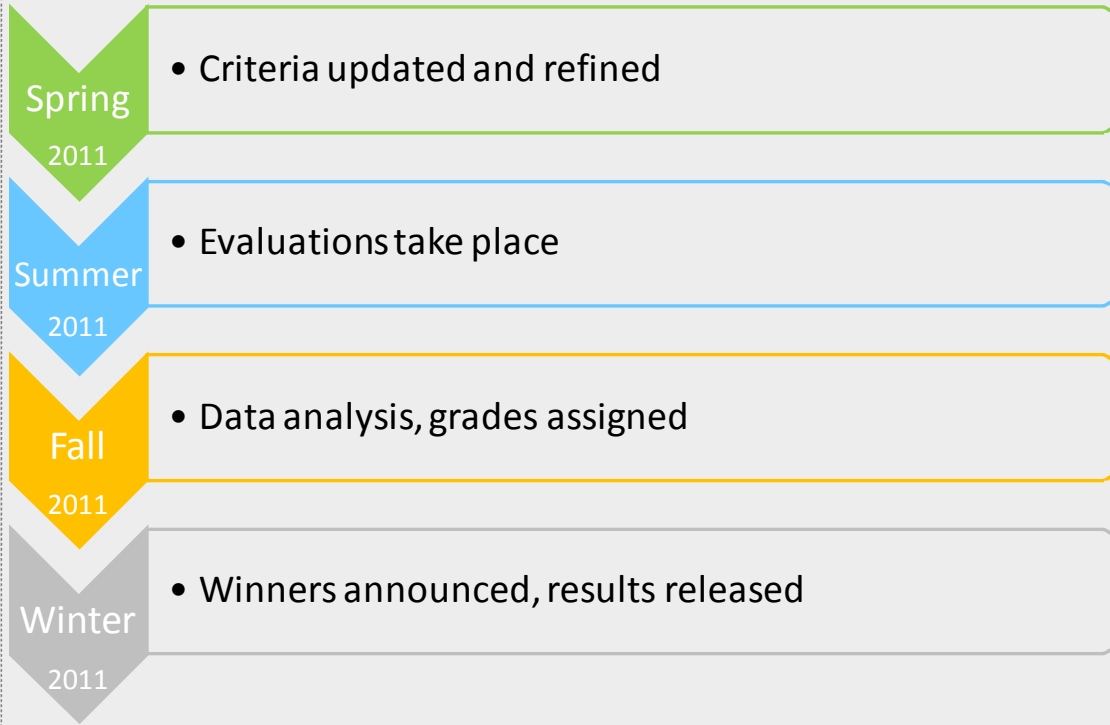
Criteria are weighted according to importance and factored into a formula that resulted in an overall numerical score for the site.

Scores are sorted within each category — Senate Member, House Member, Committee, and Leadership — standardized, and translated into letter grades.

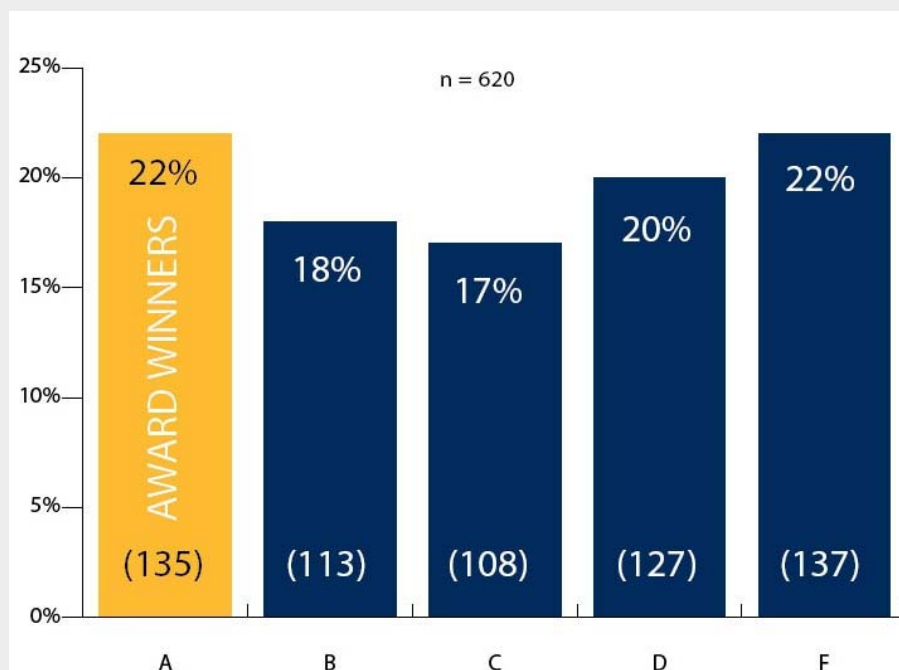
Mouse Award are the sites that score an A- or higher. There are no pre-set number of awards. The top-ranked site in each category is recognized with the Platinum Mouse Award.

MOUSE AWARD		LETTER GRADE
	platinum →	#1 site
	gold →	A+
	silver →	A
	bronze →	A-
		B
		C
		D
		F

112th Congress Gold Mouse Project Timeline



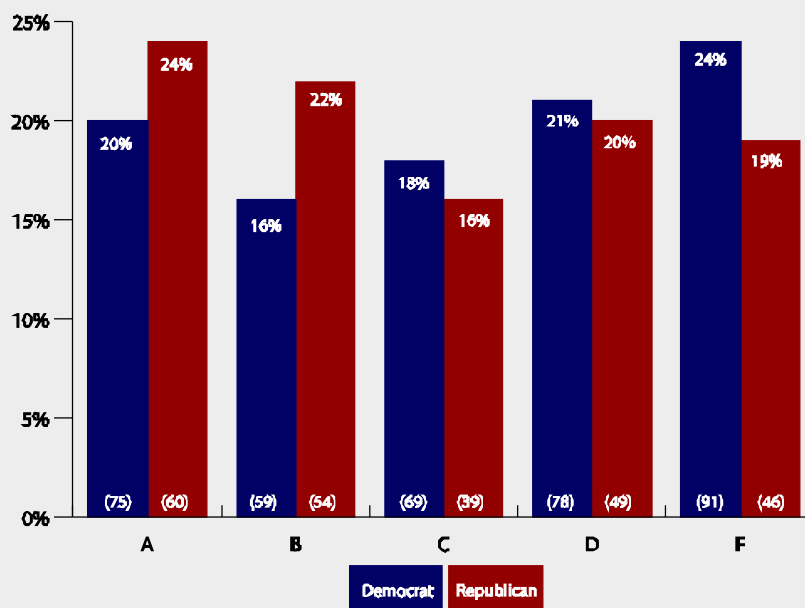
A Look Back at the 111th Congress



111th Congress: Republican Websites Scored Better

- Democratic websites outnumbered Republican websites 3:2
- “C” or higher:
 - Republicans 62%
 - Democrats 54%

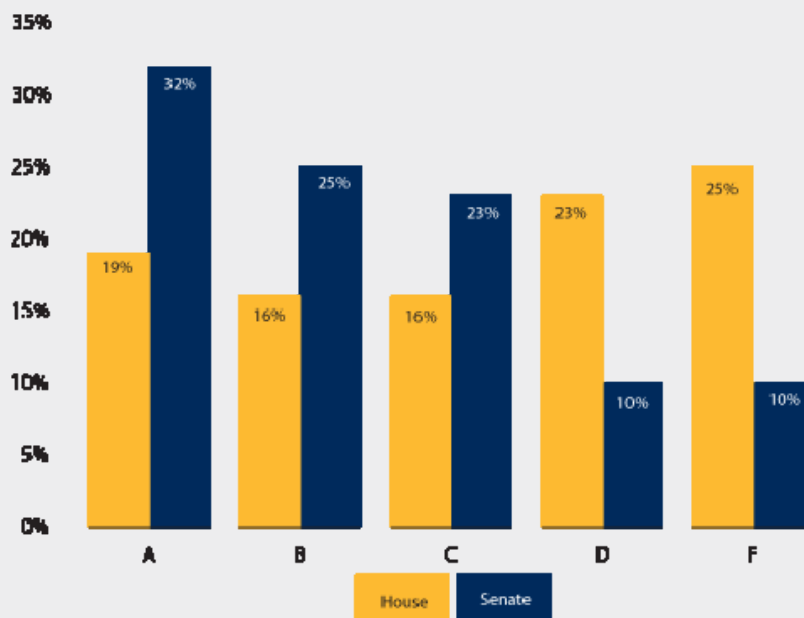
111th Congress: Republican Websites Scored Better



Senate Sites Scored Better Than House Sites

- Most common Senate letter grade:
"A"
- Most common House letter grade:
"F"
- Not surprising, given that Senate offices generally have more financial and staff resources than House offices

Senate Sites Scored Better Than House Sites



Reactions from Real Award Winners

"We are very excited and honored to be recognized by CMF."

"WOW!!!! THX U so much [...] The [Member of Congress] is very HAPPY that you have selected her website for such an honor"

Reactions from Real Award Winners

"We've been stuck at Gold for the last two evaluations!"

"It's just a Bronze Mouse sort of a day."

What To Focus on First

1. Usability

"Can I navigate the website and find what interests me even if I've never used the site before?"

2. Timeliness

"Is the information on the website up to date?"

3. Information on issues

"What are the issues before Congress? What issues are important to the Member and/or district and what's being done?"

4. Constituent services and casework

"What services can my Member provide me with and how does the process work?"

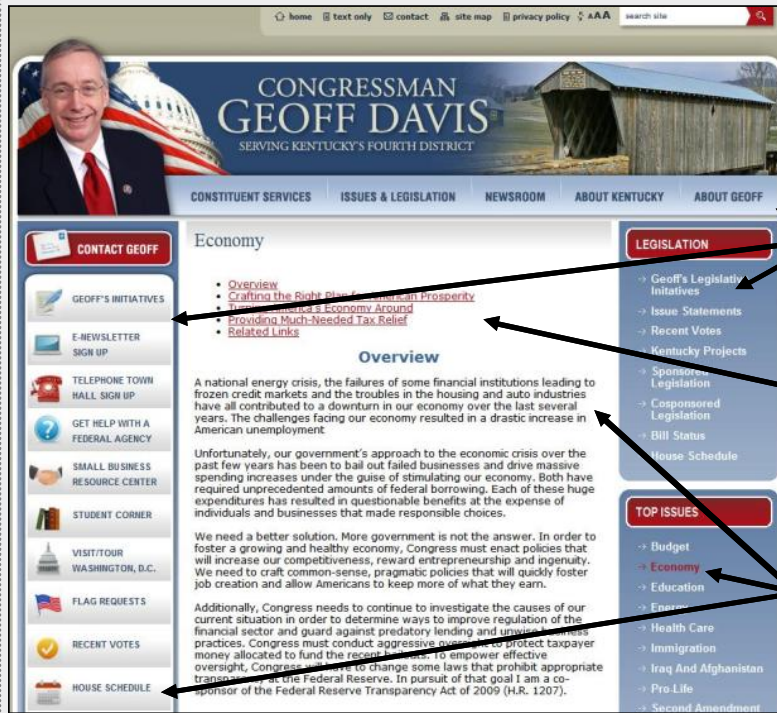
Usability

The website's readability, organization, ease of navigation, and look and feel

"Can I navigate the website and find what interests me even if I've never used the site before?"

20% of Member sites did not have a functional search engine

Can I navigate the website?



Navigation tools including a site map and search bar

Consistent and clear menu options make navigation easier

The content is scannable with links to skip to different sections and to more detailed information

Text, links, menu options are clear and easy to read

Timeliness

- All content up to date, including issue pages, vote rationales, accomplishments, video, and audio
- Information was considered timely if it was clearly from the current session of Congress

"Is the information on the website up to date?"

While 42% of Member sites had a THOMAS search box, only 22% searched the current Congress (111th)

Is the information up to date?



Links to all the latest relevant information, not just press releases

Write-up updated with the most significant, recent action

THOMAS links and search box are for the current Congress

Information on Issues

National issues, district/state-specific issues, the Member's priority issues, and key vote rationales

"What are the issues before Congress? What issues are important to the Member and/or district/state and what's being done?"

On a 5 point scale, the average Member website scored a 3.6 on national issues

What's being done about important issues?

Relevant video, blog posts, and press releases for each issue

Links to actions taken on each issue, including relevant letters, sponsored and cosponsored legislation, and votes

Hot Topics:

- California Man-Made Drought
- Hydropower as a Renewable Energy Resource

Did You Know?

- Hydropower accounts for approximately 75% of all current renewable energy sources in the United States.
- When 268 million megawatt-hours of hydropower were generated in 2004, more than 160 million tons of carbon emissions were avoided in the United States.
- Today's hydropower turbines are capable of converting more than 90% of available energy into electricity, which is more efficient than any other form of generation.
- 10 million acres of farmland are irrigated by Bureau of Reclamation Projects.
- 60% of the nation's vegetables and 25% of the nation's fruit and nuts are produced using water delivered through Bureau of Reclamation projects.
- 1 out of 5 western farmers utilized water delivered through Bureau of Reclamation projects.

Related Hearings:

- Hearings - Subcommittee on Water and Power Legislative Hearing on H.R. 4719 and H.R. 5487 (06/17/2010)
- Hearings - Subcommittee on Water and Power Oversight Field Hearing on "Managing Water for the Future: How Federal, State, and Local Entities are Supporting Agriculture" (05/17/2010)
- Markup - Full Committee Markup on H.R. 4349, H.R. 2889, H.R. 4438, H.R. 4491, H.R. 4493, H.R. 3511, and H.Res. 1254 (05/05/2010)
- Hearings - Joint Oversight Field Hearing entitled "On the Edge: Challenges Facing Grand Canyon National Park" (04/08/2010)
- Hearings - Subcommittee on Water and Power Oversight Field Hearing on "Collaboration on the Colorado River: Lessons Learned to Meet Future Challenges" (09/09/2010)

Related Documents:

- Press Releases - Rural America Solutions Group Co-Chairs Call for Committee Hearings on Federal Power Grab of Clean Water Act (06/22/2010)
- In Case You Missed It - In Case You Missed It - FOX News: Drug Cartel Activity Threatens Texas Water Supplies, Lawmaker Says (06/21/2010)
- Press Releases - Drug Cartel Violence Along Open Southern Border Endangers Drinking Water Supplies (06/17/2010)
- Press Releases - Hastings: Dam Removal Extremists Falsely Attack Latest BiOp (05/20/2010)
- In Case You Missed It - FOX News: Congressman Seeks to Expand EPA's Control of Water (04/23/2010)

What's being done about important issues?

The House Natural Resources Committee – Republican website includes hot topics and information for each subcommittee

Related hearings and documents are also available

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Constituent Services and Casework

What casework is, how to start the process, the most common problems and solutions, online resources, links to federal agencies, and a privacy release form for constituents to download

"What services can my Member provide me with and how does the process work?"

49% of Member websites did not have information on how the casework process works

What services can my Member provide?

The screenshot shows a webpage for U.S. Representative Ed Royce. The header includes his name and title. Below this, there's a section titled "U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS)". The text in this section describes the USCIS's role within the Department of Homeland Security and provides contact information for Representative Royce's office. Below this, there's a section titled "WHAT IS THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS)?" which explains the agency's functions. Further down, there's a section titled "WHERE IS THE CLOSEST USCIS OFFICE?" which lists the address and hours of the field office in Santa Ana, CA. At the bottom, there's a section titled "HOW CAN I CHECK THE STATUS OF MY CASE?" which provides information on how to check the status of an application or petition.

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS)

If you would like Rep. Royce's help with a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issue, have a question that is not addressed on this page, please call Rep. Royce in his Orange office or print out his [USCIS Privacy Authorization Form](#) (Note: This form is a different form than the general Privacy Authorization Form to be used for help with all other agencies.) and fax or mail it to his Orange office: Representative Ed Royce 1110 E. Chapman Ave., Suite 207 Orange, CA 92666 Phone: (714) 744-4130 Fax: (714) 744-4056.

WHAT IS THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES (USCIS)?

The new U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It was once the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS). The USCIS enforces laws providing for selective immigration and controls entry of tourists, business travelers, and other temporary visitors. It does so by inspecting and admitting arrivals at land, sea, and air ports of entry, administering benefits such as naturalization and permanent resident status, and apprehending and removing aliens who enter illegally or violate the requirements of their stay.

The USCIS Homepage

Visit the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' (USCIS) homepage for complete information the agency.

WHERE IS THE CLOSEST USCIS OFFICE?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) - Field Office
34 Civic Center Plaza
Santa Ana, CA 92701

The office does not have a public phone number. However, they are open five days a week for walk-in visitors. You can visit with a USCIS Information Officer.

Office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and Thursday 7:00 AM to 12:00 Noon.

HOW CAN I CHECK THE STATUS OF MY CASE?

Customers now have several options available to check the status of an application or petition filed with the USCIS. They should visit the USCIS website (see link below) or call the agency's toll-free, the National Customer Service Center (NCSC) at 1-800-375-5283. In the past customers could visit the California Service Center (CSC) at 24000 Avila Road in Laguna Niguel, to get answers to their questions. However, the CSC wants the public to know that it will no longer see customers on a walk-in basis. All customers are encouraged to go to the USCIS website (see link below) because this new technology options is far more convenient and efficient. It provides the same information as walk-in.

Each area of casework has a description of what the service is, how to get help from the agency, and how to get help from the congressional office

Resources specific to the district and answers to the most common problems or questions

What's Next (After the Basics)

5. District/State information

"Is there information specifically for and about the state or district?"

6. Accountability

"What is the Member doing in Congress?"

7. Legislative Process

"How do Congress and the legislative process work?"

8. Floor Proceedings

"What's going on in Congress?"

9. Media Communication

"Does the website include all the media created by the office?"

10. Communication Technology and Use of Social Media

"Can users interact and connect with the office in different ways?"

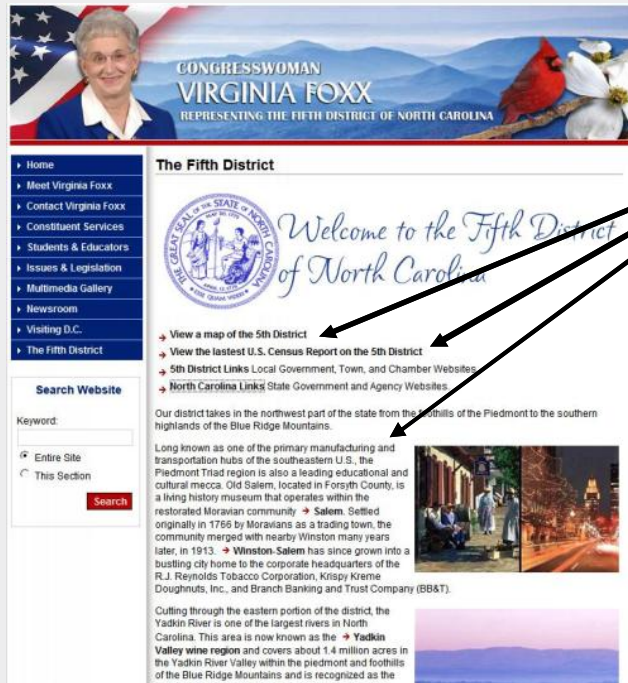
District/State Information

Key district/state information, general and demographic information, map of the state/district, and local resources

"Is there information specifically for and about the district/state?"

27% of Member websites had links to census information about their state or district

Is there info for and about the district/state?



A map of the district,
census data, a
description of the district
and what makes it
unique

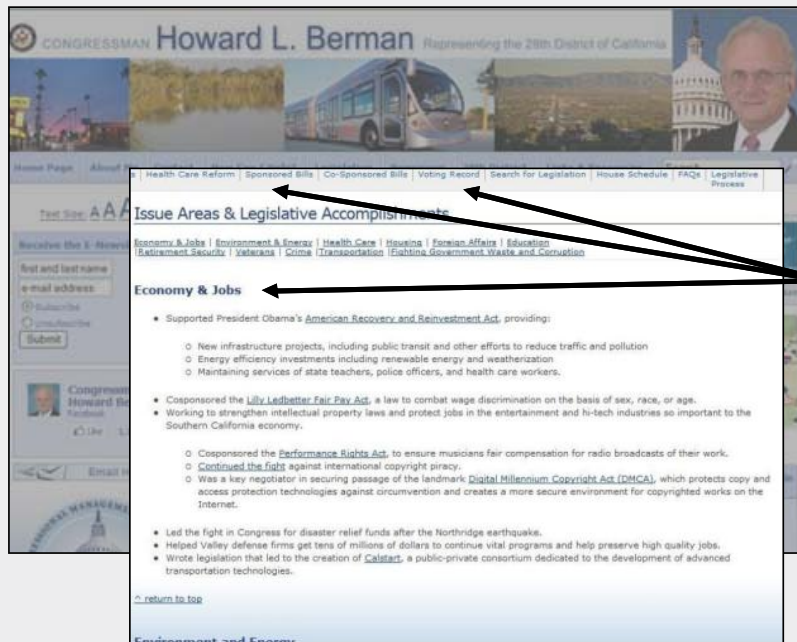
Accountability

The Member's legislative activity, voting record, roll call votes, and sponsored and co-sponsored legislation

"What is the Member doing in Congress?"

54% of Member websites posted their voting records

What is the Member doing in Congress?



Links to sponsored legislation, voting record, and key votes by issue

Legislative Process

How Congress works, how a bill becomes a law, how Congress functions, what a Member does, and other educational resources

"How does Congress work?"

49% of Member websites contained information on how a bill becomes a law

How does Congress work?

Legislative Information
Congressman Abtore has quickly established Congress on veterans, health care and social guarantee benefits for combat wounded with he has authored 30 different legislative bills. Twenty-three of those initiatives have resulted with directing over \$150 million in aid for key economic development projects.

For more details on his positions and work in:

- Energy & Environment
- Jobs & Economy
- Veterans
- Small Business
- Immigration
- Tax Reform
- Trade
- Health Care
- Education
- Offices Reform
- Sportsmen's Rights

Sponsored and Cosponsored Legislation
Before a proposed piece of legislation can be Representative, it must first be sponsored by a Member of the House or a Member of the Senate. The primary sponsor of a piece of legislation is certain bill is becoming a co-sponsor. Here is Congressman Abtore has sponsored or co-sponsored:

Federal Funding Requests
Every year, Congressman Abtore's office receives requests for federal funding from constituents.

Proceedings of the House
The Congressional Record is the official transcript of the proceedings and debates of the U.S. Congress. The full text of the Congressional Record is published the day after each meeting of the House or Senate. A summary of what is happening on the floor of the House is also available as the debate occurs.

Rules and Precedent of the House
The House Rules and Precedents are the official documents that spell out the process by which legislation is considered by the House and its committees, as well as specifying the authority of the officers and committees of the House. Several collections of material explaining the rules and precedents are available through the House Rules Committee: General Parliamentary Procedure, House Committee Procedures, House Floor Procedures, and House and Senate Parliamentary procedure (originally compiled by the Congressional Research Services of the Library of Congress).

Legislative Process
Tying It All Together: Learn About the Legislative Process, How Our Laws Are Made, and Enactment of a Law are publications that discuss the steps of our Federal lawmaking process from the source of an idea for a legislative proposal through its publication as a statute. A kid's version of *How Laws Are Made* is also available.

Roll Call Votes
The record of how each Member of the House voted on each vote where the vote was conducted electronically is available. These are the roll call votes.

Schedule of the House
Various schedules of upcoming House activities are available. On a daily basis, there is the Majority Leader's Daily Schedule. On a weekly basis, there is the Weekly House Program prepared by the Clerk of the House and the Weekly Schedule prepared by the House Majority Leader. On an annual basis, there is the Majority Whip's annual House Calendar.

Federal Laws
The U.S. Code is the official compilation of the current Federal statutes of a general and permanent nature. The Code is arranged according to subject matter under 50 subject headings ("titles"). The Code sets out the current status of the laws, incorporating all amendments into the text. Prior to being added to the U.S. Code, individual laws are published in pamphlet form as "slip laws" which are later collected together in chronological order (not in subject order) as the Statutes at Large.

Links to information on the rules, precedents, and procedures of the House.

How does Congress work?

FAQ's

1. Who is the chairman and ranking member? How are they chosen?
2. What is your committee's jurisdiction?
3. How can I keep up with committee activities on legislation, nominations and so on?
4. How does the Committee pick hearing witnesses?
5. If I attend a hearing, can I get a set of testimony while it is occurring?
6. How can I watch hearings online?
7. How do I attend a committee hearing?
8. Are your hearings open to the public?
9. What agencies does the committee oversee?
10. Does the committee hire interns?
11. How does the nomination process work?
12. Where can I find a schedule of upcoming hearings?
13. Where can I send a resume?
14. What are your hours?
15. I have an appointment to meet with a committee staffer, where should I go?
16. What is a Committee Calendar?
17. What's the best way to ask a question/comment/suggestion/complain/etc.?
18. What is a field hearing?
19. What does it mean "to report"?
20. What is a "business meeting"?
21. What is "recess"?
22. What is a "session"?
23. How often does your committee meet?
24. How many senators are on your committee?
25. What does a Committee do?
26. How do I find the text of a bill?
27. How can I get a copy of a hearing record?

June 16, 2010 Press Release
Senators urge administration to control oil available resources to meet up in the Gulf

to attend the Super
Corker, Shell Lands Act to
require states to provide for
water, the Act is to include a
plan that describes the energy
and climate for government
and protection of the environment

© 2007

The Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources has an extensive FAQ that touches on everything from the committee's jurisdiction to the definition of "recess"

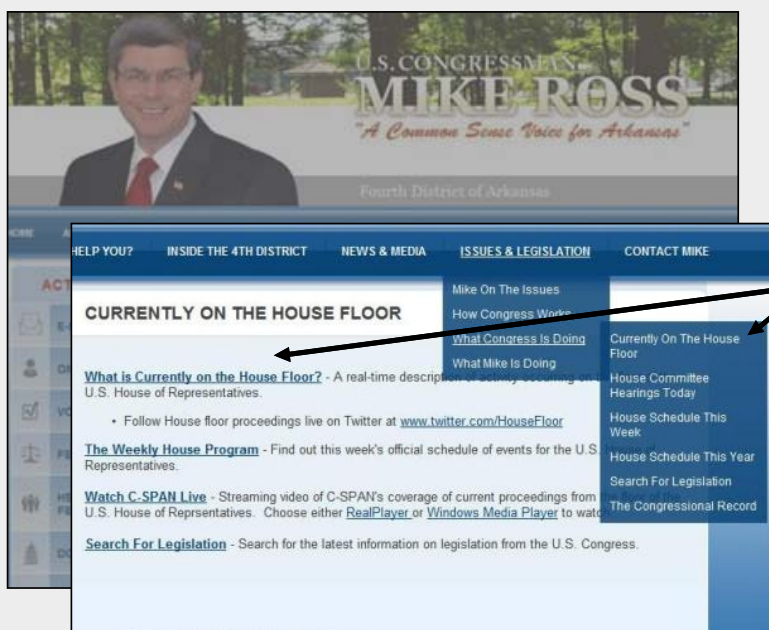
Floor Proceedings

What is currently happening in Congress, the chamber's schedule, current floor proceedings, and the Congressional Record

"What's going on in Congress?"

53% of Member websites had links to the floor proceedings

What's going on in Congress?



Links to information on what Congress is doing, including the schedule for the week and what's on the floor today.

What's going on in Congress?

The screenshot shows the website for the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. At the top, it says "U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS". Below that, there's a section for a hearing titled "Hearing: Implementation of the New Post-9/11 GI Bill - Looking Back and Moving Forward". It includes the date "April 21, 2010" and time "9:30 a.m.". There's a link "Click Here to Read RAW Transcript" and a "Committee Channel" video player. A "Table of Contents" is also visible, listing "1- Committee Leadership" with "Chairman Daniel K. Akaka" and "Ranking Member Richard Burr". It also lists "Panel I" with "KEITH M. WILSON, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION" and "Mr. Robert E. Clark, Assistant Director for Accession Policy Office, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness". "Panel II" lists "MARCO REININGER, JAVA MEMBER, STUDENT VETERAN AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY", "Faith Deslauriers, Legislative Director, National Association for Veterans' Program Administrators", "WILLIAM D. STEPHENS, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES", and "ROBERT MALCOLM, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION". A "Hearing Accessibility" section at the bottom provides information for individuals attending the hearing, including contact details and accessibility services like ASL interpreters and Braille.

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs includes a raw transcript and video of the hearings along with its schedule

Member statements, witness testimony, and information on hearing accessibility are also posted

Media Communication

The amount and quality of the media content, press releases, video, audio, and columns or op-ed pieces

"Does the website include all the media created by the office?"

While 98% of Member sites posted press releases, only 40% were sortable by topic

Does the website include all media?



The latest information, from videos and newsletters, to press releases and commentaries

Links and information specifically for the press

Communication Technology and Use of Social Media

Facebook and Twitter, RSS feeds, blogs, social bookmarking, online polls or surveys, and any other new media tools

"Can users interact and connect with the office in different ways?"

83% of Member sites had RSS feeds

Can users connect with the office in new ways?

The image shows a screenshot of Congressman Erik Paulsen's official website. The website features a header with his name and title, a navigation menu, and various sections including 'Kids Service Project', 'Welcome To My Website!', 'Constituent Services', and 'Contact Erik'. Below the website, there is a social media section with links to Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Arrows point from the text annotations to the social media links and the website content.

Official social media tools are linked to the official website

Posts are tailored toward the medium and go beyond just a headline service

Managing a Successful Website

It takes the whole office:

- Getting Buy-In From the Top
- Making the Website a Priority
- Formulating a Strategic Plan
- Allocating the Necessary Resources
- Creating a Team-Oriented Approach
- Meeting the Needs of Constituents on their Terms

Top 10 Improvements To Make Today

6. Add links to chamber schedule and floor proceedings
7. Add links or guidance on how Congress works
8. Add Census and other demographic information about your state
9. Add press contact information
10. Connect your official Facebook, Twitter, or other social media tools to your website

Top 10 Improvements To Make Today

1. Use your website! Click on every link to make sure they are working properly
2. Test the forms on your website: email form, search feature, etc.
3. Update sponsorship and co-sponsorship links
4. Add guidance on how to best communicate with your office
5. Add links to roll call votes

Coming Soon



Additional Resources at pmpu.org

- Gold Mouse Project Page
 - o Blogs
 - o Resources and announcements
- Current and Past reports:
 - o Findings from the 111th Congress Gold Mouse Project
 - o 2007 Gold Mouse Report
 - o 2006 Gold Mouse Report
- Your website grade and rank
 - o Emailed to your Chief of Staff in April, contact CMF for a copy
- Customized Feedback:
 - o Website report cards available for purchase at:
<http://pmpu.org/2010/04/21/web-site-report-cards/>

Links to Mouse Award-winning Websites



Q & A

With award-winning panelists:

- John Clocker – HIR
- Lindsay Hamilton – Congressman Steve Israel
- Armstrong Robinson – Congressman Geoff Davis
- Betsy Barrett – Congressman John Dingell
- Neal Kirby - House Natural Resources Committee



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Comments? Questions?

Tim Hysom: thysom@cmfweb.org

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