



THE PARTNERSHIP FOR  
*A More Perfect Union*

# PREPARING FOR THE 112<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS **GOLD MOUSE** PROJECT

## Becoming One of the Best Websites on Capitol Hill



# 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



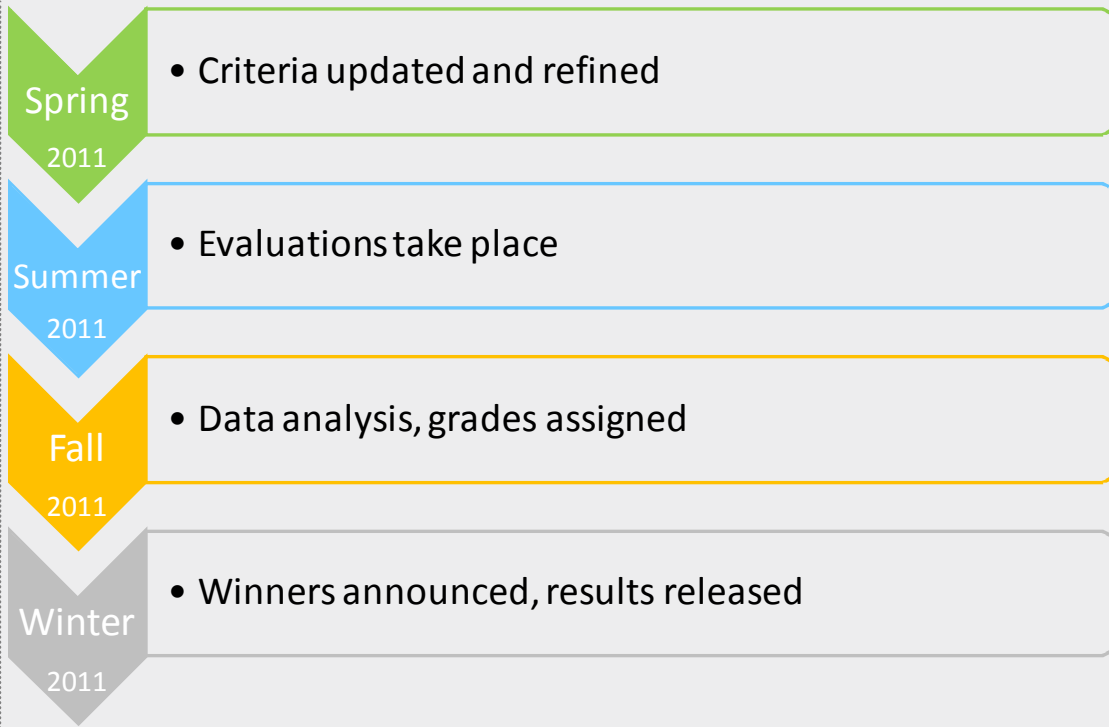
Identify best and innovative practices  
in House & Senate offices

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

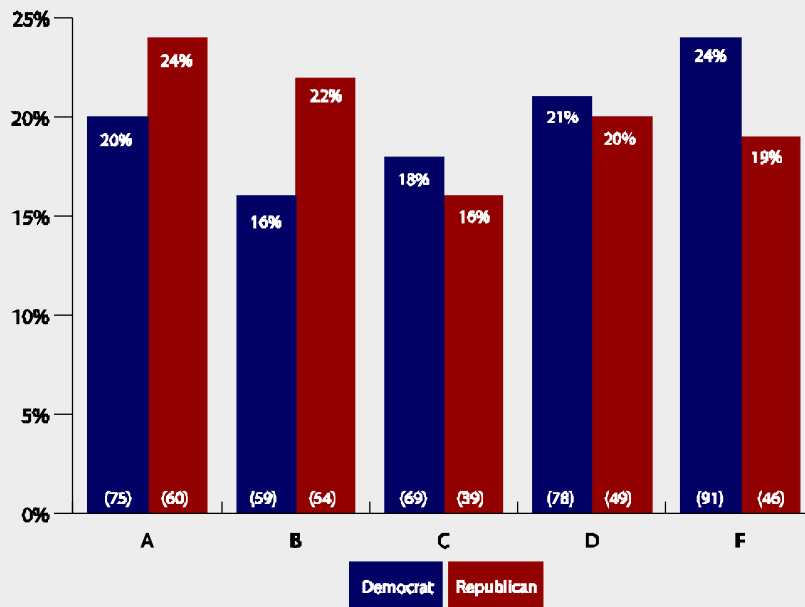
## 112th Congress Gold Mouse Project Timeline



## 111<sup>th</sup> Congress: Republican Websites Scored Better

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

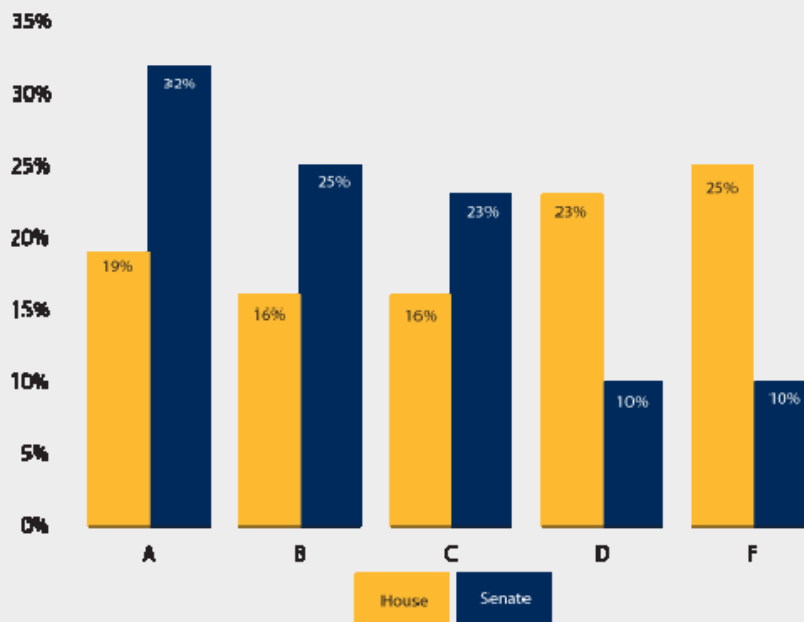
## 111<sup>th</sup> Congress: Republican Websites Scored Better



## 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 state and what's being done?"*

4. Constituent services and casework

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

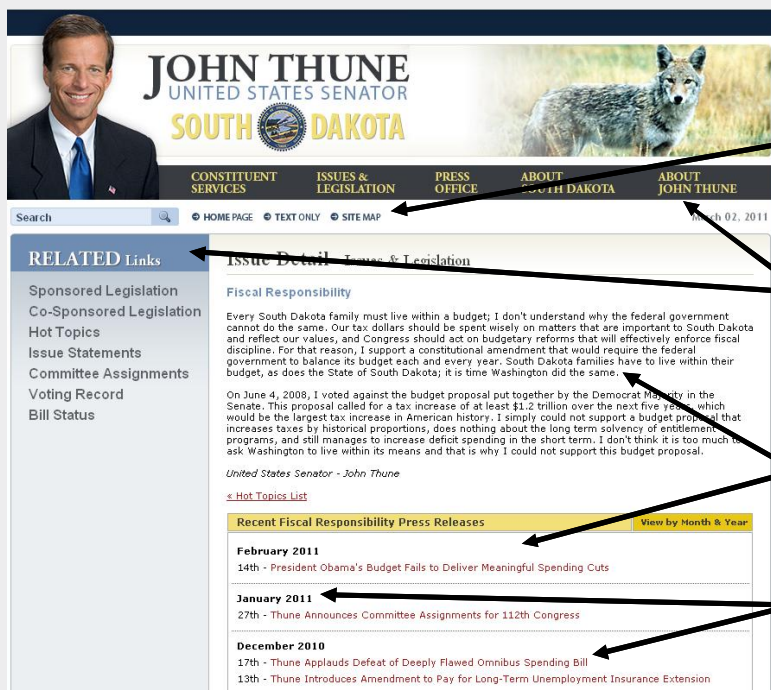
# Usability

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?



# 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 (111<sup>th</sup>)**

## *Is the information up to date?*

**Veterans**

For more than 145 years, Ohio has been a leader in veterans' services - from founding one of the nation's first chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Columbus to establishing the nation's first VA hospital in Dayton to its extraordinary system of county veterans' service offices. Throughout our nation's history, Ohio's service members have protected our nation's freedoms and security and have returned home to enrich our communities in our classrooms and boardrooms, and in our businesses and factories.

Through community roundtables on veterans' issues - in Canton, Chillicothe, Columbus, Toledo, and Youngstown, and a Veterans Affairs Committee field hearing in New Philadelphia - veterans and their families across Ohio have provided invaluable ideas on what we are doing right and where we need to improve when it comes to serving Ohio's nearly 1 million veterans.

That is why I am honored to be a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and to fight to increase U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care funding, reduce claims backlogs to assure veterans get their earned benefits, and ensure veterans have the educational tools to transition to civilian life.

**Advanced Funding for the VA Services**

In October 2009, I attended a White House ceremony at which President Obama signed into law the **Veteran Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act**. The Act is essential to guaranteeing timely funding for the VA so it can improve the delivery and quality of medical care given to the veterans across our state and nation.

The legislation would provide advanced, guaranteed funding for VA medical programs. This is an important first step toward permanent, long-term funding -

**Related Press**

- Brown, Portman, and Turner Express Concern to Secretary Shovel on Dayton Hospital Investigation -
- Brown Budget Funding Shows Commitment to Springfield Air National Guard Base's Mission -
- Sens. Brown and Portman, Rep. Ryan Introduce Bill to Rename Rootstown Post Office After Fallen Portage County Marine -
- Brown on Dayton VAMC: We Must Right the Wrongs for All Affected Veterans and Families -
- Brown Leads Ohio Delegation to U.S. HSA Administrator to Locate Retired Space Shuttle in Dayton -

**Related Multimedia**

- Senator Brown speaks on the Senate floor about Veterans and Veterans Day -
- Sen. Brown speaks on the Senate floor about Veterans and Veterans Day -

**Related Legislation**

- Veterans Emergency Care Fairness Act of 2007

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

Write-up updated with the most significant, recent action

# Information on Issues

National issues, 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 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?

The screenshot shows the website of Congressman J. Randy Forbes, 4th District of Virginia. The header includes navigation links like Home, Fast Facts, Contact Us, Email Alerts, and Enter Your Search. Below the header, there are three main sections: 'Video: When will government listen?', 'Voting Against the Economic Stimulus', and 'Balancing the Federal Budget'. Each section has a thumbnail image and a brief description. Below these, there are several text-based news items with headlines and short paragraphs. The items include: 'Voted against the statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009', 'Voted against increasing federal spending', 'Voted against excessive government spending', 'Supported an amendment to restore "regular order" to the consideration of annual spending bills', 'Urged President Obama not to commit \$100 billion to foreign countries', and 'Sent a letter to President Obama urging him not to commit an additional \$100 billion to the International Monetary Fund'. Arrows from the text on the right point to specific elements on the website, such as the video thumbnails and the text-based news items.

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

## What's being done about important issues?

**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 260 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. 2855 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. 4492, H.R. 3511, and H.R. 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" (04/09/2010)

**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 Release](#) - Drug Cartel Violence Along Open Southern Border Endangers Drinking Water Supplies (06/17/2010)
- [Press Release](#) - 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)

Includes hot topics and information for each subcommittee

Related hearings and documents are also available

## 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?

**Casework**  
Home: Services for Californians: Casework

How to... Request Casework Assistance  
[Casework Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ's\)](#)  
[Tips for Requesting Casework Assistance](#)

Many Californians contact my office when they have a concern which involves a federal agency. If you would like assistance in dealing with such a matter, please complete a [California Authorization form](#) or the [Immigration Assistance form](#) and mail it to my San Francisco office.

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein  
One Post Street, Suite 2450  
San Francisco, CA 94104

Once your information has been received and processed, you will receive a letter of acknowledgement, along with the name of the assigned staff member.

**We cannot accept e-mailed requests.** Please make sure that all written requests for assistance include all of the following information:

- Name;
- Mailing address and phone number;
- Federal agency involved;
- Specific request for assistance; and
- Signature of person in need of assistance (required by federal law under the Privacy Act)

Related LINKS

- SERVICES
- CONTACT
- E-MAIL ME
- DC TOURS
- EDITOR INFO
- CONSTITUENT BREAKFAST
- SCHEDULING
- FLAG PURCHASE
- SPECIAL REQUESTS
- CASEWORK
- GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE
- APPLICATIONS
- LEARN MORE

Related Resources:

- [Casework FAQ \(PDF 26.0 KB\)](#)

| Constituent Services Staff   | Issues   | Departments/Agencies  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>As of: 9-1-2009</b>   |  |   |
| <b>Daniel Chen</b><br>Constituent Services Representative<br>San Francisco | U.S. Military, Army Corps permits, National Guard, CA and DC, TriWest and TriCare Veterans, Benefits, VA Med. Centers, Natl Committee Military Records | Army Corps, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, National Guard, DOD, Def. Finance & Accounting Service, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, NPRC |
| <b>Martha Flores</b><br>Director of Constituent Services<br>San Francisco  | Immigrant and Non-Immigrant Visa cases pending with State Department/NVC/Consular offices, Deportations, U.S. Citizens overseas                        | Dept. of State, National Visa Center, U.S. Embassies and Consulates, ICE  |
| <b>Morgan Galli</b><br>Constituent Service Representative<br>San Francisco | Federal Workers' Comp, Private Pension Plans, Telecommunications, Housing/Section 8, Patents/Copyrights, Commerce                                      | Dept. of Labor, FCC, HUD, Dept. of Commerce, GSA, RRB, USCIS, Patent Office   |

Clear, detailed information about what casework is and how to get help, as well as an FAQ

Sen. Feinstein's site even lists the staff that handles each area of casework

## 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 with the office in different ways?"*

# State Information

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

*"Is there information specifically for and about the state?"*

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

*Is there info for and about the state?*

Senator Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator for New York

Home About

Help with Federal Agencies

How Can Check Help Me?

What do I do if I've been a victim of discrimination at work?

What do I do if my workplace is dangerous or unhealthy?

Phone Fax

Albany Area Office (518) 464-4338 (518) 464-4337  
Bayside District Office (718) 279-9060 (718) 279-9057  
Buffalo Area Office (716) 684-3891 (716) 684-3896  
Long Island Area Office (516) 334-3344 (516) 334-3326  
Manhattan Area Office (212) 466-2482 (212) 466-2939  
Syracuse Area Office (315) 451-0808 (315) 451-1351  
Tarrytown Area Office (914) 524-7510 (914) 524-7515

An important part of state information is providing links to local resources

# 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?*

The screenshot shows the website of United States Senator Lisa Murkowski for the State of Alaska. The header includes navigation links: ABOUT LISA, ABOUT ALASKA, CONSTITUENT SERVICES, ISSUES & LEGISLATION, PRESS OFFICE, STUDENTS, and CONTACT. Below the header is a banner image of Senator Murkowski with the text "UNITED STATES SENATOR LISA MURKOWSKI for the STATE of ALASKA". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "RELATED LINKS", contains a list of links with checkmarks: SPONSORED LEGISLATION, CO-SPONSORED LEGISLATION, VOTING RECORD, ISSUES & PRIORITIES, SENATE SCHEDULE, SENATE RESOURCES, and EDUCATION NEWSLETTER. The right column, titled "ISSUES & LEGISLATION", contains a table of legislative activity. The table has columns for Vote No., Session Date, Vote Question, Result, and Position. The table lists several votes, including a motion to table S.Amdt. 112 to S. 23 (Patent Reform Act of 2011) on 3/01/11, an amendment to S.Amdt. 121 to S. 23 (Patent Reform Act of 2011) on 3/01/11, a nomination for the Northern District of Georgia on 2/28/11, and a bill to modernize the air traffic control system on 2/17/11.

| Vote No. | Session Date | Vote Question  | Result                            | Position |
|----------|--------------|--|-----------------------------------|----------|
| 28       | 3/01/11      | On the Motion to Table S.Amdt. 112 to S. 23 (Patent Reform Act of 2011) To require that the Government prioritize all obligations on the debt held by the public in the event that the debt limit is reached.  | Motion to Table Agreed to (52-47) | Nay      |
| 29       | 3/01/11      | On the Amendment S.Amdt. 121 to S. 23 (Patent Reform Act of 2011) To amend the bill.   | Amendment Agreed to (97-2)        | Yes      |
| 26       | 2/28/11      | On the Nomination: RNOB: Jones, Jennifer, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia.   | Nomination Confirmed (90-0)       | Yes      |
| 25       | 2/17/11      | On Passage of the bill: A bill to modernize the air traffic control system, improve the safety, reliability, and availability of transportation for the United States, provide modernization of the air traffic control system, authorize the Federal Aviation Administration, and for other purposes. | Bill Passed (87-8)                | Yes      |
| 24       | 2/17/11      | On the Motion to Table S.Amdt. 91 to S. 223 (FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act) To decrease the Federal share of project costs under the airport improvement program for non-primary airports.   | Motion to Table Agreed to (54-41) | Yes      |
| 23       | 2/17/11      | On the Motion to Table S.Amdt. 80 to S. 223 (FAA Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act) To limit essential air service to locations that are 100 or more miles away from the nearest medium or large hub airport.  | Motion to Table Failed (34-65)    | Nay      |

Voting record readily accessible and readable

Links to sponsored and cosponsored legislation

# 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?



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?*

The screenshot shows the website for the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The main heading is "Hearing: Implementation of the New Post-9/11 GI Bill - Looking Back and Moving Forward". Below this, it says "Oversight Hearing: Implementation of the New Post-9/11 GI Bill - Looking Back and Moving Forward" and "April 21, 2010". There is a link "Click Here to Read RAW Transcript". A "Table of Contents" section lists "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 "DR. ROBERT L. CLARK, Assistant Director for Accession Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness". "Panel II" lists "MARCO REININGER, JAVA MEMBER, STUDENT VETERAN AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY", "Faith DeLauniers, Legislative Director, National Association for Veterans' Program Administrators", "WILLIAM D. STEPHENS, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES", and "ROBERT MARXEN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION". A "Hearing Accessibility" section provides information for individuals who are planning to attend a Committee hearing and require an auxiliary aid or service.

**Hearing Accessibility**  
Individuals who are planning to attend a Committee hearing or meeting and require an auxiliary aid or service should contact the Committee at 202-224-9126. So as to best enable staff to make arrangements, please call at least 3 business days in advance.

Among other things, staff can arrange for ASL interpreters, convert hearing testimony to Braille, and reserve seating for individuals who have service animals.

- The Committee's hearing room in Russell 418 has a hearing induction loop installed to assist visitors with hearing aids; and individual wireless hearing amplifiers are available from any Committee staff member.
- The Committee routinely leaves space open at hearings to accommodate individuals in wheelchairs.
- Additional information about accessibility can be found [Here](#).

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?*



News releases are posted by date and in the issues section

The latest information, from floor statements and newsletters, to press releases and commentaries

# 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?*



Official social media tools are linked to on Sen. Mark Udall's official website



Posts are frequent, 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

## Additional Resources at [pmpu.org](http://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

### Links to Mouse Award-winning Websites



## Coming Soon



## Q & A

With award-winning panelists:

- Jacob Wood – Senator Lisa Murkowski
- John Fossum – Senator Mark Udall
- Rosemarie Calabro – Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
- Mike Kanick – Senator Sherrod Brown



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## PREPARING FOR THE 112<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS **GOLD MOUSE** PROJECT

Comments? Questions?

Tim Hysom: [thysom@cmfweb.org](mailto:thysom@cmfweb.org)

Visit us at

**pmpu.org**

Connect with us (**morperfectunion**) through

