

2006 GOLD MOUSE REPORT

Recognizing the Best Web Sites on Capitol Hill



CONGRESSIONAL
MANAGEMENT
FOUNDATION

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This report was authored by Collin Burden
with contributions from Nicole Folk Cooper and Tim Hysom.

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We thank Collin Burden for authoring this report. His work could not have been done without the guidance and contributions of Nicole Folk Cooper and Tim Hysom. CMF staff members—Beverly Bell, Kathy Goldschmidt, Leslie Ochreiter, Jennifer Ross, Rick Shapiro, and Rowdy Yeates—also deserve our deep appreciation. They were invaluable through every step in the process—from the Web site evaluations through the writing and production phases. Their contributions are reflected in every page of this report. We also extend our gratitude to consultant David Cooper and interns Allison Zellman, Anne Wingate, Samuel Lees, and Sarah Yoo for their assistance. As always, our faithful editor, Dina Moss, curbed our verbosity and focused our attention. Our appreciation goes to graphic designer Cynthia Wokas whose skills greatly improved the readability of this report and magnificently showcased our winners.

We are indebted to the hundreds of congressional staff in the House and Senate that patiently answered our questions and sacrificed their time to make this report a success. Their input and participation in our research underscores the value of this project and their efforts to engage and communicate with constituents across America.

Finally, we thank the National Science Foundation (NSF) for generously funding this project. For over 50 years, NSF-sponsored research has led to revolutionary breakthroughs in a wide range of disciplines. Their support demonstrates their commitment to studying the impact of technology on democracy and government, and it is our hope that, by improving congressional online communications, we can enhance the connection between citizens and Congress.

Congressional Management Foundation



About this Project

The *2006 Gold Mouse Report: Recognizing the Best Web Sites on Capitol Hill* is the heart of our research project “Connecting to Congress,” generously funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Digital Government program (NSF Award Number IIS-0429452), awarded to the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) and our research partners at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of California-Riverside, and Ohio State University.

The goals of the project are to:

1. Determine how Members of Congress can use the Internet to enhance communication with constituents and promote constituent engagement in the legislative process;
2. Understand how Members and staff learn to use best and innovative practices for their Web sites and Internet communications;
3. Identify how information about technology and innovation spreads among staff and congressional offices; and
4. Identify best and innovative practices for congressional Web site and technology use that can be more widely adopted by congressional offices.

Through this work, CMF is developing resources and services that will help congressional offices improve their Web sites and online communications to engage citizens and meet their own goals. Our partnership with the researchers at these universities also provides scholarly insight into the practices of congressional offices and ways in which they could improve.

With the release of the *2006 Gold Mouse Report*, our project team begins the process of conducting this work once again for 2007, including the evaluation of all congressional Web sites and identifying best practices for the 110th Congress.

About CMF

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting a more effective Congress. CMF has pursued this mission for 30 years by working internally with Member offices, committees, leadership, and institutional offices in the House and Senate to foster improved management practices. Simply put, CMF advocates good government through good management. CMF engages in three primary activities, outlined below.

Management Books and Research Tailored for Congress

Though there are ample books on the general topic of “management,” only CMF produces publications adapted to the unique congressional environment. Our management handbooks for congressional staff include: *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*; *Frontline Management: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices*; *The Insider’s Guide to Research on Capitol Hill*, and the *Congressional Intern Handbook: A Guide for Interns and Newcomers to Capitol Hill*. CMF also conducts research on timely topics of importance to managers in congressional offices, which has resulted in reports such as: *2006 Gold Mouse Report: Recognizing the Best Web Sites on Capitol Hill*; *Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy*; studies on House and Senate office compensation and benefit practices; and a brief on managing the transition process for new committee Chairs.

Office Management Services

CMF provides a range of confidential services to congressional offices including: facilitating office retreats that typically focus on strategic planning and improving office operations; conducting office assessments to examine overall office operations, identify office strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies for improving performance; and conducting assessments to improve constituent correspondence management. CMF also provides consulting services to House and Senate institutional offices, primarily on training, human resources, operational effectiveness, and strategic technology projects.

Staff Training

To meet the distinct needs of congressional offices, CMF provides free training workshops to top level congressional staff on topics including: strategic planning; motivating staff and reducing turnover; assessing management skills; measuring office performance; supervising staff; and improving internal office communications. Under contract with the House of Representatives, CMF also provides orientation programs for interns and Staff Assistants and workshops on writing constituent correspondence.

For more information, contact CMF at (202) 546-0100 or visit www.cmfweb.org.



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Introduction

Since 1998, the Congressional Management Foundation has been tracking the use of the Internet by Congress in an effort to identify best practices to cope with new technologies and utilize them to meet the needs and goals of congressional offices. In that time, we have seen Member Web sites go from a rarity to a requirement. As the 21st Century progresses it is becoming clear that now and in the future a significant portion of the business of Congress will be done online. It is with this in mind that we present the *2006 Gold Mouse Report: Recognizing the Best Web Sites on Capitol Hill*.

We have found that congressional Web sites, in general, have failed to keep pace with rising expectations as the Internet becomes increasingly entrenched in the daily lives and work of Americans. Though it is no longer the novelty it once was, too many offices still believe that an online presence is not necessary. The best Web sites are virtual offices that foster communication with constituents and provide valuable information and services. With this report we hope to motivate all congressional offices to rethink their sites along these lines. Web site development need not happen in a vacuum. Interested offices can take cues and look at examples from current online successes. A large part of what follows is a blueprint for offices to use on the path toward success on the Web.

The purpose of this report is to recognize the congressional Web sites that successfully utilized the Internet to better serve their constituencies and the goals of their offices. We encourage all offices to view a dynamic Web site as critical to their job and an integral part of the services they provide for Americans. To that end, we investigated and identified the best practices, guidelines, and necessary approaches to making a successful Web site. We present them here as resources for all congressional offices seeking to improve their presence on the Internet.

CHAPTER 1

Summary of Key Findings

General

- The Internet is becoming an increasingly essential part of the lives of the American people: 73% of adults considered themselves Internet users as of March 2006¹ and by 2004, 97 million Americans had used the Internet to get information from, or communicate with, government agencies.² Congressional offices need to recognize the importance of having an effective presence on the Web. (Page 7)
- Through extensive research, we identified five building blocks that underlie the success of the most effective Web sites on Capitol Hill. In order of importance, these are: (Page 9)
 1. Audience
 2. Content
 3. Usability
 4. Interactivity
 5. Innovation
- There were a relatively small number of outstanding congressional Web sites: 85 sites (or 13.8% of all congressional sites) received a score of an “A” and a Mouse Award, including 18 Gold, 27 Silver and 40 Bronze Mouse Awards. Of the remaining sites, 23.7% received “B”s, 23.9% got “C”s, 25.4% obtained “D”s, and 13.2% scored “F”s. (Page 16)
- Overall, the quality of congressional Web sites is disappointing. Of the 615 Member, committee, and leadership office Web sites that CMF evaluated in 2006, 38.6% were substandard or failing. Regrettably, the most common grade earned was a “D.” (Page 15)

¹Home Broadband Adoption 2006, May 2006, Pew Internet & American Life Project, 18 Jan. 2007 <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Broadband_trends2006.pdf>.

²How Americans Get in Touch With Government, May 2004, Pew Internet & American Life Project, 18 Jan. 2007 <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_E-Gov_Report_0504.pdf>.

- Almost half (49.1%) of all Member Web sites do not clearly explain how or why constituents should contact the office regarding a problem that they have with a federal agency.
- 30.9% of all Member Web sites do not have a self-service privacy release form available for constituents.
- 32.0% of all Member sites do not have links to sponsored or co-sponsored legislation. Of the ones that do, 13.7% did not reference the most current session of Congress.
- Only 16.2% of all Member Web sites have clearly marked information on Congress and the role of its Members.
- Only 26.4% of all Member sites offered guidance concerning the best ways to communicate with their offices.
- Information on state or local issues was not available on 58.7% of Member Web sites.
- A high percentage of award-winning Member office sites have received awards in the past: 54.6% of Gold Mouse winners in 2003 won a Mouse Award this year. (Page 27)
- There is a relationship between Web site grade and 2006 election margin. Members who received less than 50% of the vote had the highest percentage of sites that scored an “F” – 21.1%. (Page 16)
- The most successful Web sites identify their audiences and sculpt the content of their site to meet the audiences’ needs and the goals of the office. They choose and present the content in a way that their audience can easily understand and use, as well as in a way that fosters interactivity. They also utilize innovations that compliment their goals and enhance the value of the site. (Page 53)
- The offices with the most successful Web sites are those that manage them effectively. They get buy-in from the top and choose the administration option that best suits the needs of the office. They also formulate a strategic plan, allocate the necessary resources, empower staff to make decisions, and incorporate the Web site into everything they do. (Page 73)

Chamber and Party Trends

- Senate sites (including Member, committee, and leadership offices) are doing better overall than their House counterparts. The Senate had 7.7% more “A”s and “B”s. The House had a higher percentage of sites that scored a “D” or “F” (4.5%). (Page 18)
- House committee Web sites performed better than their counterparts in the Senate. None of the House committee sites received a failing grade compared to 17.4% of Senate sites. (Page 20)

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Republican congressional Web sites (including Member, committee, and leadership offices) generally scored higher than Democratic sites³: 65.9% of Republican sites received at least a “C,” compared to 56.1% of Democratic sites. (Page 21)
- The divide between the quality of Democratic and Republican congressional Web sites is particularly pronounced in the Senate. Senate Republican Member sites scored much higher, with 10.3% more “A”s and 14.9% more “B”s than Democrats. (Page 22)
- Top performing Member sites in the House are split equally between the two parties. A single point separates the percentage of “A”s in each party, though the Democrats hold a slight lead. Both Republicans and Democrats have the same percentage of “B”s (22.8%). (Page 23)

³For the purposes of analysis, Independents were counted with the party with which they caucused.

CHAPTER 2

The Internet and Congress in 2006

The Internet is a constantly changing frontier. As users' experiences and expectations expand, it is not always clear what kind of information they want and what is the best way to present it to them. What is clear, however, is that using the Internet is the new norm of communication. Having a functional Web site is as essential as having a mailing address and a phone number.

Since the last Gold Mouse Awards were released in 2003, Internet use has continued to grow at an impressive pace. Seventy-three percent of adults considered themselves Internet users as of March 2006⁴, up approximately 13% from when the last Gold Mouse evaluations took place.⁵ Forty-two percent of adults have high-speed access to the Internet in their home.⁶ Both the number of people online and the quality of their connection continue to increase. The bottom line is that most of the country is online, and Internet penetration and growth trends reveal that it is becoming a standard part of people's everyday lives.

According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project:

*"The longer the internet is around, the more people expect of it. Increasingly, it is seen as a utility rather than a novelty."*⁷

E-MAIL CONTACT

89.5% of House and 92.0% of Senate Member sites had a Web form or "Write Your Representative" link. 5.9% of House and 3.0% of Senate sites had public e-mail addresses, and the rest provided both.

⁴ Home Broadband Adoption 2006

⁵ Internet: The Mainstreaming of Online Life: Trends 2005, June 2005, Pew Internet and American Life Project, 18 Jan. 2007 <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/Internet_Status_2005.pdf>.

⁶ Home Broadband Adoption 2006

⁷ Internet: The Mainstreaming of Online Life: Trends 2005



INNOVATIONS

16.2% of Member sites had a poll or survey for users to fill out, 6.0% had a blog, 11.9% offered RSS feeds, and 8.7% provided podcasts.

People are regularly using the Internet to find information on politics. Twenty-six million Americans used the Internet to find out about politics and the upcoming mid-term elections on an average day in August of 2006.⁸ Using the Internet for news and information on politics isn't just common—it's an everyday activity. Approximately 5 million more people turned to the Internet for political news during the 2006 midterm election than during the 2004 presidential election.⁹ Regardless of the overall interest in elections and politics, Americans are relying on the Internet for their informational needs.

Increased voter interest does not explain the rise in use of the Internet for political information: even though more people looked for political information online in 2006, voter enthusiasm was down 3% from the 2002 midterm elections.¹⁰ The Internet isn't just used when a particular political or governmental issue gains prominence. It is an increasingly popular method of receiving political information.

In addition to using the Internet to get information on politics, the American people are using this utility as a means to interact with their government at all levels. By 2004, 97 million Americans used the Internet to get information from, or to communicate with, government agencies.¹¹ And citizens aren't just using the Internet to fill out their tax returns and find out when their local post office closes. Thirty-eight million Americans contacted government officials through e-mail with the hope of affecting policy.¹² They are using it to participate in their government and in democracy. CMF found in a previous report, *Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy*, that Congress experienced a four-fold increase in the amount of communications it received between 1995 and 2004, and all of that increase came from the Internet.¹³ Given that the use of, and access to, the Internet has significantly grown in the two years since these figures were last reported, one can expect the total number of people getting information from, and interacting with, their local, state, and federal governments through online channels to continually increase.

Congress needs to recognize that the Internet is an essential information and communication medium. As citizens increasingly incorporate the Internet into their lives, they will continue to expect Congress—and all other governmental and business entities—to maintain a useful and informative presence online. Congress must rise to this challenge, and make the creation of effective Web sites a top priority. To quote a popular saying: "It's the Internet, stupid."

⁸ Politics Online Memo, Aug. 2006, Pew Internet and American Life Project, 18 Jan. 2007, <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Politics%20Aug06_Memo.pdf>

⁹ Politics Online Memo, Aug. 2006

¹⁰ Politics Online Memo, Aug. 2006

¹¹ How Americans Get in Touch With Government

¹² Internet: The Mainstreaming of Online Life: Trends 2005

¹³ CMF (United States: 2005) 4.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology: A Brief Description

To assist congressional offices seeking to improve their Web sites, we set out to identify the best practices which would lead to the most effective Web sites on Capitol Hill. Continuing a process begun in 1998, we created a comprehensive evaluation method that combined both quantitative and qualitative measurements of the sites.

Evaluation Criteria

Our evaluation criteria are based on previous discoveries from focus groups with constituents, interviews with congressional staff, industry research, surveys of political reporters and advocacy groups, and voluminous evaluations of past and present congressional Web sites. With this extensive research, we identified five building blocks that underlie the success of the most effective Web sites on Capitol Hill. The Web sites were then evaluated based on the degree to which they incorporated these five building blocks. In order of importance, these are:



1. Audience: The Web site conveys the sense that the office has clearly identified its Web audiences, both those seeking information from the office and those whom the office wants to target, and has methodically built the site around those audiences.



2. Content: The site provides up-to-date information that is specifically targeted to meet the needs of the defined audiences and the goals of the office.



3. Usability: The design and information architecture of the Web site provide quick and easy access to information and services.



4. Interactivity: The Web site fosters two-way communication—both on and offline.



5. Innovation: Creative features enhance visitors' experiences on the site by making it more interesting and easier to use.

Evaluation Process

Using these five building blocks as our foundation, we devised an evaluation framework that would be fair and objective, while still taking into account important qualitative factors that affect a visitor's experience on a Web site. The qualitative factors included: the quality and tone of the information presented; the usability and navigability of the site; its look and feel; and the degree to which the information meets visitor needs. We evaluated 615 congressional Web sites. This included 64 committee sites, 13 leadership sites, 100 Senate Member sites, and 438 House Member sites (at the time of the evaluations there were two vacant House seats). The three types of congressional Web sites (Member, committee, and leadership) have distinct goals, functions, and audiences. Because of this, they were all evaluated according to their use of the five building blocks in a way that accounted for their different missions.

Member Sites

The Web sites of all Members of Congress were evaluated in July and August 2006. Prior to conducting these evaluations, every evaluator went through several rounds of training to assure that each criteria—and especially the qualitative criteria—was judged the same way regardless of the evaluator, within a reasonable margin of error.

Committee and Leadership Sites

The evaluations for the leadership and committee sites were conducted between April and June of 2006. Because each committee and leadership site has its own distinct purpose and audience, special care was given to determine how well each of these sites address the needs of the groups they serve. This extra consideration was incorporated as part of the overall qualitative and quantitative evaluation described above.

Analysis Process

This year 18 Gold, 27 Silver, and 40 Bronze Mouse Awards were given out for a total of 85 awards. Each of the three categories of sites (Member, committee, and leadership) were not only evaluated separately, the analysis and grade cutoffs for each were also determined separately.

Member Sites

After evaluating all 538 Member Web sites (including all House and Senate Members, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner), the data was analyzed by our research partners from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of California-Riverside, and Ohio State University. Using statistical factor analysis on the collected data, a preliminary numeric score was assigned to each Web site. Extra credit was then given to sites that scored above average in four priority categories: issue content,

constituent casework, timeliness, and usability, which was then added to the preliminary score to produce a final numeric score. [See “Deal Breakers” on page 13.] The final numeric scores were translated into letter grades and then into the resulting Mouse Award categories shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR MEMBER WEB SITES

SCORE	LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
90-100	A+	Gold
80-89	A	Silver
70-79	A-	Bronze
50-69	B	
40-49	C	
30-39	D	
0-29	F	

Committee and Leadership Sites

Committee and leadership sites were subjected to a somewhat different evaluation process than the Member sites. This is because there are fewer total committee and leadership sites and because committee and leadership sites have distinctly different audiences, depending upon their role in Congress. The sites were divided into classes based on their target audience and then their score was weighted based on the information their target audience expected. We then computed a ranking by dividing each Web site’s score by the highest score within its respective category (committee or leadership). In this final ranking, the highest scoring Web site in each category was given a 100%, and all of the other scores ranked below that as the percent of the highest score. We then reviewed the qualitative assessments of Web sites and assigned cutoffs between scores to assign letter grades as shown in Figures 2 and 3 (on the next page). Because of the small number of leadership sites, a score breakdown is not available in order to maintain the privacy of individual office scores.

FIGURE 2. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR COMMITTEE WEB SITES

SCORE	LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
96-100	A+	Gold
90-95	A	Silver
86-89	A-	Bronze
71-85	B	
53-70	C	
36-52	D	
0-35	F	

FIGURE 3. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR LEADERSHIP WEB SITES

LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
A+	Gold
A	Silver
A-	Bronze
B	
C	
D	
F	

For a more extensive explanation of the methodology used to evaluate, rank, and award the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Mouse Awards, please see the Appendix (on page 79).

DEAL BREAKERS

To determine the final grades of each Member Web site, four priority categories were given more weight than all the others. These four categories may seem obvious at first glance, but a surprising number of congressional sites either inadequately addressed them or overlooked them entirely.

Timeliness: The Internet is a fast-paced medium, and users expect up-to-date information. No matter how well designed a site is or how much content it has, it's not going to be useful for visitors if the most current information they can find is six months, or even a year old.

While 98.7% of Member sites have content about national issues, just 65.8% of them included information from the 109th Congress.

Usability: All the content in the world is not going to be helpful to users if they can't find it. Because everyone has a different level of familiarity with Congress and their own Representative or Senator, it's important that every Web site make its content as easy to find and easy to navigate as possible.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the highest), the average Member Web site score for "Navigation" was 3.6.

Issue Content: All sites, regardless of their audience, need to have information regarding legislative activities and the work of the office. This includes national, local, and current issues. It is a Representative's primary responsibility to keep their constituents informed about their actions.

On a scale of 0 to 5, the average Member Web site score for "National Issue Content" was 3.0.

Constituent Casework: Citizens access congressional Web sites for a reason. They are looking for information online, not offline. Providing them with information and guidance on casework on the Web site is essential.

On a scale of 0 to 5, the average Member Web site score for "Constituent Casework" was 2.7.



CHAPTER 4

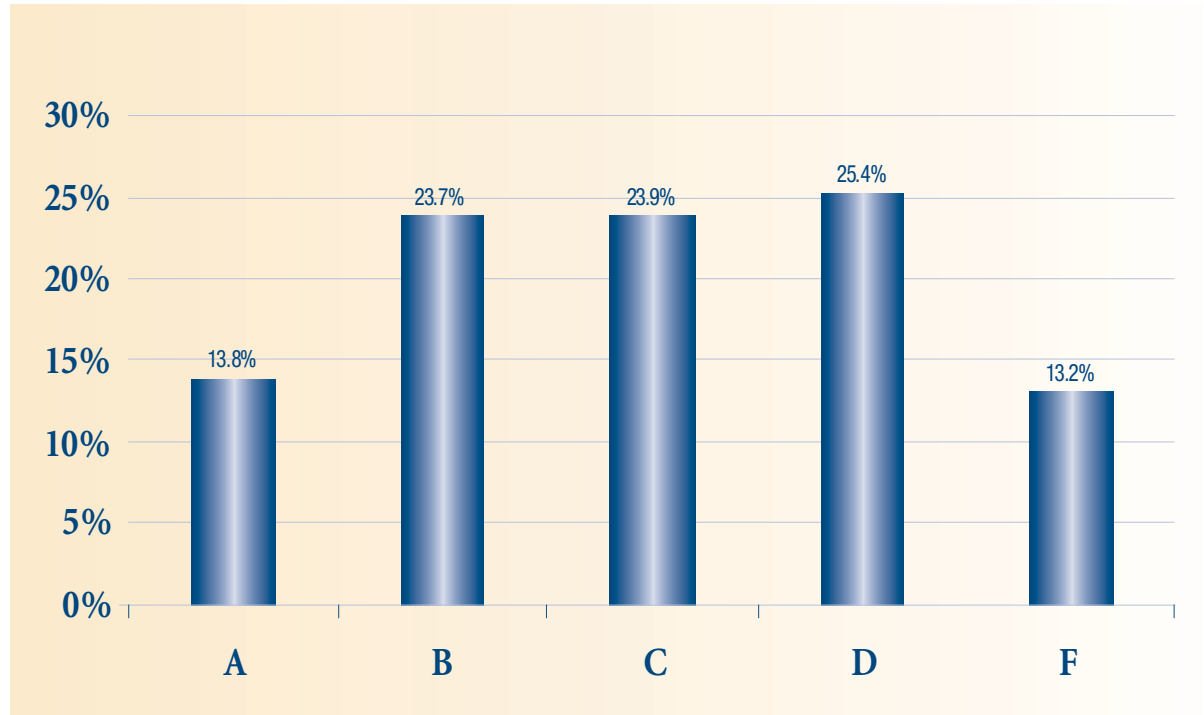
Analysis

Beginning in April and continuing through August of 2006, we evaluated the 615 Member office, committee, and leadership Web sites of Congress. This included 64 committee sites, 13 leadership sites, 100 Senate Member sites, and 438 House Member sites (at the time of evaluations there were 2 vacant House seats). What follows is an assessment of how congressional sites are faring, a general description of the chamber, party, and award winner trends, and important facts and themes that emerged after a thorough analysis of the evaluations. Percentages may not add up to 100.0 due to rounding.

Overall, the quality of congressional Web sites is disappointing.

As the Internet continues to grow more and more commonplace, it becomes increasingly important for congressional offices to have not just an online presence, but to have sites that provide helpful, up-to-date information to their constituents. To accomplish that, offices should have qualified as a “B” or “C.” But 38.6% of sites were substandard or failing. Regrettably, the most common grade earned was a “D” (See Figures 4 and 5 on the next page).

Even some congressional sites that scored above this threshold showed some surprising shortcomings. For example, 49.1% of Member sites did not offer guidance about how to initiate constituent service requests, 82.2% were missing a site map, and 46.3% did not have functional search engines. In terms of legislative content, 41.3% of Member office sites did not have current links to sponsorships and co-sponsorships of legislation and 40.3% did not have rationales for key votes. Information on state or local issues was not available on 58.7% of Member Web sites. For a more in-depth comparison of features on Member sites, see Figure 6 (page 17).

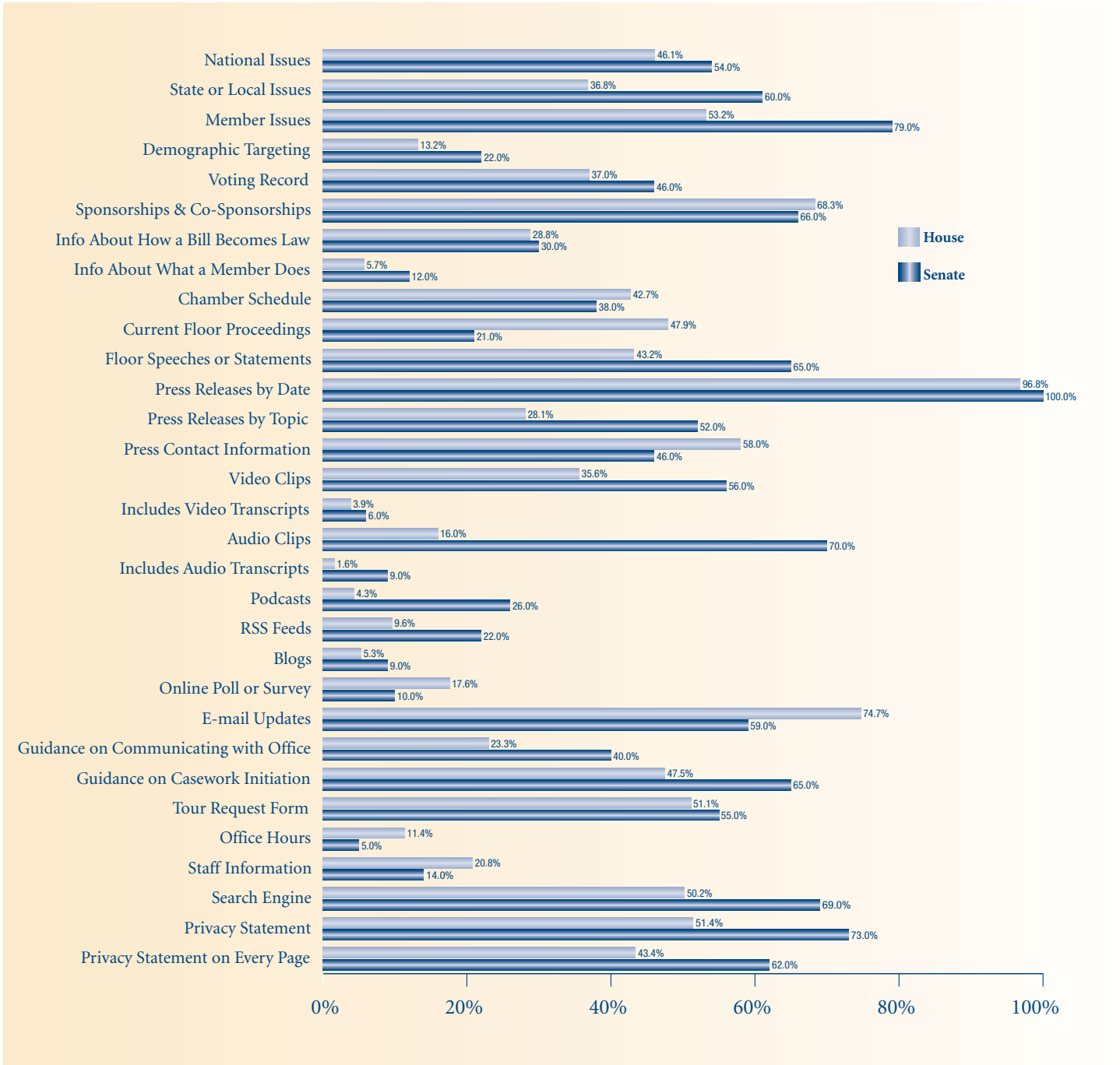
FIGURE 4. OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF GRADES**FIGURE 5. GRADES BY CATEGORY**

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D	F	TOTAL
House Member	53	100	103	124	58	438
Senate Member	19	26	17	19	19	100
Committee	10	16	22	12	4	64
Leadership	3	4	5	1	0	13
Total	85	146	147	156	81	615

There is a relationship between Web site grade and 2006 election margin.

Another telling finding was that in the 2006 midterm election, Members who received less than 50% of the vote had the highest percentage of sites that scored an “F” (21.1%). This suggests that having an adequate Web site is something voters want and expect—but is not, unfortunately, something enough Member offices now deliver. On the opposite end of the spectrum, those who received more than 55% of the vote had the highest percentage of “D”s. Those with close margins of victory (50-55%) seemed to understand the consequences of not meeting constituent expectations online. They earned the highest percentage of “A”s and “B”s. In order to better fulfill their role as representatives for the American people, more offices need to make their Web sites a priority.

FIGURE 6. COMPARISON OF FEATURES ON HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBER WEB SITES



Note: This is a selection of the more interesting features—and not an exhaustive list—of what we looked for in our evaluations.

CHAMBER FINDINGS

Senate sites overall (including Member, committee, and leadership offices) are doing better than their House counterparts.

Senate sites earned 7.7% more “A”s and “B”s than House sites. The House had a higher percentage of sites that were substandard or failing (4.5%), and a significantly higher number of “D”s (almost 11% more). However, the Senate had considerably more “F”s than the House—18.3% versus 11.9%, respectively. In sum, while Senate sites (including Member, committee, and leadership) are doing better overall than their House counterparts, both chambers will need to improve their Web sites if they are to catch up with user expectations.

FIGURE 7. COMPARISON OF HOUSE AND SENATE OVERALL GRADES (MEMBER, COMMITTEE AND LEADERSHIP)

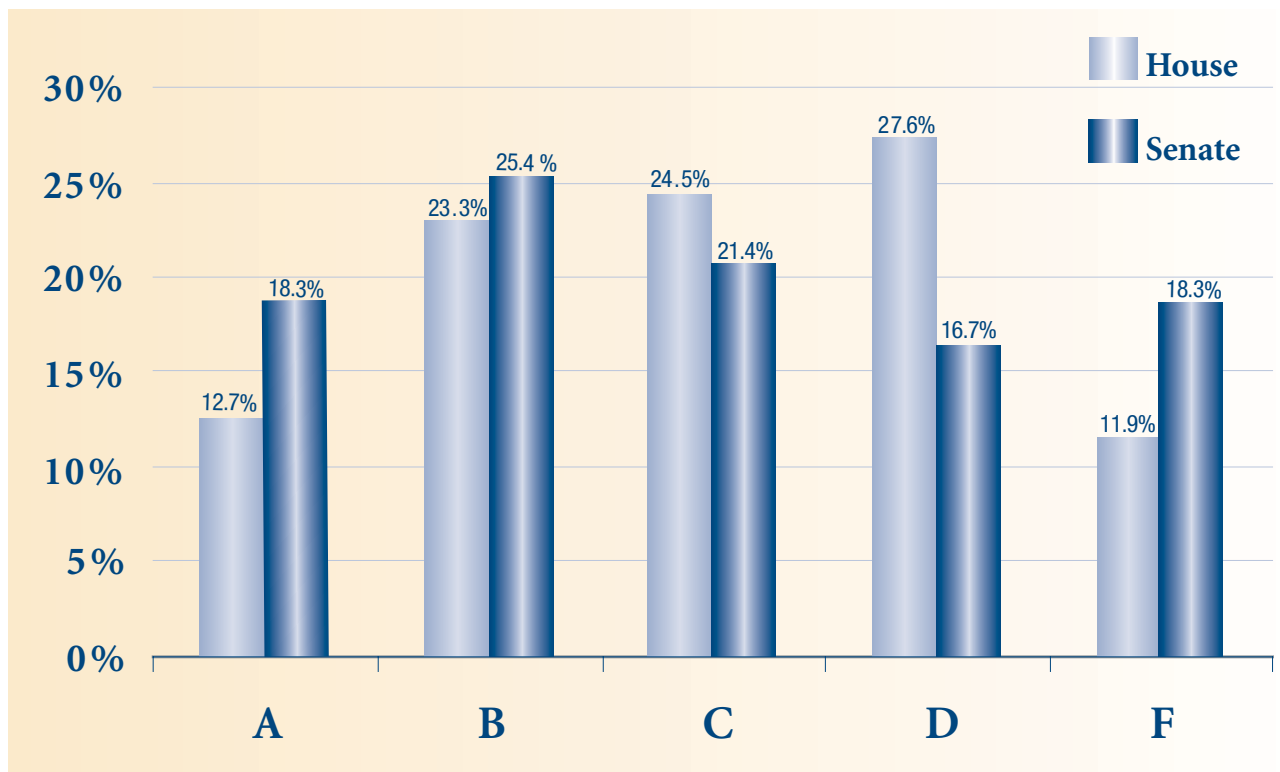


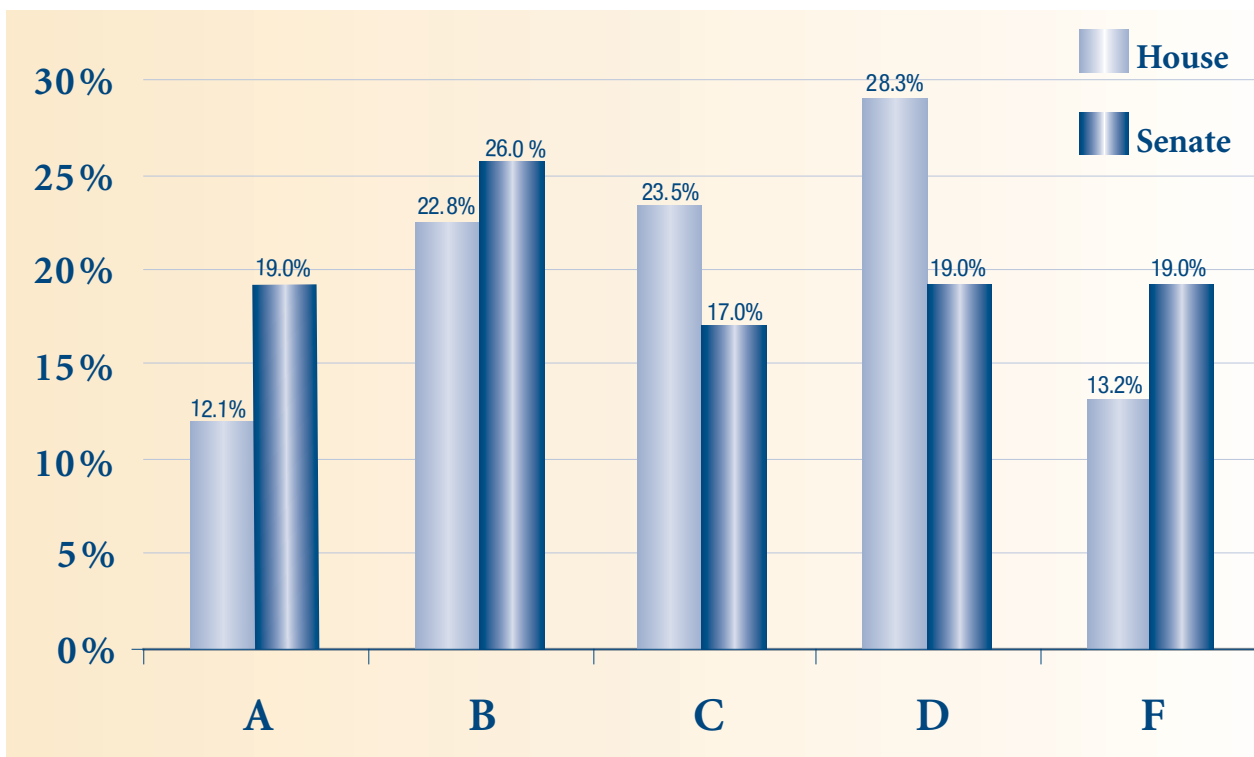
FIGURE 8. GRADES BY CHAMBER

CHAMBER	A	B	C	D	F	TOTAL
House	62	114	120	135	58	489
Senate	23	32	27	21	23	126
Total	85	146	147	156	81	615

On the Member office level, the Senate is outperforming the House.

The Member offices in Congress make up the bulk of the Web sites that were evaluated and, thus, reflect the overall trends in congressional sites. Senate Member offices outperformed House Member offices, with 19.0% of Senate sites earning “A”s compared to 12.1% of House sites and Senate sites earning 3.2% more “B”s than House sites.

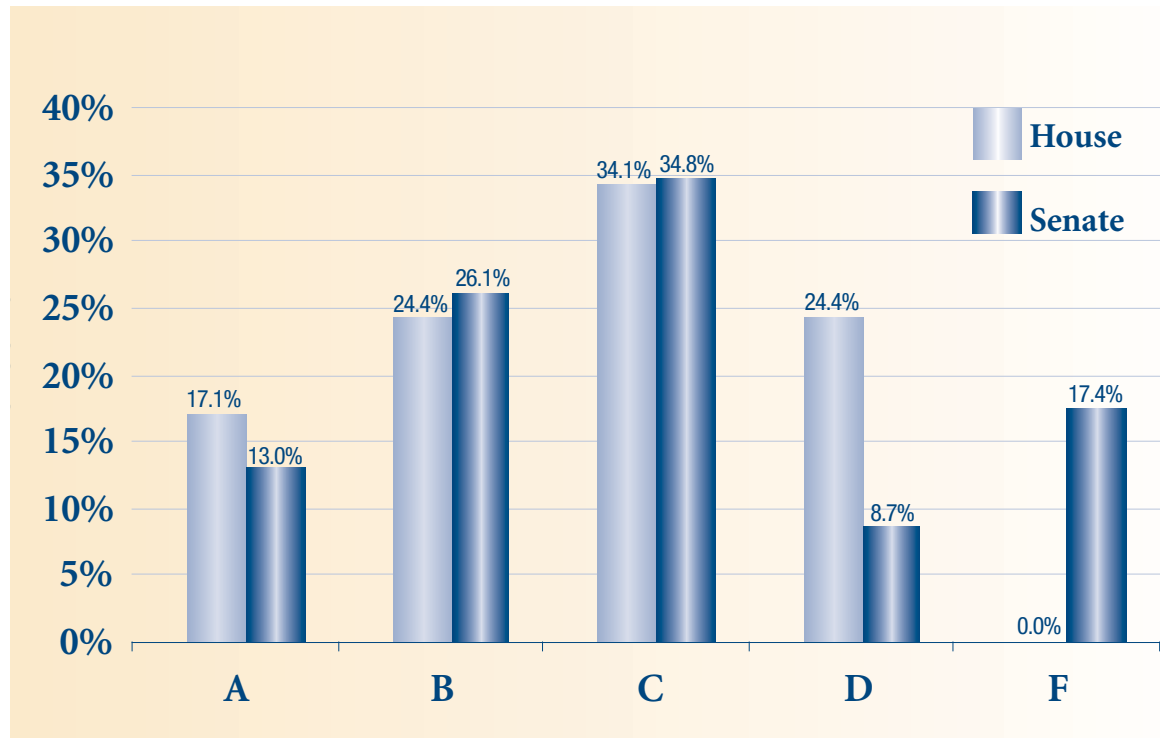
FIGURE 9. COMPARISON OF HOUSE AND SENATE MEMBER GRADES



House committee Web sites perform better than their counterparts in the Senate.

House committee sites received 4.1% more “A”s than Senate committee sites. Not only did more than three-quarters of the House committee Web sites get at least a “C” or better, none of the House sites received a failing grade, compared to 17.4% of Senate sites receiving “F”s.

FIGURE 10. COMPARISON OF HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEE GRADES



PARTY FINDINGS

Republican congressional Web sites (including Member, committee, and leadership offices) are generally better than Democratic¹⁴ sites.

Republicans had a higher percentage of “A”s and “B”s: 5.8% more Republican sites scored above a “C” than did Democratic sites, and Democrats had 9.7% more “D”s and “F”s than Republicans. Almost two out of three Republican sites received at least a “C,” compared to slightly over half of Democratic sites.

FIGURE 11. COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN OVERALL GRADES (MEMBER, COMMITTEE AND LEADERSHIP)

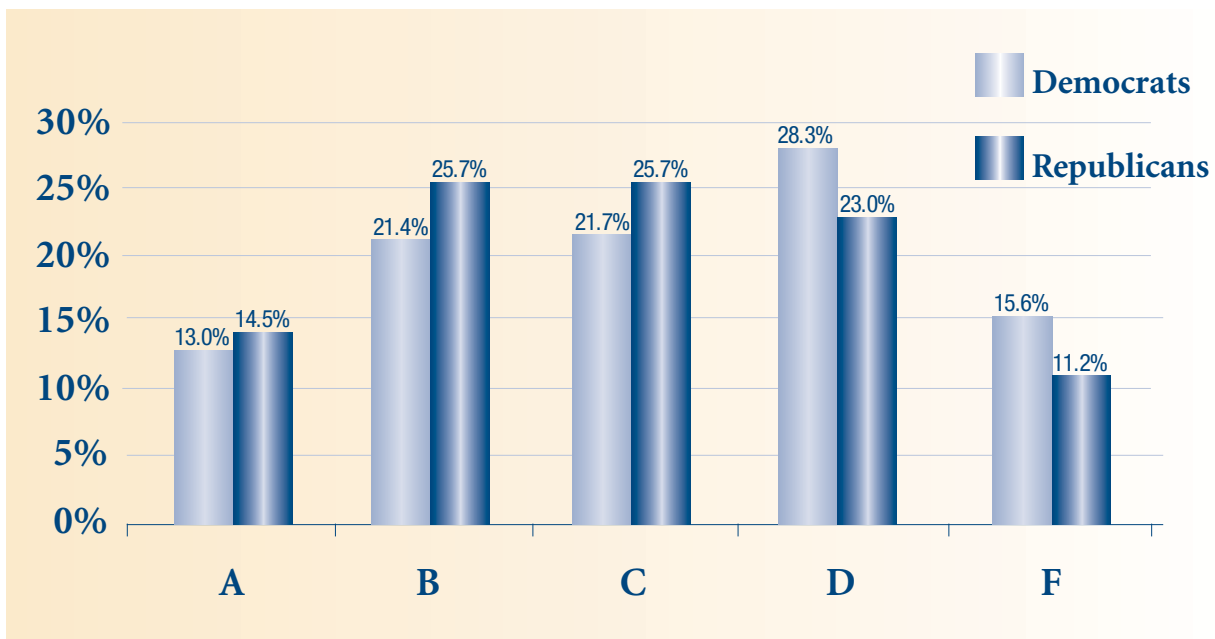


FIGURE 12. GRADES BY PARTY

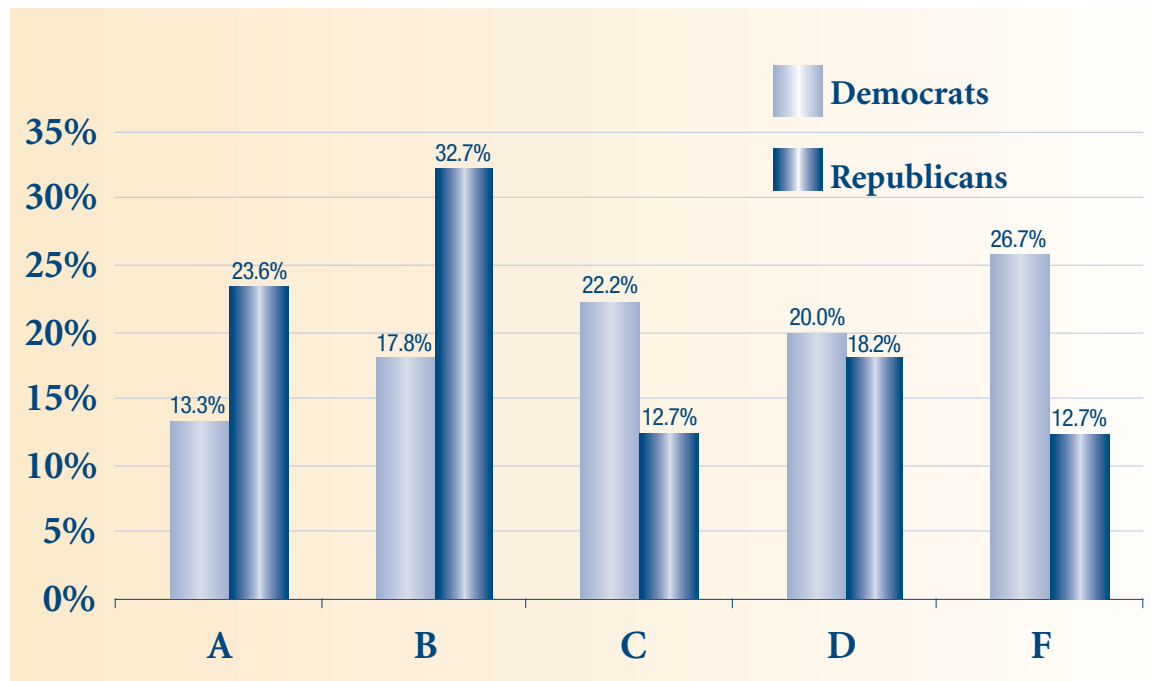
PARTY	A	B	C	D	F	TOTAL
Democratic	36	59	60	78	43	276
Republican	49	87	87	78	38	339
Total	85	146	147	156	81	615

¹⁴For the purposes of analysis, Independents were counted with the party with which they caucused.

The divide between the quality of Democratic and Republican congressional Web sites is particularly pronounced in the Senate.

Senate Republican Member sites scored much higher than did their Democratic counterparts, earning 10.3% more “A”s and 14.9% more “B”s. Republicans received 25.2% more grades above a “C.” More than two in five Democratic Senate Member offices scored below a “C,” as compared with less than one in three Republican sites—and approximately one in four Democratic Member sites earned an “F.”

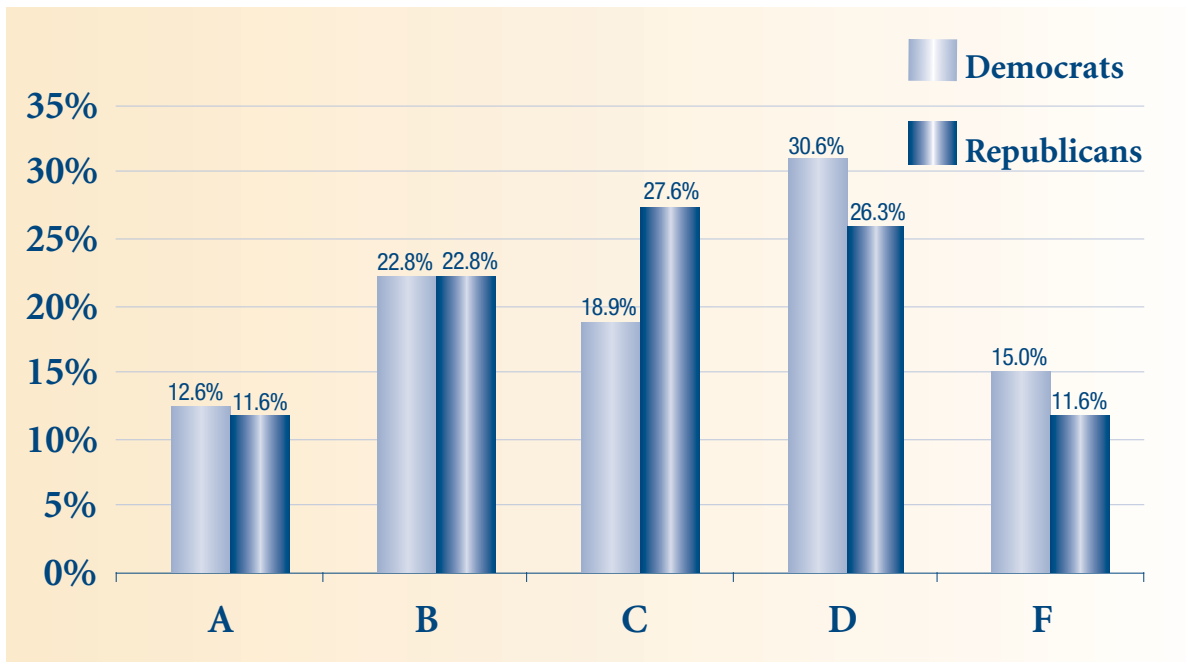
FIGURE 13. COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN SENATE MEMBER GRADES



Top performing Member sites in the House are equally split between the parties.

In the House of Representatives, the proportions of the best Member office sites are virtually even between Republicans and Democrats. A single point separates the percentage of “A”s between the parties, though Democrats hold a slight lead. Both Republicans and Democrats have the same percentage of “B”s (22.8%). At the lower end of the spectrum, Republicans have 8.7% more “C”s and Democrats have 7.7% more “D”s and “F”s.

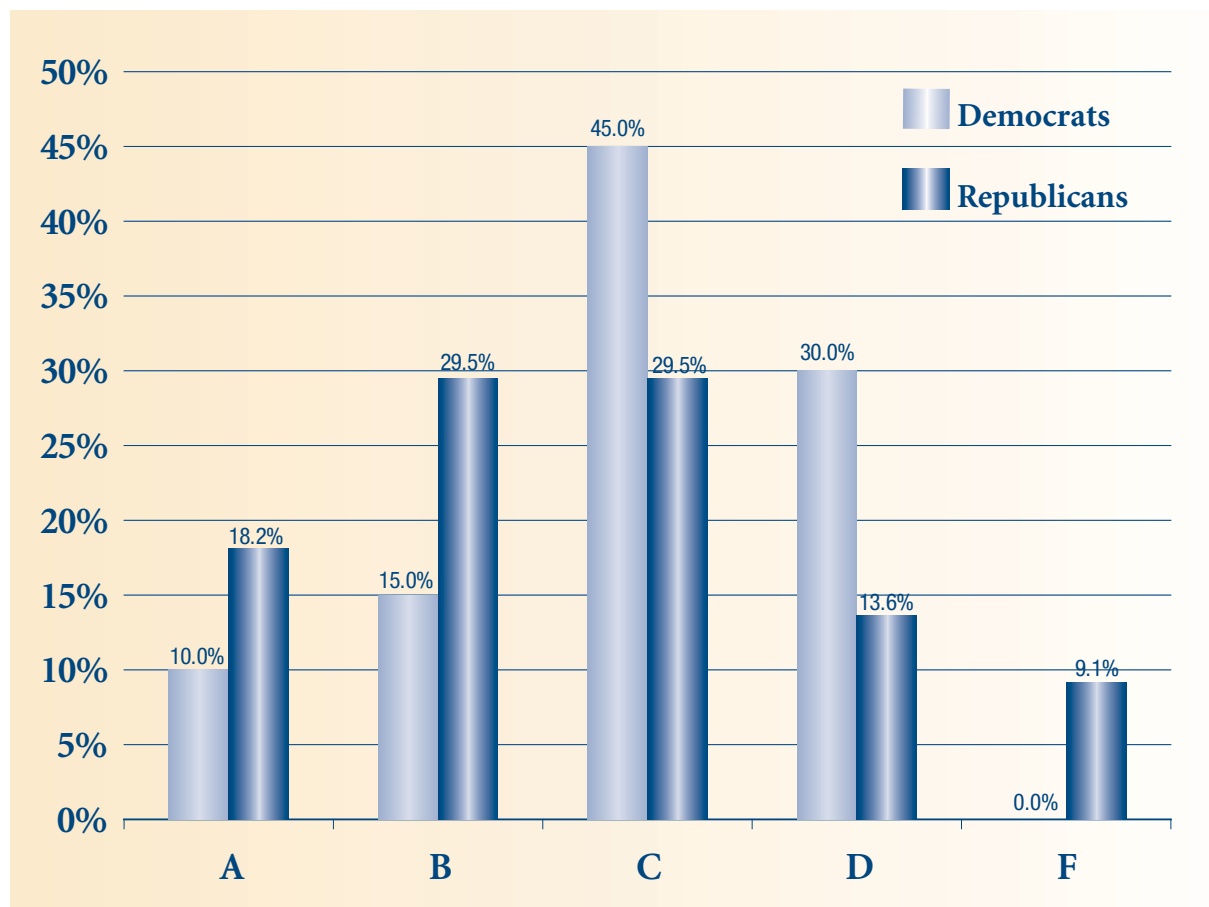
FIGURE 14. COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN HOUSE MEMBER GRADES



Republican committee sites scored better than Democratic committee sites.

Republican committee sites received 22.7% more “A”s and “B”s than Democratic committee sites. Democratic committees received 15.5% more “C”s. It is notable, however, that no Democratic site scored an “F.” Overall, committees on both sides of the aisle did relatively well, with a solid majority of the sites in each party earning a “C” or better. The difference in grades can probably be explained, at least in part, by differences in resources and budgets among Republican (majority) and Democratic (minority) committee sites in both the House and Senate in the 109th Congress.

FIGURE 15. COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE GRADES



AWARD WINNER FINDINGS

A relatively small number of sites earned Mouse Awards.

Gold, Silver, and Bronze Mouse Awards were given to sites that earned an “A+,” “A,” and “A-,” respectively. These 85 winners represent the best Web sites on Capitol Hill. In each chamber of Congress, a select number of sites—62 in the House and 23 in the Senate—illustrated how a significant online presence can be achieved. And though they are few—just 3 leadership, 10 committee, and 72 Member sites won awards—they prove that a Web site can succeed regardless of the office’s audience, goals, or priorities.

FIGURE 16. AWARDS BY CATEGORY

CATEGORY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
House Member	11	16	26	53
Senate Member	3	7	9	19
Committee	3	3	4	10
Leadership	1	1	1	3
Total	18	27	40	85

FIGURE 17. AWARDS BY CHAMBER

CHAMBER	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
House	15	18	29	62
Senate	3	9	11	23
Total	18	27	40	85

Democratic sites earned a larger proportion of Gold Mouse Awards than did Republican sites.

While Republicans won more awards overall, Democrats had a larger percentage of sites that were the best of the best. Democratic sites won 4 more Gold Mouse Awards than did Republican sites. Because there were more total Republican sites than Democratic sites (339 and 276, respectively), this means that proportionally, 4.0% of Democratic sites won Gold Mouse Awards compared to 2.1% of Republican sites.

FIGURE 18. COMPARISON OF DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN MOUSE AWARD WINNERS

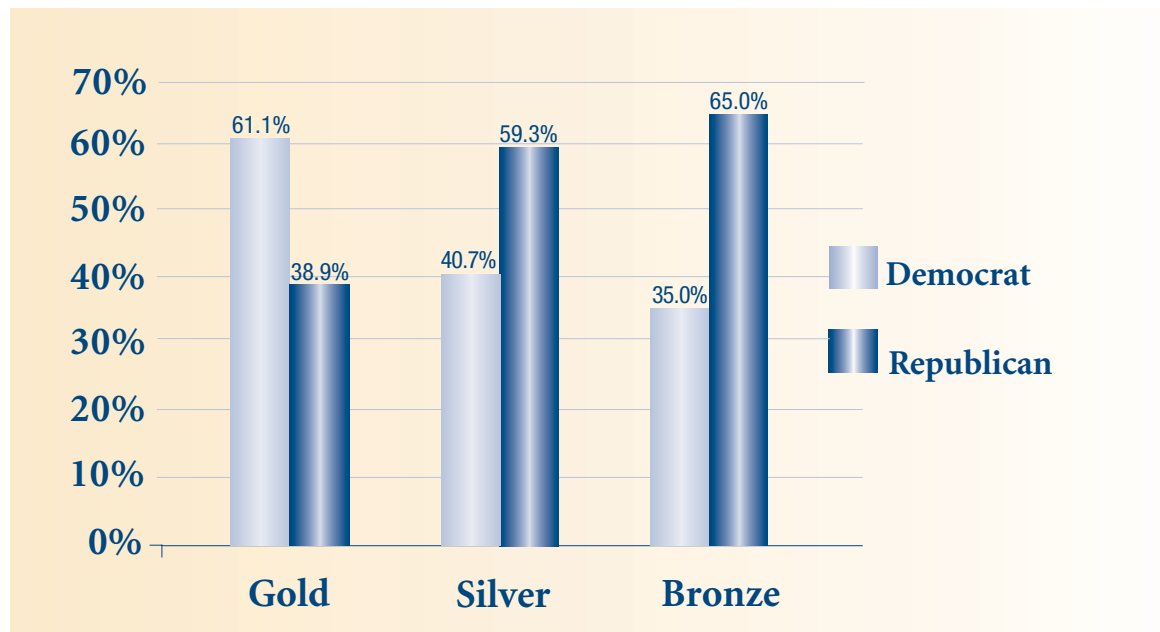


FIGURE 19. AWARDS BY PARTY

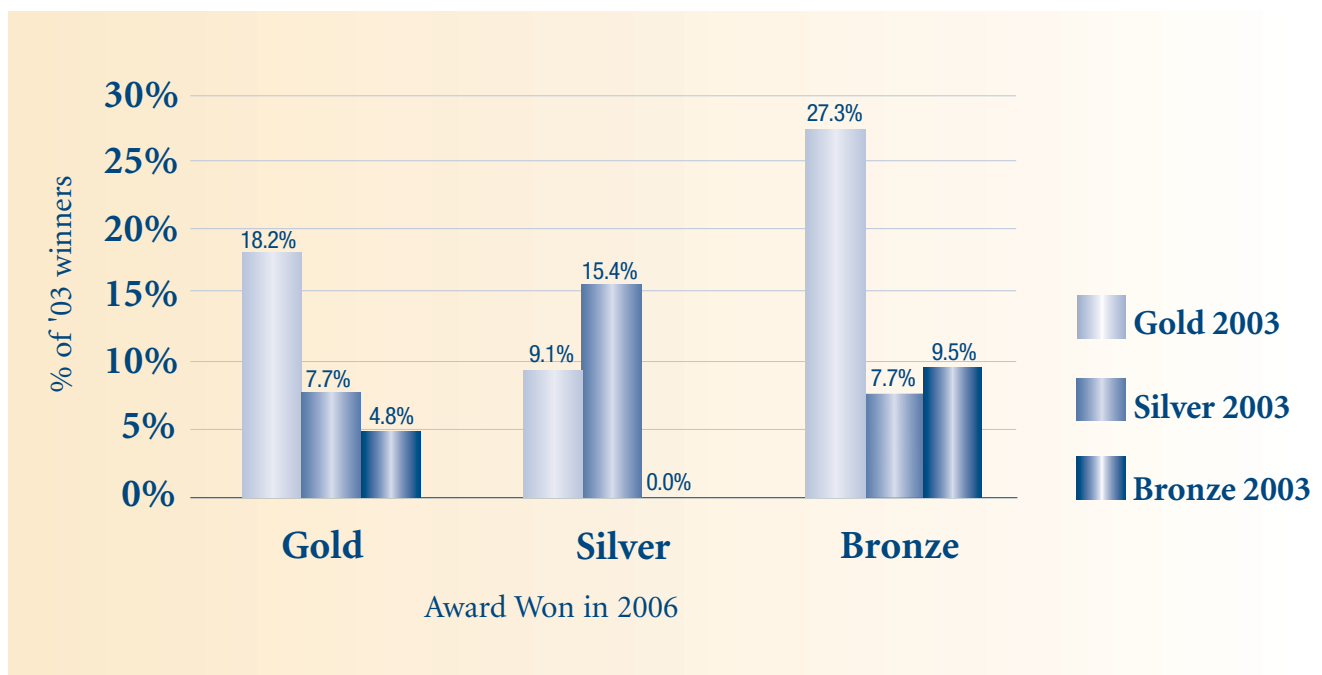
PARTY	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
Democratic	11	11	14	36
Republican	7	16	26	49
Total	18	27	40	85

A high percentage of award-winning Member office sites have received awards in the past.

One notable finding was that those offices that won awards when they were last given out in 2003 continued to excel in 2006. Past Gold Mouse winners have stayed particularly strong. A high percentage of award-winning Member office sites have received awards in the past: 54.6% of 2003 Gold Mouse winners won a Mouse Award this year, with 18.2% of them again winning a Gold Mouse award.

Only three Member sites have won an award all three times the Mouse Awards have been given out (in 2002, 2003, and 2006): Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) and Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT). While all three have earned "A"s every time, only Sen. Leahy won a Gold Mouse all three times. In the House, no Member office that won an award in the past scored below a "C." This suggests that the best sites are keeping up with the pace of growth online, while those sites lagging behind have failed to make up ground in the years since the sites were last evaluated.

FIGURE 20. 2003 WINNERS RECEIVING MOUSE AWARDS IN 2006



While we analyzed the sites using a variety of other factors—the age and tenure of the Member, size of the state or district, average income of the state or district, and many others—none of them revealed any significant trends, underscoring the point outlined in later chapters that a successful Web site is possible for any and all offices.

2006 CMF MOUSE AWARDS

THE BEST WEB SITES ON CAPITOL HILL

HOUSE MEMBERS

Gold

Rep. Brian Baird (D-WA)
Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA)
Rep. Marion Berry (D-AR)
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)
Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)
Rep. John B. Larson (D-CT)
Rep. John Linder (R-GA)
Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY)
Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL)
Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS)
Rep. Charlie Norwood (R-GA)

Silver

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)
Rep. Bud Cramer (D-AL)
Rep. Thelma Drake (R-VA)
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA)
Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)
Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA)
Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY)
Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC)
Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)
Rep. Mark Kennedy (R-MN)
Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI)
Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA)
Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA)
Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)
Rep. E. Clay Shaw, Jr. (R-FL)

Bronze

Rep. Tom Allen (D-ME)
Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA)
Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA)
Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)
Rep. John Carter (R-TX)
Rep. Chris Chocola (R-IN)
Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX)
Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)
Rep. David Dreier (R-CA)
Rep. Chet Edwards (D-TX)
Rep. Phil English (R-PA)
Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)
Rep. Melissa Hart (R-PA)
Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA)
Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA)
Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT)
Rep. John L. Mica (R-FL)
Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA)
Rep. John E. Peterson (R-PA)
Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)
Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA)
Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT)
Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR)
Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)
Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL)

SENATORS

Gold

Senator Bill Frist (R-TN)
Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA)

Silver

Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)
Senator Norm Coleman (R-MN)
Senator Larry Craig (R-ID)
Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA)
Senator Carl Levin (D-MI)
Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)
Senator Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME)

Bronze

Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO)
Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT)
Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)
Senator Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)
Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA)
Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY)
Senator John Thune (R-SD)

COMMITTEES

Gold

House Committee on the Budget (Majority)
House Committee on Science (Minority)
House Committee on Ways and Means (Majority)

Silver

House Committee on Agriculture (Majority)
House Committee on the Judiciary (Majority)
Senate Special Committee on Aging (Majority)

Bronze

House Committee on the Budget (Minority)
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs (Majority)
House Committee on Rules (Majority)
Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources (Majority)

LEADERSHIP

Gold

House Democratic Whip—Rep. Steny Hoyer

Silver

Senate Republican Conference—Chairman Rick Santorum

Bronze

House Democratic Caucus—Chairman James Clyburn

CHAPTER 5

The 2006 Mouse Award Winners

Though the overall picture of congressional Web sites is relatively gloomy, the following award winners offer a ray of hope. They model the use of the five building blocks to create an online presence that effectively provides information and assists in communication with constituents. This section describes how the 18 Gold Mouse winners succeeded in each of the five building blocks, highlights one building block in which each of the 27 Silver Mouse winners particularly excelled, and lists the 40 Bronze Mouse winners.¹⁵ The award breakdown is as follows:



Gold Mouse = A+



Silver Mouse = A



Bronze Mouse = A-

Gold Mouse Award Winners

The winners of the Gold Mouse Award set the bar for congressional Web sites. They each successfully utilized the five building blocks to make their Web sites valuable tools for their audiences. They lead the congressional field in taking full advantage of all the unique opportunities the Internet provides. The 18 Gold Mouse Award winners are presented alphabetically by chamber and type of site.

¹⁵Web addresses and content may be different than it was at the time of the evaluation because sites on the Internet continue to change on a daily basis. Sites with an asterisk (*) next to their name have, in the new Congress, gone offline or have a different role than that for which they were originally evaluated. For a snapshot of the site at the time of their evaluation, go to our project archive: www.connectingtocongress.org.

House Member Office Web Sites

Representative Brian Baird (D-WA)

www.house.gov/baird

Congressman Brian Baird's Web site provides a variety of helpful tools for users. Whether constituents are interested in legislation, what their Representative is accomplishing, or local issues and casework, they will find useful and substantive information.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is providing **CONTENT** that serves the needs of its audience. Representative Baird's site provides this in spades. His Web site anticipates the needs of its audience with information on a variety of topics, including: issues, constituent services, initiatives, and schedules of town hall meetings and traveling district office hours. The Congressman's site has specific content for each county in his district, discussing local issues and problems and how he is addressing them. His site has an informative FAQ section, which contains casework questions, an example of an actual case, and a section with information on how to register to vote. There is content for kids, students, and those curious about what a Member does, and even a "A Day on Capitol Hill" slideshow.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site provides targeted information for audiences in each county in his district, as well as those seeking assistance and those interested in legislative issues.
- **USABILITY:** Side bars and consistent menu options make it easy to traverse the site.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Users can communicate with the office using features including e-mail updates, Web forms, and schedules for town hall meetings and traveling district office hours.
- **INNOVATION:** The site is enhanced with innovations including "Brian's Initiatives," a section which includes up-to-date summaries of issues on which he is active, a "resume" of his interests and accomplishments, and a casework FAQ.

Congressman Brian Baird 3rd Congressional District

Working on Congress

Constituent Services Issues Legislation About the District News Biography Resources Contact Us

Latest News

2/6/2006
Rep. Baird Statement on FY 2007 Budget
 Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird, a Member of the House Budget Committee, issued the following statement on the President's Fiscal Year 2007 budget that was released today:
 ...more

2/1/2006
Congressman Baird Votes NO on "Fiscally Irresponsible" Budget Bill
 Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird, member of the

On The Hill

See Rep. Baird in action on the House floor
 View Video
 (4.5 meg. Window Media Player)

In The News

Business Week
 Hear Rep. Baird on



Representative Xavier Becerra (D-CA)

www.house.gov/becerra

Congressman Xavier Becerra's Web site is a sterling example of how a Member's Web site can be an extension of his or her congressional office. The constituent services section guides users through every step in the casework process. The site allows users determine whether the office can help, takes them through FAQs that give them the tools to resolve an issue on their own, and gives clear guidance on what information the office needs in order to open a case.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **INTERACTIVITY**, and Representative Becerra's site enables constituents to take control of their problems and work through them with the tools on the site. Allowing them to do this has three benefits. First, it serves constituents well and leaves them with a good impression of their Representative. Secondly, it allows the Congressman's staff to focus their energy on the most critical or time-consuming casework. Finally, the process helps constituents determine what their needs are and resolve the most common issues using the resources on the Congressman's site.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site clearly identifies and serves constituents with casework help as well as district links to governmental and community-based organizations.
- **CONTENT:** The site provides helpful information and extensive links to other sites that describe the legislative process for those unfamiliar with it. This includes "Hot Topics in Focus" which features initiatives and legislation on which the Congressman is active with links to more information and links to roll call votes, as well as to GovTrack (www.govtrack.us)—which has tracked every vote he has made since 1993. The site is a clearinghouse of information regarding his office.
- **USABILITY:** The information is clearly written for the Web with embedded links, short paragraphs, and an effective layout.
- **INNOVATION:** Rep. Becerra's site enables four different RSS options to receive notification every time he votes, as well as "the Becerra Bulletin" (an e-mail newsletter), videos, and podcasts.

Representative Marion Berry (D-AR)

www.house.gov/berry

Congressman Marion Berry's Web site takes his office online. It displays his accomplishments, what he is working on, and what services he can provide for his constituents. By keeping the site layout simple and accessible, as well as chock-full of content, he serves the needs of constituents and interested experts alike.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **INTERACTIVITY**. Congressman Berry's site allows constituents to send him an e-mail and take part in a survey. His e-mail newsletter gives subscribers the option of receiving monthly updates, as well as issue alerts on the topics that interest them. His issues section allows the user to search the entire site for content on a given topic with one easy button. The constituent services section gives both FAQs for selected agencies and the steps necessary to initiate an agency inquiry.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site is written for constituents, with a biography section highlighting issues and accomplishments important to the Representative.
- **CONTENT:** The issues section includes related CRS reports and provides the ability to search the entire site for information on specific topics. Voter registration information is provided as well.
- **USABILITY:** Short paragraphs and concise, clear menu options allow the user to easily absorb the information that is provided.
- **INNOVATION:** The site provides Google maps and driving directions to the Congressman's offices, in addition to audio and video clips and RSS options.



Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

www.house.gov/blumenauer

Congressman Earl Blumenauer's Web site illustrates how a congressional site can be a rich resource for both experts and newcomers. With a wealth of information about national issues, congressional casework, and ways to interact with Congress, his Web site delivers useful content that serves the needs of a variety of users.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is to know the **AUDIENCE**, and Representative Blumenauer's site is clearly designed to meet the needs of a diverse group of users. For those with specific legislative interests, his site has an extensive issues section that explores over a dozen topics. Each topic has timely information with links to position statements, related press releases and floor speeches, and links to further information from associated governmental agencies and institutions. The Congressman's site also has content for users less familiar with congressional matters. The casework section links to local, as well as important federal agency resources.

Other successful practices:

- **CONTENT:** His site has an abundance of content with a focused purpose.
- **USABILITY:** While the wealth of information could be overwhelming, his site does an excellent job of separating content into consistent and distinct menus. Links are embedded and clearly identifiable.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** There are many opportunities for users to interact with the office, including a contact form, e-mail updates, and forms for questions, comments, and assistance on each casework type.
- **INNOVATION:** The section titled "Effective Advocacy" is particularly laudable, as it gives users a clear and explicit guide to getting the most out of interactions with congressional offices.

Representative Mike Honda (D-CA)

www.house.gov/honda

Congressman Mike Honda's Web site offers extensive and well thought-out services for his online audience. His site offers excellent casework guidance and in-depth discussion of issue topics. It illustrates the variety of services and resources that a valuable Web site can offer.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is anticipating the needs and interests of its **AUDIENCE**. Congressman Honda's casework section accommodates those who may be unaccustomed to governmental operations. A legislation FAQ offers an introduction to what Congress does and how it works. His site provides links to federal, state, and local governments in addition to community based organizations and service providers. These links help users cut through the red tape associated with contacting a federal agency. Representative Honda's site also has links to federal government Web sites and complements them with brief descriptions of the general areas those agencies cover.

Other successful practices:

- **CONTENT:** His issues section is kept up-to-date, with the most current information and legislation on each topic summarized.
- **USABILITY:** Clearly identifiable embedded links and short introductions to topics—with more information available on demand—make the site easy to read and scan.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** E-mail updates and sections for students, educators, and small businesses, promote user interaction with the office.
- **INNOVATION:** A video library, podcasts, Google search, and an 'en español' section are useful features that enhance the content of the site.

The screenshot shows the homepage of Congressman Mike Honda's website. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links: Constituent Services, Mike in Congress, Latest News, Mike's Legislation, About our District, Biography, Government Links, Photo Album, Veteran's Information, and Welcome Message. Below the menu, there are links for 'home' and 'contact mike'. The main content area features a large 'welcome' banner with a photo of Congressman Honda speaking at a podium. To the left of the banner, there is a list of services: Flag and Tour Requests, Mike on Education, Mike on Technology, Mike on Transportation, and Help With Federal Agencies. At the bottom, there are three main sections: 'MIKE'S EMAIL UPDATES' with a 'JOIN' button, 'MIKE'S LEGISLATION' with a 'SEARCH' button, and 'EN ESPAÑOL' with a 'VISTA' button.



Representative John B. Larson (D-CT)

www.house.gov/larson

Congressman John Larson's Web site illustrates how identifying target audiences can result in a site that is clear, consistent, and accessible for all users. His site has content on Congress, legislative issues, and casework assistance that is geared toward informing uninitiated users.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is providing **CONTENT** that attracts new visitors and supports the goals of the office. The Congressman's site introduces users to how Congress works and what the Member does. His committee section lists the committees on which he serves and explains the nature of their work. His issues section introduces topics with up-to-date information, as well as links to the text of bills, press releases, and related information. This allows both newcomers and experts looking for specific information to find what they are looking for.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** A casework FAQ, a list of federal agencies and the services they can provide to constituents all anticipate and meet the needs of the site's users.
- **USABILITY:** The site uses 'breadcrumbs' to identify where a user is within the site, boxes with additional information and related links, and press releases searchable by topic to assist user navigation.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** The contact section has an FAQ which includes responses to common Internet myths and a link to "Write Your Representative."
- **INNOVATION:** His site provides brief descriptions and relevant press releases for bills he has introduced.

Congressman John B. Larson
Online Office for Connecticut's First District

Search

District Office
[Casework](#)
[Services](#)
[Grants](#)

DC Office
[Legislation](#)
[Issues](#)
[Committees & Caucuses](#)

Congress Connection
[Sign up](#) above for email updates about news & issues affecting CT and the nation

ISSUE FOCUS
Watch Larson offer motion on House floor to **eliminate oil industry tax giveaways** ... [more](#)

On May 3, Congressman Larson

Representative John Linder (R-GA)

www.house.gov/linder

Congressman John Linder's Web site provides constituents with what they expect from a quality site. With ample legislative information and a range of casework and constituent services, the site provides extensive content on almost every conceivable issue.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **INTERACTIVITY**, and Congressman Linder's site allows the users to actively work with the site to get what they need. His casework section takes his constituents step-by-step through the process of determining eligibility and opening up a case. An "e-mail update" sign-up and a form with a drop-down issues menu allow users to contact their Representative and stay up-to-date with what's going on in Congress. A poll on the homepage allows users to share their opinions on current events.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site targets the needs of constituents with an extensive constituent services section.
- **CONTENT:** Legislative information and links, "Linder Letters" (offering both postal and e-mail newsletters), and a casework FAQ are examples of content that aid his constituents.
- **USABILITY:** A text-only option makes the site more accessible, while clear and consistent menus and sub-menus make the site easy to navigate.
- **INNOVATION:** His site provides audio and video clip archives, as well as a press resource kit.

THE ONLINE OFFICE OF
JOHN LINDER
UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE FOR GEORGIA

Home | About John | Constituent Services | Issues | Newsroom | Photo Album | Contact John

May 16, 2006

Welcome
Welcome to the online office of the Seventh District of Georgia. I hope you will use this site to locate resources and to contact me.

Current Focus
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY HOLDS HEARING ON PANDEMIC FLU READINESS
Today Congressman John Linder (R-GA), Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Prevention of Nuclear and Biological Attack, participated in the Committee on Homeland Security's hearing entitled "Are We Ready?: Implementing the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza."
"Today marks another step in our nation's preparation for the possibility of a deadly outbreak of avian influenza, or H5N1, in

1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return
It's time to Scrap the IRS! Click Here to learn about H.R. 25, the FairTax

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY



Representative Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY)

www.house.gov/maloney

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney's Web site exemplifies how to use advances in technology and the Internet to better serve the growing number of constituents that are online. The content is comprehensive and cross-referenced. The wealth of features provides users with a sense of the work the Representative does, her accomplishments, and the services she provides.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is the use of **INNOVATION** to enhance a user's visit and Congresswoman Maloney's site does exactly that. RSS feeds, three e-mail update options, and both traditional and e-mail newsletters enhance the interactivity. Menus and links on each page lead to related content and ensure that users can find the information they are seeking. While the sheer volume of information on this site could be overwhelming, its innovative layout makes it thoroughly usable.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** Her site provides targeted information on her accomplishments and priorities such as her extensive efforts on 9/11 recovery.
- **CONTENT:** Her site has an amazing breadth of content, including information about topics contained in issue-related press releases, summaries of specific legislation, and links to other relevant topics.
- **USABILITY:** A site map and links to related content that are specific to each section allow users to easily find what they are seeking.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** E-mail updates and Web forms allow users to interact with the office online.

Representative
CAROLYN B. MALONEY

14TH DISTRICT NEW YORK • MANHATTAN • QUEENS

Email Updates | FAQs | Search | Contact Me | Site Map

Home

SEARCH THIS SITE GO

Home

Welcome

Biography

How Can I Help?

My Work In Congress

Press/News

Just for Students

What's New

Take my 2006 Issues Questionnaire

Community Calendar

Latest Press Releases

04/12/06

Reps. Maloney, Fossella and Shays Demand 9/11 Responder Health Treatment Plan NOW

Quick Links

Do You Live In My District?

Enter Your Zip +4 (if known)

Representative Jeff Miller (R-FL)

www.house.gov/jeffmiller

Congressman Jeff Miller's Web site demonstrates how much the layout and organization of a site can enhance everything it offers. The professional look and organization of his site make the process of finding what users are looking for quick and painless. His site doesn't just have the range of content expected of a successful congressional Web site; it also has the mechanisms in place to deliver that content to interested users efficiently.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **USABILITY**. Congressman Miller's site uses a consistent menu and short, descriptive pop-up sub-menus to efficiently guide users to legislative or contact information. All of the sections are clearly written specifically for the Web, with short paragraphs, important information in bold, and a format that can be easily scanned.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site was clearly written for specific, targeted audiences that use his Web site with a "Kid's Corner" and a profile of the district.
- **CONTENT:** The Member's schedule, town hall schedule, issues section with related speeches and press releases, and constituent FAQs are all available and easily accessible.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Constituents can interact with the office online through quick polls, a contact form, an e-newsletter, and Member and town hall schedules.
- **INNOVATION:** With a list of staff members and their positions, backgrounds, and phone numbers, his site reflects the approachable and personal feel of his office.



Representative Dennis Moore (D-KS)

www.house.gov/moore

Congressman Dennis Moore's Web site illustrates how a Web site can be used as an outreach tool to important groups. Web sites do not have to choose between providing content for all users and providing content for particular groups. This site guides visitors to information they would find most helpful in a clear and easily navigable format.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is building it around specifically targeted **AUDIENCES**. The content in the issues and "Assistance" sections of this site are designed with the Congressman's constituents in mind.

Congressman Moore's site also has sections for veterans, parents, small businesses, and other groups, and includes pertinent information and links for each of these audiences. His site successfully addresses the needs of all constituents, while at the same time taking measures to make sure targeted groups can easily find relevant resources.

Other successful practices:

- **CONTENT:** The content is presented in an easily accessible format, with news releases posted by date and topic, as well as content that is segmented by the demographics of his district.
- **USABILITY:** "Related items" box, clear pull-down menus, and embedded links all contribute to easy navigation within the site.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Community office hours, contact forms, and e-mail updates allow users to choose from a variety of ways to interact with the office.
- **INNOVATION:** Options to print specific pages are clearly displayed and an "inform a friend" feature allows users to share the site with others via e-mail.

Representative Charlie Norwood (R-GA)

www.house.gov/norwood

Congressman Charlie Norwood's site illustrates the importance of having a clear goal and vision in designing an effective Web site. Congressman Norwood wants his constituents to know what he does, what he has accomplished, and the issues about which he cares most. Every section of his site, and even the layout of the site itself, serves these goals.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is providing **CONTENT** targeted toward the audience the site is attracting. The content on the Congressman's site focuses on what he does as a legislator and his main public policy concerns. His biography details his accomplishments and priorities clearly. The issues section describes his views on various topics and contains references and links to specific legislation on these topics. His site does not simply list the committees on which he serves, but also explains which issues are under their jurisdiction.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The content is clearly focused on constituents and is presented with them in mind.
- **USABILITY:** His site uses embedded and clearly distinguishable links, short paragraphs written for the Web with access to more lengthy information, and a site map.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** E-mail updates are offered to interested users and the House's "Write Your Representative" service is integrated into the site in an accessible manner.
- **INNOVATION:** His site contains video and audio clips as well as a poll eliciting opinions from his constituents.

Senate Member Office Web Sites

Senator Bill Frist (R-TN)

www.frist.senate.gov*

Senator Bill Frist's Web site synthesizes all five building blocks to create an informative and timely resource. Constituents and interested users can get the information and services they need from his site because it is usable, interactive, and innovative. Content that targets specific audiences helps users get the most information from the Web site.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is providing **CONTENT** that reinforces the goals and priorities of the Member. With prominent sections on health care and national security, Senator Frist's site emphasizes the public policy issues that are important to him. An extensive issues section has links to reports, press releases, columns, and relevant documents. His site also contains the most up-to-date information possible, referring casework to the appropriate people even as he was preparing to retire.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** His site accounts for the needs of his audiences by targeting relevant information to groups such as students and teachers, members of the press, and individuals interested in national security and health care issues.
- **USABILITY:** An attractive, consistent and easy-to-use layout greatly aids users' movements throughout the site.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Related information and reports are available for each issue topic discussed on the site, allowing users to interact with the site and get the most useful information.
- **INNOVATION:** The site provides a scheduling request form and a "characters left" counter which lets users completing Web forms know how much space still remains on the form.

Bill Frist, M.D.
United States Senator, Tennessee
United States Senate Majority Leader

SEARCH:

- :: About Senator Frist
- :: Services for Tennesseans
- :: About Tennessee
- :: Issues and Legislation
- :: Spotlight On Healthcare
- :: National Security Affairs
- :: For the Press

Frist Hails New Job Figures
WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, M.D. (R-TN) today made the following statement after the Department of Labor announced the creation of 193,000 new jobs in January and a drop in the unemployment rate to 4.7 percent: "Today's figures reinforce the fact that the Republican-led Congress' pro-growth policies are creating an environment for our nation's economy to thrive. ... >> MORE

Get SMART!
NEW!! Click here to learn more about Senator Frist's SMART Grant federal student aid program.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

www.leahy.senate.gov

Senator Patrick Leahy's site clearly knows its audience and targets it in a straightforward manner. It provides the standard content and services of a successful congressional site with an added emphasis on local constituent matters. His site is an extension of, and plainly illustrates, the goals and priorities of his office.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is to understand its **AUDIENCE**.

Senator Leahy's site is a resource for the residents of Vermont, with features and content crafted to meet their needs. There is a specific section with information for businesses, the military, and "cybersellers" in his state. The issues section discusses national issues as well as those of local concern to his constituents.

Other successful practices:

- **CONTENT:** An extensive legislative section containing descriptions of legislation he has introduced is an example of the useful content offered on the site.
- **USABILITY:** The simple and clear layout ensures that the site is accessible for users at all levels of Web expertise.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Online chats, transcripts of past chats, and comment forms in some issue sections allow for effective online communication.
- **INNOVATION:** The aforementioned online chats, as well as available podcasts, video, and audio clips contribute to the overall quality of the site.

The screenshot shows the homepage of Senator Patrick Leahy's website. At the top, it reads "Patrick Leahy Vermont United States Senator". Below this is a navigation menu with icons for Biography, Vermont, Issues, Constituent Services, Press, Office, and Search. A "Contact Senator Leahy" button is prominently displayed. On the left, there is a section titled "GAS PRICES:" with a sub-headline "Read about Sen. Leahy's efforts to curb rising costs at the pumps, both in Vermont and across the country." On the right, there is a "More from the Floor" section with a sub-headline "The Senate is in recess until Monday, June 5, 2006. To follow recent Senate action, click here for More From the Floor." Below this is a "WHAT'S NEW" section with a sub-headline "Vermont Nets \$10.9 M." and a partially visible sub-headline "More From the Floor".



Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA)

www.santorum.senate.gov*

Senator Rick Santorum’s Web site is an example of how a Member can create an online office on the Internet. His site utilizes new practices and technology to bring services like legislative information, casework, and issue statements to Web users in a helpful and accessible format. It’s not only what his site provides, but how his site provides it, that makes it a success.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **INNOVATION** that goes beyond users’ expectations, and Senator Santorum’s site does just that. All the material on his site is cross-referenced and exceedingly easy to use. In every section, related press releases, columns, statements, and legislative links are displayed.

Press releases can be sorted in typical reverse chronology, as well as by issue and by state region. The ability to change font sizes, to see the site ‘en español’, and the high-tech layout all serve the purpose of enhancing—and not distracting from—the range of content the site provides.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** His site provides targeted information for constituents needing help with federal agencies and those looking for specific legislative information.
- **CONTENT:** Not only is there a wealth of content on the site—including a history of the Senate and the State of Pennsylvania—the content is cross-referenced and searchable.
- **USABILITY:** The professional layout is optimized with content clearly written for the Web, and contains related options and topic boxes for each part of the site.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** E-mail updates, a contact form with topics and specific issues to select, and an interactive state map for searching by region are examples of innovation that this site provides to its users.

The screenshot shows the website for Senator Rick Santorum, United States Senator, Pennsylvania. The header includes the name and title, along with a background image of a rural landscape. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for HOME, EN ESPAÑOL, and TEXT ONLY. The main content area is titled "Press Releases" and includes a "PRESS OFFICE" link. There are filters for "FILTER BY:" (Issue, Region) and "BROWSE BY:" (Month). A dropdown menu for "Region" is open, showing options: Allentown, Altoona, Coudersport, Erie, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Scranton. The "Recent Press Releases" section lists items by month, including "DECEMBER 2006" and "OCTOBER 2006". A search bar is located at the top left, and a font size selector is at the top center.

Committee Web Sites

All committee sites are from the 109th Congress and referred to as their official designation at the time. Snapshots of these sites are available at www.connectingtocongress.org.

House Committee on the Budget (Majority)

www.house.gov/budget*

The House Committee on the Budget's Majority Web site is geared toward an audience of experts familiar with the budget process. At the same time, it provides a general introduction for newcomers. Committee Web sites are available to the public, and the committee site does a good job of appealing to its primary congressional audience while still containing resources for those that are not on the Hill.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **CONTENT**. While it has a simple and unpretentious look to it, the House Budget Web site is a clearinghouse for budget information. It contains a wealth of reports, pie charts, facts and figures, and a "Budget Tutorial" that explains the whole process. It provides not only hearing transcripts, but video and audio archives of the hearings as well.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site contains targeted information including reports and information for those interested in the budget process.
- **USABILITY:** The site index makes for easier use of the Web site.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** The site allows users to browse the latest economic numbers and indicators.
- **INNOVATION:** Archived audio and video, along with transcripts, are important additions to the value that the site's content provides users.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the House Budget Committee website. At the top, it features the name of the Chairman, Jim Nussle, and the website URL, budget.house.gov. Below this, it identifies the House Budget Committee for the 109th Congress. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- LATEST ECONOMIC INDICATORS:** A table showing various indicators:

LATEST ECONOMIC INDICATORS	
Schedule of Economic Announcements	
Unemployment Rate: 4.4 % in October	Real GDP: +2.2 % in 3rd Qtr
Consumer Confidence: -2.2 pts in November	GPI: -0.5 % in October
Industrial Production: +0.2 % in October	National Debt
- WHAT'S NEW:** A section with two main headlines:
 - Treasury Confirms Deficit Drop to \$248 Billion**: Surging Revenues Continue to Drive Down Deficit -- 10/11 -- PDF -- 138 KB. Talking Points -- PDF -- 97 KB.
 - Deficit Estimate Continues to Fall**: Surging Revenues Drive Down Deficit to \$250 Billion -- 10/6 -- PDF -- 139 KB. Talking Points -- PDF -- 96 KB.
- THE BUDGET FY 2007:** A sidebar section with links to Congressional Budget Resolution, President's Budget, and Budget Projections.
- BUDGET ANALYSIS:** A sidebar section with links to Budget Week and Economic Update.
- Left Sidebar:** Contains links for SPSA Menu, SCHEDULE, Subscribe for E-Mail Announcements, Meeting Schedule, Hearings, Witness Statement, Guidelines, Budget Calendar, and Majority Leader's Calendar.
- Bottom Left:** A NEWS section.



House Committee on Science (Minority)

www.house.gov/sciencedems*

The House Committee on Science’s Minority Web site provides as much content as a user could expect from any congressional committee. It does an excellent job of showcasing information in a way that improves the users’ sense of the depth and breadth of the committee’s duties. Users can browse easily through the detailed description of the committee’s jurisdiction and come away with a sense of how much really gets done in a congressional committee.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **INNOVATION**. Providing new content in innovative ways allows Web users to get information they might otherwise overlook. Better ways of presenting data also can help guide a specific audience to the content that is most pertinent to its needs or interests. With appropriations and investigations updates, event listings, and a tip line all prominently showcased, the committee site enriches users’ visits and draws them to new information.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** Targeted information that allows interested parties and the press to see how the committee works—and what they do—shows the site has its audiences clearly defined.
- **CONTENT:** E-mail updates for the press and for citizens and information on legislation, hearings, investigations, and appropriations are examples of useful content.
- **USABILITY:** A site map, clear, embedded links, and consistent layout make navigation painless.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** A “Contact Us” section with specific ways of contacting the office for citizens and the press as well as e-mail updates options enhance online interactions.

The screenshot shows the top portion of the website. At the top left, it reads "Committee on Science DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES". To the right is a photo of Bart Gordon, Ranking Member. Below this is a navigation menu with links: About Us, Subcommittees, Our Legislation, Our Events & Investigations, Tracking R&D Funding, Press Room, Hearings & Publications, For Members & Citizens, and Comment Online. The main content area features a "printer friendly" icon and the heading "Our Events and Investigations" with a sub-heading "Events | Investigations". Below this is a dark blue bar labeled "EVENTS" and a link to "View all Events". On the left side of the page, there is a sidebar with the text "In This Section" and "Our Events and Investigations" with a "Tipline" button and a link to "View All Events and Investigations". At the bottom of the sidebar is a "Search the Web site" button.

House Committee on Ways and Means (Majority)

www.house.gov/waysandmeans*

The House Committee on Ways and Means' Majority Web site is a great resource for those interested in the work of the committee. The efficient and effective way it serves its unique aims makes it one of the best committee sites on Capitol Hill. With a layout, content, and innovative features that serve its primary audiences well, the Ways and Means Committee site illustrates how a Web site can be a valuable asset regardless of its audience.



One of the keys to a successful Web site is **USABILITY**, and the Ways and Means' Majority site is eminently usable. With features like an interactive calendar, resource kits, and hearings and legislative information by committee and subcommittee, the site meets its audiences' expectations. Sections for the press and other interested users also enhance the site's usability.

Other successful practices:

- **AUDIENCE:** The site addresses the needs of a diverse set of users, including congressional and professional audiences, the press, and citizens.
- **CONTENT:** Committee reports, legislation, publications, and press releases are all available online.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** A "Hot Topics" menu, e-mail newsletter, and Web form to send messages to the Chairman makes this committee site notably open to online communication.
- **INNOVATION:** The contact form can be directed to the Chairman, intern coordinator, or Webmaster; enhancing its interactivity.

COMMITTEE ON
Ways And Means
WAYSANDMEANS.HOUSE.GOV

E PLURIBUS UNUM

All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE COMMITTEE NEWS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE HEARINGS PUBLICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES LINKS CONTACT

★ EMAIL SIGNUP
Email Address

★ COMMITTEE ACTION - LIVE
[Click Here to View Committee Proceedings Live](#)

★ HOT TOPICS
On December 7th, Chairman Thomas introduced "The Tax Relief

★ COMMITTEE SCHEDULE
Upcoming Events
No items on the schedule

Recent Events
December 6, 2006
10:30 AM
1100 Longworth House Office Building
Hearing on Patient Safety and Quality Issues in End Stage Renal Disease Treatment
[More Info...](#)

December 2006						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Leadership Web Sites



House Democratic Whip—Rep. Steny Hoyer *www.democraticwhip.house.gov**

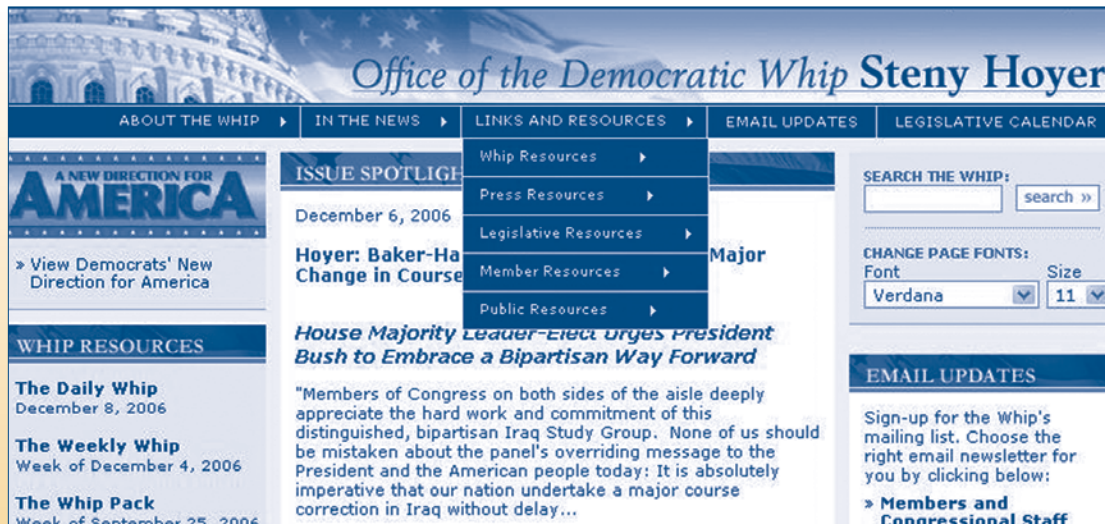
The Democratic Whip’s Web site recognizes that it must serve numerous, distinct audiences and targets each of them effectively. The clear organization of the site ensures that the wealth of information it offers never overwhelms users. The site is exemplary, not only because of its rich resources, but more importantly because it presents those resources in a way that allows all of the audiences to find what they need quickly and easily.

One key to a successful Web site is methodically building the site around its **AUDIENCES**. The Democratic Whip targets the press, Members and staff, and the public with a robust “links and resources” menu. Schedules and Whip resources are also prominently displayed and easily accessible. The main functions of the Whip—communicating upcoming floor activity and getting information to Democratic Members and staff—are clearly given the most attention, but the site does so while still allowing for its secondary audiences to be served.



Other successful practices:

- **CONTENT:** Crucial content hosted on this site includes information about the role of the Whip, what the office does for newcomers, legislative information and resources, as well as content for its party-specific constituency.
- **USABILITY:** The site is user-friendly, with clear and consistent navigation and sidebars for related links in each section.
- **INTERACTIVITY:** Daily and weekly e-mail updates and the ability for members of the press to receive Whip documents by e-mail all foster online communication.
- **INNOVATION:** The ability to change font style and size, and the “on this page” sidebar, greatly enhance the usability of the site.



AHEAD OF THE CURVE

A small number of pioneering congressional offices are innovating in ways that are not yet widely practiced or go beyond the scope of our evaluations. Given the ever-changing nature of the Internet and constituent expectations and demands, might these features become standard on future congressional Web pages?

Foreign Language Translations: From Spanish, to Vietnamese, to links to an online resource that automatically translates Web sites into one of nearly a dozen languages, some congressional offices are opening their site to users more comfortable with other languages.

Adjustable Text Size: A few sites have incorporated this feature to make it more readable for users who might not be familiar with how to change text size on their own.

RSS Feeds: 11.9% of Member sites allow users to subscribe to these feeds, which automatically update them on the latest news from the congressional office, greatly enhancing interactivity for those users familiar with the technology.

Podcasts: 8.4% of Member sites have some form of podcasting, which is an innovative new way of keeping constituents informed and facilitating greater communication with those users who subscribe.

“Last Updated” Stamp: Some congressional Web sites have this stamp on each page, letting everyone who visits the site know when the last time the information on that specific page was updated. Not only does this show the user that the site is frequently updated, it signals to online constituents that the information the site provides—and the interaction that the site allows—is a priority for the office.

Silver Mouse Award Winners

The 27 winners of the Silver Mouse Award offered Web sites that exceeded the expectations for a typical congressional Web site. What follows is a quick look at one particular feature in which the given Silver Mouse winner excelled, organized by the building block that feature illustrates.

Silver Mouse Winner	URL	Feature	
Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV)	www.house.gov/berkley	“Who are you” tab, identifying and targeting different audiences	AUDIENCE
Rep. Thelma Drake (R-VA)	www.house.gov/drake	Effective targeting of demographic groups	
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA)	www.house.gov/eshoo	Glossary of terms used by Congress and the government	
Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI)	www.house.gov/langevin	“Rhode Island Office” and “D.C. Office” sections	
Rep. E. Clay Shaw, Jr. (R-FL)*	www.connectingtocongress.org	Hurricane awareness information	
Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA)	www.murray.senate.gov	FAQ and explanations of the content	
Rep. Jim Gerlach (R-PA)	www.house.gov/gerlach	Well thought-out casework information	CONTENT
Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)	www.house.gov/israel	Career highlights broken down by issue	
Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)	www.house.gov/reyes	Disctict census data provided on the site	
Sen. Norm Coleman (R-MN)	www.coleman.senate.gov	Rich casework section	
Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID)	www.craig.senate.gov	Research tools section	
House Judiciary Committee (Majority)*	www.connectingtocongress.org	“Print Shop” has procedural, historical, and informational documents on demand	
Rep. Bob Inglis (R-SC)	www.house.gov/inglis	Appealing and professional layout	USABILITY
Rep. Mark Kennedy (R-MN)*	www.connectingtocongress.org	Issues section integrates a wealth of information	
Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)	www.house.gov/royce	Breadcrumbs at the heading of each page	
Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI)	www.levin.senate.gov	Breakdown of information by region	
Sen. Olympia J. Snowe (R-ME)	www.snowe.senate.gov	Helpful and productive homepage layout	



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chart continued

Silver Mouse Winner URL Feature



	Silver Mouse Winner	URL	Feature
INTERACTIVITY	Rep. Bud Cramer (D-AL)	www.house.gov/cramer	“Letter of the month,” responding to a constituent letter
	Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY)	www.house.gov/higgins	Interactive casework section
	Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA)	www.harkin.senate.gov	A variety of comment forms for many of the sections of the site
	House Agriculture Committee (Majority)*	www.connectingtocongress.org	“Farm Bill Feedback” form that allows for direct commenting
	Sen. Republican Conference – Chairman Rick Santorum*	www.src.senate.gov	Content searchable by Member, region, or document type
INNOVATION	Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)	www.house.gov/farr	“En Español” option
	Rep. Devin Nunes (R-CA)	www.house.gov/nunes	“Legislative action” section and brief descriptions of the links
	Rep. George Radanovich (R-CA)	www.house.gov/radanovich	Life events section and link to Babel Fish to translate page
	Sen. Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)	www.chambliss.senate.gov	High-tech features and interactive homepage
	Sen. Special Committee on Aging (Majority)*	www.connectingtocongress.org	Tip line for reporting fraud, abuse, and waste





Bronze Mouse Award Winners

The winners of the Bronze Mouse Award have excellent Web sites that go beyond just being ahead of the curve. The following 40 sites won Bronze Mouse Awards.

House Member Office Web Sites

Rep. Tom Allen (D-ME)
Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA)
Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA)
Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)*
Rep. John Carter (R-TX)
Rep. Chris Chocola (R-IN)*
Rep. Mike Conaway (R-TX)
Rep. John Culberson (R-TX)
Rep. David Dreier (R-CA)
Rep. Chet Edwards (D-TX)
Rep. Phil English (R-PA)
Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC)
Rep. Melissa Hart (R-PA)*
Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA)
Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA)
Rep. Jim Matheson (D-UT)
Rep. John L. Mica (R-FL)
Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA)
Rep. John E. Peterson (R-PA)
Rep. Earl Pomeroy (D-ND)
Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA)
Rep. Christopher Shays (R-CT)
Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR)
Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)
Rep. Jerry Weller (R-IL)

Senate Member Office Web Sites

Sen. Wayne Allard (R-CO)
Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
Sen. Conrad Burns (R-MT)*
Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)
Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)
Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA)
Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Sen. Craig Thomas (R-WY)
Sen. John Thune (R-SD)

Committee Web Sites

House Committee on the Budget (Minority)*
House Committee on Rules (Majority)*
Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources (Majority)*
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (Majority)*

Leadership Web Sites

House Democratic Caucus –
Chairman James Clyburn*

CHAPTER 6

Building a Successful Web Site

The Five Building Blocks

Congressional staffers repeatedly seek our advice regarding their Web sites: What information should I post on my site? What services should I offer? What are other offices doing? How can I improve my site? Attempts to answer such questions are complicated by the fact that the medium keeps changing. As the Internet expands and Internet use grows more widespread, the choices for Web site design and development grow with it. In seeking to answer these questions, our challenge was to identify the best practices and methods that are effective today and will remain effective in an ever-changing environment. Through extensive research, we identified five building blocks of effective online communication. In order of importance, they are:

-  Audience
-  Content
-  Usability
-  Interactivity
-  Innovation

In the following pages, we describe how to use each of these building blocks in the development or improvement of a congressional Web site. We define each building block and explain how to use it to create an effective site with examples from this year's award winners.



The First Building Block: AUDIENCE

The fundamental rule for the success of any communications effort, including an effective Web site, is to know your audience. Therefore, audience is the first building block. If you know and clearly define your audience, it will be much easier to select the content, the format, and the kinds of interactive and innovative features to provide for your users. Every building block that follows will be shaped by the users of your site.

So, who visits your site? To understand the different audiences that use your site, you should think of your Web site like a specialty store inside a mall. There are two types of customers: the first are casual shoppers who come into the store because it looks interesting and it might have something they want. We will call these users “**newcomers**.” They are going to need help, ask lots of questions, and can range from having a vague idea of what they want to having a very clear need but being unsure of how to fill it. Students, teachers, and many constituents are examples of newcomers. The second type of customer are those who came to the mall specifically to shop at the specialty store. These are the “**experts**.” They know exactly what they want and why they are there, and they primarily need help tracking down a specific piece of information or service. Members of the press and activists are examples of experts.

A successful Web site will be user-friendly for both audiences. Experts know what they are doing, so they are primarily concerned about content. If you have what they need and give it to them, they will be happy. Newcomers, on the other hand, need an explanation of the content as well as guidance on how to find it.

In addition to serving two types of users, there are two fundamental approaches to providing information and fostering communication:

- In the **proactive approach**, you build your site to anticipate the needs of the different subsets of your audience. An example of this approach would be having a section of your Web site devoted to the needs of a key constituency (e.g. a section for small business owners with information on grants, loans, and press releases that would interest them).
- In the **reactive approach**, you build your site to address the most common needs of your audience. An example of this approach would be having a section of your Web site that addresses the most commonly requested information your office receives (e.g. providing online flag request forms or a casework FAQ).

Building your Web site is not a matter of choosing one of the two approaches, but rather determining what mix of the two is appropriate. Member, committee, and leadership offices will have different subsets in their audience, depending on their function or jurisdiction within Congress, and thus will need to take different approaches to their Web sites based on their goals and priorities. The key to creating a successful Web site lies in identifying the various audiences your site attracts and determining the best way to meet their needs and accomplish your goals.

To help offices with this task, Figure 21 describes the typical audiences we identified for Member, committee, and leadership offices and the considerations each office must take into account when identifying their approach.

FIGURE 21. AUDIENCES OF MEMBER, COMMITTEE, AND LEADERSHIP OFFICE WEB SITES

OFFICE TYPE	TYPICAL AUDIENCES	KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCES
Member Offices	Constituents Reporters Activists Students and educators Lobbyists	Who are the key constituencies in the district or state? What are the Member’s key issues? What are the Member’s goals and priorities?
Committee Offices	Congressional staff Majority/minority staff Activists Lobbyists Other professionals	What is the role and jurisdiction of the committee? What are the goals and objectives of the Chair or Ranking Member?
Leadership Offices	General public Reporters Party supporters on and off the Hill Congressional staff Lobbyists and advocates	What is the role and purpose of the office within the leadership structure? What are the goals and priorities of the party leadership?

Congressional Web sites by their very nature have the potential to attract a diverse audience. Therefore, it is even more important when planning and managing your Web site to consider the needs of both the audience your site naturally attracts and the audience you want to target with your site. Defining and catering your Web site toward these audiences will go a long way in helping your Web site be a success.

HOW CONGRESS WORKS

Only 16.2% of all Member Web sites have clearly marked information on Congress and the role of its Members. Just 29.0% of Member sites had specific information on how a bill becomes a law.



HOW COMMITTEES WORK

46.9% of committee Web sites did not have information on the rules of the committee. 85.9% of them did not have explanations of their processes and procedures.

AUDIENCE DO

- **Focus on constituents first:** **Rep. Xavier Becerra's** site provides step-by-step instructions for constituents on how to open a case and provides legislative resources that explain how Congress works and what's currently going on. **Rep. Ed Royce's** site has detailed FAQs tailored to common needs constituents have when dealing with federal agencies. The issues section of **Sen. Patrick Leahy's** site tailors the content to the needs of his constituents.
- **Build relationships online:** Reaching out to specific groups or members of your constituency—the “proactive approach”—can be done effectively on your Web site. **Rep. Thelma Drake's** site has a section focused on meeting the needs of a prominent subset of her constituency: those in military service.
- **Remember that your site attracts both newcomers and experts:** **Rep. Tammy Baldwin's** site has an extensive issues section with links to current legislation, press releases, and relevant outside sources for each issue. Her site provides basic information for newcomers and also allows those with more familiarity to get in-depth information. The **House Committee on the Judiciary (Majority)** has a wealth of resources including legislative and GAO reports for those who take a particular interest in the committee's jurisdiction.
- **Identify your strategic goals and let them guide the planning of your Web site:** The Web sites that are the most successful and won Mouse Awards are also—*not* coincidentally—the ones that clearly use their Web sites to advance the goals of their office. Offices interested primarily in serving constituent needs make that known through well-planned casework sections and press releases sorted by regions of the district or state. Those interested in illustrating their work in Congress do so with links and information explaining the legislative process, policy accomplishments, and issues they view as priorities. Many sites do a combination of the two to varying degrees.

Rep. Becerra

Rep. Royce

Sen. Leahy

DO DO DO

Casework
What is Casework?

One of my most important duties as your representative in Congress is to assist you when dealing with federal agencies – this assistance is referred to as casework. My casework staff and I are ready to help you cut through “red tape” and secure the services and benefits paid for by our tax dollars.

Constituents most commonly approach my staff for casework when they do not receive a timely response from a federal agency, when they wish to appeal a decision, or if they have lost important documents.

Examples of federal agencies that we work with include the Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), among others.

How to Open a Case

1. Determine that your question or problem is something my office can assist you with.
2. Check this quick list of frequently asked questions to determine if an answer to your question is there.
3. Prepare to open a case with my office.
4. Mail, fax or drop off all of your documentation to:

Office of Rep. Xavier Becerra
Attn: Caseworker
1910 Sunset Blvd., Suite 560
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Fax: 213-483-1429

Once we receive your casework request and documentation, please allow three business days for a member of my casework team to contact you regarding your concern.

Home | **Constituent Services** | Education Department

If you would like Rep. Royce's help with an education issue or have a question that is not addressed on this page, please call Rep. Royce in his Fullerton office or print out his [District Authorization Form](#) and fax or mail it to his Fullerton office:

Representative Ed Royce
305 North Harbor Blvd., Suite 300
Fullerton, CA 92632
Phone: (714) 992-6081
Fax: (714) 992-1668

Where can I get my local school district's report card?

CA Department of Education, School Accessibility Report Card
School district report cards are used to rate districts comparably both statewide and nationwide using standardized tests and benchmark exams. Reports can be broken down to the individual schools within the district.

How do I prepare my child academically and/or financially for college?

You can help your child make informed decisions about his or her college education.

Getting Ready for College Early
A handbook for parents of students in the middle and junior high school years.

Preparing Your Child for College
A resource book for parents

Major Issues

Resources For Families Of Our Troops

Foreign Policy

Information in This Section:

- Iraq and Afghanistan
- Latin America & the Caribbean
- Africa
- Civilian Victims of War
- Asia
- Landmines
- The Middle East
- International Health
- Foreign Assistance
- Global Environment
- Other Foreign Policy Issues
- Human Rights

As current Chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee for the last decade, I have been deeply involved in U.S. foreign policy and foreign aid programs.

Vermonters, like most Americans, recognize that events outside our borders can have direct and dramatic consequences for our health and safety. Isolationism is not an option in a world in which a deadly infectious disease, or a terrorist attack, is only a plane trip away.

I believe that as the wealthiest, most powerful nation in history we have wide ranging interests and responsibilities around the globe – from promoting trade and investment to combating terrorism, reducing poverty, protecting the environment, supporting human rights, and broadening understanding between Americans and people of

SPOTLIGHT ON:
Statement Of Sen. Patrick Leahy, Hearing On “The Fight Of Iraqi Refugees” January 16, 2007.

AUDIENCE DON'T

- **Don't build the site around a single audience:** Focusing on one audience, whether it's the media or constituents, neglects the interests and needs of other groups that the site attracts. It thus fails to take advantage of a tremendous opportunity to inform, serve, and build relationships with all of the office's key audiences.
- **Don't treat your online audiences as secondary to offline audiences:** Many offices use their Web sites to direct constituents to contact them offline for the information and services they are seeking. Yet, people who choose the Web as their method of contacting a congressional office are doing so precisely because they prefer to have their needs met online. Respond to their needs accordingly, and you will find you have more satisfied "customers," at less effort and expense to the office than you ever thought possible.
- **Don't alienate newcomers:** With Web sites in general, it is relatively easy to confuse online audiences that have no previous experience with the information they are viewing. Experts are rarely offended if you offer introductions and explanations of the subjects of their interest. Even something as basic as a list of links to reliable introductory information can go a long way toward being the most helpful to the widest possible audience. Remember, anyone in the world can visit your Web site.
- **Don't forget your audience when deciding on content:** Before you do anything, step back and consider your audience. They are the reason you are making a Web site in the first place. Remembering your audience will make it easier to decide what to put up and where to spend your time when creating and updating your site.



SCHEDULE

9.1% of Member sites had a district or state schedule and only 7.3% had such information posted within the last month. Just 10.2% of Member sites posted their office hours.

Rep. Drake

Rep. Baldwin

House Committee on the Judiciary (Majority)

... is above
... today
... the
... their search

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- [Casework Request](#)
- [US Flag Request](#)
- [Grant Information](#)
- [Presidential Greetings](#)
- [Federal Jobs](#)
- [Internships](#)
- [Washington, DC Tours](#)

MILITARY RESOURCES

Information for those who are serving, have served or aspire to serve in our nation's military.

- [Active Duty, Reserve, & National Guard](#)
- [Military Retirees & Veterans](#)
- [Veteran's History Project](#)

CIVIL RIGHTS TOPICS:

- Civil Rights Enforcement
- Disability Rights
- Election Reform
- Employment Discrimination
- Hate Crimes
- Racial Profiling

Civil Rights Enforcement

Guaranteeing civil rights to all Americans requires an ongoing commitment to the enforcement of our current civil rights laws. I strongly support enforcement of the Civil Rights Act and all other federal civil rights laws. Continuing federal Affirmative Action programs to promote outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups is also important.

Our civil rights laws are meaningless if they are not enforced.

IN-DEPTH: Press Releases | Legislation | Links

Committee Amendment to H.R. 1956 (109th Congress)
This represents the text of H.R. 1956, the "Business Activity Tax Simplification Act of 2006" as reported by the Committees on the Judiciary. For purposes of Rules Committee consideration any proposed amendments should be drafted to this text.

H.R. 4975, the "Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006," as reported by the House Judiciary Committee

H.R. 4472 - Manager's Amendment approved by full House on March 8, 2006

H.R. 4437, (Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005), as reported, for purposes of Rules Amendments - 12/09/05

H.R. 1751 as reported by the House Judiciary Committee - 10/27/05

H.R. 4128 - As reported by the House Judiciary Committee - 10/28/05

Committee Report to accompany H.R. 3402 (DOJ Appropriations)
Committee Report to accompany H.R. 3402, "To authorize appropriations for the Department of Justice for fiscal years 2006 through 2009, and for other purposes" as reported by the Committee on the Judiciary.

Committee Amendment to H.R. 3402 (109th Congress)
This represents the text of H.R. 3402, the "Department of Justice Appropriations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 2006 through 2009" as reported by the Committees on the Judiciary. For purposes of Rules Committee consideration any proposed amendments should be drafted to the this text.

Committee Amendments to H.R. 3199 (109th Congress)
This represents the text of H.R. 3199, the "USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005," as reported by the Committees on the Judiciary and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. For purposes of Rules Committee consideration any proposed amendments should be drafted to the this text.

Committee Amendment to H.R. 975 (108th Congress)
This represents the Committee amendment as agreed to by the Committee on March 12, 2003. For purposes of Rules Committee consideration, proposed amendments should be drafted using this document.

Committee Amendment to H.R. 1104 (108th Congress)
This represents the Committee amendment as agreed to by the Committee on March 18, 2003. For purposes of Rules Committee consideration, proposed amendments should be drafted without reference to page and line numbers since they may change.



The Second Building Block: **CONTENT**

Once you have identified your audience, the second and most important step is to determine what content to offer visitors. The information and services provided by the best sites varied, but they all addressed the five major purposes of congressional Web site content. They are:

- Provide services to constituents and stakeholders;
- Support the goals and legislative priorities of the office;
- Strengthen the public’s understanding of Congress;
- Foster the public’s trust in the democratic process; and
- Attract and retain visitors.

Congressional offices can do this for their Web audiences by being online conduits of the same high-quality information and assistance they provide offline. More specifically, they can provide:

- **Legislative Information:** Legislation is what Congress is about, and offices that make it easy to find and understand the legislative process—and the role of Member, committee, or leadership offices in crafting legislation—are providing a critical service to citizens.
- **Issue Information:** Most citizens think of legislation in terms of broad issues, rather than specific bills. They especially want to understand the issues in Congress that most directly affect them.
- **Demonstrations of Accountability:** Citizens want to know that their representatives in Congress are accountable to them. They want to understand what Members are doing, where they stand on the issues, how they are voting, and how they can be reached.
- **Press Information:** Specialized features, information, and services can make the site more relevant and interesting to reporters. Offices that make it easy for reporters to research a story about the Member, Chair, or Leader, or about issues before Congress are providing a valuable resource to the media.
- **Educational Information about Congress:** Most citizens outside the Beltway have forgotten their high school civics classes. Offices can do constituents a great service by finding ways of making educational information easily accessible throughout the site so visitors can refer to it whenever they have questions.
- **Constituent Services:** Offices should provide access to the full range of information, services, and resources that are commonly requested offline. When applicable, committee and leadership offices can also provide them to citizens online.
- **Member Information:** While it shouldn’t be the primary focus of the site, every congressional Web site should include a section that contains information about the Member’s (or Leader’s or committee’s) priorities, interests, accomplishments, experience, and expertise.

There is a nearly unlimited amount of potential content that you could host on your site. Use the needs of your defined audience and the information and services provided by your physical office to determine what to put on your Web site.

CONTENT DO

- Focus on legislative information first:** Offices should focus on the business of Congress before branching out to other information. The award-winning sites all address their role in Congress in some form, ranging from linking to a list of bills they sponsored and cosponsored, to highlighting key issues on which they are active, to providing sections dedicated to their accomplishments in office. **Rep. Carolyn Maloney's** site is an excellent example of how to do all three at once.
- Create an information service:** **Rep. John Carter's** site is a virtual office where constituents can initiate basic service requests for flags and tours as well as find the necessary documents to begin other more complicated processes, including internships and academy nominations. These services, combined with issues sections that contain links to relevant agencies and press releases that are searchable by issue, assure that the Congressman's Web site is foremost a resource for constituents, advocacy groups, and reporters to consult when they need specific information.
- Respond to commonly asked questions online:** The FAQ section on **Sen. Patty Murray's** Web site serves two functions. First, it makes her site more accessible for users by orienting them to the site, and secondly, it cuts down on the demand for personal communication with the office by allowing constituents to find the answers they need.
- Include information on a variety of issues:** Constituents have a wide range of interests and priorities. Citizens' concerns about issues important to them should be addressed on congressional Web sites. The best sites provide information on district or state issues, national issues, issues on which the Member is active, and some even include current "hot topic" issues that appear in the headlines at a given time.



COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS

Reports and publications produced by the committee were not offered on 29.7% of committee Web sites. Only 46.9% offered a list of bills referred to the committee.

Rep. Maloney

9/11 Recovery
 Introduction | Press Releases | Legislation | Documents | Links
 The September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center continue to have serious and lasting impacts on New York and its residents. From long-term health problems, to extensive job loss, to extreme difficulty making mortgage and rental payments or keeping a small business going, thousands of New Yorkers continue to deal first hand with the aftermath of the disaster.
 Read More...
 Press Releases
 01/09/07 - Authors of Civil Liberties Board Bill Hal Civil Liberties Board Provisions in H.R. 1
 01/09/07 - The First 100 Hours: Stronger National Security
 12/18/06 - Senator Clinton, Reps. Maloney and Fossella Host Bush Administration's 9/11 Health Task Force, Urge President to Include Treatment \$ in Budget

Rep. Carter

I am in Congress to serve you, my constituents. As part of my service to you, I want to make sure you have plenty of information regarding federal agencies, grants and services myself and my staff can offer you.

Federal Agencies
 My district offices offer several services, but probably the most requested is help with federal agencies. We are here to help you with any problems you may have with federal agencies or to simply just listen to your concerns. Please feel free to give us a call and let us know what we can do to help you.
 Federal Agency:

Grants
 Everyday my district offices get requests about information on grants. There are various types of federal grants available each year. The Catalog of Federal Assistance is a comprehensive list of all the grants and loans available. I hope you will find this link and the following, useful in your grant search and application process.
 Grant Link:

Flag Request
 My Washington, D.C. office offers a unique service that gives you the chance to order a flag that has been flown over the United States Capitol. You can order a flag for yourself, or request that it be flown in someone's honor or to mark a certain occasion. It takes time to process the request, so please keep that in mind when making your request. To order a flag, simply fill out the form and send it with a check to our found back office. If it is an urgent and/or time sensitive, please mail the form and check to our district office.
 All orders must be accompanied by a check, or money order or they will not be processed.

Sen. Murray

Frequently Asked Questions

- Help with a Federal Agency
- Senator Murray's Work
- Services
- Visiting D.C.
- Weekly Coffee
- Order a U.S. Flag
- Grants
- Legislation Guide

Contacting Senator Murray

Q. How do I contact Senator Murray?

A. To Comment on Legislation contact our Washington, D.C. office:
 U.S. Senator Patty Murray
 173 Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, D.C. 20510
 Phone: (202) 224-2621
 Fax: (202) 224-0230
 E-mail: [Click here to E-Mail Senator Murray](#)
Note: If you would like a response, please include your name and full street mailing address in your message.
****Postal Mail subject to 1-2 week security delays****

Q. How Long is Postal Mail Delayed?

A: After several letters containing Anthrax were received in the Senate in 2002, new mail security procedures were implemented. These procedures add 1-2 weeks to the amount of time it takes for your letter to reach our Washington, D.C. office. Letters are first sent to a remote screening facility and irradiated.
Q. Will the security irradiation damage the items I send?

DO

DO

DO



VOTING RECORDS AND RATIONALES

Voting records were not offered on 61.3% of Member sites and 40.3% of them did not offer information on why they voted the way that they did on key votes.

- **Provide access to neutral sources of information:** You increase the value of your site and improve your credibility if you provide access to resources that will help visitors find answers to questions that your site does not address. Supporting information allows visitors to explore issues in greater depth, which will make them more likely to view you positively, even if they do not share your opinions and conclusions. It is important to remember, however, that House and Senate rules prohibit congressional Web sites from linking to for-profit sites.
- **Demonstrate accountability and accessibility:** Congressional Web sites can demonstrate accountability by providing voting records, rationales for key votes, and schedules—and they can do so without overburdening their staffs. Constituents are probably not interested in knowing about every meeting that takes place or every vote taken. Stick to the most relevant and current information: meetings with constituents, public Member appearances in the district or state, committee hearings, and the House and Senate floor schedule.
- **Explain what you do:** The *House Committee on the Budget (Minority)* provides an overview of the budget process, a glossary of budget terms, and FAQs about the budget. It is important to be as user-friendly as possible. That means explaining what you do in terms that those off the Hill can understand, and not just in the kids' section.
- **Give reporters what they need, not what you want them to have:** Reporters use your site to research their stories, so provide the information they're looking for in an easy and accessible way. Most of our award-winning sites keep their press releases up-to-date and organized chronologically and by topic as well. Reporters also look for statements from the Member, Chair, or Leader; Members' rationales for their votes on key legislation; summaries of important national issues; and descriptions of Members' accomplishments in Congress.
- **Provide timely and relevant information for congressional staff:** Congressional staff are an important audience for congressional Web sites, especially for committee and leadership sites. Determine what information and services congressional staff—including those from state or district offices—will need and then decide whether they are better offered on a public Web site or on an internal intranet.

House Committee on the Budget (Minority)

DO

DO

DO

House Budget Committee Democrats
U.S. Rep. John Spratt ■ Ranking Democratic Member

Budget Facts

[Frequently Asked Questions About the Federal Budget](#) – click here for answers to the most common questions about the federal budget.

[Charts and Graphics](#) – click here for charts and graphics about the federal budget.

[Historical Tables](#) – click here for links to historical tables on federal spending and revenues.

CONTENT DON'T

- **Don't feel obligated to create original content for every page:** Writing all of your text from scratch wastes valuable staff time and resources. Instead, use materials already available or produced by your office and adapt them for the Web. You can use documents such as briefing materials, press releases, talking points, and constituent correspondence. The chances are that you have the information you need at your fingertips, though it may require minor modifications in format and context.
- **Don't write for the Hill instead of your audience:** Congressional jargon and the legislative process can be difficult for most people off the Hill to understand. Focus on making the information on your site understandable, rather than impressive and official-sounding.
- **Don't promise online assistance with constituent services without providing substantive content:** Having a constituent services section that merely directs users to "please contact the office" does not meet the needs or wishes of your online audience. Constituents seek help online because that is their preferred medium. Servicing them online can better meet their needs and lessen the demands on office staff.
- **Don't provide unnecessary information and features:** Visitors come to your Web site for legislative information and services, not to be entertained with games, movies, local news and weather, or demonstrations of cutting-edge technologies. The best sites are those that focus on providing the information visitors came to find.
- **Don't use self-promotional language and graphics:** A congressional Web site is very different from a newsletter or TV appearance. It is not a broadcast medium, and people do not see it passively. The only reason people make the active effort to come to your Web site is to find information that *they* want. The less your Web site seems like a campaign site—and the more it is an information resource—the more successful it will be.

PRESS RELEASES

96.8% of House Member Web sites and all of the Senate Member Web sites have press releases that are—at the very least—arranged chronologically.



The Third Building Block: **USABILITY**

After you have determined your audience and chosen the content that meets their needs and interests, you then need to ensure that it is in a form your visitors can use. Visitors to your site will undoubtedly vary in their familiarity with your office and the Internet in general. Keeping that in mind will enhance their experience and perception of your office.

The elements of usability that are especially important for congressional Web sites include:

- **Ease of Navigation:** Visitors should be able to move quickly and smoothly through the site using the navigation tools, menu options, and links provided.
- **Readability:** Sites should be simple for visitors to read. Factors that impact readability include: the font size and style; the contrast of font and background colors; the absence of distracting animations and moving text; and the length and structure of sentences and paragraphs.
- **Scannability:** The degree to which text can be scanned, rather than read in its entirety, greatly influences a site's usability.
- **Timeliness:** Your site should be up-to-date and all information on it should reflect the latest developments in Congress.
- **Accessibility:** Congressional Web sites should be accessible to all visitors, even those with disabilities. Follow the standards for accessible Web sites found on the Federal Access Board's Web site at www.access-board.gov/sec508/standards.htm. The Web Accessibility Initiative guidelines at www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html are another tool for guidance.
- **Consistency:** Consistent layouts, designs, formats, menu bars, and navigation throughout the Web site ensure that visitors can quickly and easily navigate the site without having to figure out something new on every page.
- **Information Architecture:** Organize your information in a way that is logical to your audiences by using language, topics, and information groupings that make sense to them.
- **Look and Feel:** Careful attention to layout, graphic design, and color will ensure the site is user-friendly and also produces a pleasing, inviting, and eye-catching design.

Usability is a critical factor for any Web site, but it is particularly important for a public or government Web site. Government Web sites, including those of Members of Congress, should be easy for all Americans to use. The audiences of a public Web site have a wide range of technical knowledge and ability and will access the site with a variety of hardware, software, bandwidth, and access devices. For these reasons, public Web sites must be designed with the lowest common denominator in mind.

USABILITY DO

- **Write and revise documents for the Web:** People read Web sites differently than print. Documents written for the Web should be short and easily scanned, with embedded links and summaries that link to more extensive information. **Rep. Virginia Foxx's** Web site seamlessly incorporates everything from issue statements to press releases into her site. Her press releases contain short summaries of the given topic, then links to the full release.
- **Keep your format and navigation consistent on every page of your site:** Don't force your audience to learn new formatting and navigational rules on every page of your site. Each page should follow the same pattern. **Sen. John Cornyn's** Web site is a model of clearly and consistently organized information. The menu headers and options are clear, and they stay the same throughout the site.
- **Organize by issue type in addition to content type:** **Rep. Jim Langevin's** Web site allows users seeking information about an issue to view press releases, speeches, and CRS reports on the subject. When users are interested in a topic, they want everything related to it, without having to start a new search in every section of the site. Even simply linking to related sections of your Web site and cross-referencing your content can go a long way toward making your site usable.
- **Include helpful navigational tools, such as a search engine and site map:** While they are common practice off the Hill, only 50.2% of House sites and 69.0% of Senate sites have functional search engines. Search features and site maps—indexes to a Web site—allow visitors to find information quickly and easily. These seemingly small and trivial tools make a significant difference in the site's usefulness for constituents looking for specific information.
- **Make your site accessible to everyone:** Congressional Web sites need to be accessible to those with disabilities. Guidelines for accessibility standards can be found at www.access-board.gov and www.w3.org.



GUIDANCE ON CASEWORK INITIATION

Almost half (49.1%) of all Member Web sites do not clearly explain how or why constituents should contact the office regarding a problem that they have with a federal agency.

Rep. Foxx

Press Releases

- **FOXX VOTES TO STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE, BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY**
05/19/06 WASHINGTON—United States Rep. Virginia Foxx (R.C.-5) voted today to help our soldiers and veterans receive the health care and benefits they deserve. The House of Representatives approved the Military Quality of Life and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for FY 2007 by a vote of 395 to 0.
- **FOXX BILL PASSES SENATE, WILL GO TO PRESIDENT FOR SIGNATURE**
05/19/06 WASHINGTON—The United States Senate has passed H.R. 1499, the Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities (HEROES) Act. The bill, introduced by U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx (R.C.-5), will amend the IRS Code of 1986 to allow members of the Armed Forces earning hazard pay to make Individual Retirement Account contributions. Earlier this month, the House passed an improved version of the bill (H. Res. 923), also authored by Foxx, to allow combat pay earned in 2004 and 2005 to also be eligible for IRA contributions.
- **FOXX VOTES FOR RESPONSIBLE BUDGET**
05/18/06 WASHINGTON—Early this morning, United States Rep. Virginia Foxx (R.C.-5) voted for the FY 2007 House Budget Resolution. This plan strengthens our nation's most critical programs, reforms the federal government and saves tax dollars wisely.

Sen. Cornyn

John Cornyn
UNITED STATES SENATOR, TEXAS

Home | Contact Me | Site Map | Privacy | Español

Monday, May 29, 2006

Cornyn Statement On Senate Immigration Bill Passage

WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, chairman of the Immigration and Border Security subcommittee, made the following statement Thursday after the Senate passed the immigration bill, S. 2611, by a vote of 62-36. Sen. Cornyn voted ...

The Cornyn Report

Stay informed about Senator Cornyn's daily efforts to work for Texans. Sign up for his monthly e-mail newsletter.

Latest Edition: May 2006 | Report Archive | Subscribe

Government to Stop Collecting Long-Distance Telephone Tax

The Internal Revenue Service today announced that it will stop collecting the federal excise tax on long-distance telephone service.

Taxpayers will be eligible to file for refunds of all excise tax they have paid on long-distance service billed to them after

Rep. Langevin

Related materials

Press releases:

- [Langevin Floor Statement on Campaign Finance Reform Legislation](#)

Speeches:

- [Statement on Campaign Finance Reform](#)

CRS Reports:

- [What is a CRS report?](#)
- [Campaign Financing: Highlights and Chronology of Current Federal Law](#)
- [Issues Before the U.S. Supreme Court in *McConnell v. FEC*](#)

DO

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DO



BASIC NAVIGATION TOOLS

Only 17.8% of Member sites and 28.1% of committee sites had a site map. 46.3% of Member sites and 28.1% of committee sites did not have a functional search engine.

USABILITY DON'T

- **Don't clutter the screen:** Visitors become frustrated by distractions and delays in their searches. Don't overwhelm users by posting everything on the home page. Provide the most important and most requested information first.
- **Don't fail to keep your information fresh and updated:** Outdated information is not only frustrating for visitors, it can also be misleading. Citizens may not realize that the information they are relying on is no longer relevant. Additionally, if users see that the most recent information available on the site is 10 months old, then both the Member and the site will lose credibility.
- **Don't create graphic-intensive, slow loading Web sites:** Bear in mind that, despite the growing availability of broadband connections, the majority of wired households in America still do not have a high speed connection. Stay away from auto-loading audio or video content—like a welcome video—on your home page. Allow users to choose if they want to take advantage of features that require a faster connection. Try to steer clear of high-resolution graphics and slow loading applications, such as Java pop-up menus, ActiveX features, and Flash videos.
- **Don't use elaborate graphics and hard-to-read text:** Movement on a Web page can be very distracting, and it can greatly increase the amount of time it takes to download a site. If you do include features such as scrolling text or moving graphics, test your site with people unfamiliar with the Hill and see how they react to them. Additionally, using text that is too small, or a combination of several fonts, makes the site difficult to read. Just as important as the text itself is the background behind it. Backgrounds that are too busy or don't contrast enough with the color of the text can make a Web site unreadable. If visitors can't see what you have to offer, your site is useless to them.
- **Don't jam content, graphics, and links into every page of your site:** Web users don't want to have to scroll down long lists and long pages. Just as a newspaper puts the biggest news "above the fold," you should have the most important information in each section "above the scroll." Having to keep scrolling to find information can be difficult and frustrating to users. At least two-thirds of every page on your site should contain useful information. For long Web pages, ask yourself if it's really necessary to include it all, and if it is, think about breaking the information up into separate, linked pages.
- **Don't put information where you want it, rather than where users would expect it:** Content is only helpful—and could only be evaluated—if it can be readily found. If you aren't sure about where users might look for something, err on the side of caution and link to it in multiple sections. For example, a link to internship information could be placed in both a constituent services section and a student section. Use 'breadcrumbs' and cross-reference information so users don't get lost, and do not allow any feature to be accessible only from the home page.

The Fourth Building Block: **INTERACTIVITY**

Internet users are more likely than non-Internet users to contact the government.¹⁶ They also increasingly expect communication to take place online. Many constituents feel that communication with their Members is too infrequent—that Members only communicate with them when an election is near. Constituents want to be engaged in the process and they want to stay informed about issues that matter to them. They want to be able to register their opinions and to have their opinions acknowledged and considered. To this end, congressional Web sites can play a particularly important role in fostering interaction with constituents and other audiences by keeping them informed and building strong online relationships with visitors.



Congressional offices can foster interactivity in many ways:

- Web forms
- Polls
- Surveys
- E-newsletters
- Blogs
- Podcasts
- Online town halls

Online interactivity does not have to be complicated, time consuming, or even high-tech. You can encourage interactivity simply by making visitors to your site aware of the best way to register their opinions and get more information. This can mean anything from providing a link to “Write Your Representative” to an FAQ on the best person or agency to contact with a given concern or comment.

SPONSORSHIPS AND CO-SPONSORSHIPS

32.0% of all Member sites did not have links to sponsored or co-sponsored legislation. Of the ones that did, 13.7% were not for the most current Congress even though they were a year and a half into the two-year session.

¹⁶[How Americans Get in Touch With Government](#)



E-MAIL UPDATES

Surprisingly, 71.8% of Member offices offered an e-mail update of some kind, compared to 40.6% of committee Web sites.

INTERACTIVITY DO

- Provide contact information:** Every congressional Web site should prominently display basic contact information, including telephone and fax numbers, the office's physical addresses, office hours, and their e-mail address or a link to their contact form. The emerging standard is to have this information on the bottom of every Web page. The more detailed and helpful the contact information, the better. Surprisingly, only 5.0% of Senate Member sites and 11.4% of House Member sites list their office hours.
- Post clear e-mail and correspondence policies:** *Rep. John Larson's* site explains why he doesn't use a public e-mail address and how "Write Your Representative" works. He also has a separate Web form for constituents' scheduling requests. *Sen. Jeff Bingaman's* site goes the extra mile, with a contact section that offers four different ways of contacting him: e-mail, postal mail, phone, or walk-in. His site also indicates which method is most effective for each type of request.
- Create an online forum that directly responds to constituents' concerns:** This could take many forms, from FAQs to examples of casework the office has handled, to upcoming or archived online town halls. These efforts give constituents a sense of what your office can do for them and reassures them that your Web site is an extension of your office and can effectively help them with their concerns.
- Provide valuable and regular communication:** Opt-in e-mail updates are an easy way for citizens to stay informed about their Member's work and about legislative activity on issues that interest them. It can also be beneficial for your office, as it may cut down on the overall volume of mail and help build or start an online outreach effort. This practice is becoming more widespread on congressional Web sites—74.7% of House offices and 59.0% of Senate offices offer e-mail updates. Maintaining the communication by making sure updates go out regularly is just as important as offering them in the first place. When done right, proactive updates foster good relationships with constituents and other interested parties.

Rep. Larson

Sen. Bingaman

Sen. Kennedy

DO

DO

DO

The Office of Web Assistance in the House of Representatives designed the Write Your Rep email system to improve communications between constituents and their representatives.

- Allows constituents to find their Member of Congress simply by filling in their Zip Code.
- Directs the message to the appropriate representative, allowing each Member of Congress to serve his or her own constituents.
- Reduces the heavy burden placed on the House mail servers by the high volume of emails sent to Congressional offices every day. (Nearly 117 million emails in 2001)

However, I also understand that there are limitations to the current system. I know that this may be inconvenient at the moment, but as you know this is a new and evolving technology which our technicians are constantly working to improve. Until then, I appreciate your patience and understanding as we work to develop this new technology.

I want my website to be a "virtual office" that constituents can use 24/7 to find up-to-date information about important issues and the services my office provides more quickly and conveniently. Click around on:

- Issues to find out where I stand
- Common Questions & Answers if you need help with a Federal agency
- Services to learn what my office can do for you

Email Me

Couldn't find your answer here?

Write to me by using the Write Your Rep service

CONTACT ME

I make every effort to keep New Mexicans informed of my work on their behalf in the U.S. Senate. In turn, I'm interested in hearing from you if you have concerns about legislative matters before the Congress or if you need my assistance working with the federal government.

Listed here are the most common topics of communications I receive, along with the methods by which you can get your message to me. While you should choose the method that is most convenient for you, I've placed an asterisk (*) beside those that are usually the most efficient for that topic. [MORE]

HIV / AIDS

HIV / AIDS



The spread of AIDS is the greatest global health threat of our times. It's a terrible disease that destroys lives, denies hope to individuals and families, and threatens the well-being of entire countries.

Research Respond

Your Feedback

- I Agree with Senator Kennedy's stance on this issue.
- I Disagree with Senator Kennedy's stance on this issue.

Name:

e-mail:

- **Take advantage of standard Web features, such as feedback and comment forms:** Interactivity need not be flashy or complicated. Simply using Web forms to customize your casework section, receive feedback about issues or services, or even comments on the Web site setup itself can both streamline your online communication and better serve the users of your Web site. *Sen. Edward Kennedy's* site takes interactivity to a new level. Each and every issue discussed on the site has a form which allows users to respond to the Senator's position with their own views or comments.
- **Let constituents' voices be heard through online surveys and polls:** Online surveys and polls offer quick and easy ways for constituents to register their opinions. Constituents not only feel engaged by the Member's office, but the inclusion of survey questions can cut down on the amount of mail an office receives because constituents understand that their views have been registered. Of course, the more timely the survey questions, the more effective the tool.
- **Foster trust in your Web site by protecting citizens' privacy:** Privacy statements should be included on every Web site, but currently only 55.4% of congressional offices provide them. They should be written in user-friendly language that is designed to put visitors at ease about the information the site is collecting. If a Web site requires the user's name and address before they can correspond with the office, the privacy statement should explain why the information is being collected and what will happen to it later. It is especially important to describe the steps that the office will take to safeguard any personal information it obtains.

INTERACTIVITY DON'T

- **Don't neglect your end of the interactivity equation:** Online communication is a dynamic endeavor. It is not enough to decide to update your Web site and institute changes that foster interactivity. You must follow through when users take advantage of them. Incoming communication needs to be integrated into your office and handled appropriately. The online world is fast-paced and users will expect a timely response, even if it's a simple acknowledgement of receipt and details about when a reply will be forthcoming.
- **Don't cut off communication when Congress is in recess:** Most citizens do not understand, or are not familiar with, the intricacies of the congressional schedule. In our research with constituents, they assumed that their elected officials were golfing or on vacation when Congress is in recess. While there isn't much legislative activity to report during recesses, you can correct this misperception by posting a schedule of town hall meetings, reorganizing your home page content, or providing a preview of what the Member, committee, Leader, or Congress will be doing after the break. Every August we see scores of congressional Web sites that haven't been updated since mid-July. Don't let yours be one of them.
- **Don't fail to follow through on e-mail newsletters:** Establish a policy concerning your e-mail updates *before* visitors sign-up, and stick to it. Create clear expectations regarding what information citizens will receive and when they will receive it. A weekly legislative update or a monthly e-mail update on health care should be exactly that. An agreed-upon policy will also establish clear guidelines for office staff responsible for the newsletter's content and distribution.



COMMITTEE INTERACTION

A small number (7.8%) of committee Web sites offered guidance on how to submit or give testimony, and fewer (4.7%) gave direction on attending hearings.



The Fifth Building Block: **INNOVATION**

Innovations are the icing on the cake. They can help make a congressional Web site more interesting, easier to use, or more valuable to constituents. They don't have to be the newest, cutting-edge technological offering or a wholly unique creation. Rather, they should enhance a user's experience with a congressional Web site. Some examples of features that aren't necessarily the flashiest but nonetheless add value to congressional Web sites include:

- Step-by-step help with casework and other constituent services;
- Database-driven Member schedules;
- A case study of how an actual piece of authored legislation became a law;
- Information segmented by region, county, audience, etc.;
- Media kits with printer-friendly press releases and downloadable photos; and
- Highlights of constituent achievements and local events.

The purpose of innovations is to take advantage of the unique opportunities the Internet allows for Members, committees, and leadership offices to engage with the audiences of the site. They should complement—not detract from—other features on the site.

HEARINGS

*29.7% of committee Web sites did not offer a schedule of hearings.
Only 28.1% included hearing transcripts, while 17.2% provided audio
Webcasts and 40.6% supplied video Webcasts.*

INNOVATION DO

- **Offer features that make your site easier to use:** *Rep. Shelley Berkley's* site uses a clearly organized site map and search feature that is seamlessly integrated with the rest of the site. Her site also employs the practice of posting the date the content was updated.
- **Provide features that improve communication:** *Sen. Carl Levin's* Web site provides excellent constituent services by streamlining and simplifying the process. His section on contacting the office has an innovative design that gives constituents the ability to initiate requests for all the services a congressional office provides—from flag requests to comments on the Web site itself—all in one easy-to-use, customized Web form.
- **Advance your mission through innovations:** Special sections and features can set you apart and personalize your Web site. *Rep. John Mica's* site does this in his biography section, which highlights his accomplishments and areas of interest. Special features can also be used to highlight district or state-specific issues or campaign promises that are being fulfilled. Innovations can, and should, distinguish the Member's mission and reflect office priorities and concerns.
- **Take advantage of innovations already available to your office:** You can use automated press archive features available from the House and Senate, or a feature from the Library of Congress that enables visitors to search for information on federal grants from your Web site.
- **Employ features that empower citizens and encourage participation in government:** *Rep. Richard Baker's* Web site has a special section called “Effective Advocacy” that describes the steps citizens should take to have their voices heard in Congress. Not only does this help both his office and his constituents have more fruitful interactions, it signals to constituents that his site and office are open and sensitive to citizens' needs.
- **Create features that improve service to citizens:** Fulfilling constituent service requests can be repetitive and time-consuming. Our award winners have incorporated innovative features on their Web sites that reduce their own workload and save citizens time by providing self-service information resources.

Rep. Berkley



Sen. Levin



DO

DO

DO



MULTIMEDIA CONTENT

Only 39.4% and
26.0% of Member sites
posted video and audio
clips, respectively.

INNOVATION DON'T

- **Don't provide "entertainment" features solely designed to impress visitors:** "Splash" pages, large photos, music, and introductory "movies" are very frustrating to visitors and serve no discernible educational or communications purpose. They also tend to discourage visitors from continuing to use the site and may discourage some users from ever returning. If you choose to offer these features on your site, don't force them on visitors. Allow users to opt-in to them if they wish.
- **Don't fail to consider the effects of innovative features on the overall usability of your site:** When used correctly, drop-down menus can reduce the space or text needed to convey certain information. Keep in mind, however, that such features can be difficult for novices and users with disabilities.
- **Don't provide features with a lot of movement:** Flashing or moving graphics and scrolling text are very distracting to people who are trying to read the text on your Web pages because their eyes are automatically drawn to the movement. Think of these features as a children's song: it's cute the first time you hear it, but after that it becomes an annoyance.
- **Don't use "pop-ups":** Pop-up windows are distracting and frustrating for visitors of any site and are strongly associated with spam and unwanted advertisements. In addition, Internet users often have browsers that prevent them from being displayed anyway. Stick to providing all your information within your Web page.

In conclusion, all of the building blocks really do build on each other. The most successful Web sites identify their audiences and sculpt the content of their site to meet the needs of their audiences and the goals of the office. They choose and present the content in a way that their audiences can easily understand and use, as well as in a way that fosters interactivity. They also utilize innovations that complement their goals and enhance the value of the site for their audiences.

Rep. Mica

DO

DO

DO

Congressman John L. Mica Seventh Congressional District of Florida

Official Biography

[Printable Version](#)


U.S. Representative John L. Mica is currently serving his seventh term in the 109th Congress representing Florida's 7th Congressional District, which stretches across six counties from the suburban areas north of Orlando to the Jacksonville city limits. Major cities in the district include Winter Park, Altamonte Springs, Lake Mary, Deltona, DeLand, Daytona Beach, Palm Coast, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra Beach, and Palatka.

Rep. Mica serves on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the Government Reform Committee and the House Administration Committee.

In 2001, Rep. Mica was named Chairman of the Aviation Subcommittee. A panel under the jurisdiction of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the subcommittee has oversight of all matters regarding civil aviation including airport improvement, aviation safety and security, and other related issues. Major federal agencies overseen by the Aviation Subcommittee include the Federal Aviation Administration, the Transportation Security Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board. After 9/11, Mica authored the Aviation Security Act, which created the new Transportation Security Administration to focus on protecting aviation -- as well as all modes of transportation -- from terrorist attacks.

Rep. Mica has been recognized as a national and Florida leader in transportation issues. He has spearheaded legislative efforts to improve our nation's infrastructure and to expedite Florida's highway and interstate expansion. Mica has also led efforts to develop local and state transportation alternatives.

Rep. Baker



Congressman
Richard Baker / 4th District of Louisiana

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Effective Advocacy

We want to be sure that we answer your questions, address your concerns and, if we have to disagree on an issue, explain why as quickly and clearly as possible. Find some tips for communicating with our office to ensure that your communication is handled appropriately and receives the attention it deserves.

Communicating with any elected official really boils down to four simple steps: Knowing what you want; Knowing who to ask; Knowing how to ask; and Knowing how to follow-up. Following is a quick overview of each of these steps, with links to provide more information.

Knowing What to Ask

This section explains why it is important to ask for something specific and how to find out more about legislative initiatives in the U.S. Congress [KNOWING WHAT TO ASK]

Knowing Who to Ask

Under our representative system of government, it is always most effective to work with the elected officials that represent you. That's why Congressman Baker's office

**E-mail Newsletter
Signup**

- WHAT'S NEW
- PHOTO GALLERY
- NEWSROOM
- LEGISLATIVE ISSUES
- VOTING RECORD
- EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY
- CONSTITUENT SERVICES
- TOUR REQUEST
- FRAG REQUEST
- BIOGRAPHY
- DISTRICT INFORMATION
- INTERNSHIPS
- JUST FOR KIDS
- LAUNCH TOOLS
- GRANT INFORMATION
- STUDENT CENTER
- CONTACT REP BAKER

T O B L O G , O R N O T T O B L O G ?

Before any Member launches their own blog, they should carefully consider the costs and benefits. Below are a list of questions an office needs to answer before entering the blogosphere. Of course, be sure to follow all House and Senate rules regarding content and hosting restrictions.

Can we dedicate the resources that would be necessary to launch—and sustain—a blog? The most precious resource in most congressional offices is time—especially the Member’s time. A blog requires constant attention and staff resources—in most cases taking the staffer away from other projects or duties. To be a truly effective blogger requires a time commitment to regularly—even daily—update and post new content to the blog. It will also take staff time to read through and publish reader comments and to respond when necessary. Be sure you are ready to make the commitment; too many Members have launched blogs that fall by the wayside because of insufficient resources.

Are we willing to allow constituents and other members of the public to post comments to the blog? A vast majority of the mainstream blogs allow the moderator or other user to start a “thread” to which viewers can comment. Will the office allow comments—the good and the bad, the complimentary and the not so complimentary? Good management policies will need to put in place and enforced by the Member’s staff to make sure the medium is not abused or too one-sided.

Does the Member have something to say that isn’t being said somewhere else? While blogs are becoming more and more prevalent every day, not every Member should have a blog. People read blogs because they provide information that they do not get from traditional media sources. If the Member is worried about alienating people and not willing to speak “off script,” the blog is probably not a good idea. Blogs are expected to provide unfiltered and informal communication and personal perspective. In a world of scripted speeches and carefully thought-out talking points, this is a valid concern for Members and staff. Also, it is critical that a blog be more than a different way to list press releases, otherwise blog enthusiasts—your intended audience—will be the first to notice and the last to return.

If we aren’t ready for our own blog, what about guest blogging, or special event blogging? Many Members have been successful players in the world of blogs by chiming in, or guest blogging, on other mainstream blogs. Another alternative is for the Member to publish a blog or trip diary during a significant event, like a CODEL to Iraq, that chronicles the Member’s impressions of what they encounter. These blogs are a good way for Members to enter into the blogosphere without overwhelming staff and running out of interesting and relevant things to say.



CHAPTER 7

Managing a Successful Web Site

Almost all of this year's award-winning offices have integrated their Web sites into everything they do—both on and offline. They have created management processes, technical infrastructures, policies, and priorities that support the Web site on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is comprehensive, up-to-date, interesting, and targeted to the needs of their various constituencies. This enables the staff to keep a steady, but manageable, stream of information and ideas flowing to the Web site from everyone in the office—from the Member or Chair on down to the Staff Assistant. Conversely, we found that the less effective Web sites are often the result of failures on the parts of many offices to plan, manage, and execute their Web sites effectively.

Designing, developing, and deploying a new congressional Web site can seem overwhelming for someone who has never undertaken such a task before. In this report, we have identified the key factors that contribute to a successful Web site. While issue content, a usable Web interface, and the timely posting of information all contribute to a high-quality site, all of those things can be undermined without the good management practices listed below:

Get Buy-In From the Top

A Web site cannot be truly successful unless it has the support of management. There needs to be someone with authority committed to ensuring that the site is integrated into the work of the office and who is also committed to keeping the Web site informative and up-to-date. This person must ensure that the office sets aside time and resources to get the work done, solicits participation from the entire staff, and provides incentives for contributing to the site—and disincentives for non-contribution. Otherwise, when faced with all of the other priorities and responsibilities in the office, the Web site will languish.

In most of this year's award-winning offices, the Web site has the active interest and participation of the Chief of Staff or Staff Director and other top-level managers. Many even have the interest and support of the Senator, Representative, Chair, Ranking Member, or Leader. As a result, these offices get their Web work done, and done well.



“Most award-winning sites have the active interest and support of the Member, Chief of Staff, or Staff Director.”

Make the Web Site a Priority

Many congressional offices, even some of those with management buy-in, view their Web sites as something nice to do when there is time, rather than as something integral to everything they do. Instead of adjusting their other responsibilities to accommodate the responsibilities associated with effectively maintaining their Web sites, these offices continue doing things the way they’ve always done them. As a result, they are failing to take advantage of the communications and productivity benefits that effective Web sites can offer.

The offices with the best sites, on the other hand, have realized that the Web site is an extension of everything they do. It has the potential to reach and serve even greater numbers of constituents—at less cost—than any other tool in their repertoire.

Choose the Right Administration Option

Congressional offices have three separate—but not mutually exclusive—options when it comes to the development and deployment of a new Web site. As with everything, there are advantages and disadvantages to each.

The first option for offices is to hire a staffer with significant Web and technical knowledge who can build the site from the ground up and internally manage the content and future direction of the site. While it can be beneficial to have an expert on staff, problems may arise if that staffer leaves the office. Secondly, offices can contract with a House or Senate approved vendor to build their sites, which usually includes the development of a content management system. This option, of course, means the office may spend more money out of an already limited budget on the development and maintenance of the site. The upside is that the tools and support they provide can assist with quick publishing and eliminate the need for a dedicated tech-savvy staffer. Finally, offices can use the internal resources available through the CAO Web Systems group in the House or the party leadership in the Senate for the planning and administration of their Web sites. While these services are free, requests for support are handled on a first-come, first-served basis and your options are limited by the organization's resources.

Some offices are using a combination of these options by having their sites designed and built by a vendor or the internal House or Senate technology services, but then altering the sites as needed through the Webmaster’s internal knowledge of Web publishing. Whatever option—or combination of options—that you choose, make sure that it will best meet the online goals of the office.

Formulate a Strategic Plan

Most congressional offices leave the planning of their Web sites to the “techies” who will be creating them—usually a Systems Administrator, House or Senate support staffer, or vendor. These individuals may see the Web site as a technical undertaking, and not as the strategic opportunity that it is. As a result, many offices are supporting generic Web sites that fail to convey the goals, responsibilities, and priorities of the Member, Chair, Ranking Member, or Leader and fail to meet the needs of their audiences.

The offices with the best Web sites approach their sites just as they approach any other important initiative: strategically. They bring the right people together, devote time and thought to what it is they are trying to achieve, and devise a clear and comprehensive plan for their site. Then, they make sure the site is designed and executed according to their specifications. As a result, they are able to build sites that complement their goals and meet the information and service needs of their specific audiences.

Allocate the Necessary Resources

The financial and staff resources in congressional offices have not seen increases commensurate with the increased demands of the 21st Century. Most offices are overwhelmed because they see themselves as responsible for doing everything they were doing before the Internet went mainstream—in addition to implementing new communications tools such as Web sites, blogs, and e-newsletters. As a result, their Web sites suffer from a lack of resources, which are viewed as permanently dedicated to other purposes.

The offices with the best Web sites, on the other hand, have shifted resources away from other tasks, such as printing and mass mailing, and allocated them to the development of their Web sites. They have also made an effort to shift both the office and constituents toward electronic communications. Many of the offices have realized great returns as a result of this shift of resources, including: reduced postage and printing costs, fewer phone inquiries, more productive use of staff time, and positive feedback from constituents and stakeholders.

Create a Team-Oriented Approach Toward Web Site Development and Maintenance

When the Internet was still a novelty and constituents preferred to contact a congressional office via phone or postal mail, it was fine for the Web site to be managed by one low-level staffer who squeezed it in between answering the phone and writing mail. Now that the Internet has become commonplace, Internet users are more comfortable communicating online—and even prefer online contact to telephone or postal communications. While it is important that there is one staff person in the office who is primarily responsible for the development and coordination of the site, it is increasingly important that the entire staff be incorporated into the planning and development of the site.

With few exceptions, the offices with the best Web sites have realized that no one person—especially not a junior-level staffer—can produce the content and conduct the strategic, big picture thinking necessary to have a truly effective Web site. In those exceptional cases, the one staffer responsible for the Web site has authority to create and manage content for the site, access to all of the information in the office, and strong relationships with everyone on the staff, which they draw upon to manage the Web site effectively. In most offices, everyone will need to integrate the Web site into their day-to-day thinking, and management will need to create a team-oriented approach through which all staff understands the importance of the Web site to the success of the office.



“Everyone on staff will need to integrate the Web site into their day-to-day thinking.”

Meet the Needs of Constituents on Their Terms

Many congressional offices use their Web site to “advertise” the information and services they can provide, without actually providing them online. The most common argument for this practice is that the office would prefer staff interact with constituents and provide a personal touch, rather than depend on the impersonal nature of the Web. For this reason, many offices describe the general information and services they offer and provide a phone number or address for constituents to learn more. This is counterintuitive to Internet users, who specifically turn to a Web site as an alternative to calling, writing, or going in-person to the office. If they wanted to call, write, or stop by, they would have done so.

The offices with the best Web sites have realized this, and they are providing information and services that enable their audiences to serve themselves. Not only does this reduce staff and visitors’ time and effort, it also enhances the image of the Member, Chair, Ranking Member, or Leader. Visitors who find what they are looking for online give as much credit to the office as do visitors who get what they need offline. A satisfied customer is a satisfied customer, whether or not there is any human interaction.

In sum, the winners of this year’s Gold, Silver, and Bronze Mouse Awards excel in the technical and issue expertise that is necessary to deliver quality services to constituents online. Their Web site is an office priority and an essential part of their overall strategic plan. They have been able to change ingrained management practices that would certainly have hindered the sustained delivery of a quality congressional Web site. The best of the best have made good management decisions and have challenged the cultural impediments to success.



Conclusion

While the current state of congressional Web sites may not seem particularly promising, there is no reason that it cannot change. The Gold, Silver, and Bronze Mouse Award winners are shining examples of the excellence possible for all Web sites. The building blocks and best practices described in this report can, and should, be used by all offices that recognize the growing importance of the Web in the 21st Century. The Internet is no longer a novelty. Rather, it will have an ever greater presence in the lives of Americans and the work of Congress. This method of communication and interaction does not have to be a burden for offices. When utilized correctly, creating and maintaining a Web site can contribute to the success of the office. The Congressional Management Foundation hopes offices will use this report as an important tool to assist them in turning their Web sites from a bothersome chore into a time-saving resource for achieving their goals.

With the commencement of the 110th Congress, change is both necessary and inevitable. New Members are coming to the Hill, committee and leadership offices are in a state of transition, and new priorities and agendas are developing while public interest in Congress and the Internet continues to grow. In this landscape, there is an opportunity to rethink the importance of a quality congressional Web site. With the best practices and guidelines for success we laid out in this report, the means and prospects for becoming an award winner—or at least improving to a minimum standard—are at Congress' fingertips. All new offices—and existing offices that take the aforementioned measures—will have another chance to raise their grade and even earn a Mouse Award when the Congressional Management Foundation evaluates congressional Web sites again in 2007.



APPENDIX

Detailed Methodology

Evaluation Process

Our evaluation methodology was designed to be as fair and objective as possible, without being based solely on quantitative factors. A visitor's experience on a Web site is largely based on qualitative factors such as the quality and tone of the information, the usability and navigability of the site, the look and feel, and the degree to which the information meets the constituent's needs. As a result, a purely quantitative, checklist-based evaluation does not begin to measure actual user experience. To measure both the qualitative and quantitative factors that contribute to user experience as fairly and objectively as possible, we continued the process begun in 1998 of fine tuning our evaluation process and created a comprehensive evaluation form that combined quantitative and qualitative measurements of the sites.

Member, committee, and leadership sites were graded using the same building blocks detailed in "Building a Successful Web Site," but each of the three types of offices had a unique evaluation form based on their different roles, goals, and audiences. Every site within the three categories was given an extensive evaluation starting in the spring with the committee and leadership sites and into the summer for the Member offices. Every evaluator went through several rounds of training to ensure that each criteria—especially the qualitative ones—was judged the same way regardless of the evaluator, within a reasonable margin of error. After all 615 congressional Web sites were evaluated, the extensive data we collected was analyzed in conjunction with our research partners from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, the University of California-Riverside, and Ohio State University.¹⁷

¹⁷For more information about our partnership, see "About the Project" on page iii

The Analysis

Underlying the letter grade each Web site received is a numeric score. This numeric score is based on a considerable amount of data collected from each Web site and quantitatively measures the overall quality of the Web site. This appendix discusses how the data was collected and the statistical analysis we used to evaluate the overall quality of each Web site.

Over the years, we have developed a long list of criteria—currently 135 items (for Member sites)—that indicate the quality of a congressional Web site. We identified the criteria using a variety of sources, including citizen focus groups, interviews with Members and press secretaries, surveys of reporters and advocates, internal discussions, as well as research using the literature on industry best practices and usability. Taken together, the criteria measure the attributes of what constitutes a high-quality Web site in the normative sense; that is, a Web site that is helpful and informative from both the Member’s perspective as well as from citizens’ perspective. We used these criteria to evaluate the quality of congressional Web sites for our prior two reports, *Congress Online: Assessing and Improving Capitol Hill Web Sites* (published January 2002) and *Congress Online 2003: Turning the Corner on the Information Age* (published March 2003).

Member Sites

In the summer of 2006, we updated the criteria list to reflect the evolving technology and practice standards for Web design that have occurred in recent years and used the updated criteria to evaluate each official Web site in the House and Senate. In July, we created a snapshot of all House and Senate Web sites and archived this snapshot on a server at the University of California-Riverside (www.connectingtocongress.org). To conduct the evaluations, evaluators viewed each archived Web site and answered a series of 135 questions about the site. Each question, called a “code,” tapped into one of the criteria identified as important for a Member Web site. A form gave a detailed description of the criteria or attribute that the code is intended to measure and guidance on how to respond to the question. Some of the codes are qualitative—asking how well the site did something—such as the *National Issues* code: “To what extent does the site provide information about major national issues...” and the evaluator is to respond on a 0 (low) to 5 (high) scale. Other codes are quantitative—asking whether or not a site had something—such as the presence or absence of a THOMAS search box, which is measured as either present (one) or absent (zero).

While it is relatively straightforward to identify and code for the attributes that make for a good quality Web site, the method for determining how to aggregate these data to measure the overall quality of a Web site is not necessarily as clear. One possible and relatively easy way would be to add all of the coded variables together and create a simple percentage of the number of codes on which a Web site received a high score. This “additive index” approach is not desirable, though, since it gives equal weight to each code. For example, in this approach, whether or not the site had information on receiving federal grants—which is somewhat peripheral to the intrinsic quality of a legislative Web site—would be given equal weight to whether or not the Member offered rationales for key votes or extensively discussed national issues.

Instead, we used statistical factor analysis to assign weights to the codes and then constructed the numeric overall quality score by taking the weighted sum of the coded variables. Factor analysis is one method social scientists use when there are many measured indicators of a trait that itself cannot be measured directly, such as a Web site’s intrinsic “quality.” A trait such as “Web site quality” that cannot be measured directly is called a “latent” trait. Factor analysis is a statistical method that takes many coded variables, called “indicators” or “indicator variables,” and finds the latent trait that is common to all of the indicators.¹⁸ Here, the measured quality indicators are the coded variables, and the latent trait of the Web site is its underlying quality. Factor analysis is especially appropriate in this context, since it accommodates the fact—indeed assumes—that many of the indicators are measured subjectively or with error. With the presence of a vast quantity of indicators, subjectivity and errors tend to cancel out.¹⁹

We carried out the statistical analysis in several steps. In the first step, we used factor analysis and the coded data to construct a series of 13 *attribute scales*, where each attribute scale measured the extent to which the Web site possessed desirable attributes such as the amount of issue content, the Web site’s usability, the quality of the information to constituents, and the quality of the Web site’s technology. For this analysis, we used 62 of the 135 codes, and between three and six coded indicator variables to measure each attribute scale. In the second step, we combined these attribute scales using a separate factor analysis model to form two *quality scales*, one measuring the quality of the information on the site, and the other measuring the degree to which the site communicates to constituents. In the third step, we took the average of the two quality scales to construct an overall quality score.

Figure 22 lists all of the coded variables we used in the analysis, and the composition of each of the attribute and quality scales. The original coded variables are indicated with a light blue bullet point (◦) (for example, the code for “Readability”). The attribute scales are indicated with a dark blue bullet point (●) (for example, “The quality of issue content on the site”). The two quality scales are labeled as such (for example, “Information Quality Scale”). Each code and each scale has an associated weight listed in parentheses, where the weight is estimated in a factor analysis model, and then rescaled so that the weights add up to 1. With this rescaling, the weights indicate the percentage each item contributes to the associated scale.

¹⁸Factor analysis uses the empirical correlations among indicator variables to estimate the degree to which the original data can be described by one or more underlying dimensions. These underlying dimensions to the data are the latent trait of interest, and the observed, coded data are used to measure the unobserved latent trait. Since the variables in this study are either dichotomous (0,1) or ordered categorical (0 to 5), we use a polychoric correlation matrix in the factor analysis. We use the principle factors method, and for each attribute scale we select variables that load well onto only a single dimension for that scale. We retrieve factor score coefficients using the regression method, which post-multiplies the vector of factor loadings by the inverse of the estimated correlation matrix. These scoring coefficients are the weights we use to construct each attribute scale. For ease of presentation, we standardize the scoring coefficients as percentages within each scale so they add up to one.

¹⁹While factor analysis statistically accommodates data that are measured with error, it is best for the data to have as little error as possible, or in other words, high “reliability.” We conducted a reliability study across the coders by asking each coder to evaluate 10 common Web sites. There were a total of eight coders involved in the study. Coders evaluated all Web sites in a randomized order, and so did not know which 10 Web sites were the common Web sites. To assess reliability across these common evaluations, we quantified a coding “error” as choosing a value that differed from the modal response from all coders. So for example, if coder B coded a Web site as having an attribute, and so entered a one, while the remaining seven coders entered a zero, coder B in this instance would be identified as having made a coding error. We then simply took the percentage of errors across all codes that each coder recorded for all common Web sites. The error rates overall were very low, ranging from as low as 8.2% to as high as 15.0%. This indicates overall a very high level of inter-coder agreement.

FIGURE 22. FACTOR WEIGHTS FOR THE CODED INDICATORS²⁰
INFORMATION QUALITY SCALE

- **The quality of all issue content on the site (0.25)**
 - The quality of information regarding national issues†
 - The quality of the Member's priority issues
 - The quality of state and local issues
 - The extent of the Member's rationales given for votes cast†
- **The amount of content on current issues (0.32)**
 - Discussion of current events
 - The quality of information on national issues from the 109th Congress†
 - The quality of Member's priority issues from the 109th Congress
 - The quality of state and local issues from the 109th Congress
 - The extent of rationales for votes from the 109th Congress
 - The Member's specific accomplishments from the 109th Congress
- **The ambiguity of the issue content (-0.08)**
 - The discussion of national issues is too generic to tell if current
 - The discussion of the Member's priority issues is too generic to tell if current
 - The discussion of state and local issues is too generic to tell if current
- **The Web site's usability (0.21)**
 - The overall look and feel of the Web site is good†
 - Ease of navigation†
 - Readability†
 - Organization†
 - Timeliness of information and updates†
- **The timeliness of the information (0.31)**
 - National issues are from the 109th Congress
 - Member's priority issues are from the 109th Congress
 - State and local issues are from the 109th Congress
 - Rationales for votes are from the 109th Congress
 - The Member's specific accomplishments are from the 109th Congress
 - Timeliness of information and updates†

COMMUNICATION QUALITY SCALE

- **The extent to which the Web site promotes accountability to constituents (0.10)**
 - Provides the Member's voting record
 - Explains how to read and use roll call votes
 - Lists the Member's sponsored and co-sponsored legislation
 - Links to the THOMAS search engine
 - Includes a THOMAS search box

²⁰Variables marked with a † are measured on a 0 to 5 scale; all others are measured on a 0 to 1 scale.

- **Information on the legislative process (0.14)**
 - Explains how a bill becomes a law
 - Includes a FAQ section about Congress
 - Provides information about what a Member does
 - Includes a student or kid's page
 - **Information on floor proceedings (0.08)**
 - Lists the chamber schedule
 - Provides information about the current floor proceedings
 - Links directly to the *Congressional Record*
 - **Resources for constituent casework (0.16)**
 - Answers FAQ regarding constituent casework†
 - Provides guidance on how constituents can initiate casework
 - Includes a casework privacy release form
 - Links to relevant government agencies
 - Links to FirstGov
 - **Information of interest specifically to constituents (0.10)**
 - Congressional internships
 - Admission to the military academies
 - Capitol tour information
 - Flag requests
 - Information about federal grants
 - Information about local or district resources
 - **Information about the district or state (0.13)**
 - Lists interesting and important features of the district/state
 - District/state demographic statistics
 - Targets users demographically
 - Targets users geographically
 - Includes map of the district/state
 - Includes photos of constituents on the home page
 - **Media communication (0.14)**
 - Press releases are organized by date
 - Video
 - Audio
 - Archives of the Member's columns or op-ed pieces
 - **Communication technology (0.16)**
 - Privacy statement
 - Text only option
 - Blog
 - RSS feed
 - Podcast
 - Search feature
-

To construct the attribute factor scores, we multiplied the value for each coded variable by its associated weight, and then added these numbers together. Most of the codes are measured on a (0/1) scale, meaning that the variable is a one if the Web site has the feature and a zero if the Web site does not have the feature. Because of this, the attribute scales for the most part are simply the sum of the weights corresponding to the items found on the Web site.

To create the quality scales for “information” and “communication,” we multiplied the Web site’s factor score for each of the relevant attribute scales (that is, the attribute scales that fall under each of the two headings) by its associated weight and add these together. Finally, to create a total score, we took the average of the Web site’s score on the two quality scales.

Both of the quality scales measure the quality of a Web site but each in different ways: one measures issue content and the other measures the clarity of communication to constituents. While our analysis showed these are distinct dimensions of quality, they are not unrelated. The two quality scales were highly correlated (with a Pearson correlation of 0.50, $p < 0.001$).

Because we found through our research and experience that they were the most essential and basic aspects of a successful Web site, we identified issue content, constituent case-work, timeliness, and usability as four key dimensions which needed to be given priority beyond the results generated in the factor models. Web sites that scored above average on all four of these dimensions were given extra credit in the form of a 10% increase above the overall score generated by the factor analysis.

The final step was to use the numeric scores to assign letter grades. To do this, we first sorted all scores within each chamber, so that the scores were arranged from the highest House score to the lowest House score, and then the highest Senate score to the lowest Senate score. We then computed a within-chamber ranking by dividing each Web site’s score by the highest score within the respective chamber. In this final ranking, the highest scoring Web site in each chamber was given a 100%, and all of the other scores ranked below that as the percent of the highest score. We then reviewed the qualitative assessments of Web sites—which are also extensively documented in the dataset—and assigned cutoffs between scores to assign letter grades as shown in Figure 23.

FIGURE 23. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR MEMBER WEB SITES

SCORE	LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
90-100	A+	Gold
80-89	A	Silver
70-79	A-	Bronze
50-69	B	
40-49	C	
30-39	D	
0-29	F	

Committee and Leadership Sites

Though every one of the 615 Web sites we evaluated were judged based on the five building blocks, the way in which we measured the five building blocks changed to accurately determine the success of each category of site. The committee and leadership sites were evaluated with the same mix of qualitative and quantitative measures. Because the roles and audiences of committees and leadership offices differ greatly, there are also great differences between the factors that contribute to the success of one committee Web site versus another, or to the success of one leadership Web site versus another. In order to account for this in our evaluation, we divided committee and leadership offices into “classes.” These classes were designed to take into account the differing needs of the audiences that the committees each serve: some committees primarily serve more technical and professional audiences, while others serve the general public. Thus one class of committees must be held to higher standards for providing information geared toward a Hill audience and lower standards for providing information accessible to the general public, while a second class of committees should be held to higher standards for information geared to the general public and lower standards for the information useful for a Hill audience. The use of these classes enabled us to use the same criteria in the evaluation of all of the sites while still ensuring a robust and accurate evaluation of each individual site.

Committees

The classes for committees were based on their primary audiences. All committees must provide for the same basic audiences—the general public, the press, experts on the issues in their jurisdiction, and congressional staff—but they differ in the degree to which each of these audiences demand access to their work. As a result, we separated committees into the following five classes:

- 1. Standing committees with significant professional audiences.** These were the committees whose jurisdictions are fairly specialized and/or technical and whose audiences will include a significant percentage of people who have some knowledge of, and expertise in, the subject matter. *These committees were held to lower standards for providing educational and other information geared toward the general public, but higher standards for providing technical documents and publications geared toward an expert audience.* Examples of committees in this class include the House Committee on Appropriations and the Joint Committee on Taxation.
- 2. Standing committees with significant non-professional audiences.** These were the committees whose jurisdictions impact a fairly sizeable population of citizens with a personal, rather than an academic or professional, interest in the subject matter. *These committees were held to higher standards for providing information and services accessible to the general public, but lower standards for providing technical information for an expert audience.* Examples of committees in this class include the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs and the House Small Business Committee.
- 3. Standing committees with significant professional and non-professional audiences.** These committees have jurisdictions that make their work of interest to a range of expert and non-expert audiences. Most of them have high media profiles,

which keeps their work in the public eye. *These committees were held to high standards for having information and services accessible both to the public and experts.* Examples of committees in this class include the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

4. Standing committees with primarily congressional audiences. These are the committees with jurisdictions that are largely internal to Congress. *These committees were held to high standards for providing information and services for congressional staff and lower standards for providing information and services for external audiences.* It is important to note, however, that some of the functions of these committees are best served by internal congressional intranets, which were not included as part of our evaluation. Committees in this class include the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

5. Standing committee minority offices with primarily partisan audiences. Minority offices of committees do not control the bulk of the information that most visitors will be seeking on committee Web sites and provide a counterpoint to the majority office. *These committees were held to high standards for providing information and services for their Democratic staff, supporters, and the press.* Examples of committees in this class include the Senate Committee on the Budget (Minority) and House Committee on International Relations (Minority).

Leadership Offices

The classes for leadership offices were based on their leadership roles. Their different roles dictate the audiences they are trying to reach and the content and services they should be providing. All leadership offices have to provide basic educational information about what they do, information about the Leader's and the party's message and key issues, information and services for same-party congressional staff and Members, and information in support of their leadership roles. The degree of attention they should focus on each of these things will differ, however, based on their responsibilities. To allow for this in our evaluations, we divided leadership into the following three classes:

1. Leadership offices with primarily congressional and public audiences.

These are the leadership offices that hold the highest leadership positions of each party in each chamber. Their roles are to represent the party, as a whole, and to provide general party leadership on and off Capitol Hill. They are the spokesperson for their parties, and their Web sites will be of interest to citizens as well as to party activists and congressional staff. *As a result, they were held to high standards for providing authoritative party information for both citizens and congressional staff.* Note that the Majority and Minority Leaders in the Senate do not have separate leadership Web sites. Examples of leadership sites in this class include the Office of the House Democratic Leader and the Office of the House Majority Leader.

2. Leadership offices with primarily congressional audiences. These are the leadership offices that conduct the organizational business of the party. Though their content and services, and therefore their Web sites, are of interest to select citizens and activists off Capitol Hill, their primary role is to organize the party on Capitol Hill. As a result, *they were held to high standards for providing content for congressional staff and lower standards for providing information and services that are accessible to citizens.* An example of leadership sites in this class is the House Republican Policy Committee.

3. Leadership offices with primarily public audiences. These are the leadership offices that serve as the communicators for each party in each chamber. *They were held to high standards for providing information and services for both the public and for congressional staff, as well as for communicating the parties' messages and accomplishments in ways that were accessible and informative to audiences on and off Capitol Hill.* Examples of leadership sites in this class include the House Democratic Caucus and the House Republican Conference.

The “codes” were weighted based on their overall importance, and the scores for the audiences were given extra weight based on the class of the site. We then computed a ranking by dividing each Web site’s score by the highest score within the respective category (committee or leadership). In this final ranking, the highest scoring Web site in each category was given a 100%, and all of the other scores ranked below that as the percent of the highest score. We then reviewed the qualitative assessments of Web sites and assigned cutoffs between scores to assign letter grades as shown in Figures 24 and 25. Because of the small number of leadership sites, a score breakdown is not available in order to maintain the privacy of individual office scores.

FIGURE 24. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR COMMITTEE WEB SITES

SCORE	LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
96-100	A+	Gold
90-95	A	Silver
86-89	A-	Bronze
71-85	B	
53-70	C	
36-52	D	
0-35	F	

FIGURE 25. BREAKDOWN OF GRADES FOR LEADERSHIP WEB SITES

LETTER GRADE	MOUSE AWARD
A+	Gold
A	Silver
A-	Bronze
B	
C	
D	
F	



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