

PUBLICATION PRACTICES FOR TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT: RATING THE CONGRESS

How well can the Internet access data about Congress' work? The Cato Institute rated how well Congress publishes information in terms of authoritative sourcing, availability, machine-discoverability, and machine-readability.

SUBJECT	GRADE	COMMENTS
House and Senate Membership	<i>B+</i>	<i>The variety of sources that exist combine pretty well to reveal who represents Americans in Washington, D.C.</i>
Committees and Subcommittees	<i>C</i>	<i>Organizing and centralizing committee information would create a lot of clarity with a minimum of effort.</i>
Meetings of House, Senate, and Committees	<i>Senate B+ House D+</i>	<i>Can the public learn about what meetings are happening, when, and on what subject? Depends on which side of the Capitol you're on.</i>
Meeting Records	<i>C-</i>	<i>There is lots of work to do before transcripts and other meeting records can be called transparent.</i>
Committee Reports	<i>D+</i>	<i>Committee reports are barely visible to the Internet.</i>
Bills	<i>A-</i>	<i>Bills are the "pretty-good-news" story in legislative transparency, though there is room for improvement.</i>
Amendments	<i>House/Senate C Committees I</i>	<i>Amendments are hard to track in any systematic way—especially in committee.</i>
Motions	<i>I</i>	<i>If the public is going to have insight into the decisions Congress makes, the motions on which Congress acts should be published as data.</i>
Decisions	<i>I</i>	<i>The decisions Congress makes should be published as data.</i>
Votes	<i>A-</i>	<i>Vote information is in pretty good shape.</i>
Communications (Inter- and Intra-Branch)	<i>I</i>	<i>Transparent access to the messages sent among the House, Senate, and executive branch would complete the picture available to the public.</i>