

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	 House C- Senate A-	<i>The Senate has taken the lead on making data about who represents Americans in Washington machine-readable.</i>
Committees and Subcommittees	 C-	<i>Organizing and centralizing committee information would create a lot of clarity with a minimum of effort.</i>
Meetings of House, Senate, and Committees	 House B Senate B	<i>The House has improved its data about floor debates. The Senate is strong on committee meetings.</i>
Meeting Records	 D-	<i>There is lots of work to do before transcripts and other meeting records can be called transparent.</i>
Committee Reports	 C+	<i>Committee reports can be found, but they're not machine-readable.</i>
Bills	 B-	<i>Bills are the "pretty-good-news" story in legislative transparency, though there is room for improvement.</i>
Amendments	 F	<i>Amendments are hard to track in any systematic way—and Congress has done little to make them trackable.</i>
Motions	 F	<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 and Votes	 B+	<i>Vote information is in good shape, but voice votes and unanimous consents should be published as data.</i>
Communications (Inter- and Intra-Branch)	 F	<i>Transparent access to the messages sent among the House, Senate, and executive branch would complete the picture available to the public.</i>