

# The State of Congressional Web Sites

Since 1998, the Congressional Management Foundation has assessed the quality of congressional Web sites to determine how Members of Congress can use the Internet to more effectively communicate with and serve citizens.

The Gold Mouse Project seeks to improve these sites by identifying best and innovative practices that can be more widely adopted by House & Senate offices.

In the 111th Congress evaluations, we found that there is a digital divide in Congress: the most common letter grades earned were "A" and "F".



## What Did We Do?

In 2009, CMF, with the assistance of our research partners at Harvard Kennedy School, Northeastern University, University of California–Riverside, and the Ohio State University, conducted an extensive evaluation of all congressional Web sites in the 111th Congress.

439	House Member Web sites <sup>1</sup>
99	Senate Member Web sites <sup>2</sup>
68	House & Senate Committee Web sites (majority and minority)
+14	House & Senate Leadership Web sites

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**620**

<sup>1</sup> Includes 433 Representatives (there were two vacancies at the time of our evaluations), 5 delegates, and 1 resident commissioner.

<sup>2</sup> There was one vacancy in the Senate at the time of our evaluations.



# What Were Our Criteria?

Member Web sites were judged on 93 criteria in the following broad categories. The 61 committee criteria and 49 leadership criteria fell into most of these categories as well, but were adjusted to reflect their unique roles.



\*Denotes categories that were eligible for extra credit

## How We Made The Process Fair & Accurate

Prior to each evaluation year, the criteria are updated and refined to reflect current and evolving technology and practice standards.

All evaluators went through several rounds of training to ensure that each criterion was applied the same way regardless of the evaluator, within a reasonable margin of error.

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


***“Does the site have a THOMAS search box?”***

Member sites were evaluated June–August 2009; committee and leadership sites were evaluated September–December 2009.



## How We Scored The Web Sites

- **Criteria were weighted** according to importance and factored into a formula that resulted in an overall numerical score for the site.
- **Scores were sorted** within each category — Senate Member, House Member, Committee, and Leadership — standardized, and translated into letter grades.
- **A Mouse Award was given** to the 135 sites that scored an A- or higher. There was no pre-set number of awards. The top-ranked site in each category was recognized with the first-ever Platinum Mouse Award.

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

## Platinum Mouse



# The #1 Web Sites in the 111th Congress Are...



**SENATE MEMBER**  
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)



**HOUSE MEMBER**  
Steve Israel (D-NY)



**COMMITTEE**  
House Committee on Science and  
Technology  
*Chairman Bart Gordon*



**LEADERSHIP**  
House Republican Conference  
*Chairman Mike Pence*



## Gold Mouse



### SENATE MEMBERS

Evan Bayh (D-IN)  
Sherrod Brown (D-OH)  
Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)  
Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)  
Ben Nelson (D-NE)  
Mark Udall (D-CO)

### HOUSE MEMBERS

Howard L. Berman (D-CA)  
Geoff Davis (R-KY)  
John D. Dingell (D-MI)  
Sam Farr (D-CA)  
Virginia Foxx (R-NC)  
Phil Hare (D-IL)  
Suzanne Kosmas (D-FL)  
Sandy Levin (D-MI)  
Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY)  
Mike Michaud (D-ME)  
Patrick J. Murphy (D-PA)  
Bill Pascrell (D-NJ)  
Erik Paulsen (R-MN)  
George Radanovich (R-CA)  
Mike Ross (D-AR)  
Ed Royce (R-CA)  
Steve Scalise (R-LA)  
Adam Schiff (D-CA)  
Robert Wexler (D-FL)  
Charlie Wilson (D-OH)  
Don Young (R-AK)

### COMMITTEES

House Budget  
*Chairman John Spratt*

House Education and Labor  
*Chairman George Miller*

House Education and Labor  
(Minority)  
*Ranking Member John Kline*

Senate Energy and Natural Resources  
*Chairman Jeff Bingaman*

House Select on Energy Independence  
and Global Warming  
*Chairman Edward J. Markey*

House Foreign Affairs  
*Chairman Howard L. Berman*

Senate Judiciary  
*Chairman Patrick Leahy*

House Natural Resources (Minority)  
*Ranking Member Doc Hastings*

Senate Veterans' Affairs  
*Chairman Daniel Akaka*

### LEADERSHIP

House Republican Leader  
*John Boehner*

House Republican Policy Committee  
*Thaddeus McCotter*

## Silver Mouse



## SENATE MEMBERS

Sam Brownback (R-KS)  
 Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD)  
 Bob Corker (R-TN)  
 John Cornyn (R-TX)  
 Mike Crapo (R-ID)  
 Chris Dodd (D-CT)  
 Byron Dorgan (D-ND)  
 James M. Inhofe (R-OK)  
 Jon Kyl (R-AZ)  
 James E. Risch (R-ID)  
 David Vitter (R-LA)  
 Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)  
 Roger Wicker (R-MS)

## HOUSE MEMBERS

Jason Altmire (D-PA)  
 Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)  
 Henry E. Brown, Jr. (R-SC)  
 Dan Burton (R-IN)  
 Christopher P. Carney (D-PA)  
 Mike Conaway (R-TX)  
 J. Randy Forbes (R-VA)  
 Bart Gordon (D-TN)  
 Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL)  
 Pete Hoekstra (R-MI)  
 Mike Honda (D-CA)  
 Lynn Jenkins (R-KS)  
 Mary Jo Kilroy (D-OH)  
 Mark Kirk (R-IL)  
 Chris Lee (R-NY)  
 Nita Lowey (D-NY)  
 Frank Lucas (R-OK)  
 Michael E. McMahon (D-NY)  
 Charlie Melancon (D-LA)  
 Jerry Moran (R-KS)  
 Jim Moran (D-VA)  
 Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)  
 Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)  
 Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)  
 Paul Ryan (R-WI)  
 Pete Sessions (R-TX)  
 Frank R. Wolf (R-VA)

## COMMITTEES

Joint Economic  
*Chair Carolyn B. Maloney*

Senate Environment and Public Works  
 (Minority)  
*Ranking Member James M. Inhofe*

House Financial Services  
*Chairman Barney Frank*

House Homeland Security  
*Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*

Senate Indian Affairs  
*Chairman Byron Dorgan*

House Oversight and Government Reform  
*Chairman Edolphus Towns*

House Oversight and Government Reform  
 (Minority)  
*Ranking Member Darrell Issa*

Senate Small Business and  
 Entrepreneurship  
*Chair Mary Landrieu*

House Transportation and Infrastructure  
 (Minority)  
*Ranking Member John L. Mica*

## LEADERSHIP

Speaker of the House  
*Nancy Pelosi*

House Majority Leader  
*Steny Hoyer*



# Bronze Mouse



## SENATE MEMBERS

Bob Bennett (R-UT)  
 Kit Bond (R-MO)  
 Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA)  
 Dick Durbin (D-IL)  
 John Ensign (R-NV)  
 Russ Feingold (D-WI)  
 Tom Harkin (D-IA)  
 Joe Lieberman (ID-CT)  
 Mel Martinez (R-FL)  
 Jeff Merkley (D-OR)  
 Harry Reid (D-NV)  
 Charles E. Schumer (D-NY)  
 Arlen Specter (D-PA)  
 John Thune (R-SD)

## HOUSE MEMBERS

Brian Baird (D-WA)  
 Xavier Becerra (D-CA)  
 Mary Bono Mack (R-CA)  
 John Boozman (R-AR)  
 Robert Brady (D-PA)  
 Paul C. Broun (R-GA)  
 Ginny Brown-Waite (R-FL)  
 Dave Camp (R-MI)  
 John Campbell (R-CA)  
 Anh "Joseph" Cao (R-LA)  
 John Carter (R-TX)  
 Mike Castle (R-DE)  
 Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)  
 John Culberson (R-TX)  
 Rush Holt (D-NJ)  
 Steny Hoyer (D-MD)  
 Ron Kind (D-WI)  
 Buck McKeon (R-CA)  
 Bill Posey (R-FL)  
 Charles B. Rangel (D-NY)  
 Dave Reichert (R-WA)  
 Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)  
 Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)  
 David Scott (D-GA)  
 Henry A. Waxman (D-CA)

## COMMITTEES

House Administration  
*Chairman Robert Brady*

Senate Environment and Public Works  
*Chair Barbara Boxer*

## LEADERSHIP

House Majority Whip  
*James E. Clyburn*



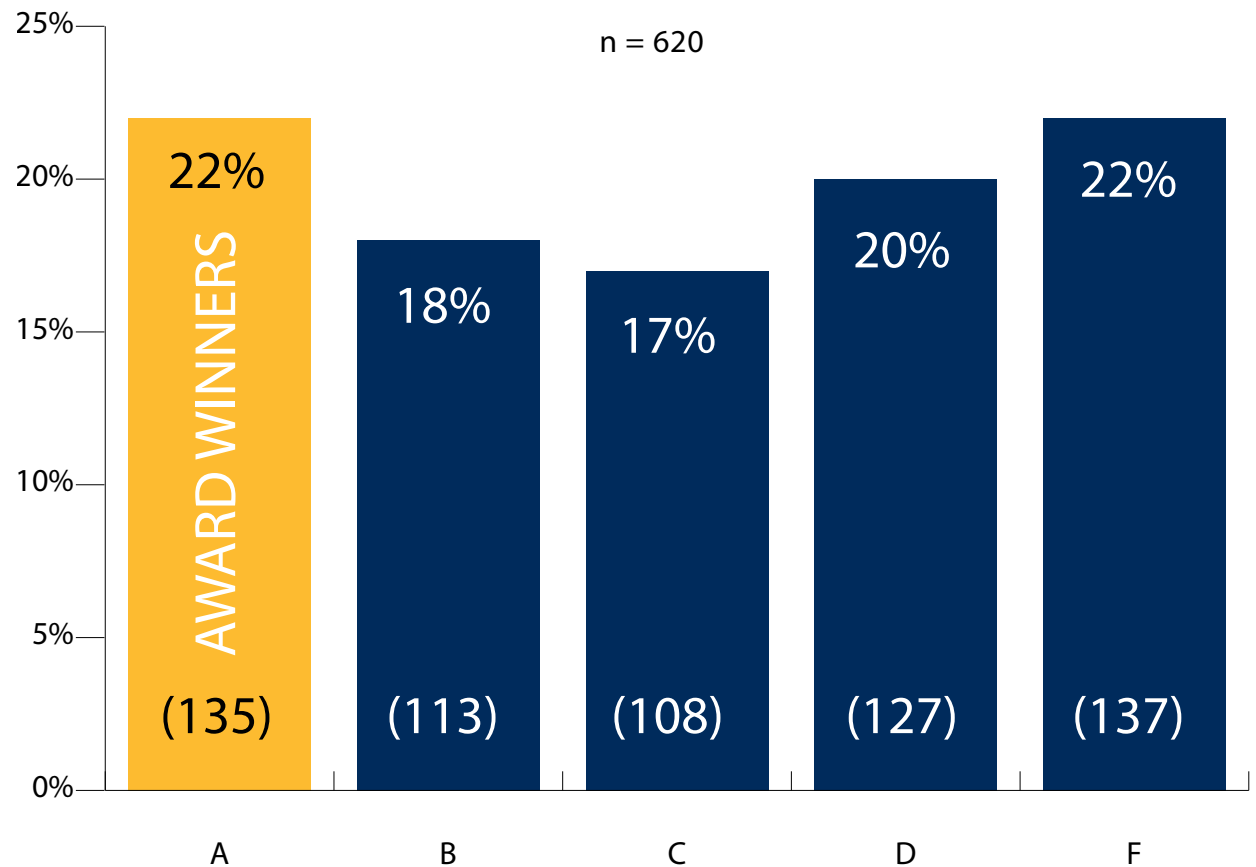
# As The Best Web Sites Get Better, The Rest Are Falling Behind

Since CMF began conducting evaluations of congressional Web sites in 2001, the results have continued to skew towards the top and bottom grades.

An almost equal percentage of sites were substandard ("D"s and "F"s) as were above average ("A"s and "B"s).

Additionally, by analyzing past data, we found that "B"s were trending toward "A"s, and "D"s were trending towards "F"s.

CONGRESSIONAL WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009



\*% may not = 100 due to rounding

# Republican Web Sites Scored Better Overall, But Democrats Have More Award-Winning Sites

Democratic Web sites

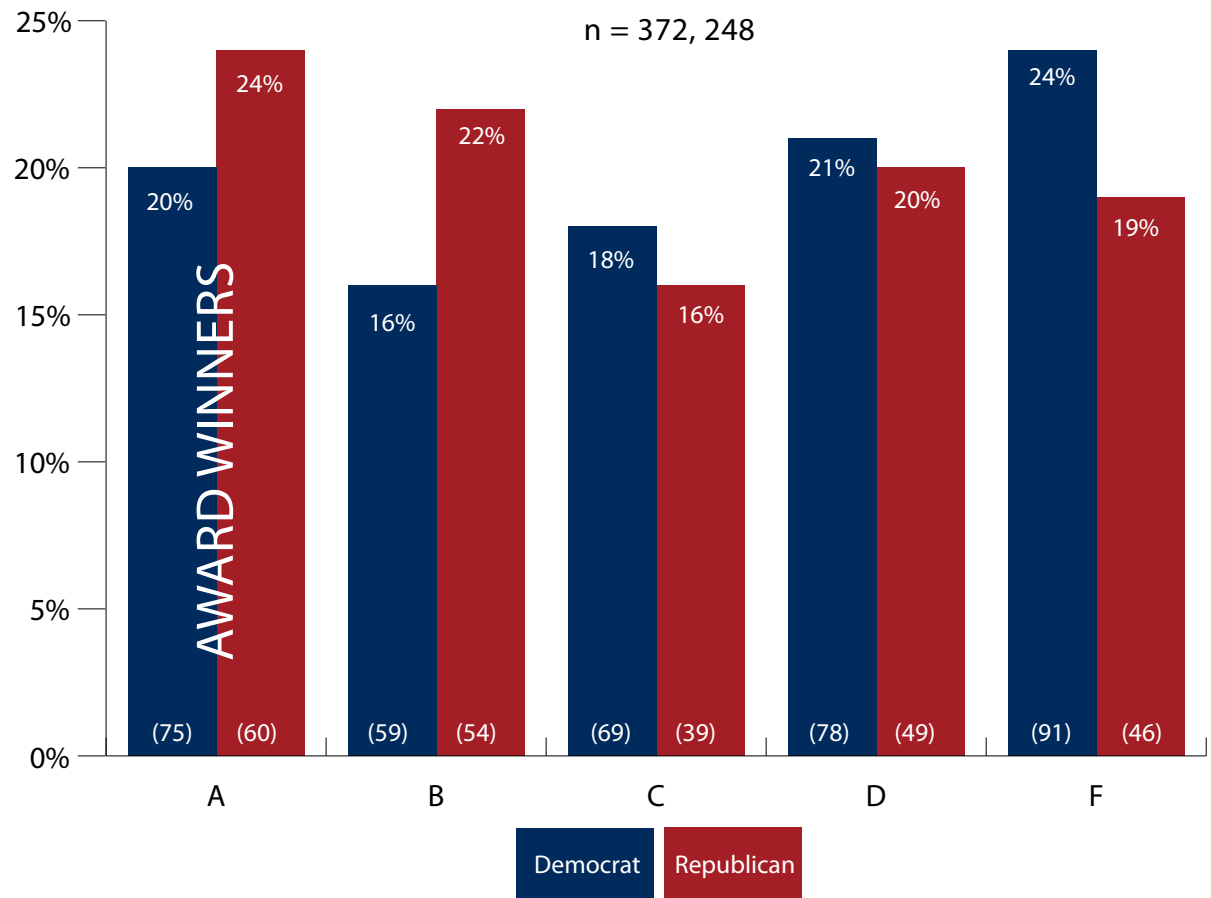
outnumber Republican Web sites by a ratio of 3:2.

Republican sites scored better overall with 62% of Republican and 54% of Democratic Web sites scoring a "C" or higher.

However, Democrats won more total awards (75) than Republicans (60), earning more than twice as many Gold Awards.

\*% may not = 100 due to rounding

DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009



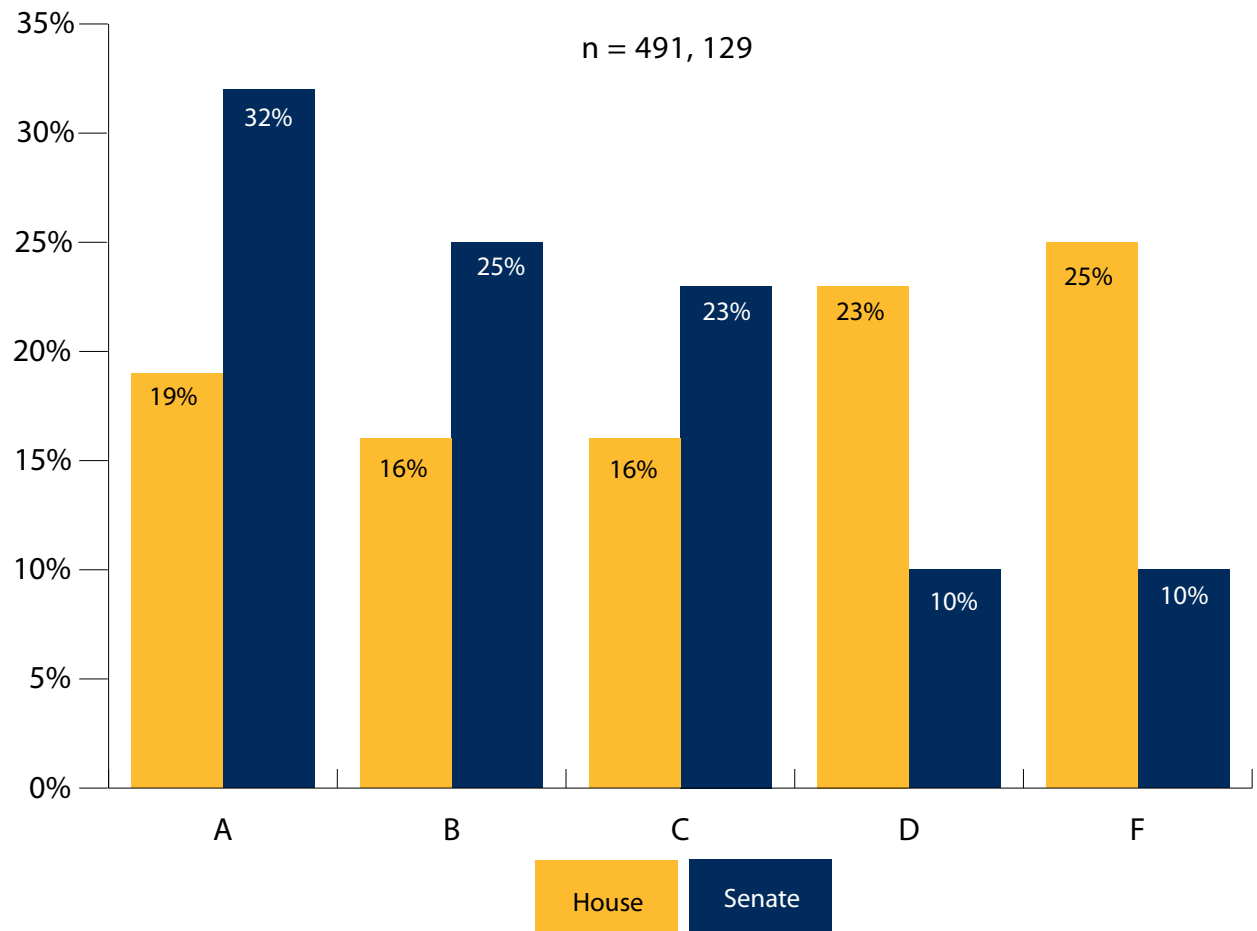
# Senate Sites Scored Better Overall Than House Sites

For Senate Member, committee, and leadership sites, the most common letter grade was an "A," compared to an "F" in the House.

The Senate's performance is not surprising, given that Senate offices generally have more financial and staff resources than House offices.

House Member sites underperformed in some of the most crucial areas, including Issue Content, Timeliness, and Usability.

HOUSE AND SENATE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2009

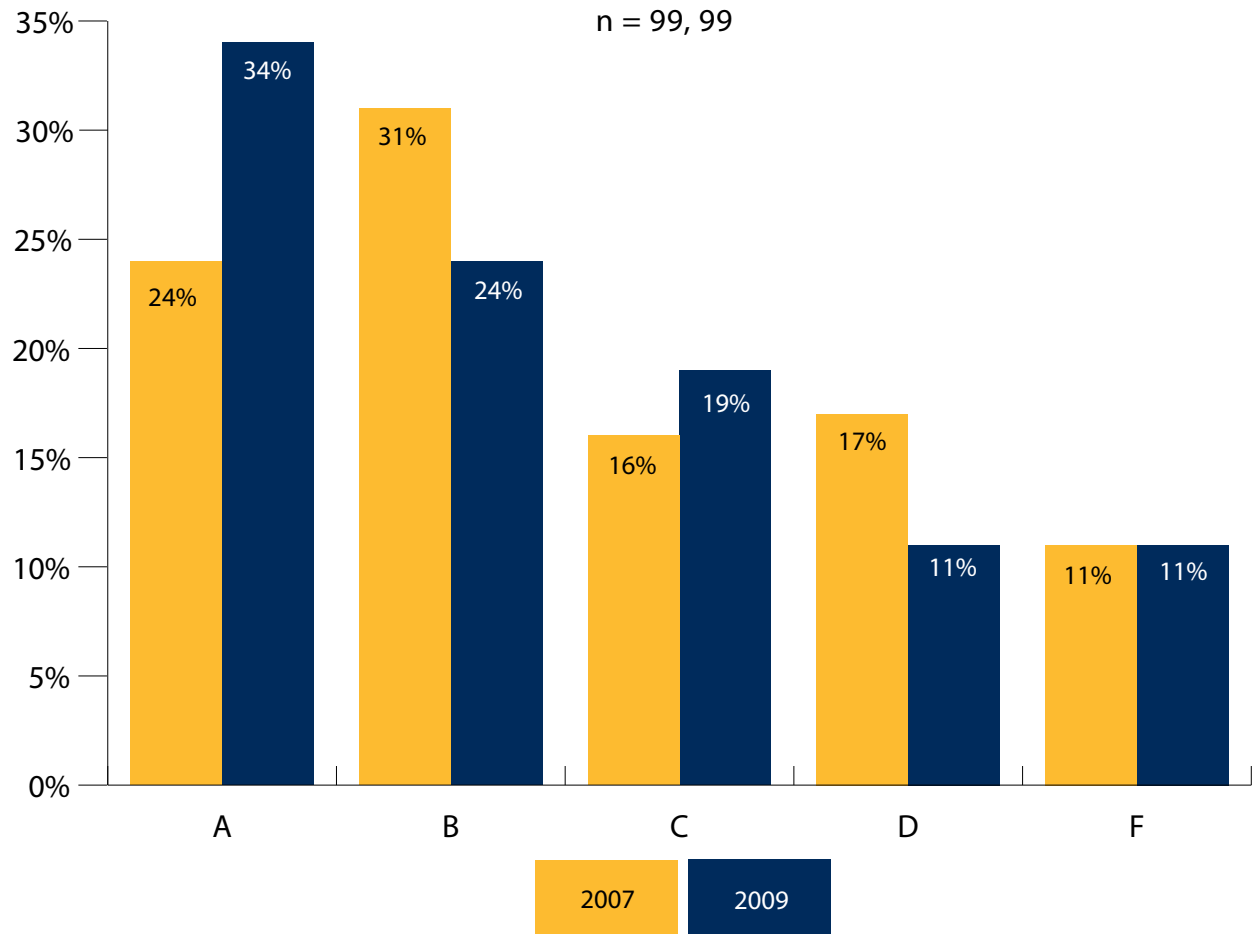


\*% may not = 100 due to rounding

# The Number of Award-Winning Senate Member Sites Increased Significantly



SENATE MEMBER WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009



The most common letter grade for Senators rose from a “B” to an “A”.

Almost 60% scored an “A” or “B”.

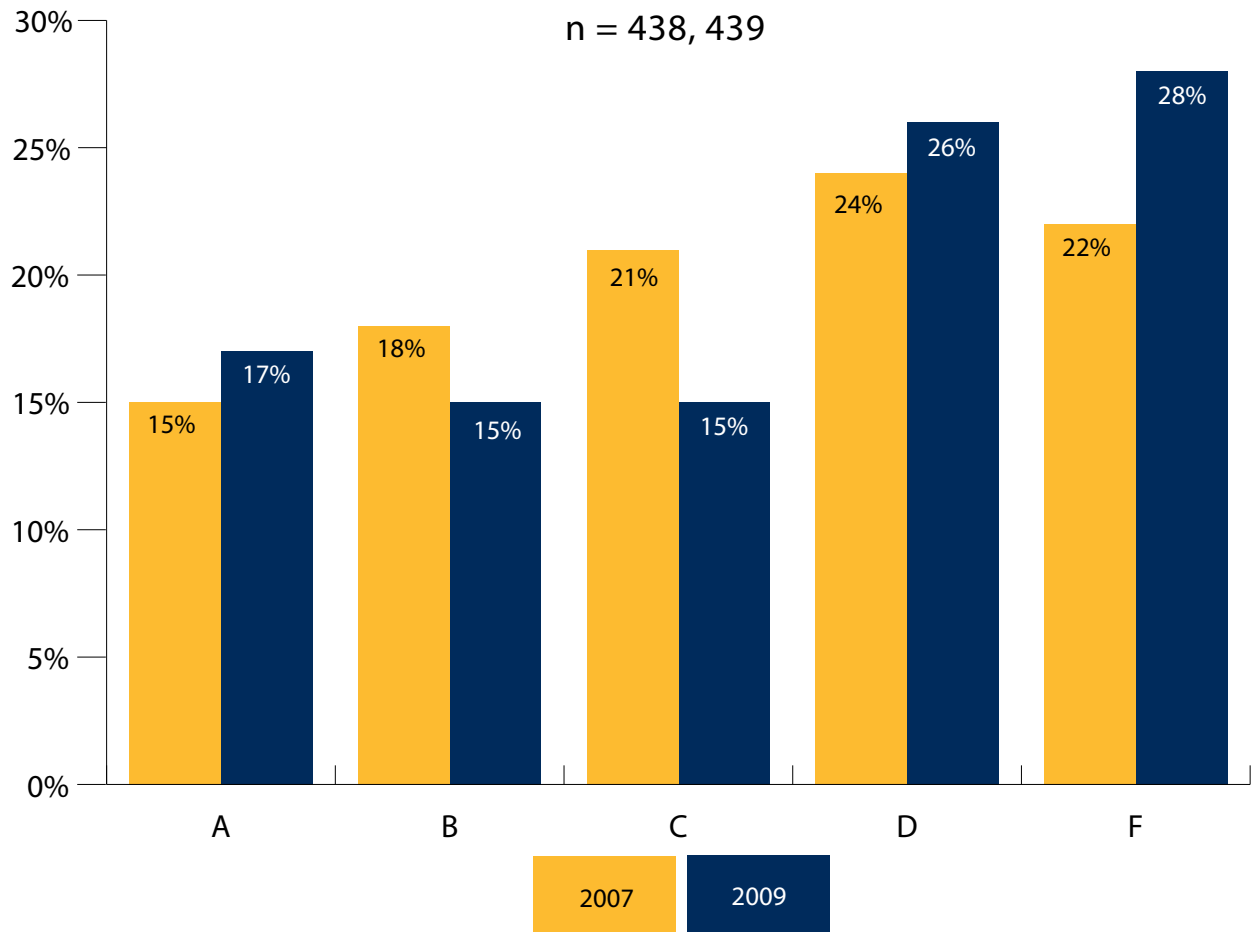
However, the number of “F”s remained the same.

\*% may not = 100 due to rounding



# Despite a Slight Increase in Award Winners, The Quality of House Member Sites Is Declining

HOUSE AND SENATE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009



With 439 of the 620 total sites, House Members comprise the largest segment of sites evaluated by CMF. They scored lower when compared to Senate Members, committees, and leadership sites. More than half (54%) of House Member Web sites scored a “D” or “F”. At the same time, the number of award-winning sites (“A”s) slightly increased.

\*% may not = 100 due to rounding

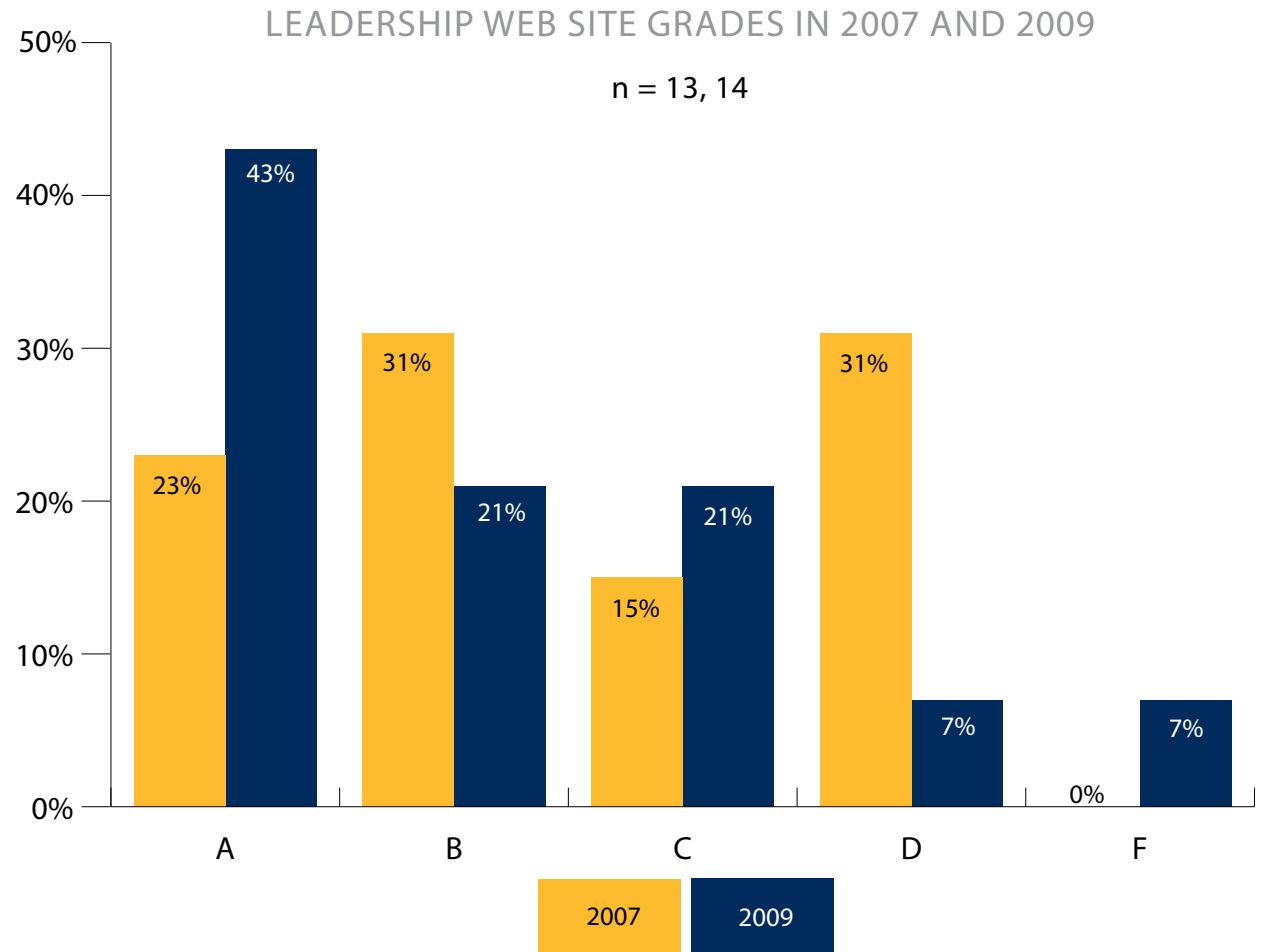




# The Number of Award-Winning Leadership Sites Nearly Doubled

House and Senate leadership Web sites have improved since the last Congress. Six of the 14 leadership sites won awards in 2009, compared to 3 of 13 in 2007.

\*% may not = 100 due to rounding





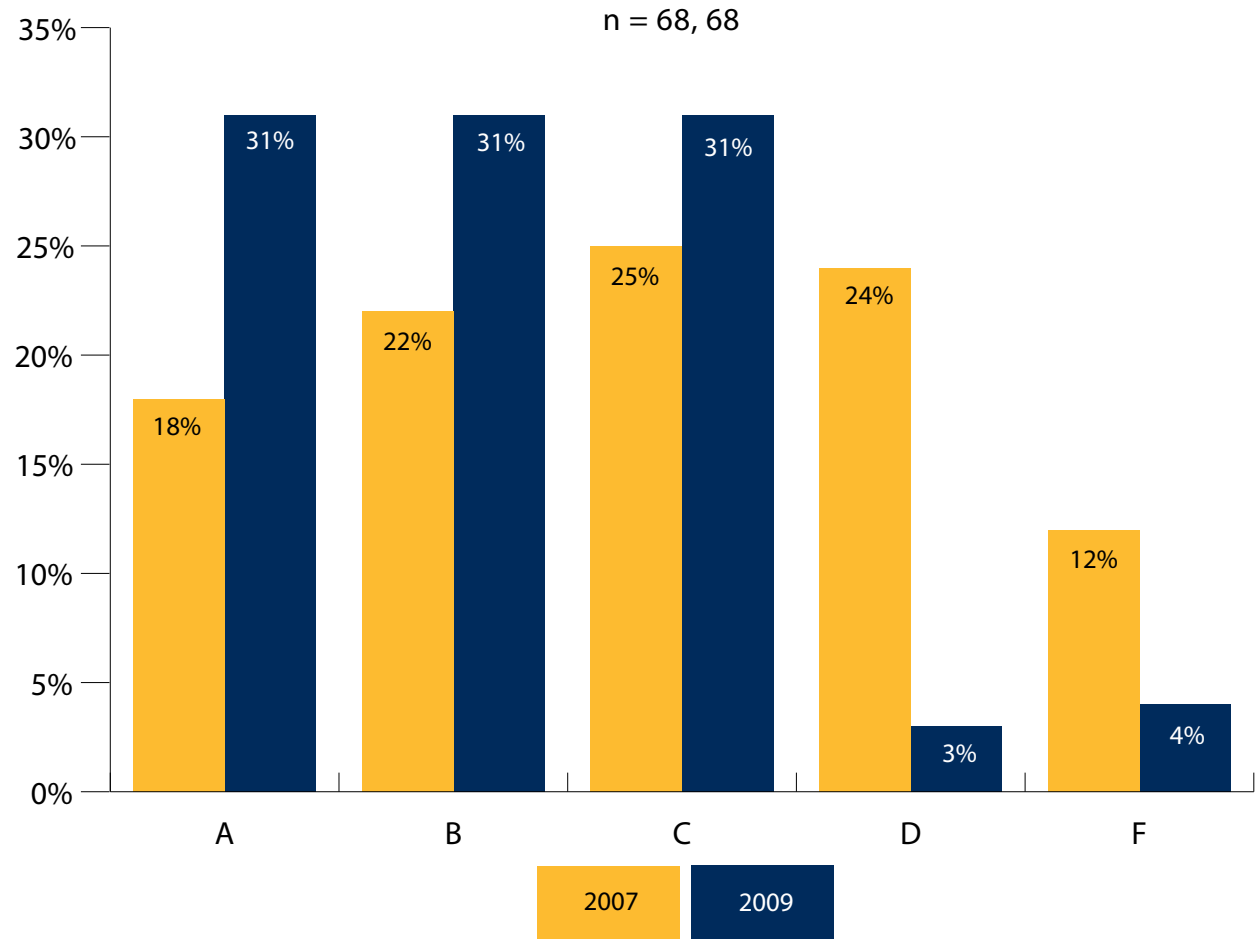
# Committee Web Sites Showed The Most Dramatic Improvement

COMMITTEE WEB SITE GRADES IN 2007 AND 2009

The vast majority of committee Web sites in the House and Senate (93%) scored a "C" or better.

The proportion of "D"s and "F"s dropped from 36% to 7%.

This is primarily due to the improvement of minority (Republican) Web sites, whose scores of "D" or "F" dropped from 63% in 2007 to 8% in 2009.



\*% may not = 100 due to rounding



## Want To Know More?

### ADDITIONAL SLIDESHOWS & INFORMATION

- [Methodology](#)
- [Findings](#)
- [Mouse Award Winners](#)

### ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership For A More Perfect Union envisions a United States where Members of Congress and citizens have a vibrant, active, and engaged relationship characterized by mutual respect, a sense of shared purpose, and a dedication to the tenets of representative democracy.

We seek to further our nation's progress toward "a more perfect union" by fostering the genuine and effective exchange of ideas between Members of Congress and citizens. The Partnership seeks to accomplish this mission by conducting research and education, promoting best practices, and creating innovative tools for everyone with a stake in our government.

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