112TH CONGRESS

GOLD MOUSE AWARDS

Best Practices in Online Communications on Capitol Hill

CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

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Introduction

In 1998, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) embarked on a ground-breaking research project: to study best practices in congressional websites with the goal of providing Congress with guidance on how to use this emerging technology to improve constituents' communication with, and understanding of, the institution. Three years later the initiative was boosted by a two-year grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts to create the Congress Online Project, in association with The George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management.

The project had an ambitious goal: develop a methodology for evaluating more than 600 congressional personal office, committee and leadership websites. CMF spent a year conducting focus groups with citizens, examining private sector research, and even polling reporters on their expectations when interacting with congressional websites. We then engaged in a thorough assessment process, assigning grades to every website on Capitol Hill. The strategy was: by highlighting the best practices, and playing to politicians' natural competitiveness with a grading system, Congress would better utilize online communications tools, thereby better serving citizens.

The initial results were not promising: 10% of congressional websites received grades of A or B, and 90% received grades of C, D or F. The 2002 CMF report on congressional websites stated:

> *"(T)he large majority of congressional offices treat their Web sites as ancillary to their duties, rather than integral to them. They don't see them as deserving priority attention and they devote minimal office time to them. They update them haphazardly or when time permits. They post content that highlights the activities and achievements of the Member rather than creating content specifically geared to meeting the needs of their audiences."*

What happened in the next 12 months was remarkable. CMF held more than 200 sessions with individual congressional offices, explaining the research and identifying deficiencies in their online communications. When CMF again assessed congressional websites and issued a report in 2003, the results were markedly different. Using the same criteria, the percentage of congressional websites receiving an A or B rose from 10% to 50%. Both as a result of CMF's encouragement, and the innate intuition of Members and staff that the Internet offered significant political and communications potential, an era and culture of continual learning and improvement began.

Over the last decade, Congress experimented with content and features with varying degrees of success. Blogs captured special attention five to six years ago – until staff and Members realized that it took a lot of effort to transcribe daily musings in an efficient and interesting way. Congressional podcasts were a fad – until Congress realized that its content was competing for audience attention on the same device (an iPod) on which the audience also had Ray Charles, NPR and Lady Gaga. These features and tools have been supplanted by newer innovations, such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

Now there are signs that Congress really does "get" technology and its value to individual Members, the institution of Congress, and constituents. IPads are common on the House floor, Members in the House and Senate display extraordinary creativity and transparency in their use of social media, and institutional offices continue to develop new methods to help Members use technology to enhance the relationship and communications between citizens and Congress.

Most notably, this report documents the biggest leap forward in the vast majority of websites in the history of our research. In the past two years, the most common congressional website grade rose from an F to a B. CMF

theorizes that this great leap could be a result of new attention on social media. With the shifting of resources to constituent communications (documented in CMF's 2011 "Communicating with Congress" research), there appears to be greater emphasis on all online resources.

And yet, there continue to be noticeable and embarrassing laggards. More than one-third of congressional websites received a D or F grade. (To receive one of these substandard grades, the following is likely: the website design hasn't been changed in the last three to five years, the content is woefully out of date and explanations of basic services – such as how to receive casework help from the office – are nonexistent.) This is not an abstract problem. When a constituent tries to get information from an office online, and gets no answers, the constituent's thoughts could range from, "What are they hiding?" to "They don't care about me." Both emotional responses contribute to cynicism about government in America and Congress' historically low approval ratings.

Fortunately, these cases are the minority. This report demonstrates the outstanding effort, contribution and transparency of the best websites on Capitol Hill. The winners of the 112th Congress Gold Mouse Awards clearly have devoted substantial resources and creativity to building "virtual offices." They have sought ways to ensure that their constituents and stakeholders have convenient avenues and tools for accessing services and information related to government processes. Most important, these Members and staff have displayed a degree of transparency and efficiency that ultimately enhances the image of Congress and helps to improve confidence in our democratic institutions.

Findings

1. The overall quality of congressional websites improved between 2009 and 2011.

House websites (including Member, committee and leadership office sites) saw some degree of improvement in the past two years while the Senate saw a small decline (Figure 1). Metrics valued by constituents, such as readability, navigation, issues information, and timeliness, all improved (Figure 2). Though there are fewer award-winning sites in 2011 than in 2009 (those that earned an A in our evaluations), this was due to the increased competition from the overall improvement of websites.

- For the first time since 2003, the most common grade for a congressional website was not D or F (Figure 3). In 2011, the most common grade was B, and 63% of sites earned grades of C or better (Figure 4).

FIGURE 1

COMPARISON OF GRADE POINT AVERAGES, 2011 VS. 2009 (4.0 scale)

(Member, committee and leadership grades combined in each category)

	House Overall	Senate Overall	Congress Overall
2009	1.81	2.58	1.97
2011	1.93	2.31	2.01

FIGURE 2

MEMBER WEBSITE SCORES ON KEY METRICS (5.0 scale)

	Readability	Navigation	Issue Information	Timeliness
2009	3.43	3.51	3.40	3.43
2011	3.94	3.57	3.54	3.48
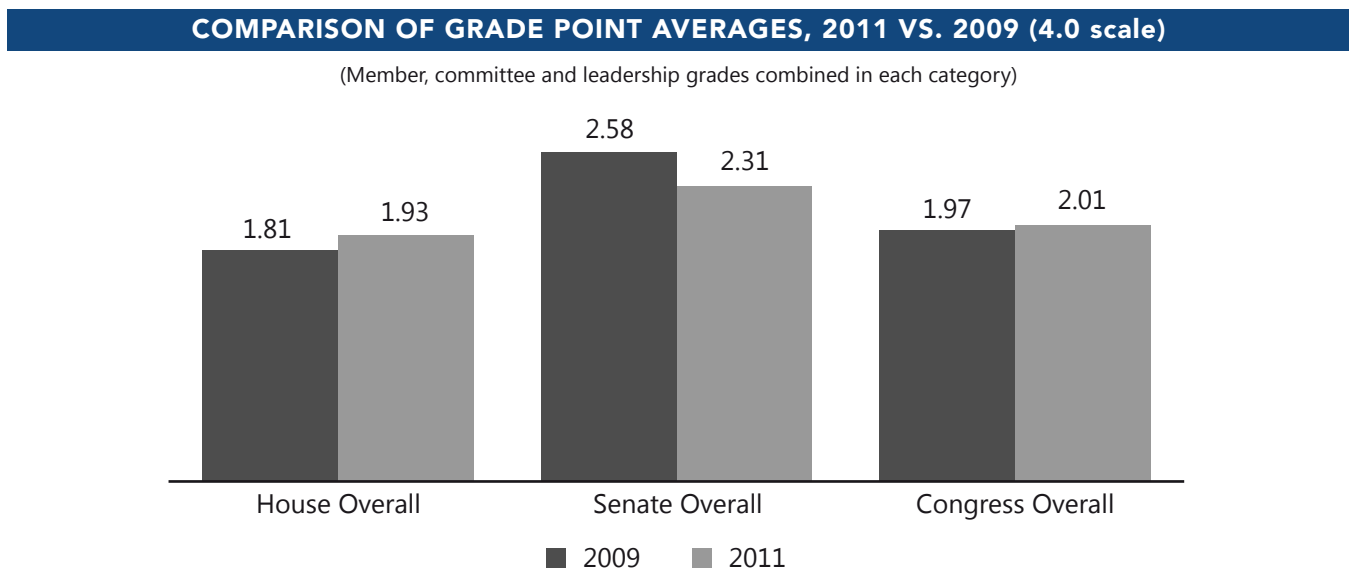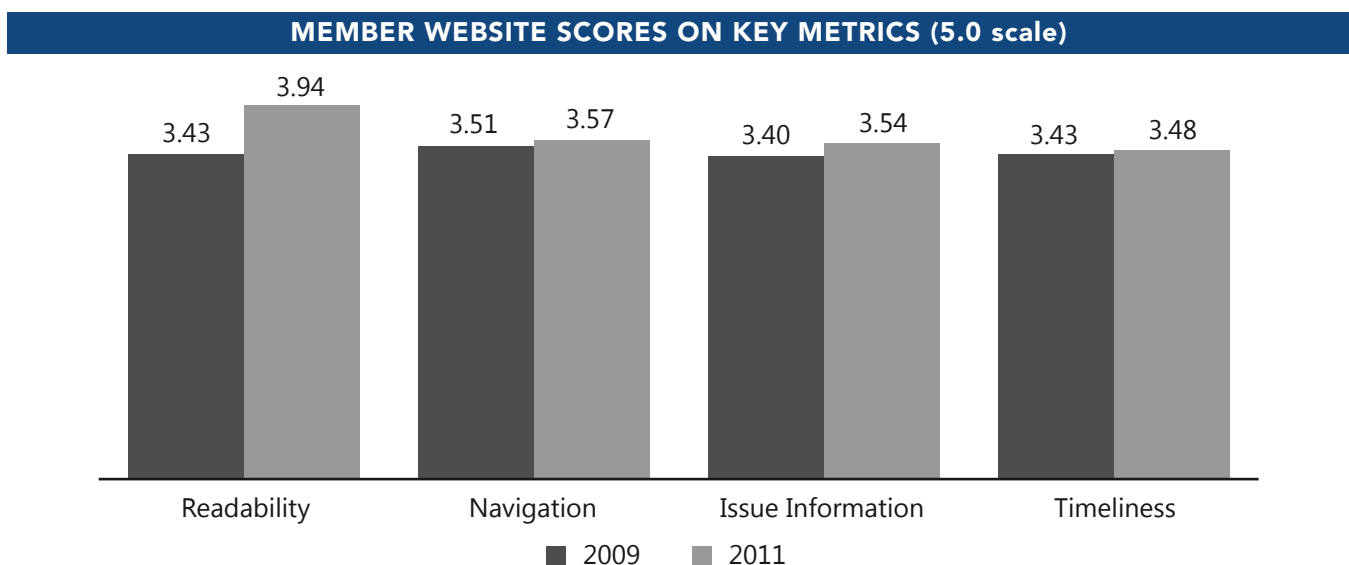
FIGURE 3

MOST COMMON WEBSITE GRADES						
YEAR	2002	2003	2006	2007	2009	2011
MOST COMMON GRADE	C	B	D	D	F	B
PERCENTAGE OF WEBSITES RECEIVING GRADE	59%	38%	25%	23%	22%	27%

FIGURE 4

CONGRESSIONAL WEBSITE GRADES

(All Member, committee and leadership grades combined)

■ 2009   ■ 2011
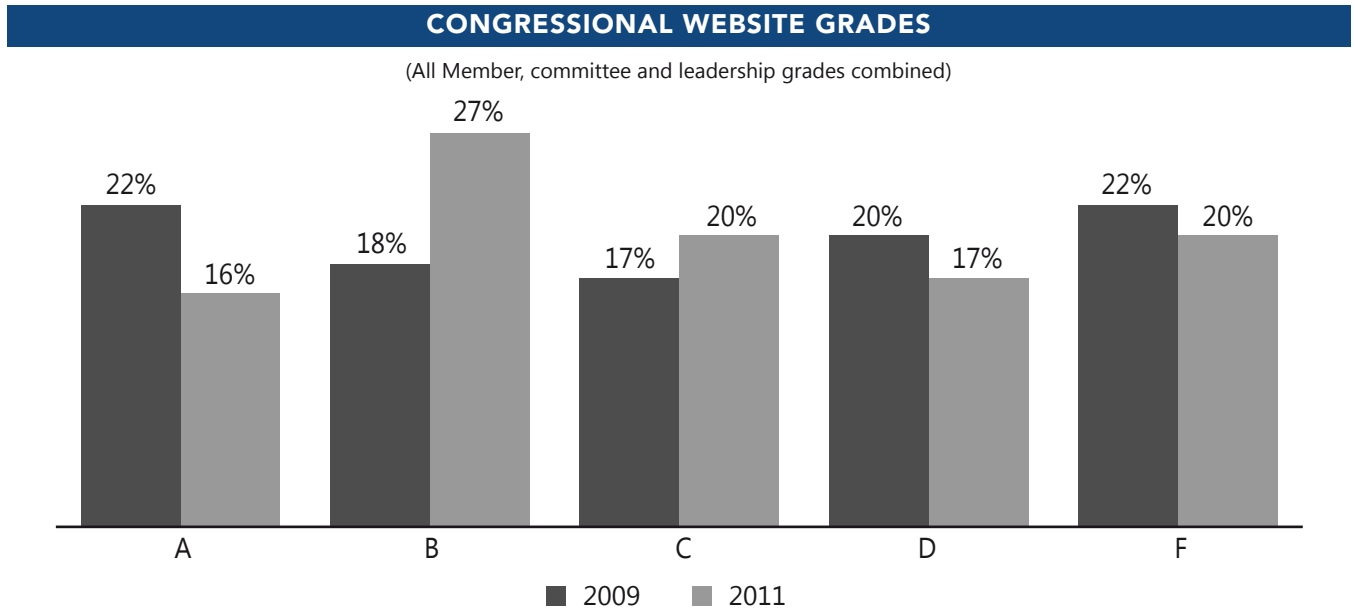
2. A significant number of Member websites lack basic educational and transparency features and content valuable to their constituents.

Previous CMF research indicates the first location on the Internet a constituent will seek information about a legislator's position on an issue is their website (see "Communicating with Congress: How the Internet Has Changed Citizen Engagement"). Yet, a significant number of Member websites do not offer basic information about their activities, the work of the Congress, or even the legislative process (Figure 5). In CMF's review of Member office websites, researchers found:

- 40% do not post information about or provide links to bills Members have sponsored or cosponsored in the current session of Congress;

- 44% do not post information about or provide links to the legislator's voting record;

- 47% do not post information about or provide links to how a bill becomes a law; and

- 67% do not provide guidance for communicating with the office (such as where constituents should direct inquiries regarding casework, versus inquiries regarding legislative activity or the legislator's position on issues).

In contrast, many congressional committee websites include key information expected by stakeholders (Figure 6).

- 90% include a hearing archive;

- 87% include reports and publications by the committee;

- 85% include a hearing schedule; and

- 78% include a video webcast feature.

However, researchers did identify a significant deficiency: only 16% of congressional committee websites post committee votes by legislators.

FIGURE 5

FEATURES ON MEMBER WEBSITES*

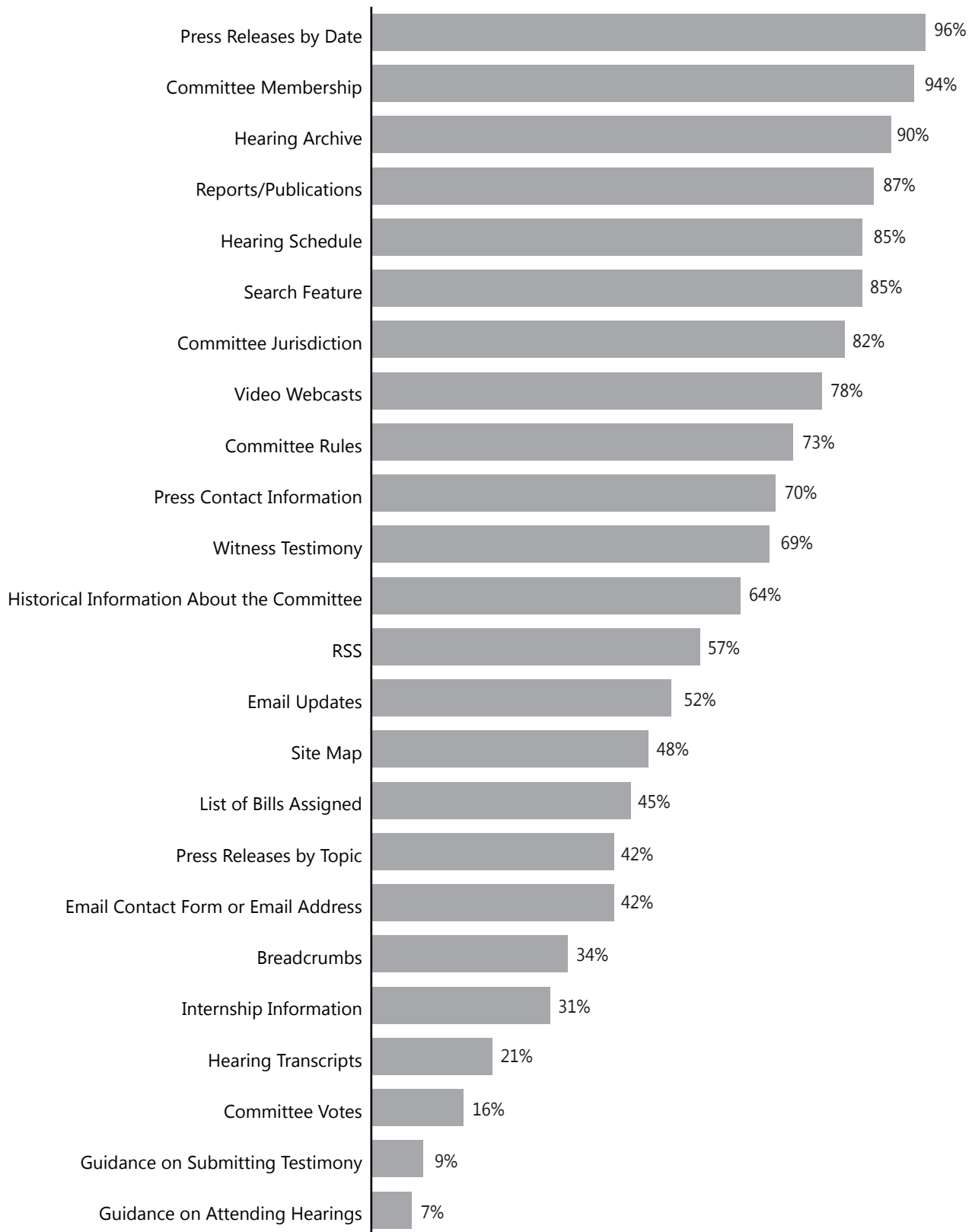| Feature	Percentage
Press Releases by Date	99%
E-newsletter	97%
Flag Request Form	96%
Video	96%
Internship Information	95%
Search Feature	90%
Casework Form	88%
District/State Map	87%
Tour Request Form	83%
RSS Feed	81%
Link to Facebook Page	81%
List of or Link to Sponsorships & Cosponsorships	80%
Link to Twitter Page	71%
Guidance On Casework Initiation	62%
List of or Link to Sponsorships & Cosponsorships is from Current Congress†	60%
Social Bookmarking Links	60%
Current Floor Proceedings	56%
Press Releases By Topic	56%
Voting Record	56%
Information About How a Bill Becomes a Law	53%
Chamber Schedule	51%
Press Contact Information	50%
Site Map	47%
Breadcrumbs	39%
Guidance on Communicating with the Office	33%
Office Hours	32%
Online Poll or Survey	26%
Blog	24%
Information About What a Member Does	17%
Member's Schedule	7%
Podcast	7%

*This chart is a selection of the more interesting features – and not an exhaustive list – of what researchers examined.
†Criterion evaluated whether the link to, or the list of, the Member's sponsorships and cosponsorships was from the current Congress (i.e., the 112th Congress). This means that 20% of the sites were providing outdated sponsorship and cosponsorship information.

FIGURE 6

FEATURES ON COMMITTEE WEBSITES*

Feature	Percentage
Press Releases by Date	96%
Committee Membership	94%
Hearing Archive	90%
Reports/Publications	87%
Hearing Schedule	85%
Search Feature	85%
Committee Jurisdiction	82%
Video Webcasts	78%
Committee Rules	73%
Press Contact Information	70%
Witness Testimony	69%
Historical Information About the Committee	64%
RSS	57%
Email Updates	52%
Site Map	48%
List of Bills Assigned	45%
Press Releases by Topic	42%
Email Contact Form or Email Address	42%
Breadcrumbs	34%
Internship Information	31%
Hearing Transcripts	21%
Committee Votes	16%
Guidance on Submitting Testimony	9%
Guidance on Attending Hearings	7%

*This chart is a selection of the more interesting features – and not an exhaustive list – of what researchers examined.

3. House Members elected in 2010 developed much better websites in their first year in office compared to their Senate counterparts.[1]

For the class of 2010, new House Members scored significantly higher in evaluations than new Senators (Figure 7). CMF research shows:

- A majority (61%) of House Freshman websites earned A's or B's, including 13% (or 12 sites) that received A's and Mouse Awards, compared to 31% of new Senators that earned B's.

- Nearly half of all new Senators (46%) received a grade of D or F, compared to 17% of House freshman offices.

- Overall, Senate Member office websites received higher ratings than House Member office websites, due primarily to the higher number of House sites that received an F (Figure 8).
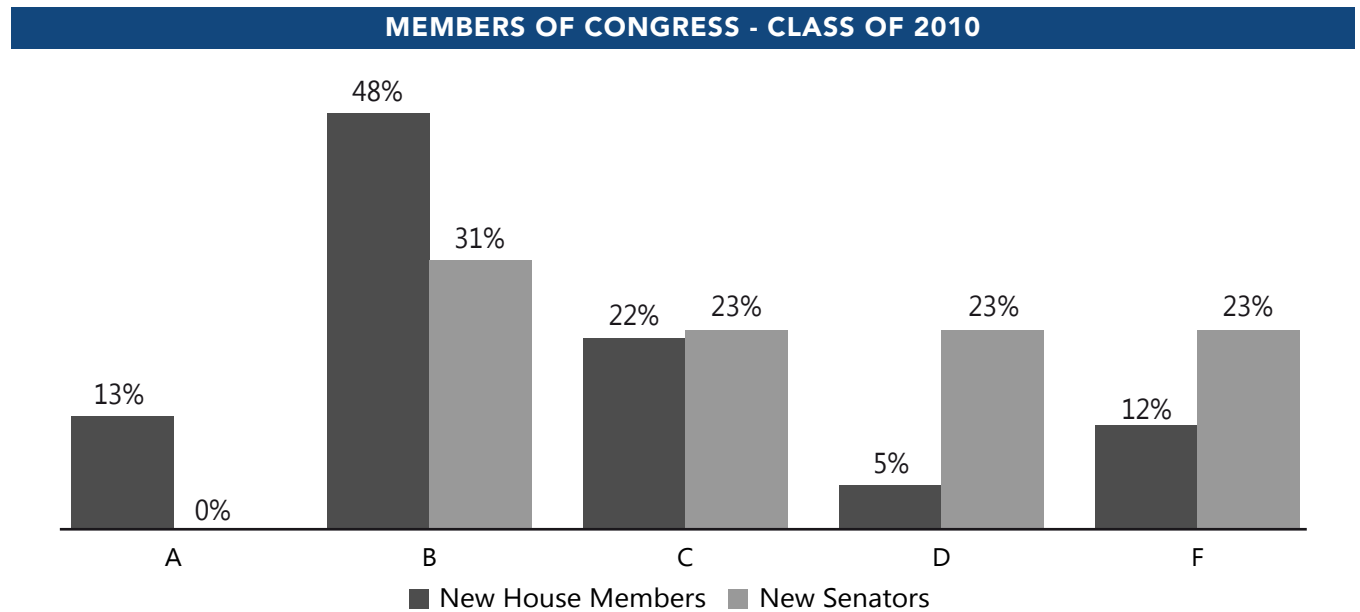
FIGURE 7

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS - CLASS OF 2010

- New House Members
- New Senators

FIGURE 8

CATEGORY	A	B	C	D	F	TOTAL SITES EVALUATED
HOUSE MEMBER	13%	26%	18%	18%	25%	438*
SENATE MEMBER	22%	27%	20%	20%	11%	100
COMMITTEE	24%	28%	30%	10%	7%	67
LEADERSHIP	38%	38%	15%	8%	0%	13
TOTAL	98	166	123	107	124	618

GRADES BY CATEGORY

* Includes 432 Representatives (there were three vacancies at the time of our evaluations), 5 delegates and 1 resident commissioner.

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[1] Finding refers to Members sworn-in to office in January 2011.

4. The use of social media tools by congressional offices has risen exponentially, and offices are using them more frequently in 2011 compared to 2009.

- The proportion of Member websites linking to official Facebook and Twitter pages has almost switched, from a vast majority without links to those pages in 2009 (79% and 82%, respectively), to a vast majority with links to those pages in 2011 (81% and 71%, respectively) (Figure 9).

- Frequency of use has also dramatically increased. In 2009, 14% of Member websites that linked to their Facebook page had updated it in the past *month*. In 2011, 73% had updated their page in the past *week* (Figure 9).

- Committee websites have shown similar, if less impressive growth, with 40% linking to Facebook and 49% to Twitter in 2011, compared to just 10% and 18%, respectively, in 2009 (Figure 10).
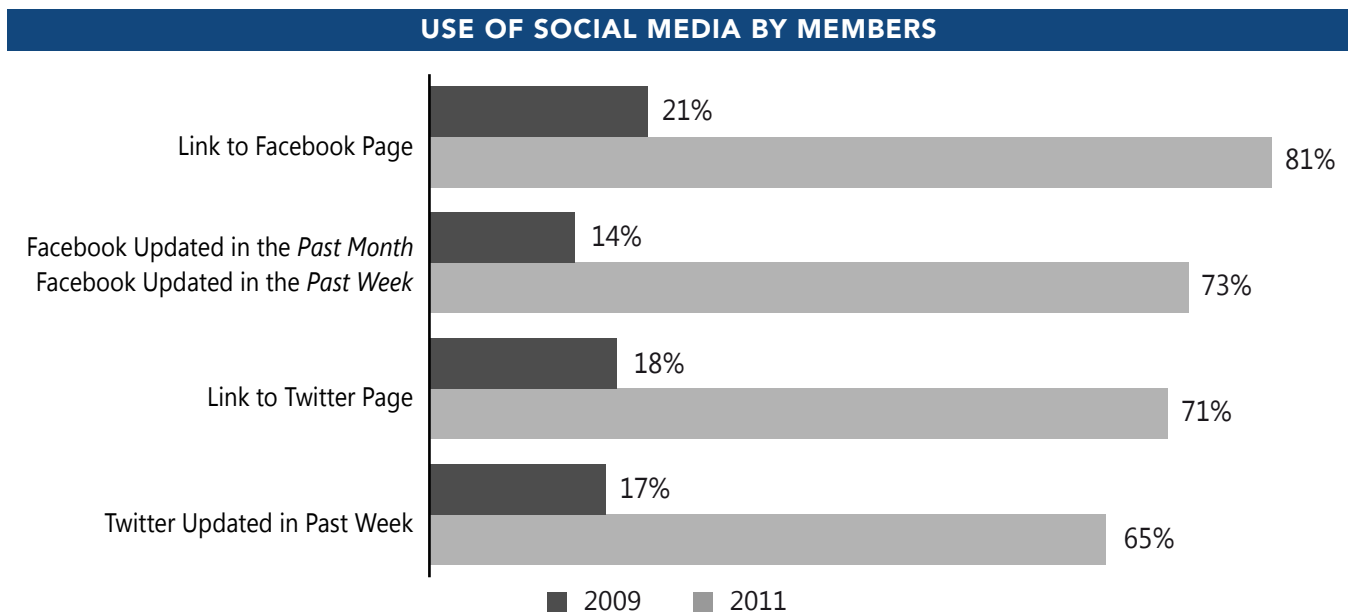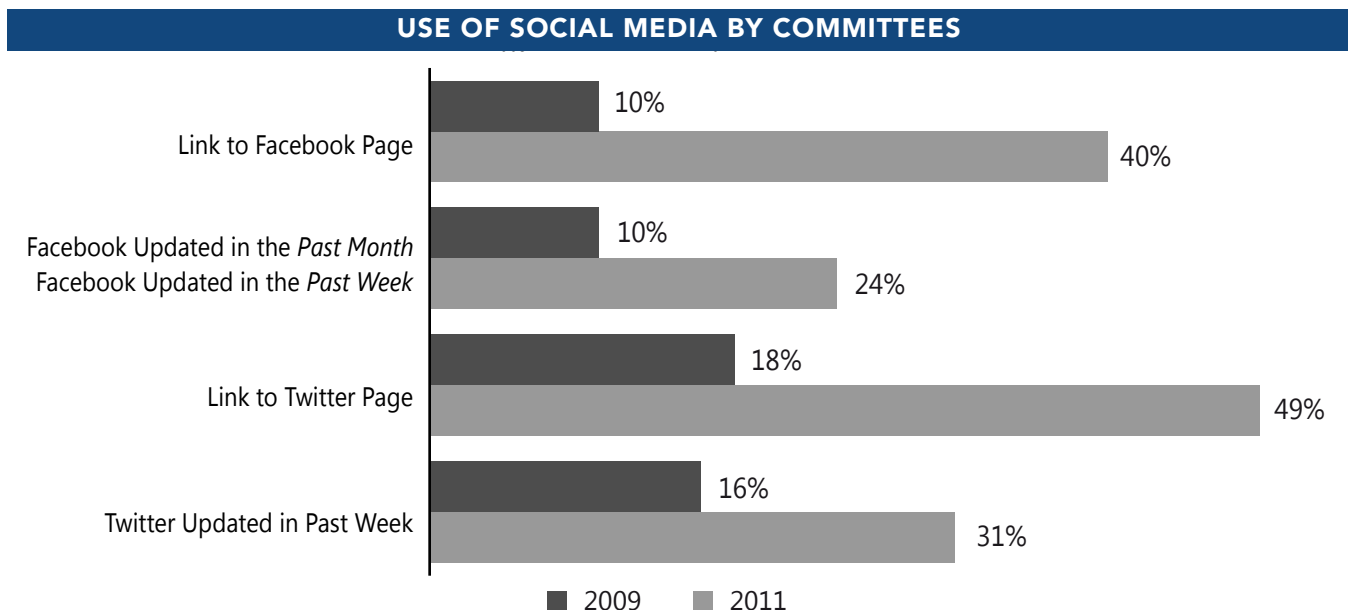
FIGURE 9

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY MEMBERS

	2009	2011
Link to Facebook Page	21%	81%
Facebook Updated in the *Past Month* / Facebook Updated in the *Past Week*	14%	73%
Link to Twitter Page	18%	71%
Twitter Updated in Past Week	17%	65%

FIGURE 10

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY COMMITTEES

	2009	2011
Link to Facebook Page	10%	40%
Facebook Updated in the *Past Month* / Facebook Updated in the *Past Week*	10%	24%
Link to Twitter Page	18%	49%
Twitter Updated in Past Week	16%	31%

5. **Democratic and Republican Member websites are generally similar in quality, although Democratic Members had a higher percentage of award-winning websites (with a grade of A).**

- 64% of Republican websites scored a C or higher, compared to 61% of Democratic sites. 20% of all Democratic websites scored an A, while 12% of Republican websites scored an A (Figure 11).
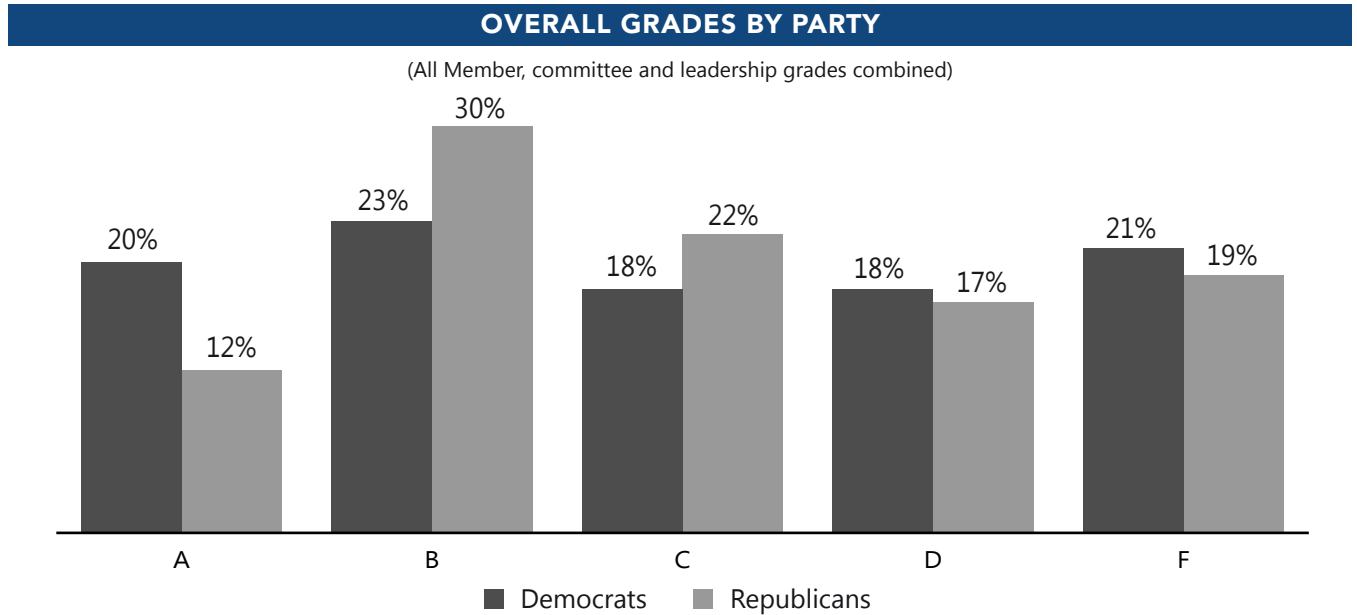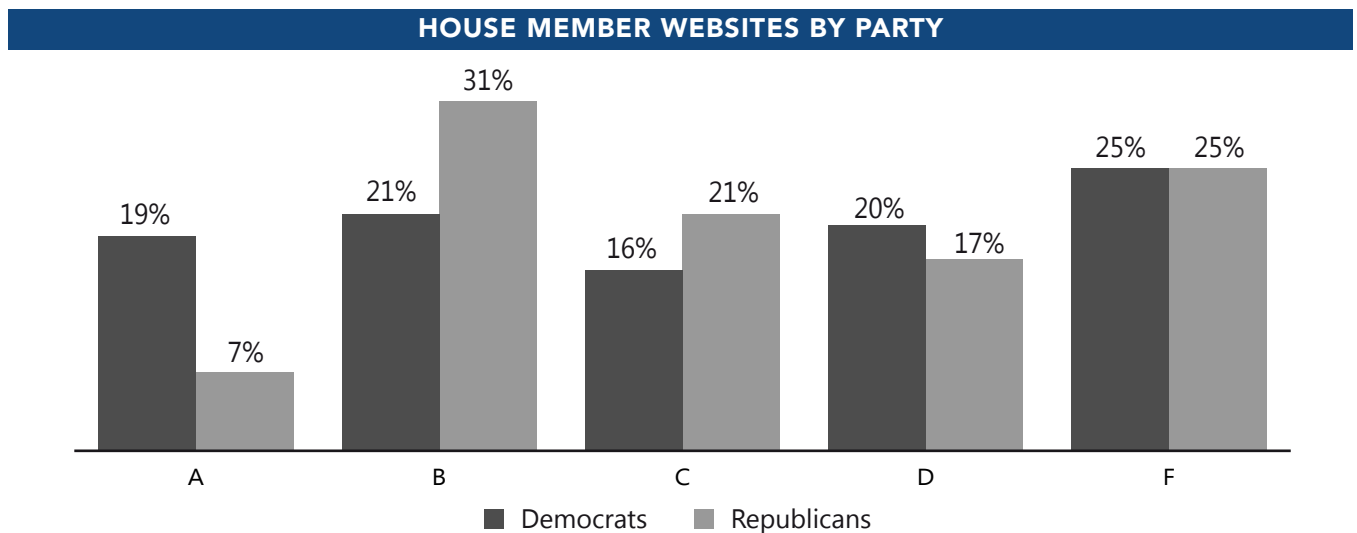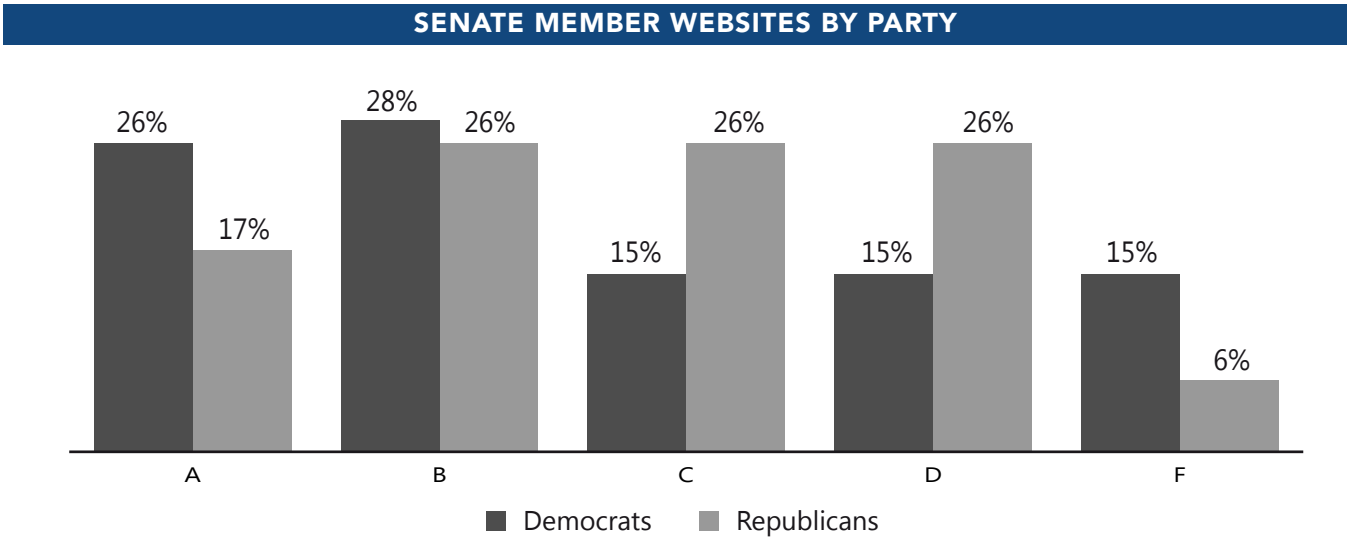
FIGURE 11

OVERALL GRADES BY PARTY

(All Member, committee and leadership grades combined)

Democrats | Republicans
A: 20% | 12%
B: 23% | 30%
C: 18% | 22%
D: 18% | 17%
F: 21% | 19%

FIGURE 12

HOUSE MEMBER WEBSITES BY PARTY

Democrats | Republicans
A: 19% | 7%
B: 21% | 31%
C: 16% | 21%
D: 20% | 17%
F: 25% | 25%

FIGURE 13

SENATE MEMBER WEBSITES BY PARTY

	A	B	C	D	F
Democrats	26%	28%	15%	15%	15%
Republicans	17%	26%	26%	26%	6%

■ Democrats ■ Republicans

FIGURE 14

HOUSE COMMITTEE WEBSITES BY PARTY

	A	B	C	D	F
Democrats	10%	10%	45%	15%	20%
Republicans	50%	32%	18%	0%	0%

■ Democrats ■ Republicans

FIGURE 15

SENATE COMMITTEE WEBSITES BY PARTY

	A	B	C	D	F
Democrats	14%	43%	24%	14%	5%
Republicans	0%	25%	50%	25%	0%

■ Democrats ■ Republicans

6. House committee websites saw a drastic swing in quality between parties, with Democratic committee sites dropping sharply and Republican committee sites rising sharply.

The turnover in the House in the 2010 elections clearly had an impact on committee website management. (Note: When party control switches in the House, the committee staff of the incoming majority has the option of taking over the previous majority committee's website, updating their former minority site, or creating a brand new site.) CMF research shows:

- The percentage of House Democratic committee websites graded A dropped from 43% in 2009 to 10% in 2011, while the percentage graded D or F rose from 0% to 35% (Figure 16). Researchers identified significant errors in these weaker sites, including the wrong congress noted (111th instead of 112th), press releases that were two years old, and in one case, continuing to refer to the Democrat as "Chair" rather than "Ranking Member."

- The percentage of House Republican committee websites graded A rose from 19% to 50%, while the percentage graded D or F dropped from 10% to 0% (Figure 17).
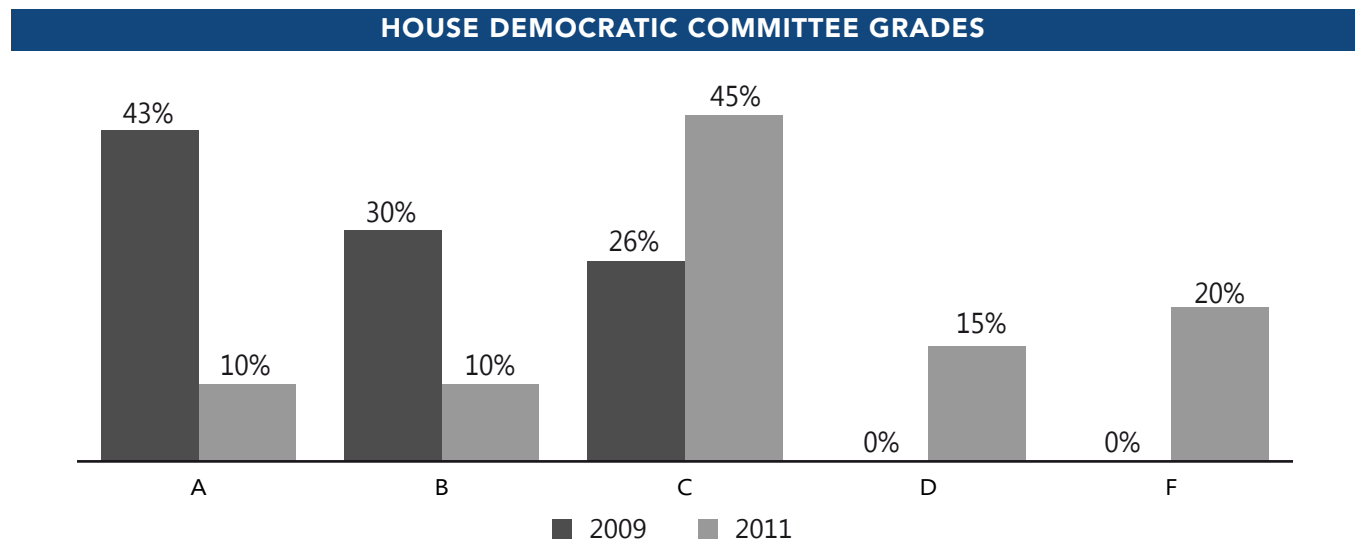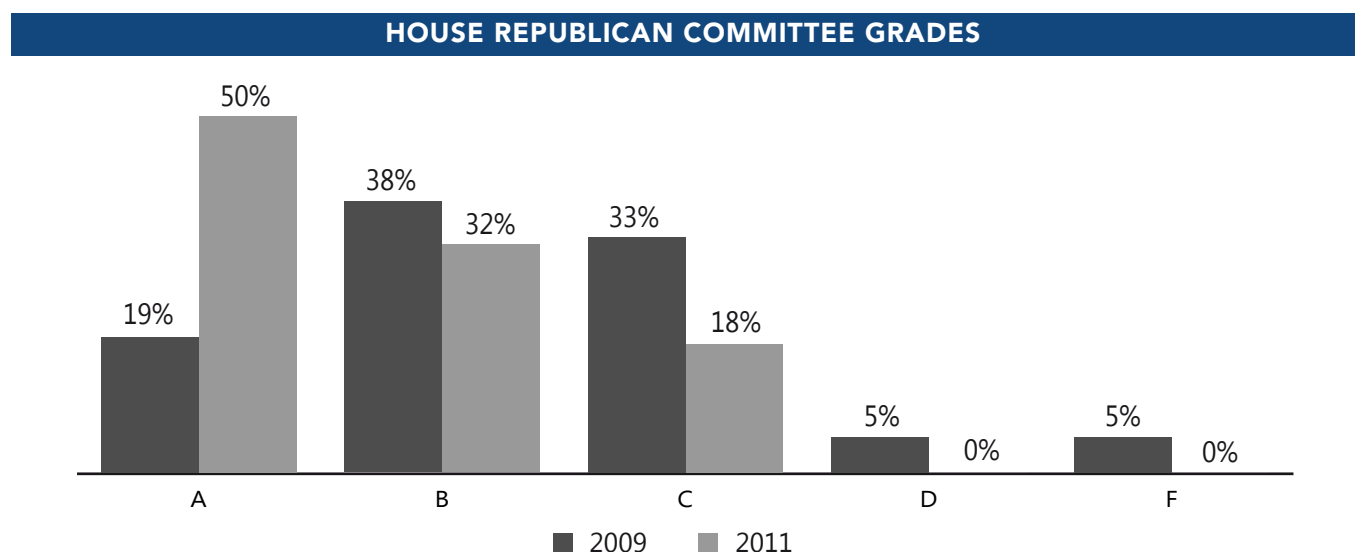
FIGURE 16

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE GRADES

FIGURE 17

HOUSE REPUBLICAN COMMITTEE GRADES

112th Congress Mouse Award Winners

SENATE MEMBERS

PLATINUM

Mark Begich (D-AK)

GOLD

Tom Carper (D-DE)
Mike Crapo (R-ID)
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
Mark Udall (D-CO)
Tom Udall (D-NM)

SILVER

John Cornyn (R-TX)
Orrin Hatch (R-UT)
Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)
Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Carl Levin (D-MI)
Richard Shelby (R-AL)
John Thune (R-SD)

BRONZE

Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)
Sherrod Brown (D-OH)
Ben Cardin (D-MD)
Christopher Coons (D-DE)
Bob Corker (R-TN)
Dick Durbin (D-IL)
Joe Lieberman (ID-CT)
Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)
Mark R. Warner (D-VA)

HOUSE MEMBERS

PLATINUM

Paul Ryan (R-WI)

GOLD

Ben Chandler (D-KY)
Jim Cooper (D-TN)
John D. Dingell (D-MI)
Frank Guinta (R-NH)
Mike Honda (D-CA)
Jim Langevin (D-RI)
Sandy Levin (D-MI)
Doris Matsui (D-CA)
Mike Michaud (D-ME)
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
Mike Ross (D-AR)
Mike Simpson (R-ID)
Jackie Speier (D-CA)
Mike Thompson (D-CA)

SILVER

Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)
Xavier Becerra (D-CA)
Diane Black (R-TN)
Michael E. Capuano (D-MA)
Ted Deutch (D-FL)
Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA)
Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI)
Joe Heck (R-NV)
Brian Higgins (D-NY)
Bill Huizenga (R-MI)
Jay Inslee (D-WA)
Steve Israel (D-NY)
Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)
Ed Royce (R-CA)
Steve Stivers (R-OH)
John F. Tierney (D-MA)

BRONZE

Jason Altmire (D-PA)
Karen Bass (D-CA)
Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)
John Boehner (R-OH)
Ann Marie Buerkle (R-NY)
Donna Christensen (D-VI)
Geoff Davis (R-KY)
Paul Gosar (R-AZ)
Gregg Harper (R-MS)
Steny Hoyer (D-MD)
Tim Huelskamp (R-KS)
Ed Markey (D-MA)
Brad Miller (D-NC)
George Miller (D-CA)
John W. Olver (D-MA)
Charles B. Rangel (D-NY)
Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)
Bobby L. Rush (D-IL)
Adam Schiff (D-CA)
David Scott (D-GA)
Steve Southerland, II (R-FL)
Pete Visclosky (D-IN)
Tim Walberg (R-MI)

COMMITTEES

PLATINUM

House Education and the Workforce
John Kline (R-MN)

GOLD

Senate Energy and Natural Resources
Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

House Natural Resources
Doc Hastings (R-WA)

House Small Business
Sam Graves (R-MO)

House Veterans' Affairs
Jeff Miller (R-FL)

SILVER

Senate Finance
Max Baucus (D-MT)

House Armed Services
Buck McKeon (R-CA)

House Budget
Paul Ryan (R-WI)

House Financial Services
Spencer Bachus (R-AL)

House Foreign Affairs
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)

House Natural Resources (Minority)
Ed Markey (D-MA)

BRONZE

Senate Judiciary
Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

House Agriculture
Frank Lucas (R-OK)

House Education and the Workforce (Minority)
George Miller (D-CA)

House Energy and Commerce
Fred Upton (R-MI)

House Rules
David Dreier (R-CA)

LEADERSHIP

PLATINUM

House Democratic Leader
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

GOLD

House Republican Conference
Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)

SILVER

Speaker of the House
John Boehner (R-OH)

BRONZE

House Majority Leader
Eric Cantor (R-VA)

House Democratic Whip
Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

FIGURE 18

AWARDS BY CATEGORY AND LEVEL

	PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE	TOTAL
HOUSE MEMBER	1	14	17	23	55
SENATE MEMBER	1	5	7	9	22
COMMITTEE	1	4	6	5	16
LEADERSHIP	1	1	1	2	5
TOTAL	4	24	31	39	98

FIGURE 19

AWARDS BY PARTY BY YEAR

	2002	2003	2006	2007	2009	2011
DEMOCRATS	13	30	36	59	75	59
REPUBLICANS	22	45	49	45	60	39

FIGURE 20

AWARD WINNER STATISTICS

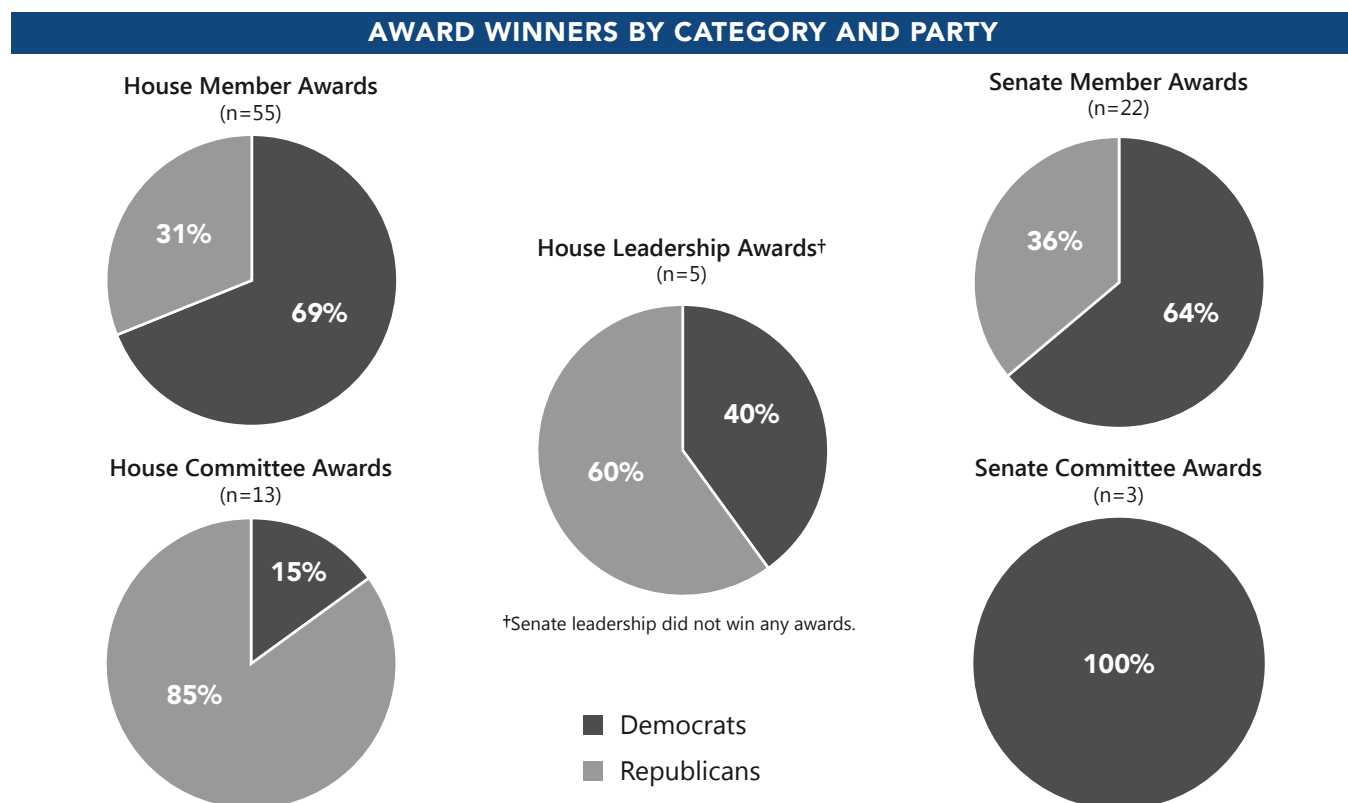|	
Members who won multiple awards (for Member site and committee or leadership site)	9
Members who won for the first time	36
Members who won in previous years	41
Members who have won 3 or more times	29
Members who won in 2011 whose sites were substandard (D) or failing (F) in 2009	11

FIGURE 21

AWARD WINNERS BY CATEGORY AND PARTY

House Member Awards (n=55)
31% 69%

Senate Member Awards (n=22)
36% 64%

House Leadership Awards† (n=5)
40% 60%

House Committee Awards (n=13)
15% 85%

Senate Committee Awards (n=3)
100%

†Senate leadership did not win any awards.

■ Democrats
■ Republicans

FIGURE 22

MULTI-YEAR MOUSE AWARD WINNING MEMBERS						
MEMBER OF CONGRESS	**2011**	**2009**	**2007**	**2006**	**2003**	**2002**
Rep. Jason Altmire (D-PA)	Bronze	Silver		n/a	n/a	n/a
Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)	Silver	Silver	Gold	Bronze		
Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-CA)	Silver	Bronze	Gold	Gold		
Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)	Bronze		Silver	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)	Bronze		Silver	Gold	Gold	
Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH)	Bronze	Gold				
Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)	Bronze	Silver		Bronze†		
Sen. Thomas R. Carper (D-DE)	Gold				Gold	
Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN)	Bronze	Silver		n/a	n/a	n/a
Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)	Silver	Silver	Gold	Bronze		
Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)	Gold	Silver	Silver			
Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)	Bronze	Gold			n/a	n/a
Rep. John Dingell (D-MI)	Gold	Gold	Bronze			
Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-IL)	Bronze	Bronze	Silver			
Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA)	Silver		Gold	Silver		
Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (R-UT)	Silver	Gold	Gold	Bronze		
Rep. Brian Higgins (D-NY)	Silver			Silver	n/a	n/a
Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)	Gold	Silver	Gold	Gold	Silver	Gold
Rep. Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD)	Bronze	Bronze	Silver			
Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX)	Silver				Silver	Gold
Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)	Silver	Platinum		Silver		
Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI)	Gold		Silver	Silver		
Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT)	Silver		Bronze	Gold	Gold	Gold
Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI)	Silver		Bronze	Silver		Silver
Rep. Sander Levin (D-MI)	Gold	Gold				
Sen. Joseph Lieberman (ID-CT)	Bronze	Bronze	Silver			
Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA)	Bronze		Gold	Bronze		
Rep. Michael Michaud (D-ME)	Gold	Gold				n/a
Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)	Gold	Platinum		Bronze		n/a
Rep. Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)	Silver	Silver	Silver	n/a	n/a	n/a
Rep. Charles B. Rangel (D-NY)	Bronze	Bronze				
Rep. Silvestre Reyes (D-TX)	Bronze	Silver		Silver		
Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)	Silver	Silver				
Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR)	Gold	Gold				
Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)	Silver	Gold		Silver		
Rep. Paul D. Ryan (R-WI)	Platinum	Silver	Gold			
Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA)	Bronze	Gold	Gold	Bronze		
Rep. David Scott (D-GA)	Bronze	Bronze	Silver			n/a
Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA)	Gold		Gold			
Sen. John Thune (R-SD)	Silver	Bronze	Gold	Bronze		Silver†
Sen. Mark Udall (D-CO)	Gold	Gold	Bronze†			

n/a = Member not in Congress. †Awarded for House Member website.

Senator Mark Begich (D-AK)

http://begich.senate.gov

Senator Mark Begich's (D-AK) website is the best Senate Member website of the 112th Congress. It serves as the online hub for information about and interaction with the Senator's office.

Senator Begich's website gives users easy and clear online access to the work of the Senator. The Senator's daily schedule of meetings is posted on the homepage, and users can view an interactive timeline of the Senator's travels in rural Alaska. The "Services" section includes guidance and information on the myriad ways the office can assist constituents, including Alaska-specific resources. The "Priorities" section of Senator Begich's website includes his voting record and sponsored and cosponsored legislation. Each issue page includes related legislation, resources, documents, and even the staff members working on the issue.

Senator Begich's website goes beyond excelling at the basics of a good website. It also allows users to connect to the Senator's office in a variety of ways. Constituents can fill out a webform to participate in telephone town halls, and links to and regular updates on Twitter and Facebook, an active YouTube channel, social bookmarking tools, and even a Ustream (a live video service) channel make the office accessible to users regardless of their preferred platform.

Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI)

http://paulryan.house.gov
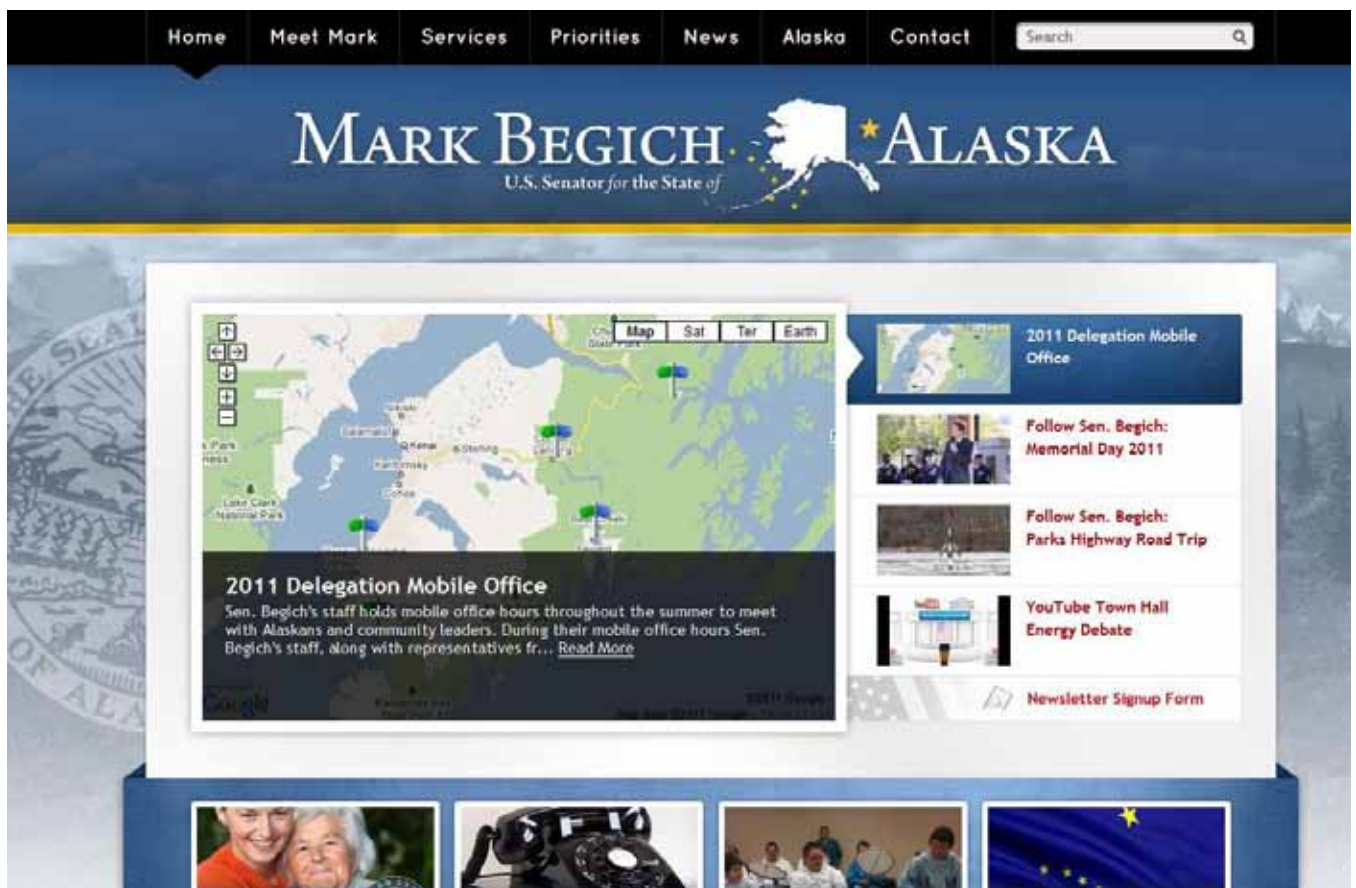
Congressman Paul Ryan's (R-WI) website is the best House Member website of the 112th Congress. It illustrates how a Representative's website can serve as an online office that's open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Congressman Ryan's website offers up resources clearly, consistently and comprehensively. The topics in the "Issues" section include details and up-to-date information on the views and actions of the Congressman as well as links to the latest articles, press releases and statements on the topic. His site also includes a "Top 5 Issues of the Week" section for users interested in the most pressing issues. Users can also view videos created by the office to explain the Congressman's view on the budget.

The website is not just a clearinghouse for information; it also facilitates engagement with Congressman Ryan. The "Listening Session Schedule" is kept up-to-date for constituents who want to attend. Whether a user wants to schedule a meeting, receive casework assistance, or connect to the office via YouTube, Facebook or Twitter, the website provides clear guidance and/or links to interact with Congressman Ryan's office.

Previous Awards:

2009 **Silver Mouse**

2007 **Gold Mouse**

Committee on
Education and the Workforce
Chairman John Kline (R-MN)

http://edworkforce.house.gov

The House Committee on Education and the Workforce website is the best committee website of the 112th Congress. It exemplifies how the extensive work and information produced by a congressional committee can be presented online in a valuable and easy-to-use format.

The website goes beyond simply housing the committee's hearings schedule and press releases to provide important and meaningful content to users. Committee votes, witness testimonies, fact sheets, legislative compilations, and live and archived webcasts are organized and accessible on the website. Users can easily find committee markups, committee votes, and bills assigned to the committee. The "Issues" section also serves up all the information on a specific topic, from related hearings to official correspondence with related agencies.

The Committee on Education and the Workforce also takes advantage of the capacity of the Internet to connect to citizens. The "Meet the Members" section includes videos from Members of the committee. Users can watch a welcome video from Chairman Kline, send a message to the committee via webform, watch committee videos on YouTube, subscribe to an e-newsletter or the site's RSS feed, and follow news from the committee on its regularly updated Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Previous Awards:

2009 Gold Mouse
(Minority)

House Democratic Leader
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

http://www.democraticleader.gov

The House Democratic Leader website is the best leadership website of the 112th Congress. It shows that a leadership website can provide a wide variety of information and interaction while also being clear and usable.

With reports, speeches, articles, fact sheets, and videos, the House Democratic Leader's website provides users with a full range of content produced by the office. The "Issues" and "Communities" sections allow users to see information related to the topics that interest them.

Democratic Leader Pelosi's website also allows users to interact with content and media from the office in multiple ways. The website has an active blog that allows comments (a rare occurrence in congressional websites), Twitter and Facebook presences, videos on YouTube, pictures and graphics on Flickr, as well as an RSS feed and a contact form. Users can view the latest from the blog, Twitter, Facebook, and News Room right on the homepage, and choose between three different types of e-newsletter subscriptions.

Previous Awards:

2009 Silver Mouse

2007 Silver Mouse

(both for leadership website)

Characteristics of an Award-Winning Member Website

The winners of the Mouse Award set the bar for congressional websites and take full advantage of all the unique opportunities the Internet provides. They create online offices that are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. But what does it take to make an award-winning Member website? Every website that earned an A grade and received a Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze Mouse Award excelled in most, if not all, of the areas outlined in this section. (Following each description is a link to an award winner's website that highlights this characteristic.)

INFORMATION ON ISSUES

What are the issues before Congress? What issues are important to the Member and/or district/state, and what is being done on those issues?

Users are always going to be interested in the Member's stance on national issues, and the way the Member voted on high-profile legislation. The personality, interests and priorities of the Member and the district or state should be reflected on the website. The depth and quality of the information provided on each issue are also important. To the extent appropriate, the Member's position on national issues should be specific, perhaps referencing major proposals by party or Executive Branch leadership. Explanations of votes should be clear, but brief – offering a degree of accountability. And write-ups, videos or other communications on Member priorities should offer some degree of detail about the impact of the proposals on the district, state, or nation.

(Note: CMF has encountered Members and staff who have suggested that offering any level of detail on a Member position, vote or priority is politically disadvantageous – that, in essence, the office is offering up "opposition research" which could be used against the Member in a political campaign. Ironically, the opposite is true. Members who display a degree of transparency and accountability not only better serve their constituents, they *benefit* politically by applying a degree of honesty and clarity to their work. Moreover, in an Internet-dominated political age, if a Member does take a controversial position on an issue, it is reasonable to assume that a political opponent could easily access it – whether or not it is posted on the Member's website.)

Award-Winning Example: Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

TIMELINESS

Is the information on the Member's website up-to-date?

Users go online for the most current information, so it is essential to keep Members' online presence (website and social media) up-to-date. Updates should be done on a weekly basis at a minimum – daily if a major debate is occurring on the floor of the chamber and making news in the home district or state. If the latest information in the issues section is more than a year old, and the list of the Member's sponsored and cosponsored legislation is from the previous Congress, it can significantly impact the credibility of the entire website in the eyes of the user. Also, generic statements with no reference to recent actions, such as "I support a quality education," can frustrate users and harm the credibility of the Member. The content of the entire website need not be rewritten every few months to accomplish this. For example, it can be as simple as adding the latest press release or floor statement on a topic to the appropriate issues page, and ensuring that all legislative links point to the current session of Congress.

Award-Winning Example: Sen. Tom Carper (D-DE)

USABILITY

Can users navigate the Member's website and find what interests them even if they have never used the site before?

Visitors should be able to move quickly and smoothly through a Member's website using the navigation tools, menu options and links on the website. Consistency and clarity are crucial as they are the most important contributions to an easily navigable site. Tools which contribute to a very usable website include: a functional search engine, a site map, clear menus and sub-menus, scannable and hyperlinked content, and "breadcrumbs" that indicate what specific section of the site the user is in and how they got there.

Award-Winning Example: Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

CONSTITUENT SERVICES AND CASEWORK

What services can the Member provide and how does the process work?

Member offices should provide online access to the full range of information, services and resources that are requested by constituents offline, reaching a wider audience than the physical office normally reaches. Constituents are not always familiar with what they can ask of their Member. It is just as important to describe how or why a constituent can use a service as it is to supply the service itself. The most critical aspect of online constituent services is giving as much substantive guidance and information as possible so constituents can serve themselves through the website. Simply posting a PDF of a privacy release form is of limited value – explain what the form is for and what users should do with it. FAQ's about the types of casework and specific links to descriptions of the most common problems and solutions can help constituents resolve problems while lightening the load of office staff. Other resources that can be included on the Member's website include: tour information and request forms, flag ordering information and request forms, internship and Service Academy Nomination applications and instructions, grant information, and guidance on scheduling a meeting with the Member or staff. Fortunately, most of the drafting of this content need only be done once, and does not require significant updating unless policies change.

Award-Winning Example: Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY TO CONSTITUENTS

What is the Member doing in Congress?

A fundamental tenet of representative democracy is that elected officials should be accountable to their constituents. Member websites can be one of the most important tools a legislator uses to demonstrate accountability. A Member website should contain information on the Member's legislative activity, work and duties. This could include: a list of the legislation the Member has sponsored and cosponsored (or a link to the appropriate page on THOMAS with that information); the Member's voting record; and the basic legislative duties and responsibilities of the Member and the office. Member websites that list every roll call vote, how the Member voted, and the outcome of the vote in an easy-to-read format provide users with a view of the work of the Member of Congress. Websites that pull out and highlight key votes on high-profile legislation and explain why the Member voted the way they did raise the bar for accountability and transparency.

Award-Winning Example: Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS INFORMATION

How does Congress and the legislative process work?

Member offices can do constituents a great service by increasing their understanding of the legislative process. Member websites should provide users with basic and readily-available educational information on how a bill becomes a law, the roles and responsibilities of a Member of Congress, and how Congress operates. By providing a level of detail, this content not only provides a "civics lesson" to constituents, it helps them understand the complexities of government in a way that might make them better appreciate the challenges Congress faces in wrestling with difficult issues.

Award-Winning Example: Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle (R-NY)

DISTRICT/STATE INFORMATION

Is there information specifically for and about the district or state?

Member websites should include information about, or of concern to, the part of the country the Member of Congress represents (as it relates to the activities, actions and accomplishments of the Member and of Congress). The district/state information most users are looking for on a congressional site is census information, a map of the district, and relevant legislative work and constituent services information. Also, anticipating the needs and requests of a prominent or unique demographic in the district or state can go a long way toward making the website a useful resource for all key audiences.

Award-Winning Example: Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA)

FLOOR PROCEEDINGS

What is going on in Congress?

Most citizens are not familiar with what is going on in Congress or the schedule it keeps. Some people think when Congress is in "recess" the Members are all on vacation (a significant misperception). Including the chamber schedule, current floor proceedings and links to the *Congressional Record* on a Member website gives citizens an idea of congressional activities. The most current information about Congress does not need be created and maintained by the office. Linking to, or incorporating information from, the Library of Congress, the Clerk of the House or the Secretary of the Senate, and leadership offices can ensure the timeliness and usefulness of a site without overloading staff.

Award-Winning Example: Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)

DIVERSITY OF COMMUNICATIONS CONTENT

Can users access a diverse array of media content created by the office?

All of the media that the congressional office produces is suitable for a Member website. This content includes: press releases, op-eds by the Member, floor speeches, committee activities, proposed legislation, and statements, speeches or videos to particular constituent interest groups. These communications can be used to keep constituents up-to-date with the Member's most recent activities, actions and accomplishments, and are most helpful and relevant for all users when they are presented by topic as well as by date.

Award-Winning Example: Rep. Mike Ross (D-AR)

DIVERSITY OF COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

Can users interact and connect with the Member's office through diverse communications channels?

Users are increasingly expecting their online experiences to be interactive, and are expecting to access information on the platforms they are most comfortable with. Member websites should serve as a bridge to these different platforms and allow users to connect to the Member's office in a variety of ways. These communications channels include, but are not limited to: robust website content, a way to share web pages with others, RSS feeds, online polls or surveys, links to a regularly updated Facebook or Twitter page, and YouTube videos. Congressional websites 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.

Award-Winning Example: Rep. Steve Stivers (R-OH)

INNOVATIVE FEATURES

As CMF combed through every congressional website, our researchers occasionally came across innovative features that deserve to be highlighted and shared with other offices. The following chart links to 10 examples of how Members of Congress are innovating online.

NAME	FEATURE
Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM)	Provides a list of the most common topics of communications, along with the methods by which you can get your message to the Senator, including a "live chat" option with staff.
Rep. Elton Gallegly (R-CA)	Posts the "Question of the Week," picking one question from a constituent to publicly answer.
Sen. Mary Landrieu (D-LA)	"Meet My Team" highlights her staff with short biographies and their role in the office.
Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA)	"LeeTV media player" allows users to pick an issue and watch videos of the Congresswoman speaking about that issue.
Rep. David Loebsack (D-IA)	A survey asks users what they think are the most important issues facing Congress.
Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK)	"How Frank's Bill Became a Law" uses actual legislation he introduced as an example to illustrate how bill becomes a law.
Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-MO)	"Help with the Federal Government" allows users to view the resources available to them by issue, by federal agency, and by location.
Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA)	"Constituent Success Stories" share real life examples of casework and their outcome.
Rep. Pete Olson (R-TX)	Each topic in the Issues section includes a form that allows users to share their views on the topic with the office.
Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM)	"Video Votes" has videos of the Senator explaining how he voted on high-profile legislation.

Characteristics of an Award-Winning Committee or Leadership Website

Some overlap exists between the characteristics of an award-winning Member website and those of award-winning committee and leadership sites. For example, timeliness and usability are essential, regardless of the type of website. In addition to general advice noted below, it is essential for each committee and leadership office to examine its goals, priorities, audiences and stakeholders. As a result of that examination process, committee and leadership offices will target specific audiences and stakeholders, tailoring content to meet their audience's needs, and make available online all of the resources and information provided by the physical office.

INFORMATION CATERED TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Who are our key stakeholders and can they find information tailored to their various needs?

The different audiences and stakeholders for committee and leadership offices can be roughly broken down into four general groups: users on the Hill, professionals off the Hill, the press, and the general public. As much as possible, committee and leadership offices should provide information and resources for all of these groups. Committees and leadership also may determine that separate sections of their websites, with customized content for a particular audience, are the best way to meet the audience or stakeholder need and interest.

Committees: For members of the press and citizens, committee websites should provide information and resources that orient them to the work of the committee and explain the issues and bills before the committee. For congressional staffers and professionals in the areas under the committee's jurisdiction, committee websites should provide documents, reports and other information and resources that would be of interest to users with knowledge of the committee and its work.

Award-Winning Example: Senate Finance Committee, Chairman Max Baucus (D-MT)

Leadership offices: Websites maintained by members of the congressional leadership often have different missions. The Speaker or Minority Leader sites are the "public faces" of that party's congressional leadership, while the Majority Leader and Minority Whip may have significant responsibilities to internal stakeholders such as Members and staff. Leadership websites should provide daily updates for these stakeholders and recognize that they are likely the *definitive* source for information on any given topic. For members of the press and citizens, leadership websites should provide information and resources that orient them to the leadership office's role in Congress and the work it does, and explain the office's activities and priorities. For congressional staffers and professionals, leadership websites should provide documents, reports and other information and resources that would be of interest to users with knowledge of the leadership office and its work.

Award-Winning Example: House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

CONTENT BASED ON ROLE OF OFFICE IN CONGRESS, RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER OFFICES, STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC

How does the office work, who are its stakeholders, and what are its policy issues and activities?

Committee and leadership offices should provide users with educational information that illustrates the jurisdiction the committee has in Congress, or the role the leadership office plays in Congress, as well as the full scope of its issues and activities.

Committees: Website content should include educational information about the committee, information about the committee's legislative and other official activities, and any other appropriate content based on the jurisdiction of the committee. Educational information includes committee jurisdiction; committee members; committee rules; subcommittees (if applicable); how the committee works; historical information about the committee; and, most important, information related to hearings and mark-ups by the committee. Information on activities includes lists of bills assigned, documents, relevant reports and publications, committee votes, hearing schedules and archives, timely witness statements, hearing transcripts, video of hearings (live and archived), and press releases and statements by members of the committee.

Award-Winning Example: Senate Judiciary Committee, Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

Leadership offices: Website content should include educational information about the leadership office, information about the leadership office's official activities and functions, and any other relevant content based on the leadership office's role in Congress. The issues the leadership office deals with and activities related to them should be provided. If there are resources or information that are routinely requested of the office, they should be easily accessible online in a format that meets the needs of stakeholders. Information about the leadership position, the leader, issues, legislation, calendars, and reports are all examples of content leadership offices should provide online.

Award-Winning Example: House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA)

INTERACTIVITY

Can users interact with the office and access the office's activities?

Committee and leadership offices should allow for users to interact with the office online in a variety of ways and serve up content in a way that facilitates information sharing, encourages users to learn more about the office, and informs users about activities. Offices should go beyond merely posting the latest press release and give users the opportunity to keep abreast of and interact with the labors of the office.

Committees: Committees should give users a variety of ways to learn about and interact with the office, whether it is simply webcasts of committee hearings, a webform to communicate with the office, an online poll or survey, other videos that explain the issues, or email updates or newsletters.

Award-Winning Example: House Small Business Committee, Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO)

Leadership offices: Interactive features for leadership sites include videos from the office, contact information, online polls or surveys, webforms and other ways to communicate with the office, and email updates or newsletters about the office's issues and related activities.

Award-Winning Example: Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH)

INNOVATION

Does the website take advantage of new ways to connect with citizens?

Like Member offices, committee and leadership offices should look for ways to connect with users on the platforms they use most frequently. Websites should serve as a bridge to these different platforms and allow users to connect to the office in a variety of ways. Because leadership and committee offices often have unique roles in Congress, anything they can do to leverage the unique capabilities of the Internet to accomplish their goals and carry out their work is encouraged. Congressional websites can play a particularly important role in fostering interaction with citizens by keeping them informed and building strong online relationships with visitors.

Committees: Innovative features for committee websites include: an interactive calendar, a section for citizens to give input on a specific bill or issue before the committee, and RSS feeds and e-newsletters that are customizable based on the interests of the user. More standard examples include links to a regularly updated YouTube, Facebook or Twitter page, and social bookmarking tools.

Award-Winning Example: House Natural Resources Committee, Chairman Doc Hastings (R-WA)

Leadership offices: Innovative features for leadership websites include customizable e-newsletters based on the issues and types of information of interest to users and active bloggers. Leadership websites should connect with their audiences through features such as RSS feeds, and links to YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages, or social bookmarking tools. Leadership websites also are in the best position to "package" hot topics or major pieces of legislation, condensing the information into vehicles easy for users to understand. Additionally, these websites can offer creative methods for citizens to interact with the party leadership, either through polls or webforms.

Award-Winning Example: House Republican Conference, Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)

Methodology

In 2011, with the assistance of our research partners at Northeastern University, University of California–Riverside, and The Ohio State University, CMF conducted an extensive evaluation of all congressional websites in the 112th Congress. This section outlines our research process for conducting these comprehensive evaluations accurately and objectively.

DEVELOPING THE CRITERIA

Since 2001, CMF has conducted extensive research into what constitutes an effective congressional website and, prior to each evaluation year, the criteria are updated and refined to reflect current and evolving technology and practice standards. Our research included focus groups with constituents; interviews with Members of Congress and management, legislative, administrative, support, and technical staff from the House and Senate; industry research; interviews with technology experts and representatives of social media companies; surveys of political reporters and advocacy groups; and in-depth evaluations of past and present congressional websites. Through this research, we determined that successful websites follow five core principles, which are:

1. Know your audience(s).
2. Provide timely and targeted content that meets their needs.
3. Make the site easy to use.
4. Foster interaction both on and offline.
5. Add value through innovation.

We used these principles to develop specific criteria. Member websites were judged on 92 criteria in the following broad categories. The 66 committee criteria and 53 leadership criteria fell into most of these broad categories as well, but were adjusted to reflect their unique roles. For more information, see "Characteristics of an Award-Winning Member Website" on page 24 and "Characteristics of an Award-Winning Committee or Leadership Website" on page 28.

1. Usability
2. Timeliness
3. Information on Issues
4. Constituent services and casework
5. Promoting Accountability to Constituents
6. Legislative Process Information
7. District/State Information
8. Floor Proceedings
9. Media Communication
10. Communication Technology

Our evaluations focused solely on the official websites of Congress and the experience and expectations of a typical end-user. We did not review or assess the following, which were outside the scope of this project:

- Politics, policies, or positions.
- Intranet, institutional, support, or Member or staff organization websites.
- Adherence to accessibility standards and the rules of their respective chambers.
- Back-end design or technical components of the website.
- Congress's online presence independent of their official websites.

EVALUATION PROCESS

For the 112th Congress, CMF evaluated 618 congressional websites: 100 Senate Member sites, 438 House Member sites, 67 majority and minority committee sites, and 13 leadership sites. Member websites were evaluated between June 22 and August 16, 2011. Committee and leadership sites were evaluated between August 3 and September 2, 2011.

To ensure fairness and accuracy, the five researchers went through several rounds of training to ensure that they assessed the site and judged each criterion – especially the qualitative ones – reliably, within a reasonable margin of error. The training included everything from ensuring that all evaluators used the same browser to ensuring that all evaluators consistently judged the difference between a "4" rating and a "5" rating. After extensive training, the researchers received a randomly generated list of websites and evaluated them in that order. For quality assurance, their work was then reviewed by our research partners and senior CMF staff.

SCORING THE WEBSITES

Member Websites

After evaluating all 538 Member websites (including those of all House and Senate Members, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner), the resulting data was analyzed by chamber with the assistance of our academic research partners. Using statistical factor analysis on the collected data, a preliminary numeric score was assigned to each website. Extra credit was then given to sites that scored above average in timeliness, issue content, usability and constituent casework, resulting in a final numeric score. The final numeric scores were translated into letter grades and then into the Mouse Award categories as shown in Figure 23.

Committee and Leadership Websites

Since there are fewer committee and leadership sites, and because these sites have distinctly different audiences and purposes (depending upon their role in Congress), committee and leadership sites were subjected to a somewhat different analysis process than the Member sites. Committee and leadership websites were divided into classes based on their target audiences and their scores were weighted based on the information their target audiences expected. The numeric scores were translated into letter grades and then into the Mouse Award categories as shown in Figure 23.

For a more extensive explanation of the methodology used to evaluate, rank and award the Gold, Silver and Bronze Mouse Awards, please review our "Detailed Methodology" posted on CongressFoundation.org.

FIGURE 23

AWARD LEVELS BY LETTER GRADE	
PLATINUM	#1 SITE (A+)
GOLD	A+
SILVER	A
BRONZE	A-

About the Gold Mouse Awards

Since 2001, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) has assessed the quality of congressional websites and recognized the best with our Congressional Gold Mouse Awards. Through partnership with foundations and academic institutions across the country, the project has resulted in extensive research, focus groups, training programs, briefings, individual consultations, reports and roundtables all to accomplish the goals of the project.

The goals of the project are to:

- Investigate how Members and staff use best and innovative practices in their websites and Internet communications;

- Determine how Members of Congress can use the Internet to enhance communication with citizens and promote citizen engagement; and

- Identify best and innovative practices for congressional website and technology use that can be more widely adopted by congressional offices and help Congress function more effectively.

The project began as a two-year program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and conducted jointly by CMF and The George Washington University's Graduate School of Political Management as the "Congress Online Project." It resulted in two sets of awards and reports:

- "Congress Online: Assessing and Improving Capitol Hill Websites" (published January 2002)
- "Congress Online 2003: Turning the Corner on the Information Age" (published March 2003)

The Congressional Gold Mouse Awards continued as part of the broader research project "Connecting to Congress," which was funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Digital Government program. The project was the result of a partnership between CMF and the Harvard Kennedy School, University of California-Riverside, and The Ohio State University. It resulted in two sets of awards and reports:

- "2006 Gold Mouse Report: Recognizing the Best Websites on Capitol Hill" (published February 2007)
- "2007 Gold Mouse Report: Lessons from the Best Websites on Capitol Hill" (published January 2008)

Since 2009, our partnership has continued with researchers at the Harvard Kennedy School, Northeastern University, University of California-Riverside, and The Ohio State University, and has been funded through private donations. It resulted in two sets of awards and reports:

- "111th Congress Gold Mouse Project" (published April 2010)
- "112th Congress Gold Mouse Awards: Best Practices in Online Communications on Capitol Hill" (published October 2011)

Acknowledgments

Evaluating the 618 House and Senate Member, committee and leadership websites of the United States Congress is a daunting task. This report is the culmination of a year-long project which seeks to help Congress improve its online communications by identifying best and innovative practices that can be more widely adopted by House and Senate offices. None of this could have been accomplished without an extraordinary amount of dedication and hard work from a large group of contributors. Fortunately, every member of our project team contributed their enthusiasm, knowledge and professionalism to make this project a success.

CMF thanks our academic partners: Dr. David Lazer (Northeastern University), Dr. Michael Neblo (The Ohio State University), and especially Dr. Kevin Esterling (the University of California-Riverside), who was essential in synthesizing the complex evaluation and analysis process in a way that makes it easy to understand. The willingness of all of our research partners to assist us in this project is a testament to their commitment to our objective: ensuring that the Internet becomes a tool for creating a better Congress.

CMF also would like to thank the authors of this report: Collin Burden, Nicole Folk Cooper and Bradford Fitch. Collin Burden also served as project manager, juggling a variety of demands in an expert fashion. CMF's former Director of Communications and Technology Services, Tim Hysom, was instrumental in planning and executing the evaluations. We also acknowledge previous CMF staff, who created the grading system and research structure that are the building blocks for this project, especially Rick Shapiro, Kathy Goldschmidt and Beverly Bell. Additionally, Judy Schneider of the Congressional Research Service offered invaluable insight on the handling of committee and leadership websites.

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This project is part of CMF's *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*, an initiative that seeks to improve communications, the relationship and understanding between citizens and Congress. We thank the Founding Partners of the *Partnership*: **AT&T**, **Convio**, **Fleishman-Hillard** and the **Hansan Family Foundation**.

About the Congressional Management Foundation

Founded in 1977, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry. Our work focuses on improving congressional operations and enhancing citizen engagement through research, publications, training and management services.

IMPROVING CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS

CMF works internally with Member offices, committees, leadership, and institutional offices in the House and Senate to foster improved management practices. From interns to Chiefs of Staff to Members themselves, CMF provides services adapted to the unique congressional environment, including:

- **Management books and guidance**, including our signature publication *Setting Course*, *Keeping It Local* for district and state offices, the *Congressional Intern Handbook*, and staff employment studies.

- **Customized management services**, such as strategic planning, teambuilding, executive coaching, mail workshops and complete office assessments.

- **Staff training and professional development**, including programs for senior managers, courses on writing constituent correspondence, webinars for district/state staff, and an orientation workshop for the aides of Members-elect.

ENHANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

CMF's *Partnership for a More Perfect Union* is a center dedicated to enriching the relationship between citizens and Congress by comprehensively addressing the communications challenges faced by both sides. The goal of the *Partnership* is to further meaningful civic engagement through education, re-establishing trust, and providing innovative yet pragmatic tools to facilitate purposeful two-way communication. Ongoing programs include:

- **Communicating with Congress Project**, improving communications between Congress and citizens.

- **Gold Mouse Awards**, recognizing the best online communications on Capitol Hill.

- **21st Century Town Hall Research**, examining and enhancing online and offline forums.

- **Inside the Hill**, offering a behind-the-scenes look at how technology is changing the way Congress works.

To learn more about CMF and the *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*,
please visit **http://CongressFoundation.org**.

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