Connecting Members of Congress and their Constituents to the Legislative Process: Congress.gov
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Program Description

In support of Congress and in collaboration with the Clerk of the House, the Secretary of the Senate, the Government Publishing Office (GPO), and others, the Library of Congress coordinates a legislation branch-wide network to provide Members of Congress, their staff and their constituents legislative information that is:

- accessible,
- accurate,
- authoritative,
- authorized,
- available,
- efficiently produced,
- comprehensive,
- findable,
- integrated,
- machine readable,
- timely, and
- well-organized.
Each House may determine the Rules of its proceedings...

Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgement require Secrecy; and the Yeas and the Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall be entered on the Journal.

Article 1, Section 5
In 1914, within the Library of Congress, Congress established the predecessor agency to CRS, the Legislative Research Service (LRS, predecessor to CRS).

To “employ competent persons to gather, classify, and make available…data for or bearing upon legislation, and to render such data serviceable to Congress and committees and Members.”
In 1935, Congress directed and funded LRS to prepare Bill Digests and for them to be made publicly available.
The House, Senate, Library of Congress and Government Printing Office each initiated efforts to develop software solutions that supported their respective missions and operational needs…
1995 – First Release of the publicly available THOMAS website
Program Description, Historical Roots (1990s)

The Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration have indicated that there are several instances where Congressional information systems may be generating or tracking duplicate information.

H. Rept. 103-517 accompanied P.L.103-283, Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1995

...The Library of Congress should consult with and enlist the support of House Information Systems, Senate information collection and processing entities, GPO, GAO, and other appropriate legislative agencies...

H Rept. 104-141
Program Description, Historical Roots (1990s)

U.S. Code
§ 180. Legislative information retrieval system
(a) Purpose
...reduce the cost of information support for the Congress by eliminating
duplication among systems which provide electronic access by Congress to legislative information.

(b) "Legislative information" defined
..."legislative information" means information, prepared within the legislative branch, consisting of the text of publicly available
bills, amendments, committee hearings, and committee reports, the text of the
Congressional Record, data relating to bill status, data relating to legislative
activity, and other similar public information that is directly related to the legislative process.

(c) Development of single system to serve entire Congress
...the Library of Congress or the entity designated by that plan shall develop and maintain, in coordination with
other appropriate entities of the legislative branch, a single legislative information
retrieval system to serve the entire Congress.

(d) Development and approval of plan
....to identify and eliminate redundancies in congressional information systems...must be
approved by the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, the Committee on House Oversight of the House of Representatives, and the
Committees on Appropriations of the Senate and the House of Representatives. ...provide ...regular status reports on the development of the plan.

(e) Availability of information to public
.....shall examine issues regarding efficient ways to make this information available to the public.

The Congressional Research Service “…in consultation with the Secretary of the Senate and the heads of the appropriate offices and agencies of the legislative branch, shall coordinate the development…", and the "... Library of Congress shall...provide technical staff and resources as may be necessary."

1997 - First Release of LIS, a Congress-only Legislative Information System
Program Description, Historical Roots (2000-2007)

2006 - Last major release of LIS
Program Description, Historical Roots (2008-2010)
Program Description, Need for Modernization

Ctrl-Alt-Delete
Program Description, Need for Modernization from: 

“Spaghetti Code”
Program Description, Need for Modernization to:
Program Description, Modernization to Congress.gov

Starting
9/26/2014

BETA.CONGRESS.GOV
“Beta” becomes the new “Congress.gov”

You can still find LIS at LIS.GOV

Legislative information at your fingertips
CONGRESS.GOV
MOBILE • OFFICIAL • SHAREABLE

Features include bills and laws, alerts, the Congressional Record, saved searches, executive actions, committee videos, and more

THOMAS.GOV RETIRES JULY 5
You can still find LIS at LIS.GOV
Program Goals

- Every Year:
  - 24x7 system availability
  - Attentive, trusted, and high value

- For 2018:
  - Retirement of Legacy systems
  - Next set of priorities are established
Content, Primary Collections

- Legislation
- Legislation Text
- Congressional Record
- Committee Reports
- Nominations
- Treaty Documents
- Communications
Content, The Legislative Process
Content, The Legislative Process
S.524 - Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016
114th Congress (2015-2016) | Get alerts

**Summary: S.524 — 114th Congress (2015-2016)**

There are 3 summaries for S.524. Passed House amended (05/13/2016)

Bill summaries are authored by CRS.

**Shown Here:**
Passed House amended (05/13/2016)

TITLE I—PAIN MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE

(Sec. 101) This bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to convene a Pain Management Best Practices Inter-Agency Task Force to: (1) review, evaluate, and update best practices for pain management and increasing pain medication and control of pain and facilitate the need for development of, and availability of...
Partnerships and Collaborations

HOUSE
- Members
- Officers
- Committees

SENATE
- Members
- Officers
- Committees

GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
- Congressional Research Service
- Law Library
- Chief Information Officer
- Library Services
- National and International Outreach

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
Services

- Legislative Analysis and Summarizing of Bills (~16,000/Congress)
- Enhancement and Q/A of House and Senate data
- E-mail help desk support – Congress and for the Public
- Training: “train the trainers,” video’s, webcasts
- Educational Outreach
- Systems Life Cycle Support
Users and Usage: Service to Congress

- **Primary User Groups:**
  - Members of Congress
  - Secretary of the Senate and House Clerk Staff
  - Congressional staff (Committee’s and Member Offices)
  - CRS staff (Policy and Legislative Analysts; Information Specialists)
  - Beginners, new Congress.gov users

- **Usage Statistics:**
  - Congress.gov vs. Legacy LIS
  - Daily and Repeat Usage
  - Most Popular Pages
  - How they visit us
Users and Usage: Service to the Public

- Policy analysts and political scientists
- Law librarians
- Lawyers
- Civil society groups and transparency advocates
- Journalists and media
- Data analysts, data scientists
- Legal scholars, historians, researchers
- Undergraduate, graduate students (including law students)
- K-12 teachers
- Concerned citizens (communities and individuals)
- Lobbyists
- Curious citizens
Sustainability

PEOPLE

DATA

PROCESSES

TECHNOLOGY

SUBSTAINABILITY
Future Directions and Challenges

Complete the Initial Modernization
Future Directions and Challenges

US and International Data Initiatives

- **U.S. Code in USLM (United States Legislative Markup) XML**
  - The Office of Law Revision Counsel released downloadable XML files, the schema, and a user guide in 2013

- **Markup of U.S. Legislation in Akoma Ntosa**
  - Library of Congress sponsored data challenges to draft and transform Congressional bill texts into Akoma Ntosa in 2015

- **Bill Status Data in XML**
  - House, Senate, GPO and LOC made bill status data available in bulk XML in 2015
  - [https://www.congress.gov/about/data](https://www.congress.gov/about/data)
Future Directions and Challenges

Work with Congress and others on prioritizing:

- Personalization
- Geospatial?
- Bill Comparison?
- Historical Collections?
- ….
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