

NALIT Award Nomination, May 2010

Please discuss the role and purpose of the site.

(Limit 100 words)

Designed for many audiences, the site helps sophisticated legislators and staff in creating legislation and aiding constituents. In addition, it welcomes and promotes citizen use.

We stress navigation to bring together disparate sources of information to record a full picture of legislative activities and help users understand the process.

The site coordinates information from all legislative offices, including official documents (statutes, laws, bills), reports, databases, member information, and caucus information. Coverage is as recent as floor amendments two minutes ago, and as old as legislator biographies from 1858 and the laws they passed.

Please Identify recent changes, modifications and renovation made to the site and discuss the reasons for those changes.

(Limit 100 words)

The new portal page was developed to reach all the areas of the complex site.

A combined legislative calendar displaying House, Senate and joint office meetings was developed to save searching time.

Mouse-over bill information makes research quicker. Hover over a House file on this page:

<http://snipurl.com/w67ua>

Twitter feeds and YouTube videos reach new audiences.

Improvements to legislative history research are constant, incremental. Examples: veto messages linked from session laws; subject and history links from statute sections, <http://snipurl.com/w67qe> ; audio/video links from House committee minutes, <http://snipurl.com/w67s4> .

To add historical context online, Legislative Time Capsule pages gather statistics by biennium.

<http://snipurl.com/ui332>

How does your site help make the legislative process user friendly?

The Combined Legislative Calendar shows all legislative hearings and meetings.

Email lists and RSS feeds keep users informed, and social networking tools reach new users. <http://snipurl.com/w69gi> Twitter feeds from the House, Senate, and Legislative Library have many followers. The Senate even features YouTube clips.

For “real people” help, the main page “contact us” link leads to phone numbers.

Bill searching is simple yet has the power to perform complex full text searches.

User-friendliness was mentioned in a 2010 CITY PAGES award: "It's clean, efficient, and intuitive. So quit your bitching—here's at least one thing government is doing right." <http://snipurl.com/w648j>

How does your site enhance the image of the legislative institution?

(Limit 100 words)

Citizen trust is built on transparency and openness. Providing vast resources in easy-to-use ways promotes participation in government.

Our ongoing commitment to retaining archived materials and adding historical information builds a trustworthy record.

Citizens benefit from research done by staff for legislators. Examples: House Research reports, <http://snipurl.com/w66qf> ; Legislative Auditor Program Evaluations, <http://snipurl.com/w66yk>; Library Issue Guides, <http://snipurl.com/t9n2j> .

Seeing the process provides accountability, with comprehensive live House and Senate audio and video. Archived meetings are available within hours and retained permanently.

Posting several editions of Minnesota Statutes and all historical session laws enhances the reputation of the Legislature in the legal community.

What have you done to make your site accessible to users with disabilities?

(Limit 100 words)

Enhanced CSS style sheets make the site much easier to use for people with screen readers and who use keyboard navigation, and this was recognized by a 2009 Civil Service and Civic Engagement Award for our Legislative Networking Group from the Commission for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans.

Comprehensive audio and video of legislative proceedings (with archives) serve citizens whose disabilities prohibit them from visiting in person.