

Comparison of Legislative Resources on *GPO Access* and Selected Government and Non-Government Web Sites

October 2003

A review of the legislative information available through *GPO Access* as compared to the legislative information available on other relevant free Government and fee-based Non-Government Web sites was conducted. The various Web sites were analyzed in comparison to the current legislative resources available on *GPO Access*. The following factors were evaluated in this legislative comparison:

- The availability of *GPO Access* resources on somewhat parallel Web sites
- The scope of those resources
- The source of those resources
- Additional legislative resources and features exclusive to comparable Web sites.

In-depth comparisons and analyses were conducted on four Government Web sites: *GPO Access*, THOMAS (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>), the House of Representatives Web site (<http://www.house.gov>), and the Senate Web site (<http://www.senate.gov>). These analyses were also conducted on three commercial, fee-based Internet services: Lexis-Nexis (<http://www.lexisnexis.com/>), Congressional Quarterly (<http://www.cq.com>), and WestLaw (<http://westlaw.com>).

The comparative analysis yielded the following key findings:

- *GPO Access* has the greatest total number of legislative resources among those measured.
- All Government Web sites, with the exception of *GPO Access*, link to other Web sites to augment some of their content.
- House.gov and Senate.gov link to the vast majority of their resources rather than creating their own applications.
- House.gov primarily points to THOMAS to augment their information, as opposed to *GPO Access*.
- Senate.gov predominantly links to both *GPO Access* and THOMAS for majority of their legislative resources.
- *GPO Access* and all the Non-Government Web sites do not link to any other Web site for legislative resources.
- The scope (range of years covered) of most *GPO Access* resources is surpassed by:
 - Lexis-Nexis
 - WestLaw
 - THOMAS
- *GPO Access* and CQ.com legislative resources are somewhat comparable in scope, as CQ.com only offers all legislative resources from 1995 forward.
- Lexis-Nexis, WestLaw, CQ.com, and THOMAS offer additional legislative resources and features not offered on *GPO Access*.

Available Online Resources

The findings of this comparative analysis were based upon comparative reviews of *GPO Access* and selected Government and commercial Web sites for 29 *GPO Access* legislative resources. This study does not differentiate between multiple methods of accessing the same base of information. For example,

Congressional Bills are counted as only one legislative resource, even if access to them is provided through both a key word search and a list of major legislative topics.

Below is the list of these legislative resources compared.

- *Cannon's Precedents*
- *Congressional Bills*
- *Congressional Committee Prints*
- *Congressional Directory*
- *Congressional Documents*
- *Congressional Hearings*
- *Congressional Pictorial Directory*
- *Congressional Record*
- *Congressional Record Index*
- *Congressional Reports*
- *Deschler's Precedents*
- *Economic Indicators*
- *GAO Comptroller General Decisions*
- *GAO Reports*
- *Hind's Precedents*
- *History of Bills*
- *House Calendars*
- *House Journal*
- *House Practice*
- *House Rules and Manual*
- *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *Public and Private Laws*
- *Riddick's Senate Procedure*
- *Senate Calendar of Business*
- *Senate Manual*
- *U.S. Code*
- *U.S. Constitution*
- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*

Availability of GPO Access Resources

This category discusses the number of *GPO Access* legislative resources contained on each site compared.

Government Web Sites

Among the *GPO Access* legislative resources compared, no other Government site contained all of the resources available via *GPO Access*. House.gov provides access to only 18 of the 29 resources analyzed. Senate.gov contains even fewer of the resources compared, with a total of 13. Finally, THOMAS offers access to only 14 *GPO Access* legislative resources.

There are seven resources exclusive to *GPO Access*. No other Government site provides access to the following legislative resources:

- *Economic Indicators*
- *GAO Comptroller Decisions*
- *GAO Reports*
- *House Journal*
- *House Rules and Manual*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *U.S. Government Policy and Supporting Decisions*

While House.gov does not offer the aforementioned, it also does not provide access to several other prominent *GPO Access* legislative resources. These include: *Riddick's Senate Procedure*, *Senate Calendar of Business*, *Senate Manual*, and the *U.S. Code*.

Senate.gov fails to make available a number of additional resources that some of the other Government sites offer. These include: *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hind's Precedents*, *History of Bills*, *House Practice*, *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*.

Finally, THOMAS also lacks several *GPO Access* resources that are available on either Senate.gov, House.gov or both. These include: *Cannon's Precedents*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hind's Precedents*, *House Practice*, *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*, *Riddick's Senate Procedure*, *Senate Manual*, and the *U.S. Code*.

The tables below present a summary comparison of the number of *GPO Access* legislative resources on each service:

***GPO Access* compared to
Government Web sites:**

<i>GPO Access</i>	29
House.gov	18
Senate.gov	13
THOMAS	14

GPO Access and Non-Government Web Sites

Among the *GPO Access* legislative resources compared, no Non-Government site contained all of the resources available on *GPO Access*. Lexis-Nexis offers access to only 13 of the 29 resources analyzed. WestLaw contains even fewer of the resources compared, with a total of eight. Finally, CQ.com provides access to fewer still, with a total of seven *GPO Access* legislative resources.

There are 13 resources exclusive to *GPO Access*. No Non-Government site provides access to the following legislative resources:

- *Cannon's Precedents*
- *Congressional Record Index*
- *Deschler's Precedents*
- *Hind's Precedents*
- *House Calendars*
- *House Journal*
- *House Practice*
- *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *Riddick's Senate Procedure*
- *Senate Calendar of Business*
- *U.S. Constitution*
- *U.S. Government Policy and Supporting Positions*

In addition, Lexis-Nexis currently does not provide access to a few other *GPO Access* resources. They include: *Economic Indicators*, *GAO Comptroller Decisions*, and *GAO Reports*.

Moreover, WestLaw fails to offer several resources that are presented on one or both of the other Non-Government Web sites. These include: *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *History of Bills*, *House Rules and Manual*, and *Senate Manual*.

Finally, CQ.com lacks a number of supplemental *GPO Access* resources that exist on Lexis-Nexis, WestLaw, or both. These include: *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Documents*, *Economic Indicators*, *GAO Comptroller Decisions*, *GAO Reports*, *House Rules and Manual*, *Public and Private Laws*, *Senate Manual*, and *U.S. Code*.

The table below presents a summary comparison of the number of *GPO Access* legislative resources on each service:

***GPO Access* compared to
Non-Government Web sites:**

<i>GPO Access</i>	29
Lexis-Nexis	13
Westlaw	8
CQ.com	7

In summary, no Government or Non-Government Web site supplies access to all of the legislative resources that are made available on *GPO Access*. Approximately, 30% more resources are found on *GPO Access* than the competing site with the greatest number of *GPO Access* resources. Additionally, there are three resources that are exclusive to *GPO Access*. No comparable Government or Non-Government Web site houses the following resources other than *GPO Access*:

- *House Journal*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*

** More detailed information concerning the *GPO Access* legislative resources of particular services is provided on the attached tables.

Scope of Resources

This category of comparison discusses the scope of both Non-Government and Government legislative resources. In this report “scope” is defined as follows:

- The range of years or sessions of Congress covered by a legislative resource.

For reading ease, scope will largely be referred to as range of coverage in this report.

Government Web sites:

GPO Access continues to maintain and update its legislative resources, although *GPO Access* does not go back and add historical information that has not already been covered. The Government Printing Office is mandated to maintain an electronic directory of Federal electronic information, provide a system of online access to the *Congressional Record*, the *Federal Register*, and other appropriate publications, and operate an electronic storage facility for Federal electronic information. Under the mandate, *GPO Access* is required to keep Federal information current, official, and free. The information provided on *GPO Access* is the official, published version, and the information retrieved can be used without restriction, unless specifically noted. None of the other compared Web sites offer the official, published version. For these reasons, *GPO Access* does not backtrack and post old information. The scope of current *GPO Access* legislative resources can be noted in the attached tables.

Of the legislative resources on the House site, seven of them have larger ranges of coverage than *GPO Access*. These include: *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Record*, *History of Bills*, *Public and Private Laws*, and *U.S. Constitution*. *GPO Access* surpasses the range of coverage of the House site in four legislative resources: *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Record Index*, and *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*. Both sites have the same coverage in seven legislative resources: *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Reports*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hind's Precedents*, *House Calendars*, and *House Practice*. A detailed table of legislative resources and ranges of coverage is attached. (*Note: Many of the resources on House.gov link directly to GPO Access or THOMAS. Detailed information is provided in the “Sources of Resources” section to follow.*)

The range of coverage of Senate.gov is larger than three legislative resources of *GPO Access*: *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Record*, and *Public and Private Laws*. *GPO Access* has a larger range of coverage in four legislative resources: *Congressional Record Index*, *Senate Calendar of Business*, *Senate Manual*, and *U.S. Constitution*. Six resources on Senate.gov have the same range of

coverage as *GPO Access: Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Reports, House Calendars, Riddick's Senate Procedures, and U.S. Code*. (Note: Many of the resources on *Seante.gov* link directly to *GPO Access* and/or *THOMAS*. Detailed information is provided in the "Sources of Resources" section to follow.)

Of the *THOMAS* legislative resources, ten of them beyond the range of coverage of *GPO Access: Congressional Bills, Congressional Committee Prints, Congressional Directory, Congressional Documents, Congressional Record, History of Bills, House Calendars, Public and Private Laws, Senate Calendar of Business, and U.S. Constitution*. *GPO Access* outreaches *THOMAS'* range in two databases: *Congressional Hearings* and *Congressional Record Index*. Both sites have the same coverage in two legislative resources: *Congressional Pictorial Directory* and *Congressional Reports*. Specific dates and legislative resources can be noted in the attached tables.

Non-Government Web sites:

Lexis-Nexis provides greater ranges of coverage in eight legislative resources: *Congressional Bills, Congressional Committee Prints, Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Pictorial Directory, Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, and Public and Private Laws*. *GPO Access* surpasses the coverage of Lexis-Nexis in four legislative resources: *History of Bills, House Rules and Manual, Senate Manual, and U.S. Code*. Both Web sites have equal coverage in one resource: *Congressional Documents*.

Of all of the WestLaw resources, five of them beyond the range of coverage of *GPO Access: Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, Economic Indicators, GAO Comptroller Decisions, and Public and Private Laws*. *GPO Access* outreaches WestLaw in three resources: *Congressional Bills, GAO Reports, and U.S. Code*. Moreover, *GPO Access* and WestLaw do not cover equal ranges of years for any resource.

As compared to *GPO Access*, three legislative resources on CQ.com reach beyond the range of coverage of *GPO Access: Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, and Congressional Pictorial Directory*. *GPO Access* surpasses three legislative resources also offered on CQ.com: *Congressional Bills, Congressional Record, and History of Bills*. Also, *GPO Access* and CQ.com both cover *Congressional Reports* equally.

To conclude, *GPO Access* has a larger total scope than one site: *Senate.gov*. All of the above numbers are based on the definition of "scope" as presented above and are based exclusively on *GPO Access* legislative resources offered on comparable sites. Conversely, all other Non-Government and Government Web sites surpass the range of coverage of *GPO Access* legislative resources. As previously noted, in accordance with the mandate, *GPO Access* is only required to keep legislative resources current. Retroactive information on *GPO Access* is not a stipulation under the mandate. While many resources are noted as being equal in range of coverage, it is important to note that in many cases, this is due to the fact that various compared sites link to *GPO Access* and other sources of information.

Sources of Resources

This category of the comparative analysis discusses whether the legislative resources on a compared Web site are produced and/or housed by the sponsoring organization, or whether they are provided through links to another Web site, such as *GPO Access*. When evaluating the legislative resources of the sites compared in the study, one measurement used to evaluate the legislative information was whether the legislative resource was housed on the provider's server or linked to another source. As a result,

educational and library Web sites were excluded from this comparison due to their heavy reliance on other Web sites for their basic content.

Most Web sites included in this analysis contained a substantial amount of their own legislative resources, and several also provided links to other Web sites to augment their content. House.gov, Senate.gov and THOMAS all link to other sites as well as house their own legislative resources. Each Non-Government Web site houses all of its own content.

Government Web sites:

Six legislative resources on House.gov link to *GPO Access: Cannon's Precedents, Congressional Pictorial Directory, Deschler's Precedents, Hind's Precedents, House Calendars, and House Practice*. House.gov links to THOMAS for nine legislative resources: *Congressional Bills, Congressional Documents, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record, Congressional Record Index, Congressional Reports, History of Bills, Public and Private Laws, and U.S. Constitution*. House.gov contains three of its own legislative resources and a total of 15 that link to other sites.

Four legislative resources on the Senate.gov link exclusively to *GPO Access: Congressional Directory, House Calendars, Riddick's Senate Procedure, and U.S. Code*. Senate.gov links to *GPO Access* and THOMAS for five additional legislative resources: *Congressional Bills, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, and Public and Private Laws*. Conversely, Senate.gov links only to THOMAS for one resource: *Congressional Record Index*. Senate.gov has a total of three of its own legislative resources and 10 that are linked to other Web sites.

THOMAS links to *GPO Access* for two legislative resources: *Congressional Directory and Congressional Pictorial Directory*. However, in the case of *Congressional Directory*, THOMAS also links to Senate.gov and House.gov. THOMAS links to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Web site for the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, THOMAS links to individual Congressional Committee Web sites for *Congressional Hearings*. THOMAS has a total of 10 legislative resources that are contained on its site and a total of four that link to other sites.

Non-Government Web sites:

Along with *GPO Access*, Lexis-Nexis, WestLaw, and CQ.com do not link to any other Web site for their content of the legislative resources compared. In fact, *GPO Access* is the only Government site compared that is not linked to another site for any legislative resource.

The following table identifies the legislative resources on each Web site that rely on links to *GPO Access* or another site:

Web Site	Resources that link to GPO Access	Resources that link to Thomas	Resources that link to Senate.gov	Resources that link to House.gov	Resources that link to NARA	Resources that link to Congressional Committee Web sites
THOMAS	Congressional Directory, Pictorial Directory		Congressional Directory	Congressional Directory	U.S. Constitution	Congressional Hearings
House.gov	Cannon's Precedents, Congressional Pictorial Directory, Deschler's Precedents, Hind's Precedents, House Calendars, House Practice	Congressional Bills, Congressional Documents, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record, Congressional Record Index, Congressional Reports, History of Bills, Public and Private Laws, U.S. Constitution				
Senate.gov	Congressional Bills, Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, House Calendars, Public and Private Laws, Riddick's Senate Procedure, U.S. Code	Congressional Bills, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record, Congressional Record Index, Congressional Reports, Public and Private Laws				

In summary, *GPO Access* is the only Government Web site analyzed in this comparison analysis that provides access to all 29 of the compared resources without linking to any other Web site. Furthermore, House.gov and Senate.gov link to other sites, mainly *GPO Access* and THOMAS, for the majority of their resources. While THOMAS does provide the majority of its own resources, it does in fact, link to *GPO Access*, House.gov, Senate.gov, and NARA for some additional information. In contrast, all comparable Non-Government Web sites provide their own resources.

Additional Legislative Resources and Features Exclusive to Comparable Web Sites

This category of comparison discusses legislative resources and features not available on *GPO Access*, but offered on other comparable Web sites.

Non-Government Web sites:

House.gov offers two legislative resources that are not available as individual resources on *GPO Access*: *Committee Schedules* and *Floor Votes*.

Senate.gov provides access to two resources not offered on *GPO Access*: *Committee Schedules* and *Floor Votes*.

THOMAS offers a number of legislative resources that are not available as individual resources on *GPO Access*. These include: *Committee Markups*, *Committee Schedules*, and *Congressional Roll Call Votes*. Additionally, THOMAS offers several features also not available on *GPO Access*. These include a bill-tracking feature and also a “hot” bills feature as well.

Government Web sites:

Lexis-Nexis has numerous legislative resources not offered by *GPO Access*. These include: *Committee Markups*, *Committee Votes*, *Committee Membership*, and *Statutes At Large*. Furthermore, a number of features not available via *GPO Access* are offered by Lexis-Nexis: bill tacking reports and Congress Daily.

WestLaw provides access to one unique feature that *GPO Access* has not made available: U.S. Code popular name table.

There are various legislative resources made available on CQ.com that are not accessible via *GPO Access*. These include: *Committee Markups*, *Committee Rosters*, *Committee Testimony*, *Committee Votes*, *Floor Votes*, and *House Action Reports*.

To conclude, while many of the legislative resources mentioned above can be found within other *GPO Access* resources, they are not available as separate applications. *Voting Records (Floor Votes, Roll Call Votes, Committee Votes)* are available from most of the comparable Non-Government and Government Web sites. While there are a few legislative resources not available on *GPO Access* that can be accessed on other Web sites, *GPO Access* remains the leader in total number of legislative resources.

Conclusion

As the following tables reveal, a major strength of *GPO Access* is its number of online legislative resources. Also, no comparable Government or Non-Government Web site houses the *House Journal*, *Independent Counsel Investigations*, or *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions* other than *GPO Access*.

While *GPO Access* is behind many of the Web sites in this study in terms of the scope of its legislative resources, these differences are largely due to the discrepancies in the objectives of *GPO Access* and the other Web sites in this study. When GPO expands its coverage of current and archival information from any branch of Government, it must devote its efforts and legislative resources to serving the greatest number of people, in line with its mandate, rather than tailoring its services to a specific user base, as many of the other Web site are able to do, or compromising the official nature of its content by changing information.

Moreover, all of the compared Government Web sites link to *GPO Access* and/or other sites for their legislative resource content. *GPO Access* and all of the Non-Government sites do not link to any other site for legislative resources.

Taking note of subsequent analyses, it is apparent that *GPO Access* is still lacking a few of the resources that most other comparable Web sites offer. On the other hand, *GPO Access* does provide some of the information contained in such resources, however the information is found within other various *GPO Access* applications.

The attached tables and graphs represent the data that was gathered and used to make the observations in this report. This data includes a comparison of 29 *GPO Access* legislative resources and their scope or the site linked on each of the seven Web sites.