

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

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Executive Summary

The goal of this study is to compare legislative information available on *GPO Access* to that available on selected, relevant Government Web sites and non-Government sites. This analysis compares two separate source bases of Government information to what currently resides on *GPO Access*. The first includes legislative resources available on external, free Government sites that provide resources to the public at no cost. The second includes legislative resources available on non-Government, commercial, fee-based Web sites. Specifically, this report will examine the following:

- The availability of legislative resources on all of the databases examined
- The scope of the resources on each database
- The source of those resources
- Additional legislative resources and features exclusive to comparable Web sites.

Analyses and comparisons were executed on four Government Web sites including *GPO Access*, the House of Representatives Web site (<http://www.house.gov>), the Senate Web site (<http://www.senate.gov>), and THOMAS (<http://thomas.loc.gov/>). The commercial, fee-based Internet services evaluated were CQ.com (<http://www.cq.com>), HeinOnline (<http://heinonline.org/>), Lexis-Nexis *Congressional** (<http://academic.lexisnexis.com/online-services/congressional>), and Westlaw (www.westlaw.com/).

The comparative analysis yielded the following key findings:

- *GPO Access* has the largest total number of legislative resources among those evaluated.
- All Government Web sites, with the exception of *GPO Access*, utilize at least some external content by linking to other Web sites.
- On House.gov and Senate.gov, most of the legislative resources link to other Web sites to supplement their information.
- House.gov and Senate.gov mostly link to *GPO Access* rather than THOMAS to supplement their information, and in some cases link to both external services.
- THOMAS links to House.gov for a very small amount of resources.
- The scope (number of years covered) of most resources on *GPO Access* is exceeded by the following:
 - House.gov
 - THOMAS
 - Lexis-Nexis
 - HeinOnline
 - CQ.com

* To be referred to hereafter as Lexis-Nexis only throughout this document.

- Non-Government Web sites possess their own content, but in a very small number of cases will supplement that information with a link to *GPO Access*, and in one case, a link to a Library of Congress site.
- Lexis-Nexis, CQ.com, Senate.gov, and THOMAS offer a significant amount of additional legislative resources and features not offered on *GPO Access*.

Available Online Resources

Analysis was based on comparative reviews of *GPO Access* and selected Government and commercial Web sites for 34 *GPO Access* legislative resources. This study does not differentiate between multiple methods of accessing the same base of information. For example, *Congressional Bills* is counted as a single legislative resource, even if access to the resource is provided through both a keyword search and a list of major legislative topics. Below is the list of legislative resources compared:

- *9-11 Commission Final Report*
- *Cannon's Precedents*
- *Congressional Bills*
- *Congressional Committee Prints*
- *Congressional Directory*
- *Congressional Documents*
- *Congressional Hearings*
- *Congressional Pictorial Directory*
- *Congressional Record, Bound*
- *Congressional Record*
- *Congressional Record Index*
- *Congressional Reports*
- *Deschler's Precedents*
- *Economic Indicators*
- *GAO Comptroller General Decisions*
- *GAO Reports*
- *Hinds' Precedents*
- *History of Bills*
- *House Calendars*
- *House Journal*
- *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*
- *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*
- *State of the Union*

- *Statutes at Large*
- *United States Code*
- *U.S. Constitution*
- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)*
- *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*

Five resources are new to *GPO Access* since they were last evaluated in 2003.* New resources include the following:

- *9-11 Commission Final Report*
- *Congressional Record, Bound*
- *State of the Union*
- *Statutes at Large*
- *U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual*

Availability of *GPO Access* Resources

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

GPO Access and Government Web Sites

Among the legislative resources on *GPO Access* measured in this study, no other Government site contained all of the resources available on *GPO Access*. House.gov offers 21 of the 34 resources compared. THOMAS offers access to 15 of the 34 resources, while Senate.gov offers even fewer with 13 resources.

The following 11 items are exclusive to *GPO Access*, meaning that they are not located on any of the other Government Web sites:

- *9-11 Commission Report*
- *Congressional Record, Bound*
- *Economic Indicators*
- *GAO Comptroller Decisions*
- *GAO Reports*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *Senate Manual*
- *State of the Union*
- *Statutes at Large*
- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)*
- *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*

* Previous reports available online at <http://fedbbs.access.gpo.gov/library/compare/>.

While House.gov does not offer the above-mentioned resources, it also does not offer several other significant *GPO Access* legislative resources. These include *Riddick's Senate Procedure* and the *Senate Calendar*. These two resources are available on Senate.gov, however.

While THOMAS does not provide access to the 11 legislative resources exclusive to *GPO Access*, it also does not provide *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hind's Precedents*, *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*, and *Riddick's Senate Procedure*. However, these can be located on Senate.gov, House.gov, or both.

Finally, Senate.gov does not provide access to the 11 exclusively available *GPO Access* legislative resources. In addition, the site also does not provide access to *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hind's Precedents*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *House Journal*, *House Practice*, *House Rules and Manual*, and *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*.

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

GPO Access	34
House.gov	21
THOMAS	15
Senate.gov	13

GPO Access and Non-Government Web Sites

Among the legislative resources on *GPO Access* that were compared, no other non-Government site contained all of the resources that are available on *GPO Access*. Lexis-Nexis offers 15 of the 34 resources compared. Westlaw and CQ.com each offer access to 13 of the 34 legislative resources. HeinOnline provides access to the fewest, with a total of 6 *GPO Access* legislative resources available.

The following items are exclusive to *GPO Access*, meaning that they are not located on any of the non-Government Web sites:

- *Deschler's Precedents*
- *Economic Indicators*
- *Hinds' Precedents*
- *House Journal*
- *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents, and Procedures of the House*
- *House Rules and Manual*
- *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *Riddick's Senate Procedure*
- *State of the Union*
- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)*
- *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*

While Lexis-Nexis does not provide access to the *GPO Access* legislative resources mentioned above, it also does not contain several other significant resources. These include *911 Commission Final Report*, *Bound Congressional Record*, *Congressional Record Index*, *GAO Comptroller General Decisions*, *House Calendars*, *Senate Calendar*, and the *U.S. Constitution*.

The Westlaw service also fails to make accessible several resources that *GPO Access* provides. These are *Cannon’s Precedents*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Bound Congressional Record*, *Congressional Record Index*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *Senate Calendar*, the *Senate Manual*, and the *U.S. Code* in addition to the resources exclusive to *GPO Access* listed at the beginning of this section.

In addition to the resources listed above, CQ.com also does not offer other *GPO Access* legislative resources. The list includes *911 Commission Final Report*, *Bound Congressional Record*, *Cannon’s Precedents*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *GAO Comptroller General Decisions*, *GAO Reports*, *Senate Manual*, *Statutes at Large*, and the *U.S. Constitution*. CQ.com lacks a number of supplemental *GPO Access* resources that exist on Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, or both including *GAO Comptroller Decisions*, *GAO Reports*, and *Statutes at Large*. The *U.S. Constitution*, unavailable on CQ.com, can be located on both Westlaw and HeinOnline.

Finally, HeinOnline does not provide access to the exclusively available *GPO Access* legislative resources as well as *911 Commission Final Report*, *Cannon’s Precedents*, *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Record Index*, *Congressional Reports*, *GAO Comptroller General Decisions*, *GAO Reports*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *Public and Private Laws*, *Senate Calendar*, and *Senate Manual*. Of these, several are available on one or more of the other legislative resources evaluated in this study.

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

GPO Access	34
Lexis-Nexis	15
Westlaw	13
CQ.com	13
HeinOnline	6

In summary, among the services evaluated, no Government or non-Government Web site offers access to the total number of legislative resources that are available on *GPO Access*. Approximately 30% more resources are found on *GPO Access* than on the competing site with the largest number of *GPO Access* resources. In addition to this finding, there are 5 legislative resources exclusive to *GPO Access*. In other words, this means that no comparable Government or non-Government Web site contains the following resources other than *GPO Access*:

- *Economic Indicators*
- *Independent Counsel Investigations*
- *State of the Union*

- *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)*
- *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*

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

Scope of Resources

This section examines the scope of both Government and non-Government legislative resources. In this report, *scope* can be defined as the range of years or sessions of Congress covered by a legislative resource.

Government Web Sites

Legislative resources on *GPO Access* are continuously maintained and regularly updated. However, information is not retrospectively added. This means that historical content is not added to *GPO Access* at this time. The Government Printing Office (GPO) 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 Web sites compared 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 charts.

Of the legislative resources on House.gov, the *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Committee Prints* and the *U.S. Code* have a wider range of coverage than *GPO Access*. *GPO Access* has a wider range of coverage than House.gov for the *Congressional Directory* and *House Calendars*. Each service encompasses the same range of coverage for *House Ways and Means Committee Prints*. Many of the resources on House.gov link directly to *GPO Access*, THOMAS, or Library of Congress. (*Note: Detailed information is provided in the “Sources of Resources” section to follow.*)

In terms of the range of coverage for Senate.gov, *GPO Access* has a wider range of coverage for three legislative resources including *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Record Index*, and the *Senate Calendar*. For *Public and Private Laws*, Senate.gov has a wider scope. Senate.gov most often links to *GPO Access* as well as THOMAS to supplement its legislative resources. (*Note: Detailed information is provided in the “Sources of Resources” section to follow.*)

Overall, THOMAS has a wider range of coverage for seven resources. These include *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, the *Congressional Record*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *Public and Private Laws*, the *Senate Calendar*, and the *U.S. Code*. *GPO Access* possesses a wider range of coverage for the *Congressional Record Index*. Both services

share an equal range of coverage for *Congressional Reports*. It is worthy to note that when comparing *Congressional Documents*, *GPO Access* possesses a wider range of coverage for current information, while THOMAS possesses a wider range of coverage for historical content. This is also the case for the *House Journal*. Specific dates and legislative resources can be noted in the attached charts.

Non-Government Web Sites

Lexis-Nexis contains a significant number of legislative resources that possess a wider range of coverage than *GPO Access*. There are eight total. These include *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Reports*, *Public and Private Laws*, and *Statutes at Large*. However, *GPO Access* surpasses Lexis-Nexis for *Congressional Bills*, *GAO Reports*, *History of Bills*, *Senate Manual*, and *U.S. Code*. The two services share a range of coverage for the *Congressional Directory*.

Four resources encompass a wider range of coverage on Westlaw than what is available on *GPO Access*, including *Congressional Hearings*, the *Congressional Record*, *GAO Comptroller Decisions*, and *Public and Private Laws*. *GPO Access* claims a wider scope for *Congressional Bills*, the *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Reports*, *GAO Reports*, and the *U.S. Constitution*. After a comparison of *Statutes at Large*, Westlaw provides a greater historical range of coverage while *GPO Access* provides a wider range of coverage for current data. Each service covers the *911 Commission Final Reports* equally.

CQ.com surpasses *GPO Access* in range of coverage for several of their shared resources. This includes *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Reports*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *Public and Private Laws*, and the *Senate Calendar*. *GPO Access* has a wider range of coverage for the *Congressional Record Index*. The services share coverage for the *Congressional Directory*. As is the case with other comparisons, CQ.com provides a greater range of coverage for historical content, with regard to *Congressional Documents*, while *GPO Access* provides a greater range for current information.

Four of the five resources that HeinOnline and *GPO Access* share cover a broader range on the commercial site. The *Bound Congressional Record*, the *Congressional Record*, *Statutes at Large*, and the *U.S. Code* each possess all information available for that resource. *GPO Access* supplies a wider range of coverage for *Congressional Documents*. The coverage of this resource on HeinOnline encompasses selected documents covering various years.

GPO Access has a larger total scope than two sites, Senate.gov and Westlaw. All of the comparisons with resulting statistics are based on scope being defined as the range of years or sessions of Congress covered by a legislative resource. In addition, all other non-Government and Government Web sites evaluated in this comparison exceed the range of coverage of legislative resources on *GPO Access*. As previously noted, in accordance with the mandate, *GPO Access* is only required to keep legislative resources current. Historical 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 for information.

Sources of Resources

This section discusses whether the legislative resources on the eight compared Web sites are produced and/or housed by the supporting organization, or whether they are provided through links to other Web sites, such as *GPO Access* or THOMAS. In order to effectively analyze the legislative information located, a significant way to assess the legislative resource is to note whether or not information is housed on the provider's server, or if it links to a separate source of information. Due to their tendency to use and link to other Web sites for basic content, educational and library Web sites were excluded from this evaluation.

Most of the Web sites in this report contain their own legislative information. Most also provide links to other sources of information to supplement that content. Senate.gov, House.gov, THOMAS, Lexis-Nexis, CQ.com, and HeinOnline all link to other sites in addition to maintaining their own legislative resources.

Government Web Sites

Eleven legislative resources on House.gov link to *GPO Access*. These include *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Reports*, *Deschler's Precedents*, *Hinds' Precedents*, *House Practice*, *House Rules and Manual*, and *Public and Private Laws*. Five legislative resources, *Congressional Bills*, the *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Reports*, *Congressional Record Index*, and the *History of Bills* all link to THOMAS as well. *Congressional Documents* and *House Journal* each link to miscellaneous Library of Congress sites. The *U.S. Constitution* links to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). House.gov contains five of its own legislative resources and a total of 19 that link to other Web sites.

Nine legislative resources on Senate.gov link to *GPO Access*. These include *Congressional Bills*, the *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Reports*, *Riddick's Senate Procedure*, the *Senate Calendar*, and *U.S. Code*. In addition, five legislative resources on Senate.gov link to THOMAS. These include *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Hearings*, the *Congressional Record Index*, *Congressional Reports*, and *Public and Private Laws*. *Congressional Bills* links to both *GPO Access* and THOMAS. Only one resource, the *U.S. Constitution*, links to NARA. Finally, Senate.gov contains two internally-generated legislative resources, *Congressional Documents* and the *Senate Calendar*. The service links a total of 15 resources to other Web sites.

Two legislative resources on THOMAS link to *GPO Access*. These include the *Congressional Directory* and the *Congressional Pictorial Directory*. In addition, two resources link to miscellaneous Library of Congress sites, *Congressional Documents* and the *House Journal*. The *U.S. Constitution* links to NARA. Two resources link to House.gov, the

Congressional Directory and the *U.S. Code*. The *Congressional Directory* also links to Senate.gov. The legislative resource, *Congressional Directory*, links to *GPO Access*, House.gov, and Senate.gov. THOMAS links a total of 8 resources to other Web sites, and also contains 10 of its own generated resources. These include *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, *Congressional Documents*, the *Congressional Record*, the *Congressional Record Index*, *Congressional Reports*, *History of Bills*, *House Calendars*, *Public and Private Laws*, and the *Senate Calendar*.

Non-Government Web Sites

All 15 of the legislative resources on Lexis-Nexis comparable to *GPO Access* are internally-generated. These include *Cannon's Precedents*, *Congressional Bills*, *Congressional Committee Prints*, the *Congressional Directory*, *Congressional Documents*, *Congressional Hearings*, *Congressional Pictorial Directory*, *Congressional Record*, *Congressional Reports*, *GAO Reports*, *History of Bills*, *Public and Private Laws*, *Senate Manual*, *Statutes at Large*, and the *U.S. Code*. Lexis-Nexis provides one link to an external resource, and that is from *GPO Access to Statutes at Large*. This occurs as a supplementary measure in addition to its own content for *Statutes at Large*.

Westlaw does not link to any external Web sites to supplement its content. All resources are generated within the subscription service.

On CQ.com, a single legislative resource links to *GPO Access*, and that is the *U.S. Code*. One resource, *Congressional Documents*, links to historical information on a Library of Congress site. CQ.com generates its own content for the rest of its legislative resources.

HeinOnline links only one resource to *GPO Access*, and that is the *U.S. Constitution*. The rest of the resources, *Congressional Documents*, *Bound Congressional Record*, *Congressional Record*, and the *U.S. Code*, all contain content generated by HeinOnline.

The following table identifies legislative resources on each Web site that depend on links to *GPO Access* and/or THOMAS:

Web site	Resources that link to <i>GPO Access</i>	Resources that link to Thomas	Resources that link to misc. Library of Congress sites	Resources that link to NARA	Resources that link to House.gov	Resources that link to Senate.gov
House.gov	Cannon's Precedents, Congressional Bills, Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Pictorial Directory, Congressional Reports, Deschler's Precedents, Hinds' Precedents, House Practice, House Rules and Manual, Public and Private Laws	Congressional Bills, Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, Congressional Record Index, History of Bills	Congressional Documents, House Journal	U.S. Constitution		
Senate.gov	Congressional Bills, Congressional Directory, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Pictorial Directory, Congressional Record, Congressional Reports, Riddick's Senate Procedure, Senate Calendar, U.S. Code	Congressional Bills, Congressional Hearings, Congressional Record Index, Congressional Reports, Public and Private Laws		U.S. Constitution		
THOMAS	Congressional Directory, Congressional Pictorial Directory		Congressional Documents, House Journal	U.S. Constitution	Congressional Directory, U.S. Code	Congressional Directory
Lexis-	Statutes at					

Nexis	Large					
CQ.com	U.S. Code		Congressional Documents			
HeinOnline	U.S. Constitution					

To conclude, *GPO Access* is the only Government Web site that provides access to all 34 resources compared without linking to any other sites. House.gov, Senate.gov, and THOMAS link to other sites to augment their content for the majority of their resources. While the non-Government sites mostly provide their own content, all of them with the exception of Westlaw link to other sites for some content to supplement their information.

Additional Legislative Resources and Features Exclusive to Comparable Web Sites

This section looks at legislative resources and features that are not available on *GPO Access* but provided on comparable Web sites.

Government Web Sites

THOMAS resources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Bill Sponsor Browse*
- *Committee Schedules*
- *Congressional Roll Call Votes*
- *“House Floor Now”*
- *“House Floor This Week”*
- *Presidential Nominations*

House.gov sources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Committee Schedules*
- *Congressional Roll Call Votes*

Senate.gov sources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Committee Schedules*
- *Executive Calendar*
- *Recent Floor Activity*
- *Resume of Congressional Activity*
- *Congressional Roll Call Votes*

Non-Government Web Sites

Lexis-Nexis resources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Committee Markups*
- *Committee Membership*
- *Committee Votes*
- *Legislative Histories*

Westlaw resources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Legislative Histories*
- *U.S. Code Popular Name Table*

CQ.com resources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Committee Markups*
- *Committee Rosters*
- *Committee Testimony*
- *Committee Votes*
- *Floor Debate Video Coverage*
- *Legislative Histories*
- *Congressional Roll Call Votes*

HeinOnline resources not offered on *GPO Access*:

- *Legislative Histories*
- *Treaties and Agreements*

To conclude, many of the legislative resources mentioned in the section above can be found within *GPO Access* resources. However, they are not available as separately indexed 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 the total number of legislative resources.

Conclusion

The following charts will reveal that one of the primary advantages of *GPO Access* is the number of online legislative resources it provides to the public. No Government or Non-Government Web site, other than *GPO Access*, contains *Economic Indicators, Independent Counsel Investigations, State of the Union, United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions (Plum Book)*, and the *United States Government Printing Office Style Manual*.

In terms of scope of the legislative resources it provides, *GPO Access* is behind the other Web sites evaluated. Many of the other sites either contain historical content on their service or link to external sites with historical information, whereas *GPO Access* possesses current information that generally begins in the mid-1990s. The objectives of *GPO Access* are to offer resources and services to the greatest number of people free of charge, and to maintain the official nature of the content it provides. Through new authentication processes and on-going efforts to mass digitize legacy documents, adding historical information to *GPO Access* thereby increasing the scope of its legislative resources, will become possible.

All of the Government Web sites evaluated provide links to *GPO Access* and other external sites to supplement their legislative resource content. *GPO Access* and Westlaw do not link to any other site for legislative resources. The other non-Government Web sites also do not link to other sites in nearly all circumstances, except for one case each, in which they link to *GPO Access*.

This analysis indicates that *GPO Access* is still lacking a few of the resources most other comparable Web sites offer. On the other hand, *GPO Access* does provide some of the information contained in such resources, though the information is found within other various *GPO Access* applications.

The following charts represent the data that was gathered and used to make the observations in this report. This data includes a comparison of 34 *GPO Access* legislative resources on each of the eight Web sites and their scope, or the site to which they link.