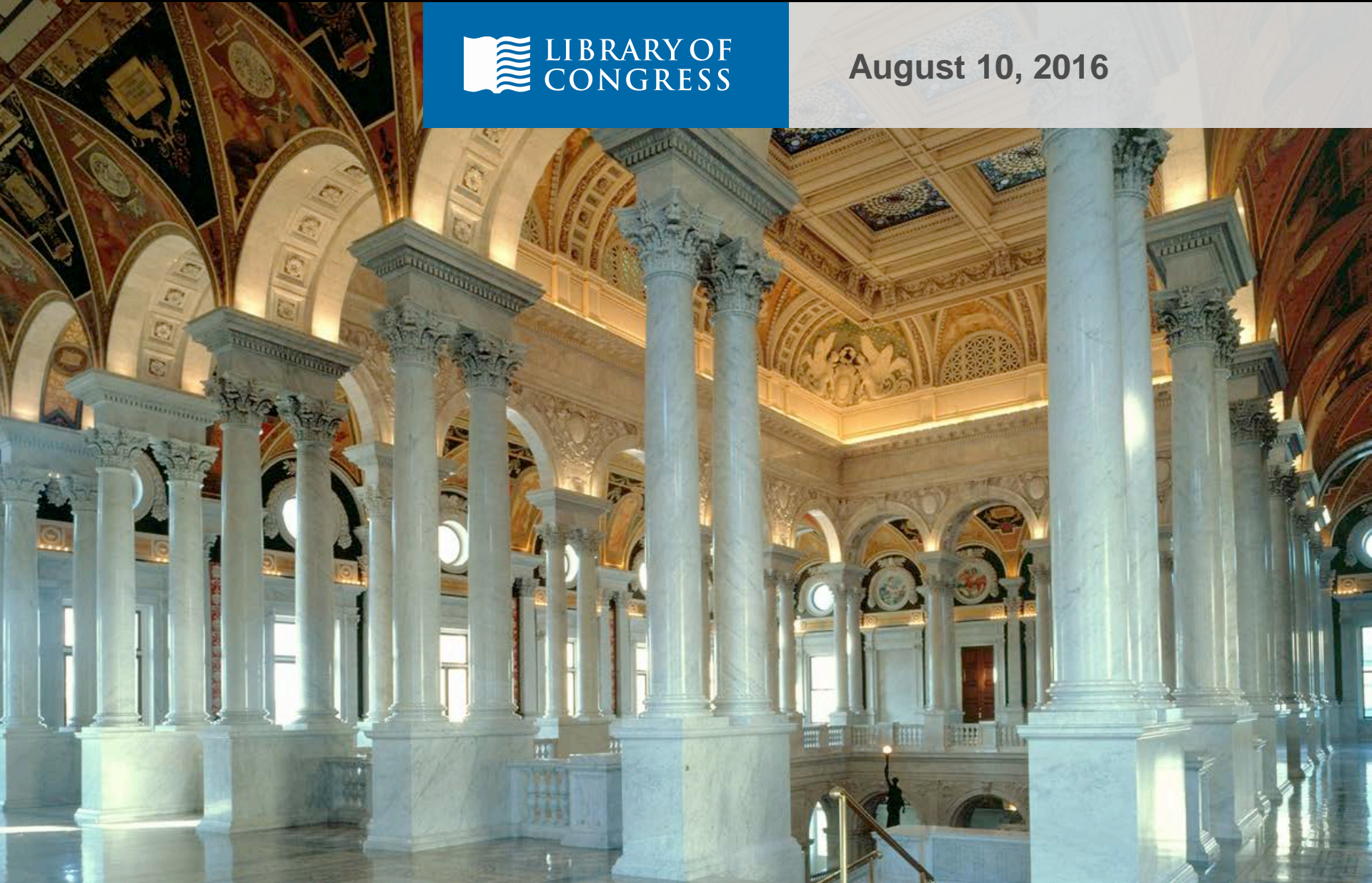


# Congress.gov: Access to U.S. Federal Legislative Information



August 10, 2016



# Congress.gov: Access to U.S. Federal Legislative Information

**IFLA Pre 2016 Conference: Library & Research Services for Parliaments**

**“Delivering parliamentary library and research services in an interconnected world.”**

**Library of Congress, Washington D.C., August 10, 2016**



**Cliff Cohen**

Associate Director

Office of Congressional  
Information and Publishing

Authoritative Information + Objective Analysis = An Informed National Legislature

KNOWLEDGE WILL FOREVER GOVERN IGNORANCE:  
AND A PEOPLE WHO MEAN TO BE THEIR OWN GOVERNOURS,  
MUST ARM THEMSELVES WITH THE POWER WHICH KNOWLEDGE GIVES.

James Madison

# Program Description, Congress.gov

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 legislative branch-wide network to provide Members of Congress, their staff and constituents legislative information that is:

accessible,  
accurate,  
authoritative,  
authorized,  
available,  
efficiently produced,  
comprehensive,  
findable,  
integrated,  
machine readable,  
timely, and  
well-organized.



# The Constitutional Context

*...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  
at the Desire of one fifth of those Present  
be entered on the Journal*

## *Article I, Section 5*



# Historical Roots: 1800 – 1950's

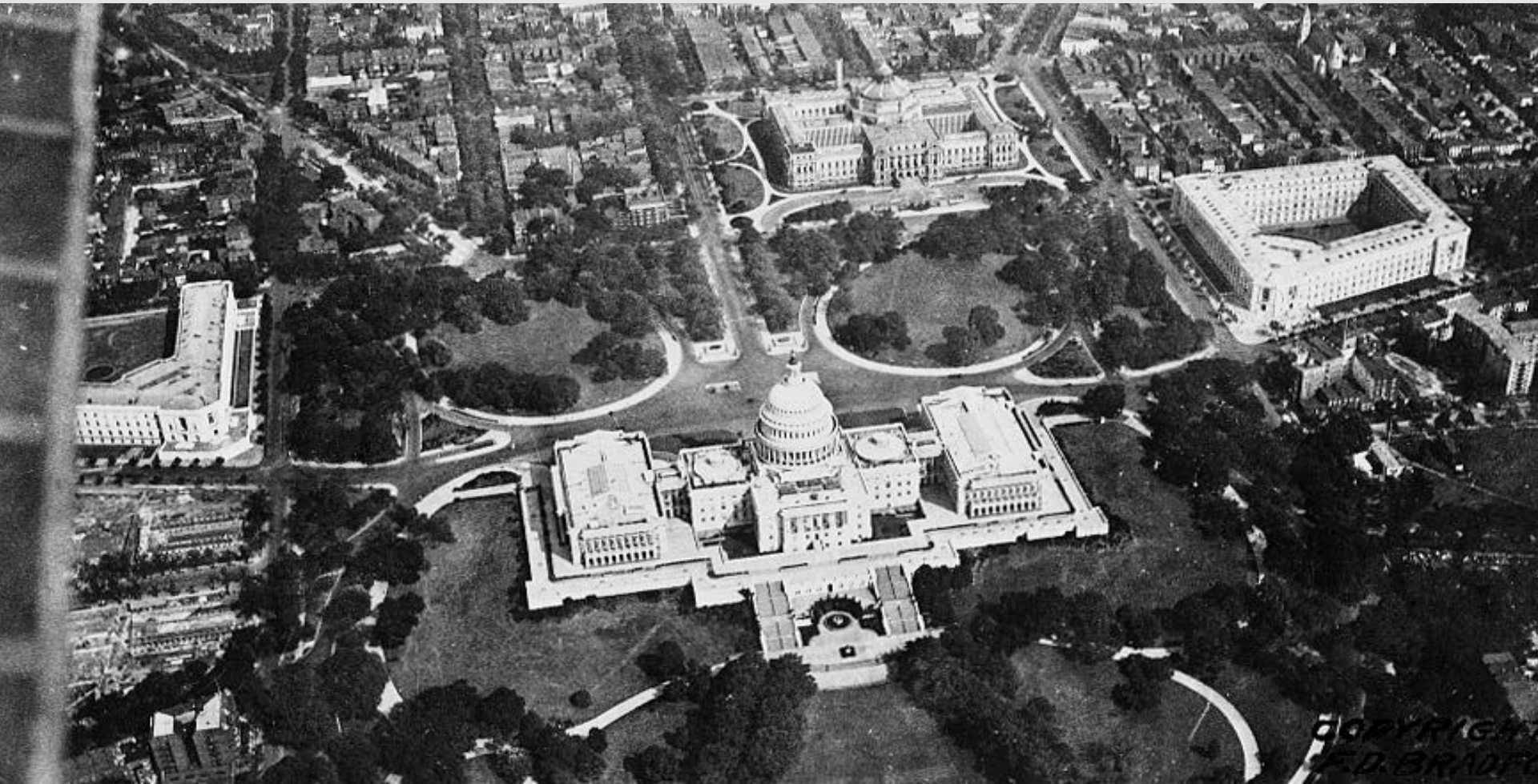
In establishing the Library of Congress in 1800, Congress laid a strong statutory foundation that was then iteratively enhanced over time to enable the Library to provide increasing essential and operationally integrated services in support of Congress's Constitutional responsibilities.

In 1914, Congress established a separate bureau within the Library, the Legislative Research Service, which was later renamed the Congressional Research Service (CRS).





# Historical Roots: 1800 – 1950's



Title: [Aerial view of the Capitol, the Library of Congress, Cannon House and Russell Senate buildings in Washington, D.C.] / F.D. Bradford;  
Contributor Names Bradford, F. D., photographer Bradford, F. D., copyright claimant; Created / Published c1919 March 24

# Historical Roots: 1800 – 1950's



From left, Catherine McGruder, Kitty Lillens and Mr. Anderson at work, 1941  
LOC Prints and Photograph Division, (Evans)

Decades of publishing periodic and final hardbound volumes for congressional use and dissemination to depository libraries began in January 1936.

In 1935, Congress directed and funded LRS to prepare Bill Digests (a.k.a., Bill Summaries) and for them to be made publicly available.



# Historical Roots: 1960's – Early 1990's



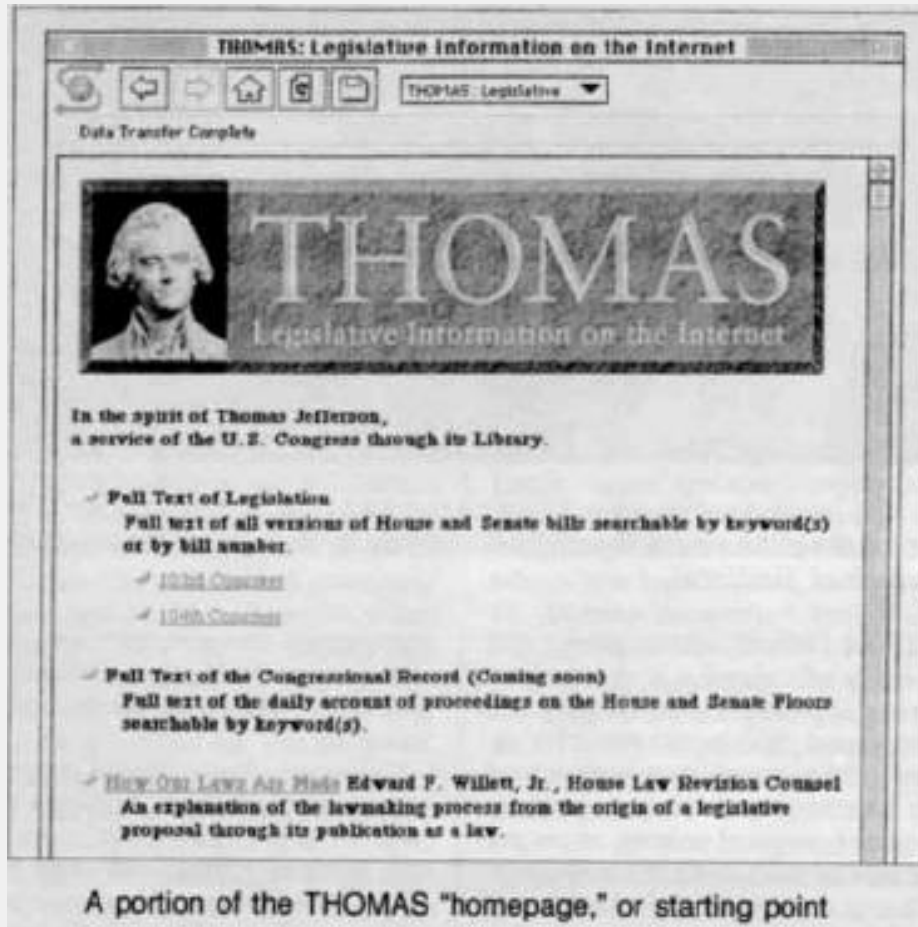
From left to right: George R. Perreault, head of the Data Processing Office, standing at the computer storage unit; Ernest Acosta Jr., digital computer programmer, working at the card reader unit; and Joseph B. Murphy, digital computer programmer, inserting a new tape in one of the tape units. Jan. 20, 1964

In 1975, Congress was provided terminal based access to legislative data through the Library of Congress SCORPIO mainframe computer system.

By the early 1990's, the House, Senate, and GPO all had initiated or were envisaging legislative information related efforts in support of their respective missions and operational needs...



# Historical Roots: 1993 - 1997



1995 – First Release of the publicly available THOMAS website

# Historical Roots: 1993 - 1997

Duplication

Duplication

Duplication

*led to:*

Duplication

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



# Historical Roots: 1993 - 1997

## U.S. Code: Title 2 , Chapter 5 – Library of Congress

### § 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.**  
( Pub. L. 104–53, title II, § 209, Nov. 19, 1995, 109 Stat. 532 .)





# Historical Roots: 1993 - 1997

**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."** H. Rept. 104-733 accompanied P.L. 104-53, Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1997



Title:[Aerial view of Capitol Hill featuring the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building behind the U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.];Contributor:Highsmith, Carol M., 1946-, photographer;Created/ Published: 2007.



# Historical Roots: 1993 - 1997

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**105th CONGRESS—A CRS REPORT: KEY ISSUES AND EARLY AGENDA**

105th CONGRESS—MAJOR LEGISLATION:	TOPIC	POPULAR/SHORT TITLE	BILL NO./TYPE	LAWS
104th CONGRESS—MAJOR LEGISLATION:	TOPIC	POPULAR/SHORT TITLE	BILL NO./TYPE	LAWS

1997 - First Release of LIS,  
a Congress-only  
Legislative Information System

# Historical Roots: 2000-2007

2006 - Last major release of LIS

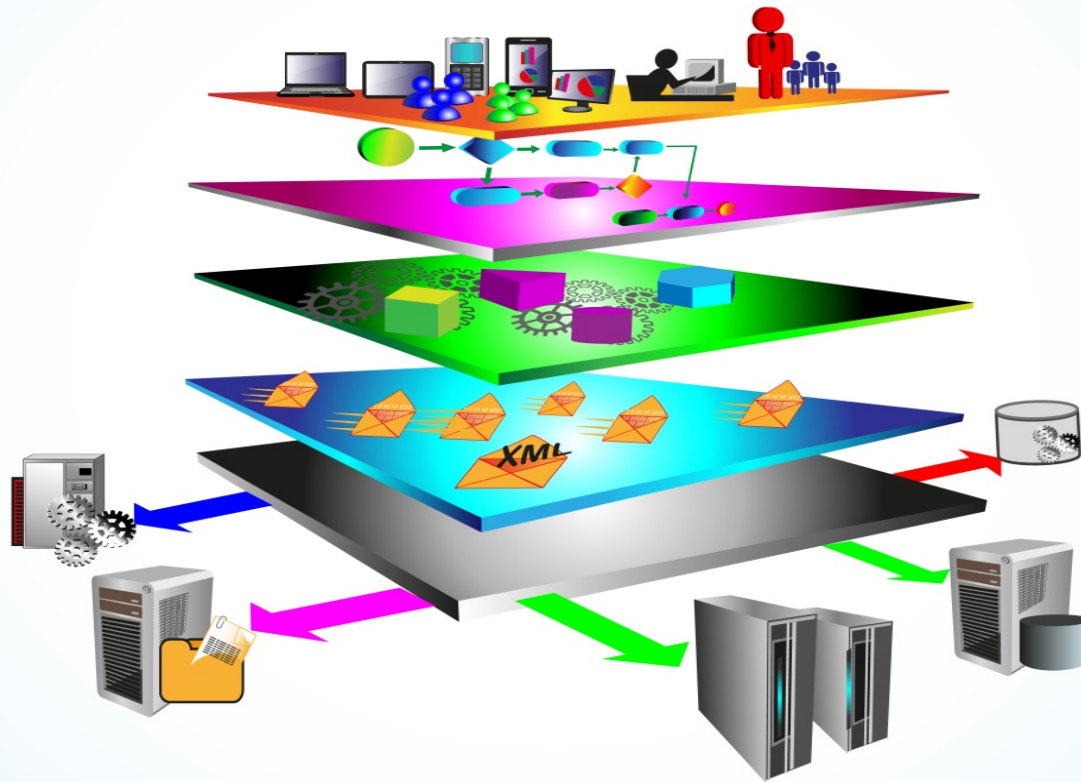


# Historical Roots: 2008-2010, Time for Modernization, from:



“Spaghetti Code”

# Time for Modernization, to:





# Historical Roots: 2008-2010, Time for Modernization





# Historical Roots: 2008-2010, Time for Modernization



# Congress.gov, Start of the Modernization

## “Three Sturdy Legs to Stand On”



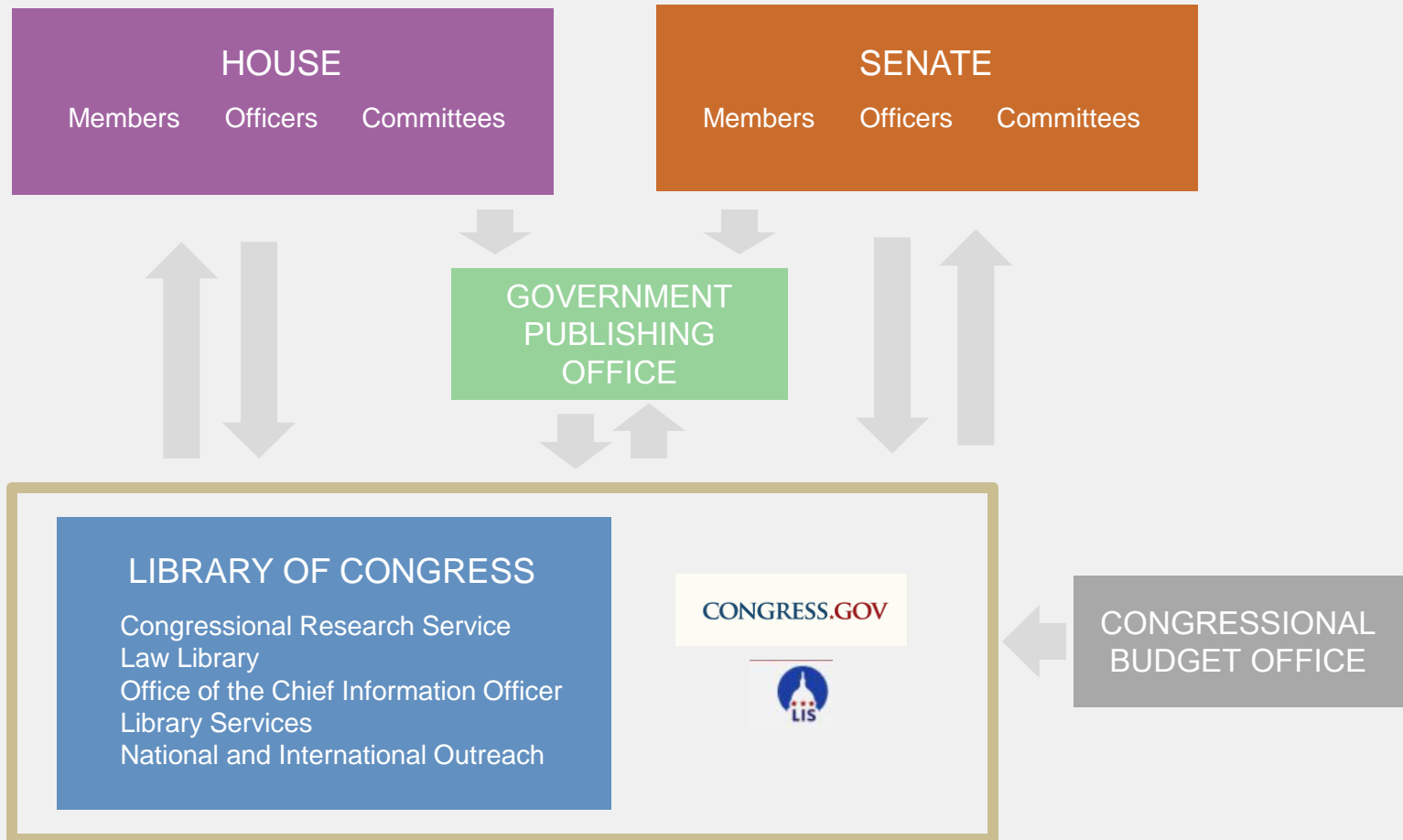
Web Interface

Legislative Tools

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# A Legislative Branch-wide Partnership





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Legislative Analysis and  
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( ~16,000/Congress)

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Training: “train the trainers,”  
video’s, webcasts

Educational Outreach

Systems Life Cycle  
Coordination, Development  
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# Modernization: 2011 to 2018 (and beyond)

July 5, 2016



Starting  
**9/26/2014**

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Legislative information at your fingertips

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- Every Year:
  - 24x7 system availability
  - A model for attentive, trusted, and high value service
- For 2018:
  - Retirement of all Legacy systems
  - Next set of priorities are established





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Legislation Text

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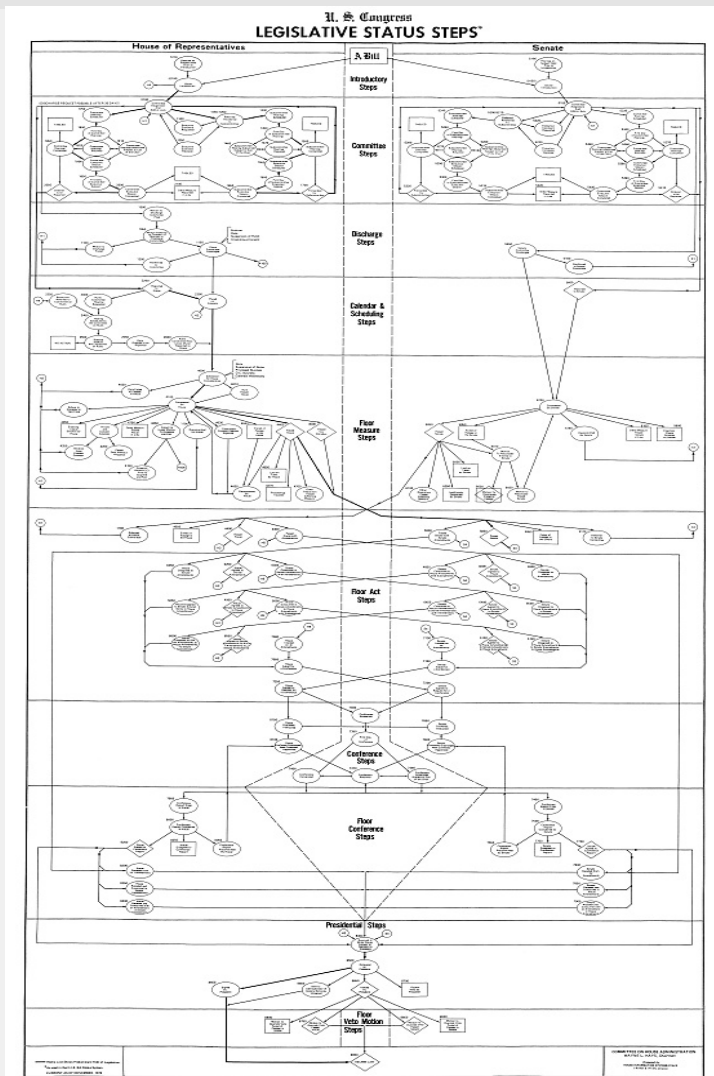
Nominations

Treaty Documents

Communications



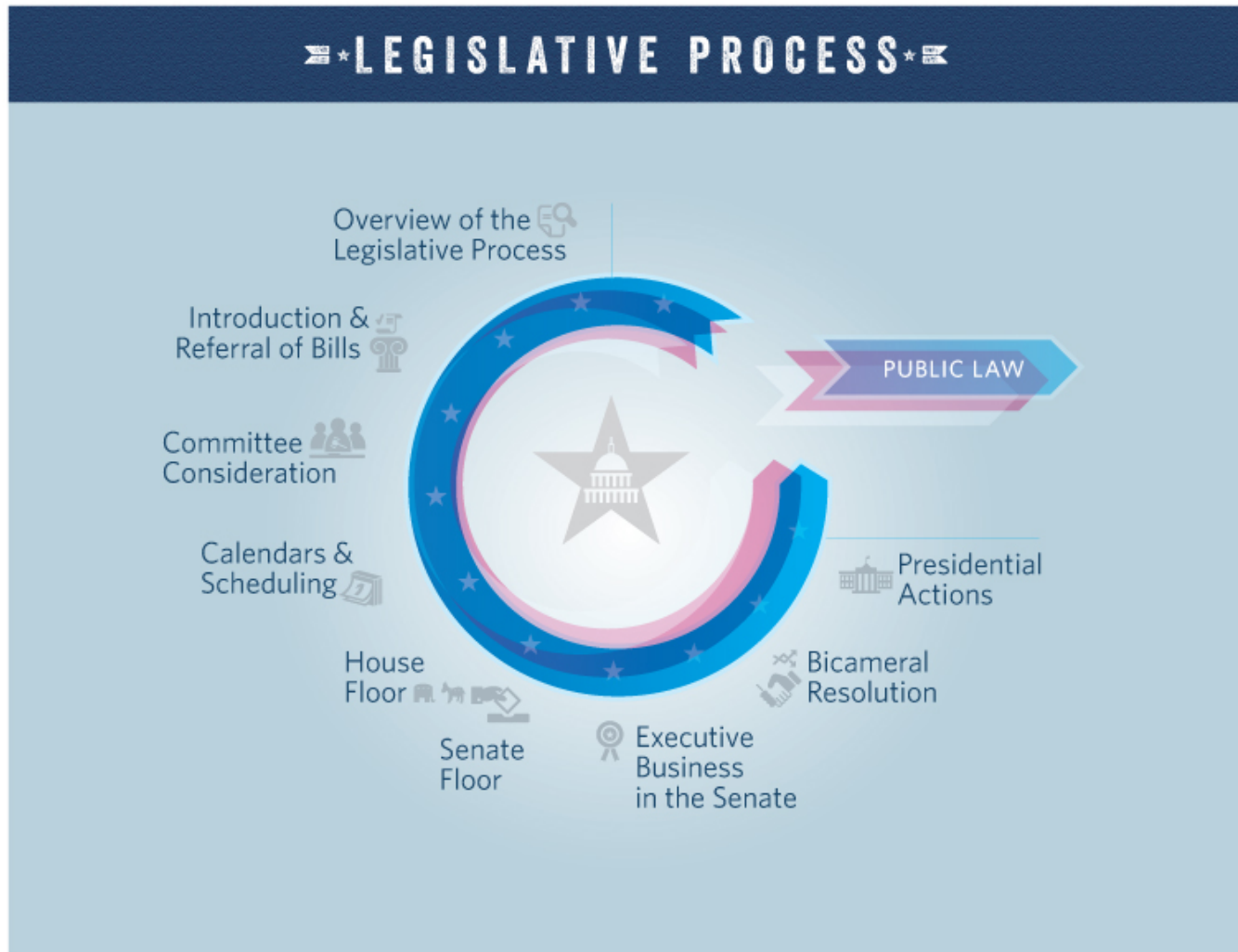
# The Legislative Process



Title: U.S. Congress legislative status steps /  
Committee on House Administration, Wayne L.  
Hays, Chairman ; prepared by House Information Systems Staff,  
Frank B. Ryan, Director. Published, Washington, D.C. : Government Printing  
Office, 1975, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2012648836/>



# Congress.gov, the Legislative Process





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[S.764](#) [114th] A bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes

[H.R.213](#) [114th] Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act of 2015

[H.R.3700](#) [114th] Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act of 2016

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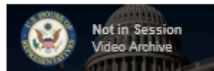
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114th Congress (2015-2016)

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Next Meeting: Aug. 9, 2016 at 12:55 p.m.

Previous Meeting: Aug. 5, 2016

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[S.524](#) [114th] Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016

[H.R.5098](#) [114th] Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016

[S.324](#) [114th] A bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes

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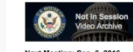
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## S.524 - Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016

114th Congress (2015-2016) | [Get alerts](#)

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**Sponsor:** [Sen. Whitehouse, Sheldon \[D-R\]](#) (Introduced 02/12/2015)

**Committees:** Senate - Judiciary

**Committee Reports:** [H. Rept. 114-669 \(Conference Report\)](#)

**Latest Action:** 07/22/2016 Became Public Law No: 114-198. ([All Actions](#))

**Roll Call Votes:** There have been [16 roll call votes](#)

**Tracker:**

Introduced > Passed Senate > Passed House > Resolving Differences > To President > **Became Law**

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[CBO Cost Estimates \[3\]](#)

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Crime and Law Enforcement  
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**Summary (3)** Text (5) Actions (106) Titles (27) Amendments (123) Cosponsors (44) Committees (1) Related Bills (33)

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

[All Bill Information](#) (Except Text)

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There are 3 summaries for S.524.   [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, modify, and update best practices for pain management and prescribe pain medication; and (2) examine and identify the need for development of, and availability of,



# Congress.gov, Nomination's Page, Dr. Carla D. Hayden

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## PN1180 — Carla D. Hayden — Library of Congress

114th Congress (2015-2016)

**NOMINATION**    [Hide Overview](#)

Confirmed on 07/13/2016.

**Description**  
Carla D. Hayden, of Maryland, to be Librarian of Congress for a term of ten years, vice James H. Billington.

**Organization**  
Library of Congress

**Latest Action**  
07/13/2016 - Confirmed by the Senate by Yea-Nay Vote. 74 - 18. Record Vote Number: 128.

**Date Received from President**  
02/24/2016

**Committee**  
Senate Rules and Administration

**Actions: PN1180 — 114th Congress (2015-2016)**

Sort by

Date	Senate Actions
07/13/2016	Confirmed by the Senate by Yea-Nay Vote. 74 - 18. <a href="#">Record Vote Number: 128.</a>
07/13/2016	Considered by Senate.
07/13/2016	By unanimous consent agreement, debate and vote 7/13/16.
06/09/2016	Placed on Senate Executive Calendar. Calendar No. 592.
06/09/2016	Reported by Senator Blunt, Committee on Rules and Administration, without printed report.
06/09/2016	Committee on Rules and Administration. Ordered to be reported favorably.
04/20/2016	Committee on Rules and Administration. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S Hrg. 114-285.
02/24/2016	Received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

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07/13/2016	Confirmed by the Senate by Yea-Nay Vote. 74 - 18. <a href="#">Record Vote Number: 128.</a>
07/13/2016	Considered by Senate.
07/13/2016	By unanimous consent agreement, debate and vote 7/13/16.
06/09/2016	Placed on Senate Executive Calendar. Calendar No. 592.
06/09/2016	Reported by Senator Blunt, Committee on Rules and Administration, without printed report.
06/09/2016	Committee on Rules and Administration. Ordered to be reported favorably.
04/20/2016	Committee on Rules and Administration. Hearings held. Hearings printed: S Hrg. 114-285.
02/24/2016	Received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration.

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# Future Directions and Challenges

## Complete the Initial Modernization



Web Interface

Legislative Tools

Legislative Information  
Exchange



# 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
  - <http://uscode.house.gov>
- 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
  - <http://akoma-ntosa-markup.challenge.gov/>
- 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>





# Future Directions and Challenges



Work with Congress and others on prioritizing:

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



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**Cliff Cohen**

Associate Director

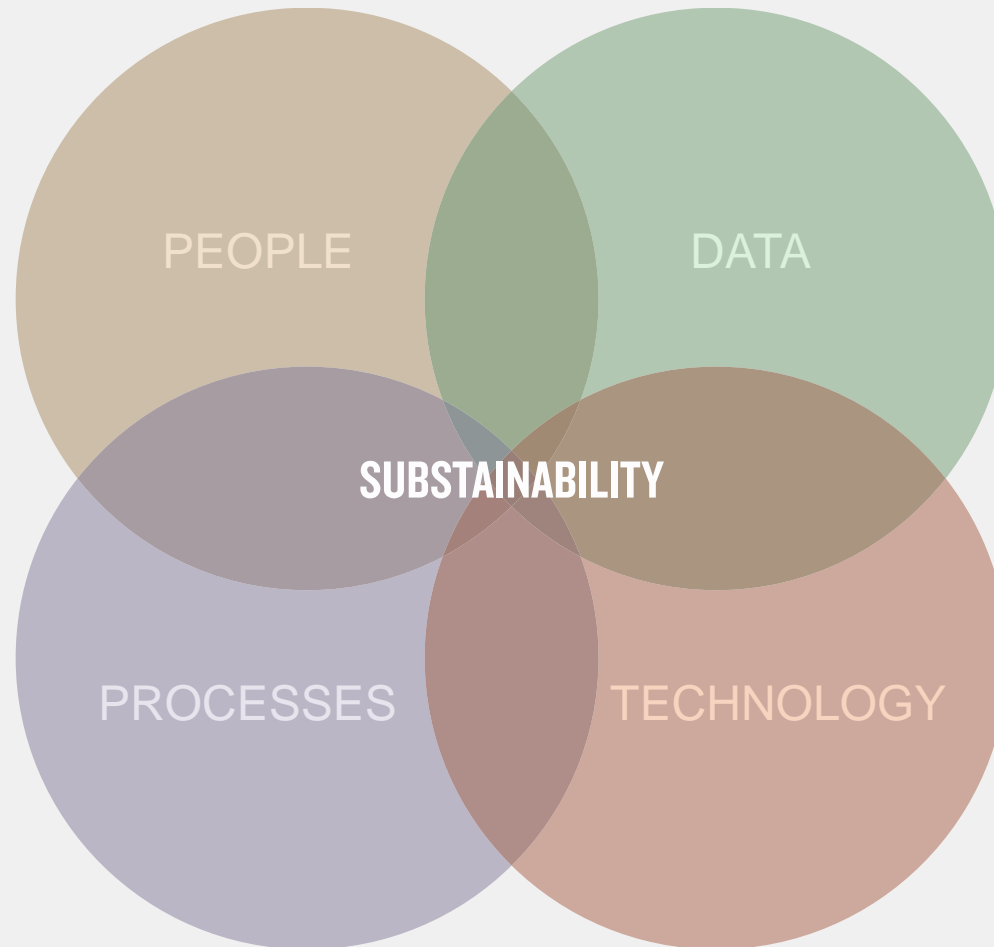
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# Sustainability



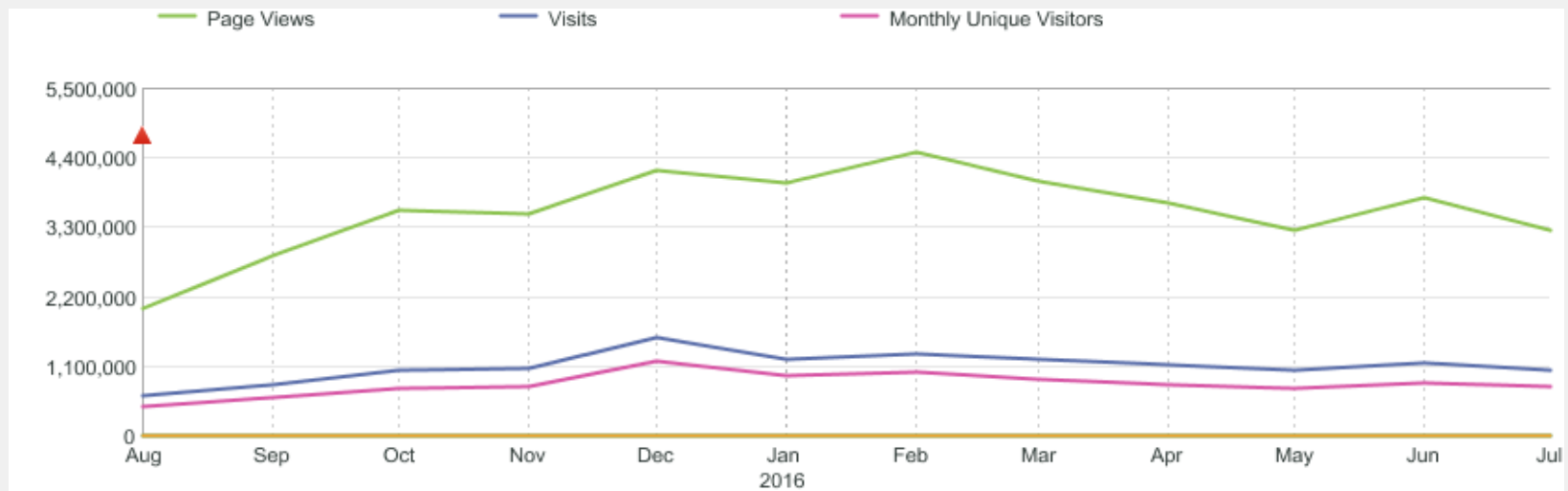
# Users and Usage, Service to Congress

- 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)
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# 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



Key Metrics Report | General Public (non-LoC, non-House/Senate) | Sat. 1 Aug. 2015 - Sun. 31 Jul. 2016 | Graph generated by Adobe Analytics at 8:04 AM EDT, 8 Aug 2016