

**July 1, 2026, Subcommittee Hearing: “Modernizing Public Access to Legislative Data and Information”**

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Chairwoman Bice and Ranking Member Torres, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss how Congress can modernize public access to legislative data and information.

Across my career supporting the U.S. House of Representatives, I have learned that public access is not simply about publishing information or putting “paper on screen.” It is about ensuring that legislative information is authoritative, verifiable through its provenance, discoverable, understandable, and reusable by Congress, by those who interact with it, and by the American people.

The scale of that responsibility is significant. As of June 2026, more than 11,100 bills and resolutions have been introduced during the 119th Congress. House Committees have filed nearly 700 Committee reports and created more than 1,400 Committee meetings on Docs.House.gov, in addition to producing thousands of hearings, publications, statements, videos, and other legislative records. Congress.gov provides access to approximately 4 million congressional information items, while GovInfo.gov hosts more than 5 million legislative branch publications. This information environment continues to grow each year.

Congress, of course, is a legislative, lawmaking institution; but in practice, it is also an information institution. Every bill, amendment, report, hearing, vote, and publication becomes part of an ecosystem of data that must be managed, preserved, and made accessible over time.

This work is both highly technical and deeply human. It requires us to think not only about data formats and systems integration, but also about people—the staff who maintain these systems, the Members who rely on them, and the public who seeks to understand how Congress works and what decisions you and your colleagues made yesterday, what legislation you are voting on today, and what debates you might have tomorrow. Furthermore, expectations have changed from simply providing information electronically to providing integrated information that is available across multiple systems and services.

Modernization is not a one-time initiative—it is an ongoing responsibility. Technology evolves, legislative requirements change, and expectations from both inside and outside Congress continue to rise. The challenge is to modernize thoughtfully: improving systems, data, and services while maintaining the continuity, stability, and trust that mission-critical legislative operations require. Effective modernization balances innovation with stewardship and ensures information remains accessible, understandable, and usable not only today, but for future Congresses and generations of Americans.

To serve the public effectively, legislative information must be easy to find, easy to understand, accessible, reliable, and available in modern formats. It must also be structured so it can be accurately discovered, interpreted, and reused by the tools people increasingly rely upon to access information, including systems that use artificial intelligence (AI). People need to trust what they are seeing. When legislative information is trustworthy, discoverable, and consistently

presented, the public is better equipped to engage with Congress, evaluate its work, and participate in democratic processes.<sup>1</sup>

## **STRUCTURED DATA AS A FOUNDATION FOR MODERNIZATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS**

Today, Congress must manage legislative information in three interconnected forms: the physical document of record, its digital presentation, and the underlying legislative data and text. While the printed document remains the official record, the data increasingly powers websites, search engines, APIs (application programming interfaces), analytical tools, and emerging AI applications. Therefore, modernization requires improving not only the document people read, but also the structured data that allows information to be discovered, reused, and understood across many systems.

One of the most important modernization efforts underway is the continued adoption of United States Legislative Markup (USLM) as the standard format for legislative documents.

As the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress recommended, legislative documents should be available in standardized, machine-readable formats. USLM transforms legislative text from documents intended primarily for human reading into structured data that can be used consistently across drafting, publishing, and internal and public systems.<sup>2</sup>

When legislative information is structured and discoverable, it

- becomes easier to search, analyze, and compare
- can be exchanged and reused across systems and websites without extensive rework
- reduces duplication and opportunities for error
- supports automation and more efficient legislative operations
- provides a foundation for new tools and capabilities, including those that use AI
- enables civic technologists, researchers, and the public to work with legislative information more effectively.

Data standards and modeling may not be visible, but they are foundational. Better standards produce better data; better data produces better systems; and better systems produce more accessible information.

Increasingly, congressional information is accessed not only through websites but through a broader information ecosystem that includes search engines, applications, AI agents, and other artificial intelligence tools. Structured, authoritative data helps ensure that these systems can accurately discover, interpret, and present congressional information—reliable outputs require reliable inputs. In short, when we structure our information, we expand what is possible.

USLM is already actively used across the legislative branch. The U.S. Code is published in USLM on the Office of Law Revision Counsel's [uscode.house.gov](https://www.uscode.house.gov). Enrolled bills, public and private

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Data Task Force, *Discussion of Data Governance and the Qualities of Government Data*, public meeting presentation, June 2025, slides 57–69.

<sup>2</sup> Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress Final Report, October 2020, page 70.

laws, Statutes at Large, and statute compilations are published in USLM on GPO's GovInfo.gov. Enrolled bills and public laws are also displayed in USLM on Congress.gov, providing consistency and higher-quality presentation than document-based displays.

USLM also underpins applications such as the Comparative Print Suite and the Text Analysis Program, which help users compare legislative text, identify similar measures, and better understand proposed changes (amendments) to current law contained in bills.

These applications are examples of what becomes possible when legislative information is structured and machine-readable. Over time, this structured data can support not only documents and datasets, but also richer information services that can be used across websites, applications, search tools, and artificial intelligence systems.

The legislative branch's work on legislative XML (extensible markup language) standards is not occurring in isolation. Congress has long recognized the importance of standardized, machine-readable legislative information, and the House, Senate, Library of Congress (LOC), and Government Publishing Office (GPO) continue to collaborate on these efforts through established statutory and institutional frameworks.<sup>3</sup> GPO provides important leadership in this area, and progress is documented through our Office's publicly available reports.

## **QUALITY, AUTHORITY, AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

Congressional information has been created over centuries using different technologies, processes, and publishing practices.

Some information benefits from modern drafting systems, structured data standards, and well-defined metadata. Other information reflects the practices and technologies of an earlier era. Consequently, congressional information does not always exist in uniform formats or with consistent levels of quality.

Modernization should improve quality, consistency, and usability wherever possible, but we should avoid making the perfect the enemy of the good. The lack of modern metadata or structured formats should not prevent historically important information from being made available.

Continuous improvement is the goal. As information is migrated, republished, or integrated into new systems, we should take opportunities to improve structure, accessibility, discoverability, and documentation. Users should be able to understand where information originated, who maintains it, how current it is, and any limitations on its use. Public access depends on both availability and trust.

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<sup>3</sup> This work is rooted in section 314 of Public Law 104-1971 (2 U.S.C. 1812) and a 1996 directive from the Chairs of this Committee and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. See publicly available reports at <https://cha.house.gov/modernization-reports>.

## THE LEGISLATIVE DATA ECOSYSTEM: PEOPLE, PROCESSES, DATA, TOOLS, AND CULTURE

Modernization is not a single project or technology. It depends on five interdependent elements.

1. **People** who create, manage, describe, and use legislative information
2. **Processes** that promote consistency, quality, and accountability
3. **Data** that is accurate, authoritative, structured, and interoperable
4. **Tools** that support legislative operations and systems that manage, preserve, and provide legislative information to Members, staff, and the public
5. **Culture** that fosters trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement

Technology alone cannot modernize an institution. Even the most advanced tools require reliable data, sound processes, engaged stakeholders, and a culture that values improvement. Modernization must deliver value to Members, staff, and the public and align with House Rules and statutory requirements.

Legislative systems should be treated as products that require continuous improvement, ongoing support, and regular investment. Modernization is not a project with a finish line—it becomes part of the normal lifecycle of maintaining and improving the institution’s capabilities.

This ecosystem extends across the legislative branch. Many modernization challenges cannot be solved by a single business unit. Through my work coordinating the Congressional Data Task Force (CDTF), I have seen how collaboration across the House, Senate, LOC, GPO, and other legislative partners enables progress.<sup>4</sup>

To support modernization efforts across the legislative branch, the CDTF is developing a Legislative Branch Data Catalog.<sup>5</sup> Legislative information is maintained across multiple organizations, systems, and websites, making it difficult for users to identify what information exists, where it originates, and which sources are authoritative.

The Data Catalog will serve as a standardized index of legislative data resources and help congressional staff, legislative branch agencies, researchers, civic technology organizations, journalists, and the public more easily discover and access authoritative information.<sup>6</sup> It is intended to improve transparency, support system modernization, reduce duplication of effort, and help users navigate the legislative information ecosystem.

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<sup>4</sup> The Congressional Data Task Force meets quarterly and brings together legislative branch representatives and members of the public and civic technology community. Our public meetings have steadily increased in size and welcomed more than 200 people online and in person to discuss emerging issues, coordinate modernization efforts, share lessons learned, and identify opportunities to improve the availability and usability of congressional information. For more information, see the Legislative Branch Innovation Hub at [https://usgpo.github.io/innovation/leadership\\_support/](https://usgpo.github.io/innovation/leadership_support/).

<sup>5</sup> This work was developed in response to a House Committee on Appropriations directive to the CDTF in House Report 118-555 to develop a legislative branch data map.

<sup>6</sup> The DCAT catalog is available at <https://usgpo.github.io/innovation/data>. For more information, see <https://github.com/usgpo/innovation/issues/100>.

Importantly, the Data Catalog will not replace existing congressional websites or data repositories. Instead, it will serve as a guide to the authoritative resources maintained by the House, Senate, GPO, LOC, and other legislative branch organizations.

Since its first meeting in 2012, the CDTF has demonstrated that meaningful progress in modernization comes not only from new applications or technology platforms, but from bringing people together. The trusted working relationships built among the House, Senate, LOC, GPO, and public participants of the Task Force have enabled both notable public accomplishments and less visible internal wins. While standards and technology are important, much of the progress comes from relationships—people knowing whom to call, how to work across institutional boundaries, and how to solve problems together. Those connections have helped establish shared standards, common definitions, and a collective understanding of the information Congress creates and uses every day.

Our own House websites are part of this same broader information ecosystem.

## **THE HOUSE.GOV ENVIRONMENT**

The CDTF was tasked to write a report about our House websites, and that work underscored the need to think beyond websites alone.<sup>7</sup>

The House’s public web presence consists of approximately 600 public websites and subsites supporting Members, Committees, Leadership offices, Officers, commissions, caucuses, and other organizations. During just the first four months of 2026, House.gov served more than 4.2 million individual visitors, generated nearly 7 million page views, and recorded more than 21 million user interactions. The most visited page, Find Your Representative, received approximately 2.4 million page views. Coupled with other legislative branch websites, these resources form a broad information ecosystem through which the public seeks to understand Congress.

While the House must continue to manage and improve its existing ecosystem of public and internal websites, we also need to reframe our work as managing congressional information in a rapidly changing information environment. Increasingly, we must design for both people and the systems they use to discover and access information. In 2026 this increasingly refers to AI-driven agents that fetch information and perform tasks on behalf of people.

## **DESIGNING FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES**

As Congress considers the future of public access to legislative information, it is important to recognize that there is no single public audience.

The people who rely on congressional information include Members of Congress reviewing bill text, congressional staff conducting research, constituents seeking assistance, students learning about government, educators developing curriculum, journalists reporting on legislative activity, researchers analyzing congressional data, and many others. Each arrives with different goals,

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<sup>7</sup> The directive to write the report is on page 2327 of the Committee Print, 117th Cong., *H.R. 2617, Public Law 117–328, Legislative Text and Explanatory Statement*, Book 2 of 2.

different levels of familiarity with Congress, and different expectations for how information should be presented and accessed.

Historically, congressional websites have been organized around the offices and organizations that create information. While that approach makes sense operationally, it is not always intuitive for the people trying to find and use that information.

The challenge before us is not simply how to improve existing websites. The larger challenge is understanding how people seek, discover, and use congressional information—and designing an experience that helps them accomplish those goals.

Consistent with recommendations previously developed by the CDTF in its 2023 report on House websites, this work should begin with user research, user experience design, information architecture, and a forward-looking vision for how congressional information should be organized and accessed now and in the years ahead. The objective is not to consolidate websites or create a single destination for all information. Rather, it is to create a more coherent, understandable, and accessible information experience across the congressional information ecosystem.

### ***Recommendation 1: Reposition [www.House.gov](http://www.House.gov) as the Public Front Door to the House***

The main page for the House is [www.House.gov](http://www.House.gov), and it should evolve into a trusted “front door” to the House of Representatives. As the primary entry point for many users, the website should help people understand the House, discover authoritative resources, and navigate the broader legislative information ecosystem regardless of which office or legislative branch organization maintains it.

The goal is not to centralize all content on a single website. The goal is to create a more coherent, user-centered experience that helps people find, understand, and use congressional information, regardless of where it resides.

### ***Recommendation 2: Establish Common Standards for a More Consistent and Connected Information Experience***

House websites should increasingly adopt common design patterns, navigation approaches, metadata standards, and information-sharing practices that help users discover, understand, and access congressional information more easily.

While individual House offices and organizations serve different missions and audiences, users should encounter familiar navigation, terminology, accessibility features, and orientation materials as they move across congressional websites. Shared design templates and standardized landing pages and introductory content can help users understand what information is available, who maintains it, and where to go next without requiring prior knowledge of congressional structure.

These standards should extend beyond visual design and navigation. They should also include metadata, structured data, and information practices that improve discoverability, interoperability, and reuse across the broader congressional information ecosystem.

Increasingly, congressional information is accessed not only through websites, but also through search engines, applications, AI agents, and other AI tools. To remain accessible and authoritative in these environments, congressional information should be organized in ways that allow both people and systems to accurately discover, understand, and reference it. Designing our systems with distinct human-facing and machine-facing delivery channels enables us to optimize each experience without compromising the integrity of the underlying data.

The House should also examine how it measures the use of congressional information. Traditional web analytics focus on visits, page views, and unique visitors. As information is increasingly accessed through intermediary services, Congress should develop a better understanding of both human and machine consumption of congressional information.

Again, the goal is not to make every website look the same. The goal is to strengthen the standards, data practices, and interoperability that create a more coherent, user-centered information experience.

### ***Recommendation 3: Advance a Data-First Strategy for Public Access to Congressional Information***

As we address immediate needs and modernization opportunities, the House should establish a clear vision for how congressional information should be made available to the public over the next decade. This effort should advance a data-first strategy that extends beyond any single office or organization and draws upon both operational expertise and forward-looking perspectives to consider how congressional information can best serve future users and future Congresses.

Congress has done this before. The creation of GPO Access and THOMAS recognized that emerging technologies would fundamentally change how the public accessed legislative information.<sup>8</sup> That vision ultimately evolved into GovInfo.gov and Congress.gov, demonstrating how long-term investments in public access can continue to deliver value across multiple Congresses and generations of technology.

This effort should focus on understanding who uses congressional information, what they are trying to accomplish, how their expectations are changing, and how emerging technologies may reshape the way information is discovered, accessed, and used. It should also examine how House information fits within the broader legislative branch information ecosystem and identify opportunities to create a more coherent and user-centered experience.

The House should also examine how more information about the work of individual Members can be surfaced through a broader House information ecosystem. While Member websites will continue to play an important role, users seeking to understand the work of Congress often do not know where to begin. A future public access strategy should consider whether selected categories of Member information can be more easily discovered, searched, aggregated, and

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<sup>8</sup> Congress established GPO Access with Public Law 103-40 enacted on June 8, 1993. Congress directed the Library of Congress to make federal legislative information freely available to the public, and THOMAS was unveiled on January 4, 1995.

accessed through central House resources—and on Congress.gov—while respecting the distinct roles and responsibilities of individual offices.

This strategy should recognize an important reality: congressional information is no longer consumed solely through individual websites and documents. Increasingly, it is accessed through integrated systems, data services, mobile applications, research platforms, and emerging AI-enabled tools. As this trend accelerates, the House should continue to prioritize the delivery of authoritative, timely, well-structured, and interoperable data that can be understood by both people and machines.

At the same time, the House should continue to improve and refresh its public-facing web presence, modernize user experiences, and make information easier to discover and understand. Website improvements should be viewed as part of a broader public access strategy rather than the sole focus of modernization efforts. The same underlying data should be capable of supporting websites, mobile experiences, bulk data services, APIs, legislative branch applications, and future technologies that have yet to emerge.

The goal is not to predict every future technology, redesign every existing website, or spend years designing a perfect future state. Rather, the goal is to invest in the underlying data infrastructure that supports transparency, create the organizational capacity to adapt quickly as technology evolves, and develop a roadmap for what good public access to congressional information should look like now and in the future.

The House should continue to think strategically about the future while remaining focused on practical delivery, experimentation, and continuous improvement. The goal is to ensure that congressional information remains available, discoverable, understandable, and trustworthy regardless of the technologies through which people access it. Rather than focusing solely on today's websites, organizational structures, or technical constraints, this effort should challenge participants to think broadly about how Congress can make its information more useful and resilient in the years ahead.

Achieving these recommendations will require more than technology. It will require sustained institutional capacity, coordination, and long-term investment.

### ***Additional Consideration: Strengthening Innovation Capacity and Strategic Technology Planning***

As we discuss modernization, it is important to acknowledge a practical reality: Congress operates in an environment of finite resources and competing priorities.

Every year, legislative branch organizations are asked to support new initiatives, new technologies, new security requirements, new reporting obligations, and new public expectations, while continuing to operate mission-critical systems that Congress relies upon every day.

Therefore, modernization cannot be viewed solely as a technology challenge. It is also a challenge of capacity and sustainability. New capabilities must be supported, maintained, secured, and improved long after their initial deployment.

The legislative branch benefits from a workforce that is deeply committed to public service and constantly identifying opportunities for improvement. Across the House, Senate, GPO, LOC, and support agencies, staff regularly develop ideas to improve processes, enhance transparency, strengthen data quality, and better serve Members and the public.

The challenge is not a lack of ideas. The challenge is creating effective pathways for those ideas to be evaluated, prioritized, coordinated, supported, and sustained over time.

The House has taken positive steps in this area, including efforts to encourage the submission of unsolicited technology ideas and innovation proposals on House.gov. Those efforts should continue.

The House also benefits from numerous forums—including the CDTF and the Legislative Branch Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council—that promote communication, coordination, and awareness among technology organizations and stakeholders. These forums provide valuable opportunities to share information, discuss emerging needs, identify areas of common interest, and build relationships that help move this institution forward.

Coordination across the House and the legislative branch has real value. It helps us learn from one another, identify opportunities for collaboration and reuse, leverage shared expertise, and strengthen long-term planning. Most importantly, it helps ensure that innovation becomes a continuous institutional capability rather than a series of one-time projects.

## **CLOSING**

Modernizing Public Access to Legislative Data and Information is about how Congress fulfills its responsibility to inform the public, preserve the legislative record, and support democratic accountability. When I first came to the House in 1993, legislative information arrived in printed form each day. Technology has changed dramatically, but the responsibility has not: congressional information must be accurate, trustworthy, understandable, and available to those who need it, when they need it.

I view modernization as a balance between stewardship and vision. We are the custodians of an institution with a rich history and an extraordinary legislative record. We are responsible for equipping Congress today and in the future with the tools and information needed to carry that work forward. Public access is ultimately about trust—trust in where information comes from, why it's reliable, and how it reflects the work of you and your colleagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I appreciate the Members of the Subcommittee and the Committee staff for their continued support and leadership on this important topic. Finally, I would like to recognize the many colleagues, internal and external partners, and members of our team—past and present—who have contributed to these efforts over the years. Modernization is never the work of one individual; it is the product of dedicated public servants working together in service to Congress and the American people.