Promoting Transparency In Government

 Congress 2.0

The technologies developed in Silicon Valley can be implemented by Congress to allow citizens better access to the actions of their representatives. I have been advocating for **making legislative information accessible**
in a format that would allow non-governmental websites to republish the information in innovative ways, such as combining it with other information sources. According to a report from the
 Open House Project
, an organization supporting this proposal, this would be quite helpful in "educating the public about Congress and providing citizens with customized views of its proceedings."

Offering legislative information in a way that other websites can reuse could lead to revolutionary changes in the way our government functions, eventually allowing Congress to better tap into the knowledge and wisdom of the American people. Websites like **Wikipedia** , as well as open source collaborations like
 Linux
, have already demonstrated the incredible benefits to be gained by open systems. These projects represent significant paradigm shifts, taking full advantage of the potential of the Internet. American public policy can also benefit from these technologies, and this initiative is a strong step in that direction.

To begin this process, I included language in the **Fiscal Year 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act**   directing Congress, the Library of Congress, and the Government Printing Office to make their data available to the public in raw form. This language supports the provision of unfiltered legislative information to the public, making it easier for people to learn what their government is doing and engage with their representatives in more meaningful and useful ways.

This effort will enhance public access to legislative documents, bill status, summary information, and other legislative data through more direct methods. The Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, and Government Printing Office and the appropriate entities of the House of Representatives are directed to prepare a report on the feasibility of providing advanced search capabilities. This report is to be provided to the Committees on Appropriations of the House and

Senate within 120 days of the release of Legislative Information System 2.0.

The American people are our nation's greatest resource. Empowering the public with information can lead to better public policy. Representing the interests of constituents becomes easier when technology enables elected officials to tap into the knowledge and expertise of the public. By offering raw data to the public, innovative citizens can 'repurpose' this information in unexpectedly useful ways.

You can read more about this initiative in this **article** .

Website Redesign through Crowd-sourcing

I undertook a new pioneering project to improve civic engagement in Congress via crowdSPRING. I redesigned my website – using a technique called crowd-sourcing – to lead the way in making government sites more transparent and accessible to the public.

The project allowed designers to mock up multiple layouts for consideration by you, my constituents. The final design was chosen based on constituent input, design functionality, usability, and other criteria. I believe that my crowd-sourcing initiative will usher in a new era of government transparency. Many government websites have good content, but the content is often very hard to find. This project was about giving power to you, and democratizing the way government interacts with the public.

My goal as your Member of Congress is to serve you first and foremost. The crowd-sourcing initiative ensures that I am meeting your needs on your terms by allowing an unprecedented level of access into the design process of a government website.

The purpose of the website redesign was to move America closer to Government 2.0, where the public's ability to access and provide advice to Members of Congress is enhanced by new technology and new online participation. As many of you know, I am very active through Twitter, Facebook, and my blog. I intend to make my new site be an example for other member sites to follow. Congress must take advantage of Web 2.0 technologies, to transform the relationship

between citizens and government. Instead of viewing the public as a customer for services, I believe that we should empower citizens to become our partners in shaping the future of our nation.