

## Electronic Access to Legislative Documents

Paper is no longer the only medium through which the public can gain access to legislative documents. State legislatures are using technology to deliver material electronically, and the information is being presented in a variety of ways—for example, dial-up access, Internet and CD-ROM.

As shown by table 97-7.14, most states use internal policies to authorize the release of legislative documents in electronic form. That is not the only authorizing mechanism, however. Statutes authorize the release of documents via dial-up access in the Kansas Senate and Virginia Senate and House and via Internet in the Georgia House, Kansas Senate and House, New Jersey Senate and General Assembly and Virginia Senate and House. For the Washington House, the authority to put documents on the Internet comes from chamber rule. Other release mechanisms include approval from leadership (Idaho Senate and House, Louisiana House, Tennessee House and Texas Senate and House) or the rules committee (California Assembly) and special contracts (Kansas Senate and West Virginia Senate).

**Dial-up Access.** Public access to government information has gained a high profile in recent years. A number of state legislatures originally provided public access to electronic information through dial-up access, often charging fees to cover the cost of providing the service. In the 1970s, Alaska, Florida, Illinois and Virginia were among the first state legislatures to offer this service. By 1985, 11 legislatures offered dial-up access to the general public, and that number nearly quadrupled by 1995.

However, increasing public use of the Internet for all types of information has led some legislatures to abandon this method of document presentation. The following 37 legislative bodies indicated that they do not provide dial-up access at all or to anyone outside the legislature.

Arizona Senate and House	Nevada Senate and House
Arkansas Senate and House	New Mexico Senate and House
Colorado House	North Carolina House
Connecticut Senate and House	North Dakota Senate and House
Florida Senate	Ohio Senate and House
Georgia House	Oklahoma House
Iowa House	Pennsylvania Senate and House
Kentucky Senate	Texas Senate and House
Maryland Senate and House	Utah Senate
Michigan House	Wisconsin Senate and Assembly
Minnesota Senate	Wyoming Senate and House
Missouri Senate and House	Puerto Rico Senate

**Internet.** Internet is a worldwide arrangement of computer networks. The graphic capability of the Internet's World Wide Web and the growing number of services—such as America Online, CompuServe and Prodigy—that offer access to the Internet are expanding the audience that seeks information electronically. In response, state legislatures are quickly establishing a presence on the Internet.

In 1991, Hawaii became the first legislature to offer legislative information through the Internet. In 1993, California was the first state to pass a law requiring on-line public access to legislative information through the Internet.

Table 97-7.15 indicates states that currently offering access to legislative documents via the Internet. Most legislatures responded that information is available through the Internet. Seventeen chambers (shown below) indicated that they did not provide public access to legislative documents via the Internet. However, the Alabama and Ohio legislatures expect their web sites to be ready in early 1998.

Alabama Senate and House	New York Assembly
Hawaii House	Ohio Senate and House
Georgia Senate	Oklahoma Senate
Illinois Senate and House	Pennsylvania Senate and House
Indiana Senate	West Virginia Senate and House
Maine House	American Samoa House

**CD-ROM.** CD-ROM (Compact Disk-Read Only Memory) technology makes it possible for users to search large volumes of information without incurring telephone and computer usage charges. At the present time, the use of CD-ROM is not as widespread as other electronic forms of document presentation. The Minnesota Legislature was the first to produce and sell a CD-ROM version of its state statutes. Florida, Iowa, Montana and Wisconsin also were among the pioneers to offer legislative information in this electronic format. Other states that currently offer legislative information via CD-ROM include Arizona, Idaho, North Dakota, Oregon and Washington.

**Decision Making.** Who is responsible for determining which legislative documents are to be placed on the various electronic venues? Typically, legislative leaders are the decision makers. They are not alone, however. Clerk's offices, legislative councils, research offices, drafting offices and computer centers often play a role. For example, tables 97-7.16 and 97-7.17 show those who are key in decisions to provide dial-up access or place legislative information on the Internet. A chamber is listed under multiple categories when more than one person or group is involved in the decision.

**Charges for Electronic Access.** Most legislative chambers reported that Internet access is free. Sometimes charges are levied for other types of electronic access to legislative information. Tables 97-7.18 and 97-7.19 provide detail about the fees charged.

**Table 97-7.14 Electronic Access Authorized by Internal Policy**

<b>State (1)</b>	<b>Dial-up access</b>	<b>Internet access</b>	<b>CD-Rom</b>
Alabama	B	H	
Alaska	B	B	
Arizona		H	
Arkansas		S	
California		S	
Colorado		H	H
Connecticut		B	
Delaware		H	
Florida		H	H
Georgia	S	B	
Hawaii			
Idaho			
Illinois	H		
Indiana			
Iowa		H	
Kansas			
Kentucky			
Louisiana	S	S	
Maine	H	H	
Maryland			
Massachusetts			
Michigan	S	B	
Minnesota			
Mississippi			
Missouri		H	
Montana	B	B	B

**Table 97-7.14 Electronic Access Authorized by Internal Policy, cont'd.**

<b>State</b>	<b>Dial-up access</b>	<b>Internet access</b>	<b>CD-Rom</b>
Nebraska	S	S	S
Nevada		B	
New Hampshire	S	S	
New Jersey	H		
New Mexico		B	
New York	H	H	
North Carolina			
North Dakota		B	B
Ohio			
Oklahoma	S	S	S
Oregon			
Pennsylvania			
Rhode Island			
South Carolina		H	
South Dakota	B	B	B
Tennessee	S	S	S
Texas			
Utah	H	B	
Vermont			
Virginia			
Washington	B		
West Virginia			
Wisconsin		S	S
Wyoming		B	
American Samoa			
Puerto Rico		S	

**Table 97-7.14 Electronic Access Authorized by Internal Policy, cont'd.**

<p>Key:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>S=Senate</li><li>H=House or Assembly</li><li>B=Both chambers</li></ul> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The following chambers did not return a survey: Colorado Senate, Delaware Senate, Hawaii Senate, Iowa Senate, Kentucky House, Maine Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate and House, New York Senate, North Carolina Senate, Oregon House, Rhode Island Senate, South Carolina Senate, Vermont House, American Samoa Senate, District of Columbia Council, Guam Senate, Northern Mariana Islands Senate and House, Puerto Rico House and Virgin Islands Senate and House.</li></ol>
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**Table 97-7.15 Groups that Have Access to Documents via the Internet**

<b>State (1)</b>	<b>Legislators</b>	<b>Legislative staff</b>	<b>Governor's office</b>	<b>State agencies</b>	<b>Local government</b>	<b>Academic institutions</b>	<b>Lobbyists</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>General public</b>
Alabama									
Alaska	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Arizona	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Arkansas	B	B	H	B	B	B	B	B	B
California	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Colorado			H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Connecticut	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Delaware	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Florida	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Georgia	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Hawaii									
Idaho	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Illinois									
Indiana	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Iowa	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Kansas	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Kentucky	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Louisiana	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Maine									
Maryland	B	B	B	B	B				B
Massachusetts									
Michigan	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Minnesota	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Mississippi									
Missouri	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Montana	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B

**Table 97-7.15 Groups that Have Access to Documents via the Internet, cont'd.**

<b>State (1)</b>	<b>Legislators</b>	<b>Legislative staff</b>	<b>Governor's office</b>	<b>State agencies</b>	<b>Local government</b>	<b>Academic institutions</b>	<b>Lobbyists</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>General public</b>
Nebraska	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Nevada	B	B	S	S	S	S	B	B	
New Hampshire	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
New Jersey	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
New Mexico	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
New York	H								
North Carolina	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
North Dakota	B	B	B	B	B	B			
Ohio									
Oklahoma	B	B	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
Oregon	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Pennsylvania	S	S							
Rhode Island	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
South Carolina	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H	H
South Dakota	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Tennessee	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Texas	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Utah	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	S
Vermont	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
Virginia	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Washington	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
West Virginia	H								
Wisconsin	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
Wyoming	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B
American Samoa									
Puerto Rico	S	S							S

**Table 97-7.15 Groups that Have Access to Documents via the Internet, cont'd.**

Key:

S=Senate

H=House or Assembly

B=Both chambers

Notes:

1. The following chambers did not return a survey: Colorado Senate, Delaware Senate, Hawaii Senate, Iowa Senate, Kentucky House, Maine Senate, Massachusetts Senate and House, Mississippi Senate and House, New York Senate, North Carolina Senate, Oregon House, Rhode Island Senate, South Carolina Senate, Vermont House, American Samoa Senate, District of Columbia Council, Guam Senate, Northern Mariana Islands Senate and House, Puerto Rico House and Virgin Islands Senate and House.



**Table 97-7.16 Key Decision Makers for Dial-Up Access**

<b>Legislative leaders</b>	
Alaska Senate and House	New Jersey General Assembly
Delaware House	New York Assembly
Florida House	Oklahoma Senate
Georgia Senate	Oregon Senate
Hawaii House	Rhode Island House
Illinois Senate and House	South Dakota Senate and House
Indiana House	Tennessee House
Kansas Senate	Utah House
Louisiana House	Vermont Senate
New Hampshire Senate	
<b>Clerk's office</b>	
Alabama Senate and House	Oregon Senate
Kansas Senate and House	Virginia Senate
Louisiana Senate	Washington House
Missouri Senate	West Virginia Senate and House
Nebraska Senate	American Samoa House
New Hampshire Senate and House	
<b>Legislative council, drafting, research or services office</b>	
Alabama Senate	Montana Senate and House
Alaska Senate and House	New Hampshire House
Idaho Senate and House	New York Assembly
Indiana Senate	Oregon Senate
Kansas Senate and House	South Carolina House
Maine House	Virginia House
Michigan Senate	West Virginia Senate
Minnesota House	American Samoa House
<b>Computer center</b>	
Delaware House	Virginia Senate
New Hampshire House	Washington House
South Carolina House	West Virginia Senate
Tennessee Senate	
<b>Other</b>	
California Senate (by statute) and Assembly (Rules Committee)	
Nebraska Senate (Executive Board)	
New Jersey Senate (Computer Advisory Group)	
Washington Senate (Joint Advisory Committee)	

**Table 97-7.17 Key Decision Makers for Internet Access**

<b>Legislative leaders</b>	
Alaska Senate and House	Nevada Senate and Assembly
Arkansas Senate and House	New Hampshire Senate
Connecticut Senate and House	New Jersey Senate and General Assembly
Delaware House	New York Assembly
Florida Senate and House	North Carolina House
Georgia Senate	Oregon Senate
Hawaii House	Rhode Island House
Indiana House	South Dakota Senate and House
Iowa House	Tennessee House
Kansas Senate	Texas Senate and House
Kentucky Senate	Utah House
Louisiana House	Wisconsin Senate and Assembly
Missouri House	
<b>Clerk's office</b>	
Arizona House	Nevada Senate
Arkansas Senate	New Hampshire Senate and House
Florida Senate	North Carolina House
Georgia House	Oregon Senate
Kansas Senate and House	Puerto Rico Senate
Louisiana Senate	South Carolina House
Maine House	Tennessee Senate
Michigan Senate and House	Virginia Senate
Minnesota House	Washington Senate and House
Missouri Senate	Wisconsin Assembly
Nebraska Senate	
<b>Legislative council, drafting, research or services office</b>	
Alaska Senate and House	Nevada Senate
Arkansas House	New Mexico Senate and House
Idaho Senate and House	North Dakota Senate and House
Indiana Senate	Oregon Senate
Iowa House	Utah Senate
Kansas Senate and House	Vermont Senate
Kentucky Senate	Virginia House
Michigan House	Wisconsin Assembly
Minnesota Senate and House	Wyoming Senate and House
Montana Senate and House	

**Table 97-7.17 Key Decision Makers for Internet Access, cont'd.**

<b>Computer center</b>	
Arizona House	Nevada Senate
Arkansas Senate	North Carolina House
California Senate	South Carolina House
Connecticut Senate and House	Tennessee Senate
Delaware House	Virginia Senate
Missouri Senate	Washington House
<b>Other</b>	
California Assembly (Rules Committee)	
Colorado House (Legislative Steering Committee)	
Nebraska Senate (Executive Board)	
Kentucky Senate (By statute)	
Washington Senate (Joint Advisory Committee)	

**Table 97-7.18 Charges for Electronic Access to Legislative Documents—  
Senate**

<b>State</b>	<b>Description</b>
Alabama	Five on-line subscription packages are offered. The rates vary from \$100 per month (20 hours of connect time for statutory retrieval only) to \$200 per month (30 hours of connect time for bill status information, voting history, boards and commissions and statutory retrieval). There is an initial hook-up fee of \$400 for all package levels.
Alaska	The cost for dial-up access is \$100 per year.
Indiana	The cost for dial-up access is \$100 annually plus per-minute charges.
Kansas	The subscription fee for dial-up access is \$75 plus 10 cents per minute.
Louisiana	The connection fee for dial-up access is \$150. A four-month contract costs \$75 per month. A one-year contract costs \$50 per month.
Maryland	Internet access has two levels. Access to the level where data is updated once per day is free. Access to the level where data is updated as action occurs costs \$800.
Michigan	The subscription rates for dial-up access vary. Prime time subscriptions include a \$225 annual fee for bill status or MCL Searchplus connect time charges ranging from \$12.60 to \$96 per hour. Public library and off-hours subscriptions are available for about \$200 annually.
Montana	On-line data base access costs 50 cents per minute.
New Hampshire	The one-time start-up fee for dial-up access is \$50. The fee thereafter is \$50 annually plus 75 cents per minute.
New Jersey	The dial-up access fee is \$55 per month. Additional hook-ups cost \$25 per month. Connect charges are 45 cents per minute for government entities or 75 cents per minute for others.
North Dakota	Internet access to the bill status system costs \$400. Bill status and session laws on CD-ROM cost \$10.
Oregon	The initial hook-up fee for non-legislative customers is \$55. Thereafter, the charge is \$25 per month, which includes one hour of computer time. Each hour after that is prorated at \$5 per hour.
South Dakota	Dial-up access is available to state agencies; the cost is \$300.
Virginia	The annual fee for dial-up access is \$100 plus \$20 per hour for usage.
Washington	Dial-up access costs \$175 per month. Statutes on CD-ROM cost
West Virginia	Two plans for dial-up access are available. The basic subscription fee is \$80 per month. The more comprehensive plan costs \$120 per month.
Wisconsin	Statutes on CD-ROM cost \$99.

**Table 97-7.19 Charges for Electronic Access to Legislative Documents—  
House**

<b>State</b>	<b>Description</b>
Alabama	Five on-line subscription packages are offered. The rates vary from \$100 per month (20 hours of connect time for statutory retrieval only) to \$200 per month (30 hours of connect time for bill status information, voting history, boards and commissions and statutory retrieval). There is an initial hook-up fee of \$400 for all package levels.
Alaska	The cost for dial-up access is \$100 per year.
Arizona	Statutes on CD-ROM cost \$50.
Florida	Statutes on CD-ROM cost \$55 plus tax.
Illinois	Three plans are offered—computer to computer, status of legislation abbreviated report, and status of legislation abbreviated report plus synopsis report. New user initial fee and 100 minutes of on-line time cost \$500. Additional 200-minute blocks cost \$200. Synopses and abbreviated report annual fee is \$125. The annual fee for only the abbreviated report is \$50.
Indiana	The cost for dial-up access is \$100 annually plus per minute charges.
Louisiana	The connection fee for dial-up access is \$125. A four-month contract costs \$75 per month. A one-year contract costs \$50 per month. These include one hour per month of connect time; additional connect time costs \$1.50 per minute.
Maine	For dial-up access, there is a one-time charge of \$200.
Maryland	Internet access has two levels. Access to the level where data is updated once per day is free. Access to the level where data is updated as action occurs costs \$800.
Minnesota	The subscription rates for dial-up access are \$800 for private sector and \$300 for agencies. There is Internet access is free. Statutes on CD-ROM cost \$225.
Montana	On-line data base access costs 50 cents per minute.
New Hampshire	The one-time start-up fee for dial-up access is \$50. The fee thereafter is \$50 annually plus 75 cents per minute.
New Jersey	The dial-up access fee is \$55 per month. Connect charges run 75 cents per minute.
New York	Dial-up access fees may vary depending upon individual requirements. The cost for complete services is \$1,100.
North Dakota	Internet access to the bill status system costs \$400. Bill status and session laws on CD-ROM cost \$10.
South Dakota	Dial-up access is available to state agencies; the cost is \$300.
Virginia	The annual fee for dial-up access is \$100 plus \$20 per hour for usage for those within Virginia or \$40 per hour for out-of-state users.

**Table 97-7.19 Charges for Electronic Access to Legislative Documents—  
House, cont'd.**

<b>State</b>	<b>Description</b>
Washington	Dial-up access costs \$125 per month without or \$175 with inclusion of the administrative rules and regulations. Basic Internet service is free. Statutes on CD-ROM cost \$50 and administrative rules and regulations cost \$100.
West Virginia	Dial-up access costs \$125 per month.