November 12, 2026

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Chair, Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Ranking Member, Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate

RE: Public Access to Senate Legislation

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Democratic Leader Schumer, Chair McConnell, and Ranking Member Padilla:

Thank you for your continuing stewardship of Senate operations. We write to renew our request for improved public access to bills and amendments considered on the Senate floor and to follow up on our December 9, 2021 letter on that topic.[1] Specifically, we urge the Senate to take the necessary steps to ensure bills and resolutions considered on the Senate floor are publicly available prior to or contemporaneous with their consideration.

The *Congressional Record* provides the most complete public source for information for bill text and amendments. However, it is published daily after the conclusion of legislative proceedings and thereby provides a retrospective look at what happened. In circumstances where bills or amendments were offered on the same day they were considered, there is no universal public availability of the text contemporaneously with the deliberations. This issue arises most frequently with respect to amendments and, to a lesser degree, Senate resolutions.

The legislative information website *Congress.gov* provides the most user-friendly official resource for bill text. For various reasons, at times it can take days or weeks for the text of legislation to be published on *Congress.gov*. Publication may occur after a measure has been considered by the Senate. This is an issue that has become worse over time.[2]

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[1] Letter to Senators McConnell and Schumer encouraging improved access to senate bills and amendments (December 9, 2021) https://s3.amazonaws.com/demandprogress/letters/Online_Senate_Floor_Amendments_LTR_2021-12-09.pdf

[2] See, for example, "Publishing pileup: Congressional bills are slow to reach the public," Roll Call (March 5, 2025), available at https://rollcall.com/2025/03/05/publishing-pileup-congressional-bills-slow-to-reach-public/.

The Senate maintains an internal website available only to individuals with a Senate IP address that provides significant contemporaneous information about pending amendments.[3] It is our understanding that the service has undergone significant improvements in the last few years.[4] They include: full amendment text availability in machine-readable formats, updated internal infrastructure for tracking floor activity, and the publication of structured text that makes possible the use of automated bill-text comparison tools like the comparative print suite.

The Senate's modernization of its technology to track legislation and amendments is good news, but it has not extended access to legislative data to the public. It is our understanding that the technology in place today is capable of supporting public access, but Senate leadership authorization is required for that capability to be turned on.

The House of Representatives, by comparison, which operates under significantly different rules, publishes the text of legislation to be considered on the floor and all proposed amendments thereto on public websites prior to consideration, except in very limited circumstances.[5] The House-run website provides the best official resource for timely access to legislative information to be considered on the House floor, although that information will become available after-the-fact in the *Congressional Record* and on *Congress.gov*.

The current Senate system inadvertently creates unequal access to information, whereby those with connections to Senate offices can at times gain access to information concerning legislation being considered on the Senate floor far more easily than those who do not. While some information asymmetries are inevitable, privileged access to public business that currently is the subject of floor debate should be minimized to the extent possible.

It is our view that congressional offices, the public, and the press should have ready access to bills and amendments set for debate on the Senate floor prior to a vote. Everyone should be able to "read the bill." In our modern era, this means contemporaneous online availability of the text of legislation and amendments with consideration on the floor as well as improved archival access.

We are unaware of any conversations held by the Secretary of the Senate or Senate Sergeant at Arms with the Congressional Data Task Force or public stakeholders

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[3] The website is the Amendment Tracking System, available at ats.senate.gov. According to the Congressional Research Service, "ATS is a web application that displays images of submitted and proposed amendments to legislation pending before the U.S. Senate. Amendments are available on ATS approximately 15 minutes after the Bill Clerk receives them." See *Policy and Legislative Research for Congressional Staff: Finding Documents, Analysis, News, and Training* (2019), Congressional Research Service (R43434), https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43434.html

[4] Congressional Data Task Force Recap: March 20, 2026, https://congressionaldata.org/congressional-data-task-force-recap-march-20-2026/

[5] The text of legislation scheduled to be considered on the House floor is published at https://docs.house.gov/floor/ and prior notice of legislation expected to be considered is published by the House Majority Leader. The text of amendments to legislation scheduled to be considered on the floor is published by the House Rules Committee at https://rules.house.gov/legislation.

regarding how to implement improved access to bill text and amendments except for the updates provided at Congressional Data Task Force meetings in response to public questions. We respectfully request that these offices be given direction to proceed with making that information publicly available in collaboration with public stakeholders and a timeline for implementation of a resolution.

The perfect should not be the enemy of the good and we would welcome steady progress on improving the public availability of this information with an eye to its publication in interoperable, structured-data formats.[6] We expect the Congressional Data Task Force would be an invaluable sounding board concerning building a robust system that can endure and be extended over time.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, Executive Director at the American Governance Institute, at Daniel@AmericaLabs.org or Zach Graves, Executive Director at the Foundation for American Innovation, at Zach.Graves@TheFAI.org.

Sincerely yours,

Daniel Schuman, the American Governance Institute
Zach Graves, Foundation for American Innovation

cc: U.S. Senate Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. Senate Committee on Rules and Administration

[6] The United States Legislative Markup Schema already in use by the Congress would easily satisfy this request. See https://github.com/usgpo/uslm.