

WASHINGTON, D.C. –Congressman Olver's website, [www.olver.house.gov](http://www.olver.house.gov) , was named one of the best websites on Capitol Hill today and given a "112<sup>th</sup>

Congress Bronze Mouse Award." The award was given by the [Congressional Management Foundation](#) (CMF), a nonpartisan nonprofit working to improve communications between citizens and Congress and enhance operations in Capitol Hill offices. CMF has assessed and graded congressional websites and issued these awards since 2001.

"I am thrilled and honored to receive this award," said Congressman John Olver. "Communicating with my constituents is, and has always been, a top priority of mine. I want residents of the First District to be able to access the information or help they need as quickly and efficiently as possible, and in this day and age the best way to do that is to have a strong website and social media presence," Olver added.

"Rep. Olver is to be commended for educating citizens and achieving the highest degree of transparency and accountability in online communications," said Bradford Fitch, President and CEO of CMF. "In the 21st Century, a website is much more than a broadcasting tool for a political message - it's a virtual office and a window into our democratic institutions. These winners of the Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze Mouse Awards understand the value of using the Internet to enlighten and serve constituents, and are examples for all congressional offices to follow," he said.

[Download a copy of the report here](#) .

CMF conducted its analysis from June to September 2011 and today released its latest report, "112<sup>th</sup> Congress Gold Mouse Report: Best Practices in Online Communications on Capitol Hill." The report identified recent trends related to online communications in Congress, including:

- A significant number of House and Senate Member websites lacked basic educational and transparency features including: links to bills sponsored and cosponsored, voting records, and basic information on how a bill becomes a law.
- House Members taking office in January 2011 had significantly better websites than Senators taking office in January 2011, with 61% of new House Members receiving an A or B grade, compared to 31% of new Senators receiving a similar grade. Nearly half (46%) of new Senators received a grade of D or F, compared to 17% of new House Members.
- While there was general parity overall in quality of websites between Democrats and

Republican Member websites, the best websites tended to be Democratic Members.

Of the 618 congressional websites graded, a total of 98 personal office, committee and leadership websites earned A's, and will therefore receive a Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze Mouse Award. With the assistance and guidance of faculty from the University of California-Riverside, the Ohio State University, and Northeastern University, CMF staff assessed and graded the websites and gave each a numerical score, which was translated into a grade of A through F.

The criteria for website assessments have been developed and refined by CMF over the past decade based on survey research, focus groups with constituents, and interviews with key stakeholders to congressional offices. A total of 92 criteria were used to grade personal office websites, 66 criteria for committee websites, and 53 criteria for leadership sites. Reviewers assessed 10 categories of criteria: usability of website; timeliness of content; breadth and depth of information on issues; constituent services and casework information; promoting accountability to constituents; legislative process information; district/state information; floor proceedings information; availability of diverse forms of content; and availability of diverse forms of content channels. CMF reviewers also included social media components in the criteria.

CMF will release only the names of award winners (congressional offices that earned a grade of A-, A, or A+). Each congressional office will be notified privately of their grade and be provided with a customized report explaining their grade and ways to improve their website. This is the sixth round of Gold Mouse Awards CMF has issued since 2001. In 2009 CMF moved the Gold Mouse Awards to a once-a-Congress schedule, and the awards are now issued in the first year of a new Congress.

Founded in 1977, CMF is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry. Its work focuses on improving congressional operations and enhancing citizen engagement through research, publications, training, and management services. The Gold Mouse Awards and congressional website research is part of CMF's *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*, dedicated to enriching the relationship between citizens and Congress. The goal of the *Partnership* is to further meaningful civic engagement through education, re-establishing trust, and providing innovative and pragmatic tools to facilitate purposeful two-way communication between citizens and Congress.

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