



School of Medicine Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Legislative Lens: Decoding Priorities & Engagement

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My Why....



“Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season. It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year.”

W.E.B. Du Bois

How do I identify resources to help understand individual legislators' policy priorities and history of constituent engagement?



Objectives

- Understand how to research legislators' policy priorities
- Identify resources for tracking legislative history
- Analyze constituent engagement patterns

Why Understanding Legislators' Priorities Matters

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- Helps advocates align their messaging with legislators' policy interests.
- Strengthens relationships with policymakers through informed engagement.
- Supports targeted advocacy efforts for better impact.

Key Resources to Research Legislators | 6

- **Government Websites**

- Congress.gov
 - Search bills, sponsors, and legislative histories
- House.gov and Senate.gov
 - Legislator bios, press releases, and issue positions.

- **Legislative Tracking Tools**

- GovTrack <https://www.govtrack.us/>
 - Monitors bills and lawmakers' actions.
- OpenSecrets- <https://www.opensecrets.org>
 - Tracks campaign donations and lobbyist influence
- Ballotpedia - <https://ballotpedia.org/>
 - Comprehensive profiles of legislators and policy stances.

Key Resources to Research Legislators | 7

•Voting Records & Bill Sponsorship

- ProPublica – <https://www.propublica.org/>
 - Analyzes voting trends and sponsorships.
- League of Women Voters –<https://www.lwv.org/>
 - Summarizes key votes.

•Campaign Contributions & Interests:

- Federal Election Commission (FEC) – <https://www.fec.gov/>
 - Provides campaign finance details.
- OpenSecrets –<https://www.opensecrets.org>
 - Details donors, PACs, and financial backing.

Key Resources to Research Legislators | 8

- **Social Media & Public Statements**

- Legislators' **X(Twitter), Facebook, and YouTube accounts** to track statements and priorities.
- **Official press releases** for policy positions.

Understanding Constituent Engagement History

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- **How to Analyze a Legislator's Engagement with Constituents:**
 - **Town Halls & Public Meetings:** Look for participation, topics discussed, and responses.
 - **Advocacy Group Endorsements:** Identify groups that support or oppose them.
 - **Media Coverage & Public Opinion:** Review news articles, interviews, and op-eds.

How to Use This Information for Advocacy

- **Practical Applications**

- **Tailor messaging** to highlight shared interests.
- **Identify key allies** who align with your cause.
- **Prepare for meetings** by understanding legislators' historical positions.
- **Anticipate opposition** and prepare counterpoints.

My practice



- Representative Terri Sewell, a Democrat from Alabama's 7th Congressional District, has served in Congress since 2011. Known for her commitment to civil rights, social justice, education, and healthcare reform, Sewell's legislative work is closely tied to the unique social and economic challenges of her district.
- **Legislative Priorities & Sponsored Bills:**
 - **Voting Rights:** Rep. Sewell introduced the **John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2023 (H.R.14)**, aiming to restore and strengthen provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
 - **Healthcare:** She co-sponsored the **Nancy Gardner Sewell Medicare Multi-Cancer Early Detection Screening Coverage Act (H.R.2407)**, advocating for Medicare coverage of multi-cancer early detection tests.

My practice

- **Campaign Contributions & Financial Support:**
- **Top Contributing Industries (2023-2024):**
 - **Insurance:** \$260,795
 - **Pharmaceuticals/Health Products:** \$193,813
 - **Real Estate:** \$189,355
 - **Securities & Investment:** \$186,410
 - **Health Professionals:** \$178,168
- **Constituent Engagement & Public Communication:**
- **Official Channels:** Rep. Sewell regularly updates her constituents through her official website and social media platforms, including X and Facebook. She hosts several town halls.
- **Local Media Coverage:** She receives coverage in local news outlets, providing insights into her district-focused initiatives and community interactions.

Practice Activity: Research Your Legislator

- **Step 1: Identify Your Legislator**
- Find your U.S. Representative or Senator: www.house.gov | www.senate.gov
- **Step 2: Research Policy Priorities & Voting Record**
- **Congress.gov** – Search for sponsored/co-sponsored bills
- **GovTrack.us** – Review voting history & legislative actions
- **Step 3: Explore Campaign Contributions & Influences**
- **OpenSecrets.org** – Find top donors & industry affiliations
- **Step 4: Analyze Public Engagement & Communication**
- **Official Website & Press Releases** – Check stated priorities
- **Social Media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube)** – See public interactions
- **Step 5: Find Local Media Coverage & Public Opinion**
- **Google News** – Search for recent articles on their policies
- **Local News Websites** – Look for community feedback & interviews

Key Takeaways & Next Steps

- **Key Learnings:**

- Legislators' policy priorities can be tracked through various resources.
- Constituent engagement history provides insights into their responsiveness.
- Effective advocacy requires aligning with their interests and engagement patterns.

- **Next Steps:**

- Start researching your target legislator.
- Engage strategically with data-driven insights.



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Questions