

Using the Internet to Make Democracy Work in Connecticut

WHY USE THE INTERNET?

If you are reading this pamphlet on the LWVCT website, you probably already know how to find information you need to get your point of view across to legislators and other public officials. **If someone has handed you this pamphlet**, we will suggest some first steps that will make you realize how easily you can find information that will help you participate in your government.

To access information, you need high-speed or broadband Internet connection. But you don't need to have such service at home, because you can find it at your local library, schools, or adult education centers. Research librarians can be very helpful in getting you started.

USING THE INTERNET TO TRACK A BILL IN THE CONNECTICUT LEGISLATURE

If you want to know what your state legislators are doing, begin at the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) home page, www.cga.ct.gov. There you will find links to information for beginners (Citizen Guide, Session Information) as well as to the daily work of the legislative committees (agendas, minutes, testimony on bills); you will also find House and Senate Calendars and the Go List (what they are voting on that very day). There is also a link to a List of Bills Passed and a link to the current General Statutes.

SEARCHING FOR A BILL

To find the text or the status of a bill, you need to know the bill's number. For that, go to the *Search* page. The Search page can help you find the bills you are looking for. Search options include:

1. Legislative Documents
2. Find Bills by Introducer/Co-sponsor
3. Find Bills by Committee
4. Find Bills by Title/Last Action
5. Find Bills in a Range
6. Subject Index to Bills A-Z
7. Site Search

The Subject Index (#6) can give you clues to words you can use to find your bill or bills. Ask yourself which committee would most likely deal with the area you're interested in. Education? Public Health? Environment? Do you know who sponsored the bill? What word would most likely show up in the title?

Once you have the bill number — it can be from two to four digits — you can use the Quick Search engine at the top of the CGA homepage to track your bill's progress through committees. The Status Page shows a bill's history of activity (with dates, so you can track down votes), has links to its text (and any amendments), provides bill analysis (in plain English!), and fiscal analysis. Once a bill is out of committee and is posted onto the Calendar of the state Senate or House, you will be able to estimate how long it might take for the bill to get to the floor for the vote and will have a good idea when you should contact your legislators with persuasive arguments about how they should cast their vote.

USING THE INTERNET TO CONTACT ELECTED OFFICIALS IN CONNECTICUT

You can find the mailing addresses and telephone numbers of our elected officials in the League of Women Voters of Connecticut *Directory of Federal & State Elected Officials*. The *Directory* is available as a booklet and also in an interactive version on the League website, www.lwvct.org. An updated edition is posted on the League's website after each statewide election and updated as changes occur.

To find what district you live in, go to the list of towns. According to your town, you will find your district numbers for the state House of Representatives; state Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives in the U.S. Congress. Your district number will lead you to the homepage of your legislators, their contact information, and their current stand on issues. If your town has more than one state Senate or House district, a link will lead you to your town's map and you will easily find the right district. The two U.S. Senators are the same regardless of where you live in Connecticut.

FINDING INFORMATION FROM OTHER CONNECTICUT AGENCIES

The CGA homepage provides information on the daily activity of the state legislature, but there are three branches of state government: Legislative, Executive, and Judicial.

You will find information about all of state government on www.ct.gov. You will be able to contact the Governor, the Attorney General, and the other constitutional officers. You will also find links to state departments, commissions, agencies, and offices that regulate various facets of public and private life.

In the Search window of the homepage, type “towns & cities” and you will find a list of links to municipal websites. Get to know your own town government or the one next door!

RESEARCHING FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The best starting point to search for federal bills and legislation in the U.S. Congress is the Library of Congress website, thomas.loc.gov (“thomas” as in Thomas Jefferson). The homepage of the U.S. Senate, www.senate.gov, provides a link to Legislation and Records, where one can search by bill number or important key word.

CONTACTING SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES IN THE U.S. CONGRESS

To find your Representative in the House of Representatives in Congress, refer to the *LWVCT Directory* or visit www.house.gov/writerep

To find your U.S. Senators, refer to the *LWVCT Directory* or visit www.senate.gov



RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

League of Women Voters of Connecticut
www.lwvct.org

LWVCT Action Center
www.lwvct.org/action.htm

League of Women Voter of the United States
www.lwv.org

www.vote411.org
Information on how, when, and where to vote
anywhere in the U.S.

Connecticut Government
ct.gov

Federal Government
firstgov.gov

For information about the League of Women Voters of Connecticut or to contact a local League near you, call the state office at 203-288-7996, or email us at league@comcast.net or log onto www.lwvct.org

League of Women Voters of Connecticut
Education Fund, Inc.



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The League of Women Voters
of Connecticut
1890 Dixwell Avenue, Suite 203
Hamden, CT 06514-3183

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