
Coates' Canons Blog: The Daily Bulletin: Big Changes Ahead

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Exciting news in the world of legislative reporting—the Daily Bulletin is going exclusively online! Since 1935, the School (a/k/a the Institute) of Government's Legislative Reporting Service has been creating the Daily Bulletin, which includes summaries of every filed bill, amendment, committee substitute, and conference report. Faculty members and staff working from an office in the basement of the legislative building write these summaries every day the General Assembly is in session. They publish the bulletin at the end of each legislative day (which, at times, can be as late as 2 a.m. the following day). Over time, the Bulletin evolved from a mimeographed paper copy that was hand-delivered and mailed to a PDF version that was sent via email. The new Daily Bulletin Online is the next tremendous step forward and we hope that it will make it easier for everyone to monitor and understand legislative developments as they unfold in Raleigh. Want to hear more about all of the new features? Read on.

There are many exciting changes with the Daily Bulletin Online but I'll just take a moment to highlight a few of the more dramatic improvements and additions.

Searching

The site now allows users to search by just about anything, including bill number, term, sponsor name, and county. A search for a bill number will direct you to a "bill page" that includes all of the details about that particular bill, including every summary that we have published. A search for a term will do a general search of the whole site. The search results will include every instance where that term appears in a bill's long title, short title, or our summary.

Categories

Every summary will have certain "categories" associated with it. For example, a bill related to the Medicaid program would likely be associated with "Public Assistance Programs" and "Health Insurance." When reading the summary of that bill, a user can click on the categories associated with it and see every other bill that has been associated with that category. In one section of the site, users can view all of the categories and easily browse every bill assigned to each category. What a lovely way to spend a Sunday afternoon, eh?

Tracking

Each user will be able to track bills of interest using the "My Bills" feature. I think of this feature as a folder where I can put any bills that are in my areas of research or concentration. The new site also includes several "Monitors" that allow users to create and save multi-faceted searches. For example, I can set up a Monitor to watch for every summary that addresses public assistance programs during the long session. I can then periodically check my Monitor to see if new summaries have been added. If a new bill of interest has been introduced, I can tag it and send it to "My Bills" for future tracking.

SOG Comments

Faculty members and staff from the School of Government may have done research or have insight into an issue that is the subject of pending legislation. The new site provides them with an opportunity to directly connect that information with the legislative summaries we are producing for the Daily Bulletin Online. If someone from the SOG has posted a comment on a specific summary, it will appear on the site under a special "SOG Comments" heading. Consistent with our longstanding values of neutrality, non-partisanship, and non-advocacy, these comments won't be editorial or offer

recommendations. Rather, the goal is to connect the work we do every day with state and local government officials to the discussions and debates underway at the legislature.

Real-Time Updates

The staff will be entering legislative summaries and publishing them to the site throughout the day. Users will not have to wait until the end of each day to access them. For those who still want to be able to read the old-school Daily Bulletin produced at the end of each legislative day, have no fear. The new site will still have a link that allows you to view or print a document that looks just like the traditional publication. When all of the summaries are complete for the day, the editor – Christine Wunsche – will post a single document that includes summaries of every bill, amendment, committee substitute, and conference report filed that day. She will also post the “Action on Bills” compilation that has historically been included in the print version of the Daily Bulletin.

The new site is up and active at <http://lrs.sog.unc.edu/> Subscription information is available here. Note that state and local government officials and nonprofit organizations are eligible to receive *significant* discounts. Do not subscribe without getting your discount code!

Please come take a look around and let us know what you think!

Links

- lrs.sog.unc.edu/
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