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Center Spotlight

Top 10 Digital Legislatures Named in New Survey

Rhonda Wilson, October 2003

Nevada has the most digitally advanced legislature in the country, according to the 2003 Digital Legislatures Survey, a new study conducted by the Center for Digital Government, a national research and advisory institute on information technology in government and education.

The Nevada Legislature ranks first above second-place winners Minnesota and South Dakota for its innovative use of technology to enhance services to its members and citizens, while increasing operational efficiencies.

The Digital Legislatures Survey is the first study of its kind that will be used as a bellwether for electronic government and provide models for best practices. In August, all 50-state legislative offices were invited to participate in the survey. Officials responded to a set of 12 questions and ranked their offices according to a four-point scale, providing URLs and background data for final verification and validation. Questions ranged from online access to legislation and elected officials to legislative technology support and operations. A ranking was established based on the multiple-choice criteria selections.

"This award reflects our long-term commitment to the great state of Nevada and its citizens," said Allan Smith, manager of information systems for the Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau. "Information technology plays a critical role in our entire operations. From our law library and session information to live broadcasts of interim committee meetings and facilities and services, technology is being applied across the enterprise."

A pioneer in the information technology arena for almost two decades, Cathilea Robinett, executive director of the Center for Digital Government, said digital democracy has come a long way in a short time.

"Over the last few years, legislatures have made huge strides in technology advancements, not only in their own chambers, but also in their ability to communicate with constituents," she said. "At one time, contacting your local legislature, tracking a bill or conducting research at the law library was an intimidating, time-consuming experience. Not anymore. The Digital Legislatures

About Us

The Center for Digital Government is a national research and advisory institute on information technology policies and best practices in state and local government. A private organization based in Folsom, Calif., the Center's advisory services, online resources and special reports provide public- and private-sector leaders with decision support, knowledge and opportunities to help them effectively incorporate new technologies in the 21st century.

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Survey shows that our nation's legislatures have worked hard to reverse this by offering easy access to nearly all relevant legislative information and improving public understanding of the legislative process."

Second-place winners Minnesota and South Dakota credit their respective Web sites for this award. Randi Madisen, Web services manager at the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, says collaboration between various staff members and offices also played a key role in their digital advancements.

"Our success is due to the remarkable level of cooperation between various legislative offices, information services staff and information technology staff," she said.

James Fry, director of the South Dakota Legislative Research Council, said the Council's Web site -- developed by and for the South Dakota Legislature -- has become the focal point of activity and information for legislators, citizens, professional lobbyists, and staff members.

"In a setting like South Dakota, blessed with a great deal of open space, people need to retrieve information about the legislative process from where they are and not have to trek to the Capitol," Fry said. "This site is about openness and access and it has come to serve a variety of constituencies very well."

Rounding out the top-10 state legislatures behind Nevada, Minnesota and South Dakota are:

Third Place: Louisiana
Fourth Place: Iowa
Fifth Place: Illinois
Sixth Place: Indiana
Seventh Place: Utah
Eighth Place: Virginia and Washington (tied)
Ninth Place: Rhode Island
Tenth Place: New Mexico

"It is truly gratifying to see the progress made by these state legislatures," Robinett added. "I congratulate each and every one of them."

[Hewlett-Packard](#) underwrote the 2003 Digital Legislatures Survey. For more information on the survey or the Center for Digital Government, contact Rhonda Wilson at 916/932-1321 or rwilson@centerdigitalgov.com.