To provide Internet access to Congressional documents, including certain Congressional Research Service publications, Senate lobbying and gift report filings, and Senate and Joint Committee documents.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 9, 1999

Mr. McCain (for himself, Mr. Leahy, Mr. Lott, Mr. Abraham, Mr. Robb, and Mr. Enzi) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Rules and Administration

A BILL

To provide Internet access to Congressional documents, including certain Congressional Research Service publications, Senate lobbying and gift report filings, and Senate and Joint Committee documents.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-

tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Congressional Open-

ness Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds that—
(1) it is often burdensome, difficult, and time-consuming for citizens to obtain timely access to public records of the United States Congress;
(2) congressional documents that are placed in the Congressional Record are made available to the public electronically by the Superintendent of Documents under the direction of the Public Printer;
(3) other congressional documents are also made available electronically on websites maintained by Members of Congress and committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives;
(4) a wide range of public records of the Congress remain inaccessible to the public;
(5) the public should have easy and timely access, including electronic access, to public records of the Congress;
(6) the Congress should use new technologies to enhance public access to public records of the Congress; and
(7) an informed electorate is the most precious asset of any democracy.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purposes of this Act are—
(1) to foster democracy by ensuring public access to public records of the Congress;
(2) to improve public access to public records of
the Congress; and

(3) to enhance the electronic public access, in-
cluding access via the Internet, to public records of
the Congress.

SEC. 3. AVAILABILITY OF CERTAIN CRS INFORMATION.

(a) AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Con-
gressional Research Service shall make available
through a centralized electronic database, for pur-
poses of access and retrieval by the public under sec-
tion 5 of this Act, all information described in para-
graph (2) that is available through the Congress-
sional Research Service website.

(2) INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE.—
The information to be made available under para-
graph (1) is:

(A) Congressional Research Service Issue
Briefs.

(B) Congressional Research Service Re-
ports that are available to Members of Congress
through the Congressional Research Service
website.
(C) Congressional Research Service Authorization of Appropriations Products and Appropriations Products.

(b) LIMITATIONS.—

(1) CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.—Subsection (a) does not apply to—

(A) any information that is confidential, as determined by—

(i) the Director; or

(ii) the head of a Federal department or agency that provided the information to the Congressional Research Service; or

(B) any documents that are the product of an individual, office, or Committee research request (other than a document described in section 3(a)(2)).

(2) REDACTION AND REVISION.—In carrying out this section, the Director of the Congressional Research Service may—

(A) remove from the information required to be made available under subsection (a) the name and phone number of, and any other information regarding, an employee of the Congressional Research Service;
(B) remove from the information required to be made available under subsection (a) any material for which the Director determines that making it available under subsection (a) may infringe the copyright of a work protected under title 17, United States Code; and

(C) make any changes in the information required to be made available under subsection (a) that the Director determines necessary to ensure that the information is accurate and current.

(c) TIME.—The Director of the Congressional Research Service shall make available all information required under this section no earlier than 30 days and no later than 40 days after the date on which the information is first made available to Members of Congress through the Congressional Research Service web site.

(d) MANNER.—The Director of the Congressional Research Service shall make information required to be made available under this section in a manner that—

(1) is practical and reasonable; and

(2) does not permit the submission of comments from the public.
SEC. 4. PUBLIC RECORDS OF THE CONGRESS.

(a) SENATE.—The Secretary of the Senate, through the Office of Public Records and in accordance with such standards as the Secretary may prescribe, shall make available on the Internet for purposes of access and retrieval by the public:

(1) LOBBYIST DISCLOSURE REPORTS.—Lobbyist disclosure reports required by the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (2 U.S.C. 1601 et seq.) within 90 days (Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays excepted) after they are received.

(2) GIFT RULE DISCLOSURE REPORTS.—Senate gift rule disclosure reports required under paragraph 2 and paragraph 4(b) of rule XXXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate within 5 days (Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays excepted) after they are received.

(b) DIRECTORY.—The Superintendent of Documents, under the direction of the Public Printer in the Government Printing Office, shall include information about the documents made available on the Internet under this section in the electronic directory of Federal electronic information required by section 4101(a)(1) of title 44, United States Code.
SEC. 5. METHOD OF ACCESS.

(a) In General.—The information required to be made available to the public on the Internet under this Act shall be made available as follows:

(1) CRS INFORMATION.—Public access to information made available under section 3 shall be provided through the websites maintained by members and committees of the Senate. The Director of the Congressional Research Service shall work with the Sergeant-at-Arms of the Senate to carry out this paragraph.

(2) PUBLIC RECORDS.—Public access to information made available under section 4 by the Secretary of the Senate’s Office of Public Records shall be provided through the United States Senate website.

(b) EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CRS REPORTS ONLINE.—The Director of the Congressional Research Service is responsible for maintaining and updating the information made available on the Internet under section 3, and shall have sole discretion to edit that information under this Act.

(c) FURTHER APPROVAL NOT REQUIRED.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the Director of the Congressional Research Service shall make the information required to be made available under sec-
tion 3 of this Act without the prior approval of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, the Committee on House Oversight of the House of Representatives, or the Joint Committee on Printing.

SEC. 6. CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE MATERIALS.

It is the sense of the Senate that each standing and special committee of the Senate and each Joint Committee of the Congress, in accordance with such rules as the committee may adopt, should provide access via the Internet to publicly-available committee information, documents, and proceedings, including bills, reports, and transcripts of committee meetings that are open to the public.