



# OpenCongress.org, Watchdog.net

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# OpenCongress.org

- Possibly the most comprehensive resource on Legislation on the web
- Aggregates and displays data from a range of sources; links to original data
- Design and tutorials which help users of all abilities explore, comment on, and share information

# OpenCongress.org

## Head-to-Head Voting Comparison

Representatives

Senators

McCain, John (R-AZ)

AND

Carper, Thomas (D-DE)

Compare

### John McCain

State: AZ

Party: Republican

Abstains: 10%

Votes with Party: 95%

OpenCongress Users' Approval Rating: 33%



### Thomas Carper

State: DE

Party: Democrat

Abstains: 0%

Votes with Party: 92%

OpenCongress Users' Approval Rating: 25%

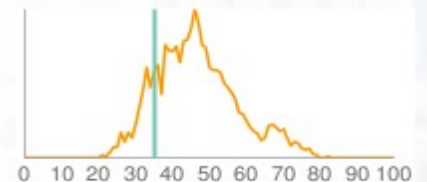


## Voting Similarity

John McCain and Thomas Carper have voted together 491 times on roll call votes since January, 2007 in votes where neither abstained, representing a voting similarity of 35%. The list below highlights how their voting records compare on passage of bills and editorially-selected "hot" votes on amendments.



The graph to the right shows the voting similarities of senators in different parties. The line indicates where John McCain and Thomas Carper fall with their calculated voting similarity of 35%. Democrat and Republican senators average 46% voting similarity.



## Shared Committees

# Bills

- Sort By Categories
  - “Hot on OC” which sorts by vote count
  - News frequency, Blog frequency
- Current state + steps-to-bill
- Popularity & Votes (Like/Dislike)
- Comments
- Full text



# Senators / Representatives

- Find by map, name, popularity, approval
- Videos
- News stories, Blog stories
- Voting with/against party
- Wiki article with links to his/her youtube, twitter, website
- Comments

# Sen / Rep : Head-to-Head tool

- Voting history comparison for two representatives or senators
- Not just stats or interpretation-- source data to back it up is shown

# Votes

- Basically just raw data
- With some attractive/meaningful graphics and charts

# Issues

- Groups of bills



# Committees

- Some data (no members)
- Outdated message
- Links to another great site that does have the info, [GovTrack.us](http://GovTrack.us) for those who are interested

# Money Trail

- OpenSecrets and MAPLight data
- Organized by interest group category
- Links to OS and ML for further exploration

# Blog

- Actually very interesting
- Clear separation from the data/community sections of the site
- Rudimentary crowdsourcing via “tips”-- available as a tool for journalists!
- Posts relevant to Open Data (specifically for the national govt, but also general)

# Overall

- Fantastic open source tool from the Sunlight Foundation
- Modern!
  - RSS, widgets, blog, update, news, video, comments, social, interactive charts
- Smart
  - Knows when/where to hand the torch to better/more complete sites



## Live Preview of your widget

### *Most Viewed Bills on OpenCongress*

#### Congress

**S.J.Res.29:** A joint resolution expressing Congressional support for the goals and ideals of National Health Care Decisions Day.

B1355 views in the last month

A Last action on Mar 12, 2008

#### Government trust funds

**S.1985:** A bill to extend the predisater hazard mitigation program under the Stafford Act.

B13 views in the last month

A Last action on Nov 9, 2005

#### Taxation

**S.3203:** KC-Tanker Recompete Act

B1112 views in the last month

A Last action on Jun 26, 2008

[More on OpenCongress →](#)

How the panel will look:

### Newest Bills in Congress

H.R.3858 To provide that Members of Congress shall not re...

S.Res.359 A resolution commending Alan S. Frumin on his s...

H.R.3846 National Commission for Independent Redistrictin...

S.2038 Public Corruption Prosecution Improvements Act of ...

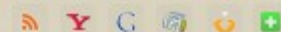
H.Res.522 Providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1...


[More Bills >>](#)

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# Watchdog.net

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# Overview

- Simple presentation of useful data
- Knows when to outsource and has useful data and links for info that can be followed up at a later time

# Overall

- Less an “exploratory” tool, but seems to fit its purpose well as a first-line resource to find interesting info.
- Perhaps the “with teeth” tagline is an overstatement

## Later that day...

- Google “GovTrack.us”->”Similar Sites”
- ->SourceWatch.org->”Congresspedia”
- <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Portal:Congresspedia>



# Thoughts

- Definite problem with how to deliver the content that is already out there. If most people knew what OpenCongress was they would want to explore that data?
- So how can we better deliver this content to people?