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Legislation: How it Impacts Your Company and How You Can Get Involved

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Why Is Modern Bill Monitoring Important?

- Thousands of bills are introduced in state and federal committees and legislatures each day.
- In order to affect pending legislation that will impact your industry, you must know when these bills are introduced, modified, tabled or up for a vote.
- In the past, this has required constant presence in Washington/State Capitols.
- However, more recently electronic tools and resources have been developed to keep you and your clients on top of the key points and provisions from massive amounts of information.

Free Internet Based Tools

- Even a simple search on the Internet will reveal a wide variety of legislation tracking options.
- These include individual local, state and federal websites which allow for legislative tracking within each governmental entity.
- There are also a variety of online pay services which purport to track legislation for a customer.
- Industry associations and political organizations also have web pages allowing their members to monitor legislative developments.

Federal Tools

The most widely accepted Federal Tool on the Internet is THOMAS, located at www.Thomas.gov.

Thomas is a free service of the Library of Congress which allows the public to browse bills and use a variety of online search features pertaining to pending legislation. Thomas' content includes full text of laws, bills, amendments, calendars, committee reports, and floor debates.

However, Thomas does not provide an automatic alert/ notification feature or annotations and links/reference materials as do pay services like West's NetScan and WestClip. Also, Thomas does not allow for searches to be submitted in combined state and federal resources.

Many of the Thomas documents can be displayed in PDF format.

Other federal tracking tools include the United States Government Printing Office website.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html>. This is a collection of searchable databases including bills, digests, committee reports, calendars and the Congressional Record.

Other convenient and free federal tracking tools include:

<http://www.govtrack.us/>
<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/law/legtrack.html>

State Tools

There are dozens of state based websites which monitor individual state's pending bills and legislation.

For example, the Illinois Legislature's website located at <http://www.ilga.gov/> has free legislation tracking software. The "My Legislation" feature allows users to create, store, and maintain custom lists of bills to track and queries for reports on legislation.

Similarly, virtually every state maintains similar legislative tracking features on the state legislature's website. A convenient listing of links for state legislative bill tracking can be found on the internet at: <http://www.llrx.com/columns/roundup23.htm>.

Other websites compile legislation tracking sites by issue or subject.
A good example can be found at:
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/lis/lrl/50statetracking.htm>.

As with the free public federal resources, these free state services generally do not provide automatic notification features or annotations and reference materials.

Also, multi-state searches can not be accomplished with these services.

Other Resources

There are a variety of other sources of legislative tracking resources.
These include:

- Media Monitoring Services
- Industry Associations
- Political parties, organizations or associations
- Lobbying Firms and Law Firms
- Bill Tracking Services

Available West Tools

- **WestClips on Westlaw** – This is a service of West which allows users to monitor legislation by entering information about a bill from a state legislature, congress or other legislative entity.
- A user enters search terms and the frequency on which a report is desired and WestClip provides results via e-mail in PDF, word, or html format. The reports contain full West annotations, links and reference materials.
- The searches can cover all 50 states and federal databases. WestClip is current within 3-5 days of legislative activity.

Available West Tools

- **NetScan** – NetScan is another service of West which provides real time searching of pending legislation across multiple states and federal databases.
- **NetScan** is rapid and uploads data from state and federal legislatures twice per day. While extremely current, NetScan has less annotation and linking than WestClip.
- **NetScan** also provides full West reference attorney support. Like WestClip, NetScan also provides notification via e-mail or on a log in basis or tracking via administrator.

Why would corporate counsel pay for these services?

- West attorneys are experts.
- Covers all state and federal jurisdictions.
- Uniformity and consistency of product.
- E-mail alerts and secure sign in monitoring of issues relevant to your industry.
- Readily available annotations, links and reference materials.

Once you know about pending legislation affecting your industry ...

Once you know about the bill, what do you do?

- Develop response strategy for support, opposition, or modification of the legislation.
- Consider involvement of trade or industry organizations.
- Consider using your internal staff, paralegals, research librarians to use a combination of free and pay online resources to stay current on legislation affecting your industry.
- Consider media relations/publicity services.
- Consider direct legislative contact.
- Consider lobbying services.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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