

Grading State Disclosure 2007

Evaluating states' efforts to bring sunlight to political money

A Report by the California Voter Foundation,
with the Center for Governmental Studies
and the UCLA School of Law

A Publication of the Campaign Disclosure Project,
Supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts

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Grading State Disclosure is a study of the Campaign Disclosure Project, which seeks to bring greater transparency and accountability to money in state politics through assessments of state disclosure laws and programs. The Campaign Disclosure Project is a collaboration of the UCLA School of Law, the Center for Governmental Studies and the California Voter Foundation and is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The Grading State Disclosure series is produced by the California Voter Foundation, with assistance from the Center for Governmental Studies and the UCLA School of Law.

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Executive Summary

A fourth, nationwide assessment of state-level campaign finance disclosure programs has found that 36 states received passing grades, while 14 states failed to meet this study's criteria for a satisfactory campaign disclosure program. The number of states that passed the 2007 assessment increased by two over the 2005 study, and findings contained in *Grading State Disclosure 2007* demonstrate the continued trend of improved campaign disclosure practices at the state level as identified in the previous three studies.

Grading State Disclosure 2007 evaluated four specific areas of campaign finance disclosure: state campaign disclosure laws; electronic filing programs; accessibility of campaign finance information; and the usability of state disclosure web sites.

Evidence of overall improvements is demonstrated by the fact that 21 states earned higher grades in 2007 than those received in the 2005 study. Twenty-eight states received the same letter grade while just one state received a lower grade. Since the initial Grading State Disclosure study in 2003, 30 states have improved their grades, and nearly every state has improved its methods and practices for making campaign finance data available to the public.

A significant area of improvement is in electronic filing; forty states now permit candidates to file disclosure reports electronically. The number of states requiring electronic filing by legislative and statewide candidates has nearly doubled in the past four years, increasing from 12 in 2003 to 23 today. The study found that states with electronic filing programs are far more likely to also provide searchable databases of campaign contributions and expenditures; 90 percent of states with mandatory electronic filing programs also publish online, searchable campaign finance databases.

For the fourth time, Washington has earned the top overall ranking, again receiving the only grade in the A range. California ranked second overall with a B+, followed by Oregon (also with a B+). Florida and Hawaii tied for 4th and also received B+ grades. Rounding out the top ten ranked states in the 2007 assessment, and all earning Bs, are: Michigan (6th); Virginia (7th); Georgia (8th); Illinois (9th); and New Jersey and Ohio (tied at 10th).

An additional seven states earned grades in the B range while 13 states received Cs and five earned Ds. Over one-third of states earned grades in the A and B ranges, seven more than in 2005. Oregon, South Carolina, New York, Colorado and Pennsylvania showed the most improvement since 2005, with South Carolina moving out of the F range for the first time. Kansas also moved out of the F range, leaving the ranks of the 14 states that did receive Fs this year. While significant improvements were achieved in many states, nearly 40 percent earned Ds and Fs.

Significant findings include:

- 31 states require disclosure of a contributor's occupation and employer;
- 36 states require timely reporting of last-minute contributions;
- 42 states require independent expenditures to be reported;
- 30 states require statewide candidates to electronically file disclosure reports;
- 23 states require statewide and legislative candidates to electronically file disclosure reports;
- 10 states permit, but do not require candidates to electronically file disclosure reports;
- 10 states have no electronic filing program;
- 48 states post campaign finance data on their disclosure web sites;
- 36 states provide searchable databases of contributions online; and
- 24 states provide searchable databases of expenditures online.

Significant improvements since 2005 include:

- 2 states increased the number of pre-election reports that candidates must file (Oregon, Tennessee);
- 2 states increased the number of non-election year reports that candidates must file (Oregon, Tennessee);
- 1 state enacted an independent expenditure reporting requirement (Vermont);
- 2 states passed laws requiring timely reporting of last-minute independent expenditures (Vermont, Virginia);
- 1 state passed a law requiring timely reporting of last-minute contributions (Vermont);
- 1 state added occupation and employer disclosure requirements (Tennessee);
- 1 state added subvendor reporting requirements (Tennessee);
- 5 states enacted a mandatory electronic filing requirement for state candidates (Colorado, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Tennessee, West Virginia);
- 1 state that previously had mandatory electronic filing for statewide candidates only expanded the mandate to include legislative candidates as well (Missouri);
- 3 states launched new electronic filing programs (Arkansas, New Hampshire, South Carolina);
- 7 states post campaign filings to the Internet more quickly than in 2005 (Arkansas, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Tennessee, Wisconsin);
- 4 states added online searchable databases of campaign contributions (North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina);
- 4 states added online searchable databases of campaign expenditures (North Carolina, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania); and
- 1 state debuted campaign finance data on its disclosure web site for the first time (South Carolina).

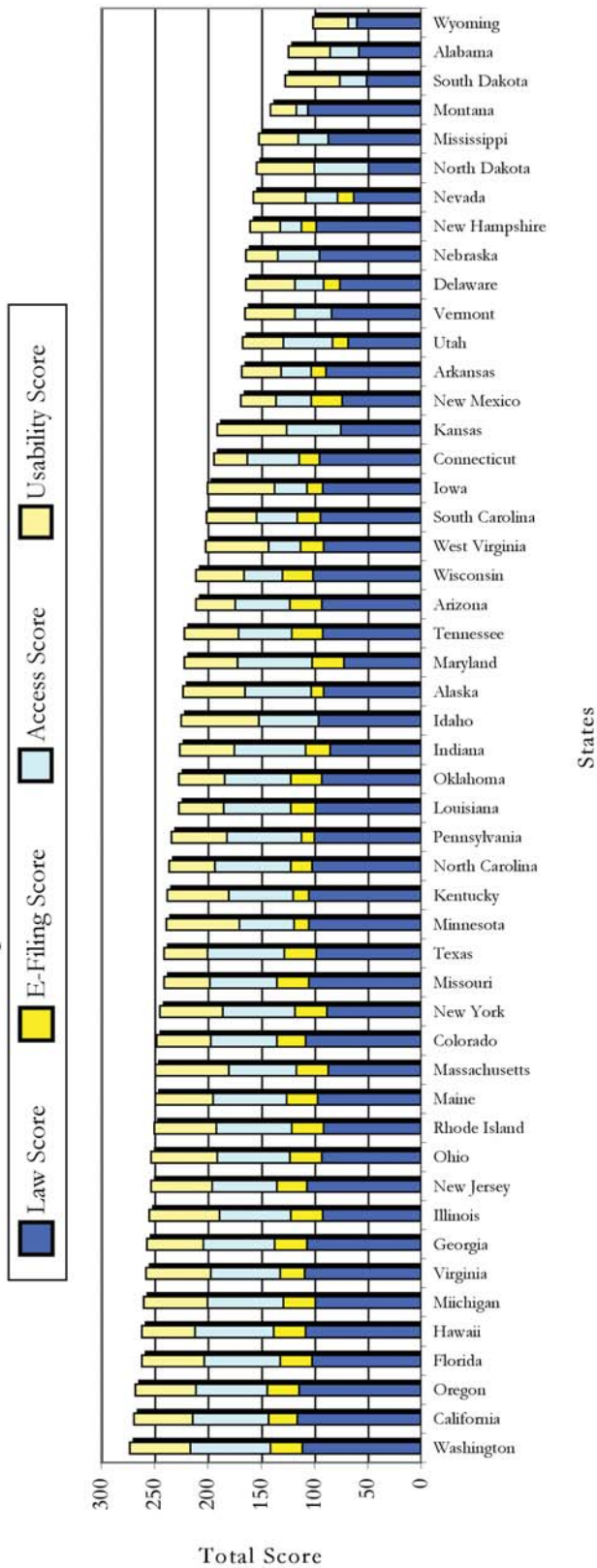
Grading State Disclosure is a study of the Campaign Disclosure Project, which seeks to bring greater transparency and accountability to money in state politics through assessments of state disclosure laws and programs. The Campaign Disclosure Project is a collaboration of the UCLA School of Law, the Center for Governmental Studies and the California Voter Foundation and is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The study is a comprehensive, comparative analysis of candidate campaign finance disclosure laws and practices in the 50 states. The 2007 assessment presents findings from a fourth round of state evaluations and provides an overview of nationwide trends and state-by-state changes.

Grades were based on criteria developed by the Project partners, the Project's Advisory Board and a panel of expert judges, who also assisted with the grading process. The Project sets a high, but not impossible, standard for state campaign finance disclosure programs. The grades were based on a state's performance in the area of candidate disclosure only; lobbying, conflict of interest, ballot measure and party organization disclosure were not evaluated.

State assessments are based on research of state laws as of December 2006, survey results from state disclosure agency staff, web site visits and online research from February to June of 2007, and web site testing by outside evaluators in April 2007.

Grading State Disclosure 2007 features a written summary of every state, its overall grade and rank, category grades and ranks, and "quick fix" suggestions that would improve the state's disclosure web site. This feature was first included in the 2005 report; since then, twenty percent of states have made improvements that reflect the "quick fix" suggestion. Examples of the best online disclosure practices are noted among the "editor's picks", which highlight a feature of each state's disclosure program that is particularly innovative or user-friendly. A listing by topic of the 2007 "editor's picks" is included as an appendix to this report.

Comparative State Performance



State Campaign Finance Disclosure in 2007: An Overview

Campaign Finance Disclosure Laws

- Number of states that require a contributor's occupation and employer to be disclosed: 31
- Number that require a contributor's occupation or employer to be disclosed, but not both: 7
- Number of states that do not require contributor occupation or employer information: 12
 - Number of states that require timely reporting of last-minute contributions: 36
 - Number of states that require independent expenditures to be disclosed: 42
- Number of these 42 states that require reporting of which candidate will benefit from the expenditure: 36
 - Number of states that require last-minute independent expenditures to be disclosed: 26
- Number of state disclosure agencies required by law to review or conduct field audits of campaign finance reports: 33
 - Number of states that require both forms of review: 9
 - Number of states that are not required by law to conduct at least one of these forms of review: 17

Electronic Filing

- Number of states that provide a program for the electronic filing of campaign disclosure reports: 40
 - Number of states that require candidates to electronically file campaign disclosure reports: 30
- Number of these 30 states that require electronic filing by both legislative and statewide candidates: 23
 - Number of states with a completely voluntary electronic filing program: 10
 - Average percentage of statewide candidates filing electronically in these ten states: 47
 - Average percentage of legislative candidates filing electronically in these ten states: 34
 - Number of states with no electronic filing program: 10

Disclosure Data – Access and Usability

- Number of state disclosure agencies that post campaign finance data on the Internet: 48
- Number of state disclosure web sites that provide both itemized contribution and expenditure data online: 46
 - Number of states that post campaign finance reports online within a week: 48
 - Number that post reports online within 48 hours: 33
- Number of states whose sites feature lists of the total amounts raised and spent by candidates in recent elections: 19
 - Number of state disclosure web sites with online, searchable databases of contributions: 36
 - Number of state disclosure web sites with online, searchable databases of expenditures: 24
- Percentage of states with mandatory electronic filing that also publish online, searchable campaign finance databases: 90
- Percentage of states without electronic filing programs that publish online, searchable campaign finance databases: 40
 - Number of states in which data can be sorted online or downloaded from the disclosure agency's web site: 33
 - Percentage of these 33 states that operate an electronic filing program: 91

Thanks to Harper's magazine for permission to use its "index" format.

State-by-State Grade and Ranking Chart

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Alabama	F	49	F	48	F	41	F	45	F	40
Alaska	C	27	C	32	F	39	B-	22	C+	13
Arizona	C-	30	C+	26	A+	1	D+	28	F	42
Arkansas	F	38	C	35	F	36	F	43	F	42
California	B+	2	A	1	A-	22	A	4	C	19
Colorado	B-	15	A-	5	A-	22	B-	22	D+	24
Connecticut	D	35	C+	23	D	30	D	33	F	47
Delaware	F	41	D	41	F	31	F	45	D-	33
Florida	B+	4	B	13	A+	1	A	4	C+	10
Georgia	B	8	B+	7	A+	1	B+	14	C-	22
Hawaii	B+	4	A-	5	A+	1	A+	2	D	28
Idaho	C	26	B-	22	F	41	C	27	A+	1
Illinois	B	9	C	29	A+	1	B+	14	B+	4
Indiana	C	25	C-	39	C	24	B+	14	D+	24
Iowa	D	34	C	29	F	31	F	40	B	6
Kansas	D	36	D-	42	F	41	D+	28	B	5
Kentucky	C+	20	B+	10	F	31	B-	26	C+	13
Louisiana	C	23	B-	17	C	24	B	19	F	38
Maine	B	13	B-	21	A	16	A-	11	C-	20
Maryland	C	28	D-	44	A+	1	A	9	D	28
Massachusetts	B	13	C-	37	A+	1	B	19	A-	2
Michigan	B	6	B-	17	A+	1	A	4	B-	9
Minnesota	C+	19	B+	10	F	36	D+	28	A-	2
Mississippi	F	46	C-	37	F	41	F	43	F	42
Missouri	B-	17	B+	10	A+	1	B	19	F	35

State-by-State Grade and Ranking Chart (continued)

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Montana	F	47	B+	9	F	41	F	49	F	50
Nebraska	F	41	C+	23	F	41	F	35	F	48
Nevada	F	44	F	46	F	31	F	40	D	30
New Hampshire	F	43	B-	19	F	36	F	48	F	49
New Jersey	B	10	B+	7	A	21	B-	25	C	16
New Mexico	F	37	D-	43	A	16	F	39	F	45
New York	B-	16	C	36	A+	1	A-	12	C+	10
North Carolina	C+	21	B	13	D	29	A	4	F	35
North Dakota	F	45	F	50	F	41	D+	28	C-	20
Ohio	B	10	C+	26	A+	1	A-	12	B-	7
Oklahoma	C	23	C+	26	A	16	B-	22	F	35
Oregon	B+	3	A	2	A+	1	B+	14	C	16
Pennsylvania	C+	22	B	16	F	39	A	9	D+	23
Rhode Island	B	12	C	32	A+	1	A	4	C+	13
South Carolina	D+	33	C+	25	C	27	F	36	D-	31
South Dakota	F	48	F	49	F	41	F	47	D+	24
Tennessee	C	28	C	29	A	16	D	32	D+	24
Texas	B-	17	B-	19	A+	1	A	3	F	39
Utah	F	39	F	45	F	31	D-	34	F	41
Vermont	F	40	C-	40	F	41	F	38	D-	31
Virginia	B	7	A-	4	C	24	B	18	B-	8
Washington	A-	1	A-	3	A+	1	A+	1	C	16
West Virginia	D+	32	C	32	C	27	F	40	C+	10
Wisconsin	C-	30	B	15	A	16	F	37	D-	34
Wyoming	F	50	F	47	F	41	F	50	F	45

I.

Introduction

- The Grading Process
- The Grading Criteria
- Methodology

Grading State Disclosure is a study of the Campaign Disclosure Project, which seeks to bring greater transparency and accountability to money in state politics through assessments of state disclosure laws and programs. The Campaign Disclosure Project is a collaboration of the UCLA School of Law, the Center for Governmental Studies and the California Voter Foundation and is supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts.

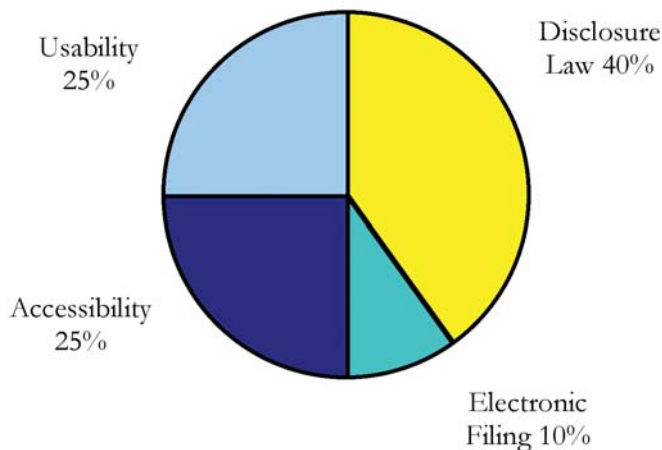
State campaign finance disclosure agencies across the country are responsible for receiving, processing and auditing candidates' campaign finance filings; these agencies are also charged with making those filings, and the data within, accessible to the public. In addition to basic information about statewide and legislative candidates' backgrounds and policy positions, voters also need to be able to determine which individuals and organizations are funding those candidates' campaigns if they are to have the opportunity to cast a truly informed vote and participate meaningfully in the election process.

Some states provide better and more complete access to information about the money that fuels campaigns than others, through both a strong campaign disclosure law and high-quality Internet access to disclosure reports. The purpose of the Campaign Disclosure Project's *Grading State Disclosure 2007* study is to provide an overview of how each state measures up to a set standard for disclosure programs, as well as to show how each state compares to others around the country.

The Grading Process

The Grading State Disclosure criteria was written and developed by the California Voter Foundation in consultation with the Grading State Disclosure judges, the Campaign Disclosure Project Advisory Board and project partners. The Project sets a high, but not impossible, standard for state campaign finance disclosure programs. In developing the criteria, efforts were made to balance the concerns of practitioners and government officials with the need for timely, complete and effective disclosure. The criteria used for this fourth round of grading is unchanged from that used in the first three rounds.

Four areas of performance comprise the grading criteria: Campaign Disclosure Laws; Electronic Filing Programs; Disclosure Content Accessibility; and Online Contextual and Technical Usability. The strength of a state's campaign disclosure law is worth 40 percent of its grade; the quality of electronic filing is worth ten percent of the grade; and accessibility to data and web site usability are each worth 25 percent.



A 300-point system was developed to score each state. Points were awarded based on a state's performance solely in the area of state-level candidate disclosure. Ranks were assigned based on points, and in several instances one or more states tied for a particular rank. This is especially the case in the Electronic Filing category, where multiple states were tied for both first and last place. Grades are based on each state's total point score, utilizing the following grading percentages:

- A: 90 – 100 percent (excellent)
- B: 80 – 89 percent (good)
- C: 70 – 79 percent (average)
- D: 60 – 69 percent (below average/passing)
- F: 59 percent or lower (failing)

In addition to an overall grade and rank, the states have also been graded and ranked in each of the four grading categories. In order to better measure progress over time, the grades are not curved, weighted or scaled.

The Grading Criteria

In the criteria, significant weight is placed on the comprehensiveness of state campaign disclosure laws; this category comprises 40 percent of a state's total grade. Good campaign disclosure laws require the reporting of detailed information about contributions and expenditures. In particular, the disclosure of some critical pieces of information – including a contributor's occupation and employer, subvendor information for expenditures, and timely reporting of last-minute contributions and independent expenditures – all enhance the public's ability to access campaign finance data. States require the disclosure of detailed contribution and expenditure information at varying thresholds, but the criteria did not evaluate the appropriateness of these thresholds.

Occupation and employer data for campaign contributors is crucial for categorizing donations or identifying efforts by corporations and organizations to bundle their employees' contributions. Details of subvendor payments are important in order to increase visibility of campaign expenses charged to credit cards or made by consultants or other vendors. Reporting of last-minute contributions and independent expenditures prior to an election helps voters identify which individuals and organizations are conducting last-minute efforts to influence the outcome of the election. Strong enforcement and frequent reporting of campaign finances by candidates are also necessary components of meaningful disclosure laws.

In the Electronic Filing category, great value was placed on whether states have mandated the electronic filing of campaign finance disclosure information. Attention was also paid to the implementation schedules being considered in states as they pass electronic filing mandates to ensure a reasonable implementation timeline that benefits the public in advance of approaching elections. The receipt of campaign finance data in an electronic format usually leads to greater availability of the information on the Internet. If data is submitted in an electronic format, the agency can post data online more quickly and in formats that allow for more meaningful analysis of campaign finance reports. Indeed, most states with electronic filing have created searchable databases of contributions and expenditures, or made data available in formats that can be sorted or downloaded. While voluntary electronic filing does lead to some expanded accessibility to campaign finance data, mandatory electronic filing is preferred because it is more likely to result in timely, comprehensive online disclosure.

The Disclosure Content Accessibility category evaluated the degree to which the content of disclosure reports is available to the public. In this category, significant weight was placed on the use of the Internet to publish state campaign finance disclosure information, based on the Project's perspective that the Internet is the most effective and affordable way for state agencies to make campaign finance data accessible to the public. Importance was given to the scope of campaign finance data on disclosure web sites and the ways in which that data could be analyzed. This included the availability of features such as databases of contributions and expenditures that allow searching across all filers and by a number of fields. Whether states allow the public to sort data online by reordering categories of information, browse records, or download data so it can be analyzed offline, were evaluated. State disclosure sites were also evaluated for offering and explaining "smart search" features, such as partial name and "name sounds like" lookups. States' efforts to make paper records accessible to the public, such as the ease of obtaining records from a distance, the cost of the records and the length of time it takes to obtain the records, was also assessed.

Of equal importance to the accessibility of campaign finance records was Online Contextual and Technical Usability – the degree to which state disclosure web sites are technically and contextually "user-friendly" to the public. This category was assessed through a combination of web research by Project staff and usability testing by outside evaluators. States that did well in this category were those that: have disclosure web sites that are easy to locate from the state's homepage; provide information explaining the state's campaign finance laws, disclosure requirements and reporting periods; provide instructions for how to access the data on the site; and give a clear explanation of which candidates and reports are online. Significant weight was also placed on the availability of analyses of campaign finance activity, which give the public a better understanding of how one candidate's fundraising and spending compares to another, and also how campaign finance trends change over time. Also of importance in the usability category was the posting and clear labeling of amended reports, with the retention of original filings online. Being able to view original and amended reports side-by-side helps the public determine what changes have been made.

The full Grading State Disclosure criteria are included as an appendix to this report.

Methodology

State assessments are based on research of state laws, survey results from state disclosure agency staff, web site visits and online research, and web site testing by outside evaluators.

The UCLA School of Law and the Center for Governmental Studies researched state campaign finance disclosure laws. The legal research was originally completed from June 2002 through March 2003. A second, comprehensive examination of all fifty states' disclosure laws was conducted from July 2003 through July 2004, a third from August 2004 to June 2005, and the most recent review occurred from March through June 2007 with the purpose of identifying any changes in the state laws as of December 31, 2006. The statutes, regulations, rules and forms of each state were evaluated. Changes in state laws that were made or implemented in 2007 are not reflected in the states' grades, though several are mentioned in the state summaries. Electronic Filing is a separate category and some of the mandatory programs enacted in 2007 were credited in this study, if the program is scheduled to be in place by the next state election cycle.

The California Voter Foundation (CVF) conducted research on state electronic filing programs, accessibility to disclosure records, and online contextual and technical usability through a variety of methods. Each state agency responsible for overseeing campaign finance was asked to respond to a survey, either online, by email or phone. All 50 state agencies responded to this request for information in 2003; in 2004, 48 state agencies completed the questionnaire and two responded by stating that nothing had changed since 2003. In 2005, 48 state agencies completed the questionnaire, one responded that nothing had changed, and one did not return the survey due to lack of staff time. In 2007, 47 states completed the survey; one state indicated no change in their state's campaign disclosure system and two did not provide responses.

CVF researched campaign finance disclosure information on the web sites of each of the 50 states. The web site evaluation form first created and used in 2003 to ensure uniformity in the research was also used in 2007, and each state web site was evaluated twice by CVF personnel from late February through June 2007.

The UCLA School of Law conducted usability tests of state disclosure web sites in April 2007. The goal of the usability tests was to determine if the disclosure information provided on the Internet is accessible to the average citizen. Usability testers, recruited from the undergraduate student population at UCLA, were asked to perform specific tasks on each state's web site. The time and number of mouse clicks it took to complete each task were measured.

The tasks were as follows:

- Locate the state's disclosure web site starting from the state's homepage;
- ascertain the total contributions received by the incumbent governor in his or her last campaign (testers were given a list of incumbent governors that included the year they were last elected); and,
- provide the name and amount contributed by any individual contributor to the incumbent governor's last campaign.

The second measure of usability was a survey in which each tester was asked to evaluate his or her experiences on each site. The states were assigned randomly to testers, with each tester testing five different states. The experiment was administered five times to ten different students, and five different students tested each state. A more detailed explanation of the usability test is included as an appendix to this report.

Following the completion of the research and usability testing, CVF compiled preliminary scores for each state that were reviewed by the Grading State Disclosure Judges before final scores, grades and ranks were determined.

II.

Findings

- Campaign Disclosure Laws
- Electronic Filing Programs
- Disclosure Content Accessibility
- Online Contextual and Technical Usability

The public's ability to access campaign finance information on the state level has improved over the course of the Campaign Disclosure Project's history. The 2007 assessment highlights the states' continuing trend of making improvements to their campaign disclosure programs. *Grading State Disclosure 2007* found that state campaign disclosure laws and practices in 36 states achieved passing grades, while 14 states were found to have unsatisfactory programs and received failing grades. Two states achieved their first passing grades since the 2003 assessment, and none of the states that passed in 2005 failed in 2007. In 2007, 21 states earned a higher grade, 28 states received the same letter grade, and only one state received a lower grade than in 2005.

For the fourth time, the state of Washington ranked number one in the study, earning an A- again in 2007. As in 2005, Washington earned the study's only grade in the A range, though 17 earned Bs in 2007, up from ten in the previous study. Thirteen total states received grades in the C range, the same amount as in 2005. Five states earned Ds in 2007 (down from ten in 2005) and 14 states earned Fs, two less than reported in 2005. (See the State-by-State Grade and Ranking Chart on page 6 for a complete listing of grades and ranks.)

The five states that improved most in 2007 are: Oregon, with a change in grade from C- to B+, jumped from 24th to 3rd in the rankings; South Carolina, with a change from an F to a D+, moved up from 49th to 33rd; New York and Colorado each improved from a D+ to a B-, with New York moving from 29th to 16th and Colorado's rank moving from 26th to 15th; and Pennsylvania's grade improved from a D to a C+, and its rank moved from 30th to 22nd.

- The states with the best overall disclosure programs in 2007, in rank order from one to ten, are: Washington (A-); California (B+); Oregon (B+); Florida and Hawaii (B+, tied for 4th); Michigan (B); Virginia (B); Georgia (B); Illinois (B); and New Jersey and Ohio (B, tied for 10th).
- The states with the weakest disclosure programs (all receiving Fs) in 2007, in rank order from 41 to 50, are: Delaware and Nebraska (tied for 41st); New Hampshire; Nevada; North Dakota; Mississippi; Montana; South Dakota; Alabama; and Wyoming.

Campaign Disclosure Laws

For the fourth year in a row, states across the country performed best in the Campaign Disclosure Law category, with only six states receiving F grades. Four states made improvements to their campaign disclosure laws since the 2005 study, with Oregon and Virginia moving into the A range, and Tennessee and Vermont moving up into the C range from a D- and an F, respectively. Six states received law grades in the A range, and there were 16 grades in the B range in this category. Four Ds and 18 Cs account for the remaining Disclosure Law grades.

- States with the strongest disclosure laws, in rank order from one to ten, are: California; Oregon; Washington; Virginia; Colorado and Hawaii (tied for 5th); Georgia and New Jersey (tied for 7th); Montana; Missouri, Kentucky and Minnesota (tied for 10th).
- States with the weakest disclosure laws, in rank order from 41 to 50, are: Delaware; Kansas; New Mexico; Maryland; Utah; Nevada; Wyoming; Alabama; South Dakota; and North Dakota.

Significant 2007 findings:

- 31 states require a contributor's occupation and employer to be disclosed;
- 5 states require only a contributor's occupation to be disclosed;
- 2 states require only a contributor's employer to be disclosed;
- 12 states do not require disclosure of either occupation or employer;
- 48 states require descriptions of expenditures to be disclosed;
- 21 states require expenditures made by subvendors to be reported;
- 42 states require independent expenditures to be reported;
- 26 states require timely reporting of last-minute independent expenditures;
- 36 states require timely reporting of last-minute contributions;
- 30 states conduct mandatory reviews of disclosure reports;
- 12 states require field audits of disclosure reports; and
- 9 states require both desk reviews and field audits of campaign filings.

Significant changes since 2005:

- 2 states increased the number of pre-election reports that must be filed by candidates (Oregon, Tennessee);
- 2 states added an additional non-election year campaign finance disclosure filing (Oregon, Tennessee);
- 1 state added contributor occupation and employer reporting (Tennessee);
- 1 state added timely reporting of last-minute contributions (Vermont);
- 1 state added subvendor reporting requirements (Tennessee);
- 1 state added independent expenditure reporting requirements (Vermont); and
- 2 states added timely reporting of last-minute independent expenditures (Vermont and Virginia).

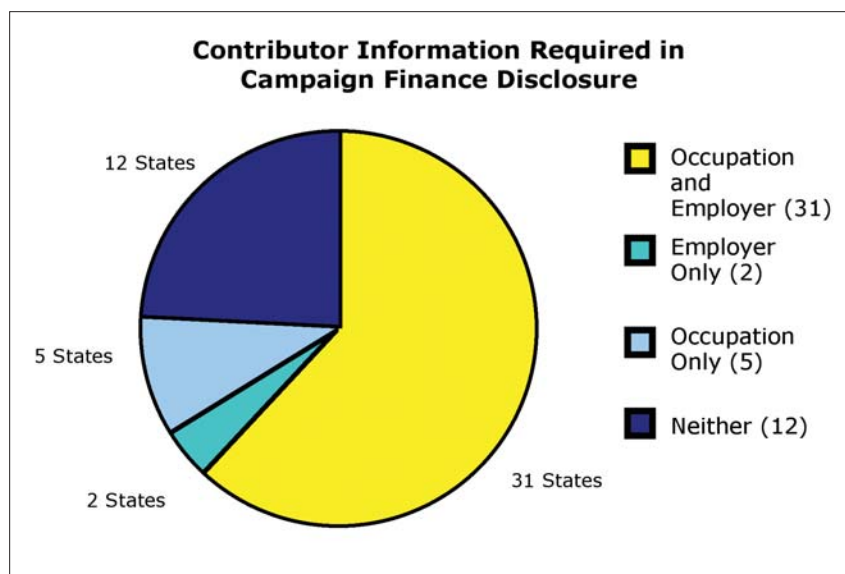
Four states earned higher grades in the Disclosure Law category following improvements made to their campaign disclosure laws as of December 31, 2006 (the cutoff period for disclosure law changes to be reflected in *Grading State Disclosure 2007*). Oregon and Tennessee improved both in pre-election reporting and non-election year reporting, while Tennessee also added subvendor reporting requirements. Vermont

added independent expenditure reporting and improved its reporting of last-minute contributions, while Virginia strengthened its already strong disclosure law by requiring more thorough independent expenditure reporting. Additionally, a number of states' grades in this category were revised after Project researchers re-evaluated disclosure law findings previously reported.

Many states that strengthen their campaign disclosure laws do so through the appointment of a task force or panel to study the issues that are clouding the public's ability to access campaign finance information. Tennessee's Citizen Advisory Group on Ethics and Oregon's Campaign Finance Disclosure Panel are just two examples of state initiatives that led to successful changes in campaign disclosure laws. Task forces can add weight to recommended reforms and provide greater momentum for passage, particularly with the appointment of a diverse, bi-partisan panel that includes both citizens and policymakers.

Contributor Information

As in years past, *Grading State Disclosure 2007* found that every state requires campaign contributors to be named at some contribution threshold, often with additional details disclosed for larger contributions. South Dakota remains the only state that does not require the date of contributions to be disclosed, but



is among the 33 states that require a contributor's employer to be disclosed. Thirty-six states require the disclosure of a contributor's occupation, while 31 states require both occupation and employer information to be listed on disclosure reports. Twelve states require neither occupation nor employer information to be disclosed.

The final detail examined in this study regarding contributor information is

whether or not a state requires the cumulative contributions made by a donor over the course of a year or election cycle to be reported. Cumulative contribution data makes it easier for the public to identify the scope of a donor's contributions to a specific candidate. Thirty-six states require cumulative contributions to be reported; 14 states do not.

In-Kind Contributions and Loans

All states require in-kind contributions to be reported, and 48 states require some amount of loan details to be disclosed. Only 15 states require the interest rate of a loan to a candidate to be disclosed, and 16 require the repayment schedule to be reported. In 35 states, the loan's guarantor must be included in the candidate's campaign disclosure reports, rather than simply naming the financial institution making the loan.

Expenditures

Forty-nine states mandate that candidates report their campaign expenses. North Dakota remains the only state that does not require disclosure of campaign expenses. Oklahoma and South Dakota require the amount of an expenditure to be disclosed, but not the name or identity of the recipient. Mississippi does not require the purpose for a campaign expense to be reported. Forty-seven states require the date of campaign expenses to be disclosed, and 42 states require candidates to report their campaign debts and obligations. Only 21 states require the disclosure of subvendor payments, such as the itemization of expenses made by campaign consultants or a detailed accounting of credit card expenses.

Number of Reports Filed

States vary widely in the frequency of disclosure reports required to be filed. In election years, twelve states require one pre-election report, 21 states require two such reports, and 17 require three or more reports before an election. In non-election years, 23 states require one report, while 27 states require two or more. Disclosure of late contributions (made between the close of the final pre-election reporting period and Election Day) is required in 36 states. In the 14 states without such last-minute reporting, many contributions are hidden from public review until after the election has taken place.

Independent Expenditures

In recent years, increased attention has been paid to expenditures made by committees that operate independently from candidates and spend tremendous amounts of money to affect election outcomes. Individuals, corporations, unions, and others seeking to influence the outcome of elections can do so through independent expenditures, thus evading state or federal contribution limits. As the prominence of independent expenditures has grown, states have taken steps to ensure that the public knows who is behind this unlimited campaign spending.

Forty-two states now require independent expenditure reporting and 36 of those states require independent expenditure reports to specify which candidate is the subject of the expense. Twenty-six of these states also require that last-minute independent expenditures be reported before the election. As of December 31, 2006, eight states -- Alabama, Indiana, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee and Wyoming -- did not require independent expenditure reporting (South Dakota enacted this requirement in 2007).

Auditing and Enforcement

As important as campaign disclosures are, it is equally important to ensure that disclosure reports are accurately filed in a timely fashion. All 50 states have some form of penalty (civil or criminal) triggered by a violation of campaign disclosure requirements. However, the mechanisms for identifying those violations vary from state to state. Ideally, all states would conduct both mandatory reviews as well as field audits of campaign finance records. Presently, 30 states conduct desk reviews and twelve states conduct field audits, with just nine states requiring both (California, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon and Tennessee). Seventeen states have no provisions for auditing campaign finances.

Electronic Filing Programs

States are making steady progress in electronic filing. Since the publication of the first Grading State Disclosure study in 2003, twelve new electronic filing programs have been implemented; seven states have mandated electronic filing and five states have adopted new programs. Since 2005, four states that previously required electronic filing by statewide candidates expanded the mandate to legislative candidates as well. Thirty states now require candidates to file campaign finance reports electronically.

Twenty-three states earned grades in the A range, up from 17 in 2005. While no states earned grades in the B range, five earned Cs (one more state than in 2005) and the two states that earned Ds in 2005 received the same grade this year. The number of states in the F range dropped from 26 to 20 since *Grading State Disclosure 2005* was published. Because of the value placed on mandatory electronic filing in the Grading State Disclosure criteria, those states with completely voluntary electronic filing programs are included among the failing states.

- States with the strongest electronic filing programs, all receiving an A+ and tied for first place in this category, are: Arizona; Florida; Georgia; Hawaii; Illinois; Maryland; Massachusetts; Michigan; Missouri; New York; Ohio; Oregon; Rhode Island; Texas; and Washington.
- States with no electronic filing (all tied for the last place rank) are: Alabama; Idaho; Kansas; Mississippi; Montana; Nebraska; North Dakota; South Dakota; Vermont; and Wyoming.

Significant 2007 findings:

- 40 states have an electronic filing program for candidate campaign finance reports;
- 30 states have a mandatory electronic filing requirement;
- 23 of these states require electronic filing by candidates for both statewide and legislative office;
- 7 states require electronic filing for statewide candidates only;
- 10 states have voluntary electronic filing for statewide and legislative candidates;
- 35 states reported having adequate funds to administer their electronic filing program and 5 reported inadequate funding; and
- 10 states have no electronic filing program.

Significant changes since 2005:

- 1 state added a new, mandatory electronic filing program. (South Carolina);
- 2 states added new, voluntary electronic filing programs (Arkansas and New Hampshire);
- 4 states that previously had voluntary electronic filing programs converted to mandatory electronic filing for both statewide and legislative candidates (Colorado, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Tennessee);
- 1 state that previously only required electronic filing for statewide candidates added mandatory electronic filing for legislative candidates (Missouri);
- 1 state that previously had a voluntary electronic filing program added mandatory electronic filing for statewide candidates (West Virginia); and
- 6 states moved from failing to passing grades in the Electronic Filing category (Colorado, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia).

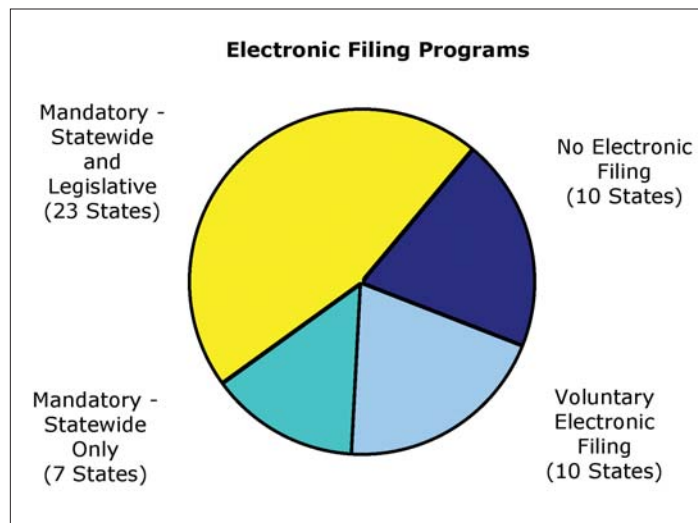
Most states require electronic filing for candidates who reach a certain threshold of fundraising or spending, with the threshold amount ranging from zero (Arizona) to \$250,000 (Connecticut). Colorado's new mandatory program requires electronic filing by state-level candidates with thirty or more reported transactions.

Five states currently have no electronic filing program in place (Alabama, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming); another five states currently have no program in place, but report progress in the development of new systems (Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska and Montana).

While mandatory electronic filing requirements are the ideal, and weighted heavily in this study, ten states currently offer a completely voluntary electronic filing option for candidates. It is important to note that these states, while receiving a grade of F in this category, are outperforming those states with no electronic filing program, as indicated in the rankings. In 2007, disclosure agencies reported an increase in voluntary electronic filing by candidates, with an average of 47 percent of statewide and 34 percent of legislative candidates participating. By comparison, in 2005, approximately 25 percent of statewide candidates and 27 percent of legislative candidates voluntarily filed campaign reports electronically in their states.

Electronic Filing Methods

Twenty states offer a free, web-based filing system and 20 states provide free filing software for candidates; candidates in nine states can utilize either filing method. Twenty-nine states have developed and offer candidates a standard filing format (technical specifications) which is used to ensure that electronically-filed reports are compatible with the disclosure agency's computer system, regardless of the filing method or software used. In the *Grading State Disclosure 2007* survey, many states reported improvements in training resources and technical assistance available to electronic filers.



Funding and Support for Electronic Filing Programs

Adequate funding is a critical component of electronic filing programs; in addition to the resources necessary to develop such a program, disclosure agencies also require funding to maintain and upgrade systems, and to provide support and training to candidates. Most states recognize the need to continue to provide a stable funding stream that anticipates both program growth and the need to adapt to new technology; this year, 35 of the 40 states with electronic filing programs reported having adequate funding for their programs. However, nine states reported funding as a primary barrier to advancing their state's disclosure system.

Additionally, disclosure agencies were surveyed on the level and type of technical support available for their electronic filing programs and whether it is provided "in house" or from outside consultants.

Eighty-three percent of state disclosure agencies reported having access to adequate or strong technical support and 50 percent reported having access to strong technical support. It is noteworthy that of those reporting strong technical support, 90 percent received either all or a portion of their technical support from within their own agency or department.

Disclosure Content Accessibility

Twenty-six states earned grades in the A and B range in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007, with 13 states in each grade range. Ten of the eleven states in the A range in 2005 again earned As in 2007 and were joined by three additional states, including North Carolina and Pennsylvania that had previously received Fs in this category. Two states moved up into the B range (Louisiana from a C and Oregon from an F) and Georgia dropped into the B range after having earned an A- in 2005 in this category. One state earned a C in 2007 and seven states earned grades in the D range, including three states (Connecticut, Kansas and Minnesota) that improved from Fs in 2005. A total of 16 states received Fs in 2007, down from 24 Fs awarded in this category in the first year of the Grading State Disclosure study in 2003. Currently, Montana and Wyoming are the only states that do not post any campaign finance data on the Internet, and continue to rank at the bottom of the Disclosure Content Accessibility category.

- States that provide the best access to campaign finance records, in rank order, are: Washington; Hawaii; Texas; California, Florida, Michigan, North Carolina and Rhode Island (all tied for 4th); Maryland and Pennsylvania (tied for 9th); and Maine.
- The states with the weakest access to campaign finance records, in rank order, are: Iowa, Nevada and West Virginia (tied for 40th); Arkansas and Mississippi (tied for 43rd); Alabama and Delaware (tied for 45th); South Dakota; New Hampshire; Montana; and Wyoming.

Significant 2007 findings:

- 48 states post campaign finance data on their disclosure web sites;
- 2 states have no campaign finance data available online;
- 36 states provide searchable databases of contributions online;
- 24 states provide searchable databases of expenditures online;
- 28 states allow campaign finance data to be downloaded from their web sites in a spreadsheet format;
- 25 states allow campaign finance data to be sorted online;
- 33 states post campaign finance data online within 48 hours; and
- 39 states offer campaign data on disk.

Significant changes since 2005:

- 3 states began posting campaign expenditures online for the first time (Kansas, Minnesota and South Carolina);
- 1 state began posting campaign contributions online for the first time (South Carolina);
- 4 states added online searchable databases of contributions (North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania and South Carolina);
- 4 states added online searchable databases of expenditures (North Carolina, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania);
- 3 states increased the number of fields that can be searched in their online databases (Georgia, Idaho and Kansas);

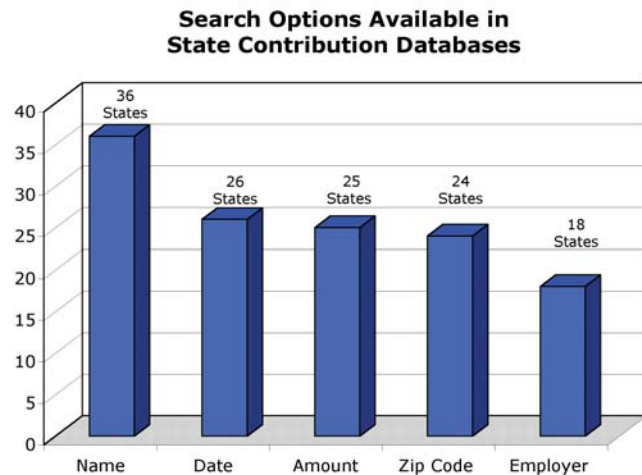
- 7 states post campaign filings to the Internet more quickly than in 2005 (Arkansas, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Minnesota, Tennessee and Wisconsin);
- 5 more states allow campaign data to be sorted online (Connecticut, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Carolina and Oregon); and
- 1 more state allows data to be downloaded (Oregon).

With South Carolina's move to post campaign finance data online in 2006, there are now 48 states with online disclosure data. All 48 states offer itemized contributions on their campaign disclosure web sites, either within reports or through searchable databases. Additionally, itemized expenditures can now be found on 46 sites as Kansas, Minnesota, and South Carolina enhanced their web sites with this information since the publication of *Grading State Disclosure 2005*.

Searchable, Online Databases

Among the states that post campaign data online, 36 provide searchable databases of campaign contributions. Twenty-four of those states also provide the public with searchable databases of campaign expenditures. North Carolina, Oregon and Pennsylvania each added databases of contributions and expenditures to their sites since the 2005 study and, as noted above, moved their grades in this category out of the F range.

Comprehensive databases offer a wide range of search fields (contributor name, employer, zip code, amount, date, etc.), search options ("name contains" or "sounds like" searches), and typically present results that can be viewed and sorted online or downloaded and analyzed offline. States that provide online databases are more likely to allow data downloads and online sort options; over 90 percent of the states that allow the public to download or sort campaign data online also publish campaign finance databases. Only two states that lack online databases (Vermont and Wisconsin) allow data to be downloaded and one state that lacks a database (New Mexico) allows data to be sorted online.



Demonstrating the positive effect that mandatory electronic filing has on access to campaign finance data online, 90 percent of states that have a mandatory electronic filing requirement offer the public searchable databases of contributions that can be searched by numerous fields. When candidates are required to file electronically, disclosure agencies are able to dedicate more attention to data presentation, rather than data-entry. By comparison, just half of the states with voluntary electronic filing programs offer searchable, online databases. Four of the ten states without electronic filing programs (Idaho, Kansas, North Dakota and Nebraska) data-enter contributions and offer searchable databases for public use.

States with mandatory electronic filing programs are also much more likely to provide online, searchable databases of campaign expenditures than states without a mandate. Nearly three-quarters of states with mandatory electronic filing offer searchable databases of campaign expenditures, while just two of

the ten states with voluntary filing programs provide this resource. Searchable databases of campaign expenses are not available in any of the ten states that lack electronic filing programs.

**Percentage of States with Online, Searchable Databases,
by Electronic Filing Status**

	Mandatory E-Filing States	Voluntary E-Filing States	States with No E-Filing
Contribution Databases	90%	50%	40%
Expenditure Databases	73%	20%	0%

Other Methods of Online Disclosure

States without electronic filing programs make records available to the public in a variety of ways. Some scan paper reports, some data-enter records from paper reports and some do a combination of both. Data-entered HTML displays of records are the most user-friendly since typed or handwritten documents that are scanned and posted online can be difficult to read. Vermont allows users to view and download information from text files, allowing site visitors to bypass the more cumbersome, scanned TIFF files that are also available. Even with the easier-to-view PDF file format utilized in Alabama, Mississippi and South Dakota, the report contents can be difficult to decipher depending on the quality of the scan, as well as the legibility of handwritten reports.

Timeliness of Online Disclosure

Posting campaign finance data online significantly contributes to the public's ability to make informed decisions at the polls. Online disclosure records are accessible to anyone from any place at any time, unlike paper records which are available only at limited locations and times. Of the 48 states posting campaign finance data on the web, 33 states provide public access within 48 hours of receipt and the remainder provide online access to reports within a week. Some disclosure agencies withhold electronically-filed reports from the web until all candidates for a particular office have filed, but even that usually results in only a slight delay in online access. Seven states reported adding campaign data to their site more quickly than in the past, while six states reported slightly slower posting times than in 2005 (possibly due to increased filings in 2006 statewide elections).

Access to Records on Paper and Disk

As the majority of states provide online access to campaign disclosure reports, many have reported a decrease in the number of requests for paper copies. Most states charge between \$.10 and \$.25 per page for paper copies of disclosure reports. The lowest price is in Ohio at \$.03 per page; the highest price is charged in South Dakota and Alabama, at \$1.00 per page. The two states that do not currently post campaign finance data online are at the low end of the price range, with Montana at \$.10 per page and Wyoming charging \$.15 for most copies. Delaware (\$.50/page) and Michigan (\$.25/page) reported higher prices than in 2005, by \$.25 and \$.03, respectively.

In addition to accessing campaign records on paper or on states' disclosure web sites, journalists, watchdog organizations, and others sometimes prefer to receive large quantities of disclosure records on CD, a format that more easily allows for large-scale analysis of several candidates' records or all campaign committees' reports for a given election cycle. Thirty-nine states now offer the public campaign data on CD or via email, up from 36 in 2005, with Connecticut, Delaware and Louisiana adding this option.

Online Contextual and Technical Usability

Online Contextual and Technical Usability is the category in which states exhibited the most change in 2007. A total of 21 states improved their grades in this category, while 20 states received lower grades than in 2005, primarily due to a poorer usability test performance. In 2007, three states earned As in the usability category, the most ever awarded during this study's history. Six states earned grades in the B range, one more than in 2005. Thirteen states earned Cs, and twelve earned D grades. Sixteen states received Fs in the 2007 assessment, five more than in 2005.

- States with the best contextual and technical web site usability, in rank order from one to ten, are: Idaho; Massachusetts and Minnesota (tied for 2nd); Illinois; Kansas; Iowa; Ohio; Virginia; Michigan; and Florida, New York and West Virginia (tied for 10th).
- States with the weakest contextual and technical web site usability, in rank order from 41 to 50, are: Utah; Arizona, Arkansas and Mississippi (tied for 42nd); New Mexico and Wyoming (tied for 45th); Connecticut; Nebraska; New Hampshire; and Montana.

Significant 2007 findings:

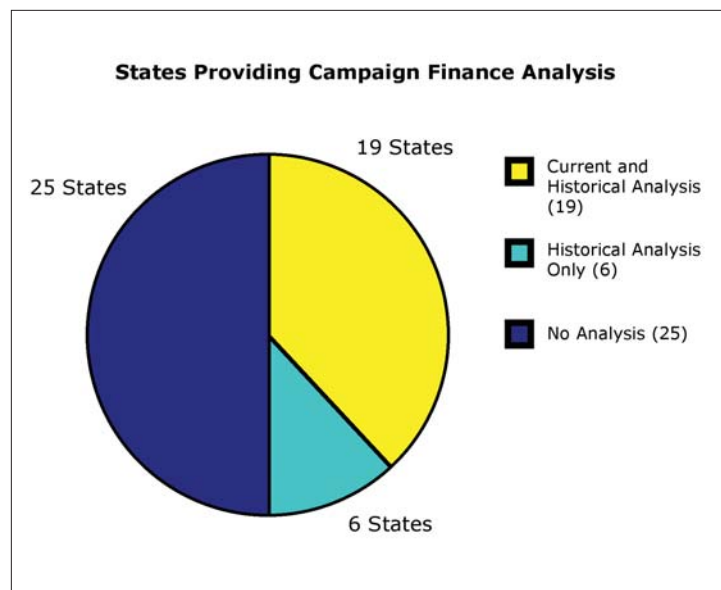
- 25 states offer online overviews of campaign finance data, including comparisons of total amounts raised and spent by candidates;
- 19 of these states offer overviews of both the most recent and past legislative races; 18 post analyses of both statewide and legislative campaigns;
- 6 states offer analyses of historical campaign finances;
- 49 states post information about campaign finance restrictions online and all 50 states provide information about disclosure reporting requirements;
- 45 states feature lists of candidates for the most recent or current election on their disclosure sites;
- 23 states provide comprehensive information explaining which disclosure reports are available online;
- 7 states provide little or no detail explaining which disclosure reports are available online; and
- 41 disclosure web sites are easily located from their state homepage by either navigating or searching the main state site.

Significant changes since 2005:

- 9 states improved their explanations of which reports can be found on their disclosure web sites;
- 2 states improved their instructions for accessing campaign finance data online (Minnesota and Nevada);
- 3 states added information about campaign finance restrictions (California, Connecticut and Georgia);
- 2 states provided better explanations of their state's campaign disclosure requirements (Connecticut and Georgia);
- 3 states improved the terminology used on their disclosure web sites (Arizona, Nebraska and Texas);
- 4 states added or made improvements to summary campaign finance information on their web sites (Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey and New York);
- 3 states expanded the scope of campaign finance information available online to include both original reports and clearly labeled, amended reports (Colorado, Kansas and Minnesota); and
- 14 disclosure agency web sites were easier to locate from the state homepage.

Campaign Finance Analysis

An important resource that many disclosure agencies offer the public are campaign finance analyses. Statistical compilations that summarize one candidate's financial activity compared to that of other candidates, or the totals raised and spent in one election relative to past campaigns, provide the public with a greater context for understanding the role of money in their state's elections. With Michigan and New York adding campaign overview data to their sites since 2005, half of all states now allow the public to more easily compare campaign financing across candidates and election cycles. Of these 25 states, 19 give overviews of both recent and historical elections, and 18 provide such detail for both statewide and legislative candidates. While the remaining six states don't have the most recent data available, they do maintain historical figures for public review.



Explanation of the Data Available Online

Another essential element of contextual usability is whether a state's disclosure web site contains adequate information to help the public determine the scope of candidates' reports and the overall availability of campaign data online. Twenty-three states do a very good job in this area, providing explanations of which types of candidates' reports are available, the time period covered by the online data, and which specific reports can be viewed for each campaign committee. These states' sites often feature detailed descriptions of available data, along with interfaces for accessing online reports that clearly show which candidates' reports are included. Colorado and Pennsylvania were among the nine states that improved in this area since 2005, giving visitors to their sites better information about the overall universe of data available, and Nevada now provides users with a better view of each candidate's filing history. Overall, visitors to 43 of the 50 state disclosure sites can find some amount of detail about what campaign data is available online.

Instructions for Users

Instructing the public how to access the data on the site is an important component of making disclosure sites user-friendly. Considering that many states offer multiple-field database searches and a number of states host scanned reports and electronically-filed reports in different areas online, the availability of a user guide, as well as instructions for use throughout the site, is necessary to ensure that all users (from novice to advanced) can access campaign records as easily as possible. Twenty-one states offer thorough instructions for users. Of the remaining 27 states that publish campaign finance data online, 18 provide at least minimal instructions while nine disclosure sites don't provide basic instructions to guide users through either the entire site or specific web pages.

Amended Reports

Retaining all of a candidate's filings online is an important feature, allowing the public a complete view of a candidate's financial activity, including when candidates amend their original reports. Both original and amended campaign filings are available on nearly two-thirds of state disclosure sites. Of the 32 states retaining original filings online alongside amendments, 30 clearly label their reports so that the public can tell the difference between original and amended reports. Colorado, Kansas and Minnesota all improved in this area in 2007, while Georgia, Hawaii and Oregon maintained access to original filings following transitions to new report filing systems. Of the 16 states that don't retain original filings alongside amended filings, six at least identify amended reports as such in each candidate's listing (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Maine, North Dakota and Pennsylvania).

Usability Testing

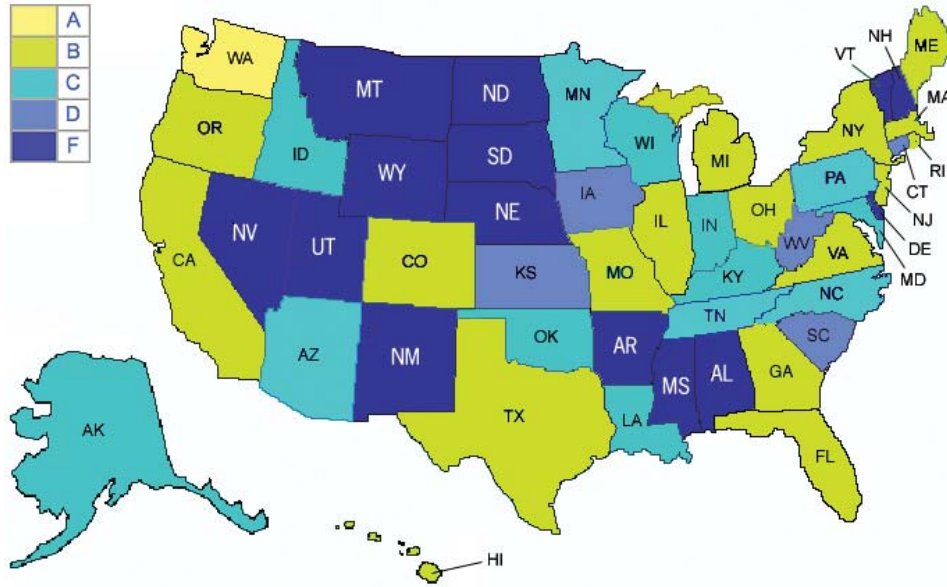
One-third of the possible points in the study's Online Contextual and Technical Usability category are determined by the usability testing conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles. The test is designed to measure the public's ability to locate a state's disclosure web site and extract from it accurate answers to specific questions about candidates' campaign finance activity. In the 2007 testing, 22 states improved their performance, and 22 states rated lower in 2007 than in 2005. Specific problems

experienced by testers included confusion with site terminology, difficulty finding specific data within the site and a lack of confidence in their overall research experience. As technological and stylistic advancements spread throughout the Internet, public expectations for easy, efficient web site visits may also cause testers to rate site experiences poorly.

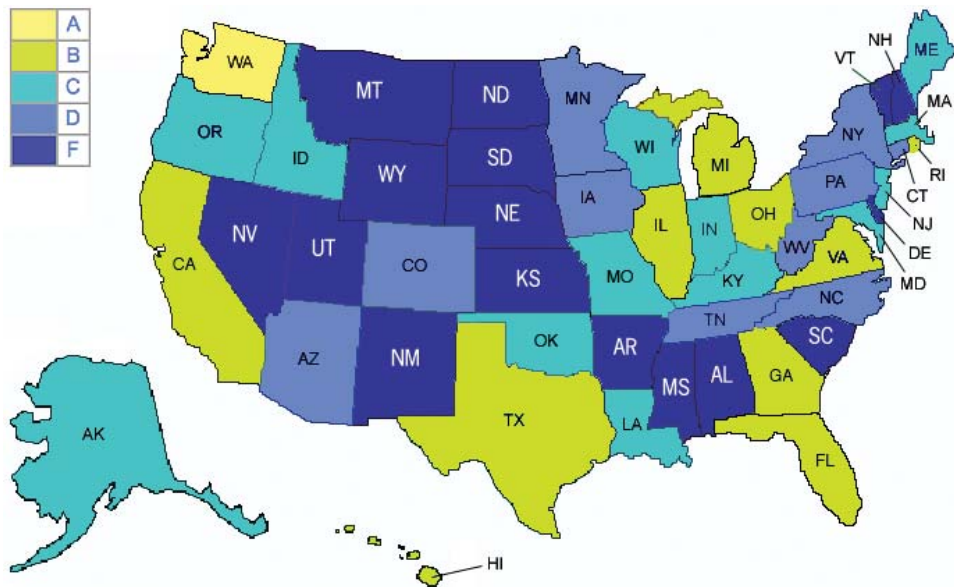
Site Redesigns

Demonstrating the need to keep pace with the public's technological and stylistic expectations, over one-third of the states redesigned their disclosure sites since 2005. Some of these were cosmetic redesigns, while some were major restructuring initiatives. While funding a comprehensive site overhaul is not always feasible, even slight improvements, such as clarifying site terminology and improving linkage from the state homepage to the disclosure site, can make campaign finance sites more user-friendly.

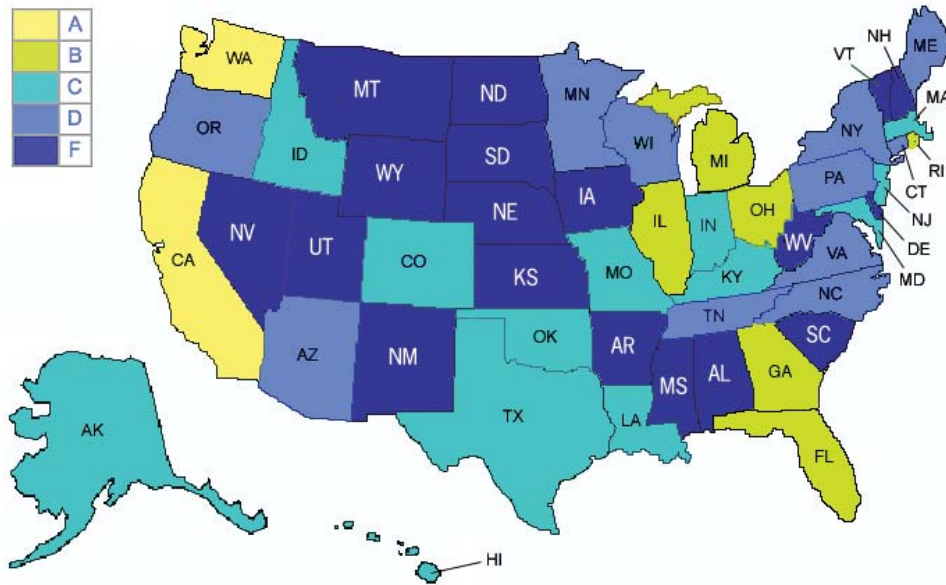
U.S. Map of Grading State Disclosure 2007 Study Results



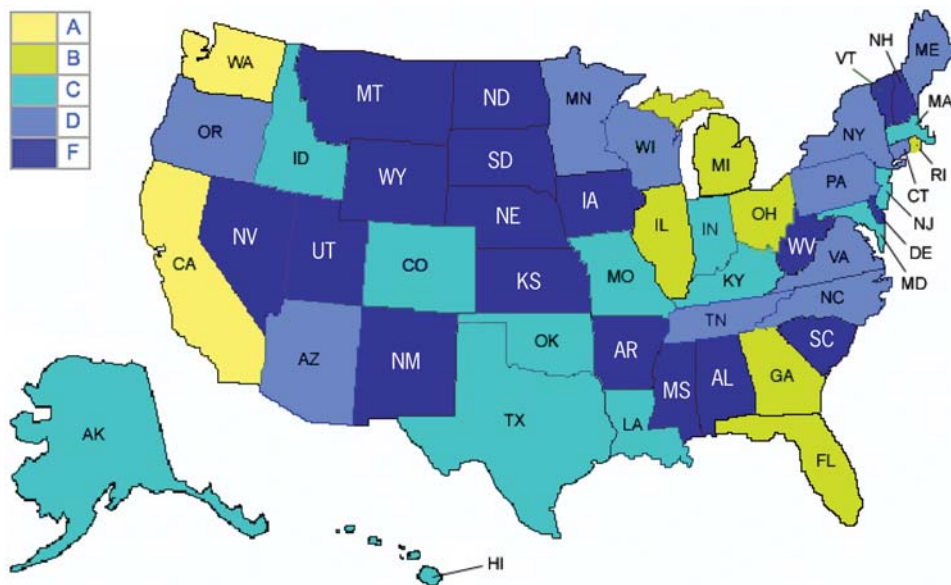
U.S. Map of Grading State Disclosure 2005 Study Results



U.S. Map of Grading State Disclosure 2004 Study Results



U.S. Map of Grading State Disclosure 2003 Study Results



III.

State-by-State Summaries

Alabama

Grade	F
Rank	49

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	48
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	45
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	40

Alabama received its fourth consecutive F and ranked 49th overall in *Grading State Disclosure 2007*, dropping 15 places in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category rankings.

Alabama's disclosure law ranked 48th overall in 2007. Alabama failed again to strengthen its campaign disclosure law, despite bills introduced in 2007's contentious regular legislative session to enact electronic filing and to ban transfers between political action committees. Contributing to the consistently low rank in the law category are a lack of mandatory auditing of campaign statements and a lack of independent expenditure reporting. The law does require the disclosure of the names and addresses of contributors, but candidates are not required to disclose a contributor's occupation or employer, the campaign's itemized debts or expenditures made by subvendors.

Very little has changed on Alabama's disclosure web site since the 2005 assessment, and the problems outlined in previous Grading State Disclosure reports still exist. To improve access to online campaign finance reports, the agency might start by streamlining the process for viewing scanned PDF images of reports, and shortening the number of steps required to get to the various schedules of each report. For example, prior to viewing requested data, a screen appears stating, "The document you requested...has 31 pages... size is 1310K. Click the link below and the document will open in approximately 15 seconds." This extra step could likely be removed as most files take just 1-2 seconds to open.

Continuing the decline from a relatively high Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade in 2004, Alabama received an F in 2007 and ranked 40th in this category. Driven lower by poorer performance in the usability testing, Alabama's disclosure site also lacks a number of contextual features that make disclosure sites more user-friendly. For example, specific dates covered by reports are not listed, overviews comparing candidates' financial activities are not available, and amended reports are labeled as "Other", rather than "Amended" reports. While the Secretary of State's site does offer helpful instructions, greater contextual usability could be achieved with the addition of a detailed description of which candidates' reports are available for viewing online.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide the reporting period's start and end dates within the index of a candidate's reports.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Clear and prominent "View Campaign Finance Reports" link on the Secretary of State's homepage.*

Alaska

Grade	C
Rank	27

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	32
Electronic Filing Program	F	39
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B-	22
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	13

Alaska's grade slipped from a C+ to a C in the 2007 assessment, with lower performance in usability testing accounting for the significant drop in rank from 13th to 27th overall.

Alaska's disclosure law requires candidates to report the name and address of their campaign contributors, as well as the occupation and employer of those contributing \$250 or more. While the law does not require subvendor expenditures to be disclosed, candidates must report the name of the recipient, and the purpose for and date of all expenditures made or accrued. Independent expenditure disclosure is a weak point in the law, particularly for last-minute expenditures that are not disclosed until after the election. While Alaska's grades reflect the state's current voluntary electronic filing program for campaign finances, the governor signed House Bill 109 into law in 2007 mandating electronic filing for statewide and legislative candidates starting in 2009.

The passage of HB 109 will make electronic filing the norm in a state where just 14 percent of candidates filed electronically in 2006. While adequate funding has been an issue in past system improvements, the state is investing in a new filing system to improve the electronic disclosure process. Alaska earned a B- in the accessibility category in 2007 and offers good access to campaign finance data (which is either filed electronically or data-entered by agency staff) through a number of search interfaces on the Alaska Public Offices Commission (APOC) web site. Unfortunately, the quantity and the labeling of the search options can be confusing to site users. Specifically, the most comprehensive database search tool (vaguely labeled "Ad Hoc Query") is last on a lengthy list of search options. The development of the new system for online disclosure offers Alaska an opportunity to improve public access and create a more user-friendly site structure.

Confusion over terminology on the site contributed to a drop from a B+ to a C+ in Alaska's Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade. Usability testers rated their experience with the site as average and expressed less confidence in their ability to derive specific information from the site than testers did in 2005. While the APOC site provides valuable contextual information, such as contribution limits and summaries of campaign finances, it could be enhanced by providing clear instructions or a user's manual for data searches.

- ◆ Quick Fix: *Rename the "Ad Hoc Query" and prominently list it as the site's most comprehensive database search tool.*
- ◆ Editor's Pick: *Overviews of campaign finance disclosure data for all candidates.*

Arizona

Grade	C-
Rank	30

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	26
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D+	28
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	42

While Arizona dropped two places in the rankings, the state did move up into the C range in 2007 due to improvements in the Online Contextual and Textual Usability category.

Arizona's disclosure law requires that candidates report detailed information about their contributors, including occupation and employer. Candidates must disclose all campaign expenditures, but subvendor information is not reported. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures are not reported until after the election, representing a major weakness in the state's campaign finance law. Arizona's law requiring electronic filing by all legislative and statewide candidates continues to buoy the state's overall grade.

Arizona's interface for accessing campaign finance data online has changed little since 2005, earning the state a D+ in the accessibility category again in 2007. The same limitations encountered in past assessments remain. Specifically, the site's contributions database offers few search fields and there is no database of campaign expenditures. The contribution database on the Secretary of State's web site can be searched only by contributor name and contribution date, and the usefulness of the date field is limited because it requires first specifying a contributor's name. Even selecting a contributor's name can be difficult as searches of common last names (for example, "Adams" or "Wilson") are met with the site returning a "Please try to be more specific" message. However, even restricting searches by contributor name and time period continues to return this message. On a positive note, Arizona is in the process of a complete system overhaul scheduled to be in place for the 2008 elections. It will be a great benefit to the public to have easier access to campaign data in a state that already has a strong electronic filing system.

Arizona earned an F for web site usability for the fourth time in this study, but did receive a slightly higher ranking as usability test scores returned to their 2004 level. The site received a makeover in late 2005 that may have contributed to more positive responses from testers regarding their overall experience. While neither the terminology used on the site, nor the functionality of the database has improved, the index of reports filed by a candidate now clearly indicates which reports have been amended.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a general description of the universe of data available for viewing online. The disclosure web site contains very little contextual information to help site visitors understand which candidates' reports are online, and what time period is covered by the database.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The site offers an index of candidate reports that clearly indicates whether reports were filed on time, the date of amended filings as well as the method used to file each report.*

Arkansas

Grade	F
Rank	38

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	35
Electronic Filing Program	F	36
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	43
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	42

Arkansas received an F in 2007, though the state has begun to make significant improvements that will increase access to campaign finance data in the future, including the implementation of an electronic filing program this year.

While average by this study's standards, Arkansas's campaign finance law is the strongest area of the state's disclosure program. Candidates must report detailed information about contributors giving as little as \$50, including occupation and employer data. Expenditures above \$99 are also disclosed, but reports do not include subvendor information. Independent expenditure disclosure is weak and reports do not include who benefits from such expenditures, or the cumulative amount spent. While candidates do file monthly election year campaign finance reports, neither contributions nor independent expenditures made at the last minute are disclosed until after Election Day.

Arkansas's rank in the Electronic Filing category improved in 2007 with the creation of a voluntary electronic filing program for candidates. Currently, Arkansas only offers site visitors the ability to search for candidate filings by name or office, but the site does note, "As filers use the database we will be able to expand this criteria for future searches." If the electronic filing program results in more data available online in accessible formats, not only will the public's access improve, but Arkansas's performance in this assessment will likely improve as well.

Arkansas again earned an F in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, with the site's major deficiency being the lack of searchable databases of contributions and expenditures. Currently, the state scans and uploads all disclosure reports as PDF files. Recent enhancements to the system made this process faster and moved the state up one place in the accessibility rankings. Presently, the scanned paper filings can be difficult to decipher depending on the quality of the scan, as well as the legibility of handwritten reports. A benefit of the new electronic filing program will be the clean, legible reports produced by the system.

In 2007, fewer usability testers expressed confidence in the site than in the past, and overall ratings of their experiences were lower than those reported in the 2005 assessment. Contributing to the failing contextual usability grade, the site does not offer overviews of totals raised or spent by candidates or thorough instructions for how to access the available data. While the gains made in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category in 2005 were lost, there is hope for Arkansas to move back out of the F range as the benefits of the new filing system become apparent on the Secretary of State's web site.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a general description of the universe of data available for viewing online to help site visitors understand which candidates' reports are online, and what time period is covered by the reports.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Monthly filing of disclosure reports in election years.*

California

Grade	B+
Rank	2

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A	1
Electronic Filing Program	A-	22
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	4
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C	19

California's very strong disclosure program earned a B+ again in 2007 and achieved the second highest overall ranking with gains made in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category.

California's disclosure law ranks first overall, with strengths such as the timely reporting of last-minute contributions and independent expenditures, and comprehensive auditing provisions contributing to the state's A grade. Candidates are required to provide detailed information on donors who give \$100 or more, including occupation and employer data. While campaigns must report expenditures made by subvendors, a weakness of the law found in this assessment is that campaigns are not required to report the date a payment is made to a vendor. Electronic filing is mandatory for all state-level candidates who reach a \$50,000 threshold. While a new, free, web-based filing system was introduced in 2005, funding issues accounted for a slight drop in the state's 2007 Electronic Filing grade.

California again earned an A and a top-five ranking in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. All electronically-filed reports are available on the state's "Cal-Access" web site going back to 2000, with new reports becoming available online immediately upon filing. Along with browsable PDF versions of disclosure reports, the site also features searchable databases of contributions and expenditures. A weakness found on the Cal-Access site is that the amended disclosure reports replace the original reports in a candidate's filing history.

California's grade for Online Contextual and Technical Usability improved from a D+ to a C as usability testers found the site more understandable and were able to more confidently find and extract campaign finance data than in 2005. California also strengthened the contextual information online by posting campaign contribution limits on the Cal-Access site that had previously been found only on the state's Fair Political Practices Commission site. Even with these improvements, the usability of California's disclosure site still ranks only as average in this assessment. The Secretary of State's office is planning to overhaul the disclosure site and could make additional improvements by publishing an online user's guide.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide better visual cues for accessing and searching the online databases by changing the label from "Advanced Search" to "Search Contributions and Expenditures". This impressive feature can be easily missed by site visitors due to the inconspicuous placement of the link on the main page, and a label that does not accurately describe the resource that is available.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *"Candidates & Elected Officials" page provides options for accessing browsable lists of candidates, incumbents and links to electronic filers' reports for all elections held since 2000.*

Colorado

Grade	B-
Rank	15

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A-	5
Electronic Filing Program	A-	22
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B-	22
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D+	24

Colorado was one of the five most improved states in the 2007 study. The Secretary of State's adoption of mandatory electronic filing for statewide and legislative candidates in 2007 pushed Colorado into the B range, a remarkable improvement over the D+ the state received in *Grading State Disclosure 2005*.

A closer examination of Colorado's disclosure law in 2007 resulted in scoring revisions, causing the state's grade to increase to an A- from a B- in 2005. Colorado's strong disclosure law requires campaigns to report details about all donors giving \$20 or more, including donor occupation and employer data for contributions of \$100 or more. Disclosure of expenditure data is thorough, though candidates are not required to report subvendor information. Colorado mandated electronic filing in 2007, a logical step for a state where approximately 70 percent of filers chose the voluntary electronic filing option in 2006. Rather than a fundraising threshold, the new mandate requires candidates to file electronically when their disclosure reports include thirty or more transactions.

Colorado again earned a B- in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category but its rank dropped as other states made improvements. Accessibility weaknesses include the absence of zip code and employer search fields within the contributor database and the fact that the expenditure database does not offer users the option to search by the type of expenditure. Colorado does an excellent job of making electronically-filed campaign data immediately available online, and paper filers' reports are scanned and accessible within 24 hours of receipt.

While Online Contextual and Technical Usability represents the state's weakest area, Colorado made significant gains in this category since 2005, moving up from 44th to 24th in the rankings. Improved performance in usability testing in 2007, as well as the addition of helpful contextual information, contributed to the state moving out of the F range. Significant improvements made to the site include the addition of a page that describes the data available on the site and provides a listing of which candidates' filings are available. However, terminology and structural problems persist. Itemized contributions and expenditures can be searched by following a link labeled "Inquiry"; however, users may miss this feature because another link on the site is labeled "Search Reports". Following this link allows users to search for specific reports, but not for itemized contributions or expenditures.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Change the text of the "Inquiry" link to "Search the Campaign Finance Database".*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The index of reports filed by each candidate contains the due date of each report, the date original or amended reports were actually filed, and the beginning and ending balance for the period.*

Connecticut

Grade	D
Rank	35

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	23
Electronic Filing Program	D	30
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D	33
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	47

Connecticut received its third consecutive D in 2007, though the state did improve from an F to a D in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category.

Connecticut's disclosure law earned a C+ in 2007, and ranks better than half of the states in this study. Candidates must provide details about contributors who give \$50 or more, and occupation and employer data for those giving \$100 or more. Campaign expenses must be disclosed as well, including those made by subvendors. Connecticut law requires electronic filing only for statewide candidates raising \$250,000 or more, a threshold met by only half of those candidates in 2006. Unsuccessful legislation introduced in 2007 would have reduced the threshold to \$5,000 and expanded mandatory electronic filing to legislative candidates. Additionally, in 2005, Connecticut law transferred campaign disclosure responsibilities from the Secretary of State's office to the State Elections Enforcement Commission (SEEC), meaning that a single agency now manages both the state's disclosure program and a new program for public financing of elections. With the reorganization, the SEEC is in the process of developing a new electronic disclosure system to enhance the ease of filing for candidates and improve public access to the records.

Connecticut received a passing grade in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007 in part due to the state now offering campaign data on disk. Major deficiencies of Connecticut's disclosure site are the lack of a searchable database of campaign expenses and the limited options available for searching campaign contributions. Electronically-filed data can be sorted online, but data cannot be downloaded from the site; the new filing system will include this and other useful tools not currently available to the public.

Connecticut continues to struggle in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category, receiving an F in each of the four Grading State Disclosure studies. One positive change made with the move to the new agency is that campaign finance restrictions are now listed on the same site as the campaign data. Unfortunately, the concerns noted with the Secretary of State's site in the 2005 assessment remain on the SEEC site, since electronic filings are still maintained separately from those filed on paper. This means users have to sort through two systems to determine a candidate's filing method. Fortunately, the SEEC's development of the new disclosure system is a positive step toward a more user-friendly disclosure site.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide site visitors with an overview of totals raised and spent by candidates for a particular election.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *While searching for reports to browse, site visitors can limit the returned list of documents to either originals or amendments.*

Delaware

Grade	F
Rank	41

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	D	41
Electronic Filing Program	F	31
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	45
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D-	33

Despite improved performance in the web site usability category, Delaware received an F again in the 2007 assessment.

Delaware's disclosure law grade has remained unchanged since 2005. Candidates are required to report the name and address, but not the occupation or employer, of each donor who gives \$100 or more. Details about expenditures of \$100 or more must be disclosed, but subvendor information is not required. There is no reporting of last-minute contributions or independent expenditures until after the election, and enforcement suffers from a lack of mandatory desk reviews and field audits. Delaware law does not require electronic filing by candidates. The Department of Elections does offer candidates an electronic filing option and recently enhanced the system by allowing candidates to use online filing forms. Candidates have responded enthusiastically to the improvements; the agency reported that an impressive 85 percent of statewide and 50 percent of legislative candidates took advantage of the electronic filing option in the last election. However, the lack of an electronic filing requirement keeps Delaware from earning a better grade in this category.

The state received an F in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, with significant deficiencies stemming from the lack of searchable, online databases of contributions and expenditures. The site did improve in terms of file formats by switching to PDFs from the more cumbersome TIFF file format, but itemized data still cannot be sorted online or downloaded for offline research. The Department of Elections has increased the cost of paper copies since 2005, from \$.25 to \$.50 per page. One recent improvement to data access is that the agency will now provide campaign data to the public on disk.

Delaware improved to a passing grade in the web site usability category in 2007 and moved up seven places in the rankings. Better performance on the usability test accounts for the state's higher grade, with testers citing less overall confusion and a better general experience with the site in 2007. However, the main process for viewing campaign reports is somewhat difficult, as users cannot view a complete listing of candidate reports on one screen. Instead, users must first select a reporting year before choosing a candidate from a listing of all of the candidates registered in that year. Also contributing to the site's low rating is a lack of contextual information, such as comparative overviews of candidates' campaign finance data.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add information to help the public determine whose reports are available online. The disclosure web site includes very little information to help visitors figure out the universe of filings available on the site.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Contribution limits are prominently linked from the campaign finance homepage and are presented in a clean and easily accessible chart.*

Florida

Grade	B+
Rank	4

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B	13
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	4
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	10

Florida is a leading performer in *Grading State Disclosure 2007*, with top five rankings in both the Electronic Filing and Disclosure Content Accessibility categories. Florida again earned a B+ overall, though its rank slipped two places to 4th due to slightly lower usability test ratings.

Florida's campaign disclosure law requires candidates to report details about contributors giving more than \$100, including occupation, but not employer data. Expenditure disclosure is strong, with candidates reporting subvendor information and accrued expenditures. The law's enforcement provisions, including mandatory desk reviews and field audits, are another strong point. Florida has mandatory electronic filing for all statewide and legislative candidates and does not allow waivers for this requirement. The state earned an A+ in 2007 and shares the highest ranking in the country for the Electronic Filing category.

Florida again earned an A in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category and moved up to 4th in this area, from 5th in 2005. The state's disclosure site offers searchable databases of contributions and expenditures that cover over ten years of filings, including both electronic filings and paper filings that have been data-entered. Candidate reports are made available immediately upon receipt. The public can search campaign donors by name and occupation, but a donor's employer cannot be searched due to the lack of this disclosure requirement in the law. The site offers an index of candidate reports, which provides a clear summary of the data within each report. However, this feature may be obscured by its placement on the site, since reports are not accessed through the "Campaign Finance Information" link.

Florida received a lower grade in Online Contextual and Technical Usability in 2007, but remains in the top ten in this category. Testers found accessing the disclosure site from the state's homepage to be challenging and more testers reported confusion with the disclosure site itself than in 2005. Even so, Florida maintains excellent options for comparing fundraising and spending totals among candidates, and also provides a thorough description of the available data and instructions for using the searchable databases. Though visitors to the site are not able to differentiate between original and amended candidate filings, the agency reports that they are working to resolve this issue.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Make it easier to access and view candidates' full reports from the section of the site currently labeled "Campaign Finance Information".*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Candidate Listing" for the 2008 election cycle includes candidates' names, political parties, office sought and incumbency status, and links to each candidate's campaign finance activity.*

Georgia

Grade	B
Rank	8

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	7
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B+	14
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C-	22

Even as disclosure responsibilities were transferred to the State Ethics Commission in January of 2006, Georgia maintained its excellent disclosure program, again earning a B and a top-ten ranking.

Georgia's disclosure law earned a B+ again in 2007, led by strong reporting requirements for individual contributors and independent expenditures. Candidates must report details about all contributors giving more than \$100, including occupation and employer data. Large, last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported prior to an election. Expenditures over \$100 are also reported, but committees are not required to list subvendor information. Georgia law requires statewide candidates who raise \$20,000 and legislative candidates who raise \$10,000 to file electronically. The State Ethics Commission provides candidates with a free, web-based filing system, online demonstrations and training programs. These factors helped Georgia earn an A+ and a share of the number one ranking in the Electronic Filing category.

Georgia's grade in the data accessibility category dipped slightly after the transition to the new site, from an A- to a B+. Regardless of filing method, all itemized disclosure data filed since January 2006 can be accessed through the Commission's searchable databases of contributions and expenditures, due to the fact that the agency data-enters paper-filed reports. The new databases now allow users to search expenditures by purpose and date, but contributions cannot be searched by zip code as they could be in the previous database. Users cannot sort data on the site, but are able to download information for offline research. Electronic filings are immediately available online, and Georgia helps keep the public up to date by providing a list of the fifty reports most recently filed.

Georgia climbed into the C range in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category in 2007, up from a D+ in 2005. (The Commission redesigned its web site in August of 2007, after the assessment was completed.) The state improved information on campaign restrictions and disclosure requirements on its site and was one of four states to earn the highest possible rating in the 2007 usability test. Though the site is overall very user-friendly, it lacks key contextual information, such as a detailed listing of candidates. Reports filed prior to 2006 are still accessible on the Secretary of State's web site, but the Ethics Commission's new site, with information since 2006, does not provide a link to the historic data. While the Commission does summarize cumulative funds raised and spent by all filers, the public would also benefit from comparisons of the totals raised and spent by candidates for a particular office.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add an explanation to the site describing what campaign finance information is available on the Ethics Commission site and what data is available on the Secretary of State's site.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The Commission provides a list of the 50 most recently filed reports.*

Hawaii

Grade	B+
Rank	4

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A-	5
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A+	2
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D	28

Hawaii maintains excellent access to campaign data and retained its top five rating in 2007. The state earned a B+, up from a B in 2005, with improvements made in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category.

Hawaii's disclosure law requires candidates to report detailed information about contributors giving at least \$100, but occupation and employer information is not reported until a donor gives \$1,000. The law's strengths are in the disclosure of expenditures, loan details and independent expenditures, with last-minute independent expenditures required to be reported prior to Election Day. Legislative and statewide candidates alike are now required to file electronically under a new law enacted in 2005. House Bill 1130, signed into law in 2007, eliminated the \$5,000 electronic filing threshold and waiver option. To further improve the electronic filing program, the Campaign Spending Commission introduced a new, web-based "Candidate Filing System" in 2007.

Hawaii moved up to 2nd place in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, earning an A+ in 2007 as public access to records improved. The Commission is in the process of developing a new campaign finance database comprised of data filed through the "Candidate Filing System". In the meantime users can access, sort and download data from reports that have been filed through this new system. Users can also access scanned paper filings and searchable databases of contributions and expenditures through the older HERTS databases, which feature multiple search fields.

Hawaii's weakness continues to be in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category, where the state's grade dropped slightly (from a D+ to a D) in 2007. Usability testers gave the site a below average assessment, and overviews of the totals raised and spent in the 2006 elections were not available online until after the close of the assessment period in 2007. One challenge of Hawaii's site is that data is found in three different locations online, depending on when it was filed. Users who wish to compare spending across elections must look in several places. The agency has succeeded in making the new site more user-friendly than the HERTS databases, offering data in an attractive and easily accessible format. The new site could be enhanced with a clear set of user instructions.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *To make the site more user-friendly, add a link from the "Candidate Filing System" site back to the Campaign Spending Commission's homepage.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Clean, attractive design of the "Candidate Filing System" site.*

Idaho

Grade	C
Rank	26

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	22
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	C	27
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	A+	1

Idaho earned a C in 2007, though the state dropped six places in the rankings as other states made significant improvements. Idaho's strengths continue to be in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category, where the state earned an A+ and maintained its status as the top ranked state in 2007.

Idaho earned a B- in the disclosure law category, the same grade earned in the previous two assessments. Idaho requires candidates to report details about contributors giving more than \$50 and expenditures of at least \$25. Expenditure disclosure is particularly strong and requires reporting of information about subvendors and accrued expenses. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported before Election Day, and the law's enforcement provisions, including mandatory desk reviews and field audits, are strong. Idaho still does not offer an electronic filing option, but the Secretary of State's office reports that it is designing a system for candidates.

Idaho improved slightly in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, earning a C in 2007 and ranking higher than 23 states (including 14 with electronic filing programs). The Secretary of State's office manually enters all campaign finance data, making itemized contributions available through a database in both searchable and downloadable formats. Idaho added a zip code search option to its contributions database, but users still cannot sort the data online. The site's primary deficiency remains the lack of an interface for searching campaign expenditures, though this data is also manually entered. Idaho makes disclosure reports available almost immediately by posting scans of reports online the same day they are received. Making reports available for the searchable database and download options takes slightly longer, but the process for manual data-entry is usually completed in seven days.

Idaho maintained its 1st place ranking in the usability category in 2007. Idaho's performance on the usability test earned the highest possible rating, accounting for the jump from an A to an A+ since 2005. The Secretary of State's site is easy to navigate and contains thorough descriptions of the data available, as well as how to access it. The site also contains very clear summaries of the totals raised and spent by candidates from 1994 to present, providing site visitors with an excellent view of Idaho's campaign financing trends.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Allow site visitors to sort contribution data online, either through the contribution search interface or on the search results page.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Summary reports displaying totals raised and spent by all candidates from 1994 to present.*

Illinois

Grade	B
Rank	9

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	29
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B+	14
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B+	4

Illinois received the same grade in each category in 2007 as was earned in the 2005 assessment. While the state dropped slightly in the rankings as other states improved, Illinois's disclosure program maintained its top ten status overall in 2007.

Illinois's disclosure law requires state-level candidates to report detailed information about contributors giving more than \$150, with occupation and employer data disclosed only for those giving more than \$500. Expenditures of more than \$150 are also reported, but subvendor information is not. Independent expenditures made in the two months prior to an election must be disclosed, but independent expenditures made outside of that timeframe are not reported. Statewide and legislative candidates reaching a threshold of \$10,000 must file electronically. The State Board of Elections offers excellent filer support, and archives training seminars online.

Illinois earned its fourth B+ in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, though the state dropped two places in the rankings since 2005. Little has changed in the data section of the disclosure web site, which continues to offer well-designed, searchable databases and browsable campaign filings. Particularly helpful is the statement that precedes the listings of search results and summarizes the number and total value of the transactions found, such as: "Your search found 73 receipts totaling \$53,750.00." Illinois also offers a listing of the most recent filings, allowing site visitors to view disclosure filings as soon as they are posted online.

Illinois remains in the top five states in the usability category, earning another B+ in 2007. The state continues to offer outstanding contextual information, such as its annual "Money and Elections in Illinois" report detailing the total amounts raised and spent by state-level candidates, a glossary of common campaign disclosure terms, and a wealth of information about Illinois' campaign finance restrictions and disclosure requirements. Illinois once again performed well in the usability test, and though testers reported some confusion with the site, they expressed greater confidence in the accuracy of the data collected in 2007 than testers did in 2005.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add the ability to download data in a spreadsheet format.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The Campaign Disclosure main page provides a "Reports Filed" table that shows the number of active campaign committees, the total number of filings for the most recent reporting period and how many reports were filed electronically.*

Indiana

Grade	C
Rank	25

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C-	39
Electronic Filing Program	C	24
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B+	14
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D+	24

While Indiana's disclosure program did not experience significant changes since 2005, a revised Campaign Disclosure Law grade bumped the state's grade from a C- to a C in 2007.

A closer examination of Indiana's disclosure law in 2007 resulted in scoring revisions, causing Indiana's grade in this category to increase to a C- from an F in 2005. Candidates must report detailed information about contributors giving at least \$100, but the donor's employer is not disclosed and occupation is only reported for those contributing \$1,000 or more in a year. While expenses over \$100 made by a candidate's committee (and any subvendors) are disclosed, independent expenditure reporting is not required. Electronic filing became mandatory for all statewide candidates in 2005, regardless of the amount raised. Legislative candidates may participate in the electronic filing program on a voluntary basis.

Indiana performs best in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, earning a B+ in 2007. The Secretary of State's web site offers well-designed, searchable databases of contributions and expenditures that include both electronically- and paper-filed disclosure records. The databases also offer users the ability to sort and download their results. The only field missing from the searchable database is contributor's employer, which is not required to be disclosed. Indiana could improve the timeliness of online access to campaign data; with just 20 percent of legislative candidates filing electronically, manually entering and posting campaign data currently takes one to two weeks.

Indiana's performance in the web site usability test dropped again in 2007, causing the state's grade in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category to drop from a C- to a D+. While testers rated their overall experience on the site as average, most found the site to be somewhat confusing. The site does not provide overviews of campaign finance activity that would allow the public to easily compare candidates' financing. Some of the beneficial features of the site include thorough information about exactly which records are available online, and a well-designed report index. Additionally, database search results contain a helpful note about the number and cumulative amount of the itemized transactions, and any amended transactions are highlighted.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Compile individual candidate summaries into a single document, making it easier for site visitors to quickly compare fundraising and spending between candidates.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The index of a candidate's reports includes key information, such as the reporting period and the date the report was filed, as well as a summary of the contents of the most recently filed report.*

Iowa

Grade	D
Rank	34

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	29
Electronic Filing Program	F	31
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	40
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B	6

While Iowa's overall grade did not improve since 2005, the state's web site was rated higher in 2007 and its grade in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category improved to a B.

Iowa earned a C again in 2007 for the disclosure law category and ranks 29th in this area. The law requires candidates to report detailed information about almost all contributions received and expenditures made. Though not reflected in this year's grades, Iowa enacted a number of campaign disclosure laws in the 2007 legislative session. Most notably, Iowa's governor signed House File 413, which will make electronic filing mandatory for all state-level candidates starting in 2012. The electronic filing mandate will be phased in, with newly formed candidate committees (i.e. challengers) required to file electronically in 2010 and longer-established committees (i.e. incumbents) joining the program two years later. Once implemented, this will provide a major boost for the state's electronic filing program; currently, only one-third of candidates participate in the state's voluntary program.

Though the state's F grade for Disclosure Content Accessibility has not changed, Iowa dropped two places to 40th as other states improved in this area. The disclosure web site's lack of searchable databases of contributions and expenditures remains a major deficiency. The state does provide timely access to reports, with electronic files posted immediately and paper reports scanned and posted on the day they are received. Users cannot sort data online or download data for manipulation offline as all reports are presented as static PDF documents.

Iowa's strength remains in the area of web site usability, where the state earned a B and climbed to 6th place overall in the 2007 rankings. Usability testers found the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board site easy to understand and expressed high confidence levels in their ability to accurately locate specific campaign data. The site provides visitors with good contextual information, including disclosure requirements and restrictions, as well as many options for comparing data across campaigns going back to 2001.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Organize campaign finance filings by candidate, rather than by reporting period, to give site visitors a better sense of each committee's complete filing history.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Campaign Finance Historical Trends" page offers the public many options for comparing both recent and historical campaign finance data across campaigns, elections and reporting periods.*

Kansas

Grade	D
Rank	36

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	D-	42
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D+	28
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B	5

Improvements in the accessibility and usability categories in 2007 earned Kansas its first passing grade in a Grading State Disclosure study.

Kansas's campaign finance law finished in the bottom ten overall in 2007 with a D- in the law category. Candidates must report detailed information about contributors giving over \$50, including occupation but not employer data for those giving more than \$150. Expenditure disclosure is stronger, but does not require reporting of accrued expenditures. A major deficiency in Kansas's law is the reporting gap that occurs in the eleven days preceding a general election, hiding last-minute spending from the public until after the election. While the legislature did not close this gap in 2007, Kansas did pass House Bill 2081, allowing disclosure reports to be filed electronically. The Secretary of State's office is developing a voluntary electronic filing program for candidates to use in 2008.

Kansas improved online access to campaign data, moving from an F in 2005 to a D+ in 2007 in this area. The Governmental Ethics Commission data-enters itemized contributions from filed reports, and has enhanced the searchable contributions database by adding additional search options, including a field for searching by amount. As of 2006, the Commission also began scanning, posting and indexing entire disclosure reports online within hours of receipt. While the public now has the ability to browse the scanned documents for campaign expenditures, the site's primary deficiency remains the lack of a searchable database of expenditures.

Along with more content, the Commission's site became more user-friendly since 2005, earning a B and ranking 5th in the usability category. Although usability testers had more trouble accessing the Commission's site from the state's homepage than in 2005, most expressed confidence in their ability to find specific data once there. The site offers helpful information for comparing finances between candidates as well as a new "Explanation of Data" page that details what information is, and is not data-entered by the Commission. The public is now able to view scanned documents on the disclosure site; however, some of the file sizes are excessively large. For example, the governor's July 2006 report is 180 megabytes and can take an hour or more to download, even with a fast connection.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Post large, scanned disclosure reports in small, easy to download file sections.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *"Quick Statistics" provides summary amounts raised and spent for each candidate since 1993.*

Kentucky

Grade	C+
Rank	20

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	10
Electronic Filing Program	F	31
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B-	26
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	13

Kentucky earned a C+ for the third consecutive assessment, though the state dropped seven places in the rankings as other states made improvements.

Kentucky's strong area is its disclosure law, which is among the best in the country. Candidates are required to report detailed information about contributors giving more than \$100, including occupation and employer data. Expenditure disclosure is excellent and reports must include subvendor data and accrued expenditures. However, reporting of last-minute contributions is required only of gubernatorial candidates, and last-minute independent expenditures are not reported until after the election. In late 2005, the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance's Task Force recommended a number of campaign finance changes including mandatory electronic filing for all state-level candidates. The task force's recommendations were incorporated into Senate Bill 159 in 2007. The bill cleared the Senate but did not pass the House, leaving electronic filing as the state's weak point. Kentucky lawmakers will have the opportunity to revisit the legislation in the 2008 session. Currently, 37 percent of statewide and 24 percent of legislative candidates participate in the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance's voluntary electronic filing program. The Registry does an excellent job of promoting electronic filing to candidates and provides many resources to help filers through the process.

Kentucky maintained a B- in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, but slipped five places in the rankings since 2005. The Registry maintains an online contribution database comprised of records from electronically-filed reports as well as records from paper reports that are data-entered by agency staff. Although Kentucky requires the agency to make campaign data available online within ten days of receipt, the agency reports that it typically accomplishes this task in half that time. The contributions database can be searched by numerous fields and search results can be downloaded for offline research. The biggest deficiency of the state's disclosure site remains the lack of an expenditure database. Itemized expenditures are available online if filed electronically, but are not data-entered from paper filings.

Kentucky's grade in the contextual usability category improved to a C+ in 2007 as more usability testers expressed confidence in the data found online than in 2005. (The Registry's web site received a makeover in May 2007, after the usability testing was completed.) The site offers thorough instructions and tutorials for accessing data, as well as clear descriptions of what is and is not available through the contributions database. Kentucky offers users a unique system for viewing amended transactions: rather than simply labeling the whole report as amended, the Registry labels individual transactions and allows users to generate a pop-up window to view the transaction as originally filed.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add more functionality to the contributor search by adding a "name contains" search option and noting the existing "name begins with" search capability.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Pop-up windows for amended transactions.*

Louisiana

Grade	C
Rank	23

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	17
Electronic Filing Program	C	24
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B	19
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	38

Louisiana's overall grade remained a C in 2007, though the state slipped seven places to 23rd in the rankings. The state received a higher grade for Disclosure Content Accessibility, but dropped in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category.

Louisiana's disclosure law earned a B- in 2007 and ranks among the top twenty in the country, with particularly strong expenditure disclosure and enforcement provisions. Candidates report the names and addresses of contributors, but not their employer or occupation data. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures are required to be disclosed prior to elections. Electronic filing is required of statewide candidates raising at least \$50,000, but is voluntary for legislative candidates. The Board of Ethics set a goal for 20 percent of all candidates to file electronically by 2010; currently, 50 percent of statewide candidates and 15 percent of legislative candidates file their reports electronically.

Louisiana earned a B in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007, moving up three spots to 19th in the rankings. Louisiana publishes databases of both contributions and expenditures that offer many search, sort and download options. These databases contain only electronically-filed reports; the majority of disclosure data online is found within scanned PDF files which vary in levels of readability. The Board of Ethics reports that the public can now obtain campaign data on disk as well. The 2005 study noted a technical problem with the searchable database, which at that time was case-sensitive. This problem has been resolved, making searches much more user-friendly. The database could be further improved by eliminating the excessively long list of campaign committees that is provided when a user searches contributions among all candidates.

Louisiana dropped from a D to an F in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category in 2007, with a lower performance in the usability test. Usability testers found accessing the Board of Ethics site from the state homepage was more challenging in 2007 than in the past. While the site is not very difficult to navigate, it lacks key contextual information, such as a detailed roster of candidates and comparisons of totals raised and spent by candidates for a particular office.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Post a complete list of candidates on the disclosure web site.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Directory of Campaign Finance Late Fees. For each committee that has incurred fees, the site lists which report was late and by how many days, the fine amount, amount paid to date, and outstanding fee balance.*

Maine

Grade	B
Rank	13

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	21
Electronic Filing Program	A	16
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A-	11
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C-	20

Maine's grade improved again in 2007, moving from a C to a B and rising four places in the rankings to 13th overall. The state made gains in the areas of electronic filing and web site usability.

A closer examination of Maine's disclosure law in 2007 resulted in scoring revisions, causing the state's grade to increase to a B- from a C in 2005. Candidates must report information on contributions of \$50 or more, including donor name, address, occupation and employer. Expenditure disclosure is thorough and includes subvendor disclosure. Maine law is also particularly strong in the area of independent expenditure reporting. With both funding and a mandate for electronic filing in place, Maine earned an A in the Electronic Filing category in 2007. The state's electronic filing program was strengthened in 2006, when the previously voluntary system became mandatory for all statewide and legislative campaigns raising \$1,500.

Maine continues to provide excellent access to campaign finance data and earned an A- again in 2007 for Disclosure Content Accessibility. The state's disclosure web site features browsable candidate filings as well as comprehensive, searchable databases of contributions and expenditures comprised of both electronic and data-entered paper filings. The only search option missing is a field for searching by a donor's employer. Site visitors can download data from the site, but are not able to sort data online. The Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices provides immediate access to reports filed electronically and posts paper filings online within 48 hours of receipt.

Maine's improved usability test performance propelled the state 17 places higher in the rankings in this area in 2007. Maine was one of four states to earn the highest usability test rating in 2007 as all testers reported confidence in their ability to locate specific, accurate data on the site and most testers found the site easy to understand. While the site is simple to use, there are still some key pieces of contextual information missing, such as overviews of the total amounts raised and spent by candidates. The site could also be improved by providing an explanation of the data contained in the searchable databases (which candidates, which reports, and the time period covered) and instructions for accessing the data. Finally, as campaign data is located on a separate site from the Commission's site, a prominent link from the campaign data site back to the Commission's site would allow users to more easily refer to campaign disclosure requirements and restrictions while reviewing reports.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Give web site visitors the ability to sort database query results.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *A "Who to call for help" chart organized by topic, and the "Guide to Political Activity," designed specifically "for organizations and individuals other than candidates."*

Maryland

Grade	C
Rank	28

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	D-	44
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	9
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D	28

Maryland's grade did not change in 2007, but the state slipped seven places in the rankings in 2005 as other states made improvements. Maryland retained its place in the top ten in both the Electronic Filing and Disclosure Content Accessibility categories.

Maryland's disclosure law has a number of significant shortcomings, including the lack of independent expenditure disclosure requirements. Candidates are required to disclose the names of contributors giving \$51 or more, but not occupation or employer data. Last-minute contributions are not reported until after Election Day. Expenditure disclosure is better, though candidates are not required to report subvendor details. Electronic filing is a strong point in Maryland's disclosure program, with all statewide and legislative candidates required to file electronically. Waivers are granted only to those committees that have raised less than \$5,000 and report fewer than thirty transactions.

In the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, Maryland improved from an A- to an A by maintaining excellent public access to campaign finance records. The State Board of Elections formed a partnership with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, which currently hosts the state's disclosure data. The public can now browse the contents of candidate reports online, and continues to have access to comprehensive, searchable databases of campaign contributions and expenditures. The databases contain records from both electronically-filed reports and paper-filed reports that are data-entered by the State Board of Elections. A nice feature of the database is that itemized search results are preceded by useful summary information, such as the largest individual transaction among the search results. Data can also be downloaded for offline research.

Following changes made to the disclosure web site, usability testers rated Maryland's site more positively than in 2005. While the site is easier to navigate, the state's Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade still suffers as several key pieces of contextual information are not available online. The site does not provide an overview of fundraising and spending amounts for all statewide and legislative candidates, and the "Campaign Fund Report Statistics" highlighted in the 2005 study are no longer found online. Additionally, amended filings are not labeled as such, and once a report is amended, the earlier version is no longer accessible online.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add an overview page or document that allows site visitors to compare spending and fundraising among candidates running for the same office.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Search the Campaign Finance Database" main page offers useful information, such as when the database is updated and what search features are available.*

Massachusetts

Grade	B
Rank	13

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C-	37
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B	19
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	A-	2

With a stronger performance in the area of web site usability this year, Massachusetts climbed into the B range in 2007 for the first time. Massachusetts earned grades in the A range in both the usability and Electronic Filing categories.

The state's weakest area is its campaign disclosure law, which earned a C- in 2007. Massachusetts requires candidates to report details for contributors giving at least \$50, including occupation and employer data for those contributing \$200 or more. Expenditures above \$50 are reported, but details about subvendor payments are not required. Independent expenditures must be disclosed, but there is no pre-election reporting of either last-minute independent expenditures or contributions. Massachusetts has an excellent electronic filing program and shares the top ranking in this category. With a mandatory program for all statewide candidates who raise or spend \$50,000 within an election cycle and a \$5,000 threshold for legislative candidates, nearly all candidates in Massachusetts must file disclosure reports electronically.

Little has changed in terms of the public's ability to access candidate campaign finance data in Massachusetts since 2005. The state again earned a B and remained in the top 20 overall in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category. The Office of Campaign and Political Finance (OCPF) provides good access to campaign records online through searchable databases of contributions and expenditures, as well as complete filings that can be browsed online. To make the system even more complete, the agency could add data from paper-filed reports to its databases, and give site users the ability to search by contributor zip code, expenditure amount, and expenditure purpose, all of which are included in the search results. The OCPF site contains instructions for accessing campaign data online or in person, as well as for requesting copies of reports by mail.

Higher performance on the usability test in 2007 earned Massachusetts a second place ranking and an A- in the usability category. Testers reported a more positive experience with the site than in 2005, along with higher levels of confidence in the accuracy of the data they found. The OCPF continues to offer excellent contextual information to site visitors, including overviews of total funds raised and spent by candidates and a detailed explanation of the contents of the databases. The OCPF could enhance the candidate listings on the site by organizing the lists by year and office sought, rather than listing all registered candidates by last name.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Allow users to search the contributions database by zip code and the expenditures database by amount and expenditure purpose.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Electronic Report Log" lists the most recently filed reports, allowing the public and the media to track campaign data as soon as it becomes available.*

Michigan

Grade	B
Rank	6

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	17
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	4
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B-	9

Michigan placed 6th in the overall rankings in 2007, and placed within the top ten in three of the four categories. Michigan's grade improved to a B in 2007 as the Secretary of State's office added useful contextual information to the disclosure site.

A closer examination of Michigan's disclosure law in 2007 resulted in scoring revisions, causing Michigan's grade to increase to a B- from a C in 2005. Occupation and employer information is required of donors giving \$100 or more, while expenses must be itemized if over \$50, including those made by subvendors. In 2006, the Secretary of State issued a "10 Point Plan to Improve Campaign Finance in Michigan" which recommends enacting campaign auditing powers and giving the public better tools for tracking contributions. Michigan's electronic filing program ranks among the best in the nation, requiring both statewide and legislative candidates reaching a threshold of \$20,000 to file electronically. Michigan's program was recently enhanced to facilitate electronic filing of last-minute contributions as well.

Michigan continues to provide excellent access to campaign finance records through the Secretary of State's web site and again earned an A in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category. Michigan's contribution and expenditure databases can serve as a model for other states, displaying great functionality, comprehensive search options, and data going back to 1997. Access to reports filed on paper could be improved by entering those records into the searchable database. In 2006, Michigan integrated campaign finance data with election information through the Secretary of State's online "Michigan Voter Information Center".

Despite a slight drop in the state's usability test performance, contextual information that debuted on Michigan's disclosure site in 2007 boosted Michigan back into the top ten in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category. The addition of a new "Candidate Summary Page" in 2007 provides users with the ability to view and compare the totals raised and spent by all candidates. This downloadable data is updated daily and offers summaries going back to 1998. While the site is rated average in terms of usability tests, the contextual information available is strong, and includes complete candidate lists, resources to help the public determine what data is available online, and in-depth information about campaign finance restrictions and disclosure requirements.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Publish candidate reporting periods. The index of candidate reports provides the date a report was filed, but not the time period covered by the report.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The Secretary of State's 2006 "10 Point Plan to Improve Campaign Finance in Michigan" informs the public of key changes that can be made to improve campaign disclosure in Michigan.*

Minnesota

Grade	C+
Rank	19

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	10
Electronic Filing Program	F	36
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D+	28
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	A-	2

Minnesota's grade improved to a C+ in 2007, due to an impressive jump from a D to an A- in the usability category since the 2005 study.

Minnesota's disclosure law again earned a B+ and a top ten ranking in 2007. Candidates are required to report detailed information, including occupation and employer, for contributors giving \$100 or more. Expenditure disclosure is excellent and includes subvendor details as well as accrued expenses, with every expense of \$100 or more being reported. The law's biggest shortcoming relates to its filing schedule (reports are filed less often than in many other states), though candidates must disclose large, last-minute contributions before Election Day. Electronic filing remains voluntary in Minnesota, and the state ranked 36th overall in this area in 2007. Minnesota offers free software for electronic filing, an option that was used by over 60 percent of legislative candidates and more than 40 percent of statewide candidates in 2006.

Minnesota's grade in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category improved to a D+, up from an F in the 2005 study. The Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board now posts complete copies of scanned and electronically-filed disclosure reports to its web site in PDF format, providing online access to expenditure data for the first time. As in the past, all contribution data is entered into a searchable database, which now allows users to search by zip code and to sort results online. The database offers the ability to limit searches to a specific employer through a pull-down menu, but this can be confusing as employers can be listed multiple times depending on how information is recorded in the system (for example, "Air Care Go Inc" and "Air Care-Go, Inc.?).

The strongest gains were made in the web site usability category, earning Minnesota an A- and a huge jump in the rankings from 25th to 2nd in this area. Minnesota was one of four states to earn the highest usability test rating in 2007, as testers found the Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board web site easy to understand and rated their overall experience on the site much higher than in 2005. Not only has usability improved, but the contextual information online has also been expanded because full disclosure reports have been added to the site. The public can now more easily identify the time period covered by each report, as well as review both original and amended filings. These additions improved upon the contextual information already online, which includes disclosure requirements and restrictions, a glossary of campaign finance terms and summaries of campaign spending going back to 1998.

- ◆ Quick Fix: Provide information explaining what data is available online, including which candidates and time periods are covered in the site.
- ◆ Editor's Pick: The "Campaign Finance - Glossary of Terms" defines the key terms used within the state's disclosure law and throughout the disclosure site.

Mississippi

Grade	F
Rank	46

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C-	37
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	43
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	42

Mississippi has earned an F in each of the four Grading State Disclosure studies and this year dropped down to 46th overall in the rankings due to a decline in the state's usability test performance.

Mississippi earned a C- again in 2007 in the Campaign Disclosure Law category. The state's disclosure law requires candidates to report details, including occupation and employer data, about contributors giving in excess of \$200. Contributions made at the last minute have to be reported prior to Election Day, but late independent expenditures do not. Candidates are required to report basic information about their expenses (such as payee and date made), but not subvendor payments, accrued expenditures, or descriptions of their expenses. Despite legislative attempts to mandate electronic filing, Mississippi lacks an electronic filing program. However, the state is in the process of developing a voluntary program for candidates, scheduled to begin in 2008.

Online access to campaign disclosure records is limited to scanned documents in Mississippi, earning the state an F again in 2007 in the accessibility category. The state's main deficiency in the area of online disclosure is the lack of searchable databases of campaign contributions or expenses. Mississippi does post scanned files online quickly for all statewide and legislative candidates as far back as 1995, but since the data is found in static (and often large) PDF and TIFF files, locating specific contributions is difficult, and sorting or downloading data into a spreadsheet is not possible. While campaign data is not available on disk, the state does offer excellent access to paper copies of disclosure reports.

Mississippi performed poorly in the 2007 web site usability testing, dropping the state from a D to an F in the usability category. Testers had more trouble finding the disclosure site from the state's homepage than in the past, and rated their overall experience on the site slightly lower than in 2005. Mississippi does provide a good amount of contextual information on its disclosure site, including candidate listings, descriptions of which reports are online, and details about reporting requirements and restrictions. The site does not provide information about the total amounts raised and spent by candidates for a particular office. The index of a candidate's reports no longer allows the public to browse the name of contributors who made last-minute contributions, a feature that was highlighted in the 2005 assessment.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a list of the total amounts raised and spent by individual candidates for each office.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *A simple, informative "2007 Campaign Finance Reporting Schedule" is easily found on the site.*

Missouri

Grade	B-
Rank	17

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	10
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B	19
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	35

Electronic filing became mandatory for legislative candidates in 2007, boosting Missouri's grade from a C to an A+ in the Electronic Filing category and earning the state its first B grade in this assessment.

Missouri again earned a top ten ranking in the law category in 2007. Under Missouri law, candidates must report detailed information about contributors giving over \$100, including occupation and employer. Last-minute contributions are reported before Election Day, and candidates must now report such contributions within 24 hours of receipt. Disclosure of loan details is particularly strong and expenditure disclosure is also good, though details about subvendor payments are not reported. Legislation passed in 2006 earned Missouri an A+ and a share of the top ranking in the Electronic Filing category in 2007. Legislative candidates were not required to file electronically before House Bill 1900 became effective on January 1, 2007. Under the new law, all state-level candidates must now file electronically regardless of the amount raised or spent.

Missouri again earned a top twenty ranking in the accessibility category, receiving a B in 2007. Electronically-filed data is posted online immediately and can be searched through the Ethics Commission's contributions and expenditures database. As all legislative candidates are now required to file electronically, the databases have become comprehensive in scope. Users can search by donor/payee name, zip code, employer or amount, but not by specific date or expenditure purpose, even though both fields are included in the search results. Adding these fields, as well as the ability to sort search results would enhance the public's ability to find specific campaign data. The state offers excellent access to campaign data offline as well, and provides data on disk at no charge.

Missouri's grade in the web site usability category dropped back to the F range after moving up to a D in 2005. Overall, usability testers rated their experience on the site as below average and expressed lower levels of confidence in the site than in 2005. A significant problem in terms of usability is the use of pop-up windows to display database search results, particularly since this feature is no longer explained on the site. The disclosure site could be greatly improved by adding a user's guide for the searchable database, including search instructions and a synopsis of the data available to explain which candidates' reports and time periods are covered. The Commission provides good explanations of Missouri's campaign finance requirements, and could add greater context to the site by offering overviews of the totals raised and spent by candidates for each office.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a detailed description of the contents of the database as well as instructions for obtaining contribution and expenditure data.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *For each candidate, site visitors can view a listing of reports, the method by which they were submitted, and their posting status (i.e. "scanned" or "received but not scanned").*

Montana

Grade	F
Rank	47

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	9
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	49
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	50

As one of only two states that does not currently offer any online access to campaign data, Montana can only earn an F in this assessment. Despite the low overall grade in 2007, Montana's disclosure law is strong, and the state is poised to debut electronic filing and online access to records.

Candidates in Montana are required to disclose details, including occupation and employer data, about contributors giving \$35 or more. Last-minute contributions are reported prior to Election Day, but last-minute independent expenditures are not. Expenditure disclosure includes the name of the vendor and transaction date, as well as accrued expenses. Subvendor details are not disclosed for campaign consultant expenditures. Other strengths in Montana's law include the filing schedule, reporting of loan details, and enforcement provisions. While Montana currently has no electronic filing program, the office of the Commissioner of Political Practices is planning to introduce an electronic filing option for state-level candidates in 2008.

As noted above, Montana does not currently provide online access to any campaign finance data, resulting in the state's poor performance in the accessibility category. Fortunately, the state is getting close to addressing this issue. A letter posted on the Commissioner's site in January 2007 acknowledges that Montana is "lacking when it comes to on-line reporting and on-line disclosure of campaign financing. It's something we're working to change." Evidence of this work is apparent: Montana debuted an online lobbyist disclosure program this year and searchable, downloadable campaign data is scheduled to come online in 2008 with the move to electronic filing. At present, the Commissioner's office oversees an excellent program for making copies of paper-filed campaign reports accessible to the public.

Montana received an F in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category due to the absence of any campaign finance data on the state's disclosure site. If the introduction of electronic filing results in the availability of data on its web site, the site's usability will improve. The Commissioner's cleanly designed and easily navigated site provides information about campaign finance laws and restrictions. To improve the site's contextual information, the public would benefit from listings of candidates that include basic information (name, office/district sought, and party affiliation) as well as comparisons of total amounts raised and spent by candidates. Once disclosure data becomes available online, it is important that the public is given a clear description of the data available, as well as instructions for using the site's new features.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a list of candidates on the Commissioner's site. Currently, the site offers a link to the Secretary of State's site where this information can be found, but it would be more helpful if this information were featured on the disclosure site.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The Commissioner's letter and the Office of Political Practices' "Goals and Objectives" offer a clear, honest assessment of the state of disclosure in Montana and the steps being taken to bring disclosure data online.*

Nebraska

Grade	F
Rank	41

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	23
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	35
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	48

Nebraska received an F for the fourth time in the Grading State Disclosure assessments, and dropped slightly in the rankings from 39th to 41st overall. The state improved two places in the rankings in the web site usability category, but dropped in each of the remaining areas as other states improved.

Nebraska's disclosure law requires candidates to report detailed information about contributors giving more than \$250, but does not require occupation or employer data to be disclosed. Large, last-minute contributions and independent expenditures (over \$1,000) are reported before Election Day. Candidates must also account for all campaign expenses over \$250, including the name of the payee, date paid and purpose for the expense. Nebraska is one of just ten states without an electronic filing program for candidates. The state is developing an electronic filing program for non-candidate political committee reports, and may consider expanding the system in the future to allow candidates to file their campaign reports electronically as well.

Nebraska earned an F for Disclosure Content Accessibility again in 2007. The Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission (NADC) data-enters all records filed on paper and offers the ability to search non-individual contributors online, such as businesses or organizations. The public can only find individual donors or itemized expenditures by browsing disclosure reports. Data within reports cannot be sorted or downloaded for offline research.

Nebraska's disclosure site was given a very nice redesign since the last assessment and the result is a clean, attractive web site. The state added slightly more contextual information, causing a small bump up in the rankings from 50th to 48th in 2007, though the state again earned an F in this category. Even with the new look, Nebraska earned the same rating in the 2007 usability tests as in 2005. Testers again rated their experiences as below average. Despite the changes, the site still lacks some key pieces of information to help the public place individual campaigns in a larger context. For instance, the alphabetical listing of all candidates makes it difficult for the public to identify all candidates for a specific office.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a link to a listing of candidates on the "View Campaign Filings" page that allows site visitors to easily see all candidates for a particular office or district.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Clean, attractive design of the NADC site.*

Nevada

Grade	F
Rank	44

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	46
Electronic Filing Program	F	31
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	40
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D	30

Nevada again earned an F in 2007, the state's third straight failing grade in this assessment. As in 2005, Nevada earned its only passing grade in the web site usability category.

Nevada's disclosure law ranks in the bottom five nationally, and is weak in several areas. While the law requires candidates to report contributors giving more than \$100, occupation, employer and cumulative amount donated are not disclosed. Expenditure disclosure is stronger, with detailed information required for expenses over \$100, but reports do not include subvendor payments. Disclosure of loan and independent expenditure details remain weak points in the law, and enforcement provisions are minimal. Nevada maintains a voluntary electronic filing program for candidates and the Secretary of State's office reports that 20 percent of candidates are using the system, a significant increase since the 2005 assessment, when only one percent of candidates reportedly used this option.

Nevada's grade for Disclosure Content Accessibility continues to suffer from a lack of searchable databases of contributions and expenditures. The site does provide scanned images of paper-filed disclosure reports, though some are handwritten and more difficult to browse than the cleanly-presented HTML displays of electronically-filed reports. None of the data can be sorted or downloaded, making it difficult to locate a specific contributor or campaign expense. A recent improvement to the site is that the public is now able to review the complete history of a candidate's filings on a single page.

Nevada's web site usability grade slipped back into the D range in 2007 as the result of a lower usability test performance than in 2005. (The Secretary of State's web site was redesigned in 2007, but not until after the testing process.) Testers noted confusion over the site's terminology and rated their overall experience on the site as below average. The site offers a good amount of contextual information to the public, including disclosure requirements and an improved description of the data available online. The site could made more user-friendly by enhancing the listing of filers to include the office/district sought by each candidate; currently, all filers are simply organized by name.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a simple comparison of the totals raised and spent by candidates for each office in the most recent election.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The state's election laws are easy to locate on the site and are nicely indexed.*

New Hampshire

Grade	F
Rank	43

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	19
Electronic Filing Program	F	36
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	48
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	49

New Hampshire launched a voluntary electronic filing program for candidates in 2006, boosting the state's ranking both in that category and overall, though the state still received an F in 2007.

New Hampshire again received a B- in the Campaign Disclosure Law category. Candidates are required to report details about contributors giving \$25 or more, including occupation and employer data for those contributing more than \$100. Disclosure of loan details is minimal, and expenditure reports do not include subvendor or accrued expenditures. Both last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported prior to Election Day. After debuting a voluntary electronic filing program in 2006, the Secretary of State's office determined that the usability and security of the system should be enhanced for future reporting; the program has been temporarily taken offline while these issues are addressed.

At present, access to campaign filings in New Hampshire is poor, as reflected in the state's F for Disclosure Content Accessibility. Disclosure reports are still scanned but recent filings are posted as PDFs, an improvement over the past use of TIFF images that required special software to view. The site does not offer the ability to sort, download or search campaign data, and House candidates' reports are not available online at all. This may change once the electronic filing system is operating again, since it previously featured a searchable campaign finance database.

Despite a new design, New Hampshire's disclosure site still rated very poorly in 2007 in the area of Online Contextual and Technical Usability. The state again earned the lowest possible rating for the usability test in 2007, as testers continued to report an overall lack of confidence in the information on the site, confusion over terminology, and general dissatisfaction with their experience on the site. There is no overview information comparing candidates' campaign finance activity, nor does the site provide a good explanation of which disclosure records are available online or how to access the data.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Improve the public's ability to find campaign finance information by making the link for "Receipts and Expenditures" more prominent, and possibly re-labeling that link as "View Campaign Receipts and Expenditures".*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *A chart showing spending limits and penalties for exceeding those limits.*

New Jersey

Grade	B
Rank	10

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B+	7
Electronic Filing Program	A	21
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B-	25
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C	16

New Jersey's grade improved from a C to a B since the 2005 assessment. Gains made in the Electronic Filing and web site usability categories moved New Jersey into the top ten overall in 2007.

New Jersey's strong disclosure law requires candidates to disclose details about contributors, including occupation and employer data for those giving \$300 or more. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported before Election Day in New Jersey. Disclosure of expenditures is also strong, and includes subvendor details and accrued expenses. New Jersey earned an A in 2007 for its electronic filing program, which is now mandatory for all statewide and legislative candidates who raise or spend over \$100,000. The state provided over thirty classroom-style trainings on electronic filing in 2006 and continues to offer additional resources for filers, both online and through a dedicated electronic filing help desk.

New Jersey earned a B- again in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. The state's disclosure web site offers a comprehensive database of contributions that is searchable by contributor name, zip code, employer and amount, though not by a specific date. Search results are sortable and can be downloaded for offline analysis. Despite the Election Law Enforcement Commission's efforts to allow visitors to browse campaign reports without having to download a large software package, the site still requires users to download and install software on their computer. While this is a shorter process than in the past, the download requirement and the lack of a searchable expenditures database continue to represent the site's main shortcomings.

The Commission's web site earned a higher rating from usability testers in 2007, moving the state into the C range in the usability category. The site offers a wealth of contextual information to help the public understand campaign financing in New Jersey, including an excellent series of "White Papers" that analyze political financing trends going back to 1977. The site also offers overviews and charts of current campaign financing activity through the most recent elections, including summaries from the 2007 legislative primary. Additionally, the site allows users to create custom candidate listings by office, district, party affiliation and election.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add a field to the contributions database that would allow records to be searched by a specific date.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Excellent overviews of campaign finance statistics.*

New Mexico

Grade	F
Rank	37

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	D-	43
Electronic Filing Program	A	16
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	39
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	45

New Mexico earned an F again in 2007, with low rankings in all but the Electronic Filing category.

Candidates in New Mexico must report detailed information about contributors giving \$250 or more, including occupation but not employer data. Large, last-minute contributions are reported before Election Day. Candidates must disclose details about expenditures, but reports do not include subvendor details. Loan disclosure is weak, and independent expenditure reporting is not expressly required under the law. Concerns about the state's weak ethics and campaign finance laws (ranked 43rd this year) contributed to the formation of the Governor's Task Force on Ethics Reform in 2006. Following the legislature's failure to adopt most of the governor's recommendations in 2007, the task force recommended a special legislative session focused on ethics reforms.

New Mexico earned an A again for its electronic filing program in 2007. Electronic filing became mandatory for all statewide and legislative candidates in 2006, though the requirement was not well received by state lawmakers, who attempted to repeal the mandate in 2007. If not for a gubernatorial veto of Senate Bill 363, the electronic filing requirement would have been eliminated.

New Mexico again received an F in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category. A new system for displaying electronic filings, including the ability to sort itemized contributions, moved the state a few places up in the rankings, but the site still has ample room for improvement. Though plans for a searchable database of campaign data were reported in *Grading State Disclosure 2005*, New Mexico's disclosure site still does not offer this valuable tool. Despite the move to electronic filing in 2006, more timely access to disclosure records online has not followed. According to a March 1, 2007 Associated Press article about SB 363, "Many reports from the 2006 election year still cannot be accessed online."

New Mexico earned another F in the area of web site usability, dropping from 43rd to 45th in the rankings in 2007, due to a slightly weaker performance in the usability test. The Secretary of State's web site does offer contextual information to the public, including a list of candidates, disclosure requirements and campaign finance restrictions, and both original and amended campaign reports. The site could be enhanced by providing overviews of the totals raised and spent by candidates in a given race to allow easy comparison to other campaigns.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add information describing whose reports are available online, what data is included, and what time periods are covered to give site visitors a better sense of the scope of the data available online.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Itemized contributions from electronically-filed reports can be sorted online by numerous fields, including date, occupation, and amount.*

New York

Grade	B-
Rank	16

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	36
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A-	12
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	10

New York was among the five most improved states since the 2005 assessment, moving from 29th overall up to 16th while jumping from a D+ to a B- in 2007.

A closer examination of New York's disclosure law in 2007 resulted in scoring revisions, causing the state's grade to increase to a C from a D in 2005. Candidates must report the name and address of contributors who give \$100 or more, but not occupation and employer data. Large, last-minute contributions are disclosed before Election Day. Details of expenditures over \$49 must be disclosed, including subvendor information. Independent expenditures are reported, and the name of the candidate on whose behalf the expenditure is made must be disclosed. Candidates for both state and legislative offices who raise more than \$1,000 must file their disclosure reports electronically. In addition to providing free filing software, the State Board of Elections has created a new, well-staffed electronic filing help desk to assist candidates.

Enhancements to the State Board of Elections' web site in late 2005 accounted for the jump in New York's data accessibility score to an A- from a C- since the last study. The addition of a searchable database of expenditures has greatly improved access to campaign data, allowing the public to search by specific payees, transaction dates and amounts. The state also enhanced the public's ability to search itemized contribution data by adding more search fields, including donor zip code. Currently, the public can download large files of data containing records for entire filing periods; adding the ability to download smaller sets of data would be useful.

New York earned a C+ and top ten ranking in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category in 2007, up from an F and a bottom ten ranking in 2005. The enhanced disclosure web site was well-received by usability testers in 2007, who were able to find information more quickly and reported higher levels of confidence than testers did in 2005. Lists of the aggregate amounts raised and spent by statewide and legislative candidates have been added to the site, complementing the wealth of contextual information that was already available, including candidate lists and a description of which reports and candidate filings are available online. Currently, reports are labeled in reference to a specific election (for example, "32 Day Pre-Primary Report"); adding the starting and ending dates of the reporting periods would provide the public with a clearer view of the time period covered by each report.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add the ability to search the expenditures database by expense code.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Each candidate's report index page provides users with the ability to search that candidate's specific contributors, or for all contributions above a certain amount.*

North Carolina

Grade	C+
Rank	21

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B	13
Electronic Filing Program	D	29
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	4
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	35

North Carolina improved from a D+ to a C+ overall, with one of the highest single category improvements in 2007. By adding a database for searching campaign contributions and expenditures, North Carolina's Disclosure Content Accessibility grade soared from an F to an A and earned a top five ranking in 2007.

North Carolina's strong disclosure law earned a B again in 2007. Candidates must report detailed information about contributors, including occupation and employer data. In 2006, the threshold for reporting itemized contributions was reduced from \$100 to \$50 and is now in line with the threshold for campaign expense reporting. Candidates must disclose the date and recipient of all payments, including subvendor details. The law requires examinations of campaign records; however, a significant backlog has been reported by the media as a result of limited staff resources largely being taken up by data-entering paper-filed reports prior to conducting audits. The state requires electronic filing by statewide candidates who raise \$5,000, but no such mandate exists for legislative candidates and less than one-third have used this option.

The addition of a searchable database of contributions and expenditures to the State Board of Elections (SBOE) web site greatly improved online access to campaign data in North Carolina, boosting the state's ranking in this area from 35th in 2005 to 4th in 2007. Itemized data from both electronic filings and reports data-entered by SBOE staff can be searched by a wide range of fields. If users don't know the exact spelling for a search term, the site offers a "sounds like" option. Search results can also be downloaded into a spreadsheet file for offline analysis. Electronic filings are posted online within a day of receipt, and paper-filed reports are scanned and posted online as PDFs, usually within two days.

The state's Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade dropped into the F range, with a slightly lower performance in the 2007 usability test. While testers expressed higher confidence in the accuracy of the data on the site than in 2005, locating the disclosure site from the state's homepage was more difficult in 2007. The SBOE site contains good contextual information, including candidate lists, and a campaign finance manual that explains the state's disclosure requirements and contribution limits. The public would also benefit from additional information, such as side-by-side candidate fundraising and spending totals for a specific election and a description of the universe of data available online.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add information describing whose reports are available online, what data is included, and what time periods are covered to give site visitors a better sense of the scope of data on the disclosure web site.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The contribution database's "Advanced Search" offers users a wide variety of search options, as well as clearly visible instructions and optional "sounds like" search features.*

North Dakota

Grade	F
Rank	45

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	50
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D+	28
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C-	20

North Dakota has received an F in each of the four Grading State Disclosure studies. The state's weak disclosure law, which has ranked last in each year's study, and the lack of an electronic filing program continue to prevent the state from achieving a higher grade.

North Dakota law requires candidates to disclose detailed information about contributors giving over \$200, including the aggregate amount given by each donor during a reporting period. Occupation and employer data for those contributing \$5,000 or more is required. Last-minute contributions over \$500 must be reported before Election Day. Unlike every other state in the nation, North Dakota does not require candidates to disclose campaign expenditures. Loans and independent expenditures are also not required to be reported. As a result of these deficiencies, North Dakota's campaign disclosure law ranks as the weakest in the nation. Since the state legislature meets only once every two years, the next opportunity for any disclosure law improvements would be the 2009 session. The state did enact legislation in 2007 improving disclosure of political party convention financing, which may indicate a desire on the part of lawmakers to further strengthen disclosure laws. The state does not operate an electronic filing program, though the Secretary of State's office continues to report that such a program is possible in the future if funding allows.

North Dakota's grade in the accessibility category has not changed since 2005, though the state slipped three places in the rankings as other states improved. The Secretary of State's office data-enters campaign reports filed by state-level candidates, resulting in clean displays of reports on the disclosure site. Along with the browsable candidate reports, the site features a comprehensive database of contributions that can be searched by donor name or zip code. The database does not allow searches by contribution amount or by a specific date. Search results can be downloaded, but cannot be sorted online. Along with the online data, the Secretary of State's office offers data on disk and provides paper copies of reports for \$.25 per page.

Despite a small decline in the usability test results, the North Dakota Secretary of State's site still ranked among the top performers in the 2007 test. Testers again expressed high levels of confidence in the accuracy of the data online, and gave the disclosure web site a very good overall rating. The site provides helpful information about campaign finance requirements and restrictions, as well as detailed lists of candidates. Amended disclosure reports are clearly labeled, though original reports are removed once amended. The site could be enhanced with a more detailed description of the data available online and instructions for using the search features.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide an overview comparing fundraising between candidates in a single race.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Simple, clean design of the Secretary of State's disclosure web site.*

Ohio

Grade	B
Rank	10

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	26
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A-	12
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B-	7

Ohio earned a B and a top ten ranking overall in 2007. The state made significant gains in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category, jumping from a D+ to a B-.

Under Ohio law, candidates must report detailed information, including occupation and employer data, about contributors giving more than \$100, and last-minute contributions must be reported before Election Day. Campaign expenditure details include accrued expenses, but subvendor payments are not disclosed. Independent expenditures must be reported, but last-minute independent expenditures are not disclosed until after Election Day. Both statewide and legislative candidates reaching a \$10,000 threshold must file disclosure reports electronically. While the state does offer an electronic filing “hardship” exemption, very few candidates have claimed this hardship, and those who do must pay the cost of data-entering their paper reports.

Accessibility of campaign disclosure records is excellent in Ohio, with the state again achieving an A- in this category in 2007. The Ohio Secretary of State’s office continues to offer one of the best online databases of campaign finance records in the country, and gives site visitors many ways to search, sort and download itemized contributions and expenditures. All candidates’ disclosure reports are available online and can be either browsed or searched, with campaign data available as far back as 1990.

Ohio’s disclosure web site became much more user-friendly following a redesign in 2005, earning the state a B- and a top ten ranking in the usability category in 2007. Testers found the site to be easier to understand and rated their experience on the site more favorably than before the redesign. Contextually, the site provides clear information about what data can be found online, and also gives site visitors the ability to easily compare finances across all campaigns from 1996 to the present. The Secretary of State’s office could improve the usability of the web site by labeling amended reports as such, and retaining the original filings.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add a note to the site instructions telling visitors that the database is capable of conducting “name starts with” searches and “name contains” searches if the user first enters the “% ” character.*
- ◆ **Editor’s Pick:** *Ohio’s searchable databases offer a wide range of search and output options. From the search interface, users can sort, download, and even select a font size for their search results.*

Oklahoma

Grade	C
Rank	23

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	26
Electronic Filing Program	A	16
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B-	22
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	35

Oklahoma's disclosure program earned a C in 2007, ranking 23rd overall. Strong gains in the Electronic Filing category were offset by a weaker performance in other categories, resulting in the same overall grade as in 2005.

Oklahoma received a lower disclosure law grade in 2007 as study researchers found that candidates are required to report the dates and descriptions of their campaign expenses, but not the names of vendors. The law requires that candidates report detailed information about contributors giving more than \$50, including occupation and employer data. Large, last-minute contributions are disclosed prior to Election Day, as are last-minute independent expenditures. Electronic filing became mandatory in 2006 for both statewide and legislative candidates who reach a \$20,000 threshold. The Oklahoma Ethics Commission provided training sessions in advance of the mandate to assist new electronic filers, and the agency reports having strong technical support for its program.

Oklahoma earned a B- and ranked 22nd in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. Electronically-filed reports are available immediately online, and paper filings are posted within five days of receipt. The state offers online, searchable contribution and expenditure databases that include both electronically-filed reports and data-entered records from paper-filed reports. The result is that Oklahoma's online databases, which were previously found to contain only 25 percent of state disclosure records, are now comprehensive. Improvements could be made to the functionality of the databases. Currently, users can limit their searches by aggregate amounts, but cannot search records by an exact amount. Users can search expenditures by vendor; however, because vendor name disclosure is not mandatory, the search does not return comprehensive results. Given that campaigns must disclose the date and purpose of an expenditure, adding these search fields would be useful.

Oklahoma's grade in the web site usability category slipped back into the F range after having earned a D- in 2005. Usability testers took longer finding specific data in 2007 and found the site's terminology to be more confusing than in 2005. While the site now includes a helpful candidates list, it could be enhanced with additional contextual information. Specifically, explaining the contents of the databases, including which candidate reports are available, the time period covered and instructions for accessing the data would be of great help to site visitors. The Ethics Commission provides informative "Top Ten" lists of candidates' fundraising; providing complete summaries of totals raised and spent by all candidates would add valuable contextual information to the web site.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add the ability to search the database by the date and purpose of expenditures.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Statistical Information" page offers top ten lists of committees receiving the most contributions, making the most expenditures, and maintaining the largest account balances.*

Oregon

Grade	B+
Rank	3

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A	2
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B+	14
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C	16

The passage of comprehensive campaign finance legislation in 2005 boosted Oregon from a C- and the 24th ranking in 2005 to a B+ and 3rd place overall in 2007. Oregon ranked higher in each scoring category and was the most improved state in 2007.

Oregon's strengthened disclosure law earned an A and ranks second in the nation in 2007. Candidates must provide detailed information on all contributors over \$100, including occupation and employer data. The new law also requires more frequent reporting by candidates, including additional last-minute reports. Expenditure disclosure is excellent, with all payments (including subvendor expenses) over \$100 reported. All state-level candidates raising \$2,000 are required to file disclosure reports electronically. The Secretary of State's office has created the "Oregon Elections System for Tracking and Reporting" (ORESTAR), an innovative, web-based electronic filing and disclosure system launched in 2007.

Oregon's new reporting system is unique in that transactions are reported continuously (other states require candidates to file periodic reports). The result in Oregon is immediate, ongoing disclosure of campaign data online. Along with the new reporting system, the Secretary of State's web site now features a searchable campaign finance database of contributions and expenditures that allows users to easily find, sort and download disclosure data. The database search options could be enhanced by adding contributor zip code and employer fields, both of which can be accessed within the search results. Oregon provides excellent access to paper reports as well, and offers data on disk for \$5.

Oregon's grade in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category rose from a D to a C in 2007 as the state improved its usability test performance. Testers found the site easy to understand and gave higher overall ratings than in 2005. However, there is room for improvement. The site does not provide a comprehensive explanation of the universe of data available online, nor specific instructions for using the ORESTAR database. Overviews of funds raised and spent by candidates in the 2006 elections are not available online; however, the site does provide thorough comparisons of campaign financing from 2000 through 2004.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add a page to the ORESTAR database search system describing which candidates' campaign data is available, the time periods covered, and instructions for accessing the data online.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Database search results are cleanly presented and can be sorted by column heading as well as downloaded.*

Pennsylvania

Grade	C+
Rank	22

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B	16
Electronic Filing Program	F	39
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	9
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D+	23

The addition of online, searchable contribution and expenditure databases boosted Pennsylvania's overall grade from a D to a C+ in 2007. Pennsylvania earned the distinction of being one of the five most improved states overall, and moved into the top ten rankings in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category.

Pennsylvania's disclosure law ranked 16th and earned a B again in 2007. The law requires candidates to report details about all contributions of \$50 or more; for donors giving \$250 or more, occupation and employer data must be disclosed. Expenditure disclosure is also good, with candidates reporting accrued expenses, but not subvendor payments. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported prior to Election Day. Pennsylvania law does not require candidates to file disclosure reports electronically, though voluntary electronic filing is available. The Department of State reported that 85 percent of statewide candidates chose the electronic filing option in the last election, a significant improvement over the previous election, when 30 percent reportedly used the system. However, 80 percent of the state's legislative candidates continue to file paper reports.

Pennsylvania's Disclosure Content Accessibility grade soared in 2007 (from an F to an A) with the addition of online, searchable databases of contributions and expenditures in late 2005. Site visitors can search both electronic filings and data-entered paper-filed reports through the database, and search results can be sorted online. Users can also download itemized data found within specific campaign reports. Electronic filings become available online the day of the filing deadline and data-entered paper reports are typically posted online within 72 hours of receipt. The state also maintains low-cost paper copies of disclosure reports and provides access to campaign data on disk.

The usability of Pennsylvania's disclosure site improved as well. Usability testers reported higher confidence levels with the site's data than in 2005, though confusion over terminology was also reported. The state has improved the contextual information online with the inclusion a new database "Help!" page and a "Frequently Asked Questions" page. The site could be further enhanced with comparisons of the money raised and spent by candidates to give an overview of campaign financing trends in Pennsylvania.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Give site visitors the ability to download database search results into a spreadsheet format.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The "Frequently Asked Questions" page provides a thorough description of the data available, including which candidates' files are accessible online, and the reports and the time period covered by the database.*

Rhode Island

Grade	B
Rank	12

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	32
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	4
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	13

Along with another strong performance in the accessibility category, gains made in the Electronic Filing and web site usability categories bumped Rhode Island up to a solid B in 2007. However, the state dropped out of the top ten overall while other states made greater gains.

Rhode Island's disclosure law earned a C again in 2007, and requires that candidates disclose detailed information about contributors giving at least \$100, including employer but not occupation data or cumulative amount donated. Loan disclosure is a weak point as is late contribution reporting; candidates who do not participate in the state's public financing program are not required to disclose last-minute contributions until after Election Day. Expenditures over \$100 must be disclosed, but reports do not include subvendor information. Electronic filing has been mandatory in Rhode Island for statewide candidates for several years; legislative candidates raising \$5,000 were scheduled to be required to file electronically in 2004 as well. However, implementation was delayed and legislative candidates were not required to file electronically until 2007. Despite a legislative challenge to the mandate by state lawmakers in 2007, the mandatory program remains in place and earned the state an A+ in the Electronic Filing category.

Rhode Island continued to perform very well in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category, and earned an A and a top five ranking in 2007. The Board of Elections provides excellent access to candidates' campaign filings, and features comprehensive, searchable databases of contribution and expenditure data on its web site. The only thing missing from those databases is the ability to search expenditure records by purpose, even though this information can be accessed through the search results. Electronically-filed disclosure reports are posted on the Internet immediately and are followed by scanned copies of paper-filings within five days.

While little has changed on the state's disclosure site, usability testers were more easily able to find data online than in 2005, which boosted Rhode Island's Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade to a C+ in 2007. Testers generally felt confident in their ability to find specific, accurate data, and gave the site a good overall rating. The index of candidate reports is detailed and shows not only up-to-date original and amended reports, but also provides due dates for reports required in the future. The online contextual information could be improved by providing overviews of campaign financing trends that compare totals raised and spent by competing candidates, or by providing additional details about the data available online, such as the time period covered.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add a list of the total amounts raised and spent by all candidates, organized by office.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The index of a candidate's reports shows the reporting period, due date and the actual date that each report was submitted, as well as future reporting dates.*

South Carolina

Grade	D+
Rank	33

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C+	25
Electronic Filing Program	C	27
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	36
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D-	31

South Carolina was the second most improved state in 2007 after implementing mandatory electronic filing for statewide candidates and posting campaign data online for the first time in 2006. The state jumped 16 places in the rankings and earned its first passing grade in this assessment in 2007.

South Carolina's disclosure law earned a C+ again in 2007. Candidates are required to disclose details about contributors giving over \$100, including occupation, but not employer data. Disclosure of loan details is strong, and candidates must also report details of all expenditures, including subvendor payments and accrued expenses. Independent expenditures are disclosed, but neither last-minute independent expenditures nor last-minute contributions are reported prior to Election Day. Mandatory electronic filing for statewide candidates was implemented for the first time in 2006, earning South Carolina a C in that category in 2007. Currently, only statewide candidates file electronically, though the State Ethics Commission reports a new system is being developed to extend electronic filing to legislative candidates by the end of 2007.

South Carolina posted campaign data online for the first time in 2006 and moved 14 places higher in the accessibility rankings, despite again earning an F in 2007. Currently, only statewide candidates' reports are available online, though this is expected to change with the expansion of the electronic filing program. The Commission's web site features a new database of campaign contributions that can be searched by donor name, but not by date, amount or zip code. Adding these fields and the ability to sort or download the results would provide the public with better tools for finding specific data. Another significant improvement that could be made would be the ability to search campaign expenditures online.

South Carolina received a higher rating from usability testers and a passing grade in the usability category in 2007. The majority of testers found the cleanly-designed Ethics Commission site very easy to understand. Despite the ease of use of the site, there is significant room for improvement in terms of contextual information. A simple step that the Commission could take would be to include the start and end date of each reporting period, rather than simply labeling reports by quarter (such as Q1, Q2, etc.). Posting a comparison of the total funds raised and spent by candidates for each office would provide the public with an overview of state campaign financing trends.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Expand the contributions database search options to include amount, date and donor zip code, all of which are found within the search results.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Site design is very clean and campaign data is presented in a clear and easy to read format.*

South Dakota

Grade	F
Rank	48

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	49
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	47
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D+	24

South Dakota's grades and rankings remained relatively unchanged in most categories, though a weaker performance in the usability testing brought the state down to a D+ in the Online Technical and Contextual Usability category in 2007.

Although not reflected in this year's scoring, South Dakota enacted significant campaign disclosure reforms in 2007 upon the recommendation of the Secretary of State. While 2007 scoring reflects the state's lack of detailed expenditure and independent expenditure reporting as of December 31, 2006, provisions of the new law include: increased reporting requirements, both in non-election years and pre-election periods; financial penalties for late reports; and the disclosure of independent expenditures. Independent expenditure reporting became a major issue following the 2006 statewide elections, when the identity of a donor that contributed \$750,000 to a ballot measure campaign was not disclosed. The new reporting requirements took effect on July 1, 2007 and will greatly improve campaign disclosure in South Dakota.

South Dakota received an F again in 2007 in the Electronic Filing category and is one of just ten states that do not offer such a program. The Secretary of State's office scans and posts all statewide and legislative candidates' disclosure reports online within 24 hours of receipt. Reports can be browsed in PDF, but itemized data cannot be sorted, searched or downloaded, which is the main reason South Dakota received an F for Disclosure Content Accessibility again in 2007. While data on disk is not available, paper copies are available to the public through the Secretary of State's office, but at \$1.00 per page, the cost can be prohibitive.

South Dakota's grade slipped from a C to a D+ in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category due to a weaker usability test performance. Testers had a more difficult time answering the test questions than in 2005, and gave the site a below average rating overall. The Secretary of State's office does provide a number of helpful contextual resources for the public, including summaries of campaign finance activity, information about disclosure requirements, detailed candidate lists and copies of both original and amended disclosure reports.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *To improve site navigation, change the color of links that have been visited by the user. This feature would be particularly beneficial when reviewing the index of candidate reports.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The index of a candidate's reports clearly labels amended reports, and users can sort the index by clicking on the column headings.*

Tennessee

Grade	C
Rank	28

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	29
Electronic Filing Program	A	16
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D	32
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D+	24

Tennessee improved from a D- to a C in 2007, with improvements in the Campaign Disclosure Law and Electronic Filing categories strengthening the state's overall disclosure program.

Following the governor's formation of a Citizen's Advisory Group on Ethics, and the formation of a new legislative ethics committee, the focus on reform in Tennessee resulted in the passage of the "Comprehensive Governmental Ethics Reform Act of 2006". The new law expands candidate disclosure requirements to include: additional non-election year and pre-election campaign reporting; occupation and employer reporting for contributions over \$100; and disclosure of subvendor payments. The new law also made electronic filing mandatory for all candidates who raise or spend \$1,000 for an election, moving Tennessee from an F to an A in the Electronic Filing category.

Tennessee improved from a D- to a D in the accessibility category in 2007, though the state slipped five places in the rankings as other states made improvements. The Tennessee Registry of Election Finance (TREF) has cut the time it takes for paper-filed reports to be posted online. The state has also made public review of documents easier by eliminating the need to provide name, address and identification before reviewing records. The disclosure site offers the public the ability to search a database of contributions by donor name and date but does not yet offer a searchable database of expenditures. TREF's 2006 Annual Report notes that the agency is working on plans to allow "the public to conduct searches on almost all of the information disclosed by candidates... including occupation, employer, zip codes... and to download the information." For those seeking to receive large amounts of campaign data on disk, TREF now fulfills such requests at no cost.

Tennessee's grade dropped again in the area of Online Contextual and Technical Usability as accessing data on the site was more difficult for usability testers than in 2005. Testers rated their experiences on the site as below average again in 2007, and Project researchers found it difficult to access the governor's 2005 filings through the "Search Candidate" feature. The TREF site contains a good amount of contextual information for the public, including excellent overviews of campaign finance trends, candidate lists, information about campaign disclosure requirements and an online demonstration of how to navigate the database.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add additional search fields to the contributions database, such as donor employer and zip code, and contribution amount.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Summaries of candidates' campaign financing are available from 1996 through 2006 and include totals raised and spent by each candidate, including totals from each reporting period.*

Texas

Grade	B-
Rank	17

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B-	19
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A	3
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	39

Texas again earned a B- in 2007, though the state slipped out of the top ten in the rankings as other states improved. Despite some contextual improvements made to the Texas Ethics Commission's web site, the state slipped again in the usability testing and its grade in this area dropped from a D- to an F in 2007.

Texas earned a B- in 2007, and ranked 19th in the Campaign Disclosure Law category. Candidates must disclose detailed information about contributors giving more than \$50, including occupation and employer data for donors giving \$500 or more. All expenditures over \$50 are reported, but reports do not include information about subvendor payments or accrued expenses. Texas requires last-minute contributions and last-minute independent expenditures to be disclosed before Election Day. Upon recommendations from the Texas Ethics Commission Task Force, the legislature passed laws in 2007 to strengthen pre-election and last-minute reporting requirements, and extended civil penalties to last-minute reporting violations. Texas earned an A+ and a share in the top national ranking for its mandatory electronic filing program, which covers all state-level candidates who reach a \$20,000 threshold.

Texas is a national leader in terms of accessibility to disclosure data, again earning an A in this area in 2007. The Commission posts all campaign reports online within 24 hours of receipt, and offers online, searchable databases of contributions and expenditures that have been filed electronically. While searches cannot be conducted by expenditure purpose, the database contains many other search fields, as well as options for sorting and downloading disclosure data. Additionally, the display of itemized search results contains a helpful link from each transaction to the filer's complete disclosure report.

Despite efforts by the Texas Ethics Commission to improve the disclosure web site, the state received a lower usability test rating for the second consecutive assessment. Only one tester was able to locate the disclosure site from the Texas state homepage in 2007. The Commission has improved the terminology used on the site, provides better descriptions of the data available, and added a link to the Secretary of State's site to allow easier identification of candidates. Providing a list of candidates directly on the Commission's site would give the public easier access to this important contextual information.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Create a clearer path to the Ethics Commission web site from the Texas state homepage. There are a number of logical options for placing a link to "campaign finance information" on the state homepage, such as from the "Voting" or "Government" sections.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Simple and advanced search options, and contribution and expenditure search fields, are all integrated into one database search screen.*

Utah

Grade	F
Rank	39

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	45
Electronic Filing Program	F	31
Disclosure Content Accessibility	D-	34
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	41

As in 2005, little has changed about campaign disclosure in Utah and the state again earned an overall F in 2007. Utah had previously earned a D in the web site usability category, but slipped down into the F range with a weaker performance in the 2007 usability test.

Utah law requires candidates to report contributors giving \$50 or more, but does not require disclosure of donor occupation or employer data, or cumulative amount donated. Last-minute contributions and independent expenditures are not reported until after Election Day. Expenditure disclosure is stronger, but candidates do not have to report subvendor information. A significant disclosure improvement was enacted in 2007 when the governor signed Senate Bill 246, requiring that officeholders file campaign finance reports annually, rather than once every other year. Electronic filing of disclosure reports is voluntary in Utah, though the State Elections Office reports an impressive 100 percent of statewide candidates, and nearly 80 percent of legislative candidates choose the electronic filing option, up from 75 percent and 40 percent reported in 2005, respectively.

Utah's Disclosure Content Accessibility ranking slipped in 2007, though the state again earned a D- in this category. The Elections Office posts data from electronically-filed reports online immediately, data-enters records from paper-filed reports within one week, and its searchable database of contributions includes records from both types of filings. Unfortunately, a number of shortcomings noted in previous reports remain: search options are limited; candidates' complete reports cannot be reviewed online; and users cannot search itemized expenditure records. According to the State Elections Office, a new web site is under development, which the agency hopes will improve the online disclosure system.

A weaker usability test performance dropped Utah from a D to an F in 2007 in the usability category as testers had a more difficult time locating data on the site than in 2005 and expressed less confidence in the accuracy of the data that they did find. While the site does provide an overview of candidate reporting requirements and schedules, there is no information about campaign finance rules and restrictions on the site, and the description of the data available could be enhanced. The site offers a nice overview of the total funds raised and spent by all candidates for each statewide office (and the House and Senate as a whole), but does not provide a breakdown of funds raised and spent by individual candidates for those offices. Providing information about state campaign finance rules and trends would improve the contextual information on the disclosure site.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide summaries of totals raised and spent by each candidate for a specific office to complement the office-by-office summary data.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *"Office Totals Summary" provides overviews of the total campaign finance activity (both contributions and expenditures) for each statewide office from 1998 through 2006.*

Vermont

Grade	F
Rank	40

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C-	40
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	38
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D-	31

Vermont improved slightly in the rankings, though still earned an overall F in the 2007 assessment. Vermont's law grade improved from an F to a C-, but those gains were offset by a weaker performance in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category.

In 2005, Vermont enacted Senate Bill 16, strengthening the state's disclosure law. While Vermont's contribution and expenditure limits were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2006, the disclosure provisions of the law remain intact. The state now requires candidates to report large, last-minute contributions within 24 hours of receipt before Election Day. Vermont also added a new section to the law regarding electioneering communications; in the month before an election, individuals or groups making independent mass media expenditures over \$500 must report the date, amount and beneficiary of expenditures within 24 hours. Vermont's law could be further enhanced by requiring occupation and employer disclosure of campaign donors, as well as requiring candidates to report subvendor payments. Vermont is one of just ten states that do not offer candidates the option of filing disclosure reports electronically.

Vermont again received an F in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. The Secretary of State's office scans all state-level candidates' campaign finance reports and posts them online as TIFF files, but the files display poorly and can be difficult to view on a computer screen. The agency also offers searchable text files of statewide candidates' filings, and the records contained in these files can be downloaded and exported for offline research. Vermont is among the best in the country in terms of providing access to paper copies of disclosure reports.

After having improved from an F to a C- in 2005, Vermont's usability grade slipped to a D- in 2007. Usability testers again rated the disclosure site as below average, and most found it to be somewhat confusing. The lack of current campaign finance analyses is the primary reason why Vermont's grade dropped to a D- in the usability category. The Secretary of State's office produced in-depth analyses of campaign finance trends for the 2000, 2002 and 2004 election cycles; however, such reports will not be available for 2006 or future cycles as the legislature eliminated the mandate requiring these reports to be produced. Vermont has distinguished itself by providing the most historical information on any state disclosure web site. Users have the ability to look up the amounts raised and spent by candidates for statewide office dating back to 1916.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Allow users to select more than one candidate at a time through the site's "Historical Campaign Finance Database". This step would allow users to more easily compare campaign finance activity between candidates.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The comprehensive, 2006 "Guide to Vermont's Campaign Finance Law" contains a wealth of information explaining changes to the state's law, including legislative changes made in 2005 as well as the effects of the Supreme Court's 2006 ruling on contribution and expenditure limits.*

Virginia

Grade	B
Rank	7

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A-	4
Electronic Filing Program	C	24
Disclosure Content Accessibility	B	18
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	B-	8

Virginia ranked 7th again in 2007, earning its second straight B. The state earned higher grades in both the disclosure law and Online Contextual and Technical Usability categories in 2007, while also remaining strong in terms of access to disclosure records.

Legislation enacted in 2006 to strengthen independent expenditure reporting improved Virginia's law grade to an A-, and brought the state into a top-five ranking in this category. All independent expenditures must be reported within 24 hours, which ensures that such expenditures will be disclosed before Election Day. Candidates are required to disclose detailed information about contributors giving over \$100, including occupation and employer data. Expenditure disclosure is excellent and candidates must report vendor name, subvendor details, and accrued expenses. All statewide candidates in Virginia are required to file disclosure reports electronically. While electronic filing is not mandatory for legislative candidates, 90 percent voluntarily do so, a reflection of the strong training and support programs provided by the State Board of Elections.

Virginia maintained its B and a top 20 ranking in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. The State Board of Elections' web site features a comprehensive, searchable database of contributions and expenditures. As noted in 2005, using the campaign finance database remains cumbersome, as retrieving search results requires a user to click through multiple screens. Users are also not able to sort database search results online or search the database by a donor's employer. The Board offers campaign data on disk at no cost, and intends to reduce the cost of paper copies in the future.

A redesign of the disclosure site in late 2005 helped Virginia earn a B- in 2007 and a top ten ranking in the usability category. Usability testers found the redesigned site easier to understand and gave it a higher overall assessment. The site could be enhanced by providing overviews of campaign financing trends, and by adding a user's guide to provide instructions for the searchable database.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Improve the campaign finance database by adding an employer search field.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The State Board of Elections' web site uses clear language and graphics that make navigation very easy.*

Washington

Grade	A-
Rank	1

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	A-	3
Electronic Filing Program	A+	1
Disclosure Content Accessibility	A+	1
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C	16

Washington has again proven its excellence in campaign finance disclosure practices, earning an A- and ranking 1st overall for the fourth time in the Grading State Disclosure assessment. Washington remains a national leader in the Electronic Filing and Disclosure Content Accessibility categories, and its disclosure law ranks third in the nation.

Washington requires candidates to report detailed information about contributors giving over \$25, including occupation and employer data for those donating over \$100. Last-minute contributions must be reported prior to Election Day. Campaign expenditure disclosure is also strong, with candidates required to report detailed information about vendors, subvendors and accrued expenses. Independent expenditures are disclosed, and those made in the 21 days leading up to an election must be reported within 24 hours. Electronic filing is mandatory for candidates spending over \$10,000, and the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) provides regular filer trainings and free filing software, which recently became compatible with the Macintosh computer platform.

Washington earned an A+ and maintained its place at the top of the Disclosure Content Accessibility rankings in 2007. Visitors to the PDC web site have the option to both browse disclosure filings or search a comprehensive database of itemized contributions and expenditures. The database offers a wide range of search fields and results can be sorted online or downloaded. Electronically-filed reports are available online immediately after they are filed, and paper filings are posted online the same day they are received. Access to paper copies of disclosure records is excellent, and the agency also offers data on CD for just \$2.

The one area where Washington needs to improve is in web site usability; the state earned a C in this category in 2007, dropping from a B- in 2005 and an A- in 2004. The lower 2007 grade is due primarily to a weaker usability test performance. Testers took longer to find specific data than testers did in 2005, and most testers reported confusion with site terminology. To address the needs of all site visitors (from novice to advanced), the PDC is designing a new data search system geared toward new users that will complement the existing search system. There have been some contextual improvements; the PDC added the dates covered by each disclosure report to the index of candidate reports. The disclosure site offers excellent information about campaign finance rules and restrictions, summaries of the totals raised and spent by candidates and overviews of campaign finance trends going back to 1998.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a glossary of the forms that can be accessed from the "View Actual Reports" section of the site. Site visitors may be confused by form names, such as "C3" (itemized contributions) or "A" (itemized expenses).*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The database search page includes multiple search fields and options for sorting and downloading the search results.*

West Virginia

Grade	D+
Rank	32

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	C	32
Electronic Filing Program	C	27
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	40
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	C+	10

West Virginia improved from a D- to a D+ in 2007, and earned a top ten ranking in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category. Electronic filing became mandatory for statewide candidates in 2007, earning the state's first passing grade in that category.

West Virginia's disclosure law earned a C again in 2007 and requires candidates to report detailed information about all contributors, including occupation and employer data for those giving \$250 or more. Contributions made at the last minute are not reported until after Election Day. Candidates must disclose all expenditures and, though not reflected in this year's grade, a subvendor disclosure requirement was passed under Senate Bill 714 in 2007. The lack of mandatory reviews or audits of campaign reports remains a significant weakness in the law. SB 714 also mandated electronic filing for all statewide candidates as of July 1, 2007. Legislative candidates continue to have the option of filing electronically.

West Virginia again received an F in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category in 2007. The Secretary of State's office makes both electronic and paper filings available in a browsable PDF format within 48 hours of filing. Electronically-filed reports are much easier to review than paper filings (particularly those that have been handwritten by committees), but itemized data still cannot be searched, sorted or downloaded. Another barrier to access is the size of the files; for example, one of the governor's 2004 reports is posted as a 34-megabyte file, which took several minutes to download, even with a fast Internet connection. The expansion of electronic filing in 2007 has led the agency to consider creating a searchable database of statewide candidate data.

West Virginia's usability grade improved from a D- to a C+ as testers had an easier time locating data on the Secretary of State's site in 2007, expressed greater confidence in the data they found, and reported less confusion than in 2005. While the disclosure site offers a clear description of the data available online, as well as detailed candidate lists, there is still room to improve the contextual information. The site does not provide overviews of the totals raised and spent by each candidate for a given office, making comparisons between campaigns difficult. In addition, the index of a candidate's reports includes only the filing date for each report, and not the time period covered within the report.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Add the full reporting period to the index of each candidate's disclosure reports.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *The site's "Campaign Finance Activity & Reporting" page offers a wealth of information related to the rules and requirements for campaign financing in West Virginia and is easily accessible on the site.*

Wisconsin

Grade	C-
Rank	30

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	B	15
Electronic Filing Program	A	16
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	37
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	D-	34

Wisconsin again earned a C- in 2007, but dropped eight places in the overall rankings as other states improved.

Wisconsin earned a B and ranked 15th in the disclosure law category in 2007. The law requires candidates to disclose detailed information about contributors giving over \$20, including occupation and employer data for those giving over \$100. Candidates must disclose expenditures over \$20, but reports do not include subvendor details. Both last-minute contributions and independent expenditures must be reported prior to Election Day, but Wisconsin requires fewer pre-election reports than most other states. Wisconsin's electronic filing program earned an A again in 2007 and is mandatory for both statewide and legislative candidates raising \$20,000 or more. Candidates currently file disclosure reports with the State Elections Board. In the future, disclosure reports will be filed with the Government Accountability Board, which was established in 2007 and is in the process of assuming the disclosure responsibilities of the State Elections Board as well as those of the State Ethics Board.

Wisconsin received an F again for Disclosure Content Accessibility in 2007, while slipping three places in the rankings since 2005. Electronically-filed campaign data can be downloaded from the State Elections Board's web site, but only summary data for paper filers is available online. Filings are made available within 48 hours of receipt. The lack of online, searchable databases of campaign contributions and expenditures is the main deficiency of the site. The state has solicited proposals for a new campaign finance information system that may, once developed, provide greater access to disclosure information online.

Wisconsin's lower usability test performance in 2007 brought the state's Online Contextual and Technical Usability grade down from a D to a D-. Most testers had trouble finding specific data, and found the disclosure site very confusing, leading to lower overall ratings in 2007. The structure of the site may be a factor in the low usability test performance, as it is not immediately clear where campaign finance data can be located online. Currently, users who want to search for campaign data must follow a link labeled "Electronic Finance Reports" to access that data. Some of the valuable contextual information that can be found on the site includes state disclosure requirements and analyses of campaign finance trends.

- ◆ **Quick Fix:** *Provide a clear and prominent link to disclosure data on the main campaign finance page.*
- ◆ **Editor's Pick:** *Contribution limits for state candidates are clearly described in a chart that is easily located on the disclosure web site.*

Wyoming

Grade	F
Rank	50

Subcategories	Grade	Rank
Campaign Disclosure Law	F	47
Electronic Filing Program	F	41
Disclosure Content Accessibility	F	50
Online Contextual & Technical Usability	F	45

Wyoming has earned an F and the lowest overall ranking again in 2007, ranking in the bottom ten in each area of the assessment.

Wyoming law requires candidates to disclose the name and address of contributors giving over \$25, but occupation, employer and a donor's cumulative contributions are not reported. Last-minute contributions are not reported until after Election Day. Campaign expenditures are not reported until after an election, and do not include subvendor details. Independent expenditure disclosure is not required, and the law's enforcement provisions are also lacking. Electronic filing is still not an option for candidates in Wyoming, though legislation has been drafted for review in the 2008 legislative session that would mandate electronic filing for all candidates starting in 2010.

As one of just two states that do not currently post campaign disclosure data online, Wyoming received an F and ranks last in the Disclosure Content Accessibility category. Access to campaign finance records in Wyoming is limited to requesting paper copies of reports (at \$.15 per page) or traveling to the Secretary of State's office to browse the records. The electronic filing legislation, if enacted, could be an important step toward greater access to disclosure records because it would also require the Secretary of State's office to maintain an online, searchable database of electronically-filed reports.

Despite not posting any campaign finance data online, Wyoming tied for 45th and ranked higher in the Online Contextual and Technical Usability category than three states that do provide online access to data. The Secretary of State's web site is easy to navigate and offers good contextual information regarding campaign finance rules and disclosure requirements. The public is also able to view complete, detailed lists of candidates that include the name, office sought, party affiliation as well as candidates' contact and web site information.

- ◆ Quick Fix: *Post some campaign finance data on the Internet, such as summary totals of amounts raised and spent by gubernatorial or other high-profile candidates.*
- ◆ Editor's Pick: *The Secretary of State's web site features detailed lists of candidates going back to 1998.*

IV.

Appendices

- Methodology of Usability Testing
- Grading State Disclosure Criteria
- Glossary
- 2005 Grade and Ranking Chart
- 2004 Grade and Ranking Chart
- 2003 Grade and Ranking Chart
- 2007 Editor's Picks
- Credits

Appendix I — Methodology of Usability Testing

The usability tests determine if the disclosure information provided on the web by state disclosure agencies is accessible to the average citizen. To do this, an experiment was designed to answer the following question: “Can a non-expert find basic, informative data about campaign finances on the Internet in his or her state without undue difficulty or investment of time?”

Most usability tests compare a handful of web sites, and are concerned with minor differences between them (see Steve Krug’s “Don’t Make Me Think” (2000)). Web site designers might be concerned about the location of a task bar on a web page or the use of drop down menus. They hire testers to sit in front of computers and do simple tasks, and the web designers watch how they navigate around the site. The Grading State Disclosure usability test is different; the goal of the test is to identify major differences, not minor ones. Dozens of interfaces were compared across 50 states, and the test measured whether the overall design of a state’s web site – from architecture to jargon to database – facilitated access to information by the average voter. The two types of testing do share a common trait, however. In both types of testing the goal is not to determine which design is optimal, but rather to rank the designs from best to worst.

Two standard measures of usability were used. The first was a degree of difficulty measure, on the assumption that difficulty and accessibility are inversely related. Subjects were given three tasks to perform and the test measured the time and number of mouseclicks it took to perform each task. The three relatively simple tasks were devised, after some experimentation, to represent the minimum any citizen should expect from a campaign disclosure site. Subjects were asked to: (1) locate the state's disclosure web site starting from the state's homepage; (2) ascertain the total contributions received by the incumbent governor in his or her last campaign (subjects were given a list of incumbent governors that included the year they were last elected); and (3) provide the name and amount contributed by any individual contributor to the incumbent governor's last campaign.

The second measure of usability was a survey. After the third task was completed, each subject was given a short questionnaire and asked to evaluate his or her experiences on each state's web site. Subjects were asked whether the web site's disclosure terminology was understandable, to rate their level of confidence in their answers and provide a ranking (one to five) of their overall experience on the site. Subjects were also asked if any special software or unusual browser plug-ins were required to access the site's disclosure information.

Subjects were recruited from the undergraduate student population at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the experiments were conducted at the California Social Science Experimental Laboratory (CASSEL) at UCLA. The experiment was administered five times to ten different students, and five different students tested each state. The states were assigned randomly to students, and each student was assigned five states. Limits were imposed on the amount of time a subject could take with each state and each subject was given no fewer than 20 minutes to complete the three tasks for each state. Each experiment lasted no longer than 120 minutes, and some subjects were finished after 60 minutes.

There were two concerns about the time and mouseclicks data that were collected: first, subjects might learn during the experiment and become more proficient with the later states than the earlier ones; second, there might be subject effects (level of competency, prior experience with disclosure web sites, etc.). To address these issues, a fixed-effects ordinary least squares model was constructed to control for subject differences, and included a variable to control for the order in which each state was tested by the subject. With these controls in place, each state's average time and number of mouseclicks was estimated for each of the three tasks. These scores were then combined into two separate indices and ranked. The survey data were also combined into a single index and ranked.

Each state could receive up to a total of 27 points for the usability test score. The distribution of scores in the three separate indices (time, clicks and survey) was examined and scores were assigned based upon the apparent thresholds in the distributions. The top-ranked states received six points each, the medium states received three points, and the lowest-ranked states received zero points for each of the time and clicks indices. The remaining 15 points were assigned according to the survey responses, with a maximum of 15 and a minimum of three points assigned to each state. These three scores were then added together to create the usability test score for the state.

Appendix II — Grading State Disclosure Criteria

Grading Categories

- I. Campaign Disclosure Laws – 40%
- II. Electronic Filing Programs – 10%
- III. Disclosure Content Accessibility – 25 %
- IV. Online Contextual & Technical Usability – 25%

Grading Categories Criteria

I. Campaign Disclosure Laws – 120 points/40%

Meaningful campaign disclosure requires comprehensive campaign disclosure laws. The Campaign Disclosure Project has identified key disclosure requirements that are essential to public campaign disclosure:

1. Disclosure Content (84 points)

1.1 Contribution record (26 points)

- 1.1.1 Date (5 points)
- 1.1.2 Contributor name and address (5 points)
- 1.1.3 Contributor occupation (5 points)
- 1.1.4 Contributor employer (5 points)
- 1.1.5 Contributor ID number (if applicable) (3 points)
- 1.1.6 Cumulative amount (for the year or election) (3 points)

1.2 Type of Contribution (21 points)

- 1.2.1 Loan - date made (3 points)
- 1.2.2 Interest rate of loan (2 points)
- 1.2.3 Loan repayments (due date) (2 points)
- 1.2.4 Guarantors (2 points)
- 1.2.5 In-kind contribution disclosed (9 points)
- 1.2.6 Total for non-itemized contributions (3 points)

1.3 Expenditure information (22 points)

- 1.3.1 Vendor name (5 points)
- 1.3.2 Subvendor information (3 points)
- 1.3.3 Description and/or expenditure codes (6 points)
- 1.3.4 Date (4 points)
- 1.3.5 Accrued expenditures (4 points)

1.4 Independent expenditures (15 points)

- 1.4.1 Are they reported? (6 points)
- 1.4.2 Are last-minute independent expenditures reported? (3 points)
- 1.4.3 Does report include who benefits? (3 points)
- 1.4.4 Does report include cumulative amount? (3 points)

2. Enforcement (15 points)

- 2.1 Does the state conduct mandatory reviews and/or field audits? (6 points)
- 2.2 Enforcement mechanism: criminal, civil, or both? (6 points) (3 points for either, 6 for both)
- 2.3 Is there a penalty for late filings? (3 points)

3. Filing Schedule (21 points)

- 3.1 Pre-election reporting (9 points) (points awarded will depend on the number of reports required before an election: 1 report = 3; 2 reports = 6; more than 2 = 9)
- 3.2 Late contribution reporting (6 points)
- 3.3 Non-election year filing (6 points) (points awarded will depend on the number of reports required during non-election years: 2 or more reports = 6; one report = 4; no reporting = 0)

II. Electronic Filing Programs - 30 points/10%

Electronic filing is key to timely online disclosure. If campaigns send disclosure data reports to state agencies in a digital format in the first place, it is feasible to place the data immediately on the Internet in ways that make it easy to search, browse or download. State electronic filing programs are assessed and evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Electronic Filing Program (30 points)

- 1.1 Does the state have an electronic filing program? (3 points)
- 1.2 Is electronic filing mandatory for statewide candidates? (10 points) (if mandate covers all statewide candidates and the threshold is reasonable = 10 points; voluntary program = 2 points)
- 1.3 Is electronic filing mandatory for legislative candidates (8 points) (If mandate covers all legislative candidates and the threshold is reasonable = 8 points; voluntary program = 1 point)
- 1.4 Is there adequate funding for an electronic filing program? (3 points)
- 1.5 Does the state provide training and/or technical assistance to filers? (3 points)
- 1.6 Is filing software and/or web-based filing available? Is it free? Does the state have a standard filing format? (3 points)

III. Disclosure Content Accessibility - 75 points / 25%

In this category, the Campaign Disclosure Project looks at the degree to which content included in disclosure reports is accessible to the public.

1. Accessibility to Disclosure Records on Paper (12 points)

- 1.1 What is the procedure the state uses to facilitate public access to paper disclosure reports? Can the public obtain them in more than one place? How long does it take for the state to respond to a request? (9 points)

- 1.2 How much do the paper records cost? (3 points) (\$.10 or less per page = 3 points; \$.11-\$.15 = 2 points; \$.16-\$.25 cents = 1 point; more than \$.25 = 0 points)

2. Scope of Disclosure Records on the Internet (18 points)

- 2.1 Is the state publishing campaign finance data on the Internet? (3 points)
- 2.2 How quickly are the data made available on the Internet? How up to date is the information online? Is it instantly available as soon as it is reported? Is it available within 24 or 48 hours? Is it available within a week? Does it take longer than a week? (4 points)
- 2.3 What is the scope of the data online? Is data available for all disclosed reports, or just some? (6 points) (If all reports are online via electronic filing or data entry = 6 points; mix of electronically-filed data and scanned reports = 3-5 points; all reports online in PDF = 2 points; some reports online in PDF = 1 point).
- 2.4 Does the site feature itemized contribution and expenditure data? (5 points)

3. Accessibility to Disclosure Records on the Internet (42 points)

- 3.1 Does the site offer a searchable database of itemized campaign contributions? (20 points) (if can search within one report of one candidate = 2 points; or if can search within all reports of one candidate = 4 points; or if can search across all filers = 10 points) (In addition, for the following fields: donor, amount, date, zip code, and employer – one point per searchable field for single candidate search of all reports; 2 points per searchable field for all filer search.) (Maximum points for searchable databases will be 2, 9 or 20 depending on scope of search capabilities.)
- 3.2 Does the site offer a searchable database of itemized campaign expenditures? (10 points) (if can search within one report of one candidate = 1 point; or if can search within all reports of one candidate = 2 points; or if can search across all filers = 5 points) (In addition, for the following fields: description/code = 2 points; vendor name = 1 point; amount = 1 point; date = 1 point; field search points will be awarded only if can search by all candidate's reports or across all filers; the same number of search field points will be awarded in either case). (Maximum points for searchable databases will be 1, 7 or 10 depending on scope.)
- 3.3 Can you filter or limit the search? (i.e. ability to limit search to just one election cycle or one candidate) (1 point)
- 3.4 Are there any types of “smart search” features such as “name sounds like” or “name contains”? (1 point – 0 points for “hidden” smart search capabilities)
- 3.5 Can the data be sorted online? (3 points)
- 3.6 Can data be downloaded for sorting and analyzing offline? (3 points)
- 3.7 Can you browse an index of a particular candidate's reports? (2 points)
- 3.8 Can you browse itemized transactions within a report? (2 points)

4. Accessibility to Disclosure Records in Other Formats (3 points)

- 4.1 Are disclosure records accessible in other formats, such as on a CD? How much does it cost? Is it available from the state or an outside vendor? (3 points)

IV. Online Contextual & Technical Usability - 75 points/25%

Each state is assessed on the usability of the state's campaign disclosure web site. Usability is divided into two categories: contextual and technical.

1. Contextual Usability (38 points)

Contextual usability means whether the web site provides essential background information that helps the public understand the state's campaign finance and disclosure laws and monitor campaign activities. When evaluating sites for contextual usability, the following questions will be answered:

- 1.1 How easy is it to find the disclosure agency's contact information? (2 points) (if it's on front page or featured on front page = 2 points; difficult to locate = 1 or no points; not available = 0 points)
- 1.2 Does the site provide information, such as summary campaign data and historical figures to give the public an overview of campaign financing trends? (8 points) (recent statewide information = 3 points; and/or recent legislative information = 3 points; and/or historical summaries for either = 2 points.)
- 1.3 Does the site provide information explaining the state's campaign finance restrictions? (3 points)
- 1.4 Does the site provide information explaining the state's disclosure requirements? (3 points)
- 1.5 Does the site provide a comprehensive list of candidates for recent or current elections? Does this list include offices and/or district numbers? Does it include party affiliation? (5 points) (List/office/party = 5 points; list and office or party = 3 points; list without office or party = 2 points)
- 1.6 Can the public determine which filers' reports are available online and which ones are not? (5 points)
- 1.7 Are the disclosure reporting periods clearly labeled? (3 points) (if filing period is featured in a report index = 3 points; if reporting periods are listed only inside the actual report = 2 points; if unavailable = 0 points).
- 1.8 Does the site use clear terminology to identify information? (3 points)
- 1.9 Are original filings and amendments available? Are amendments clearly labeled? (6 points) (Both original and all amended reports available online = 3 points; and/or amended reports are clearly labeled = 3 points)

2. Technical Usability (10 points)

Technical usability refers to the architecture of the disclosure web site. A site's structure, navigation, and database configuration have great impact on a site's overall "user-friendliness". When evaluating a site for technical usability, the following questions will be answered:

- 2.1 How easy is it to find the disclosure site from the state homepage? (4 points) (if you can find it quickly through a search tool and through a topical or agency browsing feature = 4 points; otherwise 0 – 2 points)
- 2.2 Does the site provide instructions for how to use it? (3 points)
- 2.3 Can the features on the site be easily utilized with a dialup modem and/or a machine with limited RAM? (3 points)

3. Usability Testing (27 points)

One of the best ways to evaluate a disclosure web site's usability is to see how easy or difficult it is for someone to use the site. To evaluate usability, the Campaign Disclosure Project developed a usability test and testers were asked to answer the following seven questions:

1. Find the campaign disclosure web page for this state. Copy the site URL into the space below.
2. From the list you were given, find the name of the governor of this state. How much money did this person raise in their last election campaign? Enter that amount in the space below.
3. Find a list of contributors to the governor's last campaign. Identify one contributor from that list. In the space below, provide the name of the contributor, the amount of the contribution, and any other identifying information (street address, city, zip code, occupation, employer, etc.)

Post-task survey (after each state):

4. How confident are you that you answered the three questions accurately? (1. Very confident 2. Somewhat confident 3. Not very confident 4. Not at all confident)
5. Was the disclosure terminology on this web site easy to understand or was it confusing? (1. Very easy to understand 2. Somewhat easy to understand 3. Somewhat confusing 4. Very confusing)
6. On a scale of one-to-five, with one being Terrible and five being Excellent, how would you rate your overall experience on this disclosure site?
7. Did this site require any uncommon software, plug-ins or browser features in order to view the information? (1. Yes 2. No)

Appendix III — Glossary

Accrued Expenditure – an expenditure that is not paid at the time a service is provided. Accrued expenditures are debts owed by the campaign to political consultants or other vendors for goods or services such as direct mail or campaign signs.

Amendment – a correction or revision made to a campaign finance report.

Committee – an entity established by a candidate, political party or other organization for the purpose of raising and spending money. Committees are required to file campaign statements with detailed information about campaign contributions and expenditures.

Desk Audit – a review of a campaign finance disclosure report as it has been filed by a political committee. In a desk audit, documentation other than the actual campaign finance disclosure report, such as canceled checks, bank statements and vendor receipts, are not reviewed.

Disclosure – in the context of campaign financing, disclosure means making information about campaign contributions and expenditures known to the public.

Electronic Filing – the process by which political committees and candidates disclose campaign contributions and expenditures in an electronic format. Electronically-filed campaign finance information can be submitted online, via disk or e-mail. Candidates typically use either a standard filing format provided by the state, or filing software provided by the state or an outside vendor.

Field Audit – an in-depth review of a campaign finance disclosure report and other documentation related to the campaign finance report, including canceled checks, bank statements and vendor receipts, to verify the accuracy of the report.

Independent Expenditure – an expenditure for a communication which expressly advocates the election or defeat of a clearly identified candidate, but which is made independently of any candidate's campaign. An example of an independent expenditure is a campaign ad run by an issue organization in support of a specific candidate for office. (Source: Federal Election Commission)

Itemized Data – breakdowns of contributions received or expenses made by a committee, such as listings of individual contributions with the contributor's name, address, occupation, and employer. (By contrast, an example of unitemized data would be when a committee reports the total amount of all contributions under \$100, but does not provide detailed information about the individual transactions that make up that total figure.)

Last-minute Contribution or Late Contribution – a contribution (often large) that is received by a committee after the closing date for the final statement filed before the election, but before the election takes place. Many states require supplemental reporting of last-minute contributions made in the final days and weeks prior to Election Day.

Last-minute Independent Expenditure or Late Independent Expenditure – an independent expenditure that is made by a committee after the closing date for the final statement filed before the election, but before the election takes place. Many states require supplemental reporting of last-minute independent expenditures made in the final days and weeks prior to Election Day.

Loan Guarantor – a person who guarantees that a loan to a campaign will be repaid. Often financial institutions will not lend money to a candidate or campaign unless there are private individuals who guarantee that they will repay the loan if the campaign cannot.

Mandatory Review – the process by which a state’s campaign finance agency, often the Secretary of State, is required to examine campaign statements that are filed with its office, typically either through desk or field audits.

Reporting Period – the specific time period covered by a particular campaign finance statement.

Standard Filing Format – a uniform or standard technical format set forth by a state government which committees or candidates can use to file campaign finance disclosure statements electronically. The standard format ensures that all candidates’ filings can be integrated into the state’s internal data system and online disclosure system.

Subvendor – a third party, such as a political consultant, that makes an expenditure on behalf of a campaign. For example, when a political consultant receives funds from a campaign and purchases TV time for the campaign, the campaign must report the consultant’s expenditures if subvendor disclosure is required. Credit cards can also fall into the subvendor category because detailed information about expenditures can be found in credit card statements. If the campaign only listed the credit card company in its expenditure report, the public would not know the actual expenditures made by the campaign.

Subvendor Information – detailed information, including name and address, about subvendors.

Threshold – a monetary value at or above which a candidate must disclose campaign activity. The threshold can apply to the contribution amount that will trigger a campaign to disclose detailed information about a contributor. Or, the threshold can apply to the total amount of money raised or spent that will require a campaign to file campaign finance reports electronically.

Appendix IV — 2005 Grade and Ranking Chart

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Alabama	F	47	F	47	F	38	F	41	D	25
Alaska	C+	13	C	28	F	25	B	15	B+	2
Arizona	D+	28	C+	25	A+	1	D+	25	F	48
Arkansas	F	37	C	32	F	38	F	44	D+	19
California	B+	3	A	1	A	15	A	5	D+	21
Colorado	D+	26	B-	17	F	35	B-	18	F	44
Connecticut	D	31	B-	20	D	24	F	29	F	44
Delaware	F	40	D	38	F	25	F	44	F	40
Florida	B+	2	B	10	A+	1	A	5	B	4
Georgia	B	5	B+	5	A	12	A-	8	D+	21
Hawaii	B	4	A-	4	A+	1	A	5	D+	21
Idaho	C	20	B-	20	F	38	C-	23	A	1
Illinois	B	5	C	27	A+	1	B+	12	B+	2
Indiana	C-	23	F	42	C	19	B+	12	C-	16
Iowa	D	31	C	31	F	25	F	38	C+	7
Kansas	F	36	D	37	F	38	F	30	C	10
Kentucky	C+	13	B+	6	F	25	B-	21	C	10
Louisiana	C	16	B-	17	C	19	C+	22	D	31
Maine	C	17	C	34	B	18	A-	8	D-	37
Maryland	C	21	F	41	A+	1	A-	8	D	25
Massachusetts	C+	12	D+	36	A+	1	B	17	B	5
Michigan	B-	8	C	32	A+	1	A	2	C	13
Minnesota	D+	25	B+	6	F	25	F	32	D	25
Mississippi	F	37	C-	35	F	38	F	40	D+	21
Missouri	C+	15	B	10	C	19	B-	19	D	31

Appendix IV — 2005 Grade and Ranking Chart (continued)

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Montana	F	46	A-	3	F	38	F	48	F	49
Nebraska	F	39	B-	17	F	38	F	30	F	50
Nevada	F	40	F	46	F	25	F	41	C	13
New Hampshire	F	45	B-	20	F	38	F	47	F	47
New Jersey	C	17	B	8	F	25	B-	19	D	31
New Mexico	F	40	F	44	A	12	F	41	F	43
New York	D+	29	D	38	A+	1	C-	23	F	41
North Carolina	D+	27	B	10	D	23	F	35	D	31
North Dakota	F	43	F	50	F	38	D+	25	C	9
Ohio	B-	11	C+	25	A+	1	A-	8	D+	19
Oklahoma	C	19	B	13	F	35	B	15	D-	37
Oregon	C-	24	B	15	A	15	F	35	D	30
Pennsylvania	D	30	B	15	F	25	F	33	D-	37
Rhode Island	B-	10	C	28	A-	17	A	2	C	13
South Carolina	F	49	C+	24	F	38	F	50	F	46
South Dakota	F	48	F	49	F	38	F	46	C	10
Tennessee	D-	33	D-	40	F	35	D-	27	C-	17
Texas	B-	8	B-	20	A+	1	A	2	D-	36
Utah	F	35	F	43	F	25	D-	27	D	25
Vermont	F	44	F	45	F	38	F	35	C-	17
Virginia	B	7	B	8	C	19	B	14	C+	8
Washington	A-	1	A-	2	A+	1	A+	1	B-	6
West Virginia	D-	34	C	28	F	25	F	38	D-	35
Wisconsin	C-	22	B	13	A	12	F	34	D	25
Wyoming	F	50	F	48	F	38	F	49	F	42

Appendix V — 2004 Grade and Ranking Chart

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Alabama	F	47	F	47	F	39	F	42	C-	16
Alaska	C+	10	C	25	F	22	B	12	B+	3
Arizona	D+	23	C+	24	A+	1	D+	24	F	42
Arkansas	F	40	C	29	F	39	F	41	F	38
California	A-	2	A	1	B	14	A	4	B+	3
Colorado	C-	21	B-	17	F	37	B-	15	F	37
Connecticut	D	31	B-	20	D	20	D-	28	F	46
Delaware	D-	33	D	38	F	22	F	29	D	20
Florida	B+	3	B	10	A	11	A	5	B-	8
Georgia	B	4	B+	5	A	10	A-	7	C	12
Hawaii	C+	12	A-	4	D	20	A-	7	F	39
Idaho	C-	19	B-	23	F	39	C-	22	B	7
Illinois	B	5	C	29	A+	1	B+	10	A-	1
Indiana	C-	17	F	42	F	22	B+	10	B+	3
Iowa	F	38	C-	33	F	22	F	38	F	44
Kansas	F	37	D	37	F	39	F	29	D	20
Kentucky	C+	10	B	7	F	22	C+	20	C+	11
Louisiana	C+	14	B-	17	C	16	C+	18	D+	17
Maine	D+	23	C	32	F	22	B-	17	F	30
Maryland	C	16	F	41	A+	1	A-	6	D	20
Massachusetts	C+	12	D+	36	A+	1	B	14	B-	10
Michigan	B	6	C	29	A+	1	A	2	B-	9
Minnesota	D	28	B+	6	F	22	F	46	C	12
Mississippi	F	38	C-	33	F	39	F	38	D	25
Missouri	C-	17	B	10	C	16	C	21	F	40

Appendix V — 2004 Grade and Ranking Chart (continued)

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Montana	F	43	A-	3	F	39	F	48	F	49
Nebraska	F	36	B-	17	F	39	F	36	F	32
Nevada	F	41	F	46	F	22	F	42	D	23
New Hampshire	F	42	B-	20	F	38	F	47	F	50
New Jersey	C	15	B	8	F	36	C+	18	D	23
New Mexico	F	45	F	44	F	22	F	38	F	47
New York	D	30	D	38	A+	1	C-	22	F	41
North Carolina	D+	26	B	10	C	16	F	33	F	31
North Dakota	F	44	F	50	F	39	D	25	D	25
Ohio	B-	7	C	25	A+	1	A-	7	C	12
Oklahoma	C-	19	B	13	F	22	B	12	F	42
Oregon	D	32	B	15	B	14	F	45	F	35
Pennsylvania	D	28	B	15	F	22	F	32	D	25
Rhode Island	B-	7	C	25	A+	1	A	2	D+	18
South Carolina	F	49	C-	35	F	39	F	50	F	48
South Dakota	F	48	F	49	F	39	F	42	C	12
Tennessee	D	27	D-	40	F	35	D-	26	B	6
Texas	C+	9	B-	20	A-	12	B-	15	D+	18
Utah	F	35	F	43	F	22	D-	27	D	25
Vermont	F	45	F	45	F	39	F	33	F	35
Virginia	D+	22	B	8	C	16	F	31	D-	29
Washington	A	1	A-	2	A+	1	A+	1	A-	1
West Virginia	F	34	C	25	F	22	F	37	F	32
Wisconsin	D+	25	B	13	A-	12	F	33	F	32
Wyoming	F	50	F	48	F	39	F	49	F	45

Appendix VI — 2003 Grade and Ranking Chart

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-Filing Grade	E-Filing Rank	Accessibility Grade	Accessibility Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Alabama	F	47	F	47	F	37	F	45	F	30
Alaska	C-	13	C+	23	F	31	D	20	B-	3
Arizona	C-	16	C+	22	A+	1	C-	17	F	36
Arkansas	F	41	C	28	F	37	F	39	F	47
California	C	9	A	2	B	9	F	28	D-	19
Colorado	D+	19	B-	15	F	35	C+	12	F	32
Connecticut	D+	23	B	12	F	20	D-	24	F	33
Delaware	D-	31	D-	37	F	21	C-	16	F	27
Florida	C	7	B-	15	D	17	B+	8	F	24
Georgia	D+	21	A-	3	D	17	F	27	F	41
Hawaii	C	6	B	8	C	10	A-	6	F	36
Idaho	D	24	C+	25	F	37	D-	23	C	5
Illinois	B	2	C	28	A+	1	B+	8	B+	1
Indiana	D-	32	F	43	F	31	C-	17	D-	19
Iowa	F	45	F	46	F	31	F	36	F	47
Kansas	F	39	D-	36	F	37	D-	25	F	45
Kentucky	C-	13	B+	5	F	21	C+	12	F	36
Louisiana	C-	17	B-	20	C	14	D-	25	D	15
Maine	D-	29	D+	34	F	28	C	14	F	41
Maryland	C	12	F	39	A+	1	B+	8	D+	12
Massachusetts	C+	3	D+	35	A+	1	A-	6	B-	4
Michigan	C	10	C-	32	F	21	A+	1	D	16
Minnesota	D-	28	B+	6	F	21	F	40	F	26
Mississippi	F	35	C+	25	F	37	F	36	C-	8
Missouri	D	26	B	8	C	10	F	32	F	41

Appendix VI — 2003 Grade and Ranking Chart (continued)

State	Grade	Rank	Law Grade	Law Rank	E-File Grade	E-file Rank	Accessibility Grade	Access Rank	Usability Grade	Usability Rank
Montana	F	38	A-	4	F	37	F	47	F	40
Nebraska	F	36	B-	15	F	37	F	30	F	33
Nevada	D	27	F	44	F	21	D	22	C	7
New Hampshire	F	40	B-	18	F	36	F	44	F	49
New Jersey	C	8	B	12	F	21	C	14	C-	8
New Mexico	F	44	F	44	F	31	F	45	F	33
New York	D	25	F	39	A+	1	D+	19	F	27
North Carolina	D+	19	B	8	C	10	F	29	D-	22
North Dakota	F	48	F	50	F	37	F	43	C	5
Ohio	C+	4	C	27	A+	1	A+	3	F	24
Oklahoma	D+	18	B-	18	F	21	B	11	F	45
Oregon	D-	30	B+	6	C-	15	F	40	F	41
Pennsylvania	F	34	C	30	F	28	F	33	D-	22
Rhode Island	C	11	C	30	C	10	A-	4	F	27
South Carolina	F	49	C-	32	F	37	F	50	F	50
South Dakota	F	43	F	49	F	37	F	36	B-	2
Tennessee	F	46	F	39	F	37	F	48	D	16
Texas	C+	4	B-	20	C-	15	A-	4	D+	13
Utah	D-	33	F	39	F	28	D	20	D-	19
Vermont	F	42	D-	38	F	37	F	33	F	30
Virginia	D+	22	B	12	D	17	F	33	D+	13
Washington	A-	1	A	1	A+	1	A+	1	C-	8
West Virginia	F	37	C+	23	F	37	F	40	D-	18
Wisconsin	C-	15	B	11	A-	8	F	31	C-	11
Wyoming	F	50	F	48	F	37	F	48	F	39

Appendix VII — Editor's Picks

The editor's picks presented in the state summaries were selected to highlight the best practices found within each state's disclosure program. Below are the topics featured in the 2007 editor's picks, by state.

Campaign Finance Analysis

Alaska
Idaho
Iowa
Kansas
New Jersey
Oklahoma
Tennessee
Utah

Candidate Lists

California
Florida
Wyoming

Sorting and Downloading Data

New Mexico
Oregon

Disclosure Requirements and Campaign Finance Restrictions

Arkansas
Delaware
Louisiana
Mississippi
Nevada
New Hampshire
Vermont
West Virginia
Wisconsin

Handling of Amended Reports

Connecticut
Kentucky

Index of Candidate Reports

Arizona
Colorado
Indiana
Missouri
New York
Rhode Island
South Dakota

Database Content and Functionality

Maryland
North Carolina
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Texas
Washington

Unique Contextual Information

Georgia
Illinois
Maine
Massachusetts
Michigan
Minnesota
Montana

Site Design

Alabama
Hawaii
Nebraska
North Dakota
South Carolina
Virginia

Appendix VIII — Credits

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