

New Tool for Advocates

Information is essential for effective advocacy. Fortunately, the internet provides advocates around the state with up-to-date information and research capabilities – if you know where to look.

This week the New York State Senate has unveiled a [redesigned website](#) with lots of bells and whistles. According to the Senate press release, the new site contains, “RSS feeds, email and SMS text message news signups for all Senators and Committees, and one-click republishing of content from the Senate website to a range of social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter.”

The website hosts webpages serving all 62 members of the Senate. There is a place to look-up Senators by address and an interactive map of all Senate districts. Each Senator’s page contains information about their work and, unlike the previous Senate website, users can find and connect to legislation sponsored by that Senator. Individual pages also contain press releases, a calendar, video, a blog and direct Facebook and Twitter links.

One section gives you access to Senate committees with information on their activities, membership, legislation being considered as well as meeting and hearing information. Video of hearings is also available. Users can also sign up for email alerts from each committee.

The “Issues and Legislation” gives users the opportunity to comment on proposed legislation, join a discussion on a topic (property taxes, for example) or learn more about a current issue before the Senate. According to the website, the “Open Data” section will publish complicated data in plain language and “will take government data out of PDFs and other formats that are difficult to analyze with database and spreadsheet software.” The goal is to put information into “easy to download, easy to manipulate files” for everyday use.

Take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with this new tool and mark it as one of the places you can use to find the information you need to be an informed advocate.