

BillTracker

Category: Government to Citizen (G to C)

State: Nebraska

NEBRASKA BILLTRACKER



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B. Executive Summary – BillTracker

BillTracker is a program that was designed as a tool to track bills as they move through the legislative process from introduction to becoming a law. This program is used by all types of people, from the citizens wanting to track bills of interest, to lobbyists keeping their clients updated, to state agencies tracking legislation that could affect the way they do business.

BillTracker is an efficient and cost effective method to keep all citizens informed on the activities of their Legislature.

<http://www.nebraska.gov/billtracker/>

C. Description of the Business Problem and Solution – BillTracker

There are hundreds of bills that are introduced at the beginning of each legislative session. For citizens, it would take a considerable effort to keep track of the bills of interest to them.

Initially, bills are introduced, assigned to a committee, and receive a public hearing. If the bill advances out of committee, there are three stages of deliberation by the full legislature with the potential for amendments. Finally, bills passed by the Legislature go to the Governor for consideration. If the Governor signs the bill, or refuses to act on a bill, it becomes law. The Governor may also veto a bill, which may then be overridden by the Legislature.

BillTracker was created for people to be able to easily monitor legislation and to see bills go through all of these stages of the process. Users can create an account which provides regular email updates on bills the user is tracking. BillTracker was initially launched on January 1, 2005.

There are different parameters that can be set when using BillTracker.

- Sponsor
 - This method allows you to identify bills introduced by a Senator or Committee
- Committee
 - This method allows you to identify bill referred to a Committee
- Key Word or State Statute Section
 - This method allows you to select one or more keywords to track a bill.
 - You may also select a section of statute appearing in the text of the bill
- Bill Number
 - This method allows you to identify a specific bill, by its number.

There are two types of services offered through the BillTracker system. One version allows a user to track up to 15 bills at any time through an eBill book system. This system is available at no cost to the user.

The second version is a premium service called eProfile. This system allows the user to search and track bills using all of the different streamlined methods mentioned above. The pricing for the system is graduated, depending on how many profiles are established.

On a daily basis, the BillTracker system will review all legislative information. The users are notified via e-mail if there are any changes in the status of a bill. It will also let a user know if a different bill has activity that matches the criteria that was established.

The BillTracker application went through a redesign that launched in January 2009. The look of the program was updated, to give it a modern feel. Behind the scenes, the functionality was streamlined to deliver a faster and reliable way to provide information to the users.

With the redesign, a tutorial was created to inform users on how to best use the BillTracker application. Nebraska.gov has worked with the Legislature to present training sessions to educate users of the system.

D. Significance of the Project – Bill Tracker

When citizens and businesses are able to help develop, follow and watch as new bills are made into law with one click of the mouse; that is significant. Before BillTracker, citizens had to put a lot of time and effort into keeping track of the bills that were of interest to them. The BillTracker project is a way to bring government to all citizens in Nebraska. No matter where you live, you can keep track of the activities of the Legislature.

This online system also benefits the people who lobby the Nebraska Legislature. They are able to track multiple bills at any given time. The application allows lobbyists to track a bill through the different stages. It alerts them to when a committee will be discussing a bill.

Bill Tracker also is used by the staff of the senators. It is a way for them to stay informed about the various bills that are being considered. This system helps everyone remain efficient.

E. Benefit of the Project – BillTracker

The BillTracker project was a combined effort between the Nebraska Legislature and Nebraska.gov. Nebraska.gov is a private company that has a contract with the State of Nebraska to operate the portal and work with agencies to create online applications.

This application was developed and continues to be maintained without using taxpayers' dollars, or any appropriated funds. Nebraska.gov is able to do that because it operates using a self-funded model. Under the self-funded model, multiple revenue sources are identified and established to fund the enterprise portal initiative. The self-funded portal remains financially viable by charging approved transaction fees on certain portal services. The fees are then reinvested in the portal to provide infrastructure and services that enhance the efficiency of Nebraska government interaction with citizens and businesses.

The BillTracker application has benefitted many types of people. For example:

- Citizens living in Nebraska
 - People living in Nebraska are able to track a bill through the different stages
 - The specifics of a hearing are given, in case someone would want to attend to learn more specific information
- Citizens of Nebraska living outside of the state
 - BillTracker gives the opportunity to those serving in the military, or those who reside in Nebraska for only part of the year, to stay informed of the activity of the Legislature
- Lobbyists
 - The lobbyists use this tool to follow key bills that may affect their clients
- State Agencies
 - The agencies may use BillTracker to identify proposed legislation that could change how they do business
- Staff of Legislators
 - The application can be used by the staff of the Senators to track bills

There have been over 300 eProfiles, the premium service, established. These users vary between the legislature and lobbyists, among others.

Approximately 700 free accounts have been established, with over 2,700 bills being tracked.

There are typically 180-250 emails sent following a day of activity with the legislature. The record for any given day is 344 emails sent.

There continues to be opportunity for growth and adoption of the program. Nebraska.gov looks forward to bringing in new users for the BillTracker system.