



# The New York State Senate

## Web Analytics 2009-2010 Session Report

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# **NYSenate Web Analytics 2009-2010 Session Report**

## **Methodology**

In addition to metrics gathered internally and directly through NYSenate.gov via Google Analytics, this report uses metrics provided by various third party services. The NY Senate cannot be responsible for any inaccuracies in the data. These services are:

- Disqus
- Facebook Insights
- Google Analytics
- Livestream
- Youtube Insights

Due to the fact that the Senate experiences regular seasonal variation - more activity when Session is in, less when Session is out - this report looks, whenever possible, at a full year to account for these expected fluctuations. Additionally, in the past two years the Senate has experienced a series of exceptional events. The representative sample year used in this report spans from 7/1/09 – 7/1/10 in an effort to minimize the impact of the extraordinary events of:

- Website Launch
- Senate Coup
- Monserrate Trial Verdict
- Marriage Equality Vote
- Monserrate Expulsion
- Budget Due Date
- Budget Passing
- Aqueduct IG Report
- Mid-term election Day

Additionally, because of it's hugely distorting nature, unless otherwise specified, data from 12/2, the date of the Marriage Equality vote, the highest web traffic event the Senate has ever experienced by far, has been removed from all charts in this report.

## **A General Word About Websites and the Internet**

The first undertaking of the new Office of the Chief Information Officer, beginning in February 2009, was a complete overhaul of the New York State Senate's website. It replaced a system that consisted of a single Senate homepage website hosted internally, and a network of external proprietary websites for Senators hosted by an outside contractor using their own proprietary software, in favor of an open source software system able to provide websites for the Senate as an institution, for all Senators, and (newly) websites for every Legislative Committee, all within the new "nysenate.gov" infrastructure and brand. This approach not only created brand and functionality consistency amongst all the online outlets of the Senate, but also streamlined training, troubleshooting and new functionality development. It also allowed for the collection of data across the entirety of the Senate's online presence, so that the Senate could make determinations about relevance and effectiveness of online engagement. This data collecting infrastructure did not exist in the past, and therefore made it impossible to measure relevance and effectiveness.

There are many considerations when examining the effectiveness of a website. Most critical to the NY Senate CIO Office is whether it helps the organization meet its goals of increased transparency, efficiency, and participation. To this end, this report will examine standard web metrics such as visits, bounce rates and pageviews as well as data regarding online interaction, social sharing, and the type of content that visitors are using and for which they are searching over the course of a year. It will also explore the results of targeted initiatives such as the Senate's use of crowdsourcing, expansion of online video, and publishing of Senate administrative and legislative data through two dedicated online portals.

## **NYSenate.gov: Web Metrics**

Standard web metrics were gathered using Google Analytics, a free service offered by Google which tracks user interaction with easily added javascript code on every webpage. This section is going to look at number of metrics that help define user interaction with the site in two sections. The first will pertain to the visitors themselves – who and how many people are coming to the site. The next section, which includes time on site and bounce rate, describes what users do upon arrival.

### ***Website Visits***

Chart 1: NYSenate.gov visits 7/1/09-7/1/10

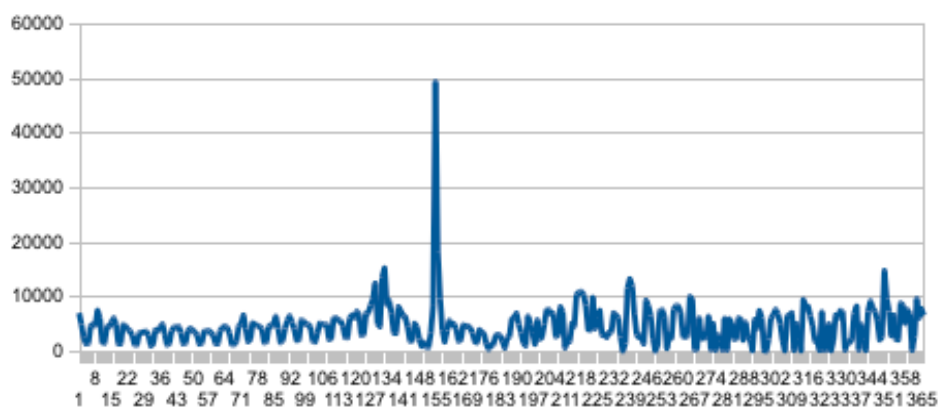


Table 1: Total Visits and Pageviews

	5/8/09-12/22/10 (All Time)	7/1/09-7/1/10 (Sample Year)
Visits	2,499,481	1,641,387
Unique Visitors	1,599,757	1,063,981
Pageviews	9,121,202	5,913,684

Table 2: New Visitors

	5/8/09-11/8/10 (All Time)	7/1/09-7/1/10 (Sample Year)
% New Visitors	63.87%	63.27%

### ***Website Activity (Bounce Rate, Time on Site, Pages per visit)***

Table 3: Bounce Rate, Pages/Visit, Time on Site

	5/8/09-11/8/10 (All Time)	7/1/09-7/1/10 (Sample Year)
Bounce Rate	42.50%	43.21%
Pages/Visit	3.66	3.6
Avg. Time on Site	3:17	3:19

Table 4: Entrance Pages and their Bounce Rates

	Page	Entrances	Exits	Bounces
1.	(home page) <a href="#">/</a>	703,227	174,309	24.79%
2.	<a href="#">/senators</a>	154,552	46,509	30.09%
3.	<a href="#">/press-release/join-fight-restore-star-rebates</a>	81,106	64,033	78.95%

4.	<a href="#">/senator/eric-adams</a>	<b>18,672</b>	5,628	30.14%
5.	<a href="#">/news/restore-my-new-york-star-check-online-petition</a>	<b>17,648</b>	13,856	78.51%

Note: Bounce Rates below 40% are generally regarded as “successful” for “sticky” websites that seek to keep their users on the site, indicating that the Senate home page and some Senator pages may be successful by this measure. However, an argument can also be made for some aspects of a legislative website seeking to deliver utility to citizens or to capture information from them efficiently, without requiring any searching around the site, and then allowing them to go back to their lives. In that context, online petitions with high bounce rates could be deemed successful as well-- constituents found what they were looking for, took the action they wished to take, and then were able to immediately leave. Bottom-line, interpretation of bounce rates depends on the context of the goal of the web page in question.

### ***Traffic Sources and Referrals***

A total of **10,372 unique websites** have linked back to **NYSenate.gov** since it's creation. **More than 50% of all traffic to NYSenate.gov results from searches on major web search engines** like Google, underscoring the importance of the strong search engine optimization (SEO) characteristics of the Drupal software used to build NYSenate.gov.

Table 5: Top Ten NYSenate.gov referring websites excluding search engines (Lifetime)

Website	Referrals
state.ny.us	59,085
Facebook	43,116
ny.gov	26,470
en.wikipedia.org	20,765
Drupal.org	20,481
webmail.aol.com	16,330
newzjunky.com	15,621
nydailynews.com	13,389
nysegov.com	11,202
Twitter.com	9,158

Table 6: Top 5 NYsenate.gov Sources of traffic (Lifetime)

Source	Visits	% of Visits
Google (organic)	1,117,713	44.65
Direct	530,467	21.19

Yahoo (organic)	102,440	4.09
Bing (organic)	81,379	3.25
state.ny.us (referral)	59,085	2.36

## NYSenate.gov Content

Table 7: Top 5 Most Popular Content Over Time

5/8/09 – 12/22/10 (All Time)	5/8/09 – 10/8/09 (1 <sup>st</sup> 6 mo.)	6/8/10 – 11/8/10 (Last 6 mo.)
( <a href="#">home page</a> ) / (12.71%)	( <a href="#">home page</a> ) / (13.92%)	( <a href="#">home page</a> ) / (12.24%)
/senators (8.31 %)	/senators (9.45%)	/senators (7.81%)
/districts/map (2.12%)	/districts/map (2.04 %)	/districts/map (3.71%)
/legislation (1.56%)	/issues-legislation (1.63%)	/legislation (1.86%)
/press-release/join-fight-restore-star-rebates (1.12%)	/media (1.29%)	/districts/map/new_york (1.16%)

Table 8: Top 5 Most Popular Content in the Sample Year

7/1/09 – 7/1/10 (Sample Year)	Pageviews	% Pageviews
( <a href="#">home page</a> ) /	719,284	12.16%
/senators	489,427	8.28%
/districts/map	106,119	1.79%
/press-release/join-fight-restore-star-rebates	102,105	1.73%
/legislation	101,332	1.71%

### **Senators**

Not included in “content” are the statistics for the Senator Lookup search form on every page of NYSenate.gov. If counted as content in the periods above, results for **Senator searches would comprise 4.21% of all pageviews and 4.72% of all unique pageviews** on the site over it's entire life. These numbers are generally the same during the sample year.

Taken as a whole within the sample year, all **Senator related content comprises a full 40.88% of all website pageviews** and 40.39% of all unique pageviews. Additionally, **Senator Contact Form pages comprise 6.73% of pageviews and 7.94% unique pageviews**. Note, though, that these do not represent completed forms, merely views.

## Initiatives

Initiatives are mini-sites within NYSenate.gov that are dedicated to a particular cause and consist of media, supporting information, links and a call to action for citizen engagement.

Throughout the course of NYSenate.gov's life there have been 12 initiatives. Taken as a whole, counting all URLs that even mention them in the title, they comprise 1.16% of total pageviews in the sample year. This may understate the value of initiatives, though, because they generally deal with a specific issue that has a specific limited timeline and end-date. For example, the most popular initiative, the 2010 Budget, was launched on 1/23/10 and the budget was passed on 8/3/10. While the initiative remained active and continued to draw some pageviews thereafter, interest dropped off drastically after 8/3/10. Between 1/23/10 and 8/5/10, the Budget Initiative was the 14th most popular piece of content on NYSenate.gov, beating out all non-conference-wide content except for a single Senator's page. In fact, the Budget Initiative ranks just above a cluster of Senator homepages, implying that this conference-wide initiative was narrowly more popular than Senator information during this time period.

Furthermore, the Budget Initiative page had an exit rate of only 26.12% meaning that fully 73.88% of views for that page resulted in a loading of another page. Most importantly, aside from returns to the homepage, the top 10 pages viewed were related to the Budget Initiative.

## Senate Events

NYSEnate.gov offers every Senator and Committee an individual calendar and RSS feed to publicize their district events on an official outlet and make it easy for constituents to receive updates. It also creates several aggregated calendars of Senator events, Public Hearings Floor Calendars, Committee Meetings and Session dates. Much of this information had never been easily accessible to the public before.

Taken as a whole, **event pages and calendars comprises 2.66% of all pageviews** and 2.81% of all unique pageviews on NYSenate.gov over the sample year. These pageviews include all views of pages dedicated to individual events, as well as all views of Calendar pages. Unfortunately there's no way to determine just how useful the mini side-bar calendars that appear on various pages are. If the calendar views are removed, fully 2.00% of all pageviews and 2.08% of all unique pageviews come from actual event pages (defined as a URL containing "/event") which contain all of the aggregated content about individual events including (but not necessarily) location, time, video and related documents.

Table 9: General Metrics for Event Pages

Avg. Time	Bounce Rate	Exit %
1:34	69.72%	29.51%

While a comprehensive analysis is prohibitively time consuming, a non-statistically significant review of the top five "event pages," shows that the vast majority of visitors arrive through



previous pages on NYSenate.gov, and that the most popular succeeding page is the NYSenate.gov homepage.

Also of note, the single most popular event only has 2.01% of all event page views (a bit over 3,000 pageviews), implying that interest in events is fairly even distributed across a large variety of events. Committee meetings are mixed in with Calendars and Session as the event-related content that generates the most interest. However, this data only account for page views directly on NYSenate.gov, and does not take into account the attention that actual event videos receive on Youtube.com or Livestream.com, outside of NYSenate.gov. We will see in the next section these websites, which gather analytics separately, also garner a large amount of attention, making events an even larger part of what the Senate provides online than NYSenate.gov data alone indicates.

## **Online Video**

Tied closely to the success of Senate Events is the major initiative of online video. One of the key changes in the Senate Rules was the mandate that, in addition to the current web broadcasting of Session, all meetings must also be streamed over the web if practicable. In conjunction with Media Services, the CIOs office has worked to wire every meeting and hearing room with video recording capability and has provided systems for streaming the video live over the web as well as hosting archives online. This greatly enhances the ability of constituents to follow the events and business of the Senate without requiring them to be in Albany.

The Senate uses two key providers for these services: Livestream and Youtube. Because these are third party websites, with video embedded into NYSenate.gov, but also with the ability for constituents to view video directly on their sites, event web traffic is split among NYSenate.gov, Livestream.com and Youtube.com. Youtube provides free analytics, and its benefits as a free provider of unlimited video storage and hosting are of great benefit to the Senate financially. In addition, Senate videos are much more likely to gain viewership and “go viral” by being directly accessible on Youtube.com, as versus being accessible only on NYSenate.gov

The Senate has two YouTube accounts:

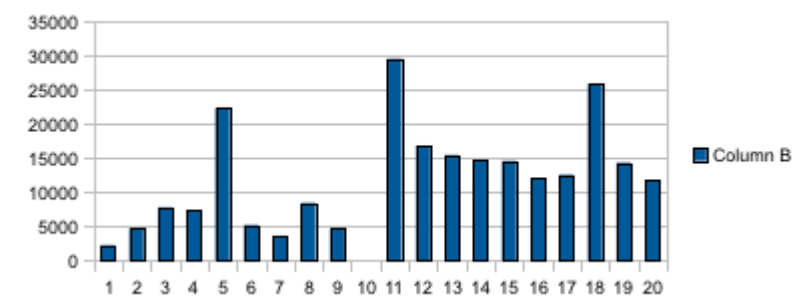
- The “NYSEnate” YouTube channel, created on 2/13/09, where short video clips and edited features are presented, and
- The “NYSEnateuncut” YouTube channel, created on 4/23/09, where complete event footage is displayed in its raw form without any editing.

The NYSenate channel, with its shorter clips, is between 8-11 times more popular than the NYSenateuncut channel in any given week.

**As of 12/22/10, NYSenate YouTube channels have garnered a total of 753,951 views of a video, since their creation.** As measured by “views” of a video relative to “page views” on NYSenate.gov, YouTube constitutes 31% of NYSenate.gov’s lifetime web traffic. However, approximately 40% of these Youtube views come from embedded players outside of Youtube.com itself, some fraction of which are embedded within, and thus double-counted

with page views on, NYSenate.gov. Of course, each “view” of a video implies several minutes (and in some cases, an hour or more) of interaction with Senate content, so a YouTube “view” could be construed as more valuable engagement than a single page view on NYSenate.gov, if length of user engagement were the goal. Bottom-line, Youtube has become one of the primary online resources through which constituents interact with NYSenate content.

Chart 2: NYSenate Youtube Monthly Views from 3/1/09-10/31/10 (excluding December 2009)



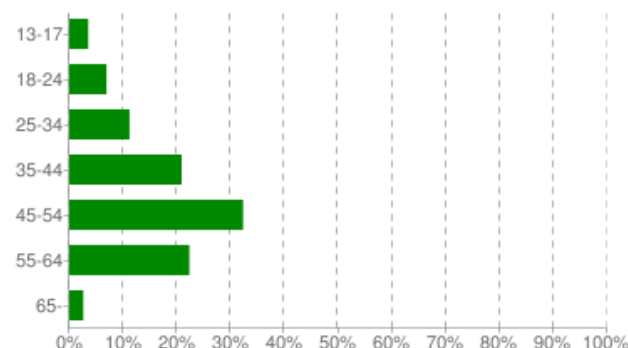
The Diane Savino Marriage Equality speech from the Senate floor continues to be the most popular video on NYSenate Youtube channel virtually every week, and accounts for somewhere between 20-35% of video views on average in any given period. NYSenate Youtube viewership has maintained a baseline level >100% higher since the Marriage Equality debate relative to before that debate, leaving 75-80% of the overall increase going to NY Senate content other than Savino’s speech.

Unfortunately, because of this huge traffic spike in December 2009 and the natural decline after that event, it's difficult to determine whether the overall trend of viewership is rising over time or whether the baseline has simply been reset.

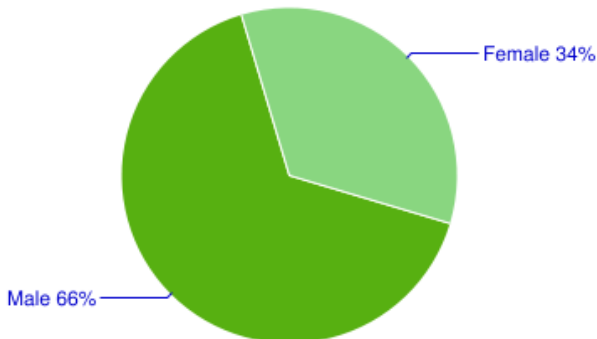
Chart 3: NYSenate Youtube Demographics

### Demographics

Age ranges for: ☒ All ☐ Male ☐ Female



Genders for all age groups



The Senate's other online video resource, Livestream, allows for the live webcasting of Senate events across 50 channels covering Session, every Committee and miscellaneous events. **These fifty channels have accounted for more than 9.3 million minutes of live video viewed by more than 280,000 unique people, since the launch of these channels in May of 2009.**

**The channel covering Session alone accounts for about 88% of all Livestream viewership**, having served 700,398 total streams to 242,424 unique viewers over its lifetime, which equates to about 28% of the number of page views on NYSenate.gov, and 16% of unique visitors to NYSenate.gov, during the same time period. Note however, that many of these views come from Livestream players embedded inside of NYSenate.gov itself, and thus are double-counted with NYSenate.gov page views. **The Marriage Equality debate accounted for 260,429 streams in that case over the course of 12/2/09, peaking at 14,000 concurrent viewers during towards the end of the floor debate.**

More than 65% of NYSenate Livestream viewers have viewed a live Senate Session event multiple times, and NYSenate Livestream channels, like YouTube, has become a primary online resource through which constituents interact with NYSenate content.

Table 10: Livestream Channel Statistics

	Total Viewer Min	Total Streams	Avg. Time/viewer	Total Unique Viewers	% New Visitors
NYSenate	8164728	708149	12	245798	35
NYSenate2	212888	8502	25	3358	39
NYSenate3	35633	4100	9	1917	47
NYSenate4	66367	1965	34	820	42
Aging	5243	323	16	119	37
Agriculture	40408	862	47	358	42
Banks	3324	252	13	101	40
Budget and Tax Reform	1747	161	11	59	37
Children Families	2009	215	9	82	38
Cities	1189	224	5	78	35
Civil Service Pensions	3592	428	8	174	41
Codes	16160	864	19	354	41
Commerce	2354	198	12	72	36

Consumer Protection	4152	248	17	97	39
Corporations Authorities Commissions	110874	2393	46	829	35
Cultural Affairs	16874	717	24	361	50
Education	12302	403	31	153	38
Elections	10423	462	23	177	38
Energy Telecoms	9480	704	13	197	28
Environment	245	75	3	15	20
Ethics	567	132	4	39	30
Finance	16398	1358	12	476	35
Gaming	3794	174	22	62	36
Health	47122	1836	26	665	36
Higher Education	48781	1563	31	682	44
Housing	2439	176	14	66	38
Insurance	7405	370	20	160	43
Investigations Government Ops	82864	12884	6	4765	37
Joint Budget	309213	41864	7	16305	39
Judiciary	5958	605	10	265	44
Labor	27801	2098	13	919	44
Local Government	3119	288	11	118	41
Mental Health	1477	164	9	64	39
Minority News Conference	18864	396	48	140	35
MTA CPRB	573	95	6	34	36
Puerto Rican Latino Caucus	683	116	6	47	41
Rules	16649	521	32	191	37
Social Services	2195	184	12	60	33
Transportation	6069	549	11	188	34
Upstate Caucus	393	85	5	26	31

Veterans Homeland Security Military	2702	197	14	83	42
Victims Crime Corrections	10382	481	22	196	41
Rules Reform and Administration	391	79	5	35	44
<b>Total</b>	9335831	797460		280705	
<b>Total w/o Session</b>	1171103	89311		34907	
<b>% of non-session</b>	12.54%	11.2%		12.4%	

## Open Legislation

The Open Legislation website has received a total of 525,167 visits and 1,707,448 page views. This is equivalent to 23% of NYSenate.gov's visits during the same time period, and the proportion of traffic on OpenLegislation relative to NYSenate.gov is growing steadily. A total of **2,920 unique websites have linked back to Open Legislation** since it's creation.

**Almost twice as much traffic comes to Open Legislation via Google searches, than comes from NYSenate.gov directly.** This underscores the importance of the strong search engine optimization (SEO) inherent in the design of Open Legislation. The primary source for Senate bill information prior to the launch of Open Legislation, the "Public Leginfo" website, does not even support permanent URLs, so it was impossible for search engines like Google to find and provide direct links to any bill.

***Note that these Open Legislation visits and page view data do not include the use of the Open Legislation Application Programming Interface (API) by other websites and software applications that rely on the Open Legislation data,*** so a significant percentage of the usage of Open Legislation may not be represented in the above statistics. These other applications include an interactive voice response (IVR) interface to Open Legislation data developed by a freelance web developer in Delaware, data "mashups" developed by the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and NYSenate's own mobile applications and NYSenate.gov itself. In other words, the Open Legislation data is used in many places beyond the Open Legislation website itself, and usage statistics for most of these other sites and applications are not available.

Chart 4: Open Legislation Lifetime visits (6/25/09-12/26/10, including 12/2/09)

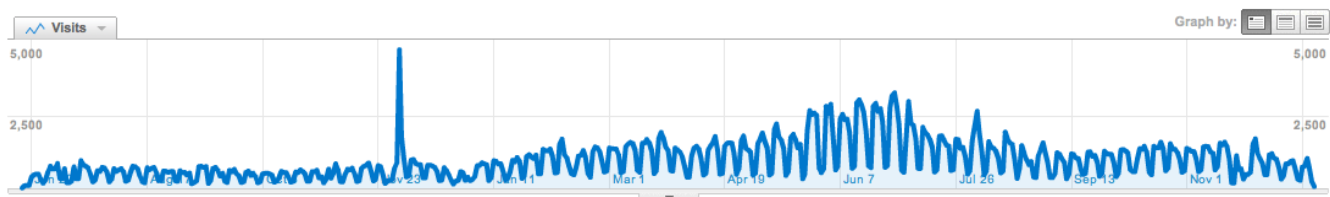


Chart 5: Open Legislation Lifetime Page Views (6/25/09-12/26/10, including 12/2/09)

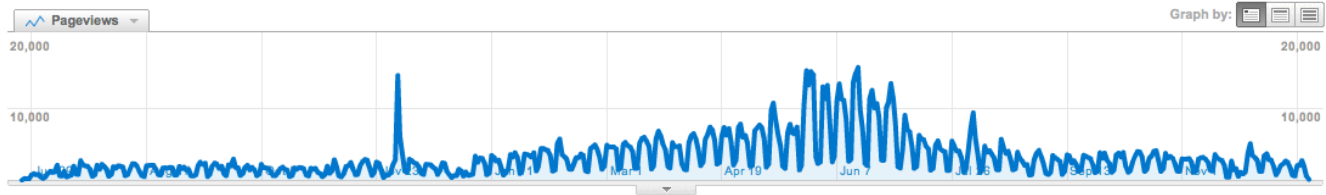


Table 11: Top Ten Open Legislation referring websites excluding search engines (Lifetime)

Website	Referrals
NYSenate.gov	133,111
Facebook	4,358
Changetection.com	2,644
blog.timesunion.com	1,621
mpp.org	1,495
nysscpa.org	1,438
e-cigarette-forum.com	1,289
senateonline.com	1,196
nytimes.com	986
nyscopba.org	722

Table 12: Top 5 Open Legislation Sources of traffic (Lifetime)

Source	Visits	% of Visits
Google (organic)	237,122	45.13
nysenate.gov	133,130	25.34
Direct	66,052	12.57
Bing (organic)	10,646	2.03
Yahoo (organic)	9,556	1.82

See also the notes about public comments on Open Legislation, below in the “interactivity” section.

## **NYSenate Mobile**

The Senate’s mobile applications include an iPhone application, an iPad application, and an application for an mobile phones running the Android Operating System. These applications draw their content from the NYSenate.gov website and from the Open Legislation service. The PercentMobile tracking service gives us the following statistics about usage of the Senate’s mobile applications over the past month.

The first of the three NYsenate.gov mobile apps was launched on 6/15/10. As of 12/29/10, the total number of downloads for the NYSenate Mobile apps are:

- iPhone & iPad Apps : 1907 downloads
- Android App: 1172 downloads, with 442 regular users

In addition to NYSenate Mobile apps, the Senate provides “mobile optimized” versions of its NYSenate.gov and Open Legislation websites, and these websites have seen a steadily growing percentage of total web traffic coming from mobile phone web browsers, per the statistics below:

Table 13: Google Analytics Mobile Web Browser traffic to NYSenate.gov Content\*

Date Range <sup>1</sup>	% of All NYSenate.gov Visits	Visits	Time on Site	% New Visits	Pages/Visit
11/3/09-12/26/10	1.59%	39,809	1m 42s	79.10	1.83
11/3/09-6/15/10	1.54%	16,699	1m 48s	79.09	1.82
6/15/10-12/26/10	3.31%	21,837	1m 40s	77.53	1.87

\*: NOTE: Does NOT include any usage of NYSenate Mobile iPhone, iPad, and Android Apps

Table 14: Google Analytics Mobile traffic to Open Legislation Content\*

Date Range	% of All Open Legislation Visits	Visits	Time on Site	% New Visits	Pages/Visit
11/3/09-12/26/10	2.77%	12,848	1m 18s	73.58	1.80
11/3/09-6/15/10	1.69%	4,025	1m 28s	73.91	2.06
6/15/10-12/26/10	3.90%	8,960	1m 14s	73.19	1.69

\*: NOTE: Does NOT include any usage of NYSenate Mobile iPhone, iPad, and Android Apps

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<sup>1</sup>Google started tracking mobile visits on 11/3/09. The Android App was launched on 6/15/10 with the Iphone app released a month later on 7/11/10.

## **“Gov 2.0” Interactivity**

Interactivity is a broad category that includes everything from contacting a Senator directly to constituents being able to share interesting Senate content online with their friends and neighbors. Think of Web 1.0 as one-way communication while Web 2.0 is two-way communication – whatever is happening or whatever content is being presented, a Web 2.0 system allows people to add their two-cents to it. With the rise of social-networks and increasing demand for rapid-turnaround self-service when citizens interact with private and public sector services online, “Gov 2.0” technologies are becoming *de rigueur* for government websites.

### **Public Comments**

The Open Legislation website has accepted online public comments on all bills since July, 2009, a step that was without precedent for a legislature. Compared to showing up to speak at a Committee public hearing on a bill, online public comment gives citizens a voice with several advantages, such as:

- no cost to travel to a public hearing,
- far less time investment required (e.g.: no need to take time off work to go to a hearing)
- ability to post and update comments at any time (rather than at a single public hearing on a single day for any given bill),
- ability for citizens to engage in an ongoing public dialogue with one another about a bill, and
- ability for legislators to hear from citizens right up to the moment a bill is voted on

In short, it levels the playing field for average citizens to get actively involved in the legislative process in New York State.

The Open Legislation website has generated the most citizen-generated content of any Senate web property, in the form of more than 2,000 public comments on all bills since July 2009, with some bills receiving more than 100 comments. Open Legislation's comments indicate that the Senate itself has the ability to elicit online interest and communal participation in the legislative process. Of course, constituents also frequently comment on Senate content on non-Senate websites, including Facebook, YouTube, and Livestream. One of the challenges of tracking comments is that they can be fragmented across a range of websites, not all of which are controlled by the Senate. There is some advantage, therefore, to encouraging constituents who want their comments to be read by Senators and staff to comment directly on Open Legislation. In addition, the Senate's new “Bill Buzz” service allows Senators and staff to easily be alerted to new citizen comments posted to Open Legislation.

Chart 6: Open Legislation Comments per Day 7/1/09-7/1/10 (Includes 12/2/10)



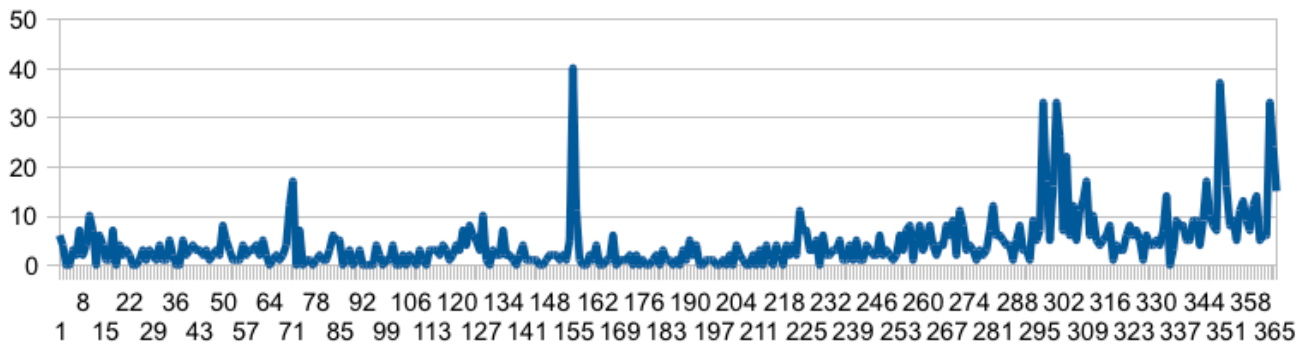


Chart 7: Open Legislation Comments per Day 6/1/09-11/21/10 (Includes 12/2/10)

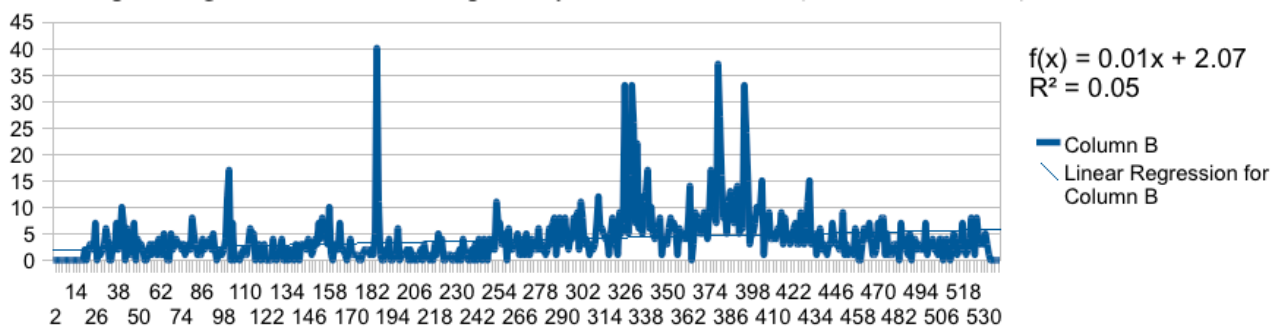


Table 15: Top 5 Commented NYSenate Videos on Youtube

Video	Comments	Views
NYS Senator Diane Savino speaks on the Marriage Equality bill	1,582	419,317
Duane fights to cap shelter costs	79	20,415
NYS Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson speaks on the Marriage Equality Bill	68	23,338
NYS Senator Eric Adams speaks on the Marriage Equality Bill	68	11,022
NYS Senator Eric Schneiderman speaks on the Marriage Equality Bill	7	6,410

### Online Town Halls

Building on online video, the Senate created a “virtual town hall” experience by combining two free services-- Livestream and Coveritlive.com-- with NYSenate.gov, to create a moderated online space where a Senator can speak with his or her constituents live on video, while soliciting real-time questions and feedback.

Table 16: Online Town Hall Attendance

	Online Attendance	Phone Attendance	On Demand after 1 week	Total
	53	16	59	128
	30	16	73	119
	17	8	107	132
	42	8	168	218
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>597</b>

One of the most important takeaways from online town halls is that viewership after the fact has been larger than live participation and adds significantly to the value of the events-- 143 people participated in the four live town hall events, and more than 400 people watched archived video of the town halls after the fact.

Online Town Halls were specifically developed to improve the ease with which Senators could hold Town Halls and the ease with which constituents could attend them. While only done as a small pilot program for a few Senators, the Senators and citizens who participated expressed satisfaction about the outcome of their events and, aside from the first Town Hall which was done in a District location, setup involved little effort, as it took place in a location already wired for video with a reliable Internet connection. The most important feedback, however, came from the participants:

Table 17: Town Hall (TH) Feedback

Total Responses	1 <sup>st</sup> Town Hall	Asked a Q	Liked System	Would Attend Another TH	Online TH Easier to Attend
22	11	13	20	20	22

After each Town Hall the Senate CIO's office issued a survey to the participants asking them for feedback on a number of topics. All told, over the 4 Town Halls for which statistics were gathered, 22 responses were received. While only a 15% response rate, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive with 91% saying that they would attend another and 100% saying that it was easier to attend than a physical Town Hall.

Another important result of the project is the feedback received about the promotion of these events. While the sample of feedback respondents is self-selecting, and it is a small sample size, the most likely way for a participant to have heard of one of these Town Halls was through either email, Facebook or a combination of both.

## Webforms, Campaigns and Polls

NYSenate.gov offered Senators official, Senate branded tools for asking questions of their constituents and organizing around issues. Webforms, Campaigns and Polls are three related features on NYSenate.gov that gave Senators the ability to create forms and collect feedback/information.

Table 18: Webform, Campaign and Poll use as of 5/19/10

	Webforms	Campaigns	Polls
	1158	803	78
	1948	41	55
	5	177	118
	7	9	19
	19	52	95
	7	7	38
	60	13	87
	2	41	23
	4	425	59
	12	126	44
	2	232	35
	23	8	151
	13	8	
	5	15	
	43	596	
	74	1394	
	440	1243	
	104	9	
	103	70	
	20	29	
	14	316	
	13	6	
	13105		
	398		
	30		
<b>Total</b>	<b>17609</b>	<b>5620</b>	<b>802</b>

Metrics currently available for Webforms, Campaigns and Polls are current only as of 5/19/10. However, with over a year of data since the website launched on 5/7/09, they provide a fair representation of the use of these tools.

Webforms had 17,609 responses with 25 webforms having been created. Over 13,000 of them, however, went to a Webform that was ultimately one of the top five pieces of content for much of the year – “Sign up to Restore STAR Rebate” (see Tables 3 and 4). 13,000 respondents in that case means a potential of 13,000 email addresses collected. Following that, the next two highest response rates number between 1,000 and 2,000 respondents.

## **Social Networks**

Since the launch of NYSenate.gov in May 2009, which made it easy for citizens to find their Senators social networking accounts, Senators have increasingly actively used the Facebook and Twitter in particular to interact with their constituents in their capacity as elected officials. Because of the proprietary nature of these services, gathering enough data to demonstrate measure success is difficult. This is further complicated by the fact that, as a government office, we only track Facebook and Twitter accounts which are being used for government purposes and are linked to NYSenate.gov – a number which has dwindled since the 2010 elections, as some Senators began using their accounts for political campaign purposes.

In addition, the Senate as an institution opened its own Facebook and Twitter accounts in early 2009.

One of the most interesting ways to measure online social engagement is through social sharing. Social sharing is how often people take NYSenate.gov content and post it to their own external social networks. While some will invariably copy the URL and paste it into an email or to their Facebook and Twitter feeds, the “share” icons on each piece of content on NYSenate.gov both facilitate sharing, and help track it's frequency.

Table 19: Social Shares on NYSenate.gov by service (Includes 12/2/10)

5/1/09-5/21/10	Total
Delicious	438
Digg	177
Stumbleupon	160
Newsvine	166
Facebook	1168
Google Bookmarks	291
Yahoo Bookmarks	212
Twitter	589
<b>Total</b>	<b>3201</b>

Chart 8: Social shares 7/1/09-7/1/10

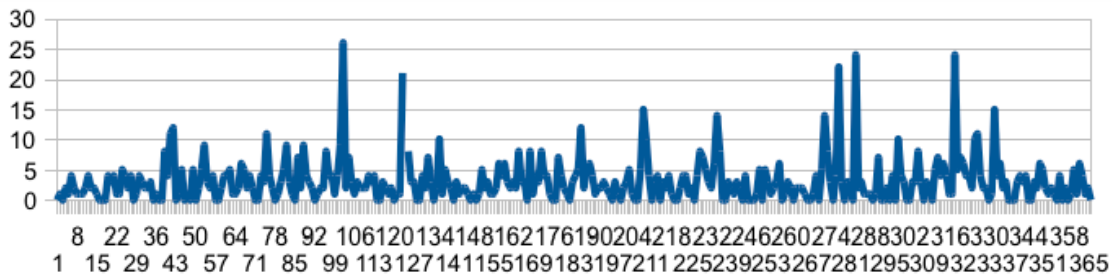


Chart 9: Lifetime fans of the New York State Senate Facebook Account (Includes 12/2/10)

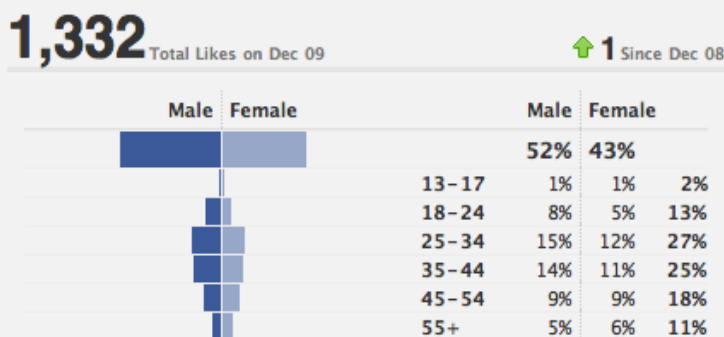
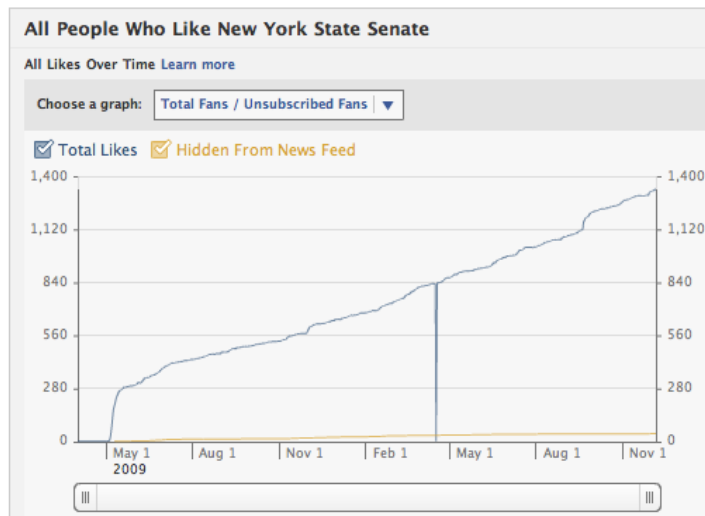
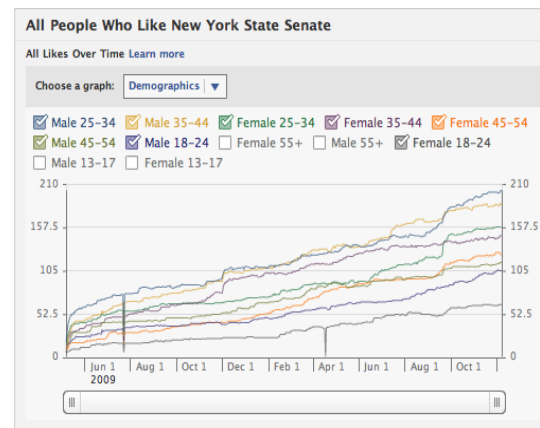


Chart 10: Facebook demographics includes 12/2/10)



With 1,332 fans, Chart 10 shows that 42% of them are under the age of 35. It also shows, on the right hand side, that Males aged 25-34 are topping the growth of fans followed by Males 35-44 and then Female 25-24.

## “Viral” Content

The most obvious lesson to take away from this entire report is that occasional exceptional events and related content contributes a large proportion of the total consumption of content from NYSenate.gov. Contributing factors to what content get shared widely and thus generates a great deal of consumption (“goes viral”) seem to be a combination of the medium of the content and the message. Often, content that manages to go viral or attract a large audience has been around an issue and has had some sort of interactive or novel feature. There are four viral events which the Senate has seen in the past year:

- The STAR Rebate webform with 13,000 signups as of 5/9/10
- The Marriage Equality Debate with 65,238 unique live viewers on 12/2/09
- Diane Savino's Marriage Equality speech with 417,569 views as of 10/2/10
- Eric Adams' “Stop the Sag” video with 153,227 as of 10/2/10

All of these successes have four things in common:

- they address a contentious issue of the moment with a strong rhetorical message.
- address an issue important to a large constituency.
- Featured a more interactive or engaging medium than a “web 1.0” post of a press release
- Were part of a promotional campaign that included the active use of social media

The first piece of content to go viral was the Star Rebate petition, and, in reality, the 13,000 signups counted above are an underestimate of the reach of that campaign, even within NYSenate.gov. STAR Rebate was a major issue for the Minority Conference and virtually

every single member posted a link to the webform, a press-release about it or created their own and sent out an email or postal mailer about it. Because the petition originally used Google Forms rather than forms stored within NYSenate.gov directly, we're unable to assess the total number of respondents above and beyond the 13,000 responses received after the petition was moved from Google Docs to NYSenate.gov.

The Senate's Marriage Equality initiative page did not receive a great deal of web traffic, nor did the Senate do much special promotion outside of the issue outside of building that initiative page. However, the immense following that had developed around the Marriage Equality issue among online grassroots organizations meant that, as soon as the marriage equality debate started, the links to the live webcast immediately widely circulated on Twitter and Facebook, resulting in more than 14,000 live concurrent viewers of the live stream of the debate. Furthermore, within a week of having made her speech on the issue during the debate, which the Senate subsequently posted a clip of to the Senate's YouTube channel, Senator Savino's Facebook fans jumped from zero (as she did not have a fan page) to over 5,000, and the video clip itself was viewed more than 200,000 times (and now more than 400,000 times). 96,000 of these views came from embedded Youtube video players on Facebook, and several 10,000s more came from video player embeds on external blogs.

The "Stop the Sag" campaign more closely resembles the STAR Rebate campaign in that it was a well organized internal advocacy effort. However, unlike STAR, instead of relying on a hot button issue with a community already around it to carry its message forward for it, "Stop the Sag" was able to activate elements in the community that weren't already organized, as well as build outside attention by bringing an undercurrent of interest to the fore and using high-production-value creative video content to appeal to the expectations of contemporary Web audiences. It was also part of a much larger traditional campaign involving posters, press-releases and attention from traditional news media.

However, the main element that allowed all of these projects to go viral was the fact that they existed on the internet in the first place. The infrastructure of shareable permalinks, official Youtube and Blip.tv accounts, and live webcasting, are what allowed for these pieces of content to take advantage of the viral nature of the Web.

## **Third Party Web Services**

Throughout this report third-party services have been mentioned several times. Part of the CIO Office's mission to improve efficiency involves finding the best services for the lowest cost. All of the third-party services utilized by the Senate, except for Livestream, are offered free of charge to the Senate, and the charges for Livestream are minimal compared to other streaming web video options.