



# **GovTrack.us 2018 Backer Update** **Tracking the US Congress**

A Project of **Civic Impulse LLC**  
July 2018

[www.GovTrack.us](http://www.GovTrack.us)



## **A Letter to Our Supporters**

A year ago we released our 2017 Backer Update outlining the state of GovTrack.us. Today we would like to continue that tradition for 2018.

We publish these updates because we are devoted to data transparency and accessibility. It only makes sense that we should be as straightforward about our work as possible. In this update you will find a brief overview of GovTrack, including what's new on GovTrack Insider, new data and analysis, new site features, and our plans for the future of the site. Whether you backed our original Kickstarter, are a monthly contributor on Patreon, or simply are an avid reader or user of our work, it is important to us that you know what we're up to.

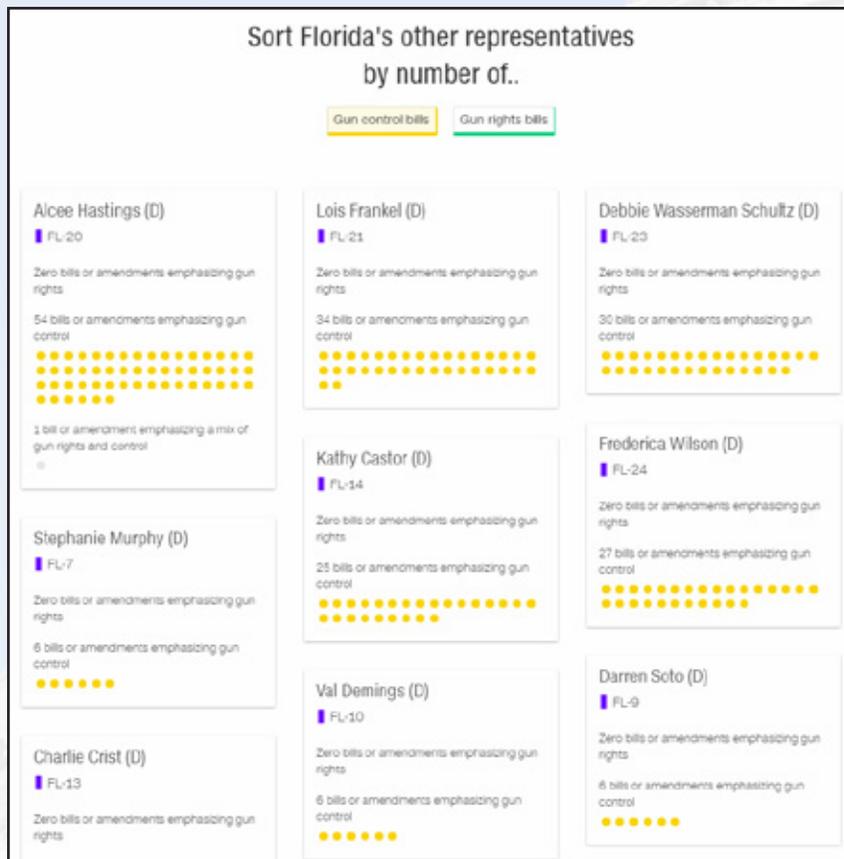
We also publish these updates because it gives us a chance to brag.

Thank you so much for your continuing readership and patronage.

## GovTrack in 2018

This has been an eventful year in Congress, with major legislative battles on tax reform, immigration, and more. Over eight million users visited GovTrack since our last backer update. Less than before, but it's hard to compete with the excitement of an inauguration.

Journalists often use GovTrack data to find and report new stories on Congress. In December, almost every national media outlet addressed the President's claim that he has had more "legislative approvals" than any other President. Many outlets used GovTrack data to discredit the claim, including [The Daily Caller](#), [CNN](#), [The International Business Times](#), and [NPR](#) to name a few. CNN also used GovTrack to track sponsorship of gun-related legislation for every Member of Congress, [you can use their tool to look up where your Members stand on gun control](#), and The Washington Post interviewed GovTrack founder Joshua Tauberer about [whether big data can predict which bills will pass](#).



CNN



## How we're making information about the United States Congress **accessible, understandable, and actionable.**

### GovTrack Insider Reporting

Three years after its start, GovTrack Insider is going stronger than ever. Since last June we've published 109 articles providing context and insight on Congress. We'd like to give a special thanks to our staff writer Jesse Rifkin and communications manager Amy West for making that possible. Here are a few notable articles from this year:

**Renaming post offices is the least controversial thing Congress does. [Here are six times it got contentious.](#)** - 21 bills to name post offices have been enacted since the start of 2017, with dozens more having been introduced or passed by one chamber—most likely on their way to enactment as well. Indeed, during the past decade, almost 20 percent of enacted legislation has been post office renamings. But has a post office vote or proposal ever not been unanimous? Occasionally, yes.

**The House couldn't pass a balanced budget amendment last week. [Could it ever pass?](#)** - H.J. Res. 2, introduced by Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA6), proposed a Constitutional amendment that would have required the federal government run a surplus every year. No more deficits, no more adding to the debt.

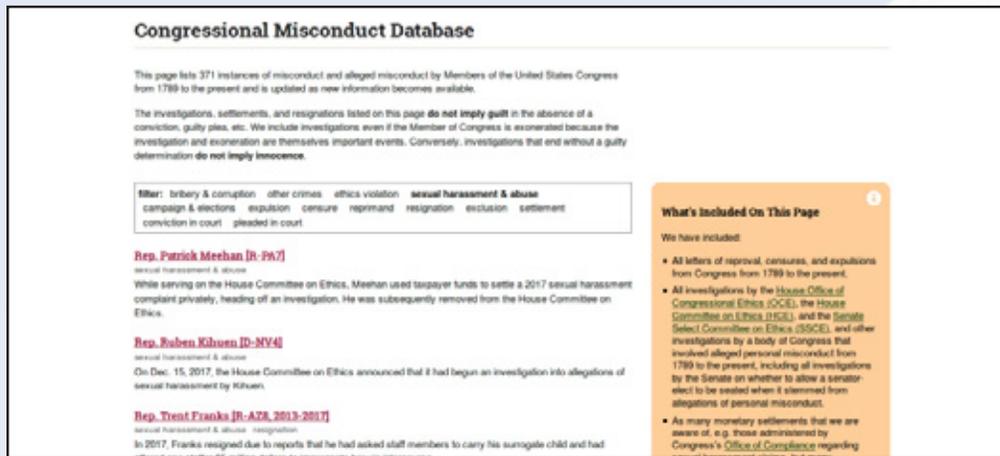
**[12 House members changed their votes on Trump impeachment. Why?](#)** - The House has twice voted on impeaching President Trump—or more precisely, on a motion to table impeachment—once on December 6, and again a month and a half later on January 19. Although every Republican voted against holding an impeachment vote both times, 12 House Democrats changed their positions.

**[Almost Unanimous, 2017 edition: We asked why these lone dissenters withheld their votes on bills.](#)** - Sometimes everybody agrees on something... that is, everybody except one holdout. There were 24 congressional votes in 2017 for which all legislators in the House or Senate voted yes except for a single dissenter. This is notably more than in previous years: there were 15 such "lone dissenter" votes in both 2016 and 2015.

## New Data and Analysis

### The Database of Congressional Misconduct

In February we introduced our [Database of Congressional Misconduct](#). It lists almost 400 instances of misconduct and alleged misconduct by Members of the United States Congress from 1789 to the present and is updated as new information becomes available. Data can be sorted by type of misconduct, consequence, and whether the case is resolved or ongoing.



**Congressional Misconduct Database**

This page lists 371 instances of misconduct and alleged misconduct by Members of the United States Congress from 1789 to the present and is updated as new information becomes available.

The investigations, settlements, and resignations listed on this page do not imply guilt in the absence of a conviction, guilty plea, etc. We include investigations even if the Member of Congress is exonerated because the investigation and exoneration are themselves important events. Conversely, investigations that end without a guilty determination do not imply innocence.

**Filter:** bribery & corruption other crimes ethics violation **sexual harassment & abuse** campaign & elections expulsion censure reprimand resignation exclusion settlement conviction in court gilded in court

**Rep. Patrick Meehan (R-PA)**  
sexual harassment & abuse  
While serving on the House Committee on Ethics, Meehan used taxpayer funds to settle a 2017 sexual harassment complaint privately, heading off an investigation. He was subsequently removed from the House Committee on Ethics.

**Rep. Ruben Kihuen (D-NY)**  
sexual harassment & abuse  
On Dec. 15, 2017, the House Committee on Ethics announced that it had begun an investigation into allegations of sexual harassment by Kihuen.

**Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ, 2013-2017)**  
sexual harassment & abuse  
In 2017, Franks resigned due to reports that he had asked staff members to carry his surrogate child and had

**What's Included On This Page**

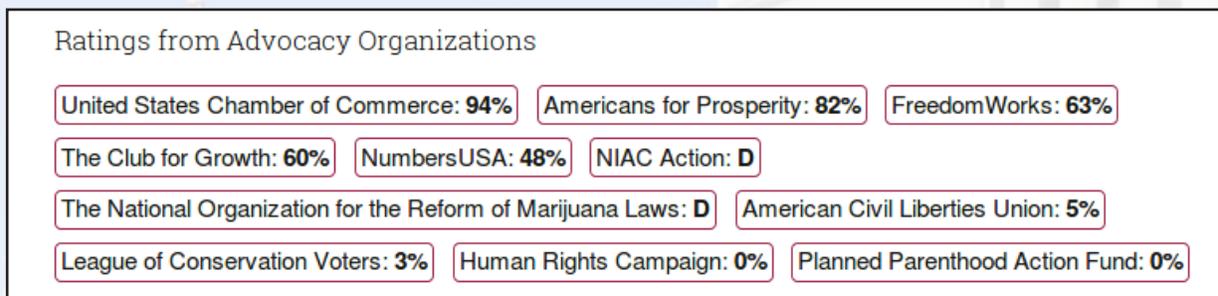
We have included:

- All letters of approval, censures, and expulsions from Congress from 1789 to the present.
- All investigations by the House Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), the House Committee on Ethics (HCE), and the Senate Select Committee on Ethics (SSECE), and other investigations by a body of Congress that involved alleged personal misconduct from 1789 to the present, including all investigations by the Senate on whether to allow a senator-elect to be seated when it stemmed from allegations of personal misconduct.
- As many monetary settlements that we are aware of, e.g. those administered by Congress's Office of Compliance regarding

You can read more about the database and our report on the history of sexual misconduct in Congress in [our introductory article here](#). A special thank you to staffer Amy West for making it all possible.

### Congressional Scorecards

We have also added advocacy organization scorecards to Member of Congress pages throughout the site. There are a total of eleven congressional scorecards from advocacy organizations with a wide range of issue focus and partisanship. We will update these scores periodically as key votes pass.



**Ratings from Advocacy Organizations**

United States Chamber of Commerce: <b>94%</b>	Americans for Prosperity: <b>82%</b>	FreedomWorks: <b>63%</b>
The Club for Growth: <b>60%</b>	NumbersUSA: <b>48%</b>	NIAC Action: <b>D</b>
The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws: <b>D</b>	American Civil Liberties Union: <b>5%</b>	
League of Conservation Voters: <b>3%</b>	Human Rights Campaign: <b>0%</b>	Planned Parenthood Action Fund: <b>0%</b>

Check out a live example on [the page for Rep. Devin Nunes](#).

## View Cosponsors

On the topic of Member pages, we have added a feature allowing users to see the relationships between Members of Congress by viewing their cosponsors. On every Member page is a “View Cosponsors” link to a list of every time that Member has cosponsored a bill with every other Member of Congress, highlighting which Members cooperate the most. For example, [here is a link to Speaker of the House Paul Ryan’s cosponsors page](#).

We have also added an option to our advanced bill search allowing you to sort bills by number of cosponsors and view cosponsor counts from each party.

## 2017 Report Cards

Finally, we released our [2017 Report Cards](#). These special year-end statistics dissect the legislative records of Members of Congress during the 2017 legislative year (Jan 3, 2017-Dec 31, 2017), looking at Members who served at the end of that period.



### Bills Cosponsored

The number of bills cosponsored by each legislator in 2017.

ALL REPRESENTATIVES

most bills

#1	805	Rep. Eleanor Norton [D-DC0]
#2	621	Rep. James “Jim” McGovern [D-MA2]
... <a href="#">EXPAND</a> ...		
#437	13	Rep. John Curtis [R-UT3]
#438	2	Rep. Paul Ryan [R-WI1]

fewest bills

ALL SENATORS

most bills

#1	374	Sen. Richard Blumenthal [D-CT]
#2	351	Sen. Elizabeth Warren [D-MA]
... <a href="#">EXPAND</a> ...		
#99	35	Sen. Bob Corker [R-TN]
#99	35	Sen. Richard Shelby [R-AL]

fewest bills

## New Site Features

### Inviting Legislative Stakeholders to Speak

Legislative stakeholders such as policy advocates, think tanks, or political candidates are invited to post statements on any bill on GovTrack. If a verified stakeholder has posted a statement on a bill, it will appear in a section just below the bill's sponsor and status. GovTrack staff verify submissions before they appear on the site.

### Pronunciation Guide

Ever have trouble pronouncing someone's name? Member of Congress pages now display a pronunciation guide below the Member's name. It might be helpful for the next time you meet Reps. Mark DeSaulnier (duh-SOHN-jay) or Rodney Frelinghuysen (FREE-ling-how-zun)!

### Save Your Opinion on Bills

In partnership with Carnegie Mellon University, we created a new tool for you to save your opinion on legislation so you can come back to it later:



You can choose on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, and you can enter notes about the legislation. Both your opinion and your notes are private – we won't share them with anyone. You can find all of the bills you entered your opinion or notes on on the new What You Have a Position On page.

### Weekly tips

Are you getting the most out of GovTrack? GovTrack has a variety of tools for tracking Congress, new and old. But with so much information readily available it can be hard to know what's out there. That's why we're providing weekly tips on how to get the most out of GovTrack in your regular email update. You can subscribe to receive weekly tips on how to best use GovTrack by [signing up for email updates](#).



## **Creating a GovTrack Community**

At GovTrack, user feedback is extremely important to us. We don't just want to build our site for you, we want to build it with you. That's why we're looking to learn more about who uses GovTrack and what features you find helpful or think could be improved.

### **The GovTrack Advisory Community**

The GovTrack Advisory Community is our way of reaching out to our most devoted users, who are passionate about civic technology, education, and engagement, and about the future of GovTrack. We hope it will foster productive discussion among our users and will help us develop the site to benefit people across the nation.

### **How to join**

If you are a regular user you may have already seen a pop-up asking you to join the advisory community. If you haven't seen the pop-up but still want to join, you can do so by emailing us at [hello@govtrack.us](mailto:hello@govtrack.us) with the subject line "Advisory Community."