

Designing the User-centric eGovernment: The THOMAS Legislative Information System

Chris Testa, Library of Congress

THOMAS

Overview

- History of THOMAS
- Our audience and mission
- Challenges
- Strategies and solutions
- Looking forward

THOMAS

About and History

- Launched in January 1995, at the inception of the 104th Congress
- Current and historical documents and records of Congress
- Search Bills and Resolutions, Congressional Record, Committee Reports, Treaties, and Nominations

The Library of Congress



Congress Now: [House Floor This Week](#) | [House Floor Now](#) | [Senate Schedule](#): [Majority](#)

Search Bill Text 108th Congress (2003-2004):
Bill Number Word/Phrase

Quick Links: [House](#) | [House Clerk](#) | [House Directory](#) | [Senate](#) | [Senate Directory](#) | [GPO](#)

LINKS	LEGISLATION	CONGRESSIONAL RECORD	COMMITTEE INFORMATION
About THOMAS	Bill Summary & Status 93rd - 108th	This Congress by Date	Committee Reports 104th - 108th
THOMAS FAQ	Bill Text 101st - 108th	Text Search 101st - 108th	House Committees Homepages
Congress & Legislative Agencies	Public Laws 93rd - 108th	Index 104th - 108th	Senate Committees Homepages
How Congress Makes Laws: House Senate		Roll Call Votes 101st - 108th	
Résumés of Congressional Activity			

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Where's the Data?

- House of Representatives
- Senate
- Government Printing Office
- Library of Congress

The collage displays four distinct government websites. At the top left is the House of Representatives website, featuring search filters for representatives by ZIP and committee. To its right is the United States Senate website, highlighting the President of the Senate's role. Below these is the U.S. Government Printing Office website, which provides information on government services and access. At the bottom right is the Library of Congress website, showcasing various digital resources and news events.

THOMAS

Mission

- Provide free and timely access to current and historical legislative data
- Educate and inform citizens to enable life-long participation in, and knowledge of, the legislative process
- Provide intuitive, usable tools for finding legislative information, *for everyone*

THOMAS

Who is our audience?

- Citizens
- Congressional staffers
- K – 12 students and educators
- Librarians and researchers
- College students, historians
- Journalists, lawyers, activists
- And many more...



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Challenges

- Diversity of audience
- Diversity of content: Bills, Congressional Record, Committee Reports, Nominations, Treaties
- Multiple sources: Library of Congress, House/Senate, Government Printing Office
- Many data types/formats: full text, database, XML, PDF
- Legacy data structures, outdated interface
- Little separation of presentation and function
- Data process flow and integration

THOMAS

Strategies

- Learn from our users
- Iterative, progressive development
- Implement best practices in Web design and development
- Refine the data delivery processes
- Adopt new and emerging technologies

THOMAS

Redesign

- Launched in November 2005
- Enhanced visual design, navigation principles, accessibility
- Ability to browse by sponsor, links to Senate hearings from Nominations
- Educational features

The screenshot displays the THOMAS website interface. At the top, it reads "The LIBRARY of CONGRESS THOMAS". Below this is a navigation bar with "The Library of Congress > THOMAS Home". The main content area features a header with the THOMAS logo and a sub-header: "In the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, legislative information from the Library of Congress". A blue banner below the header says "Explore new features that we are working on and let us know what you think!". The interface is organized into several columns. On the left is a vertical navigation menu with links such as "THOMAS Home", "About THOMAS", "Bills, Resolutions", "Congressional Record", "Presidential Nominations", "Treaties", "Committee Reports", "Government Resources", "For Teachers", and "Help". Below this menu is a section for "Related Resources at the Library" with links to "Law Library of Congress", "Century of Lawmaking", "Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention", and "Related Webcasts from the Library". The central column contains a "Legislation in Current Congress" section with a search box for "Search Bill Text" and radio buttons for "Word/Phrase" and "Bill Number". Below the search is a "Browse Bills by Sponsor" section with dropdown menus for "Select a Representative" and "Select a Senator", each with a "GO" button. Further down is a "Find More Legislation" section with links to "Search Multiple, Previous Congresses", "Appropriations Bills", and "Public Laws". The bottom of the central column has an "Other Legislative Activity" section with links to "Congressional Record", "Committee Reports", "Presidential Nominations", "Treaties", and "Roll Call Votes". On the right side, there are three highlighted boxes: "Current Activity" with links to "Yesterday in Congress", "Congressional Record Latest Daily Digest", "On the House Floor Now", and "Schedules, Calendars"; "Learn" with links to "The Supreme Court", "The Legislative Process", "Declaration of Independence", "U.S. Constitution", and "Constitution Day (Sept. 17)"; and "Features" with a small image and text about "Publishing the Declaration of Independence" by Robin Shields, with a "Running Time: 27 min."

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The BETA

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS [Try New THOMAS Features](#)

The Library of Congress > [New THOMAS Features Home](#)



THOMAS

Explore the new ways to find legislative information on THOMAS

Please let us know what you think about these new features. [We appreciate your feedback.](#)

Related Resources at the Library

- > Law Library of Congress
- > Historical Legislative Collections

Search THOMAS

Current Congress
 Previous Congresses

|| Current Legislation by Sponsor ||

Select a Representative

Select a Senator

|| Current Legislation by Topic ||

- > [Culture](#)
- > [Economics](#)
- > [Education](#)
- > [Environment](#)
- > [Food and Agriculture](#)
- > [Government](#)
- > [Health](#)
- > [Human Rights](#)
- > [Human Services](#)
- > [International Relations](#)
- > [Military and Defense](#)
- > [Science and Technology](#)
- > [Transportation and Infrastructure](#)

|| Begin a guided search ||

What type of information are you interested in?

Presidential Nominations

THOMAS Home | [Contact](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Legal](#) | [FirstGov](#)

Search THOMAS

Current Congress
 Previous Congresses

|| Current Legislation by Sponsor ||

Select a Representative

Select a Senator

|| Current Legislation by Topic ||

- > [Culture](#)
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- > [Environment](#)
- > [Food and Agriculture](#)
- > [Government](#)
- > [Health](#)
- > [Human Rights](#)
- > [Human Services](#)
- > [International Relations](#)
- > [Military and Defense](#)
- > [Science and Technology](#)
- > [Transportation and Infrastructure](#)

|| Begin a guided search ||

What type of information are you interested in?

Presidential Nominations

THOMAS

Search Results

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS [Try New THOMAS Features \(BETA\)](#)

[The Library of Congress](#) > [New THOMAS Features Home](#) > [Search Results](#)

3357 results for immigration in current congress

Search Again

Search In:

- Bills, Resolutions
- Congressional Record
- Committee Reports
- Presidential Nominations
- Treaties

Limit by Congress

THOMAS Search Results

Sort: [Relevance](#) | [Content Type](#) | [Date \(Sort by Latest\)](#)

[Show Keyword Occurrences](#)

Bills and Resolutions results

1. [H. R. 6306 \(IH\)](#) Immigration and Border Security Act (Introduced in House)
Sponsor: Rep Spratt, John M., Jr.
Cosponsors: 0
Chamber: House
Date: Sep 29, 2006
Committee: House Homeland Security, House Judiciary, House Government Reform, House Armed Services, House Ways and Means
2. [S. 2611 \(ES\)](#) Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 (Engrossed as Agreed to or Passed by Senate)
Sponsor: Sen Specter, Arlen
Cosponsors: 6
Chamber: Senate
Date: May 25, 2006
Committee:
3. [S. 2454 \(PCS\)](#) Securing America's Borders Act (Placed on Calendar in Senate)
Sponsor: Sen Frist, William H.
Cosponsors: 0
Chamber: Senate
Date: Apr 07, 2006
Committee:

[View all 1193 Bills and Resolutions results](#)

Congressional Record results

1. [PERSONAL EXPLANATION](#)
Sep 14, 2006 | House
2. [PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 6061, SECURE FENCE ACT OF 2006](#)
Sep 14, 2006 | House

RESULTS NAVIGATION

Result 1 of 1193 results for
immigration in current congress

◀ [Next Result](#)

◀ [Search Results/Search Again](#)

◀ [New Search](#)

◀ [About The New Features](#)

Bill Navigation

- ▶ [Table of Contents](#)
- ▶ [Full Display](#)
- ▶ [Relevant Sections Based on Search](#)
- ▶ [Other Versions of this Legislation](#)
- ▶ [GPO's PDF Display](#)
- ▶ [Congressional Record](#)
- ▶ [Titles](#)
- ▶ [Cosponsors \(0\)](#)
- ▶ [CRS Summary](#)
- ▶ [Related Bills](#)
- ▶ [Amendments](#)
- ▶ [Congressional Actions](#)
- ▶ [Committees](#)
- ▶ [Committee Documents](#)
- ▶ [Committee Reports](#)
- ▶ [CBO Cost Estimates](#)
- ▶ [CRS Subjects](#)
- ▶ [Keywords Based on Document Content](#)
- ▶ [Printer Friendly Display](#)

THOMAS Search Result - Bill, Resolution

Bill Number: H. R. 5306 (1H)

Bill Title: Immigration and Border Security Act (Introduced in House)

Sponsor: Rep. Spratt, John M., Jr. [View all legislation sponsored by this member.](#)

Introduced: 2006/09/29

Latest Major Action: 2006/09/29 Referred to House committee. Status: Referred to the Committee on Homeland Security in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, Government Reform, Armed Services, and Ways and Means subsequently determined by the speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

Table Of Contents

- ▶ [Beginning](#)
- ▶ [September 29, 2006](#)
- ▶ [SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 2. Definitions.](#)
- ▶ [TITLE I—SECURING UNITED STATES BORDERS](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 101. Achieving operational control on the border.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 102. National strategy for border security.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 103. Implementation of cross-border security agreements.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 104. Biometric data enhancements.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 105. One face at the border initiative.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 106. Secure communication.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 107. Border patrol agents.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 108. Immigration enforcement agents.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 109. Port of entry inspection personnel.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 110. Canine detection teams.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 111. Secure border initiative financial accountability.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 112. Border patrol training capacity review.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 113. Airspace security mission impact review.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 114. Repair of private infrastructure on border.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 115. Report on progress in tracking travel of Central American gangs along international border.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 116. Collection of data.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 117. Deployment of radiation detection portal equipment at United States ports of entry.](#)
- ▶ [Sec. 118. Sense of Congress regarding the Secure Border Initiative.](#)

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Guided Search

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS Try New THOMAS Features (BETA)

[The Library of Congress](#) > [New THOMAS Features Home](#) > Search Results



THOMAS Guided Search

Please let us know what you think about these new features. [We appreciate your feedback.](#)

Do you know the name of the nominee?
If so, enter the name below.

If not, [proceed to the next question.](#)

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS Try New THOMAS Features (BETA)

[The Library of Congress](#) > [New THOMAS Features Home](#) > Search Results



THOMAS Guided Search

Please let us know what you think about these new features. [We appreciate your feedback.](#)

What type of nomination are you interested in?



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Guided Search

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THOMAS Guided Search

Which organization?

Supreme Court of the United States (9)

GO

Please let us know what you think about these new features. [We appreciate your feedback.](#)

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS Try New THOMAS Features (BETA)

[The Library of Congress](#) > [New THOMAS Features Home](#) > Search Results



THOMAS Guided Search

When did this nomination occur?

109th [2005-2006] (4)

GO

Please let us know what you think about these new features. [We appreciate your feedback.](#)



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Guided Search

The LIBRARY of CONGRESS Try New THOMAS Features (BETA)

The Library of Congress > New THOMAS Features Home > Search Results

4 results found for guided search

Type of Content:

Nominations

Name of Nominee:

Type of Nomination:

Civilian

Which organization:

Supreme Court of the U

When:

109th [2006-2006]

State of Nominee:

All

[VIEW RESULTS](#)

THOMAS Guided Search - Presidential Nominations

- PN1059-109 Samuel A. Alito, Jr.**
Position: Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Organization: Supreme Court of the United States
Predecessor: Sandra Day O'Connor, retiring.
Received: 2005/11/10
Referred: Senate Judiciary
Latest Action: January 31, 2006 - Confirmed by the Senate by Yea-Nay Vote, 58 - 42. Record Vote Number: 2.
Nomination: PN1059-109
- PN978-109 Harriet Ellen Miers**
Position: Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Organization: Supreme Court of the United States
Predecessor: Sandra Day O'Connor, retiring.
Received: 2005/10/07
Referred: Senate Judiciary
Latest Action: October 28, 2005 - Received message of withdrawal of nomination from the President.
Nomination: PN978-109
- PN801-109 John G. Roberts, Jr.**
Position: Chief Justice of the United States
Organization: Supreme Court of the United States
Predecessor: William H. Rehnquist, deceased.
Received: 2005/09/06
Referred: Senate Judiciary
Latest Action: September 29, 2005 - Confirmed by the Senate by Yea-Nay Vote, 78 - 22. Record Vote Number: 245.
Nomination: PN801-109
- PN786-109 John G. Roberts, Jr.**
Position: Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States
Organization: Supreme Court of the United States
Predecessor: Sandra Day O'Connor, retiring.
Received: 2005/07/29
Referred: Senate Judiciary
Latest Action: September 06, 2005 - Received message of withdrawal of nomination from the President.
Nomination: PN786-109

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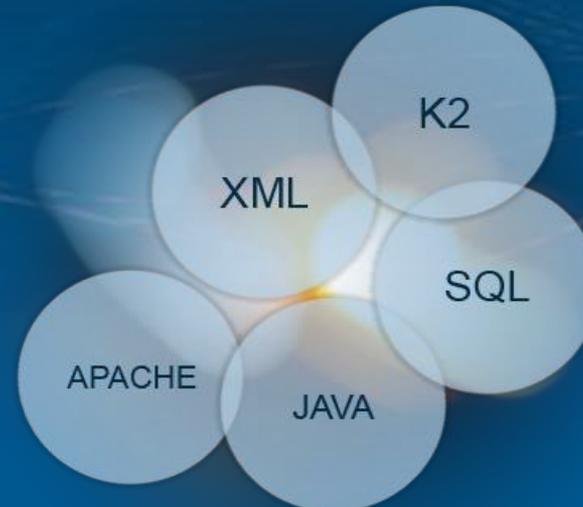
Feedback

- *"i am doing a presentation on Thomas for a class and the new Beta version is great and much easier to navigate"*
- *"I just checked your new system for a few minutes and will be back. So far, I liked it a lot. Thanks for making it easier for us old folks to find `stuff"*
- *"Excellent update to Thomas! This will make tracking bills much easier. It would be nice to look at past issues of the Congressional Record--instead of just the current date."*
- *"I think the changes are GREAT. Keep them coming . THOMAS is quite informative."*

THOMAS

BETA Architecture

- Java / JSP application architecture
- Taxonomies, controlled vocabularies
- Enabled for re-use
- Development of shared architectures for public and internal systems



THOMAS

Looking Forward

Syndication

- Implementation of RSS feeds for legislative updates
- Development of widgets, gadgets

BETA into Production

- Usability testing
- Roll out of new functions
- E-mail alerting
- Saved searches
- Interactive, educational features
- Advanced searching
- Persistent URLs

THOMAS

In Closing

"And say, finally, whether peace is best preserved by giving energy to the government or information to the people. This last is the most certain and the most legitimate engine of government. Educate and inform the whole mass of the people...They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty."

--Thomas Jefferson to James Madison

THOMAS

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