CONGRESSIONAL HACKATHON 5.0 REPORT

On September 14, 2023, hundreds of members of the Congressional Community, along with the Speaker of the House and other Congressional Leaders, gathered for a five-hour event in the U.S. Capitol's CVC Auditorium. This was the 5th such event over twelve years, to collaborate with each other and ideate on how technology can improve the Legislative Branch. And it was the first with institutional support, which was a recommendation of the recent House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, with the Chief Administrator's Office (CAO) being a co-host along with bipartisan House leaders.

This report is an attempt to capture all that occurred on this day, with the hope that many of the ideas will be further explored, and perhaps implemented and built upon.

We'd like to thank all who came, from within Congress and from the public, to volunteer their time, energy, and ideas to this open, innovative, and collaborative effort of twelve years and counting. And we hope the community continues in various ways the vital effort of strengthening the institution of Congress through modern technology.

—Organizers

VIDEOS

Hackathon Recap: **https://youtu.be/f1EHt3VdYIk**

Hackathon Part 1: **https://youtu.be/kcsIpweuyT4**

Hackathon Part 2: **https://youtu.be/bAlCRFbgnSw**

TOP RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

There are five action items, developed from discussions at the Hackathon, that we wanted to highlight for immediate consideration.

Generate Bill Summaries with AI

One lightning round talk focused on using generative AI technologies to streamline the summary-writing process and providing an AI-generated short summary of bill text in the absence of a CRS-authored one. This could eventually lead to generating full section-by-section summaries of legislation; surfacing current and prior bills in related policy areas; and integrating a site-wide chatbot to help users find their desired information more rapidly.

Create a Legislative Branch Staff Directory

While this idea has been raised at previous Congressional Hackathons and as a Modernization Committee recommendation, the legislative data breakout group did a deep dive into requirements, concerns and possible outcomes.

Improve Social Media Tracking

Staff spend hours manually tracking social media usage and responses. A new system could be created to track topics discussed by members to analyze their impact on social media engagement. This platform could integrate with CMSs and analytics dashboards for deeper insights.

Develop a House Calendar

The House Digital Service team created Deconflict, a digital calendar tool created by the House Digital Service designed to help committees schedule hearings and markups with fewer member conflicts. The same basic tool can be transformed into a House Calendar accessible by all House staff as a clean, user-friendly interface to show committee activity and help organize schedules.

Create an Anonymized Constituent Casework Database

The Constituent Services breakout group discussed the importance conducting more advanced data analysis on casework, as well as developing a universal tagging system for cases to facilitate seamless transfer and comparison, potentially by implementing an automated system for tagging and reporting casework. The Modernization Committee previously passed a recommendation that “The House should develop an optional system to allow offices to share anonymized constituent casework data and aggregate that information to identify trends and systemic issues to better serve constituents.”

REMARKS FROM LEADERS

Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy

I'm Kevin McCarthy. I'll give you a little. I know what most of you are thinking. Most speakers make it on the first round, right? It took me, but it takes you a while to get it right. That's the way I kind of look at government and what you're all doing today.

Every day I wake up, and one of the things that when I became Speaker, I thought everything doesn't have to be partisan. And one of the things we've done very well together is Steny Hoyer started this with Eric Cantor. We continued on, and Hakeem Democratic Leader is going to be here too. And one thing Hakeem and I have been working on too is how do we improve government? How do we make it more efficient, more effective, and more accountable? And with technology today, it could do great things in our life, and it could be disruptive in our right. But one of the things I thought about is I think this every morning, constant improvement. How do we improve each and every time?

And I don't believe government's going to be able to do this by themselves. And if we're of the people, by the people, for the people, we should have the people all engaging at the same time.

That's why I'm very thankful that you're willing to participate, and you know there's been successes. I want to give you a small example because I want you to think about this, but then I want you to think in a broader, bigger picture.

Think about when we first started this, people were really weren't talking about AI. What can AI do today, right? I mean I look at AI from a perspective that I'm doing a pilot program to fight forest fires that we could pre-position Blackhawk helicopters when a storm's coming for a lightning in a forest and put the fire out quickly before we let it just burn to be able to go and all the emissions and everything else about curing cancer and others.

But think about all the data that government has. Well, there's a way that we could take the AI, utilize the data, and provide it to the public in a different way in a different manner.

But when I first became a member and someone would call your office, it happens to every single member, regardless of whether you live on the East Coast, West Coast, Middle America, doesn't matter what party you're in, and they have a problem with the federal government. You want to help them, but when they call you, sometimes it's at the last moment, sometimes it's a desire, and they're frustrated.

You know what I have to tell them? I'm going to get right on that, but I have to mail you a form that you have to sign and then mail back for me, and then I can begin on this. You know what that sounds like to the constituent? It's like you really don't care very much.

So you know what we worked really hard to finally create just an e-signature. We do it with every package that comes to our door, anything else or where we sign every day. Why was government so slow on the paper? And by doing e-signature, when somebody calls us, you could help them right away, working with the agencies and others, right?

And then we had another Congressman; he had um, he retired now, but he worked with our team to be able to do public reporting on vulnerabilities. People could go look at where the vulnerabilities one from our data or anything else, and we shouldn't. We should welcome that to help solve any vulnerability so it's not there in the future.

So I want you all to think really critically and from a different point of view. I mean the thing that frustrates me is um if you're in town today and you want to take an Uber or a Lyft, you just pick up your app, you hit it, you know when someone's coming, you rate the driver, you could pay on that and everything else, good service, right? Comes closer to you. Why couldn't our vets make a doctor's appointment that way, rate their doctor? Why couldn't anyone in any government agency that a constituent needs to go to, why couldn't they have an app to do that as well, fill out the form, maybe they don't have to go in and stand in line for a long time, maybe they can rate their service.

Some people in government may think I would think that's great feedback. I think from a perspective too, we should be able to create an app within our own offices for every constituent that comes in. Let me know how the service, maybe you just want to buy a flag, maybe you got to get a passport, maybe you have an IRS issue.

I firmly believe in constant improvement. Let me know what that is, and with that data, what can we take to improve and make it happen in a more efficient and accountable way? So I'm looking for vulnerabilities. I'm looking for others.

But now in the whole world of AI, they continue to learn in others. I know a lot of people are afraid of AI. I'm a constant optimist. I look at it from a different point of view. Yeah, I understand the fear, what can be, and we can build and make sure we can protect that, but I also want to understand the opportunity of what we can do, and I don't want to see things that are only happening in the private sector because all the interaction we have in government, if we could become more efficient, that means we can utilize resources in a more appropriate and better way. If we become more accountable, we get greater respect for ourselves and the work everybody's doing. If we get better service to individuals, that's what they want too often in our country. We want to point out the negative, then look at the positive, right?

Remember in graduate school, have you ever done that the SWOT analysis, strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats? You ever wonder why they start with the

strength? You want to know where you currently are. I mean, think about it for one moment with the strongest economy in the world, regardless of what we'll argue about health care, we still have the best health care in the world. We're frustrated with our education system, but still, people want to come from around the world to come and get educated in America, right? We have the strongest military in the world, and it's all volunteer, provides security, and then you go to weaknesses, and lots of times people just start with the weaknesses. I look at a weakness; we put our vulnerabilities, but I just view them as opportunities. And today I view it as a very big opportunity, and if we do it right, we won't have anything in our threats, right?

So I hope you feel very welcoming that we want your opinion, we want your ideas, but I hope you feel from a perspective as a citizen to America, you're making a contribution. I want you to walk away excited, but I want this to be your only day. I want it to grow day in and day out, that's why we come back, and the one thing you'll read a lot about government everywhere you do this has no partisanship whatsoever.

You're going to get a video from Steny Hoyer, who's been a part of this from the very beginning; he's up with the president, so he's a good video later. You'll have the Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries as this is his first year; he's become leader. We asked him early on to be a part of it. We will take your ideas and apply it; we've showed it each time, but just like how AI grows faster, I want the solutions to grow faster here as well. There's no wrong idea; there's no wrong question. Most of the times the crazy ones turn out to be the best, right? I want you to be the disrupter. I want you to question, look whether you like them or not; I think Elon Musk has an amazing mind, right? I was with him the other day, and there's this new book out about him, and he doesn't get any money from the book; he just let the person walk around, and Walter Isaacson is a very bright man wrote a lot of good books, and he wrote this. I was reading this little excerpt from it. He said the uniqueness of Elon is he questions everything. Just because we've done it that way in the past doesn't mean it's right.

Because when they set it up, I don't know if anyone had questioned it, and he said what he was very good at, especially when Tesla was improving so the line would already make cars but how could they take steps away, right? And when you're thinking about from this position, when Public's interacting with government, if we took other steps away, I don't want somebody to come to interact with government and to be so frustrated because they have to go through so many different steps before they can get the solution they need, and they say, oh, forget it. I wanted to walk in and have a great experience and go tell 10 other people. Then we're bonding in a much stronger place as a nation. It would be great as everybody else looks at this is the way you make things happen.

So if I haven't thanked you, thank you for being a part of this. I want to challenge you, I want to encourage you, I want you to think outside the box, and the first thing I've always learned is get people who are brighter than you around. Now I got a whole room of you, so I expect big things to happen to come out of here, and I appreciate you spending time, and I don't want to be this the only moment during the year we do it, and I wanted us to grow and follow through with it of where we go. Am I introducing Cindy Video? Oh, he doesn't give me any role, right? So thank you all, but one of the big drivers of this is Chris Bend. He comes from Northern California, so I think it's embedded in him, on all this, but he's been very helpful in making sure government is much more open and efficient. So, he's a good guy. Thank you all.

CAO Catherine Szpindor Remarks

Hello, I wish I could have just come and stayed for the whole day. Those of you who know me a little bit know that my background is in IT, that's what I did for 45 years, and so the thought of what you're doing here excites me so much. I just want to thank you for taking the time to come and show your enthusiasm and your ideas. I listened to the last presentation on subjects that really hit home, I think, for everyone in a Member office and everyone in the House for casework. I wish I could have seen others, but I really thank you for coming. I'm so happy that we had a chance to join with the leadership in the House to sponsor this Hackathon, and I want to thank Stephen Dwyer and his team who've done an outstanding job. Stephen's enthusiasm for this and for so many other things that he's been involved in, you can't help but get excited. But I do want to thank you for being here. I just wanted to spend a quick second and let you know that I'm really appreciative of everything that you brought to this event. Thank you so much.

Steny Hoyer Remarks

Good afternoon and welcome to Washington. We're pleased to have you here for another hack-a-thon. And I regret that I can't be there in person as the president is in my district today.

This is our fifth hack-a-thon here in the U.S. Capitol. This, of course, has been a year of change. I'm grateful to Speaker McCarthy for carrying on this worthwhile effort, which I founded with then Republican Majority Leader Eric Cantor back in 2011. Speaker McCarthy and I partnered together on another three of these events over the past decade. I'm also grateful to my good friend, Leader Jeffries, for taking over the Democratic leadership sponsorship of this great event. I'm proud that we are finally institutionalizing these events as recommended by the Modernization Committee last year. We are including the House Chief Administrator's Office as a host for the first time.

This event has a history of making progress. We have opened legislative data to the world, enabling companies, academics, and congressional offices to build apps using congressional data. We've greatly improved how the public has their members for helping federal agencies. And we've improved the standardized congressional videos. I hear we are close to a major modernization of the flag order system that we worked on last year at this event.

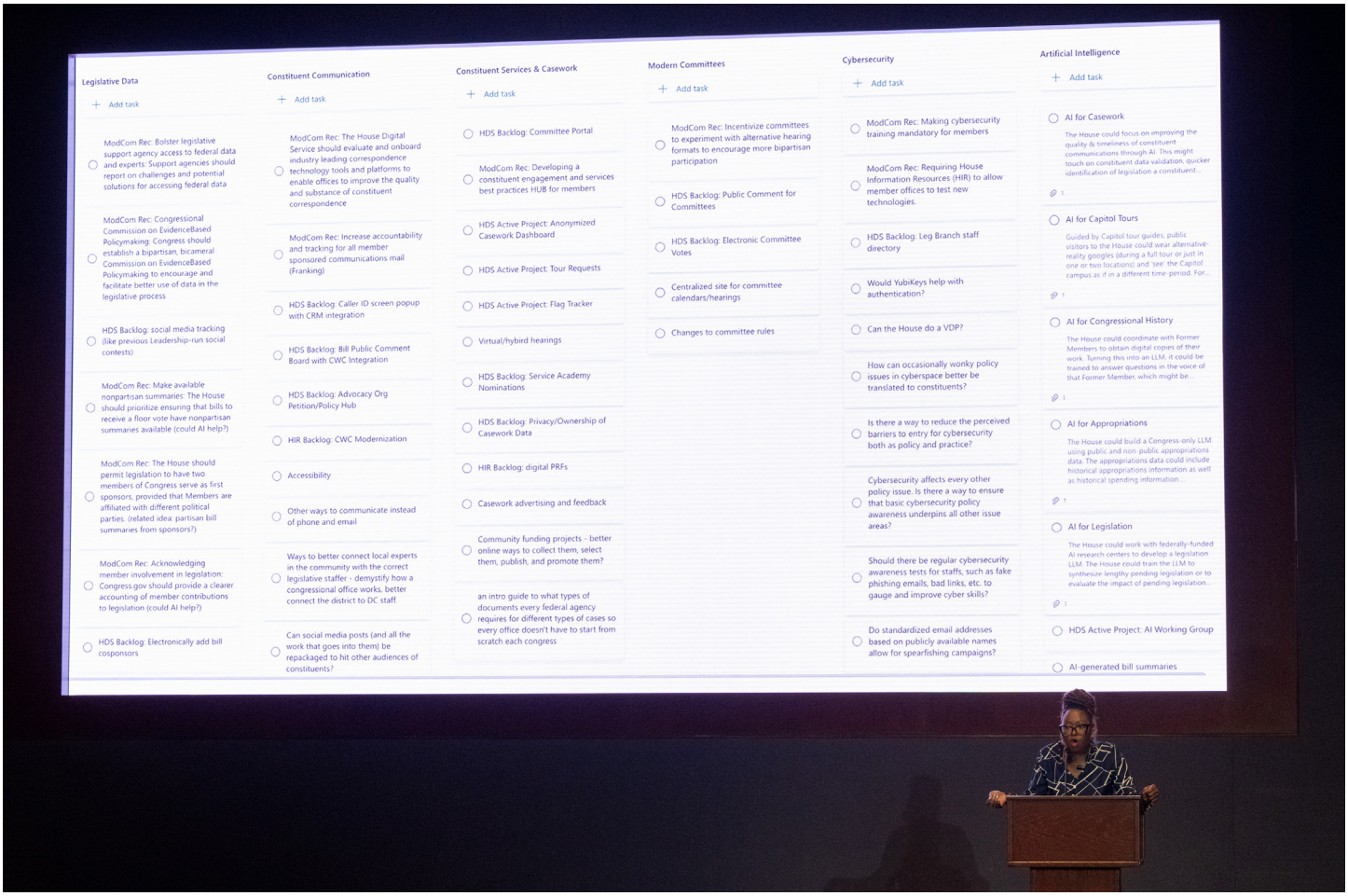
One of the greatest legacies of this event is the community that has fostered over the years. These hack-a-thons are public events, open to anyone. We get a great mix of members, congressional staff, institutional staff, academics, online political consultants, open government advocates, website developers, press, and entrepreneurs. Many of you are repeat attendees, of course. You come here not to advance a commercial interest or even a political one, but rather to advance our shared interest in the institution of Congress. And for that, I am very appreciative.

I join in welcoming you to the Capitol, and I thank all of you for coming. And, of course, I look forward to hearing about the constructed, positive, innovative, and interesting ideas that you collectively come up with this year.

Good luck. Have a great day. Thank you.

Hakeem Jeffries Remarks

"I am delighted to co-host the Congressional Hackathon this year, which has inspired technological innovation both within and outside Congress over the past 12 years. This is a unique opportunity for Congressional leaders, advocates and digital experts to come together to modernize and improve how we serve the people we are privileged to represent," said Leader Jeffries. "We look forward to brainstorming and developing new projects that have the power to transform our democracy and make Congress more transparent and accessible."



LIGHTNING ROUNDS

Tools for Casework Capacity, *Anne Meeker, POPVOX Foundation*
POPVOX Foundation is developing a proof-of-concept prototype that demonstrates how emerging automated technologies may be used to streamline casework and optimize for casework best practices, including transcribing intake notes, writing case summaries, drafting constituent-facing and agency-facing letters, and eliminating manual data entry.

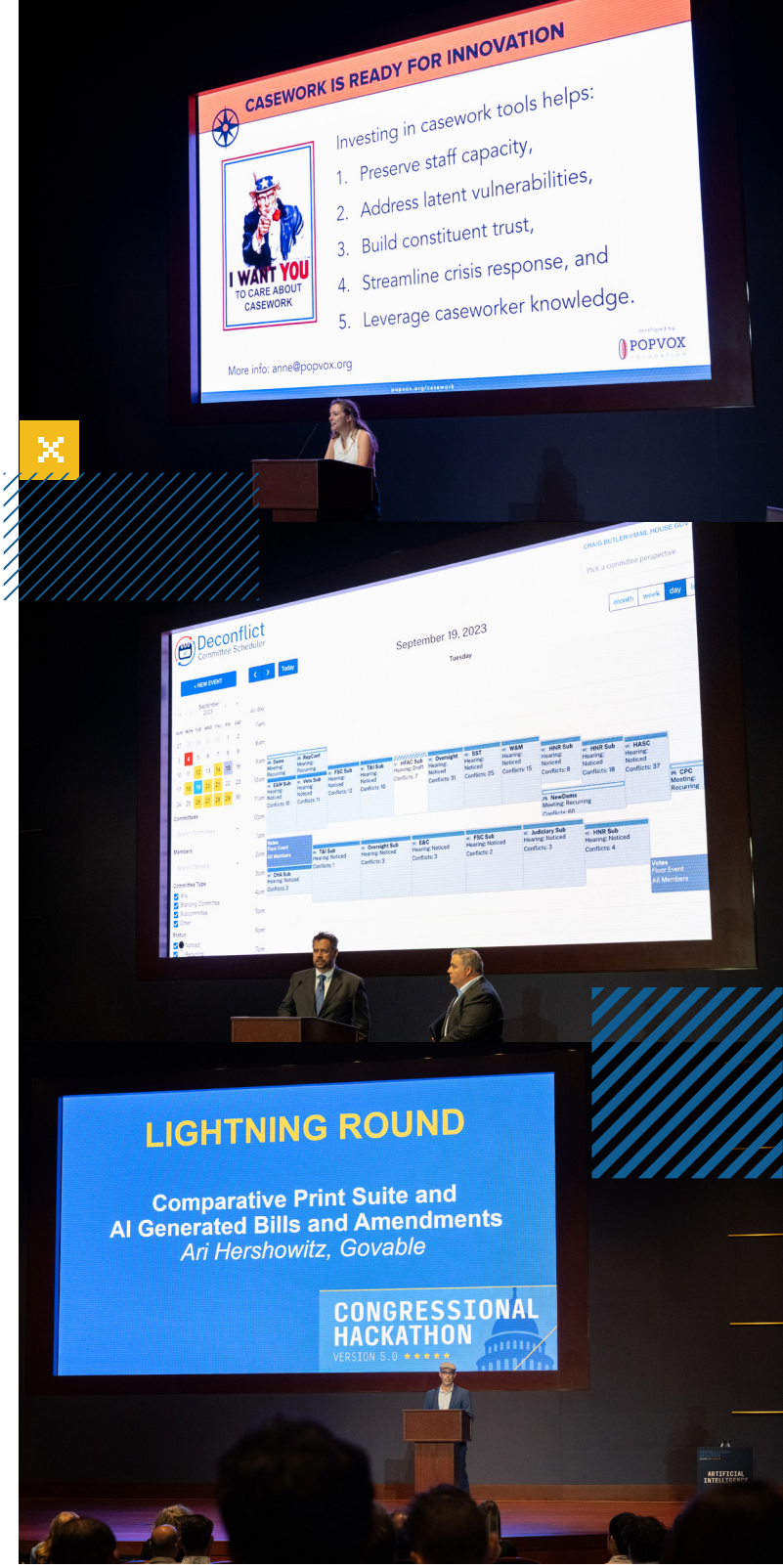
DeConflict, *Craig Butler HDS/HIR/CAO*
At the direction of the Speaker and Majority Leader, HDS developed a committee schedule deconfliction tool, leveraging a newly-deployed container infrastructure which allows rapid delivery of products and services with a high degree of reliability and security compliance.

Legis1, Matthew Chervenak, *The Sunwater Institute*
Legis1 is a comprehensive congressional, legislative, and lobbying data platform that allows users to build connections, harness data-driven insights, and increase their efficiency.

Capitol Differ, Lars Erik Schönander, *Foundation for American Innovation*
Through scraping House rules packages from the 118th to 78th Congress, FAI used AI to build the first way to analyze how the rules specifics have changed.

Comparative Print Suite and Responsible AI Use in Congress, *Ari Hershowitz, Govable*
The House Clerk's Comparative Prints Suite already uses NLP (a branch of AI) to show how bills would affect current law, and Govable proposes a pilot LLM project (Graff) to generate template text for bills and amendments in a controlled context.

Stop Using Passwords in the House, *Alex Gomes, Cyber Team (CAO)*
The CAO offers numerous secure authentication solutions alternative to passwords, like logging in with face ID or with a single click on one's phone, which can be set up through Housenet or the call center.



Verified Staff Directory, *Jason Lemons, Prolegis*
Prolegis has built a new Verified Staff Directory to address the need for an easily navigable, comprehensive, and up-to-date online staff directory for Congressional Members and staff.

Staff with Superpowers!, *Lorelei Kelly, Georgetown Public Policy*
Georgetown Public Policy and MIT's Media Lab aim to modernize and expand constituent engagement outside of traditional town halls and committee hearings through innovative technologies, partnering to explore tech-assisted listening and data analysis in district staff workflows.

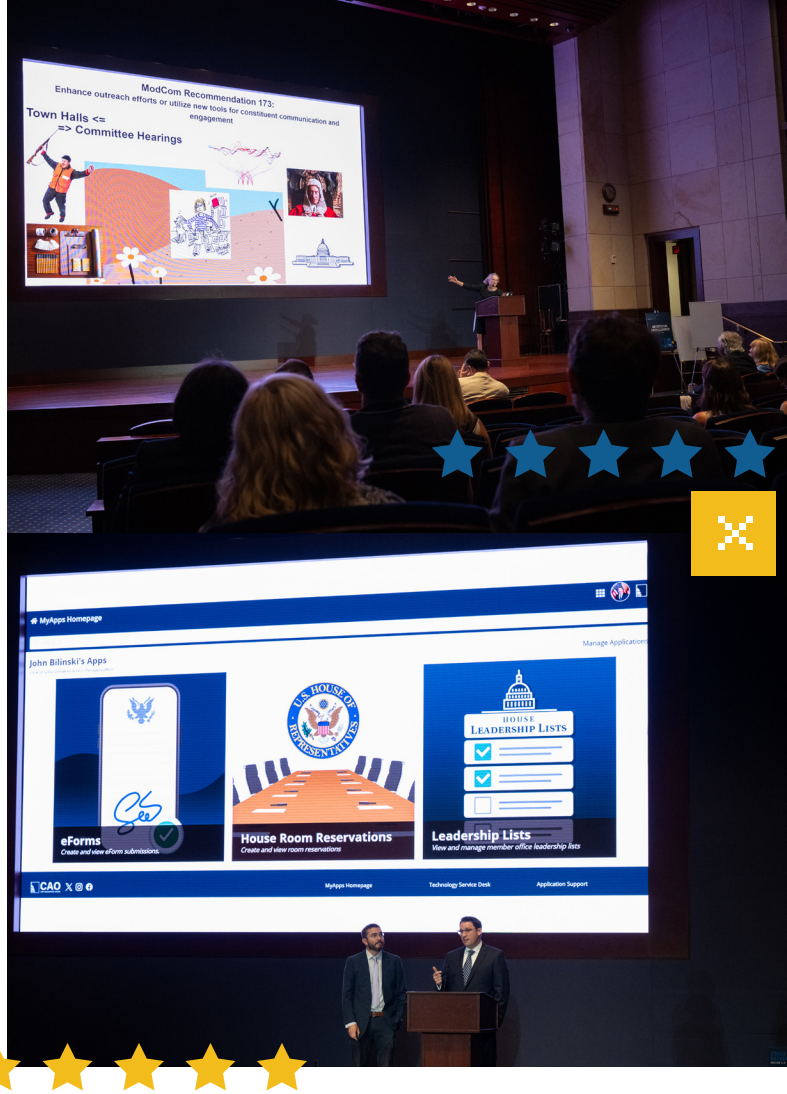
eCosponsor, Andy Doyle, *House Clerk's Office*
For staff who manage cosponsors, the Office of the Clerk's eCosponsor form and API are a set of digital tools that enable easier cosponsor form management as an alternative to the current PDF form.

Texting Town Halls, *Ashley Julyan, The AEJ Group*
Leverage SMS to connect with younger voters to submit questions in advance and then be able to book a period of time when the staff/member can respond to the questions

Supercharged Summaries, *Dylan Irlbeck, Tech Policy Fellow with the Senate Finance Committee*
Congress can employ generative AI to expedite bill summary creation on Congress.gov, starting with AI-generated short summaries alongside clear labeling, with potential future applications including section-by-section summaries, surfacing related bills, and integrating a site-wide chatbot for faster information retrieval.

The WeVote Project, *Andy Curran, Founder*
WeVoteProject.org is a civic technology platform that leverages AI to summarize complex legislative documents and distill citizen input on a comprehensive database of over 200,000 legislative bills from Congress and every state legislature.

AI-Powered Constituent Representation and Deliberation, *Jamie Joyce, The Society Library*
The Society Library created a method to enable "societal-scale" representation and deliberation on one complex issue (nuclear power in California) that can be scaled to other issues by creating a database which maps the various points of view on the issue.



Leadership Lists, *Steve Dwyer & John Bilinski, HDS/HIR/CAO*
At leadership's request, the CAO built a new web app that lets all staffers self-service into intra-party email lists of the major staff positions (COSs, LDs, Press Secretaries, etc), giving each office their own ability to fill their slots in these lists.

Integrating Congressional Data with PolicyEngine's Tax-Benefit Simulations, *Max Ghenis, CEO*
PolicyEngine is a nonprofit that provides free, open-source software to compute the impact of public policy via detailed analyses on tax-benefit outcomes, and they recommend integrating data from api.congress.gov and breaking down policy impacts by congressional districts.

SMALL GROUPS

Artificial Intelligence

The newest breakout group this year focused on leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) for various tasks within Congress. Here are the key points covered:

1. **Budget Constraints:** Congressional staff responsibilities are expanding while budgets remain flat or decrease, indicating a need for more efficient workflows which AI can assist with.
2. **Archival Improvement:** There's a desire to digitize a significant percentage of data, including newsletters, committee transcripts, voting records, and members' positions on issues. Automation could accelerate the archival process, save staff time, and organize data better.
3. **Monitoring Social Media:** An AI system can help keep track of member social media activity.

4. **Knowledge Transfer:** When a seat changes hands or when Members/staff leave Congress, there's a concern about losing institutional knowledge. An "AI Member Voice" could help prevent this knowledge loss.
5. **Datasets:** AI can help identify the datasets needed for AI Member Voice applications, including public data like vote histories, congressional records, and private data like memos and staffer emails.
6. **Constituent Correspondence:** AI Member Voice could potentially assist in answering constituent questions and virtual representation.
7. **Language and Style Customization:** AI Member Voice could communicate in multiple languages or mimic specific communication styles, such as simplifying language for a younger audience.
8. **Political/Campaign Data:** AI can be used to incorporate political and campaign data into AI Member Voice projects.
9. **Machine Learning for Archival Content:** Machine learning could be used to organize archival content, especially for retiring members.
10. **Content Tagging and Privacy:** Staff can create a tagging system that feeds content into a training model while also ensuring privacy and security.
11. **Proprietary Models:** Consideration is given to whether Congress should base AI Member Voice on proprietary AI models.
12. **Podcast Creation:** AI can be used to create podcasts.

Overall, the focus of the discussion was on how artificial intelligence can streamline and enhance various aspects of Congressional operations, from data management to constituent communication and knowledge retention. Concerns about data quality and privacy were also addressed.

Constituent Communications

The Constituent Communications subgroup identified several problems and areas for improvement in the realm of communication between constituents and their representatives. These issues included:

1. **Information Accessibility:** Constituents lack a single source to access and track information about their representatives' discussions and stances on specific topics. Existing sources don't effectively categorize information, making it hard to filter relevant and unbiased details.

2. **Communication Gap:** There's a gap in communication between constituents and offices. Current methods are inefficient and may lead to spamming of offices or delays in time-sensitive requests.
3. **Limited Opportunities for Direct Discussion:** Virtual town halls and forums are impersonal, reducing both the office's understanding of constituent concerns and constituents' insights into their representatives' views.
4. **Inefficient Engagement Management:** There's a need for an analytics dashboard for offices to track social media engagement, prioritize issues based on constituent communications, and manage interactions effectively.

To address these issues, the group proposed various solutions:

1. **Tracking & Tagging:** Develop a tool to tag and track each representative's communication by topic for easier access. Create an automated system for offices to track discussed topics.
2. **Constituent Engagement CMS:** Implement a constituent relationship management (CMS) system to manage interactions and concerns, along with an analytics dashboard for insights.
3. **Bridging Communication Gaps:** Normalize communication platforms across offices, ideally creating a uniform system. Use social media and messaging apps for real-time engagement.
4. **Automated Messages:** Offer automated and personalized messages on frequently discussed topics, enhancing constituents' access to relevant information.
5. **Virtual Town Halls:** Explore integrating virtual town halls and forums to facilitate direct interaction on important issues.
6. **Social Media Tracking:** Track topics discussed by members to analyze their impact on social media engagement. Consider CMS and analytics dashboards for deeper insights.

These proposed solutions aim to streamline communication, improve access to information, and enhance engagement between constituents and their representatives through technology and data-driven approaches.

Constituent Services

The Constituent Services group outlined various initiatives and improvements related to modernizing and streamlining government operations and constituent casework:

1. **Flag Tracking:** Updating the system for flag requests by creating a tracker that shows Staff Assistants where the flag is in the process.
2. **Tour Request Modernization:** Improving the process for scheduling and managing official tours for constituents.
3. **Federal vs. State Issues:** Creating an easier system for constituents to identify federal vs. state jurisdictions in casework.
4. **Casework Onboarding:** Enhancing the onboarding process for caseworkers with better training and resources.
5. **Constituent Feedback:** Establishing mechanisms to gather and act upon feedback from constituents.
6. **Casework Data:** Managing and utilizing data related to casework efficiently by creating a tagging system for casework, potentially for more advanced data analysis.
7. **Establish Vendor Standards:** Setting a benchmark for vendors to ensure competitiveness in CMS systems, such as by creating product "communal specs" or an aggregate product backlog.
8. **Standard Casework Tags:** Developing a universal tagging system for cases to facilitate seamless transfer and comparison, potentially by implementing an automated system for tagging and reporting casework.
9. **Common Infrastructure for Transition:** Ensuring a smooth transition to new systems or practices with shared infrastructure.
10. **Lower CMS Switch Barrier:** Reducing barriers for an office to change their CMS.
11. **Standardize CMS Vendor Satisfaction Survey:** Increasing participation in surveys to evaluate CMS vendors.
12. **Conduct CMS Audit:** Reviewing and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of CMS offerings.

13. **CMS Resources and Best Practices:** Offering resources and guidelines for staff training and best practices on how to use their CMS most effectively.
14. **Facilitate Staff-Vendor Interaction:** Promoting interaction and feedback between staff and vendors, such as by establishing regular group meetings.
15. **Create CMS Advisory Council:** Establishing a council for Legislative Counselors (LCs) and caseworkers to provide insights and recommendations.
16. **Draft Roadmap for Vendors:** Creating a comprehensive plan with recommendations for vendors to improve their products.

These initiatives aim to modernize government operations, improve constituent services, enhance data management, and promote collaboration between various stakeholders.

Legislative Data

The legislative data discussion focused primarily on creating a staff directory for the legislative branch, raising several key points and concerns:

1. **Issue Area Information:** Current directories lack information about staff members' issue areas, making it challenging to identify the right contact for specific matters. This results in time-consuming efforts to inquire about the correct point of contact.
2. **Security Concerns:** While photos can be helpful for identification, there are concerns about security, and staff members should have the option to opt out of including their photos.

3. **Salary Information:** Posting salary information, even if it is already publicly available, raises security concerns if easily viewable in the directory.
4. **LinkedIn Profiles:** Suggestions were made to include LinkedIn profiles to help individuals identify others they may be meeting for the first time.
5. **Comprehensive Coverage:** Participants express the desire for a directory that includes all members of the House and Senate, providing a comprehensive resource.
6. **Balancing Internal Tools:** The directory should complement internal tools and work seamlessly with them, rather than duplicating efforts.
7. **Data Maintenance:** Maintaining accurate and up-to-date data is a challenge, particularly when staff members leave their positions. There's a need for a balance between self-updating and auto-updating the directory.
8. **Real-Time Updates:** Participants emphasize the importance of real-time data updates to ensure the directory's usefulness.
9. **Point of Contact for Issues:** The directory should specify a point of contact for each issue and interest area, facilitating coalition building and efficient communication.
10. **Access to External Data:** Integration with databases like GAO and CBO for issue area topics would be valuable.
11. **Distribution Lists:** Keeping distribution lists updated in real time is crucial for effective communication.
12. **Cosponsor Recommender:** The directory could eventually expand into broader applications. A feature to recommend cosponsors could streamline partner identification and save time.

In summary, the discussion underscores the critical need for an accurate, comprehensive, and real-time staff directory that provides information about issue areas, contact details, and more. Balancing security concerns with transparency and facilitating efficient communication and networking among staff members are key objectives for such a directory.

Modern Committees

The discussion on modern committees focused on committee scheduling and calendars:

1. **Limiting Committee Assignments:** There's a recognition of the need to limit the number of committee assignments for members. Overcommitment can lead to scheduling conflicts and reduced effectiveness.
2. **Committee Location Restructuring:** Consider-

ations are raised about restructuring committee locations to optimize efficiency and accessibility for members.

3. **Notice Period:** The current seven-day notice period for committee meetings is deemed insufficient for members to adequately prepare and plan their schedules.
4. **Gamification:** The idea of gamifying scheduling through the use of gold stars or scoreboards is proposed. This could potentially incentivize members to prioritize committee attendance and participation.
5. **Member Availability:** The availability of members plays a crucial role in scheduling. Implementing a system where members can indicate their availability can help schedulers avoid conflicts.
6. **Attendance Tracking:** Tracking and monitoring committee attendance is important for accountability and ensuring that members fulfill their commitments.

In summary, the discussion emphasizes the need for a more efficient and effective committee scheduling system. This includes addressing issues related to member overcommitment, providing adequate notice, and leveraging technology or gamification to improve attendance and engagement. By considering these ideas, it is possible to enhance the functionality and accountability of committee calendars within the legislative process.

Cybersecurity

The cybersecurity group explored ideas related to bug bounty programs, cybersecurity, and protecting vulnerable citizens online.

The group discussed establishing an open portal for bug reporting with secure communication channels. They suggested methods for validating detected bugs, involving in-house mobile teams and creating communication pipelines with vendors. Vendor responsibility and self-certification are highlighted, and a categorization/prioritization logic is proposed to address vulnerabilities based on importance and application maturity. Public communication and liaisons with the government are mentioned to implement shared cybersecurity strategies.

They discussed using single-touch keys and piv card logic for resource access. The conversation revolved around security and authentication standards (FIDO/FIPS2), separating authentication and ID for enhanced security, detecting abnormal activities, and access control for positions with high turnover.

The group also discussed protecting seniors online, emphasizing safeguarding vulnerable citizens from online scams. They suggested increasing awareness, regulatory measures, and leveraging Congress' resources for public education and caseworker training in cybersecurity threats. They also highlighted the importance of reaching elderly populations that speak non-English languages and using an iterative approach for program implementation.

Lastly, there was a brief mention of utilizing AI in browsers and phone software for defense against cyber threats and analyzing web content to issue warnings.

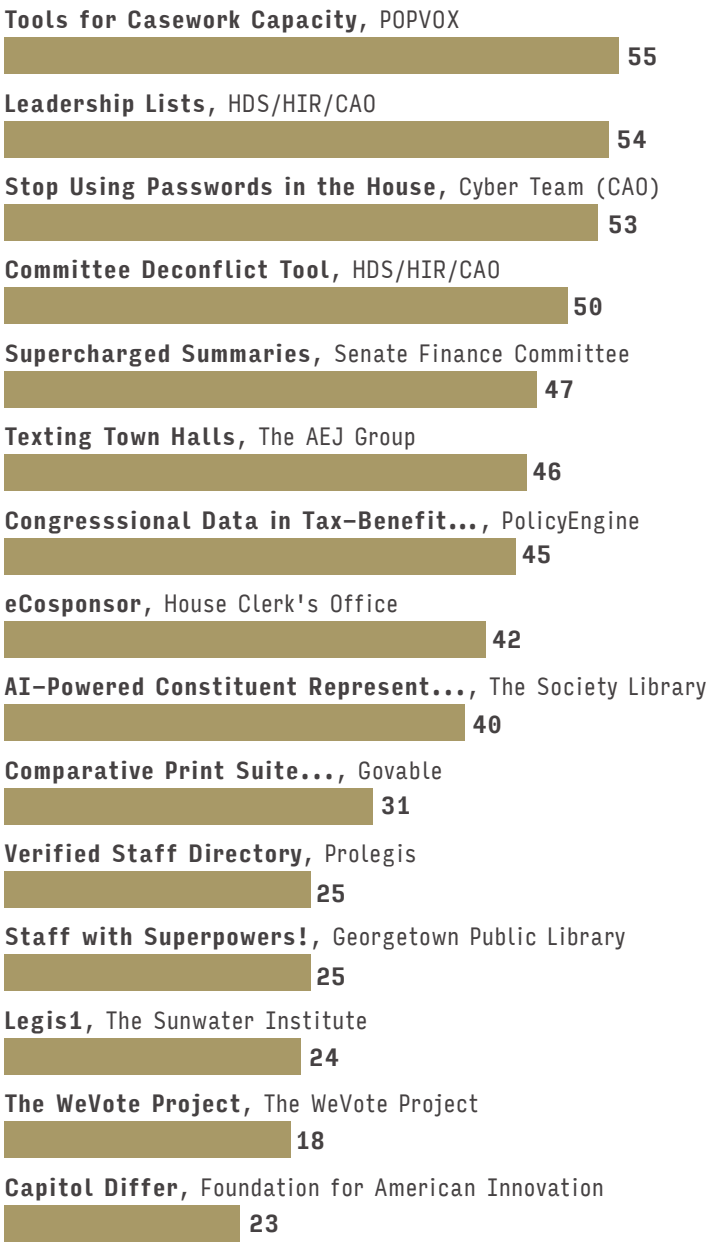
The subgroup focusing on cyberattacks using AI aims to leverage congressional resources to incorporate AI into existing processes and educate staff on identifying AI-based cyberattacks, such as those involving impersonation.

SURVEY RESULTS

(votes on small groups and on lightning rounds, plus survey results post-attendee short answers)

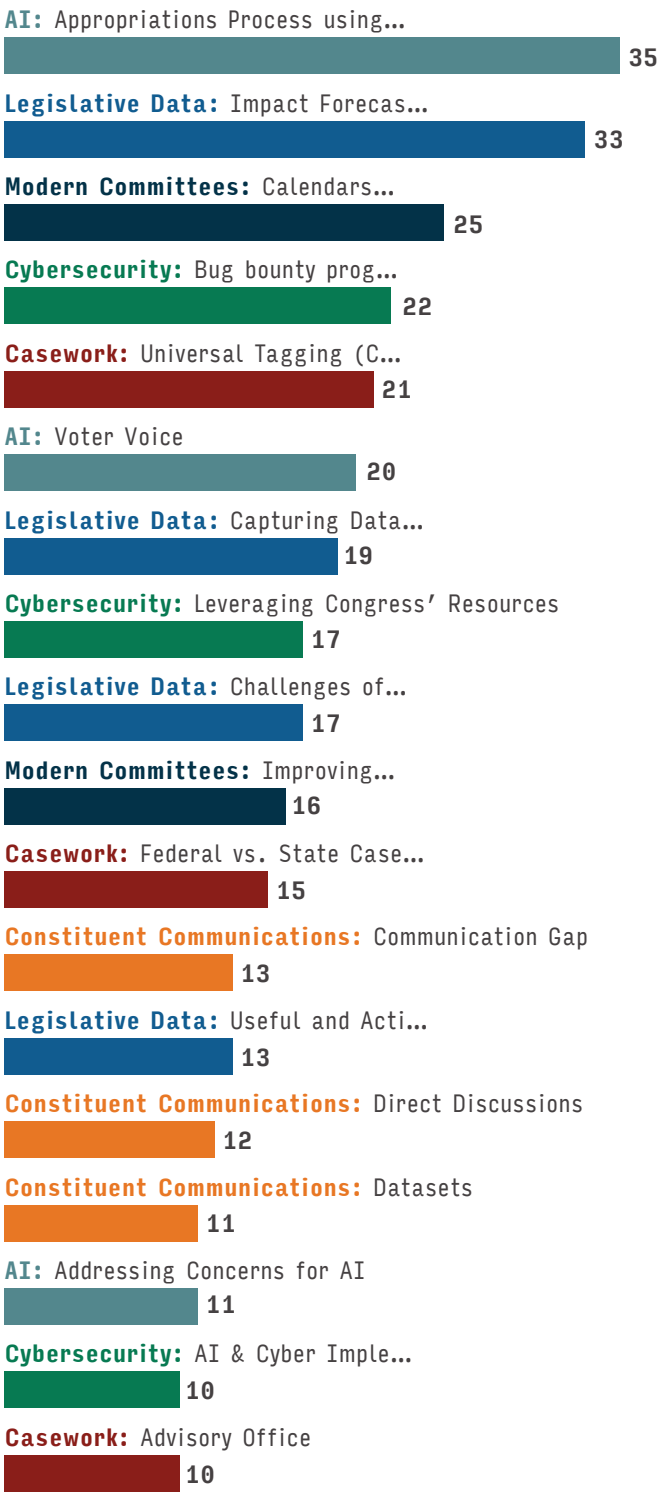
What were your favorite lightening round pitches?

146 Total Votes



What were your favorite breakout group presentations?

99 Total Votes



APPENDIX

Constituent Communications Subgroup

Identified Problems & Areas to Improve

- **Information accessibility**
  - There is no single source of information for constituents to track and access information about their members' discussions and stances on specific topics
  - Any existing sources do not effectively tag or categorize information, making it difficult for constituents to filter and find relevant and unbiased information
- **Communication gap**
  - A communication gap exists between constituents and offices
  - Current communication methods are not efficient enough to ensure continuous interaction
    - Constituents can spam offices with multiple emails or letters, and offices can easily filter out these messages or ignore them
  - Very little support for real-time exchange of information, which can lead to delays on time-sensitive requests and potential miscommunication between parties
    - Virtual town halls and forums
    - Limited opportunities for direct discussion on pressing issues, which reduces office understanding of constituent concerns and also reduces constituents'
- **Insight into constituent concerns**
  - Offices may benefit from an organized (and automated?) system to track and analyze the topics and frequency of constituent communications
  - Could assist in the prioritization of issues based on how many different constituents are writing regarding the same topic
- **Inefficient engagement management**
  - Room for an analytics dashboard for offices to track social media engagement, and how this engagement changes depending on recent posts, announcements, or news

Proposed Ideas & Solutions

- **Tracking & tagging**
  - Develop a tool to tag and track each Representative's communication (video, announcement, social media posts, etc) by topic, making it easier for constituents to filter and find information about specific topics they are interested in
  - Create an automated system for offices to keep track of the topics discussed by their members, helping in keeping the conversation relevant and prioritized
- **Constituent engagement**
  - CMS system to manage constituent interactions and concerns, possibly with the addition of a tracking & tagging system as described above
  - Implement an analytics dashboard for offices to provide insights into communication & make sure it is easily accessible and understandable
    - Analytics for social media, communication with constituents, number of topics discussed, number of concerns per topic, etc.
- **Bridging communication gaps**
  - Normalize communication platforms that bridge the communication gap, ideally this platform would be implemented across all offices for one uniform system. This would minimize the learning curve for constituents who are writing to their member for the first time. (What does this look like ??)
  - Make more use of social media and/or messaging apps to keep constituents informed and engaged in real-time. Infrequent or frequent updates sent directly to the constituent's mobile number, that serve as "Live Updates" rather than newsletters
- **Additional ideas**
  - Offer automated messages for frequently discussed topics, ensuring constituents receive timely and relevant information
  - Offer personalized messages for specific topics a constituent demonstrates interest in. These tailored updates are sent directly to the mobile number or email and could include press conferences, news articles, etc. where this topic was discussed in regards to their member
  - Explore the possibility of integrating virtual town halls and forums, allowing for direct interaction and discussion on important issues, enhancing overall engagement and understanding Social Media Tracking Ideas
  - Track topics discussed by members and when to analyze how it affects social media engagement
  - CMS + Analytics combo dashboard
  - Any way to access insights and engagements for the office accounts directly from the social media platforms? This could provide more detailed analytics for a dashboard, but would require permissions from each member (opt-in basis)
  - Find a way to minimize attention to accounts with lower rankings
  - Create a scoring system or ranking system to gamify the social media dashboard
  - Incorporate engagement into the analytics selected.

AI

- AI Member Voice Discussion Notes
- Staff responsibilities expanding but budgets are flat or decreasing
- Archival
- What percentage of data is digitized
- Sunwater is doing newsletters and committee transcripts
- How did my boss vote or what is my bosses position on an issue
- As a leg staff or comms staff using data set to create content on behalf of boss
- Automating the archival process while members are in congress could speed up and help organize data. ANd would save staff time archiving content.
- Keeping pulse on member social media
- When a seat changes hands, having access to a member voice llm to inform the new members works
- Could be internally passed down.
- Loss of knowledge when a members/staff leave congress.
- Preventing loss of institutional knowledge
- Personal staff voice based on internal llm
- What are the datasets that need to be captured to power that.
- Worried the data will not be good enough to power these tools.

PUBLIC DATA

- Vote histories
- Social pages
- Congressional record
- Committee transcripts
- Sponsorship records
- Member press releases
- Newsletters
- Private data
- Memos (How to filter/contextualize? What if a memo didn't get agreed to? How do you classify those memos)
- Staffer emails
- If an LLM is good enough, it could be used for constituent correspondence. It could answer constituent questions.
- Virtual representation based on llm
- Could help undercut deep fakes.
- Would want 2 versions of voter voice. Maybe a constituent-facing one is limited to non-private data; but for an internal version, it could be valuable and acceptable to use private emails/memos.
- AI Member voice could speak any language or could communicate in the style of a specific audience (3rd graders).
- Can a member voice project take in political/campaign data
- Could machine learning be used to organize archival content for a retiring member.
- Creating a tagging/option system that can drive content into a training model, which also allows keeping content private.
- What proprietary models would be worth Congress basing a model on
- Create podcasts

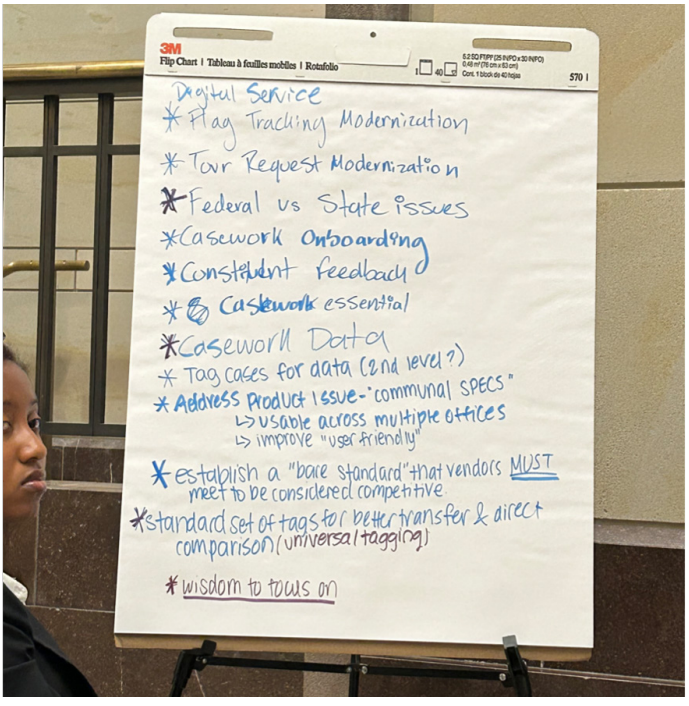
Cyber group:

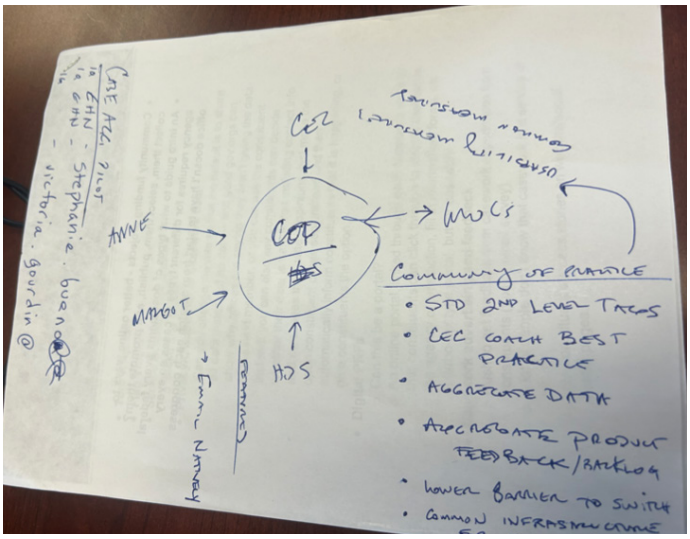
- Bug Bounty Ideas/Discussion
  - establish an open portal for bug reporting on applications, such as a web portal
    - secure communication channel for bug bounty reporting
  - how to validate any detected bugs/0-day:
    - in-house mobile team can help validate for any mobile issues
    - vendors: need some way to create that pipeline of communicating to vendors and getting responses regarding vulnerabilities
  - formalize vendor responsibility/self-certification from vendor to house in order to demonstrate that the vulnerability is solved
  - if something is developed by the house, we need to set up a pipeline so that the developer of that application can have vulnerabilities reported
  - categorization/prioritization logic
    - Basically, a triage tool so that we can prioritize fixing the things which are more important to fix
    - example: a network vulnerability/issue in a production application is something which is very important
    - Size of application/proximity to core business functions determine importance
  - examine maturity timeline of applications
  - implement public communication/liasons with the rest of government in order to implement shared cybersecurity strategies
- YuriKey Ideas/Discussion
  - At dept. of commerce, they're using single-touch key with card to access resources
    - Think about using piv card logic in yubikey?
  - FIDO/FIPS2: security/auth standards
    - if you need an ID to get into a place, why can't you also use the ID to auth yourself?

- Security/Defense in Depth for auth:
  - perhaps separating auth/ID makes us more secure given that it forces users to have multiple ways of proving that they should have access to a resource rather than having only a single barrier to entry
- Detecting abnormal activity + implementing temp lockout based on that activity?
  - Might be very difficult given that staffers are constantly adjusting their schedule/behavior based on what legislative season it is
- Access control for positions with high churn:
  - right now, each intern/short term staff gets active directory entry
  - in order to implement some form of access control, we would have to implement the following at the same time:
    - yubikey/mfa
    - AD backing
    - obsolescence
- Implementing role-based authority systems
  - think about whether interns need access to certain applications/systems
- Protect Seniors Online:
  - Help vulnerable citizens, especially elderly, that are risk for falling for online and phone scams asking for money transfers through apps like Zelle or Venmo that don't refund and aren't FDIC insured. This is a massive problem worth billions of dollars a year
  - Increase awareness around scams asking for banking information and impersonating government agencies (e.g., IRS, FBI, etc.) asking for personal information.
  - Work on regulation to help protect the elderly from online scams
  - How can we leverage Congress' resources? Increase online literature informing constituents regarding these types of online fraud and scams.
  - Increase comms from members of Congress on these topics
  - Training related to cyber-security threats for caseworkers that are receiving calls from constituents regarding these types of online fraud and scams.
  - Have online training modules provided by Congress to the public
  - Elderly with English as a second language are affected. Raise awareness in their other languages
  - Use an iterative approach to pilot the programs on a smaller scale and roll-out to larger groups with incremental improvements.
- Potential Other solutions:
  - Use AI on browsers and phone software and create defensive software
  - Use AI to analyze web content to alert and put up warnings.
- The subgroup focusing on cyber attacks utilizing AI did not send me over notes, however, I think you could probably transcribe their presentation. They promoted leveraging congressional resources to determine ways in which AI and cyber could be folded into processes that already exist and what staff should be looking out for in potential cyber attacks utilizing AI (ex: impersonating humans).

Constituent Casework Group

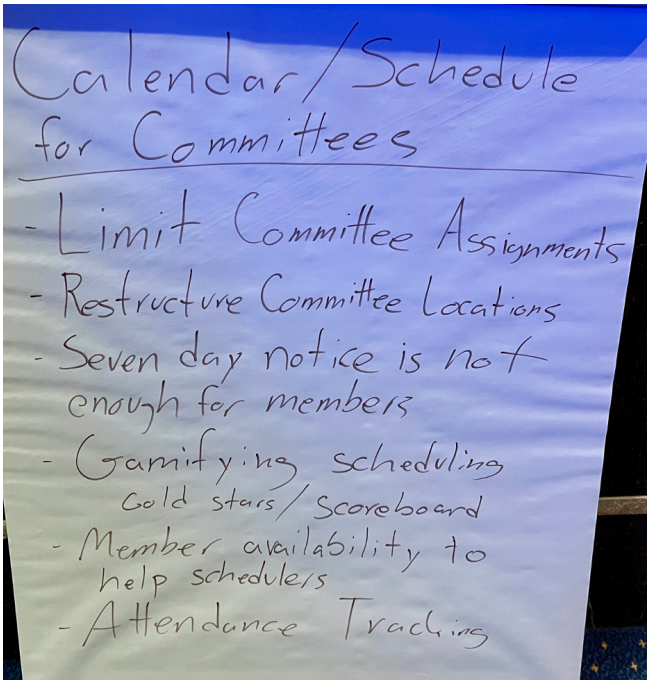
- Flag tracking modernization
- Tour request modernization
- Federal vs state issues
- Casework onboarding
- Constituent feedback
- casework data
- tag cases for data (second level?)
- Address product issue "communal specs" that are usable across multiple offices and are user friendly
- Establish a base standard that vendors MUST meet to be considered competitive
- Standard set of tags for better transfer and direct comparison (universal tagging)
- Common infrastructure for transition
- Aggregate product backlog
- Lower barrier to switch CMS
- Casework pilot





- Brain dump list of ideas:
  - Standardize the CMS vendor satisfaction survey (increase participation)
  - Start monthly or quarterly meeting/sessions within staff and CMS groups
  - Conduct a CMS audit
  - Provide more resources and structures on best practices and training
  - Facilitate interaction and feedback between staff and vendors
  - Create an advisory council for LCs and caseworkers
  - Draft a larger roadmap of recommendations for vendors
  - Automatically tag/report for casework

Committees group



- Calendar/schedule for committees
- Limit committee assignments
- Restructure committee locations
- Seven day notice is not enough for members
- Gamifying scheduling gold stars/scoreboard
- Member availability to help schedulers
- Attendance tracking

Legislative data group

- Staff Directory Notes:
  - You can find staff title but not their issue areas, when you call a member's office to find their issue areas, they don't answer most of the time and you must physically go to their office to ask what the issue areas are and it is time consuming.
  - When we need co-sponsors, we couldn't find issue areas. It is the office's responsibility to keep that updated.
  - Photos are helpful to have in the directory but may be a security concern so it would be good to opt out if you need to.
  - There is also a concern with posting salary information, even though it is available publicly, it might be a security concern if it is easily viewable.
  - We could possibly have an area for adding a LinkedIn Profile, for view photos. (Helpful to know what they look like when meeting up with someone that you haven't seen before.)
  - Would like to see all members of the House and Senate
  - Individual staff lookup should be secondary to networking and communication.
  - The question is why attempts in the past to create a staff directory has been unsuccessful. Could be because data is hard to keep updated in real time. Individuals are responsible for updating their own profiles and when they no longer work for the House, and they are not long there to update their profile and might not get removed for a few months later.
  - There should be a balance between internal tools and the directory, they should work together.
  - There would be a need for Caseworkers to use the directory to check in with other Caseworkers, but the need would be less.
  - Auto populate and updating staff directory would be better than self-populating. Would need approval for getting that data.
  - Would like data to update in real time.
  - There should be a point of contact for each issue and interest area for coalition building or at least a recommended point of contact.

- For Prolegis, the data is purchased by a third party and the staffers can update, if they aren't there anymore, they can no longer update the profile. Data is continuously updated but it is not in real time.
- Would be nice to have a cosponsor recommender, there's a lot of research done in finding a partner so this would help lessen the amount of time and effort if the information is in the directory
- Would be good to have a database from GAO, CBO for issue area topics. (CBO is the funding, GAO makes sure the money is spent correctly)
- Distribution lists need to be updated in real time.

- Summary:
  - There is a huge need to know who to contact for particular interest and issue areas.
  - Data needs to be accurate.
  - Data needs to be updated in real time.
  - Need to know who the leadership is and their roles.
  - Need to know who to contact in each committee.
  - Caucus contacts would be helpful (House Administration has a list currently on CHA site)