



2008 Power Rankings

Media Kit

March 3, 2008



**2008 Knowlegis "Power Rankings" Measuring Power in Congress Released on Web
Earmark Data Added To Power Criteria for First Time / Clinton, Obama, McCain in Virtual Tie
for Power**

CONFERENCE CALL AT 1:00 PM EST ON MARCH 3

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The 2008 Congressional Power Rankings by Knowlegis (www.knowlegis.net) were released today on Congress.org (<http://congress.org>). The new rankings include for the first time the influence of earmark data on legislators' Power Score. The rankings also include a breakdown of presidential candidates' power scores in the US Senate.

This year's analysis produced compelling results:

- o Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) was the highest ranking Presidential candidate in the Senate at #9, closely followed by Senator John McCain (R-AZ) at #10. Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) was ranked #11.
- o At the bottom of their Power Rankings were Rep. William Jefferson (D-LA) and Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID), both of whom have been implicated in scandal in 2007.

Today marks the fourth edition of the Power Rankings, which are created by Knowlegis using more than 20 objective criteria measuring power in Congress. Knowlegis is part of the Capitol Advantage family of companies and provides data and software to lobbyists, which includes "Congress at Your Fingertips" directories, Capwiz·XC grassroots tool, and the Knowlegis suite of government relations tools.

The 2008 Power Rankings by Knowlegis tracked Members of Congress power from Jan. 1, 2007 to Dec. 31, 2007. The public and the media can search and organize lists to view rankings by state, committee membership, tenure (class in Congress), or Power Category. The 2008 release includes some new criteria, including both the amount and number of earmarks a legislator has secured. The earmark data was provided by [Taxpayers for Common Sense](#).

The Knowlegis Power Rankings have sparked significant interest since 2006 as a tool to provide citizens with objective information to analyze the activities of their elected officials. Power Rankings was featured in hundreds of articles, broadcast stories, and web sites nationwide; referenced in more than a dozen congressional races; and even featured by some candidates in their 2006 campaign commercials and web sites, including the Hank Johnson-Cynthia McKinney primary in Georgia.

The Power Rankings project was led by Brad Fitch, CEO of Knowlegis. "Power Rankings is a tool of government transparency for citizens," Fitch said. "We take data available on the Internet and compile it to help people assess the performance of their legislators. There are a lot of information sources available to voters to assess how their Members of Congress are doing, including daily newspapers, television news stories, and from the legislators themselves. Power Rankings is just another transparency tool for citizens to judge their elected official," he said.

Fitch also noted that the Knowlegis Power Rankings cannot reflect everything that a Member of Congress does in Congress. "Elected officials do some work that isn't attributed in the public record," Fitch said. "We integrated every measurable piece of publicly available data to create an assessment of each Member of Congress. This may not be the totality of a member's contribution to his or her constituents, but it can serve as a valuable tool for citizens when they are judging their elected officials," he said.

Brad Fitch will be available in a conference call Monday, March 3, 1 pm EST.
Conference Call Number: 877-537-0850. Conference Code: 717-722-9168



The criteria for Power Rankings were developed by Knowlegis in consultation with academic experts and Congressional staff by identifying factors that contributed to the exercise of power in 2007. Knowlegis staff carefully researched, sorted, and considered thousands of data points to determine what factors legitimately demonstrate the exercise of power. Researchers reviewed thousands of media articles, hundreds of bills that passed out of committee and through each chamber, and more than 1,000 floor amendments. The team limited the research to the 2007 calendar year through December 31, 2007.

The concept for Power Rankings was developed by Bob Hansan, President of Capitol Advantage (Knowlegis' parent company). "Americans spend more time analyzing the individual statistics of their favorite baseball players than they do assessing the performance of their elected officials," said Hansan. "We thought it would be great to give citizens an additional scorecard to measure their Members of Congress as part of their overall judgment of their elected officials," he said.

Hansan oversees four companies, including Knowlegis, Capitol Advantage (creators of CapwizXC), Capitol Advantage Publishing (publishers of the *Congress At Your Fingertips* guide), and 720 Strategies.

Conference Call Information:

WHO: Brad Fitch, CEO of Knowlegis
WHEN: Monday, March 3, 1:00 pm EST.
WHAT: Conference Call on Power Rankings
WHERE: Conference Call Number: 877-537-0850
Conference Code: 717-722-9168

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Introduction

How powerful are those who represent you in Congress? Power is often hard to define, but for Congress it boils down to how effective one is at advancing an agenda, whether it is a personal agenda, party agenda, or district or state agenda. Much of the power in Congress derives from tenure or years in Congress, which drive assignment to key committees (and eventually status as chair or ranking member). But years of service in Congress does not automatically equate to power as some long-term members have very little power while freshmen can sometimes be effective or powerful right out of the starting gate.

[Knowlegis](#), in consultation with academic experts and congressional staff, examined dozens of factors that could contribute to the exercise of power and effective outcomes for their upcoming efforts heading into 2008. It represents the status of Members of Congress at this point in time at the end of the first half of the 110th Congress (through December 31, 2007). We created these Power Rankings as a tool for citizens to assess their elected officials. Of course this tool does not reflect the totality of contribution that a Member of Congress makes to his or her constituents or the nation, but it does measure many of those factors that both the public and official Washington have come to recognize as the levers and characteristics of power.

Power Rankings Criteria

Our project team identified key characteristics of power. These characteristics were then measured and weighted to determine the relative power or potential power demonstrated by Members of Congress heading into 2007. We grouped those characteristics into four broad categories.

1) Position: How much power might the legislator wield through his/her position in the Congress by virtue of tenure, new committee assignments or new leadership position? This Power Category includes some new weighing for all committees, subcommittees, and leadership positions, taking into consideration the new majority or minority party status of the member.

2) Indirect Influence: How much power has the legislator demonstrated or may be capable of demonstrating to influence the congressional agenda or outcome of votes through the media or congressional caucuses.

3) Legislative Activity: How much power has the legislator demonstrate through the passage of legislation or shaping legislation through amendments thus far? The team eliminated from that data items which did not substantially change the bill or existing law. These included amendments dealing with technical changes or bills of a ceremonial or commemorative nature such as naming of post offices or other public buildings, or non-binding resolutions that expressed the "sense of the Congress."

4) Earmarks: This is a new criteria added to the 2008 Power Rankings as a result of Congress' decision in 2007 to make the earmarking process more transparent. How successful was the legislator at securing funds for local projects in his or her district or state?

In addition, the project team recognized that Members of Congress can exert or possess power that cannot be measured by these standard measures. Therefore, we created the "Sizzle/Fizzle" factor. For example, "Sizzle" factors can include a legislator's unique background and experience (Sen. John McCain, R-AZ) or relationships (Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-NY) or newfound popularity (Sen. Barack Obama, D-IL) that somehow adds weight to their power that is not scored in the other categories. In contrast, "Fizzle" factors can be applied to legislators who have seen their power diminish during the year, despite their position, due to scandal or other factors that impair the ability of the member to be effective. For the 2008 Power Rankings, we had an additional metric at our disposal for current presidential candidates serving in the Senate: how many and how powerful were the fellow senators who endorsed a colleague for president? Therefore this metric was used in calculating the "Sizzle" factor for Senators Clinton, Obama, and McCain.

Methodology

[Knowlegis](#) staff carefully researched, sorted, and considered thousands of data points to determine what legitimately demonstrates the exercise of power and its effectiveness. The team limited the research to the 2007 calendar year, through December 31. Our researchers reviewed thousands of media articles, hundreds of bills that passed out of committee and through each chamber, as well as the amendments that attempted to shape the outcome of legislation. We collected data on the leadership, committee, and caucus positions of each Member of Congress in their chamber; researched relevant campaign contributions; and considered any characteristic or action that could contribute to their "Sizzle/Fizzle" factor. We also integrated earmark data provided by Taxpayers for Common Sense. In sum, there are thousands of data points and variables that were considered in the 2007 Knowlegis Power Rankings.



Changes in 2008 Knowlegis Power Rankings

After releasing our previous Knowlegis Power Rankings, we got some very good feedback from lobbyists, congressional staff, and even a few Members of Congress on how we could improve the system. Due to changes in congressional practices such as proposed "earmark" reforms and the changes in committee emphasis, structuring of subcommittees, and slight changes in the power attributed to some committees, we have recalibrated the formula to better reflect the changes in party control of Congress and the new leadership.

As noted above, new to this release of Power Rankings is the "Bacon Barometer," which scores Members for the number and amount of earmarks or "bacon" that a Member secures for their district, state or region. New rules in Congress increased the transparency of this process and with the help of [Taxpayers for Common Sense](#), a non-partisan budget watchdog organization, we were able to review earmarks for each member of Congress.

Limitations of Research

It is very important for visitors to know the following: *The Knowlegis Power Rankings project team acknowledges that Members of Congress sometimes exercise power in ways that cannot be seen or measured.* For example, we did not measure some variables such as effectiveness in assisting constituents in the district and state, known as "casework." Nor did we measure legislators' visibility in the district and state, such as public appearances or communication with voters. Finally, legislators often play important roles as liaisons with federal agencies in matters where state or local governments have a vested interest in a special project (such as military base closures). These factors — while crucial to a member's re-election and extremely important to constituents — are hard to measure and rarely contribute to power in the House or Senate.

Citizens using Knowlegis Power Rankings to assess the effectiveness of their Member of Congress should use this analysis as one of many tools to judge your legislator.

Research Team

Brad Fitch

Brad Fitch is the co-founder and CEO of Knowlegis. After working as a radio and television reporter in the mid-1980's, Fitch began working in Congress in 1988. During his 13 years on Capitol Hill, he served as a press secretary, legislative director, and chief of staff, working both in the House and Senate.

Fitch left Capitol Hill in 2001 to become Deputy Director of the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF), a non-profit, non-partisan organization that advises congressional offices on how to improve operations. As the Deputy Director of CMF, he served as a management consultant for Members of Congress, offering confidential guidance, conducting staff training programs, and writing publications on enhancing the performance of individual congressional offices and the institution. He served as editor of *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide* for the 108th and 109th Congress editions.

In 2005, Fitch managed CMF's "Communicating with Congress" project and co-authored the project's first report, [How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy](#). He also is the author of [Media Relations Handbook for Agencies, Associations, Nonprofits, and Congress](#), and is an adjunct Associate Professor at American University's School of Communication. He received his B.A. degree in Political Science from Johns Hopkins University and his M.A. degree in Journalism and Public Affairs from American University.

Dr. Dennis Johnson

Dennis Johnson is professor of political management at the George Washington University, and participated in developing the original criteria for the 2005 Knowlegis Power Rankings. He is the author of *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants Are Reshaping American Democracy* (2001) and *Congress Online: Bridging the Gap Between Citizens and Their Representatives* (2004), and a wide variety of other publications dealing with Congress, public policy, and elections. Dr. Johnson has been a longtime observer of Capitol Hill, and has been the director of the Master of Arts in Legislative Affairs program and associate dean of the Graduate School of Political Management at George Washington. He was the principal investigator of "Congress Online," a two-and-one-half year joint research project with the Congressional Management Foundation, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, which examined the impact of online communications on Capitol Hill. His current research interests focus on the history of Congress and public policymaking, and he is completing a major work entitled *The Laws that Shaped America*. Dr. Johnson received his Ph.D. from Duke University.



Dr. Michael Robinson

Michael Robinson is a retired professor of government at Georgetown University, consultant to the Pew Research Center, and consulted on the development of the 2006, 2007, and 2008 Knowlegis Power Rankings. He is the author of *Over the Wire and on TV: CBS and UPI in Campaign '80*, as well as hundreds of other articles and reviews on the topic of government. Dr. Robinson also regularly lectures on the topic of power in Congress at executive education programs conducted by the Brookings Institution. He has previously taught at Ohio State University, University of Oregon, University of Virginia, and the University of Michigan, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

James Vaughn

James Vaughn joined [Knowlegis](#) as Vice President for Business Development working with media companies, informal groups and average citizens to develop tools to provide transparency and accountability of Congress through online tools including Congress.org. Prior to this position, he served as the Deputy Program Manager on President Bush's USA Services E-Government initiative developing federal-wide standards for citizen-to-government communications with a focus on new and emerging technologies. This was a natural outgrowth of his work as Director of Government and Politics for America Online where he created GovernmentGuide.com and many other online tools and products to help citizens connect with elected officials and government agencies at all levels. He also developed the highly successful 2002 and 2004 election portals for America Online in partnership with CNN and others. These projects grew out of research he conducted while securing his Master's in Public Administration at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in 1999.

Robb Hill

Robb Hill is the CTO and co-founder of [Knowlegis](#). Previously, he worked as the director of Software Engineering for [Capitol Advantage](#) from 2002 until starting [Knowlegis](#) in 2006. Before joining [Capitol Advantage](#), he owned an IT consulting business for non-profits and associations. Prior to running his own company, Robb was senior webmaster for the American Red Cross. He is originally from Ft. Worth, Texas.

Nick Mayorga

Nick Mayorga is the software engineer in charge of Power Rankings. He has been a software engineer in the Capitol Advantage family of companies since 2004. He received his B.S. degree in Information Systems from Strayer University in Ashburn, VA. He is originally from Sterling, VA.

Charles Morrell

Charles R. Morrell is the Director of Data Mining and Acquisition for [Knowlegis](#). He began his 29-year career in government information as a founding employee with Legi-Slate in 1979. He joined Capitol Advantage in 1999 as Director of Research. In 2004 Charles moved to Gallery Watch as Vice-President of Operations. He returned to the [Capitol Advantage](#) family of companies in 2007.

Tim Yoder

Tim Yoder is the Director of Research for Knowlegis. Before joining Knowlegis, Tim had been with the Capitol Advantage research team since 1999. He served as research director since 2004. Tim grew up in Morgantown, PA, received a B.A. in American History from the University of Delaware, and still lives and dies every summer with the trials and travails of the Fightin' Phils.

Knowlegis Research Staff

The Knowlegis Research Staff is comprised of individuals who are trained on collecting and analyzing data related to the democratic processes at the state and local level. This full-time group collects data for [Knowlegis](#) and its clients. Some of the Power Rankings data was already collected as part of [Knowlegis](#) commercial enterprise, and some additional requirements were added for this research project.

Acknowledgements:

Our thanks to the many experts who helped review our data and provided valuable insight and direction. Our special thanks to current and former congressional staff who offered their viewpoints and insight.