

# Beyond Google: Quality Research for Policy Decisions

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# Between Now and Session

- \* **Help to fill in the details for BDRs already submitted**
- \* **Statistics to support your issue**
- \* **Historical context-what has been tried in the past**
- \* **Policy questions that may arise**
  - \* **This helps to frame your issue so you can better explain the potential solutions to the problem**

# During the Legislative Session

- \* **Assistance with bill introduction remarks**
- \* **Policy options**
- \* **Ideas (concepts) for amendments**
- \* **Technical data**

**Our purpose is to provide you with objective, unbiased information – both (or all) sides of an issue; lobbyists and advocates tend to have a point of view**



Time is not on  
Your Side

# Policy Informed by Substance



## \* Reliance on Other Sources

### ***“Red-faced People's Daily editor speaks out after falling for 'Sexiest Man' Onion spoof”***

An editor on China's Communist Party online newspaper, which fell for a report in the satirical website The Onion, naming Kim Jong-un, the North Korean dictator as the 'Sexiest Man Alive', has said he hoped the incident would not draw too much attention. [Excerpt from *London Telegraph*]

# Avoiding a Train Wreck

- Quick and dirty web Searches are often dated or inaccurate;
- Most open sites do not target significant policy matters; and
- Authority and objectivity may be unknown at best or suspect at worst.





What's  
Important?



# LIMITATIONS OF GOOGLE

- \* **Scope Issues** – Surface Web versus Deep Web
  - Google only searches the Surface Web or Open Web.
  - Deep (or invisible) Web is 500 times larger than the surface web.
  - Deep Web cannot be searched by Google or other common search engines.
  - Most of the Deep Web is located in library databases, publisher sites, password protected sites, fee-based sites, etc.



# Limitations of Google (continued)

## \* Technical Considerations

- Paid sites listed first; and
- Word order matters.


## \* Search Terms

- Use of the right search terms to obtain the desired results.
- Controlled vocabulary versus free text.

# Example

## **Lemon laws for cars**

- \* Google produces 23.3 million results for “lemon laws.”
- \* State lemon law web site—network of attorneys, conveniently leave out certain statutes; referral to attorneys taking such cases.
- \* The BBB has a site-but Nevada summary is dated 2004 & significant changes were made in 2005.
- \* Adding “cars” to the search narrowed that to 4.9 million hits;
- \* Or wild horses;
- \* Or motorcycle helmet laws.

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- \* We can provide information directly related to policy decisions made by legislators
  - \* Take the motorcycle helmet law—NCSL's Transportation Review: Motorcycle Safety report (January 2012), describes recent State actions for helmet laws; safety education; licensing; child passenger laws; and the latest state requirements and NTSB data.

# Evaluating Sources

- \* Our Library and policy analysts over time have evaluated sources for:**
- \* Currency**
- \* Reliability**
- \* Authority**
- \* Purpose/Point of View**

Time is not on Your  
Side



**There is a  
faster  
approach**

# Ask an Analyst

**Subject experts know who to talk to, we talk to–**

- \* NCSL, Education Commission of the States;**
- \* Experts in the field;**
- \* Heritage and Brookings Institute;**
- \* Agency heads and staff;**
- \* We can find the last time this topic came up; and**
- \* Inquiries are confidential.**

# Help is Available

Don't hesitate to ask for help  
Our job is to make you look good

If there is something you  
need to know, we will  
tell you





