



People-Centered Oversight

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People-Centered Oversight



In an era of historically low public trust in American government and democracy,¹ government must prove that it can achieve its goals, keep its promises, and noticeably improve the lives of the people whom it serves.

“People have not rejected the goals of our programs,” said Senator Carl Levin in 1979, “but they have begun to question whether our programs have anything to do with our goals.”

Nearly half a century later, those words ring truer than ever: our system of democratic governance struggles to make the case for itself, because often well-intentioned programs fail to achieve the results that were promised when they were enacted.

To regain the trust of the American people, lawmakers and administrators must ask the questions Senator Levin raised throughout his career. Are our programs achieving their goals? Is government not only efficient and honest, but is it also easy to work with?

Our system charges legislators and executive branch officials with the responsibility to monitor the performance of public programs and make changes to those programs based on the information obtained – that is, to conduct legislative or administrative oversight. Today, low levels of trust in government suggest that oversight as currently practiced may not be producing the kinds of information needed to enable government programs to meet the needs of the public.

In fact, the disconnect between the government and the public it serves may be a sign that oversight efforts are often focused on issues that are of little public concern. Oversight hearings, especially the kind that make headlines, are frequently exercises in partisan competition where one side of the aisle or the dais is primarily concerned with embarrassing the other, rather than getting to the heart of what is keeping government from succeeding.

But what if lawmakers conducting oversight and their counterparts in the executive branch viewed oversight as a collective opportunity to better understand how government was serving the people? What if, rather than challenging the integrity of the executive branch officials testifying at hearings, lawmakers challenged themselves and the administration to learn about the lived experience their constituents were having with government – to learn about the shared experience of working with government and how it compares to the standards the public expects in the 21st century.

Shifting the perspective of the inquiry from “what did the bureaucracy do” to “what are the needs and experiences of the people being served” puts the emphasis on the mission of government in a democracy. It can also lower the barriers between legislators who authorize and fund programs and the administrators who are responsible for implementing those programs.

¹ “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2024” (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, June 24, 2024), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2024/06/24/public-trust-in-government-1958-2024/>.

We have given this approach to oversight a name: *People-Centered Oversight* (PCO). People-centered oversight uses the same sweeping powers of inquiry American legislatures have long enjoyed but shifts the emphasis toward prioritizing the experience and outcomes of policy for the people it is meant to serve. Moving beyond mere questions of policy compliance, people-centered oversight asks: *Are policies delivering real results? Are programs improving lives? What is the end-user's² experience with government services? When the answer is "no," or "not good," where and why are these policies and systems falling short?*

People-centered oversight is about shifting the focus of oversight from bureaucratic compliance to human impact. This approach is centered on two foundational elements:

1. Emphasizing outcomes by engaging with those who experience government services firsthand, particularly program beneficiaries and frontline workers responsible for delivering those programs.
2. Transforming oversight by strengthening feedback loops between legislators, program implementers, and the public, ensuring that oversight is more of a dialogue rather than a one-way evaluation.

PCO is more than a vision or framework. It is taking shape in state legislatures around the country every day. Its practitioners — legislators and staff from both parties, in both full- and part-time legislatures — are already using these principles to make government more responsive, effective, and accountable.

In the coming sections, we will explore the condition of people-centered oversight in the states, both through broad data and through case studies that highlight innovative approaches in data collection and service delivery across government. We will also offer recommendations — both for individual legislators and staff and at the institutional level — to advance people-centered oversight in the nation's legislatures.

The State of PCO

The landscape of people-centered oversight in the United States today is one of significant gaps alongside promising innovations. Like legislative oversight generally, the condition of what might be considered PCO varies widely between — and even within — state legislatures, and it is challenging to definitively measure or compare. Institutional components like committee rules and digital tools can support people-centered oversight, but so can legislative culture or the practices of an individual legislator.

To capture completely the full spectrum of people-centered oversight in every state would be a monumental task, and we do not claim to have done so with the data we have summarized here and attached in the State-by-State Summaries. Nor have we tried to definitively say who is “doing” people-centered oversight and who is not. Instead, we have done our best to compare

² We use the term “end-user” to describe the people on the receiving end of government programs and services in place of more variable terms like “taxpayer,” “inmate,” or “beneficiary.”

states on several standard criteria that provide a general sense of their ability to monitor program implementation and outcomes, receive and process information from end-users of programs, and generally engage with the public in the oversight process.

These criteria include direct opportunities for public input, the collection of implementation data from agencies and casework, and other general indicators of oversight efforts. In this way, we can see where the basic infrastructure for conducting people-centered oversight is in place and how legislators and staff make use of it. We have also supplemented these findings with a collection of state-by-state summary notes with additional findings for each state.

While some states have laid a solid foundation for people-centered work with digital tools, proactive engagement, and a culture of meaningful oversight, others are limited by basic oversight mechanisms or cultures of indifference around oversight. In our collection and analysis of this state-by-state data, several patterns emerged in the implementation of people-centered oversight across the states:

First, **people-centered oversight depends on good oversight.** PCO sets a high bar for engaging with the public, strengthening feedback loops between the legislative branch and program implementers, and enhancing existing oversight efforts. However, it cannot function where there is little in the way of existing oversight infrastructure, staffing, or effort. If the underlying oversight mechanisms in a state are weak or underused to begin with, even the most innovative PCO initiatives will struggle to drive meaningful accountability and reform.

Second, **most attempts at people-centered oversight through public hearings fall short.** Americans generally do not make a habit of testifying before legislative committees. The barriers to doing so (taking time out of a weekday, traveling to a hearing or figuring out remote testimony, and the social pressures of publicly speaking, to name a few) are very high.³ Even where legislative oversight committees devote agenda space to public comment and testimony (as in Delaware, Colorado, Hawaii, and Wyoming) there is little evidence of consistent testimony by day-to-day users of government programs — much less evidence of use of that testimony by committees to inform their oversight.⁴

If legislators rely on hearings as a primary method of accepting feedback on programs and policies, they will continue to hear exclusively from those who *do* make a habit of testifying at committee hearings: executive branch staff and members of interest groups. These entities can offer valuable feedback and information, though they do not necessarily incorporate the perspectives of end-users that legislators can find beyond the confines of a hearing.

³ Pamela Ban, Ju Yeon Park, and Hye Young You, “How Are Politicians Informed? Witnesses and Information Provision in Congress,” *American Political Science Review* 117, no. 1 (February 2023): 122–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422000405>.

⁴ The exception is when the salience of a topic rises to a level that invokes intense attention and scrutiny from the public, as in Oregon’s Joint Committee on Addiction and Community Safety Response hearings on drug decriminalization. In these cases, however, it appears to be the salience of the topic encouraging a surge of public participation rather than the institutionalized behavior of the legislature.

While committee “field trips” and holding meetings at locations other than a capitol committee room can help, public hearings alone are too limited in scope to form the basis of people-centered fact-finding activity, and their inherent obstacles limit participation by most citizens. For a truly inclusive approach, people-centered oversight must extend beyond the committee room.

Third, we found that **web forms are an increasingly popular way to solicit information from the public, despite lackluster results.** Perhaps in an effort to lower the barriers to participation associated with hearings or other high-cost methods of engagement, many institutions have turned to tools like web forms. These forms take many shapes, ranging from general tools to contact members or submit written committee testimony to specifically designed mechanisms for auditors to collect information on fraud, waste, and abuse in programs.

These web forms make it easier for the public to engage with legislative institutions in many cases, and they can play an important role in a balanced strategy for people-centered oversight. However, like other ways for the public to engage with legislatures, web forms come with tradeoffs. They are more open to manipulation by spam, bots, and advocacy campaigns. Their reach is also limited, much like participating in public committee hearings, to those Americans with the interest and means to fill out legislative web forms.

We paid particular attention to web forms beyond mere generic contact forms. (“Fill out this form if you have a suggestion that will help [our caucus] investigate and bring accountability to government,” “Share your thoughts in my legislative survey.”) While some of these forms appeared to be in regular use, as with a public input form from the South Carolina House Oversight Committee, many others seemed to exist as merely symbolic gestures toward public engagement on a given issue, and it was unclear how or if the results would be used to inform oversight.

While web forms can serve an important role, they are only a starting point. PCO at its best requires more than providing a mechanism for the collection of feedback from the public. It demands careful, deliberate use of information – gathered by lawmakers or by administrative agencies or third parties – to inform policymakers about the public’s experience with a program. Without robust systems to collect, analyze, and integrate feedback, web forms remain an incomplete solution.

Fourth, **other inconsistencies and gaps in digital infrastructure hinder progress in multiple aspects of PCO.** Almost all state legislatures have some kind of centralized bill tracking system, often with years of searchable records from previous legislatures. Even in cases when similar resources for tracking, enabling, or reporting on oversight work are available, the use of those systems can be sporadic and can change with political leadership.⁵

This is also true when it comes to tracking casework. As we will discuss later, casework serves as an important basis for people-centered oversight, but the use of computer programs to harness the data it generates is often weak. As part of our research, we spoke to staff in many legislatures

⁵ The exception to this is in legislative analytic bureaucracies, where records tend to be routinely updated and generally complete. The resulting spotty records also mean it can be challenging for citizens (and researchers) to get a sense of what is happening with oversight in a particular legislature.

to determine whether they had a centralized system for processing and monitoring trends in constituent requests. Fewer than half of states, based on our sample, have adopted these systems.⁶ Further, when such a system had been implemented across an entire chamber or legislature, use by individual offices was often inconsistent. In one state, Tennessee, staff we spoke to indicated they previously had a system for tracking constituent requests but had discontinued its use because of low rates of use by staff. In many states without such systems, it can become difficult for legislators and staff to monitor trends in constituent engagement in their own offices, let alone at an institutional level.

Despite these challenges, **people-centered oversight is still happening in all corners of government.** Even in the absence of institution-wide momentum, individual legislators and staff and other offices are centering implementation and the end-user experience their work. As we will discuss in our case studies, legislators, staff, and researchers are engaging with new ways of gathering and using casework data. Some analytic bureaucracies⁷ are conducting fieldwork to gather data and provide answers about program implementation and user experience in new and interesting ways. In bright spots across government, attention to human-centered design and program implementation by legislators, agencies, and the public is leading to meaningful changes in administration.

Aspects of PCO are also happening every day in small but foundational parts of legislative work. When a staffer helps a constituent navigate unemployment insurance, when a legislator holds a town hall in their community, or when a program evaluator conducts fieldwork, they are serving as the eyes and voice of the public and building up systems of people-centered oversight.

Opportunities for PCO are expanding. Even before the COVID pandemic, some states were breaking down the old geographic barriers inherent in legislative work with technology to enable options like remote committee testimony.⁸ At the same time, other digital tools are making it easier to conduct outreach work, gather information on legislative casework, and even aggregate casework information collected across caucuses or entire legislatures. Executive agencies are also collecting and sharing more information about service delivery than ever before. With just a handful of exceptions, most states make much of this data available to legislators and the public through online open data tools. The data shown in these tools — typically generated directly through the provision of government services — can provide a far more complete and candid picture of reality than legislators and staff can hope to capture through their own data collection efforts.⁹

⁶ For more detailed state-by-state information, see the attached State-by-State Summaries.

⁷ We use the terms “analytic bureaucracy” and “analytic agency” to refer to “any state government entity that helps legislators assess agency program performance as well as financial performance.” The broader term “oversight partner” also includes non-governmental groups upon which legislators rely when conducting oversight. For more information, see Lyke Thompson and Marjorie Sarbaugh-Thompson, “Checks and Balances in Action: Legislative Oversight across the States” (Wayne State University, 2019), <http://go.levin-center.org/50state>.

⁸ Eyragon Eidam, “Remote Testimony: Cure for State Democratic Barriers?,” *Government Technology*, January 22, 2016, <https://www.govtech.com/network/Remote-Testimony-Cure-for-State-Democratic-Barriers.html>.

⁹ It should be noted that the mere presence of an open data or performance portal in a state is not a magic bullet. The accuracy and timeliness of the information collected are important, as is the type of information presented. That is, a spreadsheet of the names of organizations licensed to drill wells is open data but does not lend itself to

Critically, it is not just the volume of collected information that is increasing. Advances like artificial intelligence make it possible to analyze and make more sense of large amounts of data than ever before, even with typically low levels of staffing in legislatures. Because people-centered oversight, like legislative work generally, depends on the ability to collect, manage, and analyze information effectively, these advances represent a significant opportunity for practitioners of PCO.

The following case studies demonstrate how legislators and staff, oversight partners, agencies, and contractors are using people-centered oversight to great effect for both themselves and the people they serve.

people-centered oversight in the same way as information about, say, the time it takes for someone to acquire such a license.



Case study: Using proactive casework to improve data collection

Casework and oversight

Casework has long been an important part of the American legislative tradition. John Quincy Adams, serving in the House of Representatives after his presidency, worked with his constituents to help with everything from pensions to postal appointments.¹⁰ Today, casework has grown into a significant proportion of legislative work at all levels of government. A recent estimate from POPVOX Foundation suggests that job titles for around 1,500 congressional staff — about fifteen percent of the congressional workforce — include some mention of casework.¹¹

Casework at the state level varies widely across the country. Some members of state legislatures handle their own casework as it arrives by email, telephone, text message, and letter. Some have staff assigned to handle casework. Still others operate full-scale district offices with specialist staff and in-person service. No matter the structure, though, the basics of casework are the same: a constituent faces some issue with government (or a government-adjacent matter), and they go to a legislator for help.

Casework is more than just good politics or a relic of a bygone era in American legislatures. It has the potential to be a transformative tool for oversight.

There are two central benefits to casework as an oversight tool. The first is as a builder of institutional capacity for making sense of how well government programs are being implemented. For example, if members and staff by performing casework related to licensing of cosmetologists come to better understand the practicalities of the licensing system and the situations of people who use that system, those members and staff are in a better position to oversee (and legislate on) that system. Just as the constituent benefits from particularized assistance with their cosmetology license; members, staff, and the legislative branch more broadly benefit from an improved understanding of how the relevant policies are implemented and where they may need improvement.

Second, casework can help lawmakers identify changes, trends, and snags in existing programs, providing an early warning system when things go wrong. Constituent casework often happens as the result of some kind of failure on the part of government or a constituent's dissatisfaction with a public program or service. A process lags, someone does not get the outcome they hoped for or expected, bureaucracies clash, well-intended procedures get in the way, or systems get overloaded. Eventually, the facts of these circumstances would make it to legislators' desks through audit results or required reporting of one kind or another, but the first signs of trouble often come from constituent contact.

Casework data is a valuable input to legislative oversight, and more is better. Increasingly, legislative institutions nationwide are coming to recognize the value of data gathered through

¹⁰ Leonard Dupee White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1829-1861* (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 143-145.

¹¹ "Who Does Casework for Congress? An Unscientific Survey," *POPVOX Foundation Blog*, May 6, 2024, <https://www.popvox.org/case-notes/who-does-casework>.

casework, and they act on it by using more powerful tools to collect that data and even aggregate data from multiple offices to draw better, faster conclusions. In most places, casework data aggregation is still in its infancy, and the quality of data collected from many legislative offices makes aggregation as much an art as a science. Still, casework data aggregation promises a bright — and deeply people-centered — future for data-driven legislative oversight.

But there is a problem with casework data as it is today; a familiar, glaring question in American government: because not everyone who needs help or is negatively affected by a program seeks legislative assistance, who are “the people” around whom casework — and casework as oversight — is centered?

To answer that question, we can examine who engages with elected officials generally: the people who generate casework and whose data it reflects. The statistics in this area are a bit thin, but if casework follows the broader trends of people who participate in the American political system, they tend to be whiter, wealthier, and better connected.¹² Their experiences with government, the services they use and the problems they encounter, reflect those realities, skewing casework data away from experiences with, for example, social services that serve less privileged populations.

So, what can be done to correct this bias while maintaining the broader benefits of casework? One tool is proactive casework, outlined in a recent paper by graduate student Megan Rickman Blackwood of UNC-Chapel Hill entitled, *Proactive Casework Theory*.

Proactive casework

Proactive casework theory, writes Blackwood, “moves casework from a responsive to an anticipatory model of representation. Rather than responding to an uneven stream of complaints that reflect preexisting inequalities in political knowledge, trust, and efficacy, PCT initiates outreach to widen the aperture of service provision.... This structural change in who is the first mover in service provision requests reorients the entire access structure around the office’s willingness and capacity to seek out needs, rather than a constituents’ ability to advocate for themselves.”¹³ In other words, when elected officials reach out to their constituents to *offer* casework services — with a phone call or a knock on the door — the result is that a wider and more representative section of the population can benefit from those services. This benefits not only the constituents receiving the service but also the legislator for whom casework serves as a source of data for oversight. Proactive casework theory, then, has the potential to correct for the bias in the data generated by traditional casework.

And proactive casework theory is more than just a theory; it is a blueprint for action that could be adopted by legislators and staff — a blueprint with clear benefits. When Blackwood ran a pilot program with one office in the Virginia House of Delegates in the fall of 2023, it caused an increase in the number of constituent contacts (one of over five thousand percent, in fact), but it

¹² Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 117-146.

¹³ Megan Rickman Blackwood. Forthcoming. 2025.

also increased the number of cases representing marginalized groups by 24.5 percentage points — from 53.6% to 78.1%.¹⁴

Getting proactive casework right takes effort. It requires a commitment to take on more casework, data collection, and, of course, lots and lots of phone calls or door knocks. In Blackwood’s pilot, a group of volunteers made many of the calls to constituents using a script and logging cases for staff to follow up on as they arose.¹⁵ Because proactive casework does not necessarily require year-round attention, it lends itself to sporadic work from existing volunteer networks.

Improving oversight inputs with proactive casework requires no sweeping legislative reforms or major institutional overhauls — just a shift in approach. Many legislators have the infrastructure, from casework operations to volunteer networks, in place already. The other building blocks of a successful program include focusing proactive casework intentionally, building and using robust data systems, and integrating the resulting casework data into legislative oversight efforts.

Focusing proactive casework intentionally is key in correcting for some of the data bias produced by the old, reactive casework model. The people who most frequently seek assistance under the reactive model — and whose inquiries are reflected in most existing casework data — do not represent a legislator’s entire constituency. Proactive casework allows for better targeting in outreach, but if it simply replicates the same old patterns, it risks reinforcing the bias rather than correcting it.

To fully enjoy the benefits of proactive casework, legislators and staff must intentionally structure their outreach around communities that might otherwise be left out of casework. Modern voter data permits in-depth targeting based on a multitude of factors,¹⁶ but there are other, simpler ways of targeting proactive casework, too. Think about underserved geographic areas of the district — or just plot existing case requests on a map and look for gaps. Consider blind spots in voter data that might limit outreach to groups like students, people who have recently moved, non-citizens, and so on. Other community institutions where people already engage with government services like transit hubs, social service offices, and libraries also offer great opportunities for in-person engagement. With or without tools like voter data, it is easy to make proactive casework a mechanism for correcting existing disparities in constituent service and the associated bias in oversight data.

A good proactive casework approach also requires **building a robust data system**. This is important for handling data outputs later, but it is also a critical part of scaling up a casework operation. In a traditional, reactive casework model in which requests come in at a (mostly) manageable, even pace, it is possible (if inadvisable) to skate by on email threads and sticky notes. Proactive casework, however, generates a surge of incoming cases, many of which require considerable follow-up from staff. Nonetheless, Blackwood’s case study suggests practitioners of

¹⁴ Megan Rickman Blackwood, “A Theory of Proactive Casework at the State Level as a Means of Bridging Access Gaps” (UNC Chapel Hill, 2024),26.

¹⁵ Ibid, 23-4.

¹⁶ “Constituent Data | Contact Lists At Your Fingertips.,” L2 Data, <https://www.l2-data.com/constituent-data/>.

proactive oversight do not need to invest enormous sums of time and money in expensive and complicated software.

In one test run, Blackwood used a Google form with built-in intake scripts for volunteers to respond to a multitude of scenarios. Volunteers entered information as they spoke with constituents, and the data moved automatically to a spreadsheet for case tracking and data analysis. The system allowed volunteers — the first point of contact in proactive oversight — to record initial information from constituents in a structured way, making it easier for legislative staff to process and respond to them later. Of course, there are many other proactive outreach and casework tools available to legislators, and anything that permits good data collection, analysis, and case management, will make a fine solution.

Beyond the operational benefits, a well-structured data system also lays the groundwork for **integrating proactive casework data into legislative oversight**. Rather than just a service function, casework at its best is a tool for understanding how policies are implemented — whether and how government keeps its promises to the people it serves. The offices that do the best job of using casework data for oversight make a habit of reviewing case trends, sharing findings with their whole teams, and thoughtfully including the data in other legislative work. When patterns emerge — widespread issues with unemployment benefits, delays in cosmetology licensing, complaints about a correctional facility — they let those insights serve as early warning and incorporate them into legislative work from oversight planning to policy interventions.

Proactive casework, then, offers a practical way to improve the value of casework for legislative oversight. By shifting from reactive to proactive engagement with constituents, legislators do more than just correct for the bias of traditional constituent service — they harness the power of the tradition of casework to build stronger, more responsive feedback loops and strengthen their role as the “eyes and voice” of the people they serve.



Case study: The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor and people-centered data in formal program evaluation

Legislative oversight is only as strong as the information that informs it. While hearings and constituent casework can provide valuable snapshots of how government is working, they are not a substitute for more formal, systematic tools for gathering information. For that, legislative institutions often turn to analytic agencies – entities like auditors and inspectors general, legislative research agencies, and so on – that help legislators assess conditions in society, examine financial performance, and evaluate the impact of government programs. The field of program evaluation is a broad one, but its general focus on operational performance, service delivery, and program outcomes along with aspects like statutory compliance makes it a natural venue for people-centered oversight. In this case study, we will look to Minnesota, where the Office of the Legislative Auditor’s efforts to incorporate citizens’ lived experience with government make it a model of people-centered oversight in action.

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor’s (OLA) Performance Evaluation Division exists to “determine the degree to which the activities and programs entered into or funded by the state are accomplishing their goals and objectives” and using resources efficiently.¹⁷ As a part of the legislative branch, it answers to a bipartisan, bicameral commission of legislators that appoints the Legislative Auditor and selects topics for review.

In recent years, OLA staff have used tools like surveys and interviews in their program evaluation work to collect feedback from groups as wide-ranging as cosmetologists, court officials, parents of new drivers, and individuals incarcerated in state prisons. OLA’s consistency in gathering this user- and implementer-centered information, their care in working with vulnerable populations, and their commitment to using the resulting information to produce substantive data and insights to drive oversight make them a valuable national model for the role that legislative analytic agencies can play in people-centered oversight.

While not every program evaluation topic lends itself to extensive interviews and surveys, most OLA program evaluations in recent years have included some component in which OLA staff solicit direct feedback from end-users or implementers of programs. A report on driver testing and licensing in 2021 included not just information garnered from surveys of supervisors at testing sites, but in-person surveys on the experience of scheduling a test conducted with 45 parents while they waited for their child to take a road test.¹⁸ A 2023 evaluation of a COVID-era rental assistance program included feedback gathered from 207 survey responses from landlords on their experiences with program aspects like application processing times and call center support.¹⁹ Even a recent report on the implementation of task force recommendations on aggregate resources (a term encompassing materials like sand and gravel) – not a subject on

¹⁷ *Minnesota Statutes* 2024, 3.971, subd. 7.

¹⁸ “Driver Examination Stations” (Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, 2021), 20-21.

¹⁹ “RentHelpMN” (Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, 2023), 37.

which surveys might typically be used as an evaluation tool – included survey information gathered from county zoning administrators across the state.²⁰

Including perspectives from people who have lived experience with government programs adds a great deal of value to OLA’s program evaluations. This is especially true in cases when those perspectives come from vulnerable populations or other groups whose perspectives might not traditionally be considered in oversight work. Working to include voices from those populations – and doing so in a thoughtful, ethical way – is challenging but, in recent reports examining state correctional facilities and parts of the state’s child protection system, OLA did just that.

As part of a program evaluation examining safety in state correctional facilities, OLA collected survey responses from 246 prisoners and 1,469 prison staff.²¹ These surveys yielded valuable insights from both groups on the safety of correctional facilities, but the process of collecting data from them – particularly from prisoners – required careful planning and execution. An appendix to the report discusses some of the challenges involved.²²

Department staff needed to develop methods for prisoners to access an online survey tool without access to the wider internet. Prison staff had to arrange for prisoners selected by random sample to take the survey and supervise the process without observing survey answers. Because of the unique ethics of conducting such a survey, OLA voluntarily consulted the Department of Corrections’ Institutional Research Board when developing survey protocols. These protocols included emphasizing the voluntary nature of the survey and making audio instructions available for respondents with limited reading ability. All these measures and others described in the survey methodology appendix (which stands on its own as a worthwhile read for anyone interested in the work of people-centered oversight) took considerable effort. They resulted, however, is a richer and more valuable program evaluation for the Legislature; one which carried with it the voices and points of view necessary to understand the full picture of the state’s corrections system – voices and perspectives that might otherwise never have made it beyond the walls of a prison.

Similarly, a 2022 report on Child Protection Removals and Reunifications includes, along with survey data gathered from law enforcement agencies and county child protection agency administrators, information gathered from a series of interviews with young people who were directly impacted by child protection removals. From the report: “We worked through a DHS-coordinated youth advisory council to interview several teenagers and young adults who had been removed from their homes and placed in foster care. We appreciated their willingness to share their stories with us.”²³ As it had done in its correctional facilities project, OLA staff consulted with an agency Institutional Review Board to assess the ethical challenges of conducting research with a vulnerable population.

²⁰ “Aggregate Resources” (Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, 2025), 18-24.

²¹ “Safety in State Correctional Facilities” (Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, 2020), 87-90.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Child Protection Removals and Reunifications” (Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor, Program Evaluation Division, 2022), 2.

While these interviews did not produce the same type of statistically rigorous data as some of OLA's other work, they did provide valuable perspective from people who had experienced the effects of child protection removals firsthand. "Most of the young people we spoke with acknowledged that they had been in abusive or neglectful situations prior to their removal from the home," reads the report. "However, a common concern in these interviews was that the young person was not aware of what was happening at the time nor did they know the reason for their removal from the home. The young people we spoke with expressed a desire for greater communication at the time of removal."²⁴ Once again, this information – key to understanding policy's impact on the people to whom it matters most – is only available in service of legislative oversight because of its inclusion in OLA's reports.

OLA's work in Minnesota is an excellent example of people-centered oversight because it so consistently includes frontline perspectives on program implementation – from both staff and "end-users" of programs. By meeting people where they are (sometimes very literally, as in the case of parents during their teen's road test) OLA can include more candid and meaningful information on how policy impacts the people government serves. This work is challenging and takes real effort – far more than any web form – but the results speak for themselves.

Around the country, legislative analytic agencies with the ability to conduct program evaluations were born out of the idea that legislatures, to serve as a coequal branch of government, must develop better capacity for independent information gathering and oversight.²⁵ The information they collect and report is one of the best tools the legislative branch has to answer the central questions of people-centered oversight – questions of whether and how well government delivers on its promises. By collecting information from the front lines of program implementation thoughtfully and consistently, the Minnesota OLA does more than just enhance its reports – it strengthens the legislative branch and its oversight efforts with valuable, people-centered data. The Minnesota approach shows the power of people-centered oversight that extends beyond token efforts and includes deliberate, systematic integration of feedback from the people whose perspectives matter most. It serves as a compelling blueprint for people-centered oversight that is well within the reach of most analytic agencies.

²⁴ Ibid, 27.

²⁵ "NLPES and Its History," National Council of State Legislators, February 25, 2025, <https://www.ncsl.org/legislative-staff/nlpes/nlpes-and-its-history>.

Case study: Human-centered design for a better public benefits application in Michigan



We have discussed the benefits of people-centered work in the context of legislative oversight and information collection, but what do government and the people it serves stand to gain when that people-centered mentality filters back to program implementation? What does it look like for programs to deliver better results, to work with efficiency and honesty, and to meet the people they serve where they are? And what can practitioners of oversight learn from these practices? As governments invest in human-centered design for modernizing processes and improving digital services, we are finding out. For a case study, we need look no further than the Levin Center's home state of Michigan.

The story of how Michigan used human-centered design to overhaul its public benefits application process begins, naturally, with a numbered form: DHS-1171. Clocking in at more than 40 pages, the old version of DHS-1171 was used by a quarter of Michigan residents every year to apply for a variety of public benefits.²⁶ At Civilla, the Detroit-based nonprofit that undertook the monumental process of redesigning it, the old form has a sort of legendary status. The form, they note, contained 1,000 questions and more words than all of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in a jumbled format.²⁷ It requested the date and city of conception for most people under the age of 22. It was the longest form of its kind in the United States.²⁸ Because of its length and complexity, this ostensible tool for accessing public assistance, in reality, served as a barrier to service for millions of Michiganders. It also consumed agency staff time with error corrections and other processing difficulties. "People described," writes Civilla, "feeling like they were interacting with a fraud prevention system, rather than working with a service provider."²⁹

Today, the equivalent form is twenty pages with large text, bright colors, and questions written in clear language. Civilla reports that 90% of applicants feel confident they can complete the application on their own and 90% of applicants do complete it within 20 minutes. For staff, the new form contributed to a 42% drop in processing time.³⁰ And the reviews from applicants and agency staff are outstanding. "After filling out the new application I feel like I can breathe again. The old application would have taken me a whole day. This one was more understandable and less stressful — it asks you the questions but with respect," said one applicant.³¹ A caseworker observed that, after the new form came out, "People are coming to me with a different tone. They said it felt like the application was more caring."³²

It may just be a form, but Michigan's new public benefit application is a triumph. It improves the agency's efficiency and applicants' experience in applying for benefits. It helps government

²⁶ "Our Work: Project Re:Form," Civilla, <https://civilla.org/work/project-reform>.

²⁷ "Making the Case for Change," Civilla, <https://civilla.org/stories/making-the-case-for-change>.

²⁸ "The Road to Rollout," Civilla, <https://civilla.org/stories/the-road-to-rollout>.

²⁹ "Project Re:Form Case Study," Civilla, <https://civilla.org/work/project-reform-case-study>.

³⁰ "Project Re:form ." Civilla, <https://civilla.org/work/project-reform-case-study>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

deliver services better and helps applicants get the assistance they need. And its transformation was only possible because of a deliberate focus on *people*.

Design of forms — design of entire programs, for that matter — comes with many competing priorities and choices of where to focus attention and effort. The choices the designers of the old DHS-1171 made are clear: it was a form built to adhere as closely as possible to regulations and eliminate risk. Writes Civilla, “The benefits application was originally meant to serve the people of Michigan, but it had lost sight of that intention along the way. Over the course of 30+ years, it had been designed around process and policy, lawsuits and audits — additions that had accumulated, without considering how they might actually impact people applying for benefits every year.”³³ By choosing to focus on people instead, Civilla’s redesign changed all that.

Choosing to focus on people is not easy, especially with thirty years of institutional inertia in the other direction (Civilla’s effort was the sixth to redesign the form in that time).³⁴ It is also challenging because of people — people in all their messy, diverse unpredictability. To address this, Civilla used a process of human-centered design, built around user research — weeks of interviews with benefit recipients and frontline staff — to “understand the public benefits through the eyes of those who interacted with the system every day.”³⁵ As the form neared completion, a limited pilot program and continuous improvements based on feedback from the front lines of service delivery helped shape it into an even more powerful and user-friendly tool — and demonstrated how sustained, people-centered work can transform even the most entrenched processes.

The story of DHS-1171 holds plenty of lessons for practitioners of oversight. First, the old form serves as a cautionary tale of oversight incentives gone wrong. When oversight efforts — on the part of legislators, analytic bureaucracies, and executive branch agencies — focus solely on process, compliance, and risk mitigation, those efforts create a set of incentives that can build barriers and create systems that are ultimately cumbersome, impersonal, and unproductive. The old form ticked all the boxes, asked the right questions carefully aligned with statute, and satisfied years of recommendations and requirements from audits and litigation, but it did not do the one job it needed to do — enable people to access services to which they are entitled under law. Oversight can do wonderful things but, when oversight powers are wielded without regard for their effect on real people, oversight can get in its own way.

The field of human-centered design offers valuable direction for anyone looking to improve service delivery, both in terms of implementation and oversight. It is difficult work to shift priorities away from compliance and toward end users of programs. It is difficult work to run interviews and focus groups and program pilots and to make constant changes to programs to improve results. But it is worthwhile work, and it is work from which almost any government program can benefit. And, when government *does* prioritize people — when it *does* commit to learning from feedback and improving continuously — the result is what government so desperately needs: programs that serve the public better and more efficiently, programs that improve lives, and programs that build trust.

³³ “Making the Case for Change.”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Recommendations for institutions and individuals

In our work to understand the condition of people-centered oversight in the United States today, we have come across a number of best practices that form a foundation for people-centered oversight. Some of them are more concrete (changing computer systems, for example) while others (like shifting institutional culture) are longer-term, more nebulous changes. We outline these recommendations below, divided into sections for whole institutions and for individual legislators and staff.

For legislative institutions

Pay attention to institutional culture. People-centered oversight — like oversight more broadly — is a habit. Sweeping powers of inquiry, plentiful resources to conduct people-centered oversight, and even a history of meaningful oversight work cannot guarantee that people-centered oversight will happen. Effective PCO requires commitment and sustained attention on an institutional level. Activities like training and professional development programs can contribute to that commitment and attention, as can building people-centered practices — like user-centered research or analysis of casework data — into the rhythm of legislative work. What ultimately matters is cultivating a shared belief in the power of people-centered work and translating it into action in the long term.

Consider the incentives created by different types of oversight. “Oversight” conducted to take down perceived opponents or produce clips for social media rarely involves the people it purports to serve, and it is more likely to result in a culture of risk aversion and lowered effectiveness of government down the line. The same is true of oversight that seeks only to monitor strict adherence to policies and procedures. Michigan’s old application for public benefits, described in our case study, is the result of this kind of strict oversight. The result may comply with policies, but there is no guarantee it will produce its intended outcomes. By agreeing on shared goals and transforming oversight into a routine, non-punitive dialogue with agencies, legislative institutions can also transform the incentives that oversight creates, resulting in better outcomes.

Adopt user-centered research and design and support analytic bureaucracies and agencies in taking on user-centered work. The best way to understand how policies are achieving their goals and make course corrections is to gather perspectives from the people most directly affected by those policies. Analytic bureaucracies (as in our case study on Minnesota’s Legislative Auditor), agencies, and contractors (like Civilla in its partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services in our case study) are in the best position to take on this work and feed their findings back to legislatures. Legislative institutions can facilitate the collection of this information and empower agencies to use it in service of positive change not only in their oversight work but also by appropriating resources for user-centered work and being clear about their expectations for user-centered work through legislation and other tools.

Consider changes to legislative computer systems. Bill tracking is the low-hanging fruit of legislative computing because it requires relatively simple databases and is often managed by

concentrated groups of professional staff. It makes sense, then, that it was the first part of legislative operations to go digital. Other aspects of legislative work, however, have been left behind. Oversight is not so easily fed into a database or quantified (though the agency performance and open data portals in some states are a great start), but that does not mean it has no place in the digital world.

Oversight reports from committees — and even basic committee records like meeting minutes — can be quite challenging to find and can even vanish online as a consequence of changes in leadership and partisan control or technology upgrades. Tools for tracking casework and other constituent interactions also offer many benefits to legislative institutions and can be relatively simple to implement. Our data point, however, to very spotty implementation between — and even within — state legislatures. While some of these gaps are explained by technology systems, others are the result of institutional culture that fosters partisan separation of computer systems, staff resistance to new technology, or inattention to the implementation of policies authorized by the legislature. Understand that changes to legislative computer systems also involve work on organizational culture.

Make the public a meaningful part of oversight — and that means more than just public hearings and web forms. *Meaningfully* including the public in oversight involves meeting people where they are, which means going beyond legislative websites or committee rooms. Conducting hearings in remote locations, touring state facilities, and having conversations with program users and frontline staff can help. Routinely incorporating information gathered from member casework in oversight activities can also be beneficial. Directing analytic bureaucracies or agencies themselves to collect more detailed, people-centered information can also help take the pressure of data collection off legislators and staff and gather better and more complete information than would otherwise be possible.

Take caution in defining “the people.” Think carefully about biases inherent in how your systems and policies define who “the people” are and work to find effective and feasible ways of ensuring that, as often as possible, the data you gather comes from a representative sample of the public. Use objective data wherever possible to ensure your oversight work is rooted in reality and understand that all the people will not be happy with every program or decision.

You manage what you measure. Measure more thoughtfully. State governments produce an enormous amount of data, much of which is provided to legislatures — often in reports required by statute — or to the public through tools like open data portals. The choice of datasets included in this reporting can have major impacts on oversight, policymaking, and public understanding of how programs are working.

For those in state government responsible for determining which data to request or report, it is important to consider the extent to which the information it yields will provide real insight into how programs are achieving their goals or produce information to assist in the pursuit of people-centered oversight. Gathering or reporting too much data thoughtlessly can overwhelm institutions with largely useless information and slow down the work of agencies, which must reallocate resources to collect that information. Data on performance and service delivery (e.g. wait times, service levels, program outcomes, customer satisfaction) provide far more insight for PCO purposes than other raw data that agencies typically produce (e.g. names of licensees,

financial statements, volume of cases). Performance-related data also makes it easier to set expectations for agencies that more closely align with program goals, and routine reporting allows nimbler, more data-driven oversight action than if data must be gathered through means like an audit or subpoena.

For legislators and staff

Take casework seriously. It is one of the best tools available to the legislative branch to understand how policy implementation is working on the ground and to build capacity and understanding of how the executive branch functions. Think of and talk about casework as an oversight function — not a strictly political one. Treat casework like the valuable tool it is by involving caseworkers in oversight and other legislative work, and by collecting and monitoring data thoughtfully — ideally with a robust computer system. Because more data can yield better insights, aggregate casework data across offices when possible. Watch for trends in casework, both qualitative and quantitative, since the most important issues in program implementation and user experience often reveal themselves in casework first.

Be proactive in your constituent work. Dig into proactive casework. Hold town halls. Offer assistance and work to understand what constituents are thinking and feeling. Use proactive casework as a tool to correct for gaps in who might contact your office for casework services. Use the information that you gather from proactive constituent work to inform your oversight work.

Develop systems to separate signal from noise when engaging with public concerns. Work to understand government programs and how they are operated so that you can better distinguish between when a program has failed to deliver intended results and when it has issued a determination that a constituent or member of the public does not like. Draw a bright line between constituent casework and regular correspondence or advocacy campaigns.

Get comfortable with artificial intelligence. The fundamental challenge of people-centered oversight — and all legislative work, for that matter — is in handling information. AI, even with its flaws, offers a promising way to process large amounts of information and identify trends more quickly and often accurately than would otherwise be possible, especially in a resource-constrained legislative environment. Take time to learn the practical details of how you can use AI to enhance your work without sacrificing data integrity and cybersecurity.

Remember that the best legislative work is people-centered from the start. The legislative branch is the people's branch — an institution designed to keep its members in closer touch with citizens than anyone else in government. This is a great advantage in conducting people-centered oversight, and many of the basic practices that facilitate PCO are just good legislative practices. Form long-term relationships with constituents and learn about their experiences with government and how they change over time. Get to know your district, visit facilities, and ask questions. Remember that all of oversight, all of legislating, and all of government begins and ends with people.

Conclusion: Oversight that Engages and Delivers for People



There is evil and injustice that can be caused by political power, but there is also great good. It seems to me sometimes that people have forgotten this. They've forgotten, for example, what Franklin Roosevelt did: how he transformed people's lives. How he gave hope to people. Now people talk in vague terms about government programs and infrastructure, but they've forgotten the women of the [Texas] Hill Country and how electricity changed their lives. They've forgotten that when Robert Moses got the Triborough Bridge built in New York, that was infrastructure[...] And that one bridge created thousands of jobs: 31,000,000 man hours of work, done in twenty states, went into it. We certainly see how government can work to your detriment today, but people have forgotten what government can do for you. They've forgotten the potential of government, the power of government, to transform people's lives for the better.
-Robert Caro³⁶

Government should work, and it should work *for* the American people. It should be efficient, honest, and easy to deal with. It should achieve our goals. It should, in the words of Robert Caro, transform people's lives for the better. When we talk about government working, it is easy to fall into the habit of doing so in terms of the mechanics that make up government in the twenty-first century: contracting, procurement, compliance, regulation, civil service rules, and so on. All those factors *are* important to making government work. And, to most Americans with other things to worry about, they do not matter. What matters is implementation and outcomes — the real, tangible effect government can have on their lives.

If American democracy is to make a case for itself in our time, it must prove that it can deliver government that works. This is a tall order but, in an era of historically low trust in American government and in democracy generally, an essential one. If we are to get it right, it will require not just changes to policy and to implementation of that policy, but a reorientation of legislative oversight toward the kinds of people-centered approaches we have outlined here.

The stakes are high, but the good news is that this more responsive, experience-driven model of oversight has already spread its roots across the country. People-centered oversight happens every day. It happens when legislative staff record the details of a phone call on a computer. It happens when a program evaluator carves out a few extra days on a project plan for fieldwork. It happens when legislators tour facilities or when agency analysts compile statistics on service delivery. PCO is already a part of legislative life across the country.

What we need now is not to invent something entirely new, but to recognize the value of these practices and commit to them with greater intention. By building on what already works, institutionalizing what is often informal, and directing our oversight energy at experience and

³⁶ Robert A. Caro, *Working*, First Vintage Books edition (New York: Vintage Books, 2020), 183.

outcomes, we can strengthen the link between government and the people it serves. What we stand to gain is more than just improved government programs, but improved lives and the proof so many are craving that our democratic system is capable of listening, adapting, and delivering for people.

State-by-state summaries



The state-by-state summaries that follow offer a series of snapshots highlighting oversight structures, practices, and innovations from each state that can pave the way for people-centered oversight. They reflect the conditions in states in late 2024 unless noted. No single state can showcase every dimension of PCO, but these summaries offer a valuable look at how legislatures and, in some cases, executive agencies are approaching the challenge of ensuring government programs work effectively for the people they serve.

These summaries are not intended to be comprehensive accounts of what is happening in each state or rankings of states against one another but are meant to serve as a resource for identifying patterns and possibilities. Patterns to look for in these summaries include:

- **Dedicated and active legislative oversight committees** exist in many (but not all) states. These committees take many forms. They may be joint committees (as in Mississippi or California) or chamber-specific (like Pennsylvania and Michigan). Oversight may also be performed by policy or appropriations committees. Oversight committees may have a general mandate or a specific policy focus, like Connecticut's Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. In states with part-time legislatures, certain oversight committees may be limited to the interim, when the legislature is out of session, as in Idaho or New Mexico. In many cases, oversight committees that exist in name but do not meet regularly (as in Indiana or Alabama) represent a missed opportunity. When they meet regularly, however, oversight committees are an important, dedicated venue for the basic legislative oversight that serves as a foundation for PCO.
- **Routine, non-punitive engagement with agencies** is another foundational element of effective legislative oversight essential for PCO. Many states, including Michigan (through routine reporting to the Legislature required as a condition of the budget) and Colorado (through regular performance hearings required by the SMART Act) have systems of ensuring that oversight is an ongoing conversation to improve performance in the long run, rather than a punitive, one-time exercise.
- **Systemic collection of casework data for incorporation into oversight efforts** is one of the best tools the legislative branch has to get immediate feedback on how programs are working for the people they serve. Many (but not a majority of) states use software in one or both chambers to track constituent casework and produce data that can lead to better opportunities for PCO. These systems tend to be more prevalent in full-time legislatures. Getting members and staff across a chamber to use these tools consistently can be challenging, however. In Tennessee, an unsuccessful transition to a new tool for casework management led to the system's abandonment.
- **Digital tools for transparency and accessibility** take many forms, from Idaho's Townhall Idaho system, a comprehensive list of public meetings, to agency performance dashboards in states like Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

- **User-centered policy evaluation** appears most conspicuously in our case study on Minnesota’s Office of the Legislative Auditor, but can take other forms, too. States where performance metrics for agencies are based on user-centered metrics (e.g. service center wait times in Tennessee, citizen satisfaction with agencies in Oregon) also pave the way for better PCO.

Alabama

It is difficult to assess the extent to which oversight — much less people-centered oversight — is happening in Alabama because of a lack of clear documentation like meeting minutes or reports. An outside group makes certain committee recordings and transcripts available online, and some of those hearings do include public testimony from individuals affected by programs (as in a 2023 meeting of the Joint Prison Oversight Committee). Still, the Legislature does not provide individual webpages for committees, and it is difficult to find archived material on committee meetings.

There is some evidence of executive agencies’ collecting performance data, although the state’s open data portals are primarily concerned with financial statements and geospatial data rather than general performance data.

Alaska

Alaska’s legislature has good infrastructure for oversight and public engagement. Committees involved in oversight furnish meeting minutes, reports, and supporting material in an accessible way. Additionally, Alaska’s Office of Management and Budget tracks and publishes agency progress on certain key performance indicators that offer a valuable resource for tracking agency effectiveness.

Alaska also has several particularly novel tools for public engagement. The Public Opinion Message System allows constituents to send short written messages to “some or all legislators” while matching their information to the state’s voter file. Constituents are able to testify in committee meetings by telephone, and the Legislative Information Office even maintains a live chat tool on their website.

Arizona

Arizona’s legislature had, at the time of writing, five active committees focusing on oversight, with the help of two oversight partners. Of the five committees, three were quite active with more than seven public hearings in a session by the end of 2024. The Legislature’s webpage allows for the public to provide input through a link, “Request to Speak.” Here, users can submit testimony or comments for upcoming hearings. Two of the oversight committees — the House Government Committee and the House Municipal Oversight and Elections Committee — have easy access on their committee webpages for viewing testimony and comments from the public.

While each of the oversight committees had evidence of some public input at their committee hearings, chairs of the oversight committees do not solicit direct public input through their webpages and no public reports or summaries are available on committee webpages.

Arkansas

It appears that the Arkansas Legislature receives minimal public input on its legislative oversight activities. Three joint oversight committees were operating as of 2024, but none had any evidence of direct participation of program users in its hearings, nor did the main webpage for the institution have a direct solicitation for public input.

The Legislative Council had several public documents outlining audits conducted by their subcommittees, but there was no evidence that the public had an opportunity to provide input into what was being audited or share input on the results or conclusions.

California

The state of California has a single bicameral oversight committee, the Joint Committee on Legislative Audit. Although this committee does not hold frequent hearings on oversight topics (only two in 2023 and one in 2024), the committee's homepage shows strong interest in gaining public input to inform its oversight activities. At the top of the committee homepage, it states, "We encourage the public to provide written testimony before the hearing" and then provides a link to do so. There is also a link, utilized by several of the legislative committees on their homepages, to a Position Letter Portal where users can register and submit their positions on any bill up for consideration. The chairs of the oversight committee both have highly personalized web pages and links presented top and center to contact them. These links take users to a direct contact form that is user-friendly and quick to fill out. The hearings that were surveyed demonstrated that their prominent calls for public input resulted in several cases of direct user testimony being received. For example, a hearing on the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in August of 2023 had several Native Americans from various tribes testifying before the committee. It should also be noted that California has several oversight partners (seven in total) with easy-to-navigate websites and highly noticeable links for users to submit input on concerns of waste, fraud, or abuse of government resources.

Also of particular note is the work of the California State Auditor, which has in recent years paid special attention to publication of reports with material such as detailed infographics that make it easier for the public (and legislators) to access and understand their complex subject matter.

Colorado

Colorado's SMART Act "provides the framework for a customer-focused approach to the delivery of government goods and services." It uses performance-based budgeting in which most state entities include a performance plan with their budget request and are subject to routine monitoring of performance and progress toward goals by the Legislature.

The state of Colorado also has several, highly active oversight committees with most committee hearings allotting dedicated time to receiving public testimony. They also prominently feature a link on the Legislature's homepage for "public testimony options". Here, users can choose one of three options for providing input: in person, remotely via Zoom, or submit written testimony. Once users choose their preferred method of communication, they are taken through a step-by-step process to submit their input. In addition, both the House and Senate websites have a link under "Information for the Public" called "Participation in Legislative Hearings" that gives users directions to get to where meetings take place and describes the registration process for providing testimony. Despite the several links regarding testimony available, there does not appear to be a place to register for in-person testimony online. The omission of online registration is a possible explanation for why only half of the oversight committees surveyed had evidence of in-person public testimony occurring in the allotted time on each agenda.

Connecticut

In 2024, there was little to report on the state of Connecticut and how it was or was not engaging in people-centered oversight behaviors. The only committee listed on the State Legislature's website at that time with the specific purpose of conducting oversight was the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, and there is no evidence that this committee was meeting or engaging in any behaviors that would be considered oversight.³⁷

However, on the Legislature's home page is a section titled, "Citizen's Guide". In this section is a link, "Become a Part of the Process" that takes users to a video that walks them through how to register to testify at a hearing. This suggests the state is interested in receiving some public input, but outward solicitations for public input are otherwise quite limited (e.g., a whistleblower form on the website of the Auditor of Public Accounts).

A bright spot, however, is the state's Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, a creature of the Legislature with broad membership from all three branches of state government and community members. The committee's approach to juvenile justice in Connecticut has driven numerous meaningful changes to the juvenile justice system.³⁸

Delaware

The state of Delaware provides constituents with plenty of opportunities to submit their input and feedback on their websites. The oversight committee's page has a section called "Stay Connected and Engaged" where users can find links to submit public comments, view a public meeting calendar, join the mailing list, and access the Division of Research's Twitter account. Legislative websites also include easy ways to contact individual legislators.

Despite the number of opportunities for public input and the ease with which users can make their voices heard, there is minimal evidence that the public makes use of these opportunities in a

³⁷ In 2025, the Legislature created a new Joint Government Oversight Committee.

³⁸ Townsend, Jim, "Oversight: The Key to Restoring Public Confidence," Democracy Journal, June 11, 2024, <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/73/oversight-the-key-to-restoring-public-confidence/>.

committee setting. Of the four oversight committees surveyed, only one (the Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee) showed public input was being received and heard during any of their meetings and this occurred on only one occasion. In addition, only one public committee report could be accessed via the committees' websites and no ground-level program implementation data was available directly on the Legislature's website nor on any of its oversight partners' websites.

Florida

The Florida Legislature devotes legislative resources to practices that lay out a strong basis for people-centered oversight. Florida has comprehensive records of committee activity and there is evidence of public testimony in committee meetings. Also of interest is the fact that Florida legislators have district offices staffed by dedicated district staff who engage routinely with constituents. The Florida House uses a dedicated computer system for receiving and analyzing constituent comments and casework collected by staff.

Georgia

Overall, the Georgia Senate has a stronger infrastructure for people-centered oversight than the Georgia House. For example, the Senate Committee on Government Oversight has agendas and minutes available for each meeting held, with dedicated space for public testimony on each agenda, whereas the House oversight committees only provide users with a link to watch the hearing on YouTube, with no apparent line of sight into what is occurring in the meeting (e.g., there are no agendas or minutes available). The Senate Committee on Government Oversight has several "study" subcommittees that appear to be very active and produce several public reports each session. The House committees did not have any public reports available. The chairs of the Senate Committee on Government Oversight have links to a contact form that allows users to easily categorize their message into several categories (need help with an agency, want to meet with a Senator, want to express support or opposition to a bill, etc.), whereas the House committees do not provide such links or any direct solicitation for public input or feedback.

The Open Georgia system collects financial information, performance reviews, and more from across state government and presents them in an online format. This data can conceivably be used in conducting oversight, though non-financial performance data is limited mostly to reports issued by the Department of Audits and Accounts.

Hawaii

The Hawaii Legislature offers several tools to encourage people-centered oversight behaviors. The Legislative Reference Bureau offers a plethora of resources to help citizens engage with the legislative process, and oversight committees in both chambers dedicate time for public testimony. Committees also make it easy to submit and review testimony online. Both oversight committees offer a substantial number of public reports detailing their work throughout the last session.

Idaho

The state of Idaho had, at the end of its last session, one joint Legislative Oversight Committee and one interim oversight committee that focuses on state child protective services. While the interim committee showed evidence of a significant amount of public input through oral testimony in their hearings, the standing oversight committee did not.

One highlight for the state is a government website run by the state controller called "Transparent Idaho." This website provides a wealth of financial and operational information and data about the Idaho state government, including information at the county, district, and city levels as well.

Also of special note is "Townhall Idaho," an extensive website listing all the public meetings and events hosted by state agencies.

Illinois

The state of Illinois does not provide constituents with easy access to submit feedback or input on legislation. There is no direct solicitation for feedback on their main legislative website nor any of the oversight chairs' personal web pages. There was no evidence of direct-user testimony in any of the hearings surveyed and it was not apparent that the committees assigned to oversight were meeting at all.

While the Illinois General Assembly's website was one of the most limited in terms of form and function we came across in our work, a new public beta of the General Assembly's website is at least one promising step in the right direction.

Indiana

The Indiana General Assembly had only one oversight committee listed on its website in 2024, the Legislative Council, and it did not appear to be very active as it only meets once a year to approve and establish interim committees and study task forces for each session and approve administrative rules for the Legislature. Furthermore, the several interim committees that were approved by the Legislative Council had little online evidence of meaningful activity. Legislators in Indiana solicit messages and feedback from their constituents, though it is not immediately clear in our research how that feedback is incorporated into legislative work.

Indiana does collect and make available a number of financial and performance datasets through its Transparency Hub and its Data Portal, the latter of which appears to lack datasets in certain areas. These datasets are still a very promising start to collecting user-centered program data that can feed meaningful oversight.

Iowa

The state of Iowa has four committees dedicated to oversight listed on its legislative website, however, only two of these committees were actively meeting as of 2024. The House Oversight Committee allows users to submit written testimony and see feedback from others. This committee also has several public reports available on its website.

Iowa has an open data platform with an impressive selection of data that may lend itself to conducting oversight, though many of the datasets could include a greater focus on operations and user experience (e.g., processing times for certain citizen-facing processes rather than just cases closed or claims filed).

Kansas

The state of Kansas is quite active when it comes to performing oversight duties as it has two specific oversight committees, four specialized oversight committees, and 21 subcommittees with six task forces focused on oversight. Of the six committees dedicated to oversight, half of the committees had ample evidence of public testimony input in hearings. Public testimony and reports produced by committees are easily accessible online.

Kansas also has an online “State Databank,” the emphasis of which is chiefly financial data.

Kentucky

Of particular note in the Kentucky General Assembly the prominent links to “Surveys” on the webpage of every legislator. While many of these links load only a blank page, some legislators, including some oversight committee chairs, had a survey available on their webpage relevant to their legislative work. It is unclear, however, how or if these surveys are promoted to constituents. Because they are seemingly conducted under the auspices of an individual legislator, they do not constitute a statewide mechanism for collecting user data.

Louisiana

In Louisiana, as in many states, most available evidence points to committee testimony coming mainly from agency leadership rather than frontline staff or end-users of programs, even though citizens can complete a “witness form” for hearings.

The Louisiana Performance Accountability System, a product of the state’s Division of Administration developed in service of the state’s performance-based budgeting system, shows in remarkable detail the key performance indicators and progress toward those indicators of every state agency and its subsidiary units. This data goes as far back as 1998 and includes such wide-ranging and user-centered information as “Percent of calls to [child welfare hotline] answered directly by intake workers (not voice mail)” and “percentage of individual income tax refunds ready to be issued within 90 days of receipt of tax return.”

Maine

The Maine Legislature has a strong tool for oversight in the Joint Government Oversight Committee, which meets regularly, is well supported by the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability, and makes records of all its work easily available online. We recognize this bipartisan committee as a best practice in oversight generally. There is evidence of committees accepting testimony from the public, including electronically.

In 2024, the Committee produced a report entitled “Frontline Perspectives in Child Protection as Catalysts for Reform,” which is a particular national highlight of people-centered oversight owing to its emphasis on challenges for frontline staff as obstacles to achieving program goals.

Maryland

Maryland legislators and staff benefit from a centralized system for handling constituent contacts, including casework, in both chambers of the General Assembly. Information on legislative oversight activities is generally available to the public. Members of the public can provide oral or written testimony to committees, though there is limited evidence to show that this is a common occurrence or has great influence on legislative activity.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts General Court allows the public to register online to provide oral or written testimony, and archived videos confirm that this testimony does occur from time to time.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts also boasts an impressive online “data-driven performance” tool where the public can “learn how state agencies use data to improve your experience with government.” It is unique in that it speaks directly to data improving not just government operation, but public facing experience: “The Administration is working hard to improve your experience with state government. To that end, all government agencies have been asked to identify their critical constituent-facing services and to track ongoing efforts to improve their delivery. By selecting key metrics and measuring performance against annual targets, the goal is to provide you with the resources you need as simply, efficiently, and transparently as possible.”

Michigan

Michigan has a relatively robust basic oversight infrastructure. Legislative oversight committees in Michigan are generally active and can accept written testimony from citizens. Both chambers of the Michigan Legislature use a centralized system for tracking constituent engagement with legislative offices, including casework.

Legislators in Michigan can and do exercise their ability to require extensive reporting from agencies as a condition of their receiving appropriations. While these reports generate enormous amounts of information, most of the reports leave something to be desired in terms of providing a sense of citizen experience with programs and agencies, and it is unclear how much of the

information generated by these reports today is used in meaningful oversight, or how it would enable people-centered oversight in its current state.

Minnesota

In Minnesota, the bipartisan, bicameral Legislative Audit Commission plays an important role in the state's oversight landscape. The Commission appoints the Legislative Auditor, selects topics for review, and periodically reviews the work of the Office of the Legislative Auditor. While the Commission does not typically take public testimony, the Office of the Legislative Auditor is notable for its in-depth work with end-users of programs they evaluate. More information on this work and how it fits into a people-centered oversight framework is included in this report as a case study.

In Minnesota, the Senate uses a centralized system for managing constituent contact and casework.

Mississippi

The Mississippi Legislature has active oversight committees in both chambers and a well-run joint oversight committee with professional staff — the Joint Legislative Committee on Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review (PEER). While PEER makes its reports publicly available, it is difficult to find other basic information about legislative oversight in Mississippi, let alone people-centered oversight activity.

Missouri

As was reported in the Levin Center's fifty-state survey on legislative oversight, "Missouri does not have the political resources to produce the evidence needed for 'evidence-based bipartisan oversight.'"³⁹ Citizens can engage with the Legislature through regular member contact mechanisms and testimony, and the House does use a system to track constituent contacts. None of these items on their own, however, appear to rise to the standard of people-centered oversight.

Montana

The state of Montana has one specific and active oversight committee, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, and 13 specialized oversight committees. Each committee homepage has a link to "Submit Public Comment" and there is ample evidence of public input (e.g., written and oral testimony) given in each meeting reviewed. Agendas appear to have a public comment section as a matter of course, and meeting minutes reveal that the committee does frequently receive public comments. The website also provides a link to view all public comments

³⁹ Lyke Thompson and Marjorie Sarbaugh-Thompson, "Checks and Balances in Action: Legislative Oversight across the States" (Wayne State University, 2019), <http://go.levin-center.org/50state>, 547.

submitted. In addition, there are several reports and documents available for public viewing under each meeting listed.

While being highly active and engaging in oversight behaviors, the state of Montana also has a unique process by which they make some of their public oversight hearings more accessible to constituents who may face obstacles to attending legislative hearings due to how far they live from the state capitol. For example, the State-Tribal Relations Committee and the Water Policy Interim Committee hold several of their public hearings in various locations around the state, on reservations or in school buildings. The state of Montana also has two specialized oversight committees (the Criminal Justice Oversight Council and the Environmental Quality Council) in which members of the public hold an equal number of seats on the committee.

Nebraska

The key distinguishing feature in Nebraska's oversight ecosystem is the Office of the Public Counsel, which "investigates citizen complaints about state government and works toward resolution of issues." The office, also known as the Ombudsman's Office, is part of the legislative branch and is a valuable tool for gathering information on agency performance and citizen experience in a variety of areas, particularly those in which the State cares for vulnerable populations.

Nevada

The Nevada Legislature has no solicitation for direct feedback from the public on any of its public website pages. Although the General Assembly and Senate homepages both have links to gather further information about testifying in committee hearings, neither chamber provides users with the opportunity to directly submit testimony. Instead, a user must go through the specific committee and hearing to which they wish to submit a comment, and the process is extremely hard to navigate. Despite these challenges, Nevada's sole committee dedicated to oversight, the Legislative Commission, has evidence that public input is being obtained in several of their meetings. Under each meeting viewed is a section for public comment with direct links to view multiple instances of public input.

New Hampshire

The New Hampshire General Court performs some oversight work and is supported by the Office of Legislative Budget Assistant, though the Levin Center's fifty-state study on legislative oversight noted that reports produced by this office were not used in oversight activities as much as they could be.⁴⁰ Our research did not uncover significant evidence of repeated and meaningful citizen testimony in oversight. In terms of its ability to conduct people-centered oversight, however, the New Hampshire House of Representatives boasts a membership of 400 representatives (nearly twice the size of the next largest state legislative chamber in the country)

⁴⁰ Thompson and Sarbaugh-Thompson, "Checks and Balances in Action," 617.

and, as a result, the smallest ratio of constituents to legislators in the nation and more direct connection to its constituents.

New Jersey

New Jersey provides some avenues for public input in legislative oversight, including documented public testimony and some public input at committee meetings. It is challenging to find minutes or other reports from the oversight committee. A bright spot in New Jersey is its online Governor's Performance Center, featuring information on a variety of metrics — including those measuring performance in citizen-facing functions that can form a basis for people-centered oversight.

New Mexico

The New Mexico Legislature has six specialized oversight committees and a few best practices for conducting people-centered oversight. First, on each committee's homepage, front and center, is a section titled "Virtual Public Comment" in which users are directed to an easy and user-friendly process that provides a link to instructions for providing public comment, and a link that becomes active one hour before a scheduled meeting to join a Zoom. In three of the six committees surveyed, there was evidence of the committee receiving comments from the public. Furthermore, the interim committees often meet for full days at various locations throughout the state, not just at the State Capitol. This provides opportunities for citizens who may live too far from the Capitol to attend a legislative meeting closer to their place of residence.

The New Mexico Legislature also provides public documents that are useful for their constituents to remain up to date on the latest oversight happenings. The state has a transparency website called "New Mexico Sunshine Portal" where public data (mainly fiscal in nature) is available and can be easily accessed. On the oversight committees' web pages, users can also find a final report compiled by the committee at the end of each legislative session and several "handouts" that are easy-to-read documents summarizing the committees' actions.

Also of note in New Mexico is the LegiSTAT system, in which legislative committees work with agencies to develop — and assess progress toward — certain performance-related metrics that may include improved program implementation or results for end users.

New York

The New York State Legislature had, at the time of writing, two committees tasked with performing oversight, many of which meet regularly. Public input is limited — citizens can write to members of the committees, and, in at least one instance, a committee chair conducted a community survey. However, oral testimony at oversight hearings is by invitation only.

New York Legislators have district offices and staff, allowing closer work with constituents. The Senate uses an institution-wide computer system for managing constituent contacts, and its user-

facing website stands out among its peers for including clear information about legislative activity and soliciting feedback from citizens, even on individual bills.

North Carolina

North Carolina has a robust legislative oversight structure with active committees and professional staff (though certain non-standing, issue-specific oversight committees appear not to have met in years). Public input opportunities in North Carolina are limited to traditional contact between constituents and their legislators, and both chambers of the General Assembly use a centralized tool for tracking constituent contacts. The State of North Carolina also offers an open data portal, though the information in this portal seems limited to basic factual and demographic datasets, rather than indicators of government performance.

North Dakota

North Dakota has a “citizen legislature” with a very limited session time and part-time legislators. The Joint Legislative Audit and Fiscal Review Committee reviews reports from the State Auditor and does have a space on their agendas for comments from “interested persons,” though available records from the last two years show only one public comment at each of the two meetings, and it is unclear how or if these comments at the end of the meeting factor into later legislative action.

Ohio

The Levin Center’s fifty-state study on oversight practices suggests that high rates of lawmaker turnover in states like Ohio, which have legislative term limits, is associated with relatively weak institutional memory among legislators and less use of oversight powers. When oversight hearings take place, most testimony in those hearings is from agency staff or representatives of advocacy groups, though some hearings do include public testimony. Ohio does have an open data portal, but it lacks information required for consistent, people-centered oversight initiatives.

Oklahoma

Recent efforts to improve legislative oversight in Oklahoma have led to the creation of the Legislative Office of Fiscal Transparency (LOFT), which answers to a joint committee. This is a powerful tool for the Legislature and, while much of the work naturally concerns fiscal matters, LOFT’s work also includes some examination of policy implementation and service delivery, such as a program evaluation on “opportunities to modernize delivery of driver’s license services.” The Oklahoma House, as of spring 2025, is also soliciting public input through a “Government Transparency Portal” allowing the public to “report any instances of government duplication and waste,” which it promises will be “[incorporated] into our budget review process throughout the session.”

Oregon

The Oregon Legislature shows little evidence of people-centered oversight activity on an institutional level. Online resources suggest that the process for the public to provide testimony directly to committees is somewhat onerous compared to other states. Although plenty of testimony was being given during meetings held by their one committee dedicated to oversight, the Joint Committee on Legislative Audits, it was exclusively testimony provided by members of the executive branch and did not involve any direct users of services.

Oregon has a large open data catalog, as well as a system for annually measuring agency performance on a number of metrics (including citizen satisfaction with certain services).

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania has many of the necessary tools to conduct meaningful oversight, including a legislature with professional staff and strong analytic bureaucracies. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee is a major source of legislative oversight work and reports by the committee's staff are readily available online. The main channel for public interaction with the Pennsylvania General Assembly appears to be through individual legislators, who maintain separate district offices with staff. Legislators and staff across the General Assembly use computer systems to track constituent interactions. Four separate systems are maintained by each chamber and caucus.

Rhode Island

Each chamber in the Rhode Island General Assembly has a committee dedicated to oversight, and both committees have demonstrated in recent years an impressive ability to conduct investigations.

The State of Rhode Island also maintains an impressive transparency portal with extensive reporting on metrics ranging from pavement conditions to the average age of Supreme Court cases, as well as comparisons to set target metrics and metrics in previous years. The breadth of available data and the implementation focus of selected metrics makes this tool a national leader.

South Carolina

The state of South Carolina has several opportunities for the public to engage with its legislature through its legislative websites and there are direct solicitations for public feedback and input. On its oversight committees' homepages, there is an option to submit public input through a survey, an option for citizens to request a notification when meetings are scheduled, a link to provide testimony to the committees, and a link on "How to Submit Input about Agencies." In the House, this is part of the Committee's effort to review agency performance (including gathering user feedback) on a seven-year cycle.

Despite the numerous opportunities for the public to submit input, however, it is hard to discern whether this input is being received or applied. The committees do not make past meeting information readily available. There are recordings of past meetings, but this requires an extensive time commitment from a user to investigate what the topics or outcomes of these meetings were since there is no paper trail available. The agendas of upcoming meetings are available directly on the committees' homepages. However, there is no evidence in these agendas that there is time allotted for public input or direct user testimony.

South Dakota

The South Dakota Legislature, through its Government Operations and Audit Committee, produces an extensive report each year on agency performance benchmarks and progress toward them. This process, required by law, is an important tool to “close the loop” between the Legislature and agencies in terms of policy implementation. Many of the metrics collected are strong indicators of citizen experience with government (though some could be better focused to provide a clearer picture of program implementation at the ground level). While it is not uncommon for state governments to have this level of information available, South Dakota is unique in that its collection appears to be a primarily legislative function.

Tennessee

In the Tennessee General Assembly, the public can complete “witness cards” online to express their opinion on a matter before a committee or request to testify (though the form cautions that “the submission of this form is not a guarantee that you will be allowed to speak”). Gaps in certain publicly available committee information make it difficult to determine how often this process is used in service of oversight activities or the effect that it has.

Legislators and staff in Tennessee previously used a system to manage and track constituent requests to individual legislators, but it was ultimately determined a wasteful expenditure due to the system being too complex for the task, and its use was discontinued.

The Transparent Tennessee tool, a product of the Executive Branch, includes a tool to track a number of key performance indicators across state departments. Along with more traditional goals and statistics to measure state government performance (e.g., decrease the number of escapes from correctional facilities, increase the number of state-chartered credit unions participating in a continuous feedback and improvement process), the indicators include many direct measures of public experience with government (e.g., decrease the average wait time across all Driver Service Centers by one minute, increase customer satisfaction in various surveys conducted by agencies).

Texas

It is not clear from the Texas Legislature's websites that any typical legislative oversight is occurring on a regular basis. The state of Texas has two “oversight” committees listed, however, a deeper investigation into these committees reveals little evidence of oversight in a traditional

sense. The other oversight committee, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, does not have its own homepage (links point directly to the State Auditor's homepage), the chairs of the committee do not have any contact information available, and there is no evidence this committee has met in the past two years.

The House's website allows the public to register as a witness to appear before committees, but it requires the creation of a public profile in advance. The website provides an instructional video and indicates that this process can also be completed on a touch screen at the Capitol. However, the site cautions that "Witness registration will be open at the discretion of the committee clerk," so completing the five-step process is not a guarantee of being heard. The Senate does not have a similar registration process online, but committees in both chambers publish lists of witnesses at all committee meetings.

Utah

The state of Utah has several committees and subcommittees solely dedicated to oversight in its legislature that appear to be finding ways to receive public input through testimony in their oversight hearings, despite not having any direct solicitations for it online. Several instances of direct user testimony were evident in their public hearings. The Rules Review and General Oversight Committee, for example, had public testimony in several agendas we reviewed.

Part of the reason Utah oversight committees have an engaged constituency when it comes to participating in legislative hearings could be the ease with which relevant and up-to-date information can be obtained by the public. Minutes from meetings are available in a user-friendly format in which transcripts are timestamped and synced to recordings. Furthermore, each oversight committee had several public reports and audits attached to the meeting materials links. Within these reports was more evidence of public input being garnered through public surveys sent out to solicit input on relevant topics.

Utah makes data from across state government available online through dedicated websites, though the data consists of many raw datasets that do not necessarily speak to citizen experience or state government performance. Additionally, the House has a short podcast called *House Rules: Politics and Policy in Utah*, that regular features legislators discussing bills under consideration, or the Legislative Auditor General breaking down the results of audits in an easily digestible way.

Vermont

The Vermont Legislature lists six oversight committees on its website, all of which are devoted to a specific policy area, like information technology or transportation. Some of these committees appear to have been dormant for some time. Historical press releases and meeting agendas suggest that the Legislature occasionally seeks out public feedback on certain issues through public forums and specific public hearings (including in locations away from the capitol), though these forums appear to be general in nature or focused on specific legislation, rather than oversight issues.

Vermont has an open data portal, though some of the data is more than a few months old and leans in the direction of general lists and statistics rather than specific information on government performance or program implementation.

Virginia

The Virginia General Assembly encourages testimony from the public in committee meetings through a “Citizen Involvement” section on its website, and citizens are also invited to provide written testimony by email. The emphasis in instructions for testimony seems to be primarily on legislation rather than oversight activities. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, a well-staffed oversight entity within the legislative branch, produces most oversight-related reports and makes them publicly available online.

Washington

The state of Washington has several highlights when it comes to a sufficient infrastructure for people-centered oversight. On the main Legislature home page, there is a section of links titled “Let Your Voice Be Heard.” Here, users find three links, “Contact your Legislators,” “Comment on a Bill,” and “Participate in Committee Hearings.” Each of these links provides users with valuable information and resources to help them participate in the legislative process and submit their input or feedback.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee has sufficient infrastructure for people-centered oversight as well and frequently makes time to receive public comments. Where the agendas are listed, there is also a link for testifying information that takes users to a search box where they can easily search and view any testimony provided. This committee also provides several reports that are easily accessible and are written in a way that is understandable to a general audience.

Legislators, executive agencies, and the public in Washington also enjoy particularly excellent data and engagement from the Results Washington program, which was established by executive order in 2013. Comprehensive online datasets track performance metrics on a wide variety of people-centered criteria ranging from specific (trends in opioid overdose EMS responses) to very broad (state ranking in patents issued per capita). Results Washington also includes “Public Performance Reviews,” which they describe as “monthly, televised meetings where state agency leaders, agency experts, partners, individuals with lived experience, and customers gather to discuss the status and progress of various state goals, initiatives, and improvement projects.”

West Virginia

The West Virginia Legislature holds interim meetings (and some other committee hearings) at locations around the state other than the Capitol. In 2025, for example, several meetings of the Joint Standing Committee on Education took place at an elementary school near the Capitol, and multiple meetings of interim committees were scheduled at locations across the state. Still, the

West Virginia House of Representatives modified its rules in February 2025 to eliminate most public hearing requirements for committee hearings.

Wisconsin

The state of Wisconsin has six legislative committees dedicated to oversight listed on their website, however, half of these committees show no evidence of meeting within the last two years. There are no direct solicitations for public input on either their legislative homepage or on any of the oversight chairs' personal web pages. There was no evidence of public input or testimony in any of the agendas surveyed for the three oversight committees that were meeting regularly. One highlight in Wisconsin was the Joint Legislative Audit Committee had several audits available directly on their homepage for public viewing.

While some agencies in Wisconsin do provide useful information on key performance metrics and other data, the collection of this data does not seem to be standardized across the state.

Wyoming

The state of Wyoming's legislative homepage has a menu drop-down titled "Citizen Engagement" where a user can see all the rules and suggestions for attending a legislative hearing. Within this page, there is a link to submit a handout electronically to legislators. The form to submit a handout allows users to attach documents and comment on pending legislation. These clear directions and solicitation for public input appear to be successful in obtaining citizen input. On the oversight committee's agendas, under each topic, is a section for "public comments" and a deeper dive into the minutes of these meetings reveals that members of the public regularly provided comments in meetings.

