Sunlight Foundation’s Web Integrity Project

The Web Integrity Project (WIP) monitors and reports on changes to federal websites, holding our government accountable by revealing shifts in public information and resources, as well as changes in stated policies and priorities. In the short time since our launch in February, we have released six reports documenting reduction in access to health and immigration information, which have sourced more than 50 news articles, including by prominent outlets such as Politico, NBC News, The Hill, Newsweek, as well as driving House and Senate oversight, highlighting the effectiveness of our model.

Program areas

Monitoring federal websites: We systematically monitor government Web domains for changes in language and access to information on individual webpages. We are approaching our work by sector, and currently monitor 30,000 pages pertaining to health and healthcare and immigration topics, expanding to criminal justice and foreign aid and relations.

Sourcing journalists: We source embargoed reports detailing significant website changes to our pool of journalists who provide context for our findings, in addition to working exclusively with journalists to launch deeper investigations. Working with journalist partners bolsters our investigative capacity and ensures our findings reach the public and key stakeholders.

WIP’s investigative work: We interview agency employees, ex-employees, and policy experts, as well as file Freedom of Information Act requests to understand the agency decision-making process underlying changes to websites.

Web governance policy analysis: In addition to analyzing the impacts of changes we see, we analyze agency Web governance practices and contextualize how laws, regulations, and guidance for Web records management apply to the changes to websites that we document. We also work to encourage members of Congress to demand agencies follow current Web policies.

WIP’s Current and Future Work

Significant results so far: We’ve released a series of three reports documenting the overhaul of HHS’s Office on Women’s Health website, including the removal of a breast cancer site (covered by ThinkProgress, Newsweek) and a fact sheet about lesbian and bisexual health (covered by Politico, NBC News, The Hill, and initiated Congressional oversight). Our sixth report details the removal of 26 documents for training asylum officers from the USCIS website (covered by Newsweek, Splinter).

WIP’s team: Our current team is comprised of our Director (Toly Rinberg), Director of Programs (Rachel Bergman), Director of Policy (Andrew Bergman), Senior Investigator (Jon Campbell), a Website Monitoring Analyst (Aaron Lemelin), and five volunteer Website Monitoring Analysts.

Upcoming work and future support: The Sunlight Foundation is currently seeking funding support to add dedicated capacity for both monitoring and investigations. With additional funding, WIP could also establish comprehensive monitoring of different issue areas, including federal websites pertaining to immigration, criminal justice, foreign aid and relations, and other domains.

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