How Technology Can Help You Incorporate Local Policy Monitoring into Your Strategy

Table of Contents

Introduction

Local Policy Monitoring Software

Each year, local governments are taking on larger regulatory roles, passing legislation that has major impacts on businesses and communities.
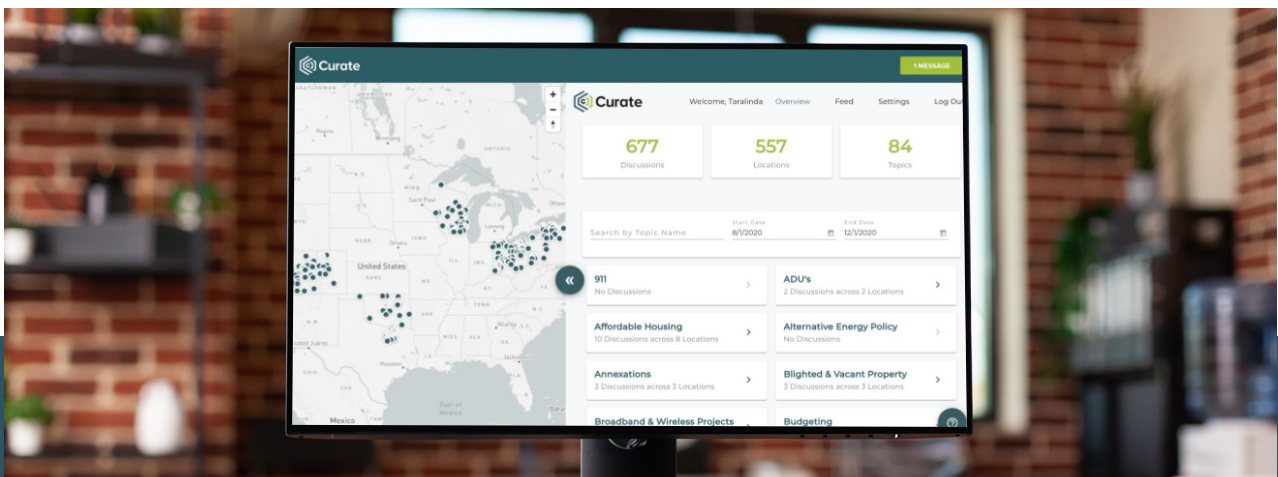
Monitoring the extensive volume of proposed ordinances and discussions across dozens or even hundreds of bodies of local government is a task that cannot be effectively or accurately accomplished through an entirely manual process.

This is why public affairs professionals, business development leaders, and lobbyists are turning to local legislative tracking software to stay informed at a scale otherwise impossible.

What is Local Policy Monitoring Software?
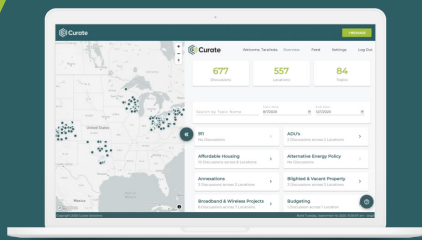
Local policy monitoring software, such as Curate, is a vital tool for public affairs professionals that collects and analyzes public documents from municipal governments, automatically extracts relevant information, and provides users timely and custom alerts about relevant discussions and upcoming legislation.

How does it work?

Local policy monitoring software uses advanced data collection techniques to find public documents such as meeting minutes and agendas as soon as they are uploaded to the web and then analyzes the content of those documents to identify mentions associated with key topics.

Using machine learning algorithms, the software determines which mentions are relevant and sets aside the rest. Users then receive real-time alerts of these crucial insights for the specific topics they want to monitor. Users can also review all of their topics through an online dashboard.

Your Centralized, Customized Local Policy Monitoring Dashboard

Curate gives you access to a customized dashboard centralizing the latest updates and developments on the local policy that matters to you and your organization, in one easy-to-use platform that lets you focus on the key issues that require action.

Learn More About Curate

What to expect from local policy monitoring software?

- Captures the entire text from meeting minutes and agendas posted online by city and county councils, committees, task forces, school boards, and other elected groups

- Extracts the most relevant information related to your key topics and delivers them in reports. It also lists them in a searchable, filterable feed on a customizable dashboard

- Allows you to do your own research in the database on historical documents

- Standardizes the documents in an easy-to-read and searchable format

Who uses it?

Corporations, industry associations, and nonprofit organizations of all sizes use local policy monitoring software to stay ahead of proposed ordinances, minimize risk, monitor their reputation, and capitalize on opportunities.

Even local governments use this software to know how other communities are addressing issues and spot policy trends moving across the region.

Government Affairs Teams

Use local policy monitoring software for early warnings of proposed local ordinances that could impact their business or members' operations. This intelligence is passed on to stakeholders, empowering them to get involved in local government.

Public Affairs Teams

Mitigate risk to their operations from local policy change with local legislative tracking software. They also watch for mentions of their organization or industry to monitor their business's reputation, assess attitudes about their industry, and predict future legislation.

Public Policy Teams

Monitor local discussions to observe trends in policymaking and find opportunities to engage with local lawmakers to advance specific policies

Business Dev Teams

Monitor local government discussions to gain a competitive advantage by being the first to identify new business leads in their communities.

Public Policy Teams

Follow changes in local regulations to ensure their organizations stay in compliance. These groups also use the timely updates to proactively engage with lawmakers and make sure new regulations achieve their intended purpose, without unduly burdening businesses.

Local Legislators & Policy Executives

Use insights from peer cities and counties to inform their policy decisions, while also staying informed trending issues impacting neighboring communities across the region.

What Are the Benefits of Using Local Policy Monitoring?

Since there is little uniformity in the ways that cities, counties, and school boards publicize their meeting minutes and agendas, tracking local legislation without an automated tool is a labor-intensive task prone to human error.

To manually track local ordinances, government affairs teams often spend hours each week reviewing Google Alerts, reading local newspapers, navigating to individual government websites to download weekly agendas, and reviewing meeting minutes that city clerks send them via email.

Automate Your Local Policy Monitoring Processes

Curate monitors 12,000+ municipalities on a real-time basis and delivers word-for-word insights from meetings and agendas across dozens of committees, councils, and commissions — helping you save time, eliminating manual work, and automatically putting what matters in front of you.

Learn More About Curate

CASE STUDY

Learn How They Did It

Unable to effectively monitor issues outside the largest metro areas, the public affairs team of a statewide hospitality association was getting blindsided by issues in smaller communities. Without adding headcount, the team is now catching more local policy issues with enough time to intervene, including in towns that would never be cost-effective to monitor manually.

How local policy monitoring software improves your government affairs strategy:

1 **Spend less time on mindless tasks** like looking for documents and more time on higher-value activities like meeting with stakeholders who can move your initiatives forward, or launching grassroot advocacy campaigns. The software automatically collects all the relevant documents for you, so you can focus on taking action from the intelligence you gather.

2 **Only review the documents that contain relevant mentions of your key issues.** No more speed-reading through dozens of agendas just to find one that mentions an issue of concern or not find any relevant discussions at all.

3 **Understand local issues in context.** Best-in-class software lets you easily find the crucial information within the document, as well as see the entire text so you can fully understand the context of the issue.

4 **Expand your tracking area to neighboring communities.** Local policies have a tendency to jump from one community to another. By tracking a larger area, you may be able to recognize policy trends before they show up on your local agenda and work to influence local attitudes proactively.

5 **Discover proposed legislation before it comes up for a vote or becomes law.** Elected officials want to hear from the stakeholders who will be affected by proposed legislation, but they don't have time to reach out to the organizations it will impact. Government affairs teams have to keep up with local policies to gain the opportunity to make their voice heard.

Considerations for Selecting the Best Local Policy Monitoring Software

Before investing in local policy tracking software for the first time, it's helpful to think through the features and functionality to make sure you're able to get the most from the platform. Use these tips to evaluate the different software options available.

✓ Cost

Like most professional software tools, local policy monitoring software comes with a subscription fee. Most tools bill either monthly or annually. However, the fee is often small compared to the potential cost of missing a regulatory or policy change and significantly less than adding headcount to your team.

✓ Users

The software doesn't replace government affairs teams, but it does help them be more efficient. Analysts still need to review alerts and identify action items, but they are able to do so at a speed, accuracy, and scale that is impossible with manual tracking. The tool you choose needs to accommodate the number of users who will access and integrate it with their existing legislative monitoring processes.

The pricing structure for local legislative tracking software often is tied to the number of accounts or users.

✓ Locations to Monitor

The number of governing bodies that you need to keep track of will determine whether you need local policy monitoring software.

If your team only tracks one or two small municipalities, you may be able to keep up with what is happening in each of the commissions, committees, and other voting bodies in those two cities by manually finding agendas and minutes on the government websites and reading through them one by one.

But if you need to track more than three cities or across multiple counties, the massive amount of documents produced by those government bodies will likely be overwhelming if you don't have a tracking solution.

Adopting a local policy monitoring solution will ensure you never miss an issue.

Considerations

✓ Population Size of the Smallest City You Need to Track

A local legislative tracking software won't add a lot of value if it is unable to track all the cities and counties your organization operates in. The number of locations and population of locations are two major distinguishing factors between the available local policy monitoring software options.

Software providers typically break down their coverage by population size, ranging from solutions that track cities as small as 2,000 residents to providers that only cover the 200 largest cities and counties within the 50 states.

✓ Breadth of Data

Some legislative tracking solutions only collect information from cities with populations of 50,000 or more, while others collect data from cities as small as 2,000 residents. It's important to make sure the tool you are considering provides coverage of all the communities you need to monitor.

The Most Comprehensive Local Coverage

With Curate you'll be confident you have the broadest and deepest coverage of local policy monitoring. We collect documents from the smallest of municipalities to the largest of counties, capturing municipalities with a population of 2,000 or greater, giving you insights into 12,000+ locations. Our technology then combs through the 400,000+ meeting minutes and agendas to extract the crucial information you need from all areas of local government including councils, committees, boards, commissions and more.

Learn More About Curate

Considerations

✓ Filtering Options

Make sure the tracking technology you choose offers the ability to filter results within the dashboard in the same way your team divides up your coverage area or key policy issues. This way each team members can focus on the segments most important to them and won't waste time looking at legislative alerts that aren't of relevance.

This is especially important for government relations teams that work in highly populated areas. It's often not enough to be able to access local legislation updates at the county level because that still covers too large of an area.

Filters should give each user the ability to customize their own dashboard to maximize their productivity.
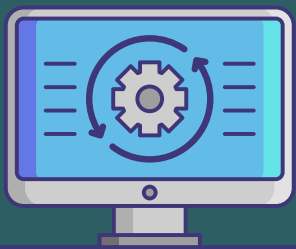
Tip: Look for software that lets you save multiple filters and share them with other users. It makes it easy to segment issues in different ways as responsibilities and initiatives change.

✓ User-friendly Format

A key difference between many of the tracking solutions available comes from the user experience of reviewing the mention.

In some solutions, the software points the user to the government website where the agenda is stored and leaves the user to search through the document on their own, or even read it through from top to bottom if the agenda is not in a searchable format. Others provide a report in an excel-type document with minimal details.

The better user experience comes from the all-in-one solutions that import agendas and minutes into the software, presenting relevant mentions in an easy-to-read feed format and then linking to information in a full context of a searchable document.

Standardized, Readable, Searchable Documents

Not only does Curate collect meeting minutes and agenda documents, it processes the text into a standardized, searchable, and easy-to-read format. As an added bonus, any mention that matches your tracked topics is earmarked within the document making it quick and easy to jump to that section. No more scanning through badly-scanned PDFs, though a link to the original document is always included.

Learn More

Considerations

✓ ## Name Recognition Tracking

In addition to using local legislative software to mitigate policy risk, many companies monitor the discussions happening in local government for reputation management purposes by including their own company name as an advocacy priority.

Similarly, they can also gain insight into their competitors by getting updates when names of competitive companies are mentioned in meetings.

Your local policy monitoring software should also be able to constantly monitor for specific names of local governments' programs or initiatives.

✓ ## Research Entire Documents

New initiatives and opportunities beyond the topics you currently track happen all the time. Want to look back and see the discussions that appeared in previous documents? Or see if it's on an upcoming agenda? Make sure this is an option with the software you select.

A best-in-class local policy monitoring software should index entire documents, allowing you to use the tool as a search engine to find matching phrases within any document. It should also let you look up discussions in any of your tracked locations that match any advocacy topics that matter to your organization.

Local Legislative Tracking Software is a Must-Have Tool for Government Relations Professionals

Savvy government affairs teams know word of mouth and manually reviewing documents is not a reliable source for intel about legislative and regulatory change at the local level. They are turning to automated tracking solutions to make sure they never miss a critical issue and they know about them in a timely manner.

Using local legislation tracking software is the only way to effectively keep up with policy changes at the municipal level.

Government relations professionals are using these tools to stay ahead of changes, proactively engage with local elected officials and act on opportunities to shape the policy landscape.

Powerful Technology & AI that Works for You

Curate uses powerful machine learning and proprietary technology to scan and read meeting minutes and agendas as soon as they're posted online. Our AI-powered solution automatically identifies relevant mentions of the topics you care about and delivers alerts to your customized dashboard, as well as an email, giving you back the hours this takes to do by your team.

Learn More About Curate's Technology

About Curate

Curate, part of FiscalNote, is local government monitoring software that provides the most comprehensive, trusted, and timely resource of actionable insights from 12,000+ municipal organizations across the country.

Schedule a meeting to see the local government monitoring capabilities of Curate.

Curate

PART OF **FiscalNote**