Celebrating Ten Years
A LETTER FROM OUR EDITOR IN CHIEF

I’ve had the honor and pleasure of working at Ballotpedia since June 2010. Back then, we talked about ourselves being one of the little guys—the political website that focused on the “down-ballot coverage” while everyone else obsessed and wrote about the top of the ticket. We humbly thought our domain rested in the areas of politics with little coverage and little competition. If only my 2010-self could see us now; I would’ve never believed it.

When I joined the staff in 2010, we had just embarked on an exciting new project to write articles about the 7,383 incumbent state legislators. Every year since then has topped the previous one in sense of satisfaction and in growth. Like any other growing company, we’ve experienced a combination of highs and lows. I suppose we have learned first-hand why they call it “growing pains.” With a large vision and grand ambitions, we set the bar high for ourselves. We have exceedingly high expectations for the quality of our work. But seven years, about 600 million page views, and 188,000 new articles later, I’m proud to say that we’ve had an amazing ride to date.

Each year brings new challenges and new opportunities to provide a richer, fuller encyclopedia for our customers. If the next seven years are as exciting as the last seven, then we’ve got an incredibly bright future ahead of us—one that will be filled with continued highs and lows, but predominantly, the incredible honor of helping create a more informed and level-headed climate around politics. Here are some of my favorite highlights from the past seven years.

2010: We launched the state legislative project and pioneered our very own competitiveness study, now in its seventh year.

2011: It was a year of R&R. No, not rest and relaxation. Redistricting and Recalls. We had a wonderful year writing all about the redistricting maps and Wisconsin recall events.

2012: This was our first step into the big leagues, with our expansion into congressional coverage.

2013: In 2012, we expanded up with Congress; in 2013, we went deeper into local government with two major projects. We acquired the Sunshine Review and more than 30,000 articles along with it. We also launched our school boards coverage area into the 1,000 largest school districts.
2014: We were all about elections, all the time, in the early years of Ballotpedia. In 2014, we moved beyond just what appears on the ballot and began focusing on the policy conversations behind the scenes of each election, with the launch of our Public Policy Desk (at the time, called Policypedia).

2015: In continuing with the trend to go beyond what appears on the ballot, we launched our Influencers project. Influencers help elect candidates, achieve policy change, create ideological change, and affect popular perception. Put simply, American politics is incomplete if solely focused on elected officials.

2016: First, you build articles on what appears on the ballot, in front of voters (2007-2013). Then, you write about the various policy areas that are influenced and shaped by elections (2014). Once that’s done, you must write about the movers and shakers behind the scenes (2015). Next comes helping readers understand the facts being spun and interwoven around the political landscape. Hence, 2016 brought us Verbatim: Ballotpedia’s fact-checking project.

So, what comes next? As the Encyclopedia of American Politics, the sky’s the limit. There are many different exciting directions we could go in, but I’ll close with just one - comprehensive sample ballot coverage for 100 million Americans. Wouldn’t that be something?

STORIES FROM BALLOTPEDIA READERS

Until I discovered Ballotpedia, I had no unbiased source for information about judgeship elections, and often was at a loss on ballot measures as well. I now go to the polls feeling confident in my decisions. This doesn’t just affect me - I have an email list of about 1000 voters in my immediate area who depend on me for thorough research and recommendations on these small local elections. Many of them tell me they just print out my emails - complete with extensive Ballotpedia citations - and bring them into the booth with them. Most of those folks wouldn’t otherwise vote in those very local elections, so this information has a real impact.

- Jen A. from Brooklyn

Ballotpedia’s organization makes sense and the site is easy to use, uncluttered by superfluous graphics, animations and so forth. Unlike some once-useful sites that have become top-heavy with bandwidth-hogging features, Ballotpedia seems to rely on supplying the “meat” – which, to this civil servant at least, seems a good choice. Navigating Ballotpedia is intuitive, at least for someone with a nodding acquaintance with government organization.

The site deserves a big thumbs-up for the attention it pays to ballot measures, including initiatives, referenda and recall elections. I have used this information, spot-checking it with other sources, and have found it to be clear and accurate. My spot-checking has given me confidence in the overall general reliability of Ballotpedia, at least in this regard and, by extension, for the site as a whole.

- David W.
2006
DECEMBER 18
LUCY BURNS INSTITUTE GOES ONLINE

2007
WIKIFOIA GOES ONLINE
MAY 30
BALLOTPEDIA AND JUDGEPEDIA GO ONLINE

2009
BALLOTPEDIA EXPANDS TO COVER STATE LEGISLATURES

2011
BALLOTPEDIA EXPANDS TO COVER US CONGRESS
FIRST 100 MILLION PAGEVIEWS
100,000 ARTICLES WRITTEN
Ballotpedia became my best friend this election

We love @ballotpedia too! #secretsauce

I'm using @ballotpedia for some post-election research for my job and I love it. Such a great resource

Don't just vote; be informed.

Ballotpedia is a neutral, third-party site that has information on all elections!

Yes! @ballotpedia is usually my first suggestion when people ask where to find any sort of election-related info.

Deeply felt #FF to @ballotpedia today -- an impartial, invaluable source of up-to-date information that I turn to constantly in my reporting.
FINANCIALS

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*Includes a $480,000 in-kind Google AdWords grant

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES OF BALLOTpedia

When BP staff personify and exhibit these values, we are a high performance/high enjoyment team that gets our very important job done.

What do these values mean? What does it look like to have integrity? What kind of behaviors embody honor/courage? Behaviors that exemplify or embody each value are listed below.

### INTEGRITY
- You communicate directly with people and never say something about a team member that you have not said directly to him or her.
- You say what you think and are known for candor.
- You are non-political when you disagree.
- You make and fulfill promises carefully.
- You are quick to admit mistakes and take action to resolved them.
- You ask for specific feedback.
- Your action always align with Ballotpedia’s best interest.

### DISTINCTION/EXCELLENCE
- You are an Artisan.
- You are passionate about improvement.
- You readily recognize excellence in others and talk to them directly about how they achieved it.
- You pause and celebrate in the presence of excellence.
- You evaluate your own work and improve it so that you can be proud of it.
- You reward innovation and ideas, and share your innovative ideas with peers.

### CURIOSITY
- You ask questions in search of understanding rather than in search of argument.
- You listen for and question assumptions until you understand them.
- You are a genuinely open minded, receptive person.
- You are non-judgemental when addressing problems and assume good faith on the part of your co-workers.

### DIGNITY
- You think about the experience of the underdog when doing your work.
- You disagree with people openly and in such a way that your respect for him or her grows.
- You are compassionate.
- You are a responsive person.

### HONOR/COURAGE
- You put your tasks in the context of the impact of the mission.
- You put your reputation behind your work and the work of your team.

### REVENUE

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