For 10 years, I have been studying federal government websites, first at Brown University and then at Brookings when I moved here last year

- good news is that tremendous progress has been made over that time period
- governments have added a great number of services, added functionality, and become easier to navigate
- but there still is considerable work to be done

Each year, we rate 61 federal agencies ranging from Cabinet departments to independent agencies

- in our last study, the Federal Election Commission site rated 48th out of the 61 federal sites
- FEC site had a total score of 40 out of 100 points (score is based on number of features and online services)
- had publications, data, audio clips, privacy policy, email, electronic updates, and online services
- lacked features such as video clips, foreign language translation, comments, personalization, PDA accessibility, and being accessible to visually impaired

Eight Specific Recommendations

1) improve interactive capacity for public feedback through comments form
2) add personalization to tailor site for voters, candidates, journalists, researchers, or students
3) webcast Commission hearings
4) add public outreach through blogs
5) RSS feeds for information customization (updates on particular candidates or political action committees)
6) non-English access (Spanish)
7) improve access for visually impaired
8) mobile access for PDAs and smartphones

Three General Comments

1) web architecture (front door/back door access)
- only four percent of visitors enter government websites through front page
- most come via search engines
- virtue of flat architecture
2) importance of promoting existence of government websites and online services
- citizens can’t access unless they know sites are available
- public service announcements and public documents
3) website readability
- half of Americans read at the 8th grade or less