

The banner features a green background with a white outline of Washington state on the left. Inside the outline, there is a photograph of a classical building with a dome and columns, likely the Washington State Capitol, with snow-capped mountains in the background. To the right of the image, the text "WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE" is written in a large, gold, serif font, and "WEB SERVICES" is written below it in a smaller, gold, serif font.

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE  
WEB SERVICES

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## What are web services?

### *Technical definition according to W3C:*

“A Web service is a software system designed to support interoperable machine-to-machine interaction over a network. It has an interface described in a machine-processable format (specifically WSDL). Other systems interact with the Web service in a manner prescribed by its description using SOAP messages, typically conveyed using HTTP with an XML serialization in conjunction with other Web-related standards.”

### *In plain talk:*

Web services are a way to provide data through the Internet that can be used (or “consumed”) by others.



## How web services work

- The provider defines a set of methods that define the kind of data available, grouped into services
- Users make calls to the services via HTTP
- The web service request and response follow a standard XML structure
- There are multiple ways to call a web service



## How web services work

- Users can either generate the XML request manually or use development tools that make it appear like they are coding to an API/library, so the programmer is shielded from the details of the XML.



## Why we use web services

- We made text files available externally for about 10 years
- Supporting text files was a significant maintenance and support burden
  - We had six large text files containing all biennia information that grew to 10 files
  - Updated six time per day
  - Tightly coupled to a VAX-based custom application



## Why we use web services

- Web services are more efficient for us to produce and users to consume
- Maintenance and support time is a fraction of what it once was – about 5 to 1



## Our transition to web services

- 2003 – Created some web services for special requests to learn how they work
- 2004 – Conducted analysis and developed a comprehensive set of web services
- 2005 – Some agencies gradually started using our web services for bill tracking and hearing information



## Our transition to web services

- 2005 – Began working with development shops that were using the text files.
- Fall of 2007 – Stopped making text files available to external users.
- Provided additional web services, methods, and data throughout the years.





## Information we provide

- 8 services – Amendments, Committees, Committee Meetings, Documents, Legislation, RCW (laws) Cite Affected, Session Law, Sponsors
- 43 methods, such as GetSponsors, GetCurrentStatus, GetLegislationIntroducedSince, GetCommitteeMembers



## Information we provide

- Descriptions, data dictionary, support policy, notification policy, change management policy, and glossary are at <http://wslwebservices.leg.wa.gov>
- Includes full list of services and methods – with functioning test input – and sample code



## Support we provide

- Currently, most questions are really about misunderstandings of our legislative process
- Errors and bugs immediately addressed when found
- Change requests addressed as warranted
- Periodic discussions with some users to review their needs and our capabilities



## Who uses our web services

- State agencies – Office of Financial Management, Dept. of Health, Dept. of Revenue, Courts
- TVW – Washington’s public affairs network
- Special interest groups and non-profits, such as Knowledge As Power



# The Office of Financial Management

- Our most significant stakeholder
- OFM supplies legislative and fiscal information to state agencies and the Governor's Office via custom applications
- The last external consumer to switch from text files to web services and still on the learning curve



## Web services we use

*Currently:*

- [Fiscal note](#) information from OFM

*Planned:*

- TVW – Committee hearings they plan to cover
- Dept. of Health and Dept. of Ecology – Location finder (GIS)



## Updates currently underway

- Adding “[selected step](#)” information to better define when legislation has passed each chamber and the legislature
- Annual discussions with OFM about refinements



## Building web services

- Consider design options carefully
- We focused on the interface
  - Naming convention
  - What information we should provide
  - Grouping of the functions
  - Response size
  - Interoperability standards





## Building web services

- There are many options for building web services
- We are a Visual Studio shop so we used the built-in tools from that
- We built to our requirements
  - Public access to all information
  - Did not implement reliable messaging



# Questions?

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# Thank You