

Usability Test on Virginia onAir and USA onAir Websites

Results and Recommendations



Survey and report by:

Kelsie LaPore, Carla McAlpine, Melanie Moy, Ben Stovner, Micah Thomason, and Zakiya Uakali
George Mason University

Table of Contents

<i>Overview</i>	3
<i>Survey Results</i>	3
<i>Recommendations Based on Survey Results</i>	9
<i>Overall Recommendations</i>	11

Overview

This document will cover the survey results and recommendations from the usability test our group conducted for the Virginia onAir and USA onAir websites. After analyzing the answers from the survey as a team, we compiled the results and developed these recommendations.

Survey Results

This survey was completed by GMU students from several different majors in order to gauge responses from a varied group of individuals. We received 41 responses to the survey in total. These responses were recorded over a two-week period from March 3rd to March 17th, 2020.

Question 1: Were you able to access the website?

All students were able to access the website via the link provided in the survey.

Question 2: Using the website, try to find your U.S. federal and state representatives. How long did it take you to locate this information?

All students were able to find their federal and state representatives in 5 minutes or less: 39% of students found their representatives in less than a minute, 41.5% found them in 1-3 minutes, and the remaining 19.5% took 3-5 minutes to find their representatives.

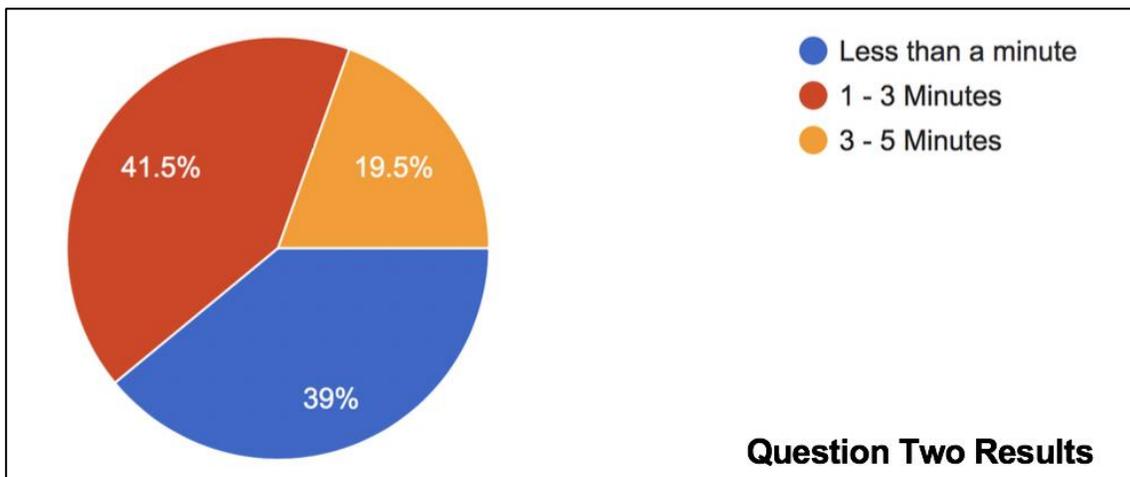


Figure 1 - Question Two Results

Question 3: After briefly exploring the site, using one to three words or phrases, which topics interest you the most?

Students answered this question via free response. The students seemed to be most interested in the issues tab especially in the areas of college affordability, gun safety and legislation, VA abortion laws, and immigration in descending order. The topics listed under the first bullet “Issues” are topics that can be found under the issues tab specifically (according to how the site was organized at the time). Below are the comprehensive answers provided by the students.

- Issues (9)
 - College Affordability (9)
 - Gun Safety and Legislation (5)
 - VA Abortion Laws (4)
 - Immigration (4)
 - Civil Rights
 - Climate Change
- Healthcare
- Federal
- VA Nonprofit Organizations (2)
- VA News Digest
 - Coronavirus
- Featured University Chapter
- Finance
- Contact
- Legislature tab
- VA Counties
- Backgrounds of leaders
- Politician views
- Land Use
- VA US House Impeachment Votes
- General Assembly leaders
- Graphs on site
- Pipeline
- Progressive
- Electoral College
- VA 2019 elections
- VA Senate News
- Policy and government
 - Convenience in access
- Nova delegates (2)
- Democracy onAir

Question 4: Try to locate the politician interviews. How long did this take you?

Over half of the students (51.2%) were able to locate the politician interviews in less than a minute. A small portion of students (2.5%) took more than 5 minutes to find the interviews. In the other categories, 34.1% were able to locate within 1-3 minutes and 12.2% were able to locate the interviews within 3-5 minutes.

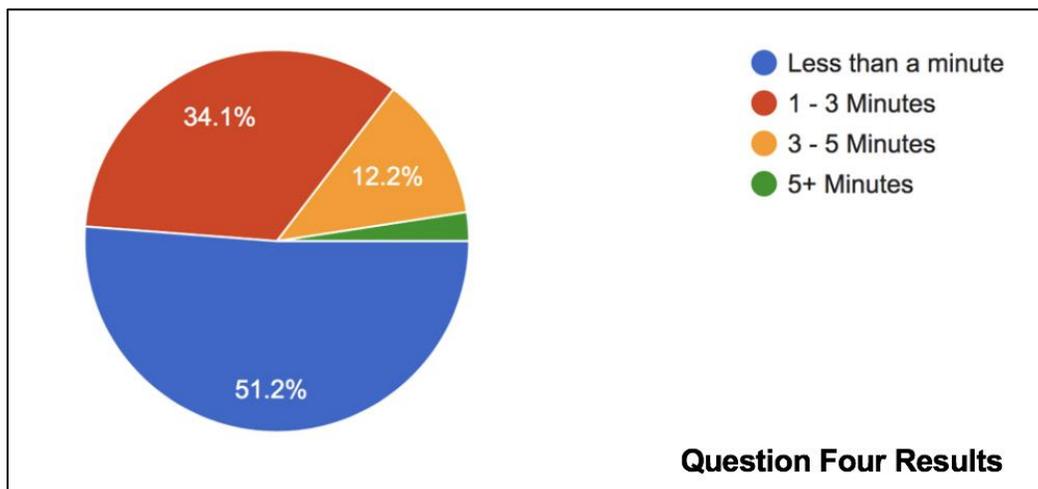


Figure 2 - Question Four Results

Question 5: How likely are you to watch the interview videos?

The majority of the students (68.3%) indicated that they were somewhat likely to watch the interview videos. About a fifth of students (19.5%) said they would very likely go back and watch the interviews. A smaller portion (12.2%) reported that it was not at all likely that they would watch the interviews.

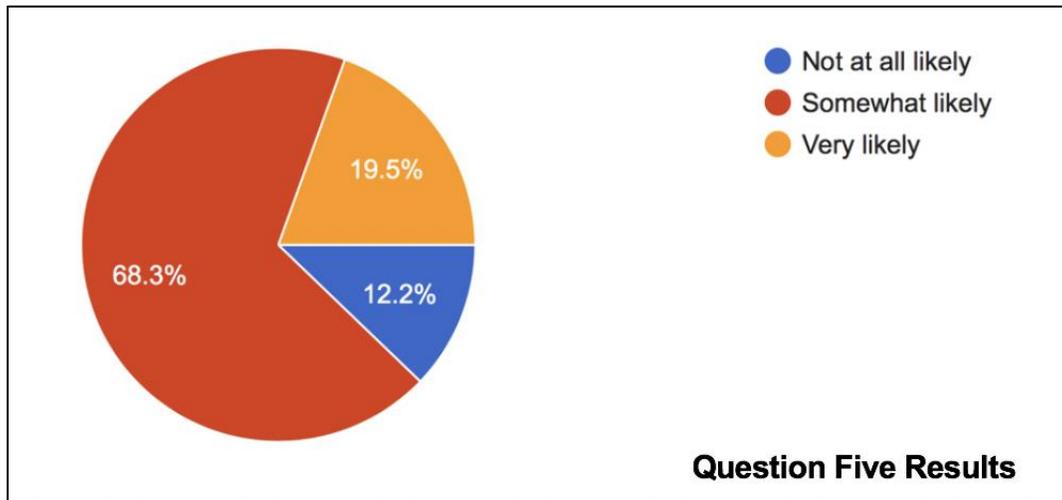


Figure 3 - Question Five Results

Question 6: How would you rate the visual appeal of the site?

The surveyed students were asked to rate the visual appeal of the website on a scale ranging from 1 to 5; 1 representing the opinion that the website had a weak visual appeal and 5 indicating they felt the website had a strong visual appeal. Almost half of the students (48.8%) reported the visual appeal of the site to be average (3) on the 1-5 scale, with 12.2% rating the site as a 2 or less, and the remaining 39% highly rating the visual appeal as a 4 or 5.

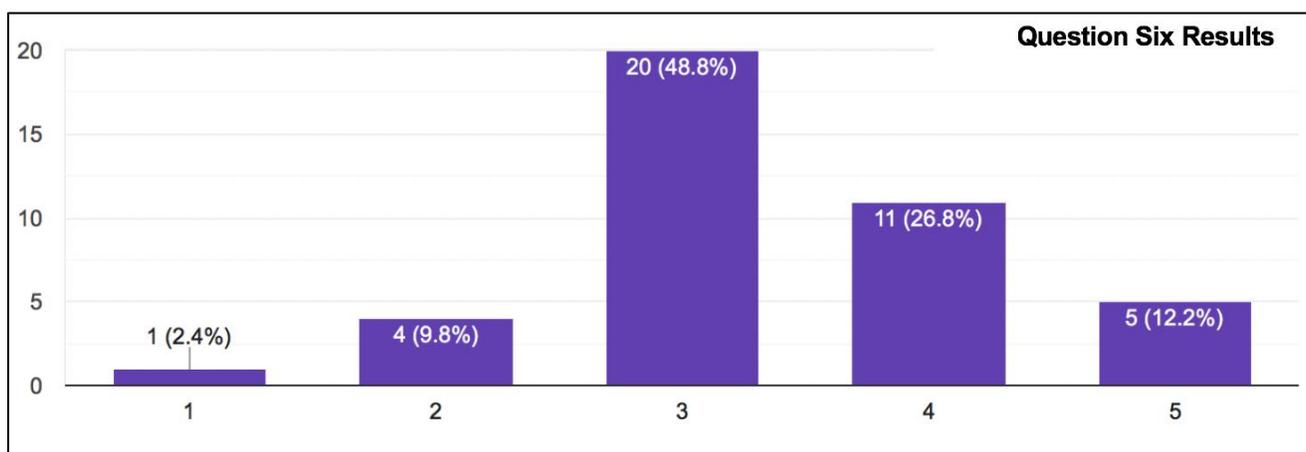


Figure 4 - Question Six Results

Question 7: How would you rate the overall ease of navigating the site?

Similar to the previous question, students were asked to rate the ease of navigating the website on a scale from 1 to 5; 1 representing students experiencing trouble navigating the site and 5 representing students navigating the site with ease. The largest category of students (39%) the site's navigation as average (3) on this 1-5 scale. A small percentage (4.9%) rated it at 2 while none rated it at 1. Slightly over a third of students (34.1%) rated it at 4. Almost a quarter of students (22%) rated it at 5.

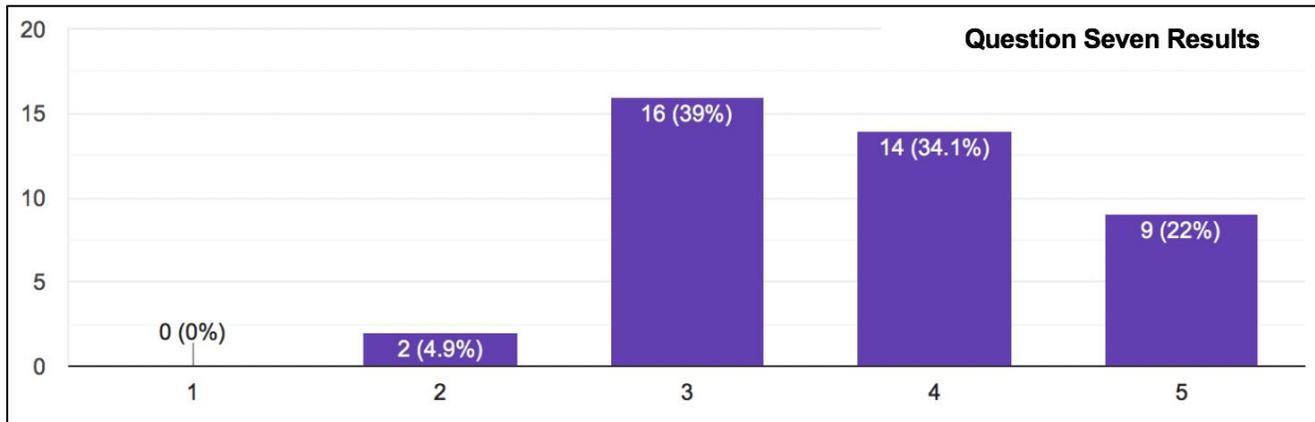


Figure 5 - Question Seven Results

Question 8: Based on the website, would you be interested in joining GMU's chapter of Virginia onAir?

Almost half of the surveyed students expressed tentative interest in joining the GMU chapter of Virginia onAir (46.3%) while an equal percentage of students (46.3%) were not interested in joining the chapter. A small percentage (7.3%) expressed clear interest in joining the chapter.

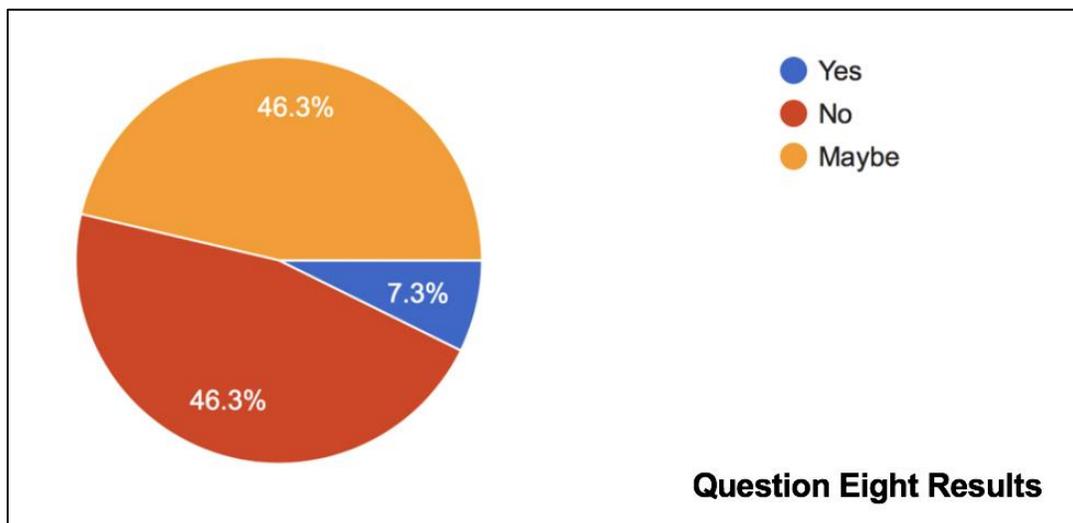


Figure 6 - Question Eight Results

Question 9: How helpful did you find the information on the website?

Just over half of students (51.2%) surveyed indicated that the website’s information was very helpful. None of the students surveyed reported that the website’s information was not helpful. The remaining percentage of students (48.8%) of student reported that the website’s information was somewhat helpful.

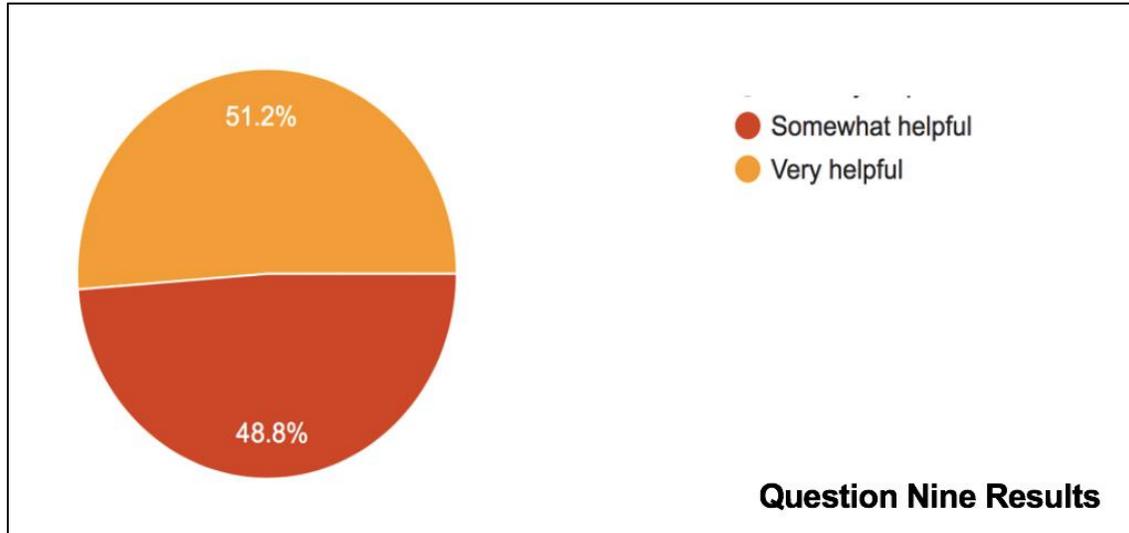


Figure 7 - Question Nine Results

Question 10: How quickly were you able to locate the Virginia onAir Hub “join” button?

When asked to find the Virginia onAir hub “Join” button, most students (68.3%) were able to do so in less than a minute. Almost a fifth of students (19.5%) were able to do so in 1-3 minutes. However, about a tenth of participants took 3-5 minutes to find it, and the remaining small percentage (2.4%) required more than 5 minutes.

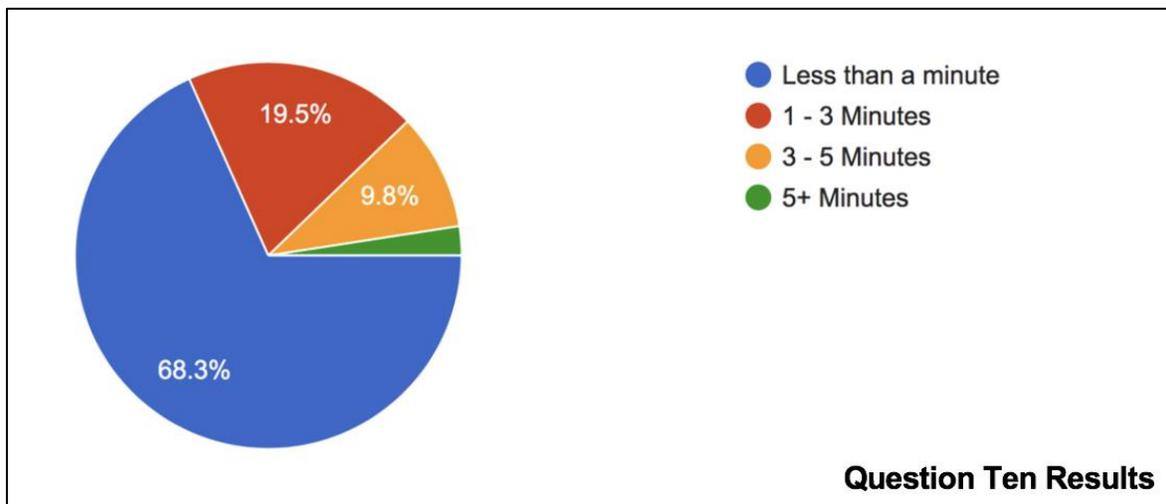


Figure 8 - Question Ten Results

Question 11: Please give any additional comments regarding the website navigation.

The comments we received from surveyed students are below.

- “More description [should be added] for the tabs, it was hard to tell what information they had specifically.”
- “I like how the website is easy to navigate with the bolded subtitles.”
- “In order to make the website [more] appealing, the layout and color should change. The main page should just be an overall presentation. It should include tabs for each representative with their perspective information.”
- “This website was really informative, it’s nice to have information about our government in one place.”
- “I very much like the design of the website. It is very simple and straightforward and divided by blocks.”
- “Very easy to navigate. Will use it to keep up to date!”
- “Seems a little cluttered. [It c]ould use a little more organization or less [content] on each page.”
- “It isn’t clear exactly who onAir is or what they do.”
- “This website was fairly easy to use.”
- “I like the website!”
- “Have [a] separate tab for politicians rather than [a] long page.”
- “Very comprehensive, though I wouldn’t have known about politician interviews if I wasn’t directed to find them via typing it into the search bar [just so you know]. Other than that, it’s really cool.”
- “I liked how simple it is and how the website is organized.”
- “‘Join’ button might benefit from being relabeled to ‘Join Hub’; by itself, I wasn’t sure what I was clicking to join.”
- “Very easy to navigate.”
- “The navigation bar and drop-down menu made it easy to navigate the website and to find information in an efficient manner.”
- “It is easy to navigate and very helpful; thank you for the good work.”
- “The right section where the other suggestions appear looks like a spam window [T]he website is straightforward, good information, easy to find and read.”
- “The website navigation was difficult for finding some stuff like the US federal and state representatives, but maybe it was also just me and others might have found it faster. For other stuff, the navigation was not hard like the politician interviews.”
- “The website looks very busy. It has a lot going on.”

Recommendations Based on Survey Results

I. Based on Question 3 Results: *“After briefly exploring the site, using one to three words or phrases, which topics interest you the most?”*

Make the issues tab and page easier to use and relevant to the website viewers.

- Change the dropdown menu under issues to reflect the most relevant issues (to the audience) and a sidebar menu.
- Make sure listed issues in the dropdown menu match the image on the page itself.
- Avoid publishing pages that are incomplete. Be sure to stay on top of information that is date sensitive and remove information that is inaccurate or outdated.
- Include issues listed elsewhere on the website such as information regarding the pipeline and land use on the issues portion of the website.
- Spark students’ participation in current issues by adding a news feed of relevant bills, speeches, etc.
- Include additional information on the issues such as on the issue’s overall background, history, and importance. Prioritize adding this information to the most relevant causes.

II. Based on Question 4 Results: *“Try to locate the politician interviews. How long did this take you?”*

Organize the menu tabs in order to make it easier for viewers to find information faster.

- Place onAir media as the first tab to increase viewer access to the politician interviews and attract those who are new to civic engagement since audiovisual media can be an easier way for users to digest this new information.
- Make menu tabs more explicit and descriptive in order to communicate to the site viewers what information is located where.
- Implement a level of hierarchy within the drop-down menu using topics and subtopics as necessary. Consider using imperatives by beginning sentences with verbs that direct the viewer to take action such as “Learn about . . .”

III. Based on Question 5 Results: *“How likely are you to watch the interview videos?”*

Increase viewer interest by presenting the information in smaller chunks.

- Advertise some of the shorter interviews or consider displaying excerpts of the interviews or supplementary news coverage to increase viewer interest.

IV. Based on Question 6 Results: *“How would you rate the visual appeal of the site?”*

Increase site usability and attractiveness through some organizational and visual changes.

- Make it clear what is clickable through consistency and online design norms (such as using clear buttons or text signaling).
- Reduce the amount of text and information on the viewer’s screen (mobile and desktop).
- Prioritize content and then have viewers click to a new page for more information.
- Consider using menu sidebars or more vertical rather than horizontal space.

V. Based on Question 7 Results: *“How would you rate the overall ease of navigating the site?”*

Improve website organization and style guide.

- Design or redesign the website’s style guide. Distinguish the different titles, headers, and buttons on the page. Choose consistent font, font sizes, and text colors that stay in line with the design of the website to make it easier for someone to quickly identify the area of the website they are interested in.
- Give direction on the homepage toward elements most users are looking for when visiting the site. Use questions like the two buttons saying, “Who represents me?” and “Interactive Maps” which are great tools, as they allow a reader to immediately find what they are seeking.
- Reconsider the slideshow format used in many of the website pages. While it can be useful for some topics (such as news), in other places (such as the Virginia > VA Government Leaders tab) the differing kinds of information provided makes it confusing to take in. Consider listing out the information to make the information clearer.

VI. Based on Question 8: *“Based on the website, would you be interested in joining GMU’s chapter of Virginia onAir?”*

Advertise the benefits of joining the GMU chapter of onAir to increase viewer interest.

- Emphasize the “Engage” tab. Consider putting it on a side banner, making it larger, etc.
- Change the primary page of the “Engage” button to include the benefits and opportunities or joining onAir.

VII. Based on Question 9 Results: *“How helpful did you find the information on the website?”*

Organize the website according to viewer interest and content relevancy.

- Emphasize the “Issues” section of the website, as it seems to be the most important section to viewers.
- State information about Democracy onAir, what it does, and how people can get involved.
- Make the “Learn,” “Discuss,” and “Engage” buttons at the top of the page look like tabs so they’re clickable. Making them prominent and clickable will reflect their importance.
- Move the three above tabs from the very top of the site to somewhere more central and visible in order to drive attention toward them.

VIII. Based on Question 10 Results: *“How quickly were you able to locate the Virginia onAir Hub “join” button?”*

Distinguish the “Join” tab.

- Move the “Join | Login” button at the very top right of the website downward from its current position, such as below the “About VA onAir” tab, where people will be much more likely to see it.
- Use a different color for the background of the “Join” tab than the header so that it is distinct and does not blend in.

Overall Recommendations

1. The website **appears cluttered** to most of the surveyed users. There is an overload of information on the homepage and it's difficult to determine what information is essential/most important. We recommend **minimizing the information on the homepage**, keeping only your logo, title, essential navigation tools, and only one or two pieces of content on the page relevant to your cause (a motto or mission statement, preview of a relevant article, a call to action, etc.). Look to websites in your field, like <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members/VA> for minimalist homepage inspiration.
2. Because there **isn't a prominent color scheme** right now, we also recommend **featuring an eye-catching color combination**. Consider using two contrasting colors to help distinguish the website's information. This can be used as a tool to make critical information easier to locate and give the website a greater sense of organization.
3. The present **navigation system is confusing** because of the way it's organized by government organization instead of being set up to guide the user through the website. The tabs in the menu bar should be **reorganized with the user's needs** in mind. It may be a good idea to look at similar organizations' navigation set-ups for guidance on this. The link to govtrack's website above could be helpful for this as well.
4. Right now, it's **hard to quickly tell what onAir's purpose is** just by looking at the front page of the website. The organization's mission and function should be some of the first information a user sees when entering the site. We recommend **adding a mission statement or motto to the website's front page**.
5. Another action that could help with featuring onAir's purpose is **making your "About" tab more visible**; as it is now, it **blends into the header** surrounding it.
6. Since it's important to your cause, and since some surveyed **users had trouble locating it**, the **"Join" button should be featured** in a more prominent location and renamed to indicate exactly what the user is joining (e.g. "Join the Hub" or "Join onAir").
7. There are **many large blocks** on some pages of the website, both as design elements and long paragraph blocks. For instance, there are 9 interactive blocks of competing information that could be **reduced or relocated** to other corresponding pages. Also, the pages with large blocks of information on each politician could instead have their name, photo, party affiliation, and a few bulleted points of their platform with a link underneath to their individual websites in case the user would like more information. Essentially, the **user shouldn't be overwhelmed** with the volume of information on any page of your site.