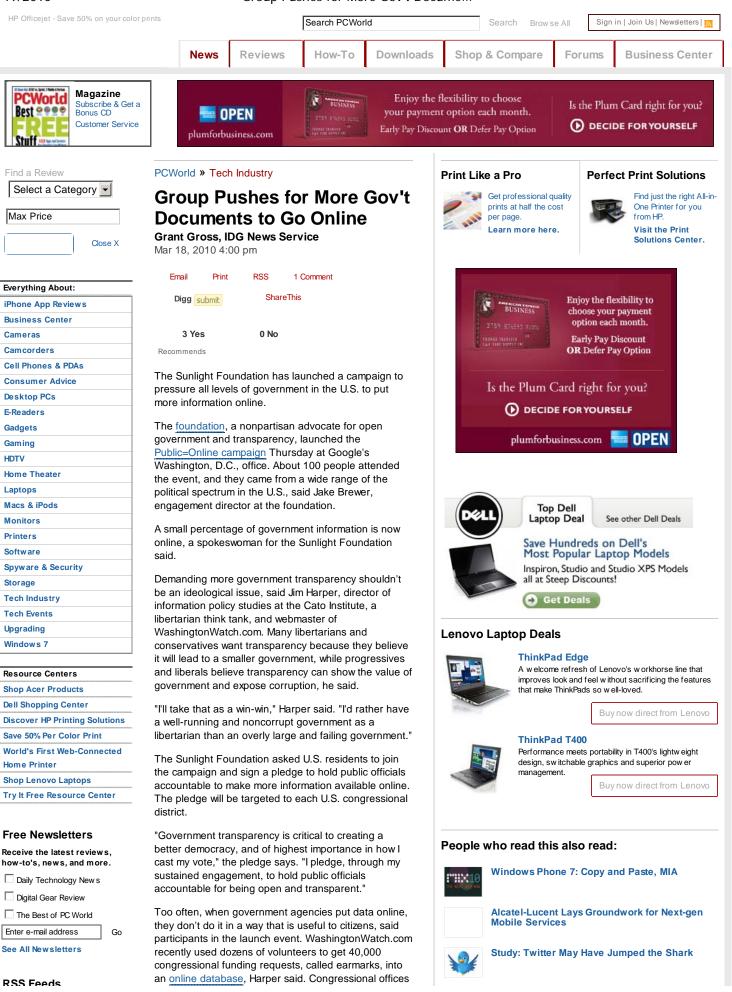
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were required to put their earmark requests online, but they did it in a range of formats, including HTML and scanned PDFs, Harper said.

"The point of Public=Online is to have government give you good data in the first place," he said.

Earlier this week, U.S. Representative Steve Israel, a New York Democrat, introduced the Public Online Information Act, which would require U.S. government agencies to make all public documents permanently available free online.

"POIA is going to take public information by the executive branch out of the dark ages, out of the dark government warehouses, out of the metal file cabinets, and into the sunlight of the Internet," Israel said at a press conference Tuesday.

Public information should be online and searchable, Israel said. The Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, is outdated because it requires U.S. citizens to go through a cumbersome process to get paper copies of government information that has not been released, he said. FOIA was passed in 1966, but amended most recently in 2007.

Public documents that get shipped off to a warehouse are "about as public and as transparent and accessible as a nuclear missile silo," Israel said.

POIA will "shift the burden" from the public having to request government information to federal agencies required to make it available, said Ellen Miller, executive director of the Sunlight Foundation.

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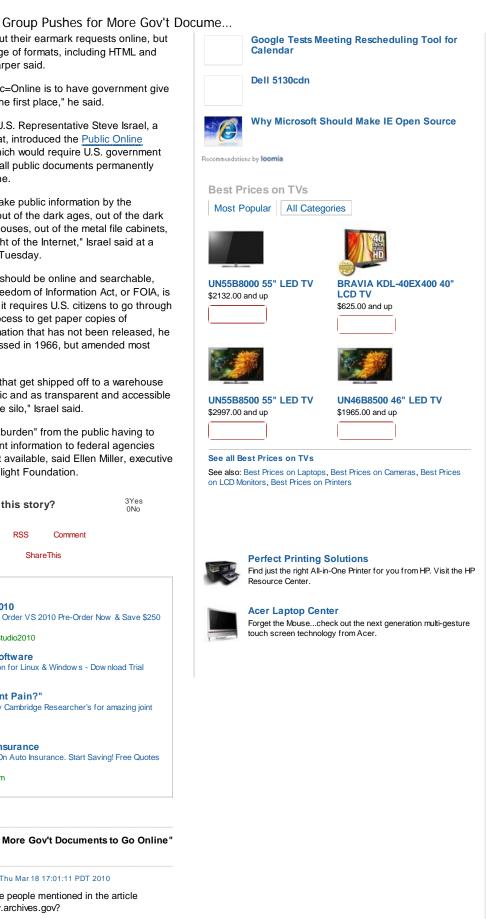
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