

**Effective Communications to Congress
in the Age of Social Media**



COUNCIL *on* FOUNDATIONS

Tuesday, June 5, 2012
1:00 – 2:00 pm ET



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Welcome and Introductions




Andrew Schulz
Vice President Legal & Government Relations
Council on Foundations

Moderator

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


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WebEx Tips

- To expand or collapse a panel, toggle the arrow (▶) or (◀).
- All phone lines are **on mute**
- Questions? On the Q&A Panel, type your question, select "**All Panelists.**" click "**Send.**"
- This webinar is being recorded and will be distributed to participants through email and posted on the Council's website.

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Speakers



Bradford Fitch
President and CEO
Congressional Management
Foundation



Susie Gorden
Vice President
Congressional Management
Foundation

Feel free to submit a question at any time. Use the "Q&A" panel on the right navigation bar. Type your question, select "All Panelists" and click "Send."

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THE PARTNERSHIP FOR
A More Perfect Union

The *Partnership For A More Perfect Union* envisions a United States where Members of Congress and citizens have a vibrant, active, and engaged relationship characterized by mutual respect, a sense of shared purpose, and a dedication to the tenets of representative democracy.

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Agenda

- History & Methodology of Research
- Findings
- Comments from Legislators & Staff
- Implications to Advocacy

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History of Research

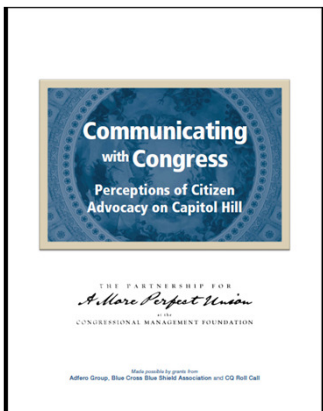
- 2003: Communicating with Congress Launched
- 2004: Congressional Staff Focus Groups
- 2005: Congressional Staff Survey Report
- 2007: Citizen Survey
- 2008: Recommendations for New Model
- 2010: Partnership for a More Perfect Union
- 2011: Congressional Staff Survey Reports

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Methodology

- Survey Conducted Oct. – Dec. 2010
- 260 Respondents
- Representative Balance by Chamber & Party
- House – Majority Senior Managers
- Senate – Plurality Senior Managers
- Office Volumes Data Collected July – Sept. 2011

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#SocialCongress
Perceptions and Use of Social Media on Capitol Hill

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Communicating with Congress
How Citizen Advocacy Is Changing Mail Operations on Capitol Hill

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Poll Question 1

What do you think are the most significant obstacles which inhibit citizens from communicating and interacting with their Member of Congress?

- They don't think their voice makes a difference.
- They lack the skills to do so.
- They feel they don't understand the issues.
- They don't have easy and accessible means to do so.

Use the "Polling" panel on the right navigation bar to respond to the poll. Select your answer and hit the "submit" button.

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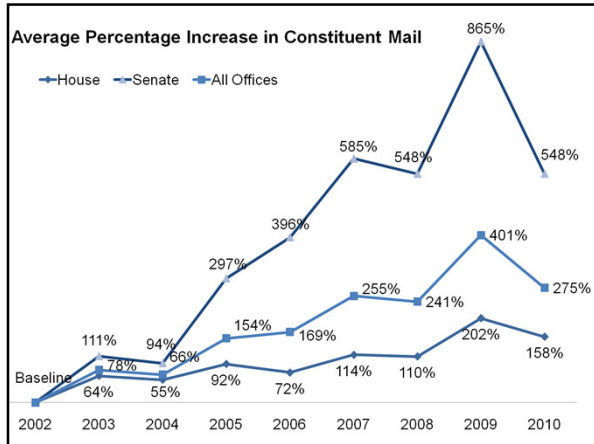
Findings

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Finding 1

Constituent communications to Members of Congress have significantly increased in the past decade.

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"It's overwhelming and it seems like we can never do enough to keep up with it."

- House Legislative Director

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Implication to Advocacy

There is significant competition to get the attention of lawmakers and staff.

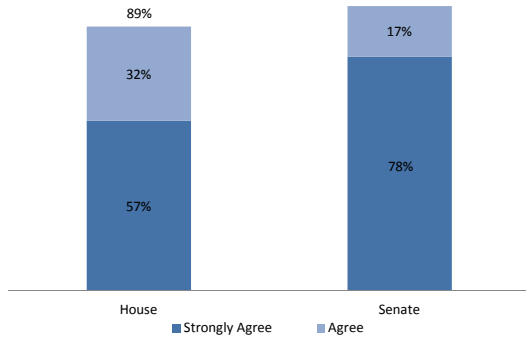
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Finding 2

Responding to constituent communications is a high priority for congressional offices.

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Responding to constituent communications is a high priority in my office.



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Senate Office Mail Policy

- 1 Week Behind: No Outside Meetings
- 2 Weeks Behind: Letter of Probation
- 3 Weeks Behind: Notice of Termination
- 4 Weeks Behind: ***You're Fired!***

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Implication to Advocacy

Advocacy works – Congress is trying to listen.

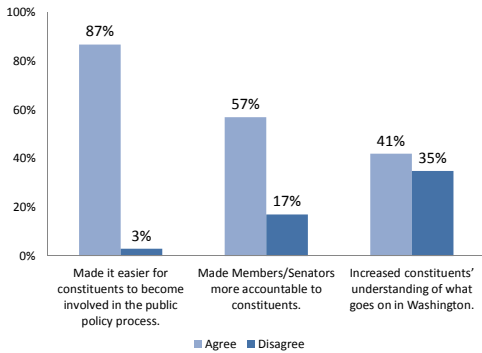
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Finding 3

Email and the Internet have increased both citizens' participation in the public policy, and lawmakers' accountability to constituents.

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Email and the Internet Have . . .



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Implication to Advocacy

We think this Internet thing is going to catch on.

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Poll Question 2

If you have sent a message to your Member of Congress in the past, how would you describe the experience?

- The Member seemed responsive to my questions/concerns.
- The Member seemed disinterested in my questions/concerns.
- The Member did not respond to my message.

Use the "Polling" panel on the right navigation bar to respond to the poll. Select your answer and hit the "submit" button.

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Finding 4

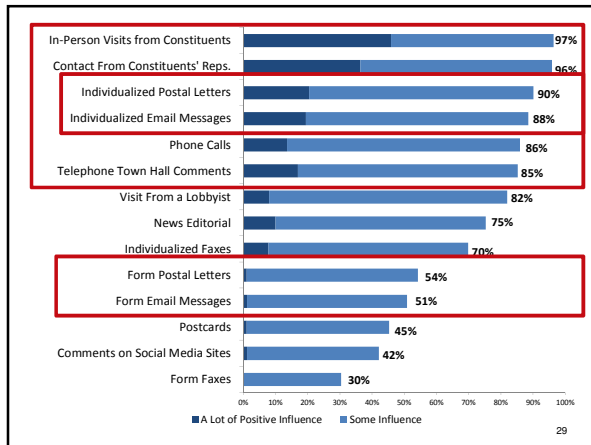
The most influential strategies depend on constituents.

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Survey Question

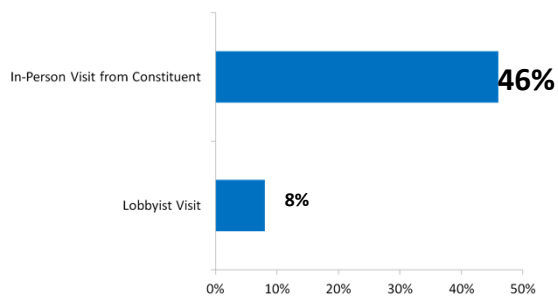
“If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the *Washington office* have on his/her decision?”

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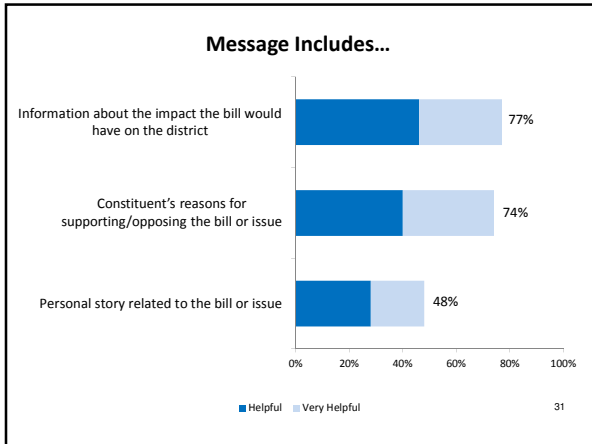


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“A lot of influence”



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"I have told paid lobbyists for years that any lobbyist worth his salt will concentrate on getting my constituents to tell me what they think...not what he thinks. He better spend his time getting them to write me because that's what I listen to."

- Republican Senator

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Implication to Advocacy

Your supporters are more influential than they realize!

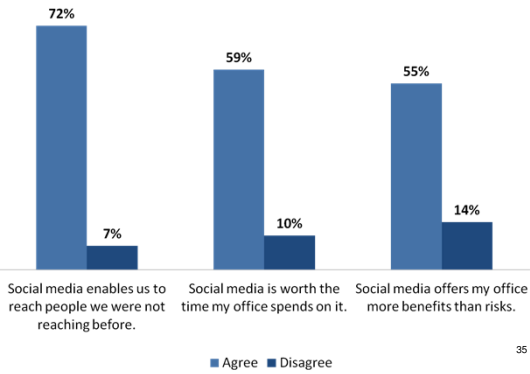
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Finding 5

Congressional staff feel the benefits of using social media outweigh the risks.

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Staffers' Views on the Value of Social Media



"Social media is less expensive and reaches a broader audience, so we plan to expand our use."

- Senate Administrative Director

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Implication to Advocacy

Advocates using social media can influence lawmakers.

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Finding 6

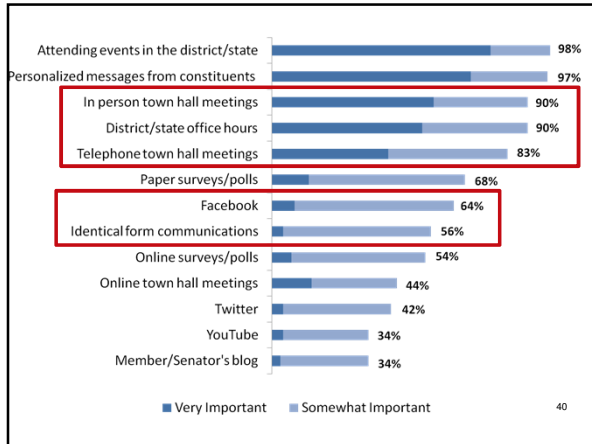
Congressional offices are using social media to help gauge public opinion, augmenting traditional tools used for that purpose.

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Survey Question

“In your opinion, how important are the following for understanding constituents' views and opinions?”

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Implication to Advocacy

Find the “congressional conversation” – join in!

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Finding 7

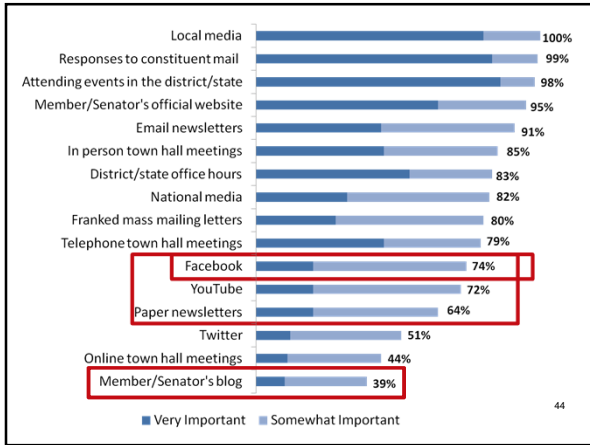
Congressional offices now include social media among the tools used to communicate Senators’ and Representatives’ views and activities.

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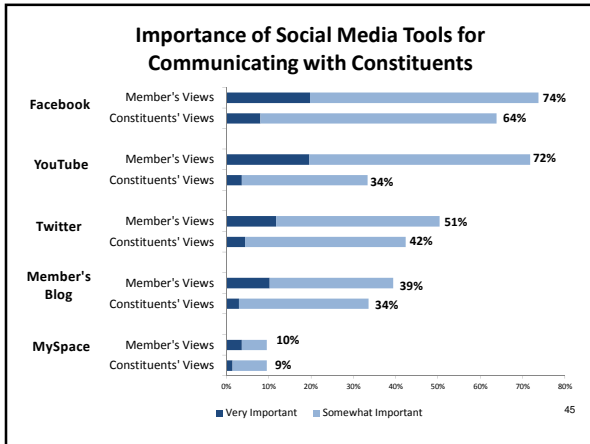
Survey Question

"In your opinion, how important are the following for communicating the Member/Senator's views and activities to constituents?"

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"Take that [C-Span] video, put it on your YouTube site ...Twitter...or Facebook, and then you're getting that multiplier effect."

- Member, US House

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Implication to Advocacy

Social media can be used by supporters and advocacy experts as an accountability tool in our democracy.

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Q&A

Use the "Q&A" panel on the right navigation bar. Type your question, select "All Panelists" and click "Send."


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Contacts




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BFitch@congressfoundation.org



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SGorden@congressfoundation.org

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