This is NOT Your Father’s Congress

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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.
Agenda

• History & Methodology of Research
• Competing Communications
• Findings
• Comments from Legislators & Staff
• Implications to Advocacy
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
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
Findings
Finding 1

Constituent communications to Members of Congress have significantly increased in the past decade.
Average Percentage Increase in Constituent Mail

- **House**
- **Senate**
- **All Offices**

Baseline: 2002
- 2003: 64%
- 2004: 55%
- 2005: 92%
- 2006: 72%
- 2007: 114%
- 2008: 110%
- 2009: 202%
- 2010: 158%

Senate:
- 2003: 78%
- 2004: 66%
- 2005: 94%
- 2006: 154%
- 2007: 255%
- 2008: 241%
- 2009: 401%
- 2010: 275%

All Offices:
- 2003: 55%
- 2004: 66%
- 2005: 94%
- 2006: 154%
- 2007: 255%
- 2008: 241%
- 2009: 401%
- 2010: 275%

Overall:
- 2003: 78%
- 2004: 66%
- 2005: 94%
- 2006: 154%
- 2007: 255%
- 2008: 241%
- 2009: 401%
- 2010: 275%

2002: 111%
2003: 94%
2004: 66%
2005: 154%
2006: 255%
2007: 241%
2008: 401%
2009: 275%
2010: 158%
2011: 865%
2012: 548%
2013: 548%
Finding 2

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

89% Strongly Agree
32% Agree

House

95% Strongly Agree
17% Agree

Senate

Strongly Agree
Agree
Finding 3

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

- Made it easier for constituents to become involved in the public policy process: 87% Agree, 3% Disagree
- Made Members/Senators more accountable to constituents: 57% Agree, 17% Disagree
- Increased constituents’ understanding of what goes on in Washington: 41% Agree, 35% Disagree
Finding 4

The most influential strategies depend on constituents.
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?”
In-Person Visits from Constituents: 97%
Contact From Constituents' Reps.: 96%
Individualized Postal Letters: 90%
Individualized Email Messages: 88%
Phone Calls: 86%
Telephone Town Hall Comments: 85%
Visit From a Lobbyist: 82%
News Editorial: 75%
Individualized Faxes: 70%
Form Postal Letters: 54%
Form Email Messages: 51%
Postcards: 45%
Comments on Social Media Sites: 42%
Form Faxes: 30%
"A lot of influence"

- In-Person Visit from Constituent: 46%
- Lobbyist Visit: 8%
Message Includes...

Information about the impact the bill would have on the district: 77%

Constituent’s reasons for supporting/opposing the bill or issue: 74%

Personal story related to the bill or issue: 48%

 Helpful  Very Helpful
Finding 5

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

“In your opinion, how important are the following for understanding constituents' views and opinions?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending events in the district/state</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized messages from constituents</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In person town hall meetings</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>District/state office hours</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone town hall meetings</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper surveys/polls</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identical form communications</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online surveys/polls</td>
<td></td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online town hall meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member/Senator's blog</td>
<td></td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- The percentage indicates the level of importance of each method.
- Very Important and Somewhat Important categories are represented by different shades of blue.
Congressional offices now include social media among the tools used to communicate Senators’ and Representatives’ views and activities.
“In your opinion, how important are the following for communicating the Member/Senator's views and activities to constituents?”
- Local media: 100%
- Responses to constituent mail: 99%
- Attending events in the district/state: 98%
- Member/Senator's official website: 95%
- Email newsletters: 91%
- In person town hall meetings: 85%
- District/state office hours: 83%
- National media: 82%
- Franked mass mailing letters: 80%
- Telephone town hall meetings: 79%
- Facebook: 74%
- YouTube: 72%
- Paper newsletters: 64%
- Twitter: 51%
- Online town hall meetings: 44%
- Member/Senator's blog: 39%

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
The Partnership for A More Perfect Union

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