

Advocacy Uptick: How Legislative Offices Are Handling the Influx of Constituent Communications

Presenters:

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Constituent Engagement

What is it?

The process by which individuals, communities, and advocacy groups address issues through contacting and building relationships with legislators.

Is it effective?

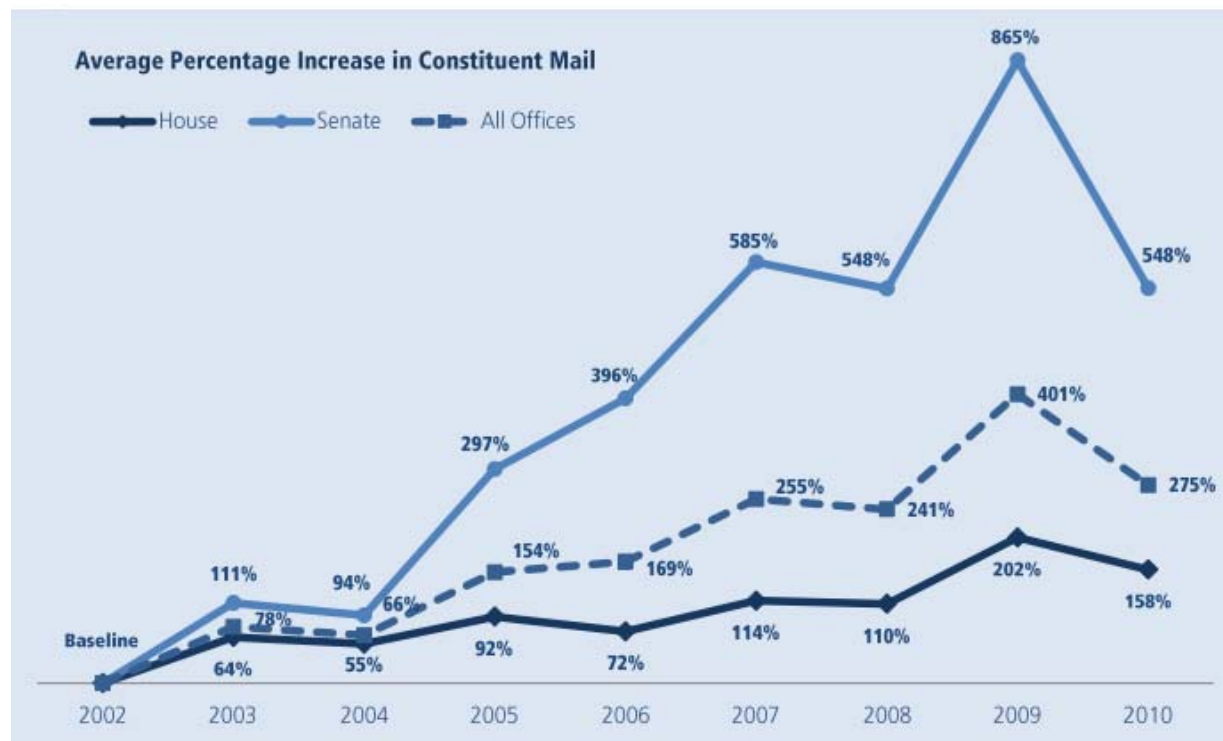
Yes! According the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF):

- 1. Direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies*
- 2. Relationships between constituents and legislators matter*
- 3. Personalized and local information delivered to MOCs by constituents can provide important context*



Increase in Constituent Advocacy (2002-2010)

According to the CMF, the internet has also contributed to an exponential increase in constituent mail.



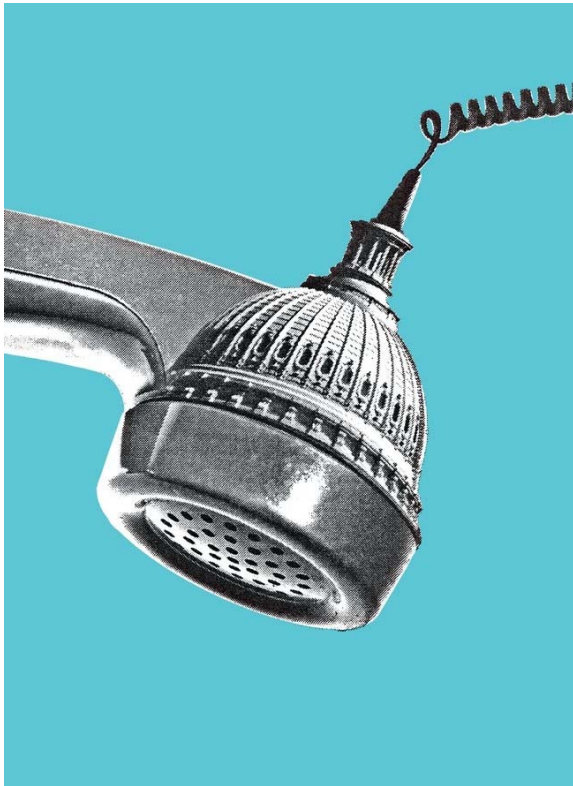
¹ These estimates are based on an anecdotal review of congressional office communications and CMF's experience working with and studying the grassroots software vendor community during the past eight years.

² Data was collected from offices in July–September 2011. Offices maintained roughly similar methodologies for tracking incoming mail.

Source: CMF, Communicating with Congress 2011

Increase in Constituent Advocacy 2017

According to the various news reports, the 2016 election and subsequent legislative battles have also contributed to an increase in constituent communications



[Source:](#) The New Yorker, What Calling Congress Achieves

- During ACHA Debate, The Senate Switchboards Reportedly Received **1.5 million calls a day**.
- In early 2017, Senator Cory Gardner received **3,000 calls in one night**.
- Senator Bob Casey claims his constituent communications have **increased 900% from 2016-2017**.
- CNN reported that Senator James Lankford reported their office went from 150-200 calls per week to **4,600 calls in just 2 weeks**

Rapid Increase In Messages: Healthcare Debate



Suzanne Bonamici ✓

@RepBonamici



NW Oregonians overwhelmingly want me to oppose
[#Trumpcare](#)

Calls/emails since January:

Support : 51

Oppose [#ACARepeal](#): 3,859

4:28 PM - Mar 23, 2017

💬 107 ↻ 1,313 ❤️ 3,366



Katherine Clark ✓

@RepKClark



[#Update](#): Our district is fighting to [#ProtectOurCare](#). Number of
calls/emails I've gotten:

Support [#TrumpCare](#): 6

Oppose [#Trumpcare](#): 2,361

8:35 AM - Mar 24, 2017 · Washington, DC

💬 33 ↻ 185 ❤️ 435



Public Affairs Council

Rapid Increase In Messages: DeVos Confirmation



- NEA claimed to have sent more than one million emails to the U.S. Senate in opposition to Betsy DeVos

158,990 Actions Taken

Only 45,810 more until our goal of 204,800

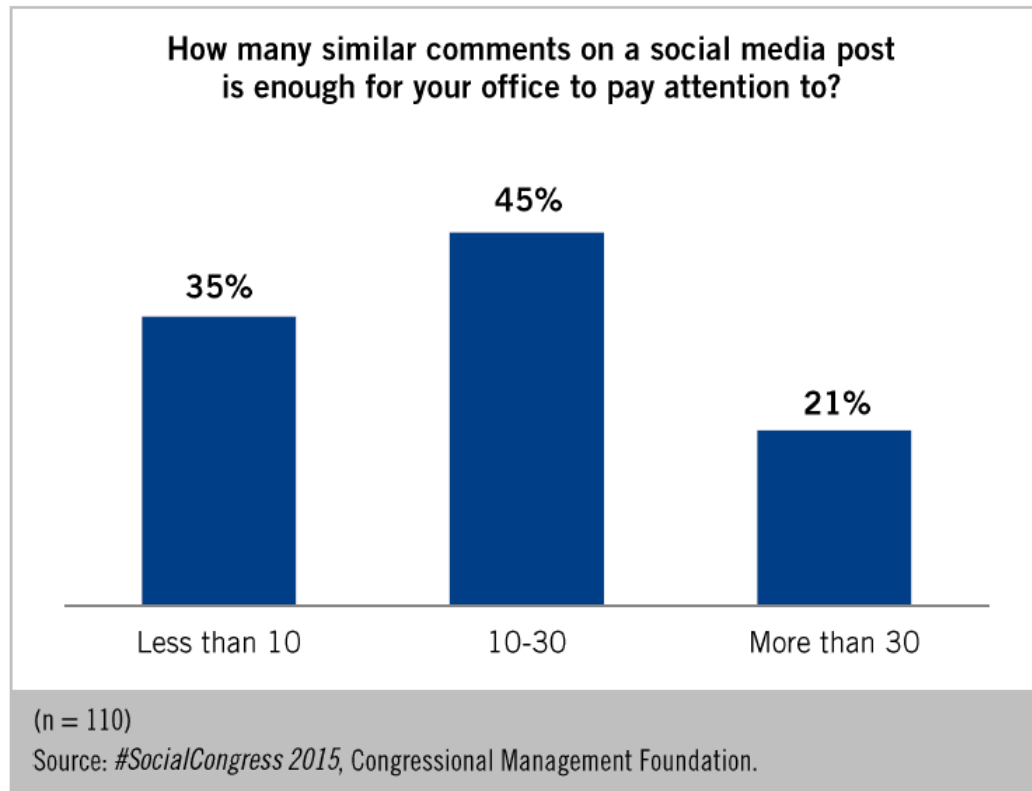
“We're looking for solutions to manage the high [number] of calls,” she wrote, and advised her constituents to contact her online if they are having trouble getting through over the phone.” —Murkowski, The Hill

ADD YOUR NAME:

Constituent Engagement – Social Media

Are Constituent Comments on Social Media Effective? – Data from CMF

FIGURE 3.

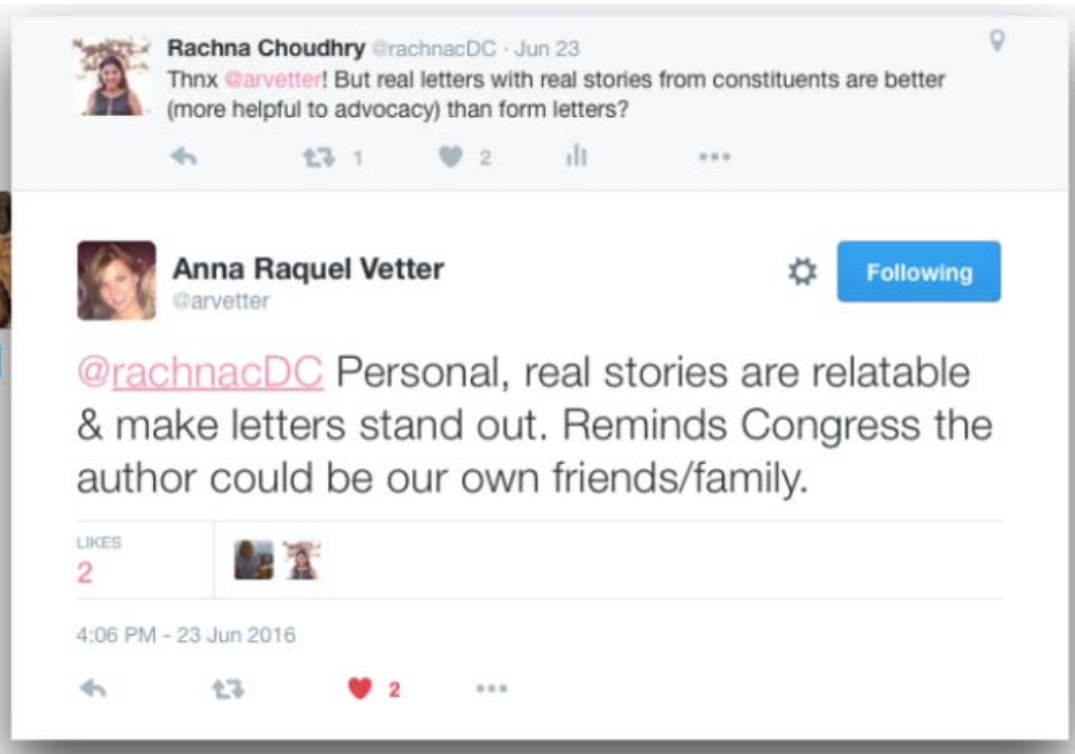


Digital Advocacy Opportunities:

- Online Petitions
- Emailing Your Legislator
- Social Media Comments
- Online Demonstrations



Telling your Story



Using Social Media for Advocacy

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS:

1. Find the correct social media account. Members often have two accounts, a campaign account and a legislative one.

Members of Congress

A public list by CSPAN



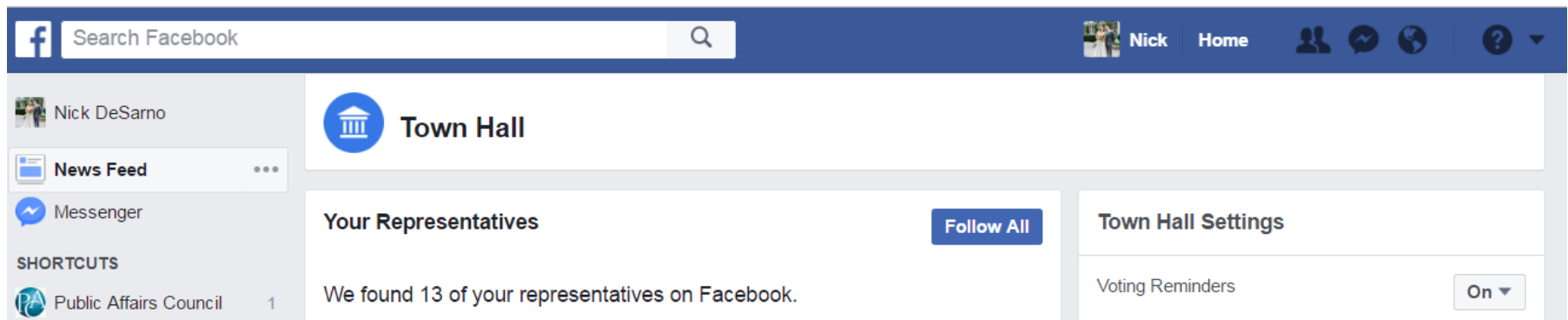
Tweets from members of Congress.

MEMBERS

563

SUBSCRIBERS

6,024



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS:

2. Follow first before you jump into the conversation. Come prepared with facts just like you do when you come to Washington, D.C.



Cory Booker  @CoryBooker · Apr 19

Take another look. I'm an original cospomsor of the bill, contributing significant parts.

Ellen @EllynThomps

Sen Warren, Sanders, Merkley & Franken pushing for a comprehensive bill to reform health care. Where's @CoryBooker?
act.credoaction.com/sign/franken_b...

 27

 109

 584

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS:

3. Try to include a picture or connect your comment to a larger campaign by using a hashtag.



Senator John Thune ✓
@SenJohnThune

Pleasure meeting with Michael and Caitlin, med school students from South Dakota and members of @AOAforDOs. #DODay17



Speak Now For Kids Retweeted



Kelly Wolfe @kfwolfe · 22h

Thanks @alfranken for your support of Medicaid, children's health and giant bear hugs! #SpeakNowforKids @childrensmn



6

23



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS:

4. Use social media to further the relationship or humanize your issue.



Alzheimer's Georgia @AlzGA · Apr 5

Alzheimer's advocates meet with staff of @SanfordBishop in DC! Please support NIH research funding \$414M to #ENDAiz. Thank you! #alzforum



Alzheimer's Assoc. Retweeted



MARY A Howard Read @lpm12659 · Mar 30

Selfie in DC. Fighting to #EndAlz while I still can. I was diagnosed with Young Onset Alzheimers 6 yrs ago



5

19

84



Future Trends

*THERE ARE 55 MEMBERS OF
CONGRESS ON SNAPCHAT*

U.S. House of Representatives:

Blackburn, Marsha: "MarshaBlackburn"

Representative for Tennessee's 7th congressional district



marshablackburn



Future Trends

INSTAGRAM

Over 300 members of Congress are on Instagram but engagement is low compared to other platforms and comments cannot be restricted.

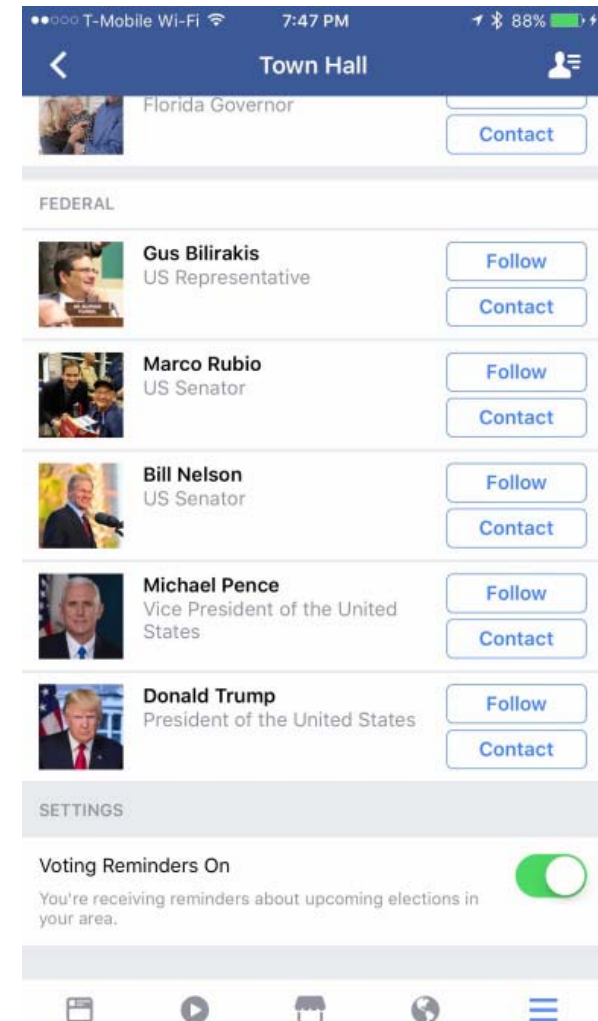
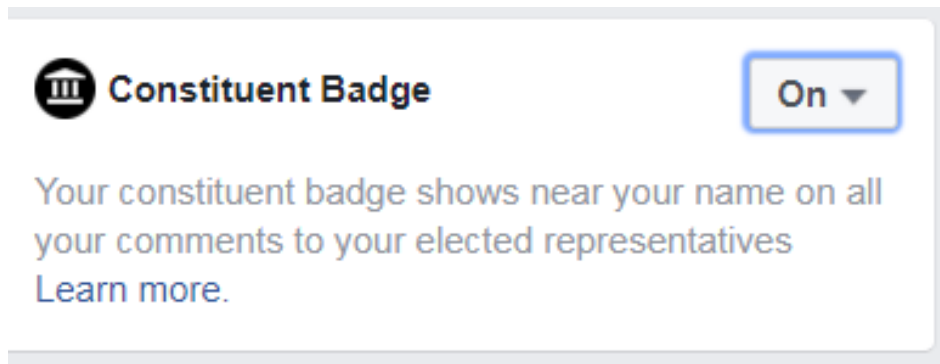
Remains popular with several members who manage their own account.



Future Trends

FACEBOOK TOWN HALL FEATURE

- Call, message or follow your local, state and federal representatives.
- Enable constituent badges to allow legislators and your friends to know which political districts you reside in.



Questions and Discussion

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