



CONGRESSIONAL
MANAGEMENT
FOUNDATION

BUILDING TRUST &
EFFECTIVENESS IN CONGRESS

**New Member Office
Training**

Setting Up Constituent Communications and Engagement Systems

Monday, February 22, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

No call in number available.

Audio is ONLY available through your computer

CongressFoundation.org

**This webinar made possible
through the generous support of:**

AARP

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Alzheimer's Association

American Council of Life Insurers

CMS Energy

***FMI-the Food Industry
Association***

General Motors Corporation

International Paper

KnowWho

National Association of Counties

***National Rural Letter Carriers'
Association***

New Member Office Training

Congressional Operations

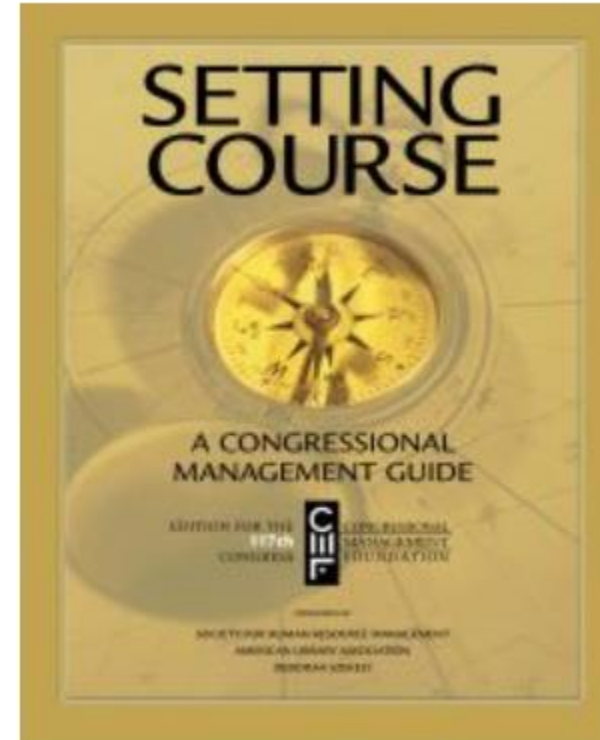
- Training, consulting, research to support a functioning Congress
- 1,000 staff from 300 offices

Citizen Engagement

- Unique studies, trainings, and resources for citizen advocates
- Connected to 91,595 Americans

- New Member Resource Center
 - Google: “CMF New Member Resource Center”
- New Member Training Series
 - December 2020 – June 2021
- Legislative Assistant Training
 - Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University
- District/State-Based Guidance
 - *Keeping It Local*
 - Templates/Manuals/Forms
- Website Guidance
 - Gold Mouse Awards for Best Website

CMF Guidebooks for Freshman Offices



CMF Guidebooks for Freshman Offices

213

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Managing Constituent Communications

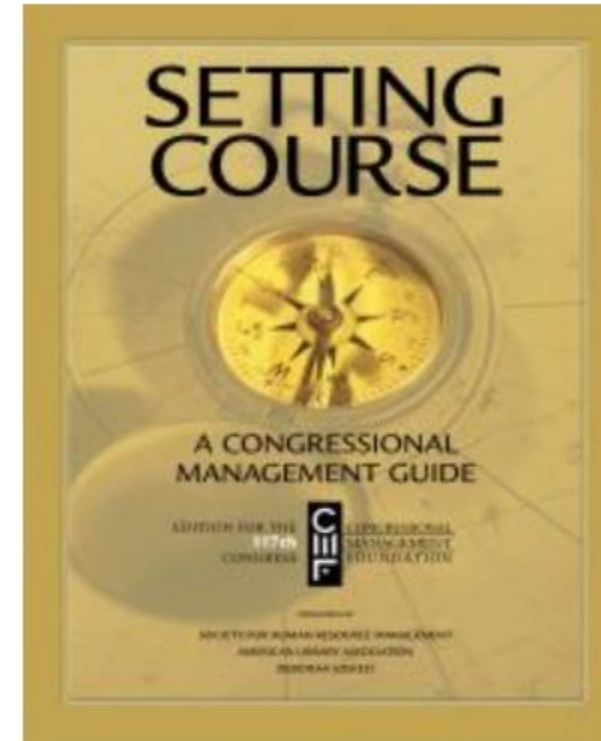
This Chapter Includes...

- ☆ The growth of constituent communications, particularly email
- ☆ Determining the priority of constituent mail and outreach mail
- ☆ How to establish constituent mail policies
- ☆ CMF Mail System, which incorporates the best practices of other Hill offices
- ☆ Strategies to address common mail issues and improve the processing of email

One of the omnipresent facts of congressional life is hearing from constituents by letter, telephone, email, and social media. For many Americans, writing to Congress is as essential to democracy as voting. It is a way of expressing their ideas of what their government should be doing — and a Member of Congress would do well to pay attention, no matter what other demands are placed on your time.

For two decades, CMF has been working to improve communications between citizens and Members of Congress. While the Internet has made it easier to contact Congress, technological developments have been so rapid that neither the senders nor the receivers have learned to use these tools in ways that facilitate truly effective communications. Through CMF's *Partnership for a More Perfect Union*, the *Communicating with Congress* and Congress 3.0 Projects, and management engagements with individual House and Senate offices, we have identified best practices to help you manage constituent communications effectively and efficiently so you can then focus on the many other duties of a congressional office.

Note: This chapter uses the terms "email" and "postal mail" to distinguish between electronic and paper communications. It uses the terms "mail," "correspondence," or "communications" to refer to both types.



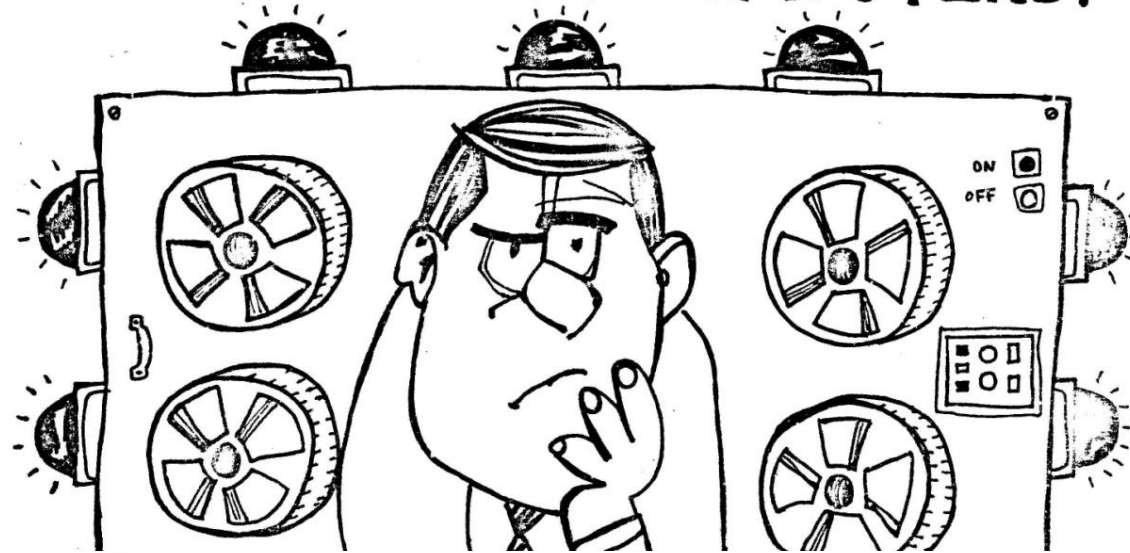
CMF's Crisis Preparedness & Response Center

- Managing Issues Related to January 6th Attack
- Managing Congressional Staff Remotely
- WFH Guides
- Best Practices for Online and Telephone Town Halls
- Managing Stress in Constituents and Staff



CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

END CONFUSION ABOUT COMPUTERS!



Computers

March 29, 1978

3-5 p.m.

CMF offices

vendors knocking at my door. Close Encounters of the Scary Kind! And I don't even know what questions to ask."

The Focus: This seminar is for the computer novice—those with little or no background or experience with computers. Topics to be covered include: the capabilities of the computer (what it can and cannot do), the initial impact of the computer on the office organization, vendor selection, and the difference between on-line and off-line systems for your office. Mailing list maintenance, updating, compilation, and use on a daily basis, as well as a targeted mailing program, will also be covered.

The Leader: Robert L. Chartrand is a Senior Specialist in Information Sciences at the Library of Congress. In the past twelve years, he has been an advisor

TIME: 3-5 p.m.

PLACE: CMF offices
201 Maryland Avenue N.E.
(behind the Supreme Court)

You must have a reservation to attend! Call 546-0100

HAS YOUR OFFICE SIGNED UP

...Oh, and a few other things have changed

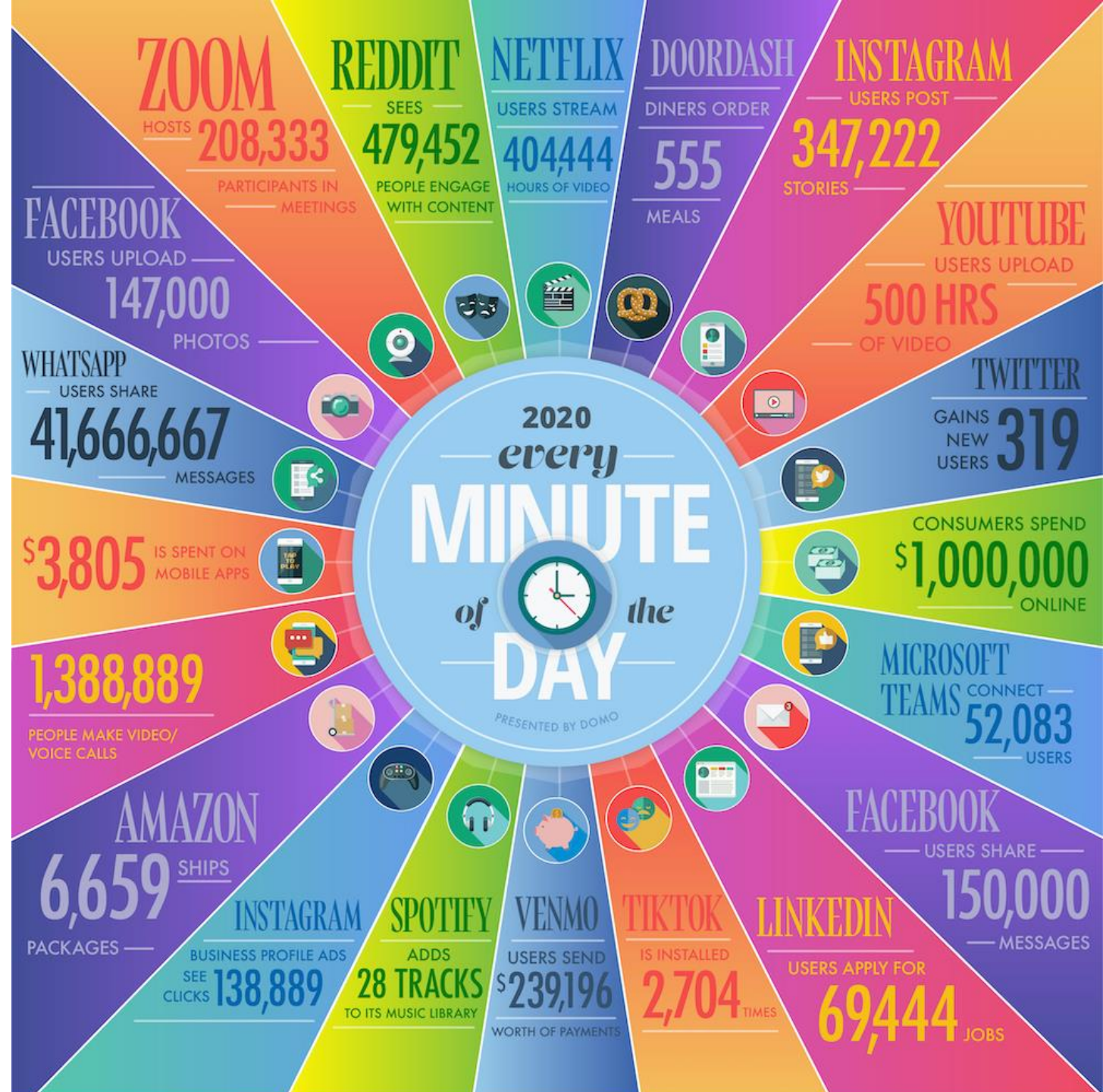




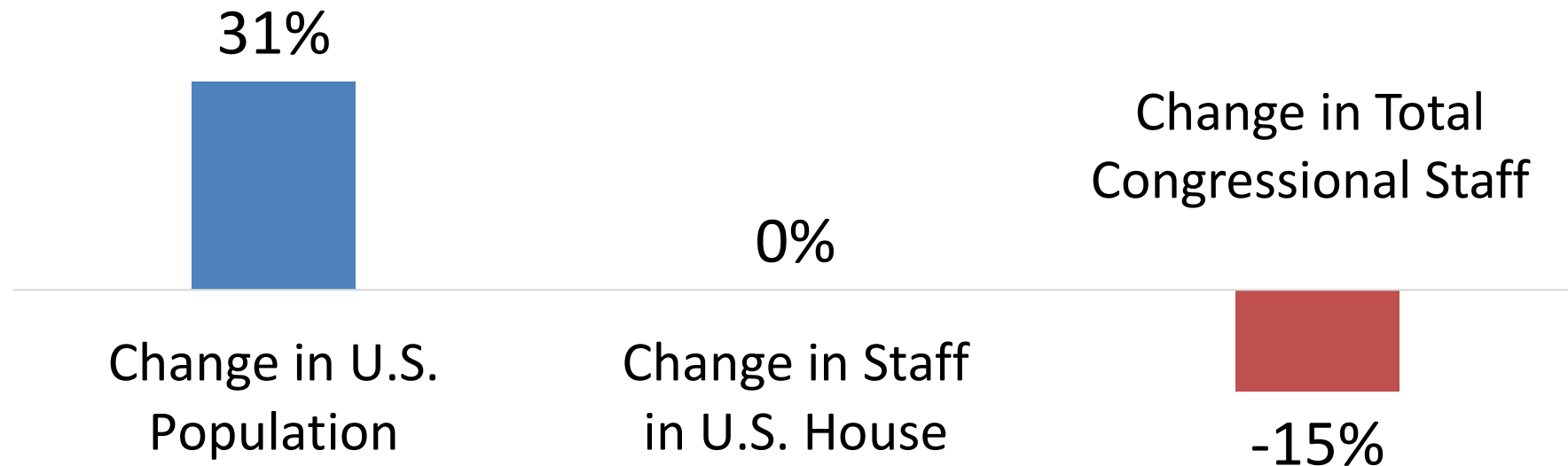
Congressional Correspondence Systems Then ... and Now

DATA NEVER SLEEPS 8.0

DOMO



1980 - 2018





Congressional Correspondence Systems

How it *FEELS* to Answer the Mail

“What we’re seeing is a 19th century institution, often using 20th century technology to solve 21st century problems.”

- Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

Agenda

- What constituents want from engagement
- Setting up your “mail” system
- Your website and social media presence
- Virtual town hall meetings
- Q & A

Presenters

Kathy Goldschmidt

Director of Strategic Initiatives
Congressional Management Foundation



Bradley Joseph Sinkaus

Associate Manager of Congressional Operations
Congressional Management Foundation



Presenters

C2C

Michael Neblo

Director

Institute for Democratic Engagement and Accountability
(IDEA)

The Ohio State University



Amy Lee

Associate Director

Institute for Democratic Engagement and Accountability
(IDEA)

The Ohio State University

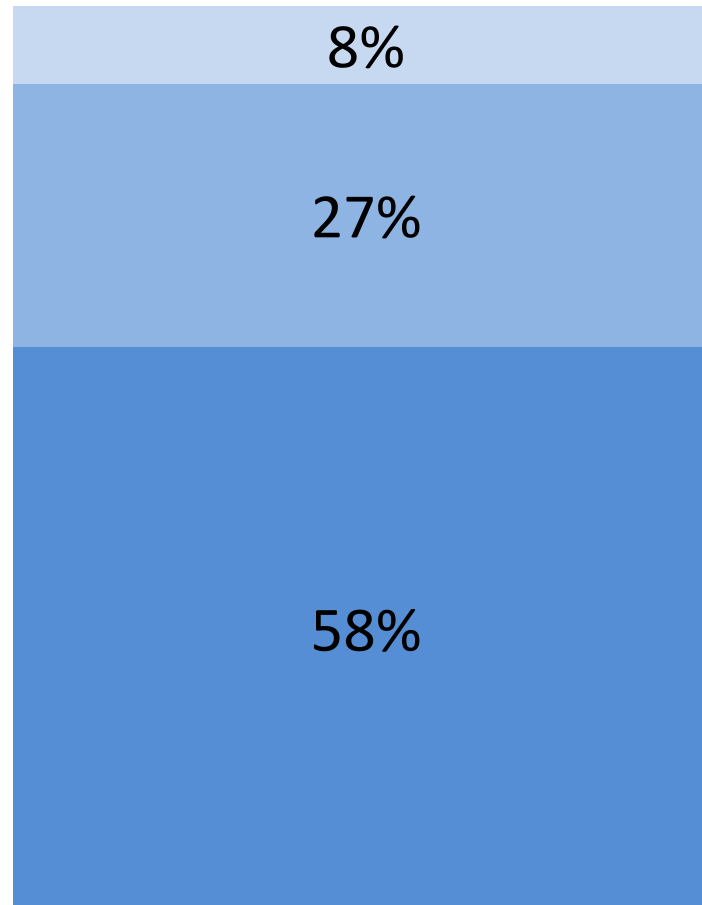




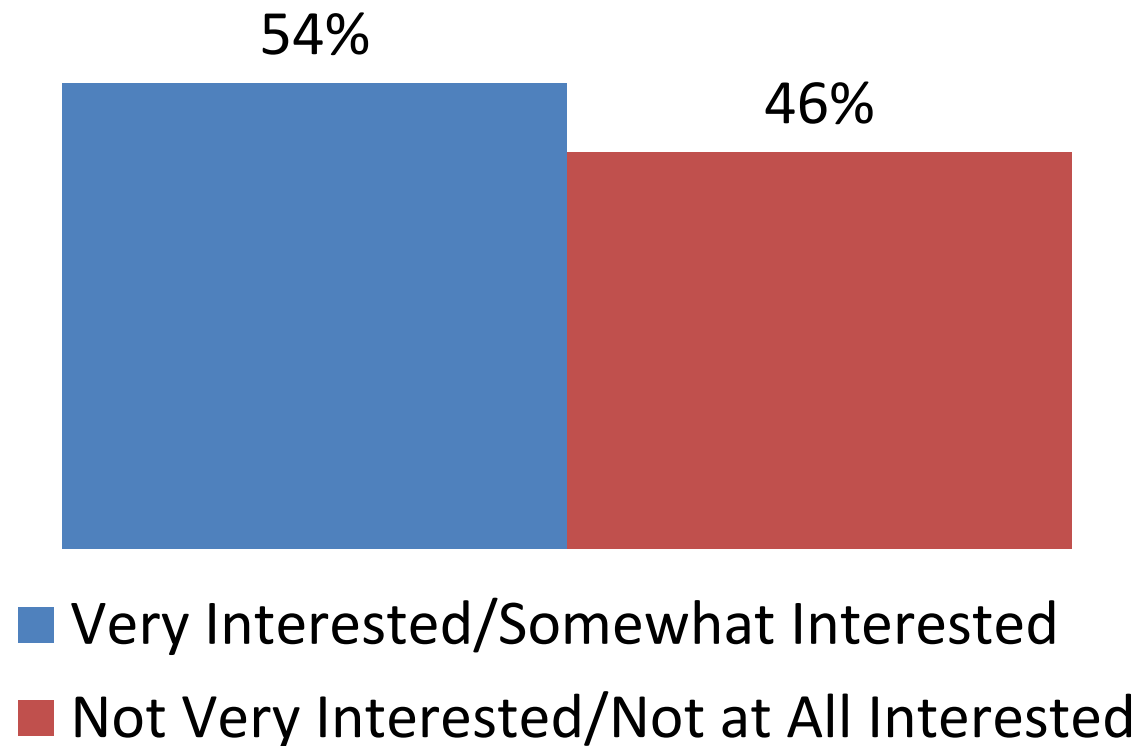
What Constituents Want from Engagement

“Interactions between citizens and their representatives are very valuable to our democracy”

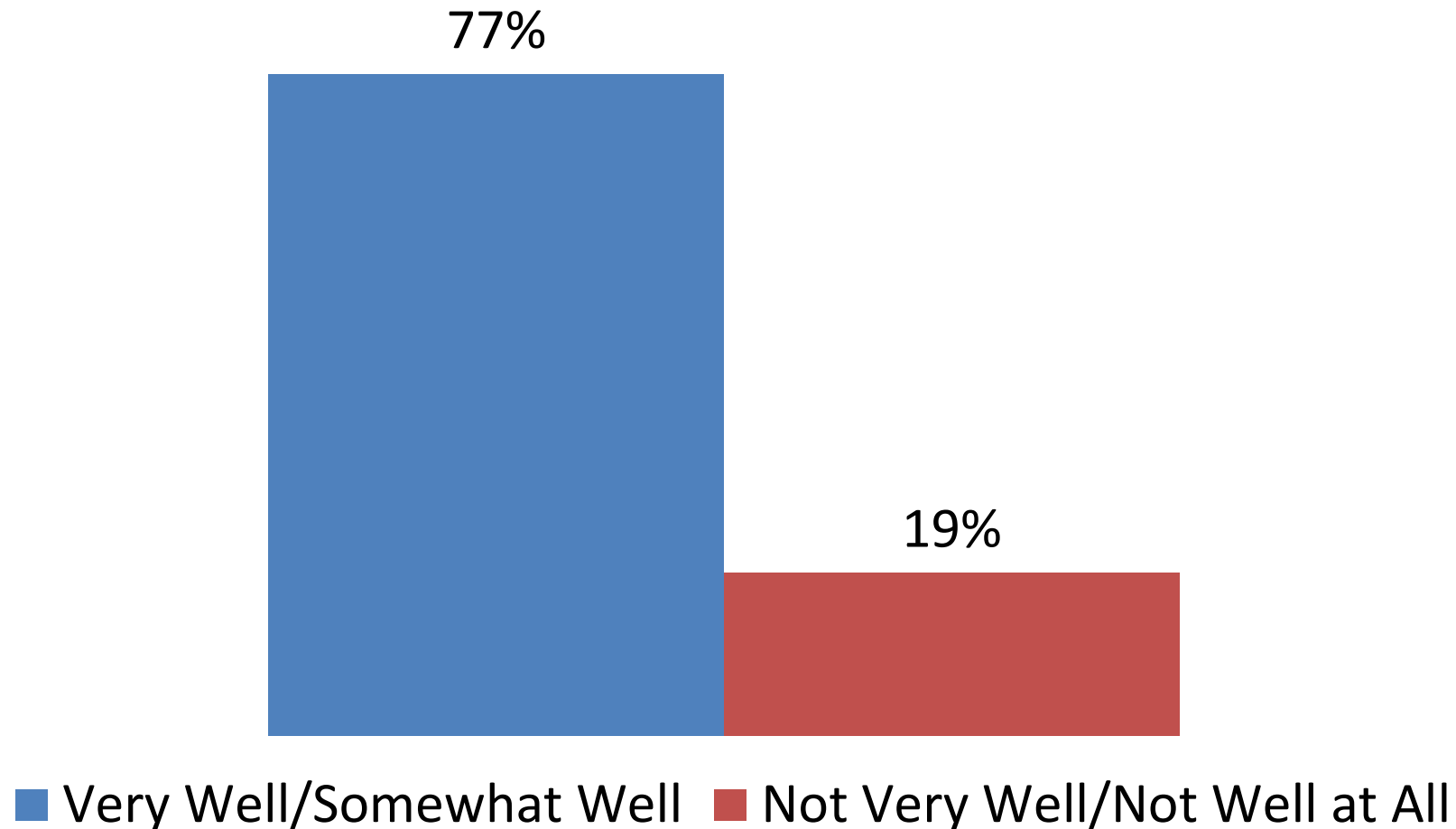
93%



“What is your impression, how interested are your Congressional representatives in what you have to say?”



“If I had confidence that my views were taken into account, I would find it acceptable for my Congressional representative to vote contrary to my view.”



I'M LISTENING!

*“Constituents who received lengthy arguments from legislators justifying their positions **were no more likely to change their opinions** than constituents to whom legislators provided little justification.”*

David E. Broockman Stanford Graduate School of
Business Daniel M. Butler Washington University in St.
Louis

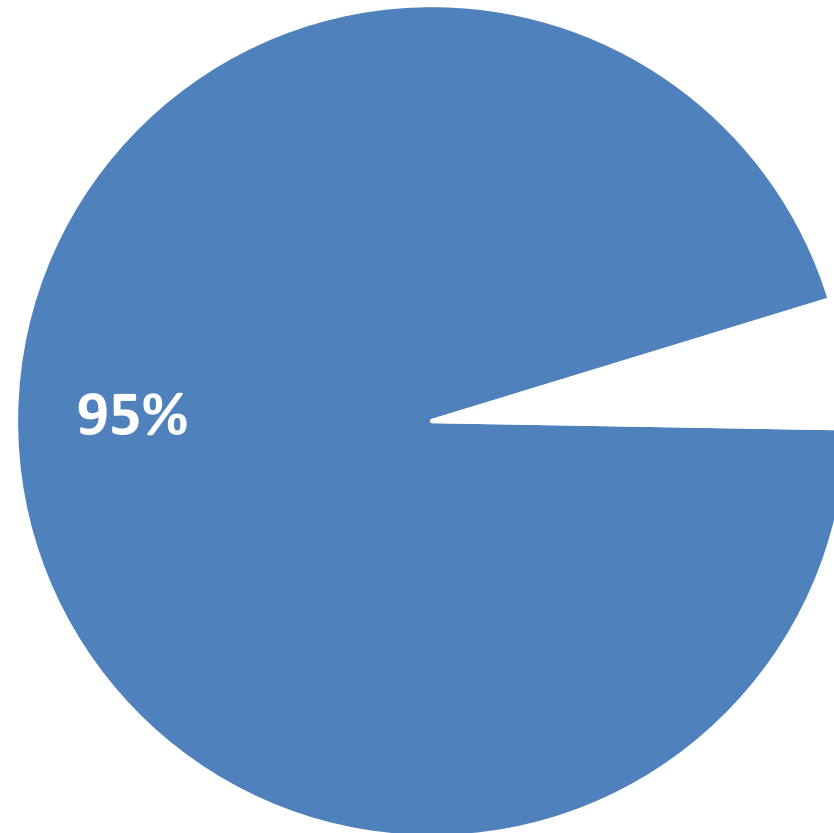
Focus on Value not Process

- “I hear you” not “Here’s what I think”
- Connect, don’t persuade
- Short and responsive not long and detailed
- Tie it to the district and the Member, not legislation and process

Listening also requires the Member to stop talking once in a while . . .

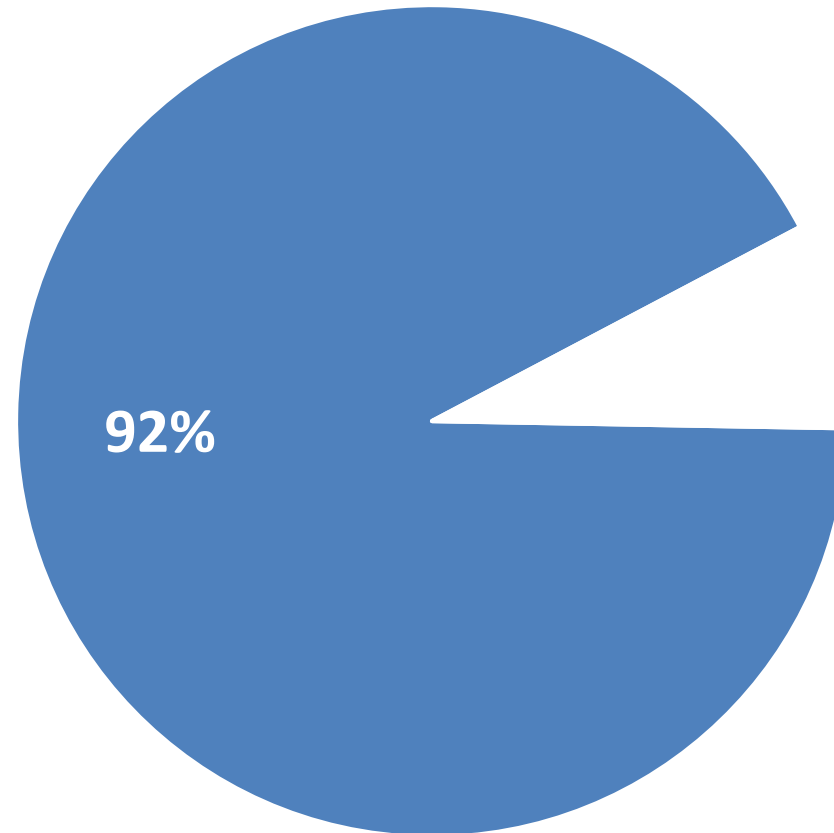
How Congress Uses Correspondence

Record incoming messages



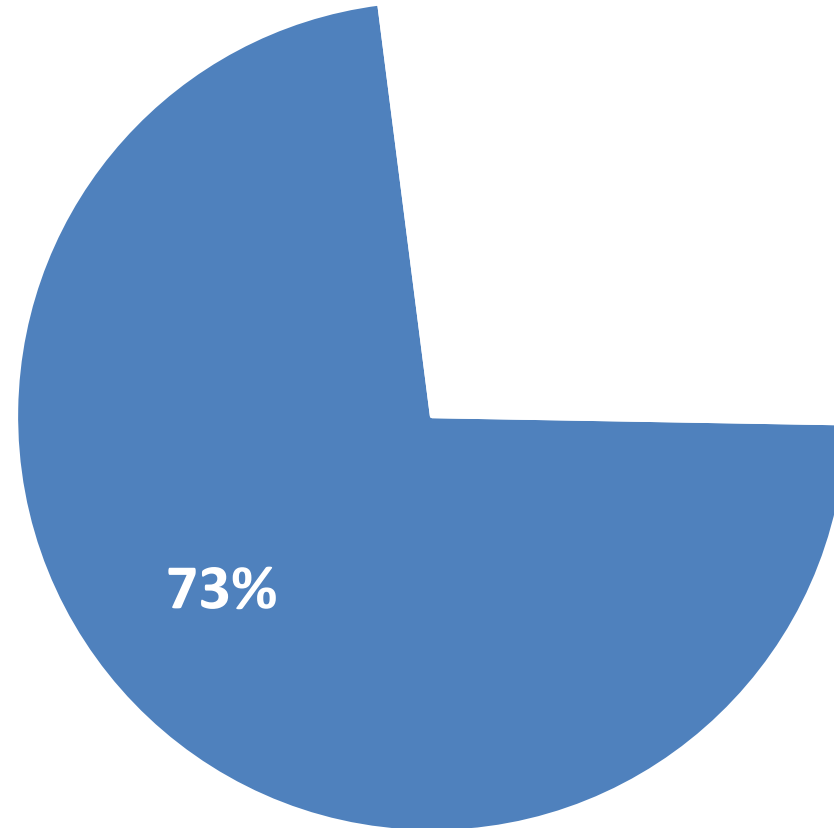
How Congress Uses Correspondence

Produce mail reports



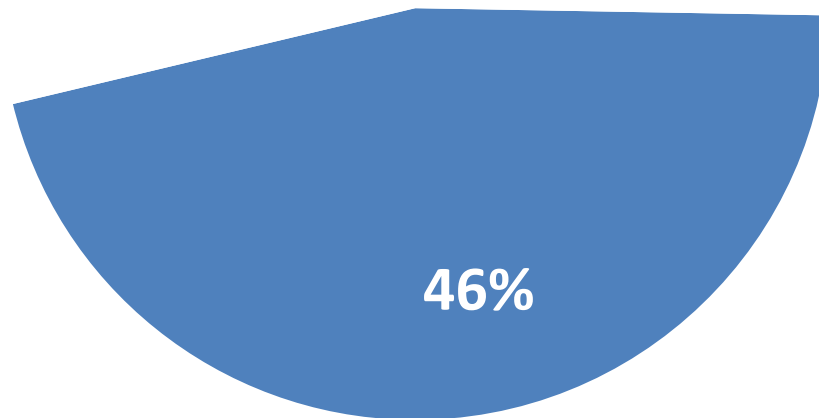
How Congress Uses Correspondence

Produce report at least twice/month



How Congress Uses Correspondence

Share reports with the Member



What is constituent engagement for?

What is constituent engagement for?

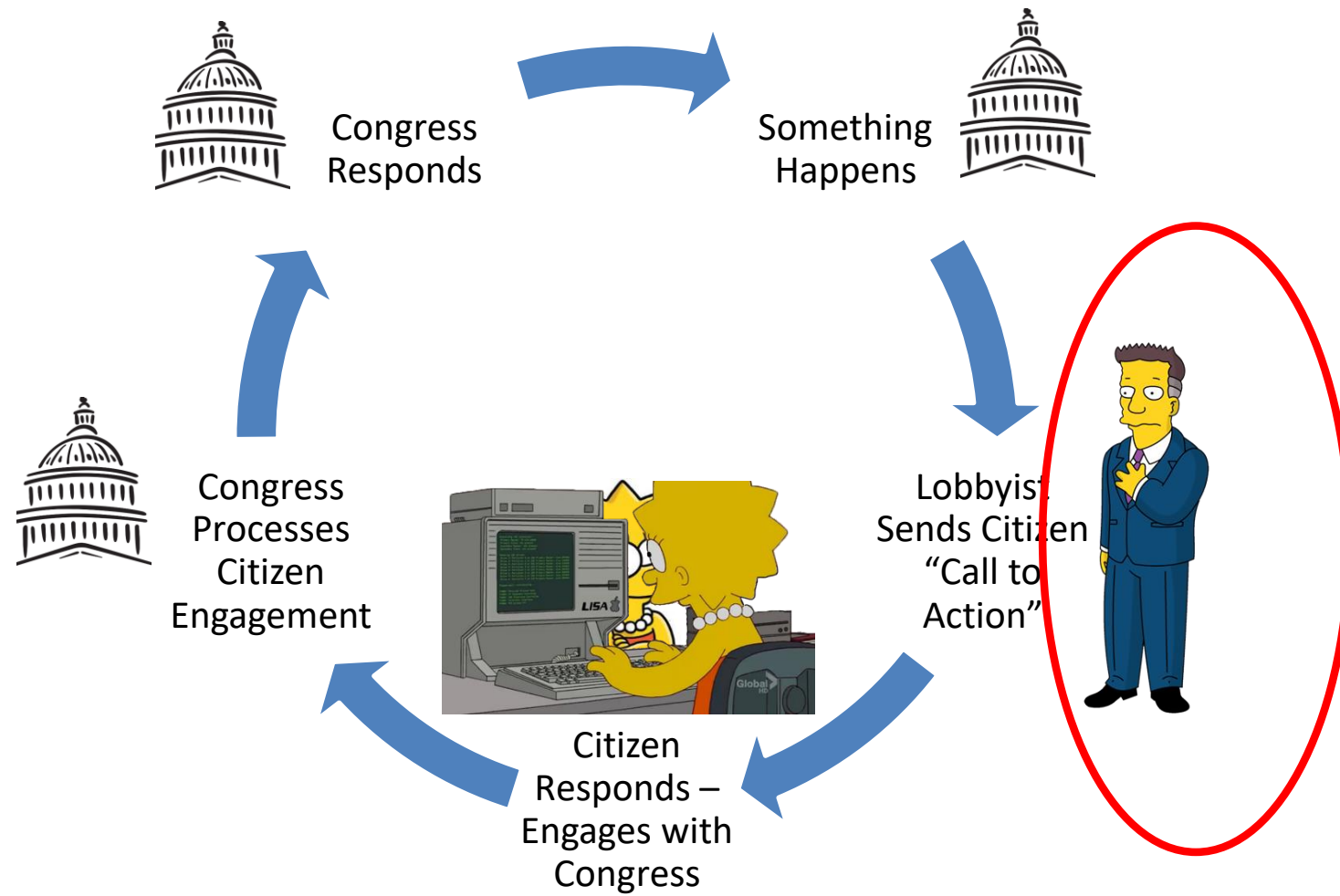
PUBLIC SERVICE & POLITICS



Satisfied
Customers
Tell Three
Friends,

PETE
BLACKSHAW

Running a Business in Today's
Consumer-Driven World





Citizen Feels that Voice was HEARD



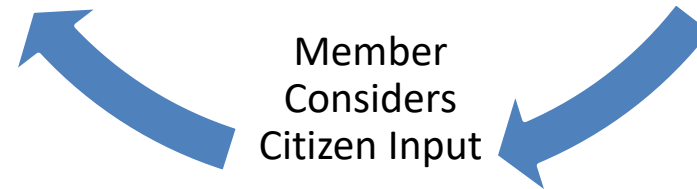
Congress Seeks Citizen Engagement



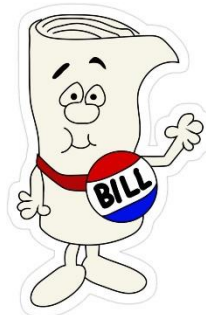
Citizen Engages, Responds & Provides Input



Member Considers Citizen Input



Citizen Input Integrated into Policy Process

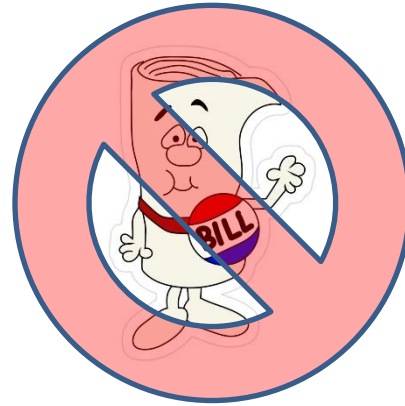




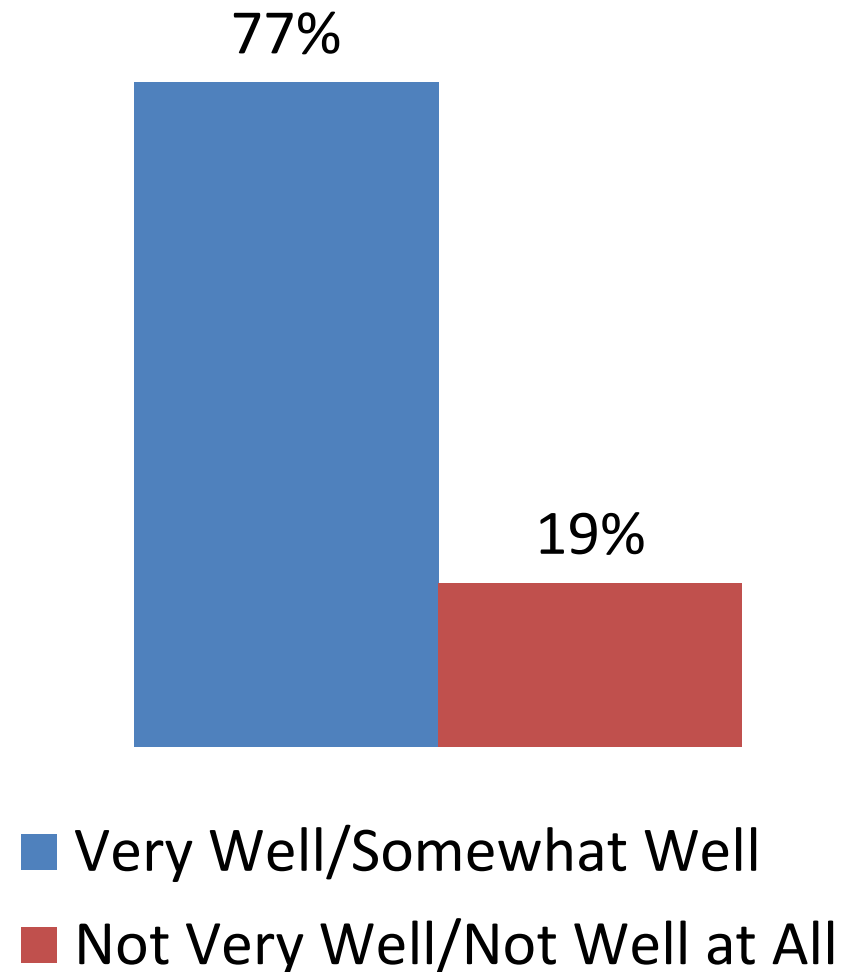
Citizen Feels
that Voice
was HEARD



Congress
Communicates to
Citizens



“If I had confidence that my views were taken into account, I would find it acceptable for my Congressional representative to vote contrary to my view.”



Principles to Live By

- Embrace and facilitate First Amendment Rights
- Promote accessibility for all
- Foster trust
- Support Congress' role in democracy
- Allow for different channels of communication



Setting Up Your “Mail” System

The First 90 Days of Managing Mail

1. Figure out the backlog
2. Set up a system for intake, tracking, reporting, and accountability
3. Develop a polite and helpful, but generic, response to send while you get settled
4. Develop form letters on the most common issues
5. Ensure staff receive training on your system

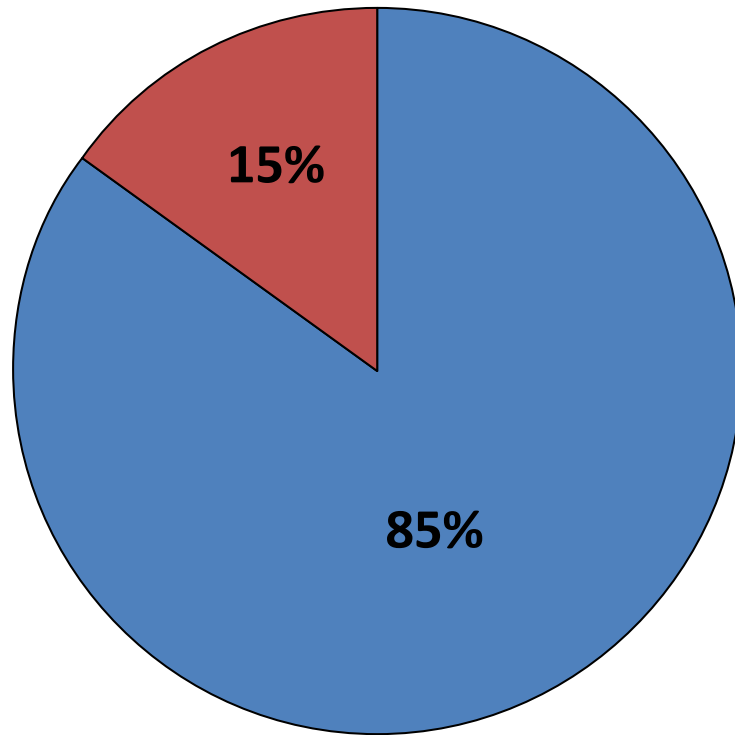
Do NOT let your Member HOARD THE MAIL!
You will NEVER answer the backlog ... until it's too late!

Desired Outcomes for Your “Mail” System

- Minimize staff time spent on constituent correspondence
- Prevent staff frustration responding to constituent mail
- Ensure constituent satisfaction with responses
- Minimize turnaround time from receipt to response

Implement a Two-Track System

Original Draft Track: 2 - 4 Weeks



Fast Track: 1 Week

- Mail should pass through as few hands as possible
- Steps that do not improve timeliness, responsiveness or accuracy should be eliminated

Be Strategic and Deliberate

- Strategically important messages are prioritized over . . .
 - Committee Assignments
 - Legislative Priorities
 - Key Groups, Individuals, or Issues in District
- Less strategic messages
 - Bills that never come to the floor
 - Non-legislative priorities
 - Issues before state or local governments

Does this message communicate...

Unfortunately, you have contacted me through a third-party communication website. As you may know, these websites are routinely used to automatically generate responses to Members of Congress which were not actually written by constituents and do not reflect the views of the constituency.

Does this message communicate...

I'M LISTENING!

Innovative “Mail” Options

Sometimes:

- A phone call is faster than an email
- Short messages with links in responses satisfy constituents
- You can nip a campaign in the bud by contacting the organization and clarifying things
- You can provide columns in groups' e-newsletters

Websites & Social Media

Create an Online Service to Constituents

- Anticipate what constituents need now
- Connect to the district
- Explain the Member, Congress and what's going on
- Keep it short and sweet
- Provide service not marketing
- Keep it up to date
- Enhance your other communications

“If you create marketing that people genuinely want you can dispense with the ‘shock,’ ‘awe,’ and ‘viral’ – and focus on solving problems, answering questions, and creating long-lasting customer relationships.”

- Jay Baer, Youtility: Why Smart Marketing is about Help not Hype (2013)

Social Media Use in Congress

- 116th Congress produced more than **2.2 million tweets and Facebook posts**
- Posts from members received:
 - 2 billion favorites and reactions across Twitter and Facebook
 - 500 million retweets & shares

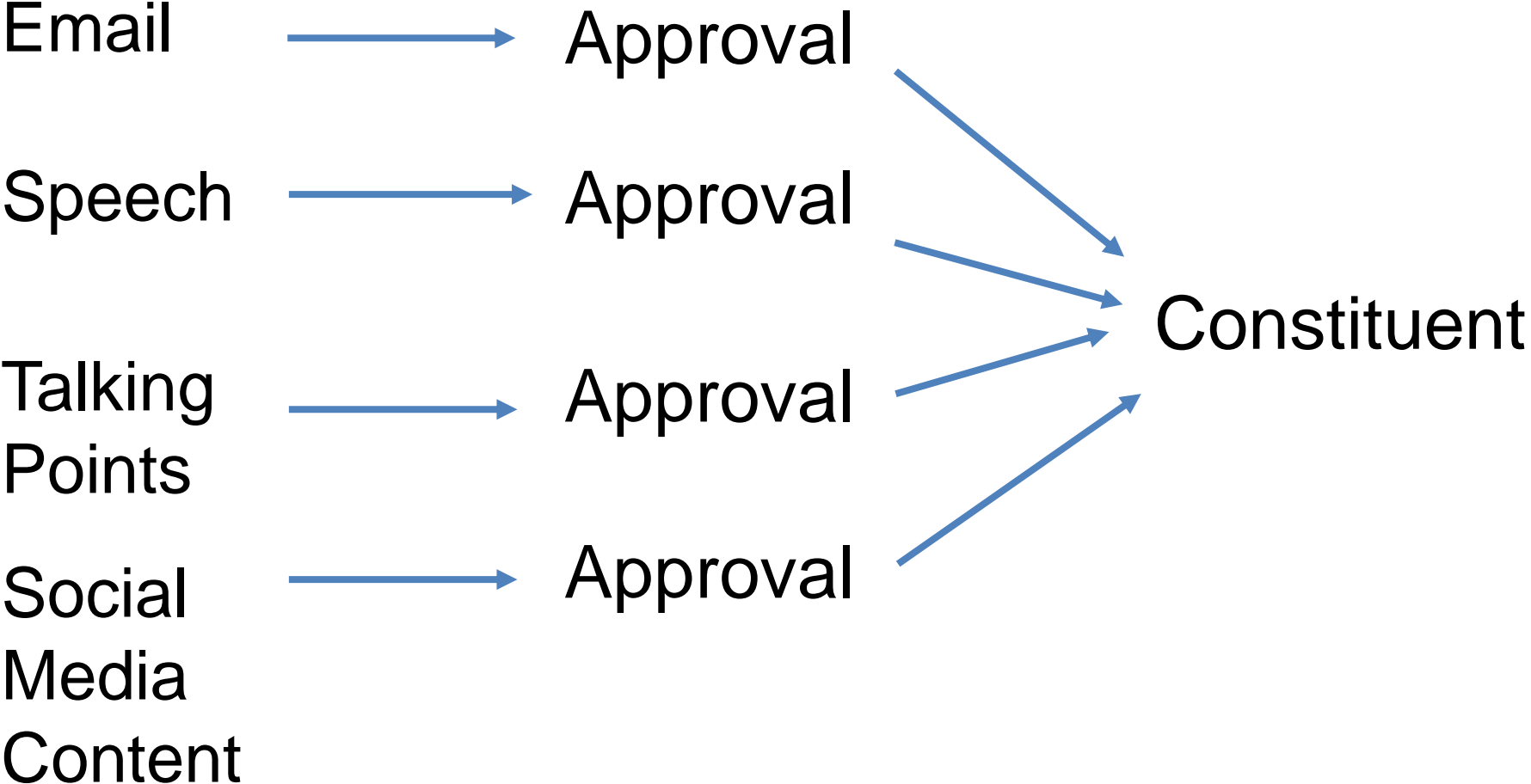
Social Media Advice from Veteran Chiefs

- Don't run before you can walk
- Start slowly and ramp up as you go
- Begin collecting data points
- Read the Congressional Research Service's white paper on social media rules
- Establish a two-person review policy for posting anything
- Reserve Twitter handles early

Consider having your Communications Director oversee constituent communications operations.

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Save Time by Recycling Content



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Virtual Town Hall Meetings

Town Halls?!?



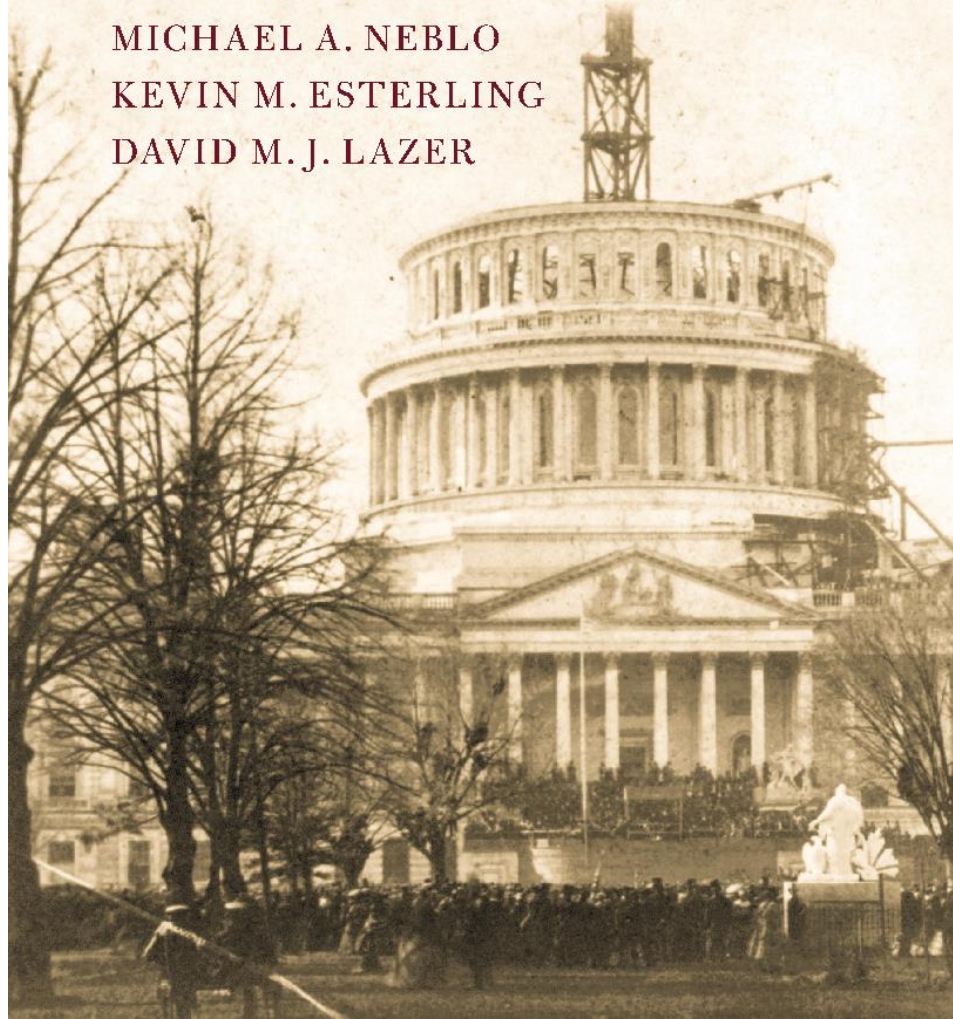
POLITICS *with* THE PEOPLE

Building a Directly Representative Democracy

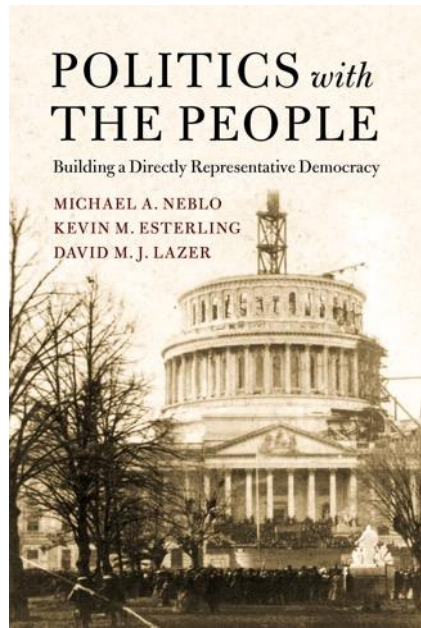
MICHAEL A. NEBLO

KEVIN M. ESTERLING

DAVID M. J. LAZER



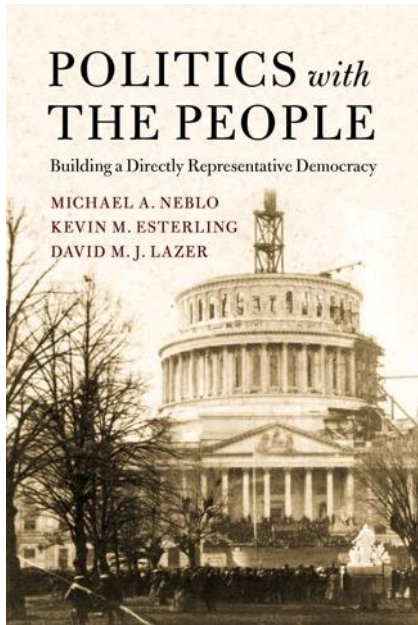
Ground Breaking Research



“How I wish this tool had been available when I served in Congress –it could finally change the tenor of our public debate and at last include citizens into Congressional decision making in a meaningful way. This process could begin to restore America’s trust in its government and representative’s accountability to their constituents.”

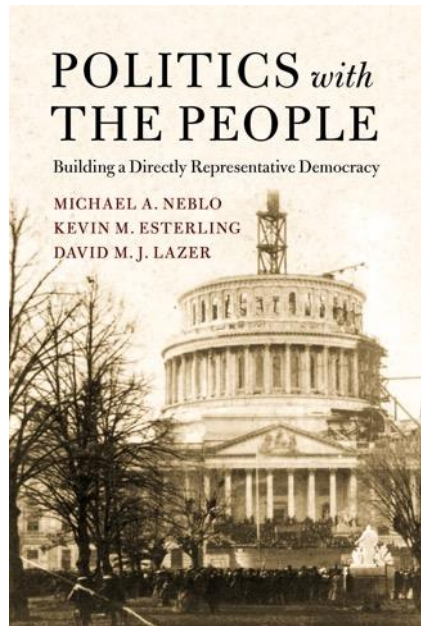
— Rep. Deborah Pryce, R OH-15
(1993-2009)

Ground Breaking Research



- *“This was a great forum. It actually made me feel like I had a voice in government.”*
- *“I believe we are experiencing the one way our elected representatives can hear our voices and do what we want.”*
- *“I don’t agree with everything he said, but it was good to get feedback from someone like him who is supposed to be working for us.”*
- *“That he is having this dialogue online is a great thing, and I would like to see much more of this, with all senators and congressmen.”*

Ground Breaking Research



- A representative group of constituents
- Single issue to ensure focus, depth, and substance
- Non-partisan background information on the issue in advance
- Neutral third-party moderator
- Real-time candid participation by elected official



Weldon
(R-FL)



Matheson
(D-UT)



Lofgren
(D-CA)



Kingston
(R-GA)



Capuano
(D-MA)



Conaway
(R-TX)



Clyburn
(D-SC)



Blumenauer



Manzullo
(R-IL)



Radonovich
(R-CA)



Eshoo
(D-CA)

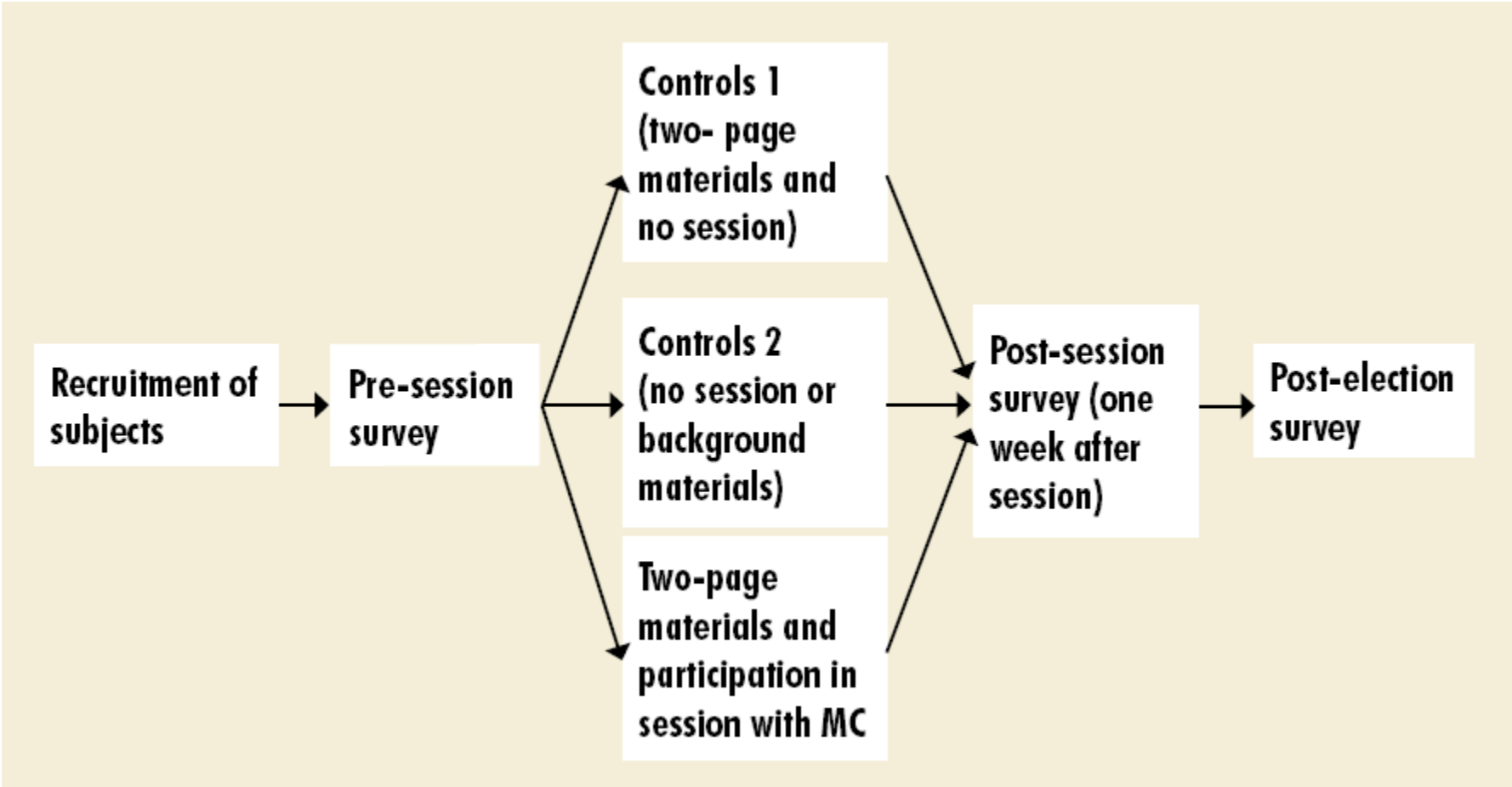


Price
(D-NC)

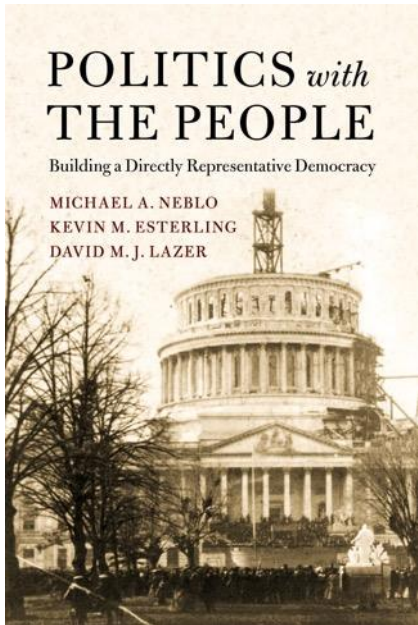


Levin (D-MI)

Conducted Like a Drug Trial



The findings were startling!



- A representative group of constituents participated, not just the “usual suspects”
- The conversations were substantive and high-quality
- Constituents learned about the issue and many changed their minds
- 95% of constituents found the forums “very valuable for our democracy”
- 97% would like to participate in future sessions

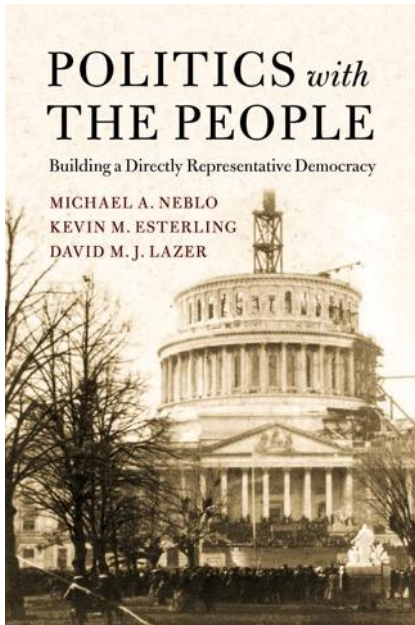
The findings were startling!

Constituents reported:

12%+ increase in approval of their member

20%+ increase in trust in their member

35%+ increase in approval of “handling” the issue (immigration)





Participants were more likely to be politically engaged after the sessions

“Connecting to Congress” in 2021

C2C

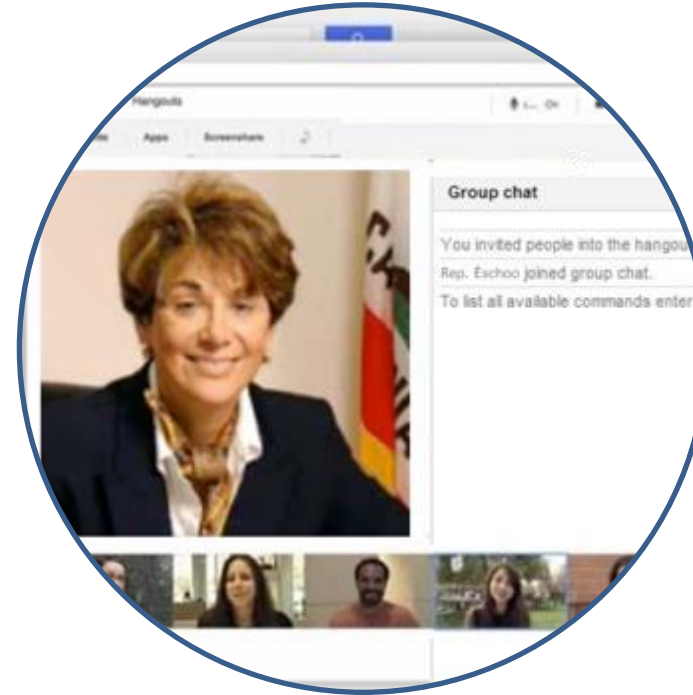
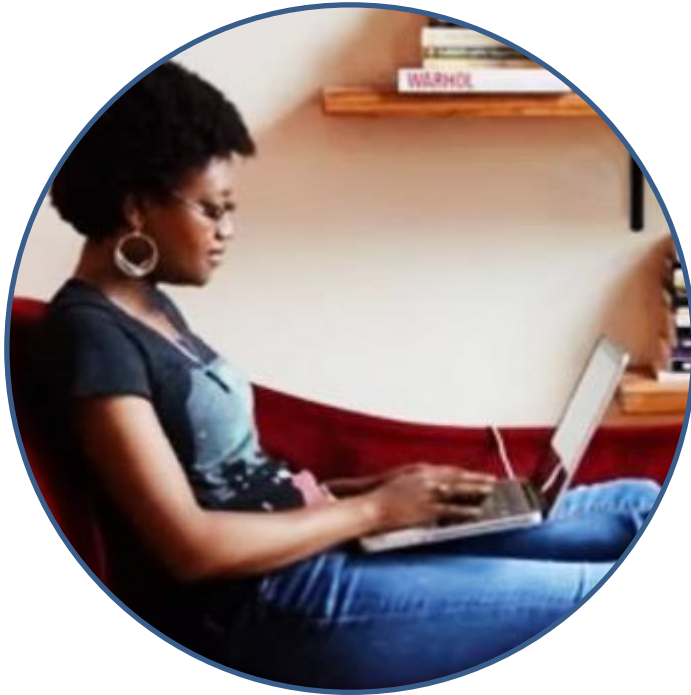


- Pandemic recovery assistance
- Healthcare
- Digital regulation
- Issues requested by offices

Connecting to Congress has digital tools

C2C

**Common
Ground for
Action
forums**



**online
Deliberative
Town Halls**

**based the same
deliberative principles**

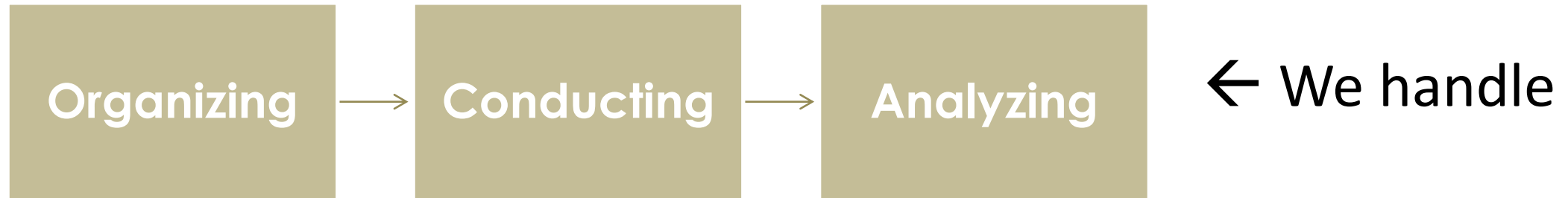
“Connecting to Congress” in 2021

The logo for C2C (Connecting to Congress) is located in the top right corner. It consists of the letters 'C2C' in a bold, black, sans-serif font, enclosed within a red square border.

A Free Service to Congressional Offices

- Host and facilitate online Deliberative Town Halls or Common Ground for Action
- Engage a broad cross-section of constituents on emerging policy issues
- Produce reports that summarize trust and approval of members, and constituents' informed opinions, priorities, and motivations on policy
- Help offices integrate this information and new technology into office workflows
- *Consistent with House & Senate Ethics Rules!*

Solving the Congressional capacity problem





Please provide us with feedback!

We value your opinion and want to make our programs even better.



Q & A



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FOUNDATION

BUILDING TRUST &
EFFECTIVENESS IN CONGRESS

**New Member Office
Training**

Creating and Implementing a Legislative Agenda

March 19, 12:00-1:30 pm ET/9:00-10:30 am PT



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