



Public Affairs
Council

Communicating with Congress Successfully



Public Affairs
Council



Kelly Memphis

Senior Manager, Government
Relations
Public Affairs Council

kmemphis@pac.org

@kelly_memphis

AGENDA

1. Refresher on why your advocacy matters
2. Review of how Congress works
3. Rundown of Advocacy Tools and Communication Tips
4. Reminder: All Politics are Local!





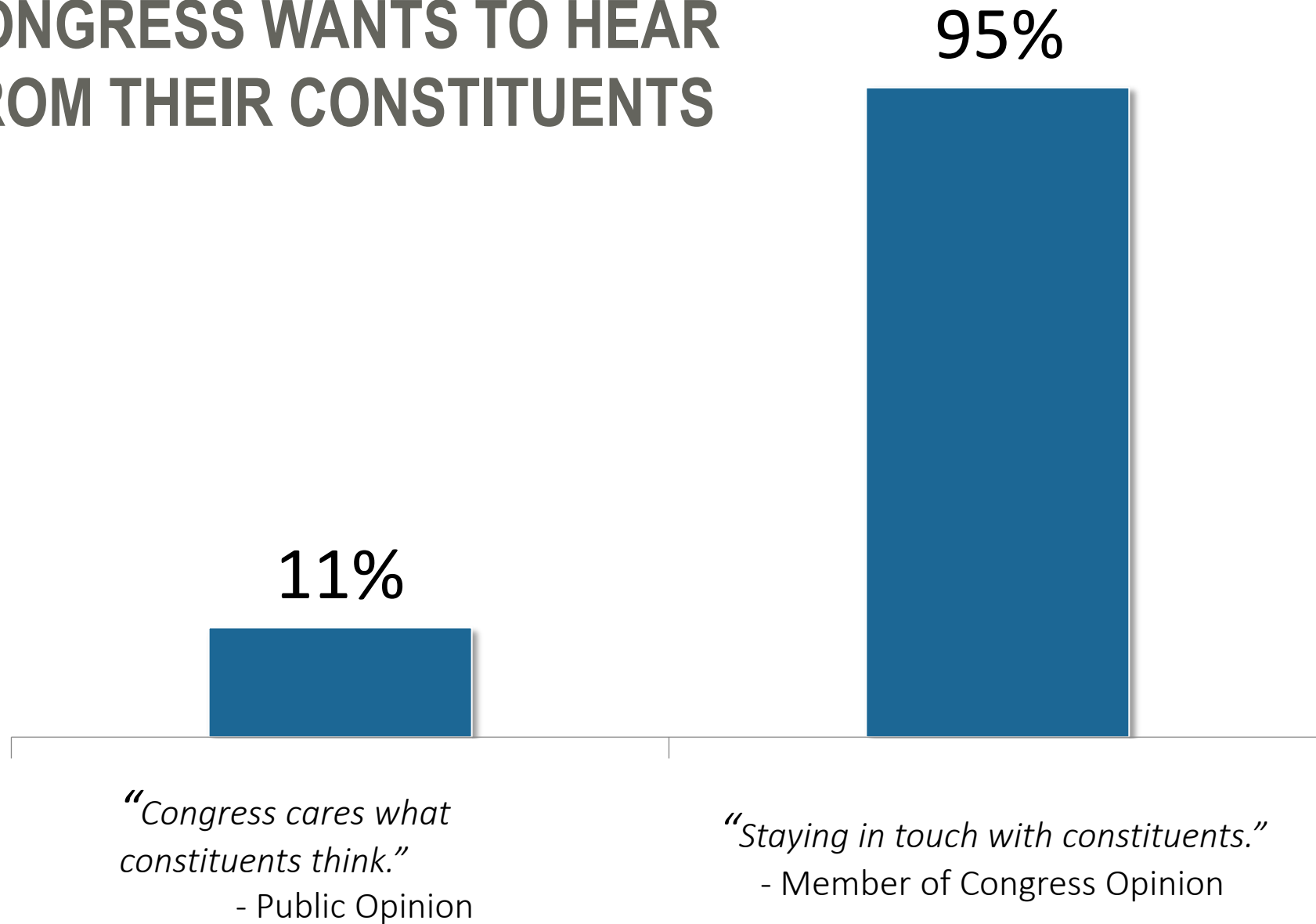
Refresher on Why Your Advocacy Matters



WHY *YOUR* ADVOCACY MATTERS

- **Legislators care about what constituents think, and YOU are the experts in your industry with important expertise to share**
- **Legislators can be more helpful if they are armed with information; be a resource for them on industry issues**
- **Successful advocacy requires strong relationships with legislators.**

CONGRESS WANTS TO HEAR FROM THEIR CONSTITUENTS



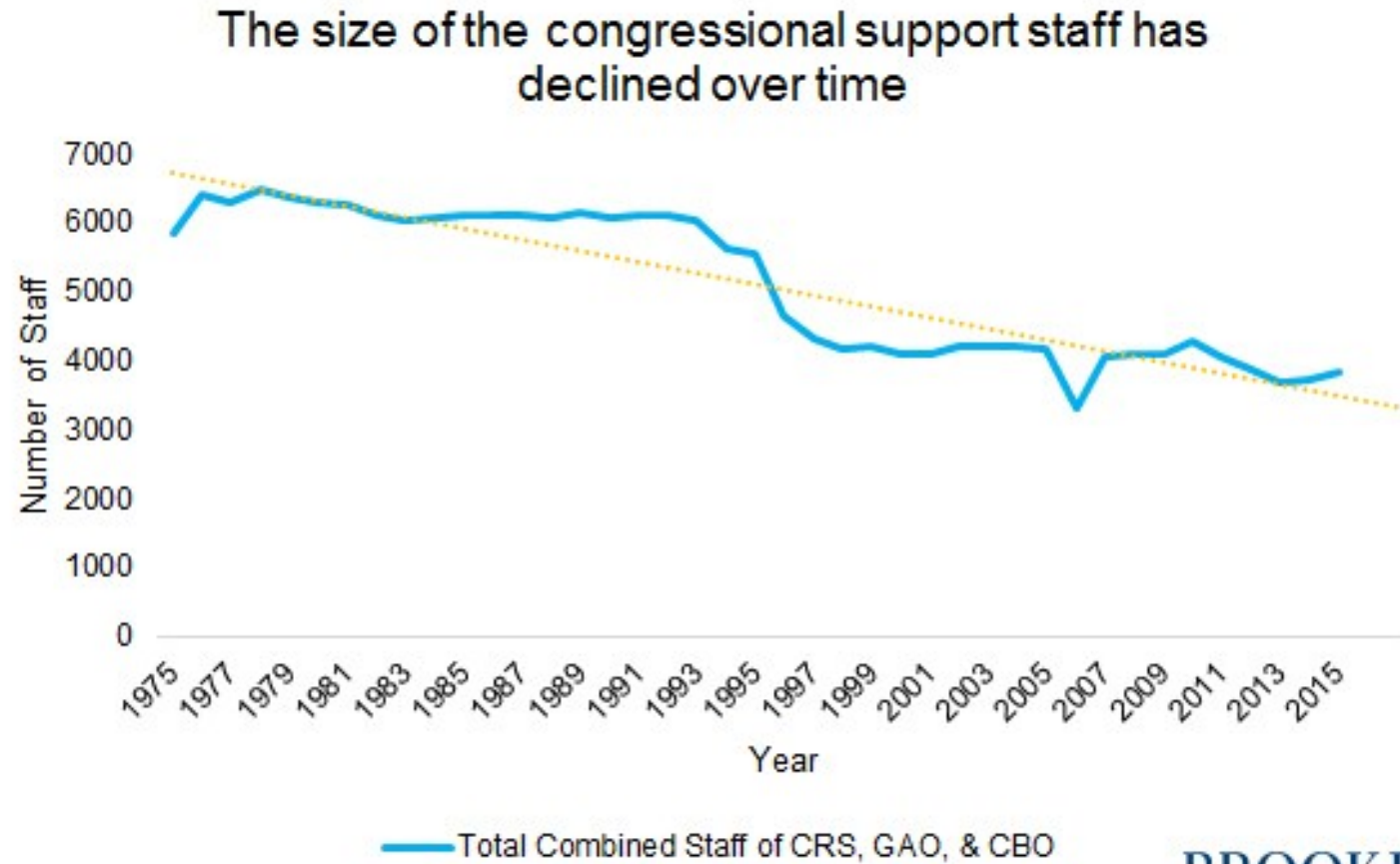
Source: Congressional Management Foundation

Why? Communicating with Congress is a Crowded Space

- Rise in citizen and corporate advocacy
- By some estimates, Congress receives well over 100 million letters and emails a year. (Doesn't include phone calls or social media posts!)
 - There are over 2,700 national associations with DC offices, 600 advocacy groups and 4,500 business PACs...
 - Last Congress 15,000 bills were introduced, but only 344 laws were enacted



Congress has Limited Resources



BROOKINGS



What's the solution?

- Use diverse advocacy tools and communicate effectively to have your message stand out from the crowd.
- Be prepared to be patient and persistent.

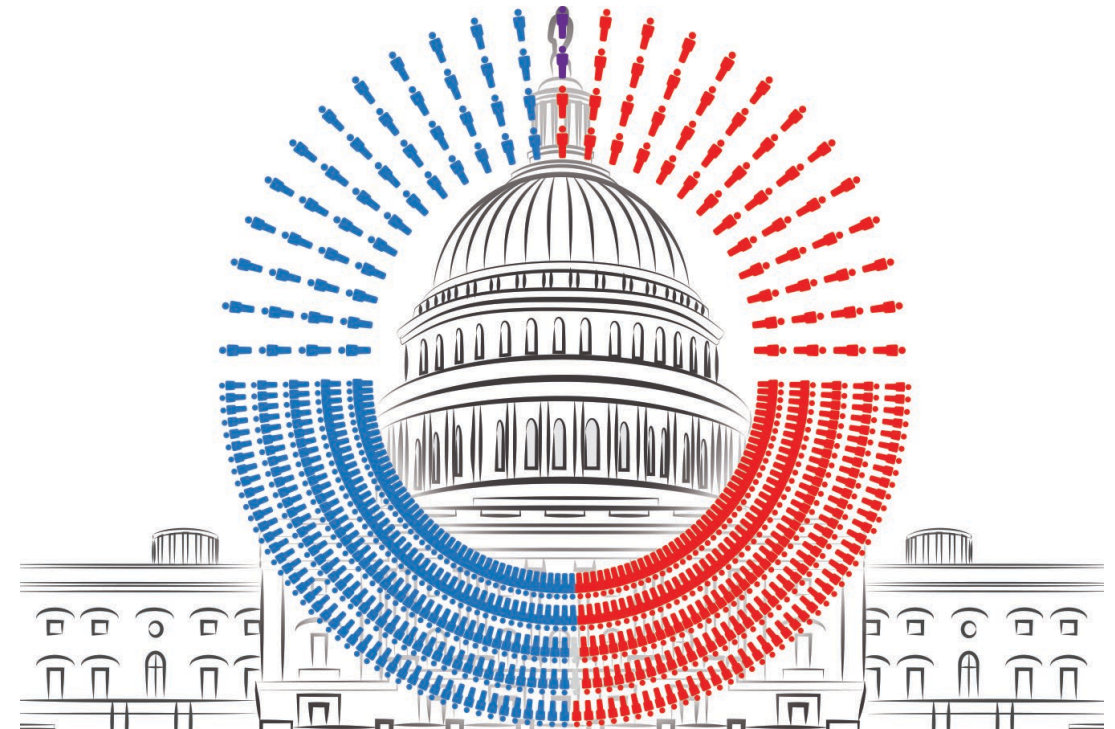


Review of How Congress Works



The Structure of Congress

- 435 Representatives and 100 Senators
- Senators elected to 6-year terms and Representatives are elected to 2-year terms
- Each body sets their own rules for operating within the confines of the US Constitution
- Each Member of Congress has a full-time staff, committee assignments and access to resources like the Congressional Research Service



Making a Bill into a Public Law

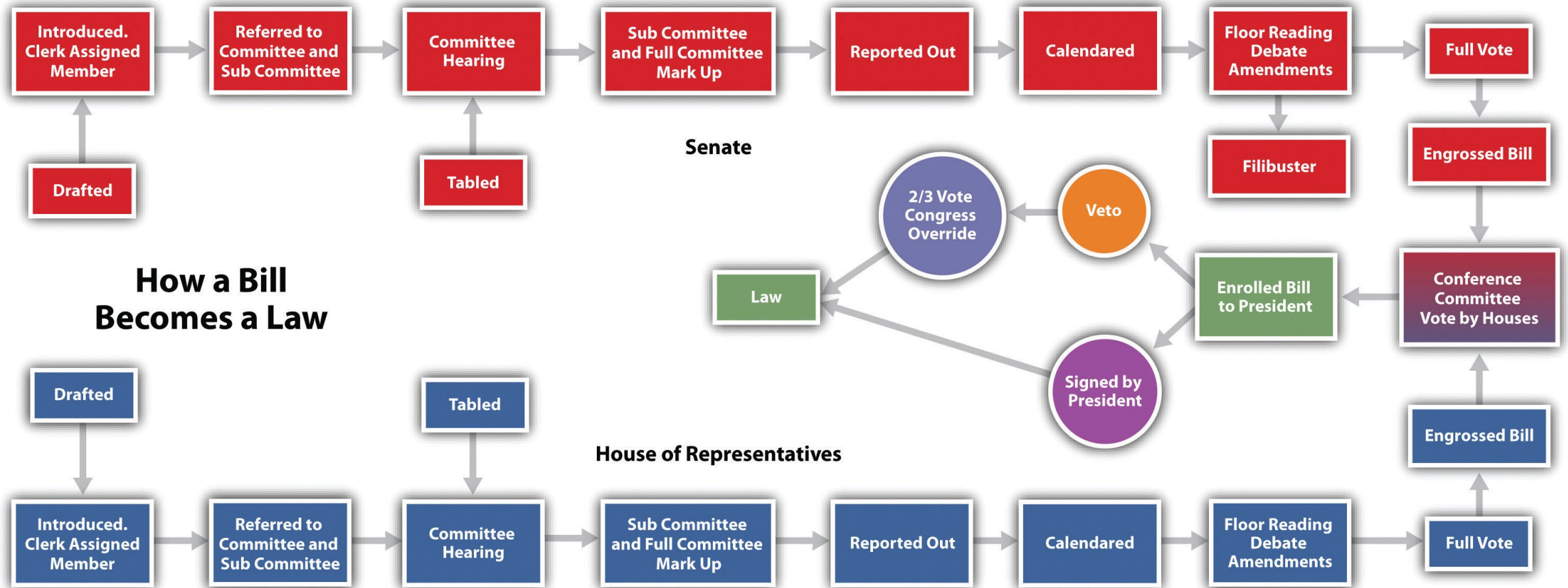
1. Requires both the House and Senate to pass the bill and resolve any differences
2. The President must sign the legislation into law or veto
3. After passage, most implementation starts at the agency level and smaller technical issues are sorted out by executive branch appointees

Avenues for advocacy throughout this process.

Committees of the House and Senate

- The House and Senate do not have the same committee or subcommittee structure
- 16 Permanent Committees in the Senate and 20 in the House of Representatives
- Key Healthcare Committees:
 - Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee
 - Senate Finance Committee
 - House Ways and Means Committee
 - House Energy and Commerce Committee
 - House Education and Labor Committee
- Process: Hearing, Markup Session, Clean Bill, Report Out
- **Avenues for advocacy:** hearings, technical language suggestions, markup, and meetings with subcommittee or committee leadership

A Quick Review



Key Takeaways

1. Members of Congress want to hear your voice, learn about the issues affecting your profession and want to be helpful
2. The process can be confusing, archaic and slow, but you do not need to be a Congressional procedure expert to be effective
3. Every step in the legislative process is an opportunity for you to advocate
4. Look for help and reach out to the experts at your association
5. Never give up, there is always an avenue for advocacy

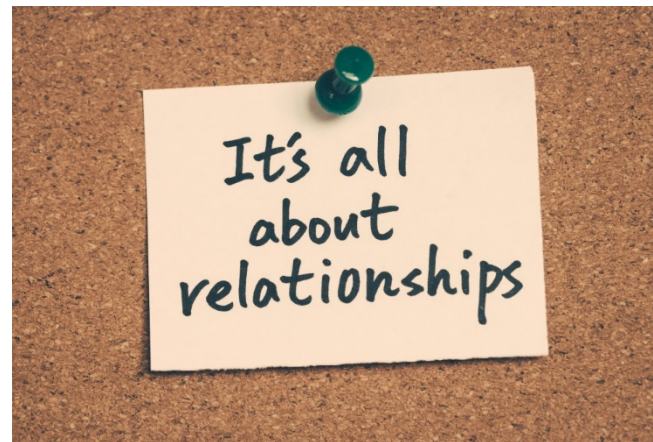


Advocacy Tools and Communication Tips



Tip 1: Remember the Golden Rules of Advocacy

- a. Build Relationships
- b. Establish Yourself as a Trusted Source
- c. Communicate Your Policy Message Effectively



a. Building Strong Relationships

- Understand who you are interacting with
 - Does this person/entity have the power to take action on my issue?
 - What is important to this person, and does it align with what is important to me?
- Build relationships right
 - Find a way to make a personal connection
 - Be authentic and transparent
 - Make sure the relationship is two-way
 - Follow-up!

b. Establishing Yourself as a Trusted Source

- Do your research.
- Maintain a reputable presence online.
- Contribute to your community or cause.
- Share your professional status & expertise

➤ Consider this 2019 Public Affairs Council survey of Congress:

Eight out of 10 congressional and federal staffers say trade associations are trusted sources of political information



c. Communicate Your Policy Message Effectively

- Show AND tell
- Use a combination of facts and storytelling

Tip 2: Utilize Multiple Advocacy Tools

1.) In-person or virtual meetings

- Offices, site-visits, town halls, council meetings

2.) Emails/letter writing campaigns

5.) Social media campaigns

6.) Media

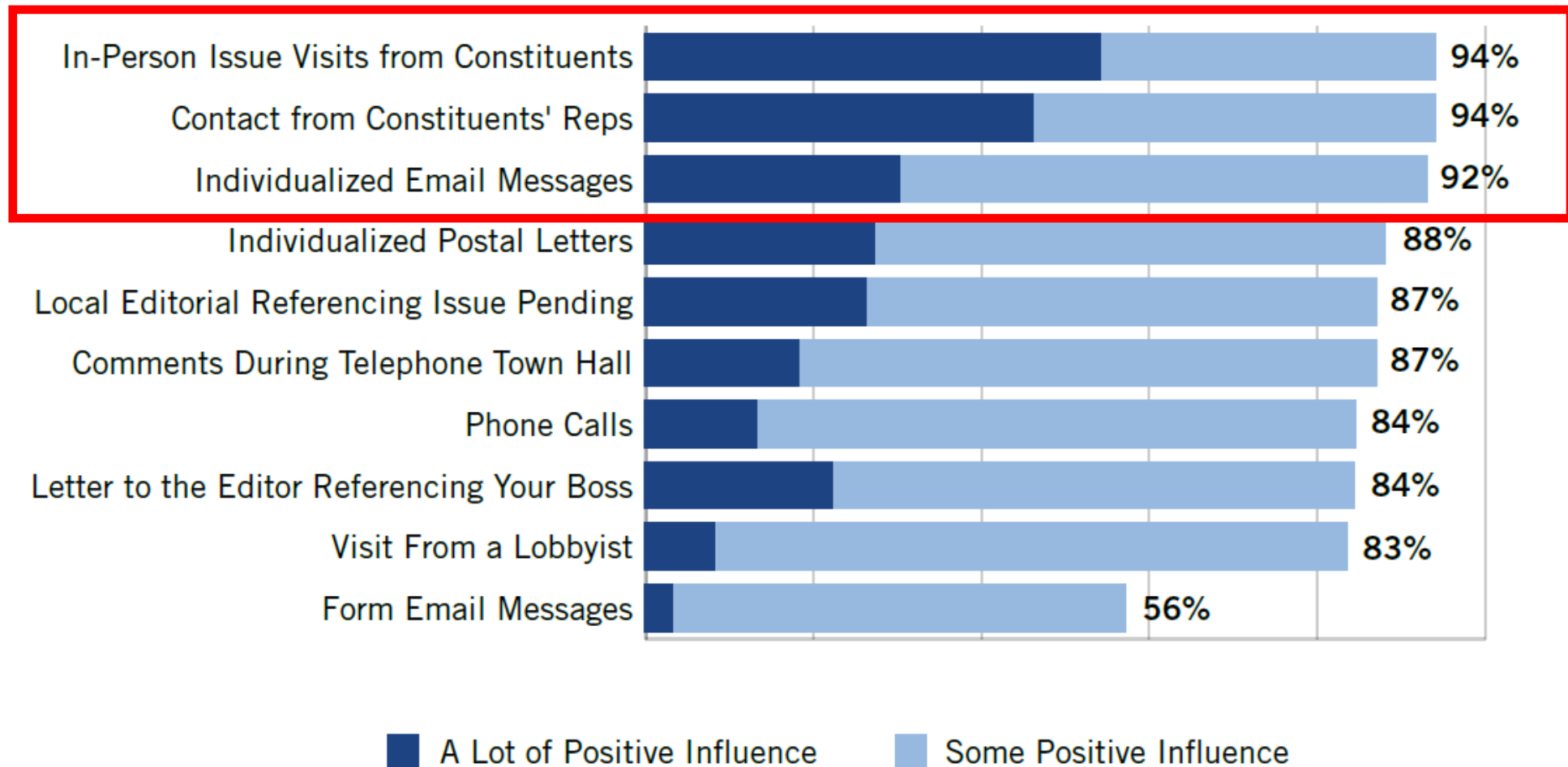
- op-eds, Letter to the Editors, local radio or TV

7.) Legislative Days

(Gathering a group of advocates to visit legislative offices at the same time to share the same message)

8.) Events

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?



Making the most out of your meeting



Key 1: Know who's who:



- **Chief of Staff (CoS):** Typically runs the office, manages the staff, and serves as the primary advisor.
- **Press Secretary/Communications Director:** Manages the member's media relations and public communications.
- **Executive Assistant/Scheduler:** Manages the member's official schedule and travel.
- **Legislative Director (LD):** Supervises the legislative staff and operations of the office.
- **Legislative Assistant (LA):** Handles legislative/policy issues in a select number of issue areas.
- **Legislative Correspondent (LC):** Drafts responses to all constituent generated legislative mail and supports work of LAs in tracking legislation.

Key 2: Know the format for an effective Meeting

- Introduce yourself
 - Don't assume they know who you are or what you do.
 - Introduce them to your association, your industry and to you.
- Be professional
 - Be on time for your meetings.
- Be flexible
 - You may be on time but the Member may be delayed due to votes. Roll with it.
 - Standing in the hall for meetings is not uncommon. Sometimes it is the only space available.

Key 3: Set the tone

- Be brief, but make your case
 - Start positive. Stay positive.
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the member's positions, committees, etc.
 - Connect issues to the district, if possible.
 - Be passionate and be succinct
- Be prepared
 - Assign roles: have a spokesperson, a storyteller and a question answerer.
 - Get comfortable with the talking points.
 - **Don't** feel like you need to know the answer to every question
- Use storytelling

Key 4: Relationships again!

- Engage with congressional staff
 - You may be scheduled to meet with a staffer, or you may have to meet with one at the last minute.
 - Staffers are valuable resources for keeping your issue in front of legislators.
- Build a long-term relationship
 - Make a memorable connection (talk about the district, if possible).
 - Say “thank you” – in whatever way you can.
- Follow-up!!

Follow-Up Tips

- Writing a thank you to the lawmaker and their staff
- Take a virtual picture or post on social media about your meeting
- Inform your organization about the meeting
- Email with the legislative staffer and connect them to your organization's lobbyist
- Subscribe to the lawmaker's newsletter, Facebook, and Twitter accounts
- Make a note in your calendar to follow up in two weeks

Site Visits (Virtual or in-person)

Long-term site visits have a big impact

- Make it memorable (tools of trade, etc.)
- Map out what you want to show, who will talk about it

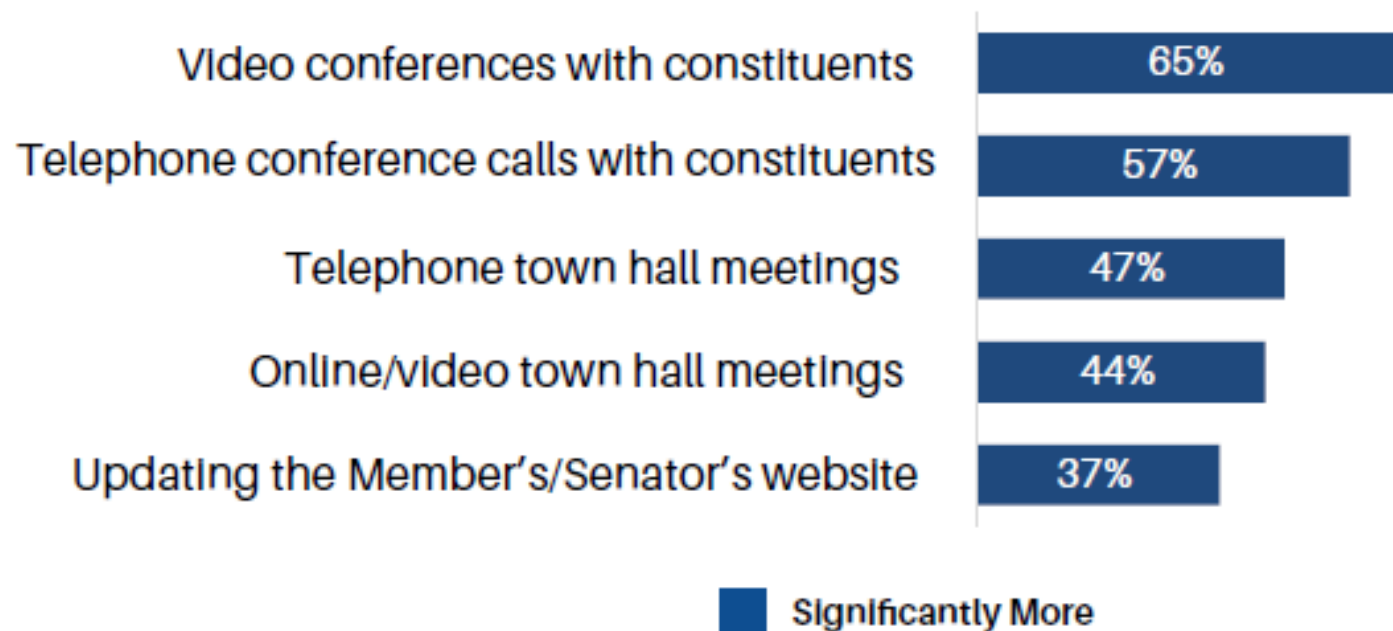
Considerations

- Invitation/scheduling process
- Choosing the right site
- Making sure all involved are prepped on issues,
- Compliance, etc



Figure 3 | Changes In Frequency of Remote Communications Practices

Compared to the months prior to the COVID-19 crisis, has your Senator/Representative done more of, less of, or about the same number of the following activities in the past two months?



(n= 100-110)

Note: "Don't Know/Does Not Apply" responses were excluded.

Source: 2020 survey of House and Senate senior staff, published in *The Future of Citizen Engagement: Coronavirus, Congress, and Constituent Communications*, Congressional Management Foundation, 2020.

Tips for virtual meetings

1. Choose simple, practical tech

- Having bright, direct light and clear sound can make your presentation stand out
- Seconds count more in virtual- don't be late!

2. Prepare & practice:

- Using the tech
- Create a schedule & assign spokespeople
- Always have a constituent in the group

3. Be even more thoughtful about your messaging

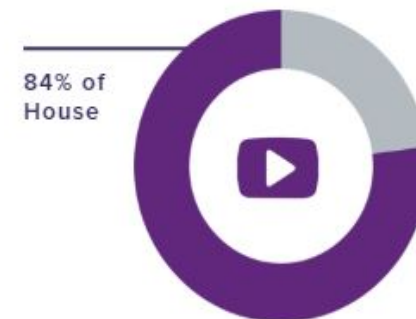
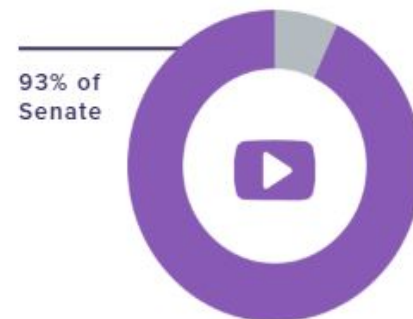
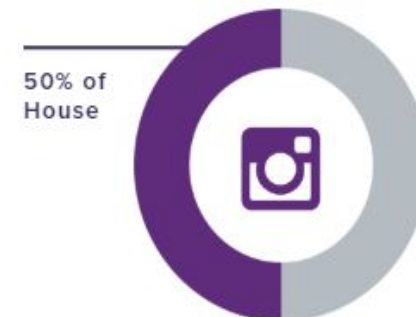
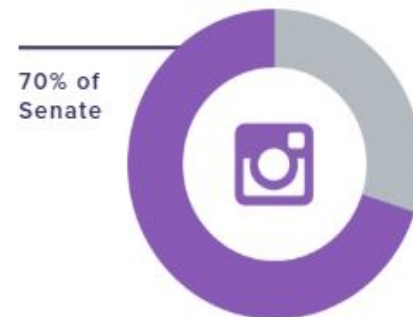
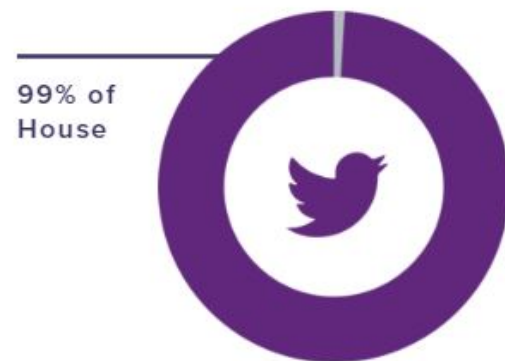
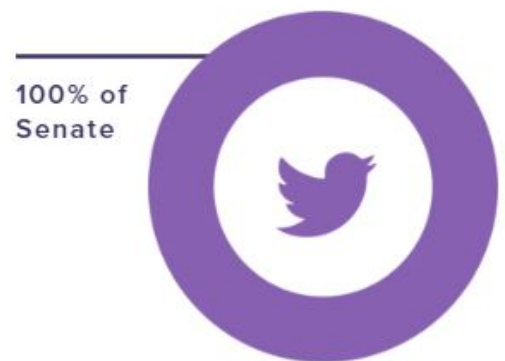
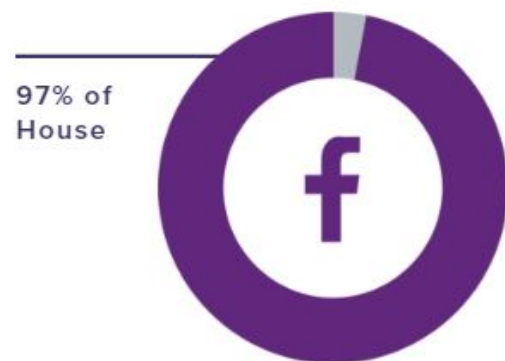
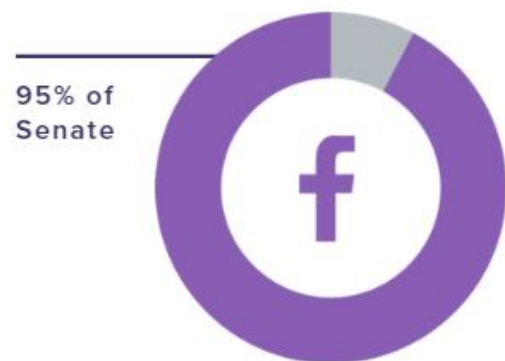
- Be compassionate (relationship building)
- Be concise and clear; consider visuals
- MAKE THE ASK



Using social media to communicate with Congress



PERCENT OF MEMBERS WHO POSTED ON
OFFICIAL TWITTER, FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM &
YOUTUBE ACCOUNTS IN 2018



Source: Quorum Analytics

Use social media to:

- Research members of Congress
- Build relationships
- Supplement other advocacy efforts



Social media tips

1. Know the mechanics

- Use tags & hashtags!
- Don't start a tweet with @
- Remember character limits on Twitter v Facebook & Instagram
- Remember that Tweets can't be edited once posted

2. Decide the purpose of your post

- Relationship building
- Education
- Request

3. Be positive & maintain a reputable presence online

4. Be visual

5. Use storytelling

← Tweet



Dr Joel Schlessinger
@DrSchlessinger



On Capitol Hill lobbying for lower drug prices via transparency for Pharmacy Benefits Managers with Sen Deb Fischer S 637! Thanks for representing NE so well! Anything we can do to lower drug prices is a good deal @senatordebfisher #aadaonthehill #lovelyskin #drjoelschlessinger



Suzanne Olbricht
@SuzanneOlbricht



Thank you @chelliepingree for working hard for Maine CD1. We discussed access and cost of medications today. With @MDKev for #AADAontheHill. #aadmember





Remember: All Politics Are Local



Local Advocacy Matters

- State / local legislation and regulation often has greater influence on lives and business
- State / local issues move at a much faster pace
- It's more likely to have a connection and be able to build a relationship with a state / local policymakers

Local Advocacy Avenues

Pro-tip: Local governance authority varies from location to location, as do names. Research the best target for your issue. <https://www.usa.gov/local-governments>

1.) Cities/municipalities

- Mayors
- City Councils
- Boards
- Regulations
- **Ballots**

2.) Counties

- Boards, commissions, councils
- Regulations



Local Advocacy Matters: Case Study

Tobacco 21

- In 2005, Needham, Massachusetts became the 1st city to pass legislation raising the tobacco age to 21.
- Eventually, over 530 cities & counties passed Tobacco 21 legislation...including New York City in 2013
- In 2015, Hawaii became the first state to pass Tobacco 21
- As of 2018, 6 states had passed Tobacco 21
- In 2019, that number jumped to 19
- On December 20, 2019, federal legislation was signed into law raising the minimum legal sales age from 18 to 21 nationwide.



Advocacy is about policies, not politics

- Policies impact daily life
- Advocacy is happening all the time, whether you take part in it or not.

PEOPLE OFTEN SAY, WITH PRIDE, 'I'M NOT INTERESTED IN POLITICS.' THEY MIGHT AS WELL SAY, 'I'M NOT INTERESTED IN MY STANDARD OF LIVING, MY HEALTH, MY JOB, MY RIGHTS, MY FREEDOMS, MY FUTURE OR ANY FUTURE.' IF WE MEAN TO KEEP ANY CONTROL OVER OUR WORLD AND LIVES, WE MUST BE INTERESTED IN POLITICS.

- MARTHA GELLHORN -

LIBQUOTES.COM

TAKE
ACTION!





Public Affairs
Council

Thank you!!

kmemphis@pac.org
@kelly_memphis