



1001 N. Fairfax Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.837.8812
www.conginst.org



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330 West 38th Street, Suite 1705
New York, NY 10018
212.760.4358
www.PresentationTesting.com

The Facebook Effect: How Congress is Using Social Networks to Strengthen Ties to Constituents— And How it Could be Doing it Better

**Research Report
January 2009**

“Facebook is now so widely trafficked that it's fast becoming a routine aide to social interaction, like e-mail and antiperspirant.”—Farhad Manjoo, technology columnist for Slate.com, Jan. 14, 2009

Overview: Why Facebook Matters

On January 8, 2009, Facebook added its 150 millionth member worldwide—only five months after hitting the 100 million milestone.¹ According to a just-released report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 35% of American adult Internet users have a profile on an online social network site such as Facebook or Myspace, four times as many as three years ago.²

But the social networking phenomenon is about more than just numbers. Facebook, the emerging leader in social networking, is changing the way people live and work. As Manjoo points out in his recent *Slate.com* column:

Most of my extended family lives in South Africa, and though I speak to them occasionally on the phone, Facebook gives me an astonishingly intimate look at their lives—I can see what they did yesterday, what they're doing tomorrow, and what they're doing right now, almost like there's no distance separating us. The same holds true for my job: I live on the West Coast, but I work in an industry centered on the East Coast; Facebook gives me the opportunity to connect with

¹ Farhad Manjoo, “You Have No Friends,” *Slate.com*, January 14, 2009

² Amanda Lenhart, Pew Internet Project Data Memo, January 14, 2009

people—to "network," you might say—in a completely natural, unaggressive manner. More than a dozen times, I've contacted sources through Facebook—searching for them there is much easier than searching for a current e-mail or phone number.³

"Politician Page" vs. "Personal Profile"

The uses of Facebook during the 2008 Presidential campaign have been well-documented. For the purposes of this report, however, the focus is on Congress, how it uses Facebook currently, and how it can do so more effectively in the future.

What Facebook offers Members of Congress is similar in some ways to what tele-town halls offer: The capacity, through technology, to have far more personal contact with large numbers of constituents than was ever previously possible—and free from the filter of the mainstream media. But what's different from the tele-town halls—which may "touch" a constituent once every several months—is that Facebook offers the capacity for Members to "touch" constituents nearly every day, if those constituents want that constant level of connectedness. And it's not just constituents; Facebook offers that level of connectedness to anyone on the globe who wants it. Amazingly, the only cost for this is staff and Member time. There is no financial outlay required to becoming a Facebook user or hosting a "Politician Page" or "Personal Profile."

The report focuses mainly on the "Politician Page," the page Facebook allows to be created by any Member to tell his/her story to the public. In 2006 Facebook created pages for Members of the 110th Congress (and their 2006 challengers), which still exist on Facebook today.⁴

In short, this "Politician Page" resembles the "fan" pages that Facebook maintains for celebrities. The main difference is that the politicians have "supporters," while celebrities such as musicians and actors have "fans." Separate and apart from these "Politician Pages," Members can also maintain their own "Personal Profile"—the way ordinary Facebook users interface with their "friends" on Facebook.

As this report shows, it is far more the exception than the rule that Members of Congress maintain both a "Politician Page" and a "Personal Profile"—usually they opt for the former if they choose to have a presence on Facebook at all. "Personal Profiles," however, need to be generated from scratch. Also, most politicians have limited time to spend on Facebook personally, and the "Personal Profile" can be particularly demanding on one's time due to the nature of being a "friend" to others on the website.

Summary of Key Findings

³ Farhad Manjoo, "You Have No Friends," *Slate.com*, January 14, 2009

⁴ Facebook did not create pages for Members or challengers in the 2008 election. Instead, it has an "open" system that allows any Member to create a page on their own at <http://facebook.com/ads>. To claim an existing page, contact Adam Conner at Facebook (aconner@facebook.com).

Analyzing Members of Congress, the research uncovered:

- 1) While there is near-parity between Democrats and Republicans, Senators are far more likely to maintain a “Politician Page” than House Members are.
- 2) Members in both chambers who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page” do not do an adequate job of keeping it updated.
- 3) Only a small segment of House and Senate Members maintain both a “Politician Page” and a “Personal Profile” on Facebook.
- 4) Among House Members, one out of six maintains a “Politician Page” through their office; nearly one out of three do so through their campaign. More than half do not maintain a “Politician Page” at all.
- 5) House Members in more challenging districts are far more likely to maintain their “Politician Page” on Facebook than Members in more secure districts. And Members in these more challenging districts are likelier than the more secure Members to maintain their sites through their campaign than through their offices.
- 6) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” the types/categories of content they post varies widely.
- 7) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” many fail to post even the most basic contact information.
- 8) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” just over half have between 101 and 500 Facebook supporters. Nearly every other maintained Member “Politician Page” has more than 500 supporters.

Analyzing Facebook supporters of Members of Congress, the research uncovered:

- 1) It is common for supporters to support several Members at once.
- 2) Supporters are *highly* engaged politically.
- 3) As a group, supporters skew young, male, and Democratic.
- 4) The supporters are more likely to support a House Member than a Senator.
- 5) More than half of supporters have become supporters within the past year.
- 6) Support is almost as sizable outside Members’ districts of Senators’ states as within

- 7) Facebook users have various reasons why they became supporters of Members of Congress, some of which are altruistic and others of which are self-enhancing.
- 8) Supporters become dissatisfied when Members don't provide enough updates, or do so only during campaign season.
- 9) Supporters want to know more about Members as a person as well as a politician, and want more ways to get involved in what they're doing.
- 10) Supporters want to hear from Members *often*.
- 11) Facebook supporters do a lot more than just act as online supporters.
- 12) Supporters offer all sorts of practical advice on how to improve their user experience.

Best Practices

Following the key findings below, this report concludes with a list of recommended "Facebook Best Practices" to improve the Congressional usage of social networks, specifically Facebook. These "Facebook Best Practices" are derived from a survey of constituents who are Facebook Congressional "supporters," phone interviews with supporters, and in-person and phone interviews with House Members and staff.

Study Design and Methodology

To conduct this research project, Presentation Testing undertook a three-pronged effort:

1) Quantitative research of Members' Facebook usage

The first research component entailed compiling a full-scale, item-by-item inventory of how Members of Congress, both House and Senate, currently engage with Facebook. For the purposes of this project, since it was conducted between the 110th and 111th Congresses, we focused exclusively on Members who served in the 110th and will be serving in the 111th.

Among these Members, we carefully reviewed each's Facebook "Politician Page" to see how actively it was maintained and updated, whether it was controlled by the Member's House office or by the campaign (or by no one), and how many "supporters" each Member has. We also conducted a separate search to see which Members also maintain a Facebook "Personal Profile"—of the type ordinary Facebook users maintain. This profile is separate and distinct from the "Politician Page."

2) Quantitative and qualitative research of Facebook "supporters" of Members

The second research component entailed surveying individuals across the U.S. who are supporters of at least one Member of Congress. Since, for privacy reasons, Facebook makes it difficult to conduct large-scale random surveys of its users, we undertook an elaborate process to find and survey these supporters.

The first method involved going to the Facebook sites of Members of Congress and then “friending” their supporters with an attached message that contained our survey. Of some 200 people “friended” and messaged, 123 accepted friend requests. Of that number, only 11 filled out the survey and were able to be validated as supporters of the Member whom they indicated in the survey they supported. As a result of this low success rate, we developed a second method.

In the second method, we created a paid advertisement that appeared on Facebook. The ad had a photo of the Capitol and stated, “Love Politics? We’ve got a survey about your social networking support for Members of Congress. Fill it out and possibly qualify for a \$20 gift card.” The ad was targeted at people who had “politics” in their profiles. The ad ran from January 2 through January 21, 2009. We purchased 4,057,183 impressions. From those impressions, 2,258 people clicked on the ad. The ad was linked to a commonly-used web-based survey application called SurveyMonkey.com. Of the 2,258 people who clicked on the Facebook ad, 409 actually filled out the survey. One hundred eighty-one of those respondents were discarded because the person responded “No” to the first question of the survey, which read: “It is possible for Facebook users to sign up to be a ‘supporter’ of various Members of Congress. Are you a ‘supporter’ of any Member of Congress?” or because they were a supporter of an atypical Member of Congress, namely presidential or vice presidential candidates Barack Obama, Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton or John McCain.

After this qualifying process, 228 respondents remained. Those respondents were then put through a cumbersome verification process. The verification process involved going to the Facebook page of the Member of whom the respondent said they were a supporter, and then searching through all of the Member’s supporters, in batches of 10 names at a time, until the respondent’s name was located or the entire roster of supporters had been examined and the supporter’s name could not be found. This process lowered our qualified respondent to total to 139 verified supporters.

The 11 individuals from the first method combined with the 139 individuals from the second method yielded a total of 150 verified supporters who were then utilized in this research.

From this total of 150, we conducted follow-up phone interviews with 24 randomly chosen individuals.

3) Qualitative research of Members’ Facebook usage

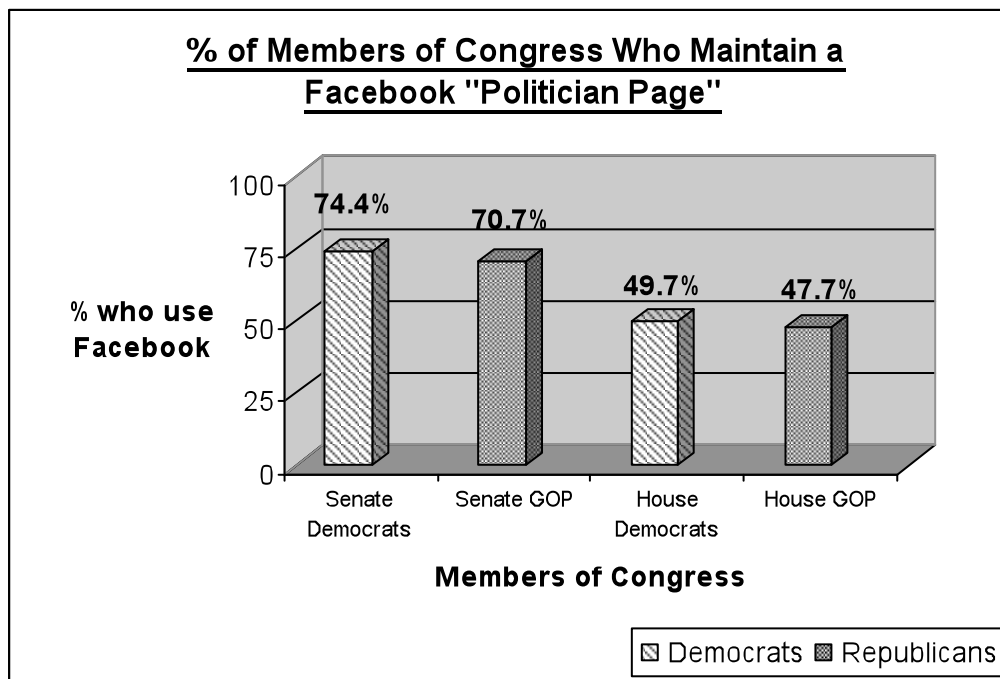
The third research component entailed conducting in-person and phone interviews with 15 staff and Members to discuss how their offices use Facebook, the value they derive from it, and what they view as best practices in their day-to-day use of the site. In order to gain the most detailed information possible, we promised anonymity to these individuals.

KEY FINDINGS

I. Quantitative research of Members' Facebook usage

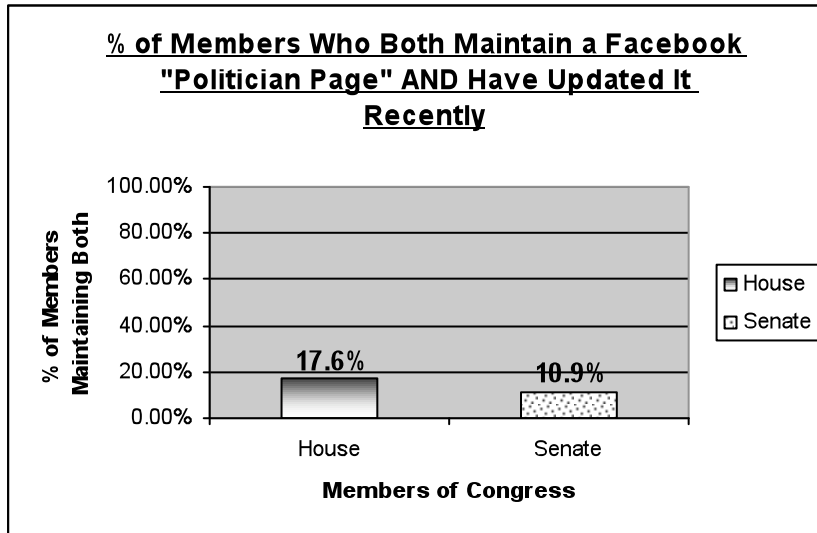
The following research contains the first-ever “inventory” of how Members of Congress are currently using Facebook. The data was derived from a comprehensive Facebook search of the 385 House Members and 88 Senators who served in the 110th Congress and will be serving in the 111th Congress.

- 1) While there is near-parity between Democrats and Republicans, Senators are far more likely to maintain a “Politician Page” than House Members are



The sheer size of a typical Senate staff may make it easier for a Senator to dedicate staff time to maintaining a Facebook page than for a typical House Member.

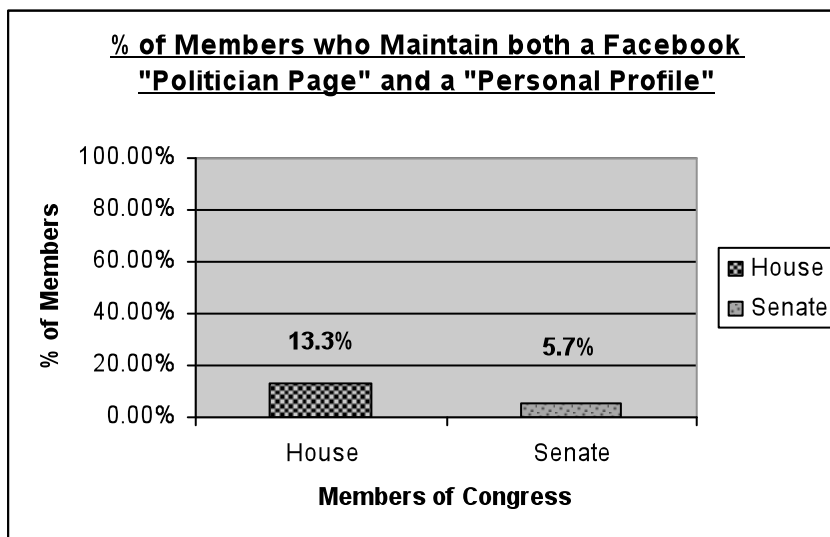
- 2) Members in both chambers who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page” do not do an adequate job of keeping it updated



In tracking update activity in late 2008, the overwhelming percentage of Senators and House Members who maintain a “Politician Page” failed to update it. Between December 1 and December 31, only seven out of the 64 Senators who maintain a “Politician Page” bothered to update it. In the House between November 5 and December 11, 2008, only 33 of 187 Members who maintain a “Politician Page” bothered to update theirs. What is noteworthy is this occurred during a time when most Members regularly offered commentary on a variety of major economic and political news events.

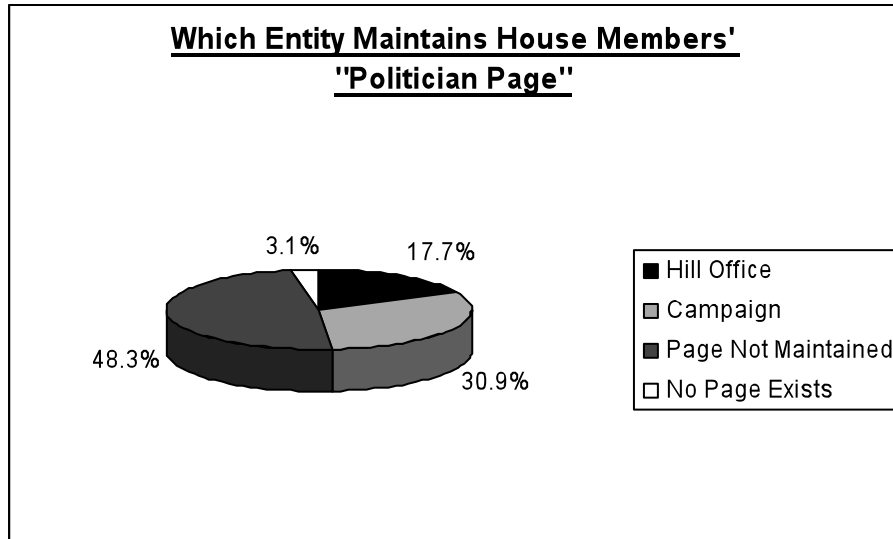
Significantly, many Members used their Facebook “Politician Page” during the campaign season, but once the election occurred on November 4th, they apparently gave up on it as a resource.

- 3) Only a small segment of House and Senate Members maintain both a “Politician Page” and a “Personal Profile” on Facebook



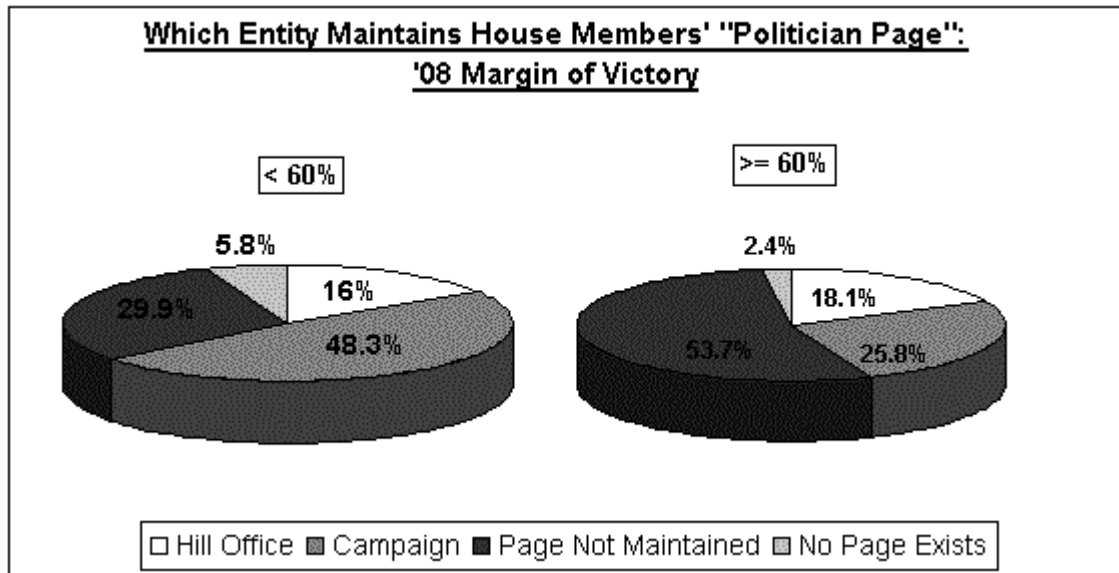
This chart indicates how many Members of Congress are really heavy users of Facebook. To maintain both a “Politician Page” and “Personal Profile” requires an atypically large commitment of time—both personal and staff time.

- 4) Among House Members, one out of six maintains a “Politician Page” through their office; almost one out of three do so through their campaign. More than half do not maintain a “Politician Page” at all



What is particularly interesting about this pie chart is how many more Members maintain their “Politician Page” through their campaigns (30.9%) than through their offices (17.7%).

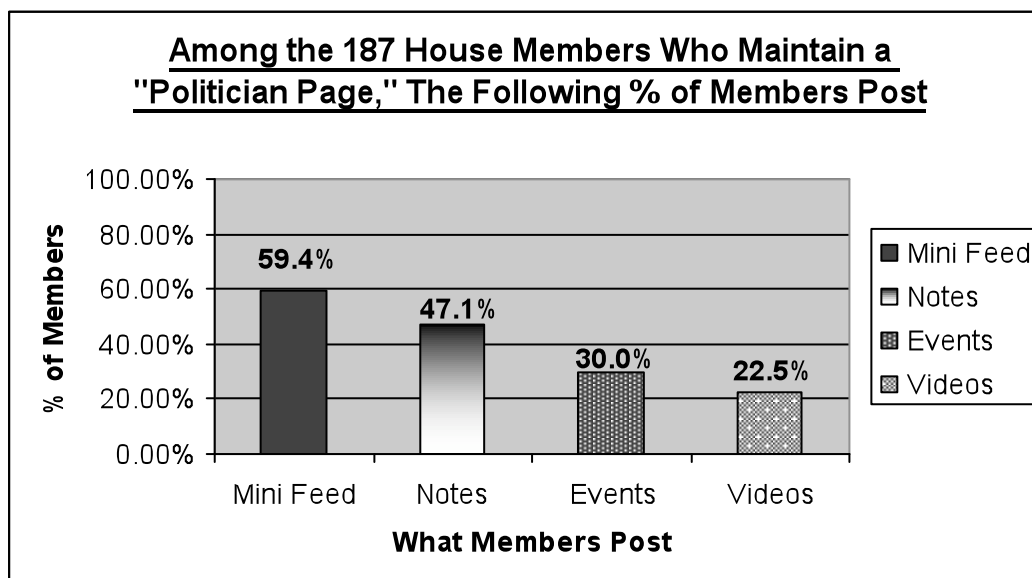
- 5) House Members in more challenging districts are far likelier to maintain their “Politician Page” on Facebook than Members in more secure districts. And Members in these more challenging districts are likelier than the more secure Members to maintain their sites through their campaign than through their offices



Nearly half (48.3%) of Members who were re-elected in 2008 with less than 60% of the vote maintained their Facebook “Politician Page” through their campaigns. Among those who were re-elected with 60% or more of the vote, a majority did not maintain their page at all, and only 25.8% maintained their pages through their campaigns.

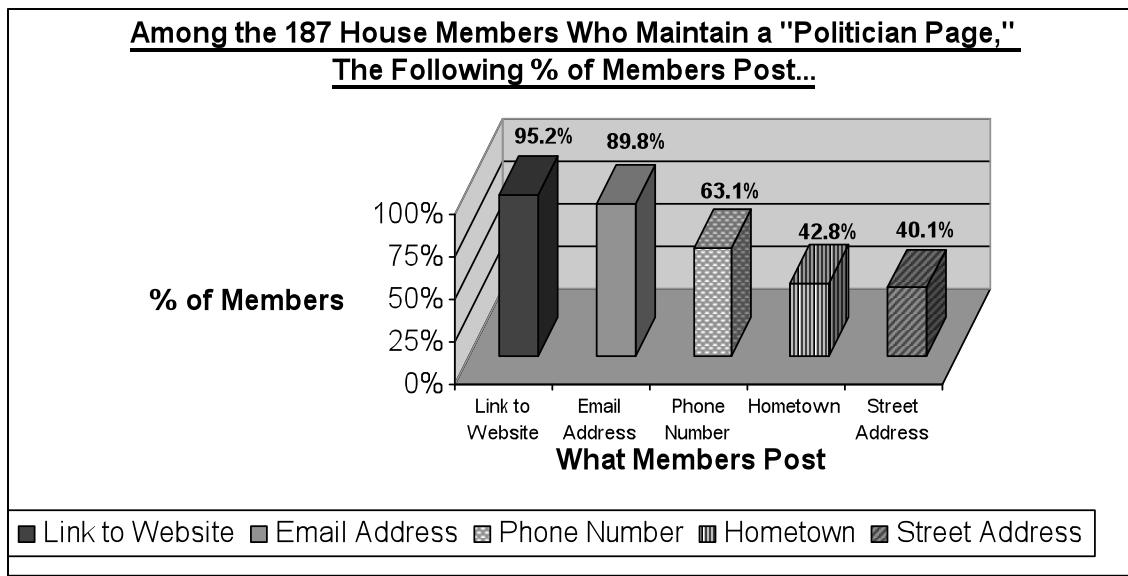
Remarkably, 5.8% of those Members in the close (<60%) races do not have Facebook pages at all.

- 6) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” the types/categories of content they post varies widely



For those unfamiliar with a “mini feed” on a “Politician Page,” it is essentially a news ticker that indicates the Member of Congress has posted a link on his/her page to an op-ed, video, or a note he/she composed, or issued an invitation to an event he/she hosted.

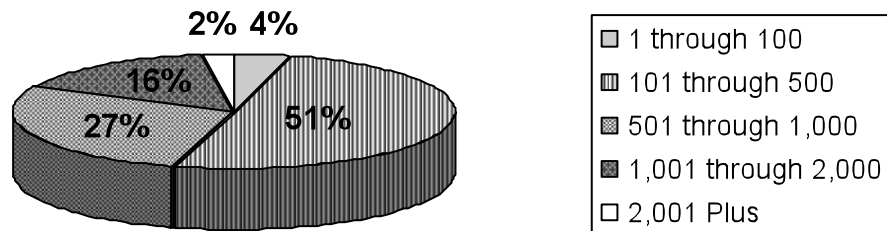
- 7) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” many fail to post even the most basic contact information



Remarkably, even among the approximately half of House Members who do maintain their “Politician Page,” key information about the Members is missing. More than one-third of these do not have their phone numbers on their page. More than half fail to list their hometown or street address.

- 8) Among the 187 House Members who maintain a Facebook “Politician Page,” just over half have between 101 and 500 Facebook supporters.

**Among the 187 House Members Who Maintain a
"Politician Page," The Number of Supporters
Varies Greatly**



One curious finding from this research is that very few Members who maintain a “Politician Page” have a small number of supporters. Just over half (51%) of those who maintain a page have between 101 and 500 supporters—a fairly sizable number. Another 45% have more than 500—even more impressive.

Considering the enthusiasm that supporters convey about the Members whom they support, and their willingness to help in myriad ways (see below), one could argue that not maintaining a “Politician Page” at all—or not maintaining it well—comes at a sizable cost to Members.

II. Quantitative and qualitative research of Facebook “supporters” of Members

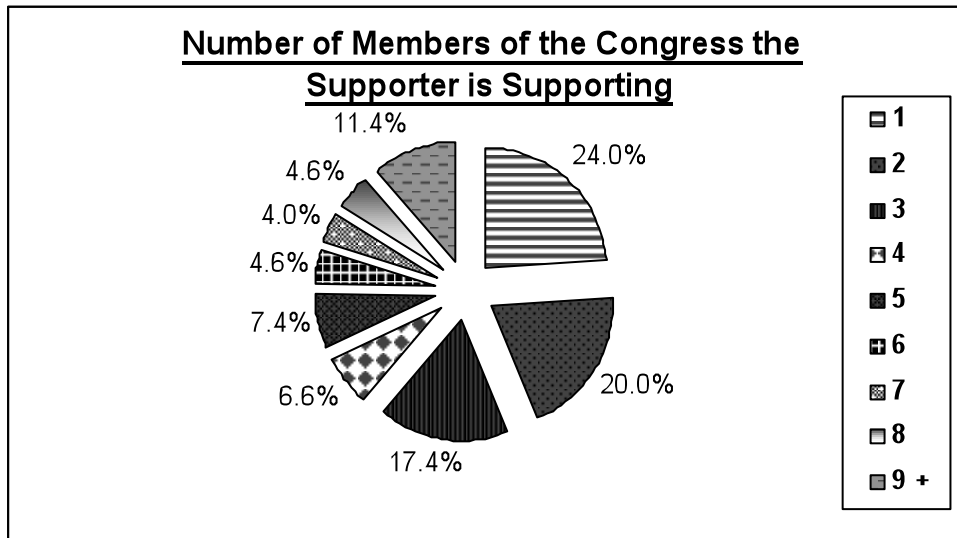
A. Survey of Members’ Supporters on Facebook

Presentation Testing located and surveyed 150 individuals across the U.S. who are “supporters” of at least one Member of Congress. Being a supporter enables one to receive the latest news about the Member’s activities whenever the Member chooses to update their “politician page.”

By becoming a Facebook supporter, one is agreeing to allow Facebook to alert all of the supporter’s friends of that person’s endorsement of the Member.

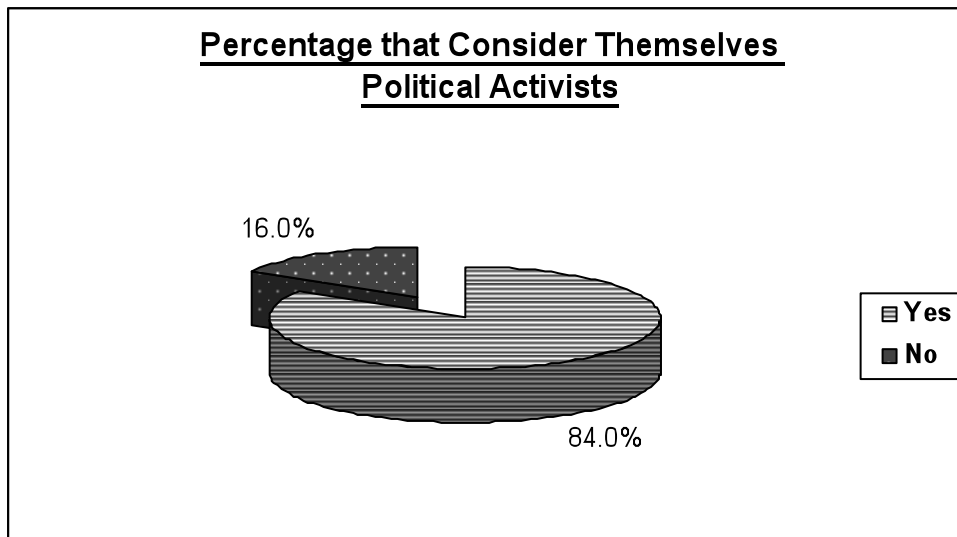
In an attempt to better understand these supporters, Presentation Testing conducted a survey of 150 individuals confirmed to be supporters, and found the following:

1) It is common for supporters to support several Members at once:

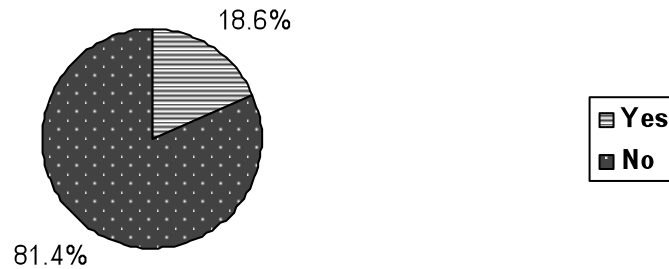


As this chart above shows, three-quarters of the people in our sample are supporters of more than one Member. For the purposes of this project, we asked survey respondents to tell us about their relationship with the Member they are most enthusiastic about.

2) Supporters are *highly* engaged politically:

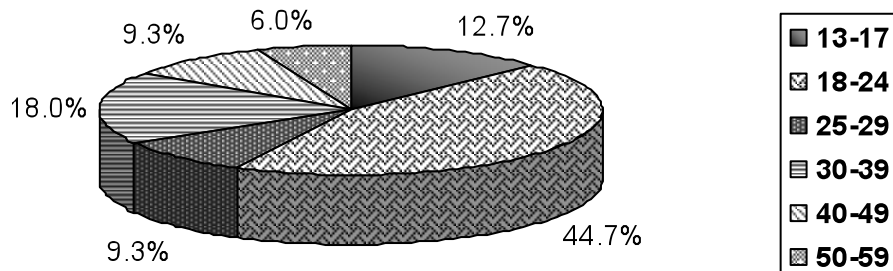


**Have Resided in the District of Columbia within
the Last 2 Years**



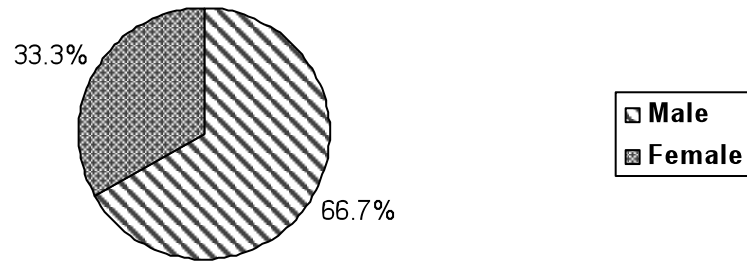
3) Overall, supporters skew young, male, and Democratic:

Age Range of Respondents

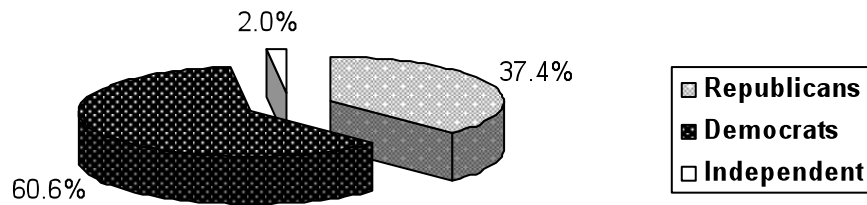


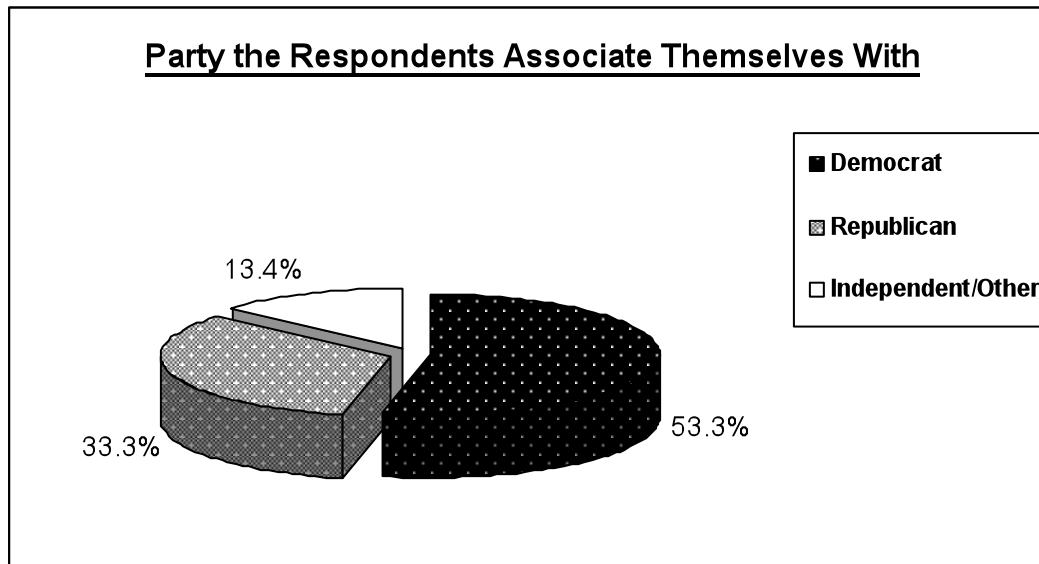
Note that almost half of the respondents are age 18-24, and one out of eight respondents is not old enough to vote.

Gender of Respondents

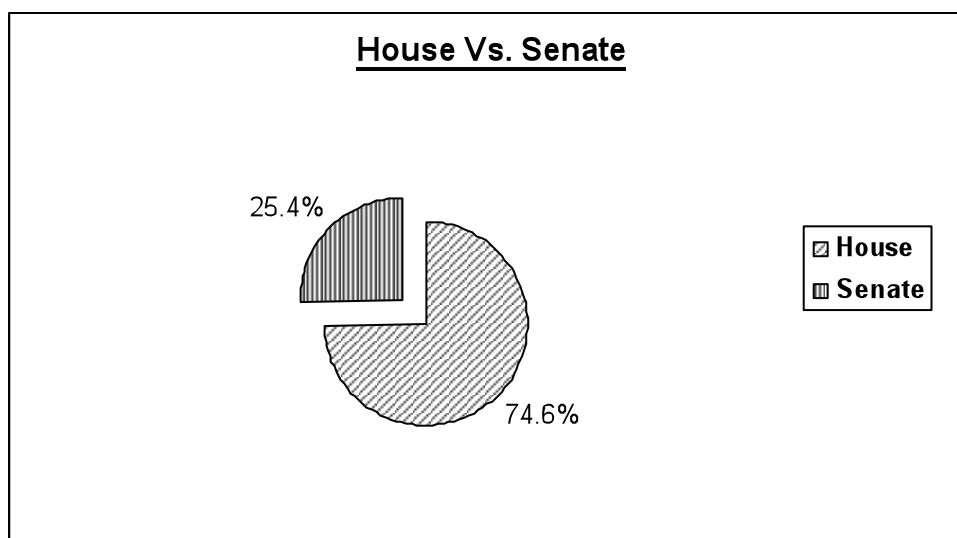


Party of Congressmen



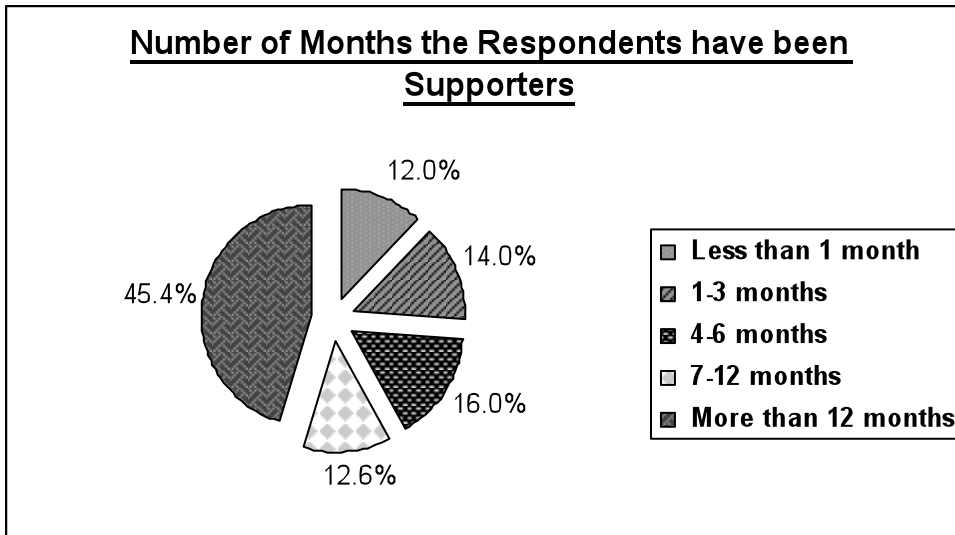


4) The supporters are more likely to support a House Member than a Senator:



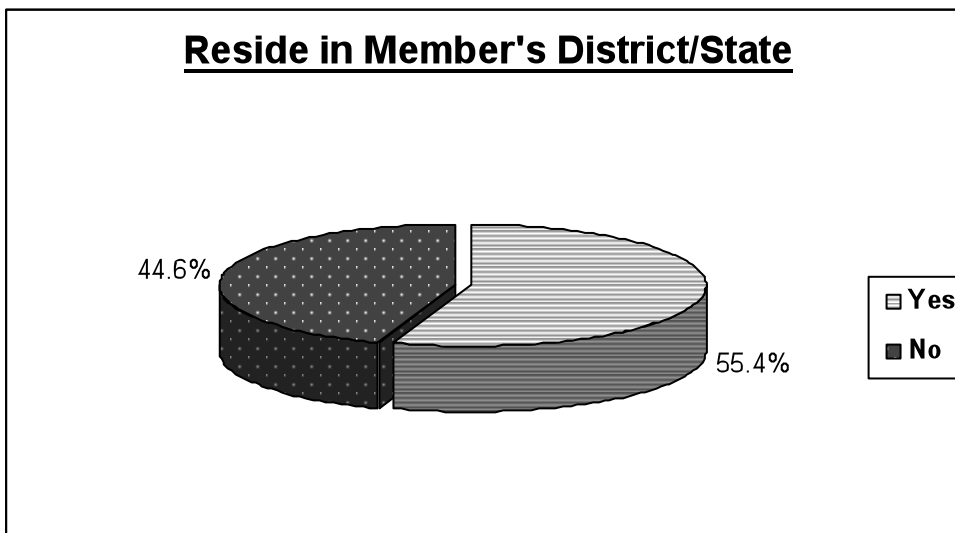
Note that 81% of Members of Congress are Representatives, so this finding should not be surprising.

5) More than half of supporters have become supporters within the past year:



This, too, is not surprising, given the recent election campaign and the huge influx of new Facebook users.

6) Support is almost as sizable outside Members' districts/Senators' states as within it:



This finding suggests opportunities for Members to build a sizable following outside their geographic strong-holds.

B. Phone Interviews of Members' Supporters on Facebook

"I'd like the Congressman to take a more active role. The mayor of my town, Albuquerque, is constantly on Facebook. At midnight, he sets his 'status' for the next

day. He'll write on the wall of his supporters, or if someone's 'status' says they're feeling sick he'll make a comment like, 'I hope you feel better!' He even sets up online town hall meetings through his Facebook page! This is great because it creates a personal connection and develops a community of supporters."

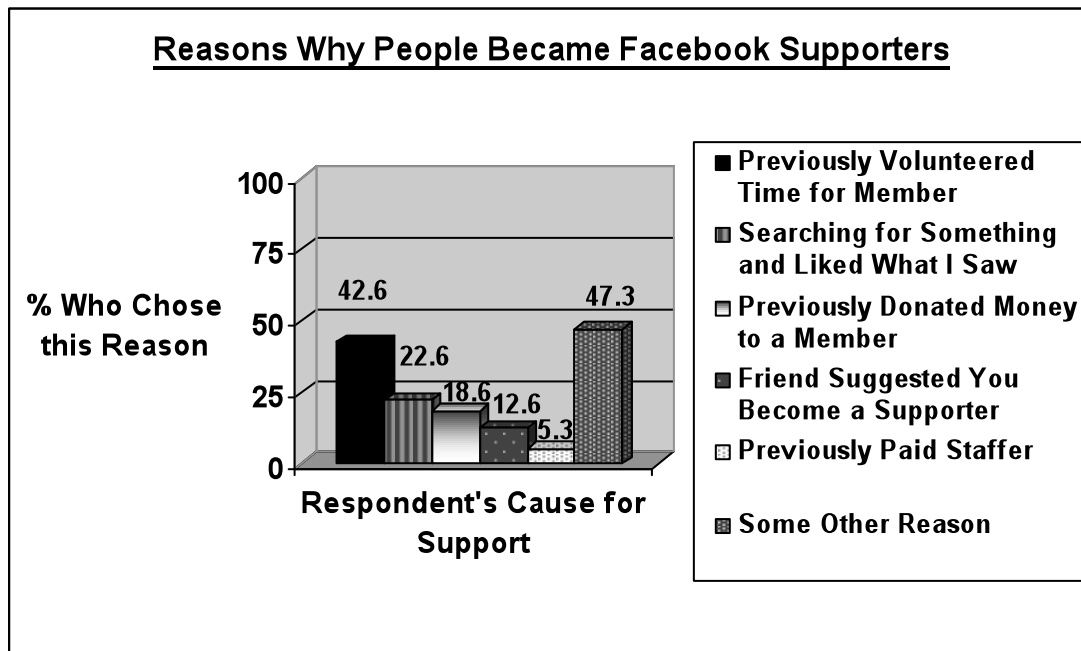
—a Facebook Supporter of a Member of Congress

To better understand what Facebook supporters want from Members, we conducted two dozen phone interviews with individuals who completed our online survey. Below are some key findings:

1. Facebook users have various reasons why they became supporters of Members of Congress, some of which are altruistic and others of which are self-enhancing

Members' Facebook supporters signed up to show their support because they agreed with the Congressman's views and admired him or her. They did this not only for the satisfaction of knowing that they were a supporter, but also so that their friends could see that they are supporters through Facebook. Furthermore, they thought of Facebook support as a way of creating additional awareness for the Member and as a way to help electorally. They also viewed their public statement of support on Facebook as a way to validate and increase their connection to the Congressman.

In exchange for offering their Facebook support, supporters gained a sense of satisfaction knowing that they had made others aware of their support for the Congressman. They also were looking to create and be part of a community of supporters who were up-to-date on the Congressman's activities as a result of being a Facebook supporter. Most supporters thought of being a Facebook supporter as a convenient way of educating themselves and staying informed while encouraging others to do the same.



For those that listed “some other reason” for support, we asked about this in the phone interviews and heard the following:

- “I am a political science major and I follow as many Congressmen as I can; that’s why I am a supporter of so many different Congressmen.”
- “I saw a video of the Congressman on YouTube and liked what I saw, so I look him/her up and became a supporter.”
- “I like to volunteer for my political party and I became a supporter in order to monitor the Congressman’s use of Facebook.”
- “I am a political guru and I have become a supporter of many Congressmen to see if they are using Facebook; I think that it is on the cutting edge of creating political awareness in a younger generation and I’m curious to see which senators are taking it seriously.”
- “I worked for him and I wanted to do my part to make sure his Facebook page had supporters.”
- “Saw him on a television show and really liked what I heard and saw, so I looked him/her up on Facebook.”

2. Supporters become dissatisfied when Members don’t provide enough updates or do so only during campaign season

Those supporters who felt their Congressman did a good job keeping his/her politician page current felt strongly that it had been satisfying. Others were dissatisfied only when they felt that they didn’t receive anything in terms of education about the Member’s views in exchange for their support. Another common criticism is that the Congressman only used his/her Facebook page as a tool during his election period and stopped updating their page once the election was over.

3. Supporters want to know more about you as a person as well as a politician, and want more ways to get involved in what you’re doing

We asked whether supporters felt as though they know the Congressman better as a result of being a Facebook supporter. The overwhelming response was “no”—much to their chagrin. Supporters were hoping to know the Congressman better, but felt as if the Congressman failed to achieve this objective.

A consistent request is that the Facebook page should have more photos, videos, status updates and blog posts about what the Member is doing that day. People thought of this as a way of getting to know the Congressman better in regard to both his/her political views and his/her personal interests. People think of Facebook as a medium for the Congressman to connect directly to them and incorporate their feedback in the way the office is run. Like any friendship on Facebook, they expect to know the Congressman

better and connect themselves to the cause. We also heard that supporters want these other things from Members:

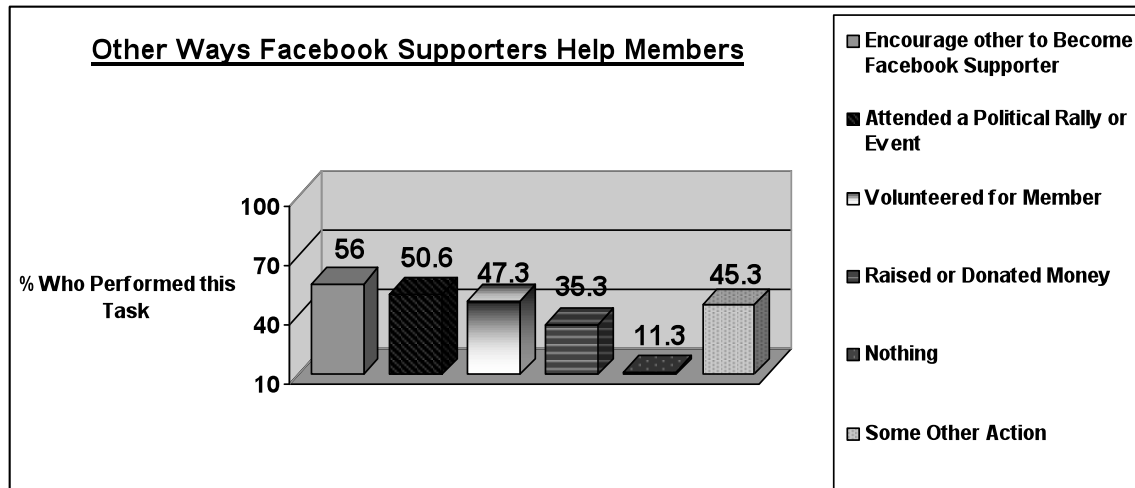
- When he/she will be in my area; what public events he/she is attending
- Increased communication about how to get involved/volunteer
- Explanations of the Member's views, and an education about who he/she is and where he/she stands on political issues
- More information in the personal interests section, make him/her more human
- Promoting the cause of the party through web links
- Links to ways to become involved with causes online
- Press releases
- Using Facebook as a way to rally supporters behind a cause
- Proactive communication with the supporters. The Congressman should understand that most people who have taken the time to look him/her up and become a supporter are probably educated and eager to help in any way that they can. Supporters are a serious and enthusiastic resource that should be taken advantage of.

4. Supporters want to hear from Members *often*

The clear consensus is that there have not been enough postings on Congressmen's Facebook pages. Yet they do want to be updated constantly; that's for the most why they became a supporter in the first place—they want that frequent "touch."

Most supporters felt a little more connected to the Member through Facebook than they would otherwise. However, those same people also said they want to know more. They want to be able to know the Congressman on a personal level and view Facebook as way for the Congressman to become personally connected with more people than he could ever feasibly do in person. In other words, the use of Facebook is a good compromise.

5. Facebook supporters do a lot more than just act as online supporters



Other actions that supporters have taken in support of the Member of Congress, beyond those listed above, are:

- Served as a paid intern/staffer
- Got involved with a lot of other party organizations
- Used the I-Phone application to “get out the vote”
- Been involved with the media to support Member, and have done interviews via radio and television and written articles for the newspaper.

6. Supporters offer all sorts of practical advice on how to improve their user experience:

We heard the following suggestions for Members from Facebook supporters:

- Tell ways to get involved/volunteer
- Provide more updates about daily proceedings
- Explain how Member is voting and why
- Share more about policies and views
- Offer more about what the Congressman is doing on a daily basis
- Display more albums of photos taken at local events
- Create a link or posting of the Congressman’s newsletter
- Use polls to ask supporters for their input
- Provide ways to get tickets for tours of the Capitol
- Create a community feeling and networking opportunities through Facebook invitations to events
- Explain why certain things are being posted and what qualifies those things over others; use the medium to provide a “real” picture of the Congressman
- Hire a staff blogger (in addition to the links to news stories) to give an insider’s view of the Congressman’s office
- Post status updates several times a day, e.g. “Congressman X is going to vote on Y bill.”
- Provide video interviews where the Member expresses his/her views on topics

- Post the agenda for 2009 and how I can help, how can I be a part of making things happen
- Post what the Member is working on and his legislative agenda
- The Congressman should host a live discussion group with his Facebook supporters once a month
- The Congressman needs to think of ways to use his/her supporters. Supporters are a legitimate resource that should be used; many would be willing and eager to help. Ask supporters to blog, make the page interactive, give us a place to leave feedback

III. Best Practices

In conversations with Hill offices, it has become readily apparent that many are “winging it” when it comes to their Facebook strategies. To gain maximum efficiency and effect, this practice should stop. What follows are suggested steps Members should take when guiding the use of Facebook:

- 1) Get comfortable with Facebook
 - a. You can’t afford to ignore Facebook, so spend time there learning how it operates and what it can do for you. There are plenty of experts in your office already, starting with your communications people; have one give you a tour. Make sure the tutorial includes an overview (with examples) of how other Hill offices are using it effectively already.
- 2) Develop a Facebook strategy and execute it
 - a. Use Facebook as a way to inform and motivate your most loyal supporters—particularly young ones you might not have animated with other outreach efforts.
 - i. If you knew you had, say, 500 extremely motivated people who have declared to all their Facebook “friends” that they officially support you, what would you want them to know if you could communicate with them every day? What might you ask of them?
 - b. Instantaneously circumvent the mainstream media and tell your story the way you want it told to these supporters.
 - c. Get added bounce out of your mainstream media appearances by re-posting them on Facebook.
- 3) Take control of your Facebook “Politician Page”!
 - a. “Politician Pages” are administered by a designated individual associated with the Member who already maintains a “Personal Profile” on Facebook. This is done for security reasons. In many Hill offices this is often the press secretary or chief-of-staff. In campaigns it’s often the

campaign manager. Administrators for a page can edit the page and designate other administrators.

- b. Don't leave the flag up there (indicating you haven't gotten around to doing something with your page).⁵
- c. If a constituent wants to know about you, it's becoming increasingly likely they'll look you up on Facebook (as opposed to typing your name into Google or Yahoo).
- d. If they get to your "Politician Page" and there's nothing there, it's a reminder to them that you're "out to lunch" technologically.
- e. At bare minimum, post a head shot of yourself, along with the basic contact information (email address, street address, website, phone, etc.)
- f. Preferably, add some personal information to the "Politician Page" so as to give visitors a better sense of what you're like as a person and to strengthen ties to supporters who are your biggest fans. Items to list are your favorite books, movies, music, etc.
- g. To create a "Politician Page" go to <http://facebook.com/ads>. Click the "Pages" tab and then click the green "Create A Page" button which will guide you through the page-creation process.
- h. To take control of an existing page contact Adam Conner of Facebook's DC office: aconner@facebook.com.

- 4) Know the pros/cons of designating your Hill office vs. the campaign as the controller of your primary Facebook page (Remember: Better to pick **one**.)
- a. Your House office generally has a better sense of what you're doing day-to-day than the campaign does (particularly in off-years like 2009). Since supporters want to know how you're governing, making the Hill office the controller of your Facebook page is the more practical way to go.
 - b. Your campaign can benefit from the labor and other help that Facebook supporters provide, and they can be easily and quickly mobilized through this site. But with Facebook you do NOT want to go from lots of posting activity (pre-election) to no activity for months (post-election).
 - c. You need to keep your campaign and official activities apart. That means, for example, no posting video of the previous night's campaign fundraiser on your "Politician Page" if that page is run out of your Hill office.
 - d. You *can* maintain a dual presence on Facebook, with a "Politician Page" for the Hill office and a Facebook "Group"⁶ for the campaign, but doing that risks splitting your supporters into separate Facebook camps, and perhaps leading to confusion among them. To wit: "Why do I have to be Congressman X's supporter on two separate pages? Isn't he the same person?" Remember: Supporters are unlikely to appreciate the need for

⁵ This applies only to Members who served in the 110th Congress. Freshmen in the 111th Congress need to create their own pages from scratch using Facebook's "open system."

⁶ "Groups" can be started by any Facebook user, and members of the group are people who share a common interest. For example, "Tomato Growers of the World—Unite!" is a group, as is "Mary Bono Mack for Congress."

Members to keep campaigning and governing separate. Given where we are in the current electoral cycle, you may want to master the Hill office page first, and then think about an additional campaign “Group” in 2010.

- 5) Know the rules governing the relationship between your official Member website and third party sites such as Facebook. House Administration’s formal policy is now this:

In addition to their official (house.gov) Web site, a Member may maintain another Web site(s), channel(s) or otherwise post material on third-party Web sites.

The official content of any material posted by the Member on any Web site must be in compliance with Federal law and House Rules and Regulations applicable to official communications and germane to the conduct of the Member’s official and representational duties.

When a link to a Web site outside the Member’s official cite is imbedded on the Member’s official site, the Member’s site must include an exit notice advising the visitor when they are leaving the House. This exit notice must also include a disclaimer that neither the Member nor the House is responsible for the content of the linked site(s).

- 6) The “Politician Page” allows for modest two-way communication, but you should use it mainly for one-way: outbound
- a. Post video, photos, op-eds, notes, events, mini-feeds of yourself. You are the head of your own media empire, and in this empire there’s only one news topic covered: You!
 - b. Make sure whatever you post is interesting. Boring is not an option.
 - c. If it’s short, post it. If it’s long—like the text of a bill—post a very brief summary, and a link to the full text. Remember, people generally don’t read long (or even medium-length) documents on the Internet.
 - d. When you’re at a hearing, post that you’re there and cite in general terms the broad topics you’re going to asking the witnesses about. Make your supporters feel like “You are here!”
 - e. You can literally have your staff take out a digital video camera, film you making a brief policy statement, and upload it to your Facebook page immediately.
 - f. Get creative—let your staff film and post a video diary about what it’s like to be an intern in your office.
 - g. Allow supporters to post their photos and videos of you—as long as they are not offensive.
 - h. Use Twitter for more active two-way communication.

- 7) Don't actively censor your "Politician Page"
 - a. Most visitors are supporters, not opponents, so most postings are positive
 - b. Leave comments that might challenge your policy positions; your supporters will come to your defense, as they vastly outnumber opponents
 - c. Feel free to remove any vulgar comments
- 8) Remember: The beast must be fed!
 - a. Supporters are like fans—they can't get enough of you. Be sure to post as often as possible, literally every day or other day if possible.
 - b. Let your staff handle the posting if you're too busy, but make sure you keep on top of it personally. Take a quick look at your page at least weekly to review your own postings and those from supporters.
 - c. Don't give the task of posting to an intern! Put it in the hands of a trusted staffer who has the ability to know what you want to say to the world.
 - d. Every time you post, remember that supporters are gently notified by an "Update" on their personal profiles. It's not as intrusive for them as your sending emails (or email newsletters) every day, but you don't want to post several times a day, either.
- 9) Remember: More activity=More supporters
 - a. The magic of Facebook is that the more you put yourself out there, the more that comes back to you in terms of networking.
 - b. If you post frequently on your "Politician Page," your supporters hear from you more often—and that gives them material about you to forward to their Facebook friends. Once these other people learn about your positions and activities, that prompts some of them to also become your supporters.
 - c. You can post that you're holding an event in your district, and it becomes a "viral" invitation forwarded to friends of supporters, and friends of friends, etc.
- 10) If you keep a "Personal Profile" on Facebook—just like ordinary Facebook users do—know that the etiquette for this is very different from the "Politician Page"
 - a. The "Personal Profile" is the online version of you *personally*, not professionally. It is an electronic extension of yourself.
 - b. You should reserve the "Personal Profile" for friends and family, and *not* supporters. Direct the supporters to join your "Politician Page" instead, and decline offers to be their "friend."
 - c. Adjust your "Personal Profile" privacy settings at <http://facebook.com/privacy> to restrict your search availability and control who can see what in your "Personal Profile."
 - d. Remember: When you have a profile and check on it, friends who spend a lot of time on Facebook will know when and how often you're there, too.

(Remember, there's a quasi-voyeuristic aspect to Facebook.) If they see you're on it, they will email you through Facebook and expect a quick reply. Even more intrusively, they might also "instant message" (IM) you and want to engage you in a dialogue right there and then via the Internet. That might be fine if you're talking about a manageable number of people, but you can't possibly have the time to do this with tens or hundreds of supporters.

- e. You do NOT want to put a staffer in charge of your "Personal Profile"—it's akin to putting them in charge of talking to your friends and family. When someone is your "friend" on Facebook, they expect you to communicate with them, not a surrogate. It's a breach of Facebook etiquette to allow someone else to pretend they're you.