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In the eye of the beholder: What your constituents *actually* see when you communicate online and via franked mail

January 2013

OVERVIEW

Technological advances make it possible for us to know more about human behavior than ever before. By harnessing one of the most powerful behavior-tracking tools now available, eye-tracking, we are able to discern minute aspects of constituent behavior that earlier had been impossible to uncover.

The purpose of this study is to help Members of Congress communicate more effectively with their constituents by acting upon lessons learned as a result of the eye-tracking research described in this report.

For those not familiar with it, eye tracking is a combined software and hardware application designed to capture the conscious and unconscious eye gaze movements of a respondent. This technology enables us to know what, when, for how long, and in what order information is absorbed and processed by a study respondent.

For the purposes of this study, we used eye tracking to study how constituents view Congressional official online advertising on the web, glossy franked mail, websites, and e-newsletters. We did *not* study online advertising specifically designed for hand-held devices because at the time of the study it was not allowed under House Administration rules.

Having a better understanding of how constituents interact with these forms of media will help Members know what is working, what is not working, and what improvements to make in their communications.

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METHODOLOGY / TERMINOLOGY[1]

Presentation Testing teamed up with Interactive Video Productions (IVP), a leading provider of eye-tracking technology with 15 years of industry experience. IVP has worked with clients from a variety of industries, including Charles Schwab, ESPN, Mapquest, and Dow Jones. Based on our research, this is the first known eye-tracking study of Congressional communications.

We used IVP's eye-tracking technology during 24 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with constituents in two different locations: Tulsa, OK, and Daytona, FL. We tested actual content from two recently-retired Members of Congress, John Sullivan and Sandy Adams,[2] conducting 12 IDIs in each of their districts.

In Round 1, we went to Tulsa and conducted IDIs on December 18 and 19, 2012, with 12 constituents from Oklahoma's 1st Congressional district (still John Sullivan's district at that time). There were six men and six women in total, with a wide range of ages, and a variety of education levels and work statuses.

In Part A, Round 1 respondents looked at a John Sullivan display ad on a popular Tulsa news site, Tulsaworld.com. In Part B, they looked at four franked mail pieces that the Member had sent to constituents. In Part C, they viewed his website and were asked to complete tasks that we know constituents typically do when visiting a Congressional website.[3] In Part D, respondents were asked to view two e-newsletters that Congressman Sullivan had emailed.

In Round 2, we went to Daytona and conducted IDIs on Jan. 3 and 4, 2013, with 12 constituents from Florida's 24th Congressional district (formerly Sandy Adams' district). Again, there were

[1] Technical terms related to this project are denoted in **bold** in this section.

[2] We chose those two Members for several reasons. First, we needed to use retiring Members, because under House rules we could not conduct independent research that would benefit some Members but not others. Since the presentation of these findings comes after the end of Sullivan's and Adams's terms, they were not benefitted by the results. Second, we needed Members who were still in office when the research was approved, so that we could easily gather the stimulus materials used in the study. A long-ago-retire Member would not have that material readily available. Third, we wanted the constituents to review relevant materials that did not seem out of date. (i.e. produced during the 112th Congress). Fourth, we wanted Members whose districts were geographically distinct from one another. Fifth, for variety's sake, we wanted on non-freshman Member and one freshman.

[3] We know from viewing Google Analytics data that two of the most commonly-performed tasks by people visiting Congressional websites are looking for the Member's biography and contact information. We sought to discover how challenging a task that is for people who'd never done it before.

six men and six women, with a wide range of ages and a variety of education levels and work statuses.

In Part A, Round 2 respondents looked at a Sandy Adams display ad on six news sites in total, four local to Florida and two national (CNN.com and WSJ.com). In Part B, they looked at five franked mail pieces that the Member had sent out to constituents during her term. In Part C, they viewed her website and were asked to complete the same tasks as in Round 1, with one additional task. In Part D, respondents were asked to view two e-newsletters that Congressman Adams had sent out.

For all of these tasks, respondents were asked to view the material as they normally would do at home. We fully realize that respondents may have been more attentive to the material than they would have been outside of a focus group facility, but we continued to emphasize to them that they pay the same level of attention to each item as they normally would, in order to get their most natural reactions as possible.

Each IDI lasted 60-75 minutes, during which we showed respondents a variety of Congressional media, including websites, e-newsletters, online advertising, and franked mail. Using a technology called "**eye-tracking**," we tracked the sequence of respondents' eye movements, as well as how long they looked at each point, and then explored with them what they viewed—and why.

Importantly, all respondents knew, from the start of the session, that we were tracking their eye movements. In fact, the eye-tracking software had to be calibrated for each respondent at the start of each in-depth interview so that it would track their eye movements accurately.

One graphical result for this type of data gathering is called a "**gaze plot**":

The lines indicate the "path" that the respondent's eyes took, and the size of the dots indicates the length of time the respondent looked at each area (the larger the dot, the longer the area was

viewed).[4] The gaze plot shows you where your first gaze was registered, and with a series of lines and circles you can determine the path for each addition gaze. Each gaze point is numbered sequentially.

The "**heat map**" is a summary of gaze data from one or multiple recordings. Most of the time this is an aggregated representation. The heat map data is primarily based on gaze time and uses color to visualize a summary of the gaze data. The darker the color, the longer the gaze concentration in those areas.

Importantly, we were able to aggregate the data from all respondents, in order to perform a more comprehensive analysis of the results.

The online advertising and e-newsletters required that we use non-moving, non-interactive images during testing, in order to ensure that each respondent is experiencing and viewing the same material. For example, we will take the official online advertisements used by Members of Congress, and insert them into local news sites.

As with any research study that looks into a topic for the first time, this first-ever, in-depth analysis of official online advertising offers a number of answers to the "low hanging fruit" questions. But it also raises a number of new questions and leaves other questions unanswered. We view it as a first look into a topic that merits future study by us and others in the years to come.

In order to undertake this current study, very special thanks belong to Mark Strand, the President of the Congressional Institute. His ongoing commitment to cutting-edge research, combined with the generous support of the Congressional Institute's board of directors, is having a substantial impact on how well and how often Congress communicates with constituents.

We are especially indebted to the staff and leadership at two companies: FrankingGrid, which provided us with professional-quality online ad images that our team used to test the viewership

[4] IVR's eye trackers have no visible or moving "tracking devices" that might affect the subject. Large freedom of head movement allows respondents to behave naturally as in front of any other computer screen, and in-depth and accurate studies can be performed without fatigue.

and recall of ads appearing on various news sites, and Fireside21, which created both of the Member websites we tested in this study. Their efforts enabled us to have access to archived versions of those sites after the end of the 112th Congress.

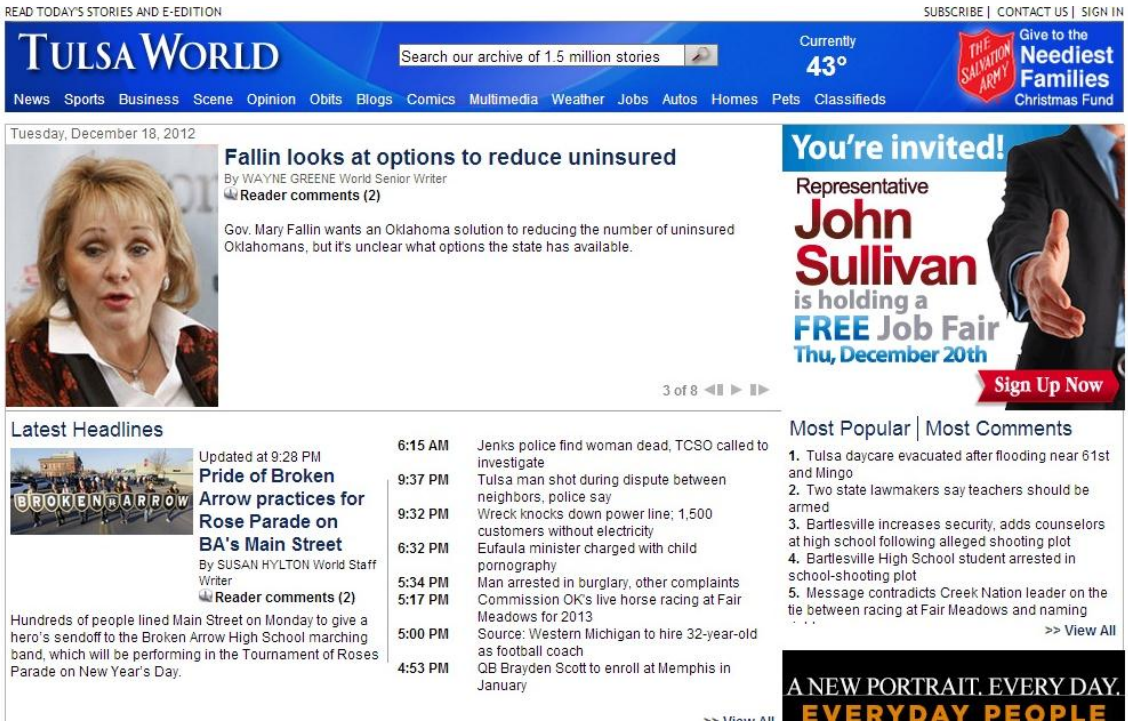
FINDINGS

A. OFFICIAL ONLINE ADS

1) Repetition is key – one impression from a single display ad makes no dent

If your office plans to run official online ads, you'll need to deliver multiple impressions of your ad in order for them to have a reasonable chance of noticing the ad. We found, in a small-scale case study that we conducted as part of this project, that when we showed an ad on just one local news website one time, not a single participant could recall seeing the ad. However, when we put the same ad on six different news sites and showed them to 12 participants in a different location, one-third of them could accurately recall their Member's ad.

Specifically, in Round 1, we superimposed a display ad on a popular news site in the Tulsa area, called TulsaWorld.com. Below is a partial image of what respondents saw during the eye tracking (the full home page of Tulsa World was made available for them to view):



And below is a larger image of the ad:

It should be noted that Congressman John Sullivan never used this specific display ad format.[5]

We instructed the respondents to view the page as they would at home if they had just turned on their computer and opened the page. We told them that they could scroll and click like they would on a normal website, and we stopped the exercise as soon as respondents clicked on an item that would have led them to another web page. Respondents were not told to look for ads or to pay attention to anything in particular, and they were not told anything prior to this exercise that would prime them to think that our research was at all politically-, Congressionally- or advertising-related.

[5] The display ad chosen had rated the highest in the research Presentation Testing conducted for the Congressional Institute in 2011-12. In that research, we conducted a poll of 600 respondents nationwide. We used a pseudo-Congressman identified as "Michael Adams," and asked respondents, "How does this ad make you feel about Congressman Michael Adams, on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being very unfavorable and 10 being very favorable?" The ad received the highest score of 16 display ads tested, with a score of 7.08 out of 10.

Of 12 respondents, not a single person could recall seeing the John Sullivan ad, and the aggregate heat map for all 12 shows that very little time was spent on the ad by each respondent, if at all:

After showing the news site, we asked respondents whether there were any ads on the page they viewed, and if so, which ads they could recall seeing. Three respondents thought that they saw an ad – but only one of these three could accurately recall the ad that they saw, and it was not Sullivan's.

In Round 2, we decided to place a nearly-identical ad on six news sites, not just one, to see whether repetition of the ad would increase respondent recall. This time, the ad was changed to show Congresswoman Sandy Adams' name, as follows:

The six websites we superimposed the ad over were the following:

- The Daytona Beach News-Journal Online (http://www.news-journalonline.com)
- WFTV (http://www.wftv.com)
- CNN (http://www.cnn.com)
- WESH (http://www.wesh.com)
- Click Orlando (http://www.clickorlando.com)
- Wall Street Journal (http://www.wsj.com)

We gave the Daytona respondents the same directions as those in Tulsa. This time, instead of ending the exercise after the respondent clicked, we simply showed them a black screen and then repeated the directions before showing them the next webpage.

Of the 12 respondents, four recalled the Sandy Adams ad after seeing it on the six news sites. Six others recalled seeing ads, but did not identify the Adams ad as being one of them, and two claimed to have not seen any ads at all.

As an example, below is the aggregate heat map from CNN.com, which shows that respondents spent some time looking at the ad, although still not as much time as other areas of the webpage:

It is interesting to note that respondents seemed to focus on "Sandy Adams," "FREE," and the date. Very little attention was paid to the rest of the ad, especially the image of the hand reaching out. This is true for all of the news sites we tested (see Appendix for other images).

When we asked respondents who recalled the ad what the ad was for, two of the four said they remembered the content:

> *"The Sandy Adams ad I saw quite a bit – it was inviting you to a meeting. It made me feel like she was into suggestions and things like that, but it didn't make me want to take part in it." – Liz, Daytona*

> *"I remember Sandy-something with the hand. It kept saying 'free,' and I usually don't even bother with it, but the color stuck out. It was for a job fair, but I'm not looking for a job." – Cathy, Daytona*

While there are many variables at play here – between the different respondents, the different news sites, and the design of the ad itself – constituents who visit news sites where ads appear multiple times are more likely to see it and remember it than if it only appears once.

2) **There is a threshold amount of time—and number of times—needed to view an ad for it to be remembered**

Of our 12 Daytona respondents, all of whom saw six different news site home pages in succession, four of them remembered seeing the Sandy Adams ad. Those four respondents spent 28.81 seconds, collectively, looking at the ad across all six sites. The other eight respondents spent 7.56 seconds, collectively, looking at the ad across the same six news site home pages, but none of these remember seeing it.

Recalled Sandy Adams Ad	# of respondents	Average amount of time spent viewing Adams ad across all six news site home pages	% of time spent looking at ad, as a fraction of time spent looking at six news site home pages
Yes	4	7.20 sec.	3.99%
No	8	0.95 sec.	0.75%

The average amount of time the four respondents who remembered the ad spent looking at it was 7.20 seconds in total, across all six news sites combined. The eight respondents who did not remember seeing the ad spent an average of 0.95 seconds looking at it. And, the four respondents who remembered seeing the Sandy Adams ad spent an average of 3.99% of their time on the web pages looking at the ad, while the other eight respondents only spent an average of 0.75% of their time on the web pages looking at the ad.

What was the threshold amount of time required to view an ad for someone to remember it? Each of the four respondents who remembered seeing the ad spent at least 2.79 seconds looking at it. Only one of the other eight respondents spent more time than that (4.35 seconds) looking at the ad without remembering it.

Each of the four respondents who remembered seeing the Sandy Adams ad saw it on at least four of the six web pages they viewed. Six of the eight respondents who did *not* remember seeing the ad viewed it (according to heat map data) on three or fewer web pages. The other two respondents viewed it four or more times, but they did not remember seeing the ad. All 12 respondents viewed the ad on a web page at least once, which suggests that the act of seeing it just once does not cause it to be remembered.

Each of the four respondents who remembered seeing the Sandy Adams ad viewed it for at least 1.21% of the time that they were looking at the news site home pages, ranging from 1.21% to 8.56% of their total viewing time. Six of the eight respondents who did *not* remember seeing the Sandy Adams ad viewed it for less than one percent of the time that they were viewing web pages. The other two respondents saw the ad for 1.31% and 1.80% of the time that they were viewing web pages, but they did not remember seeing the ad.

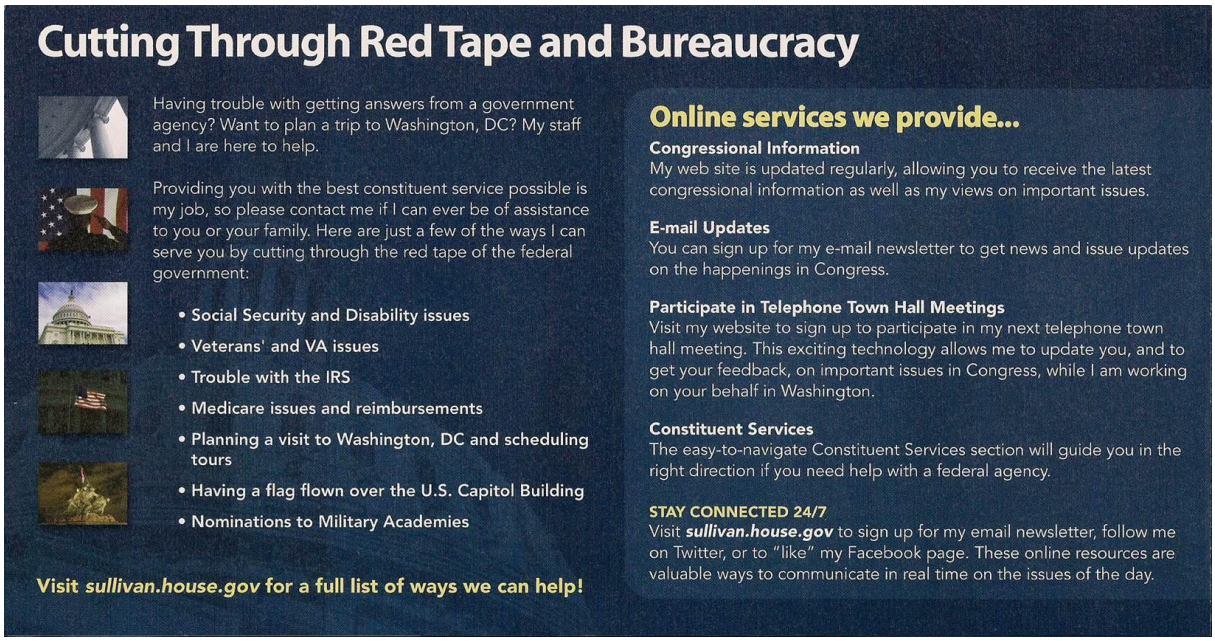
B. FRANKED MAIL

3) Constituents are more likely to read bullet points and highlighted text, and are less likely to read large blocks of text—unless that block is the only content on the page

We found that people take the easy route with Congressional franked mail. That means they are not willing to make a big time commitment to reading the totality of a page, especially when they are given visual clues that it's OK to take a shortcut. The exception occurs when the block of text is the main content on the page.

Constituents make snap decisions about what they want to read or have time to read. Therefore, when there are long paragraphs mixed in with bullet points or highlighted text, constituents may just look at what interests them most. So, just because Members or their staffs inserted material into a glossy mail piece, they cannot expect it to be consumed in its entirety – some content will be treated as just filler because recipients will not take the time to read everything.

So, with a mail piece like this, note the "hot spots" below where the readers focused their gaze:



Cutting Through Red Tape and Bureaucracy

Having trouble with getting answers from a government agency? Want to plan a trip to Washington, DC? My staff and I are here to help.

Providing you with the best constituent service possible is my job, so please contact me if I can ever be of assistance to you or your family. Here are just a few of the ways I can serve you by cutting through the red tape of the federal government:

- Social Security and Disability issues
- Veterans' and VA issues
- Trouble with the IRS
- Medicare issues and reimbursements
- Planning a visit to Washington, DC and scheduling tours
- Having a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol Building
- Nominations to Military Academies

Visit *sullivan.house.gov* for a full list of ways we can help!

Online services we provide...

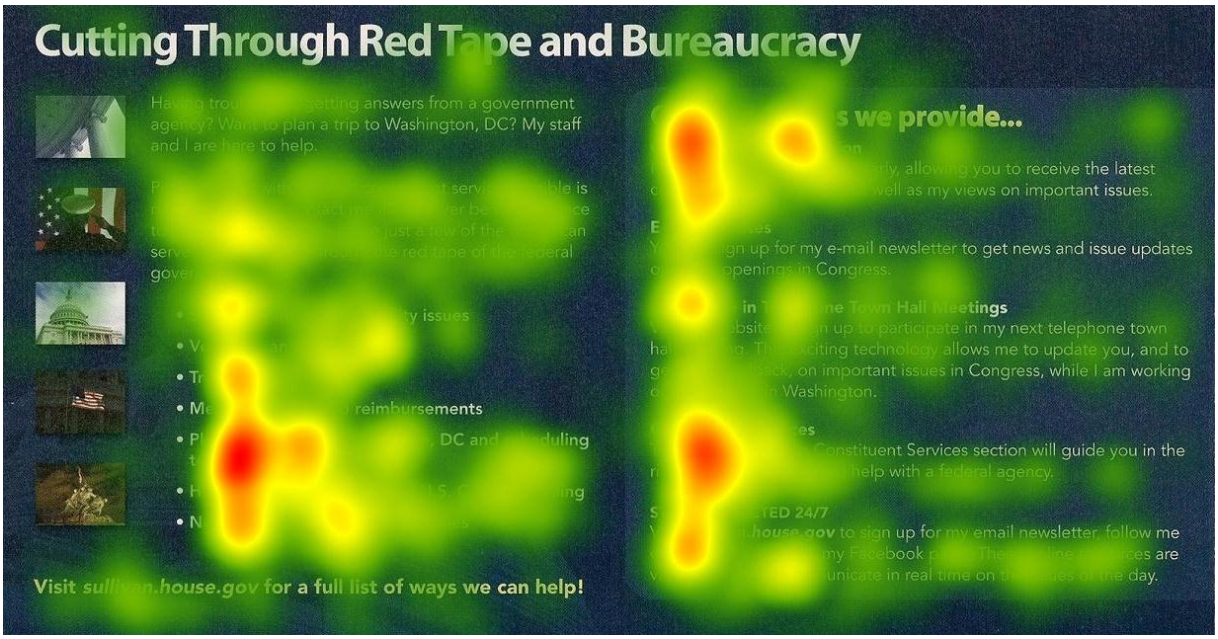
Congressional Information
My web site is updated regularly, allowing you to receive the latest congressional information as well as my views on important issues.

E-mail Updates
You can sign up for my e-mail newsletter to get news and issue updates on the happenings in Congress.

Participate in Telephone Town Hall Meetings
Visit my website to sign up to participate in my next telephone town hall meeting. This exciting technology allows me to update you, and to get your feedback, on important issues in Congress, while I am working on your behalf in Washington.

Constituent Services
The easy-to-navigate Constituent Services section will guide you in the right direction if you need help with a federal agency.

STAY CONNECTED 24/7
Visit ***sullivan.house.gov*** to sign up for my email newsletter, follow me on Twitter, or to "like" my Facebook page. These online resources are valuable ways to communicate in real time on the issues of the day.



In watching the eye movements of our respondents, we noticed that when block text, highlighted text, and bullet points appeared on the same page, respondents typically spent more time looking at the bullet points and highlighted text. In fact, they told us:

> *"You don't have to read it all – it's easy to pick out the topic you're interested in [with highlighted text]." – Sharon, Tulsa*

> *"I read highlights and bullets unless I see something that really interests me…I probably wouldn't read [a letter] much. I'd open it and read the highlights, but I'd rather see it in a flyer. It takes me longer to go through it, so the shorter it is the more likely I'd be to read it." – Tyler, Tulsa*

One of the mail pieces we tested for Congresswoman Adams had four sides. Both the left inside and the right inside have a section of block text at the very top, and we noticed that the block text on the left page seemed to get skipped, while the block text on the right page tended to get read:

Left page (portion of original page)

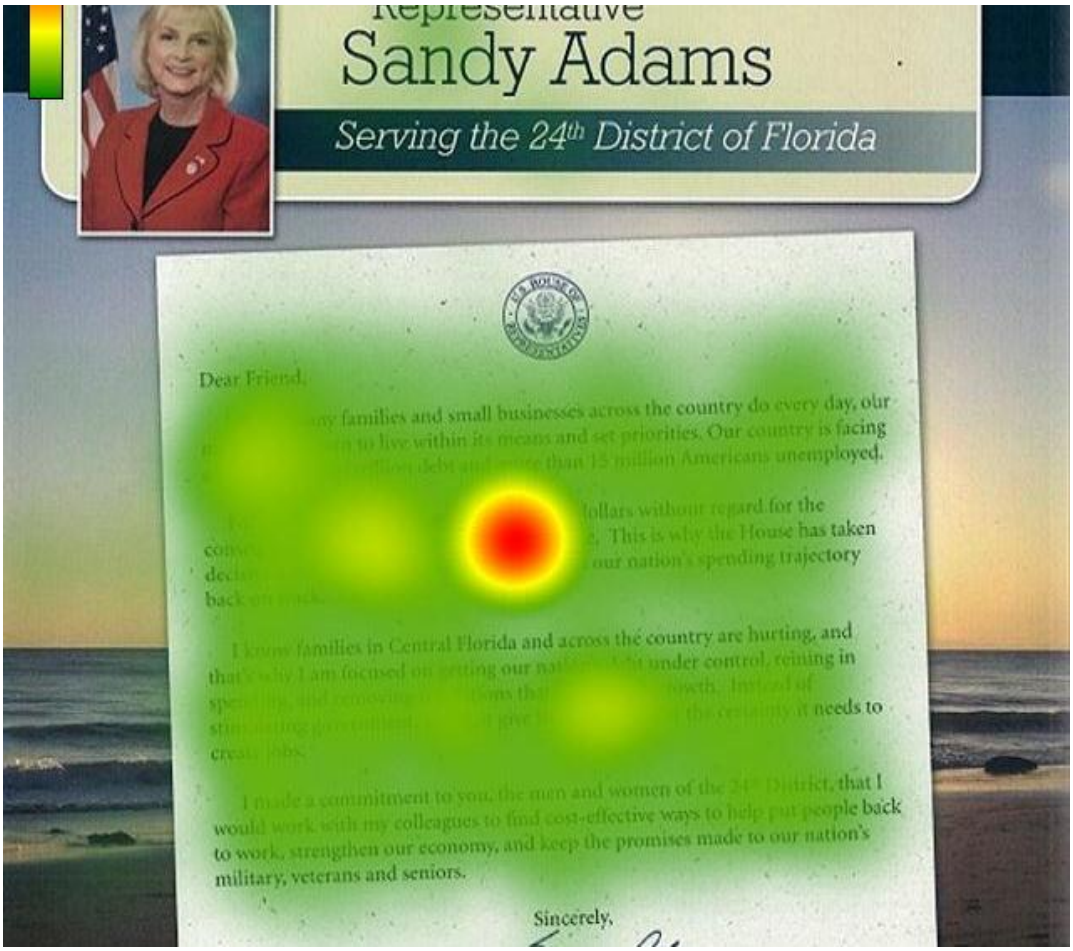
Right page (portion of original page)

We asked what caused certain respondents to skip over the block text on the left, but not the block text on the right, and heard:

> *"I jumped to the bullets [on the left] because of the job stuff. It interested me and [the bolded text] caught my eye so I skipped over [the block text]." – Cathy, Daytona*

The block text on the right page is also followed by bullets points, so we can only hypothesize why this didn't cause respondents to skip to it. Our best guess is that because the bullet points appeared to be in a different section with the dark blue background, respondents wanted to read what came first before moving on.

We also noticed that on pages with predominately block text and no bullets or headings, respondents spent a roughly equal amount of time on all of the text:



It should be noted that the bright red dot in the middle is due to respondents' starting their gaze in the center of the screen, but otherwise, the length of time spent on the text on this page was nearly even throughout.

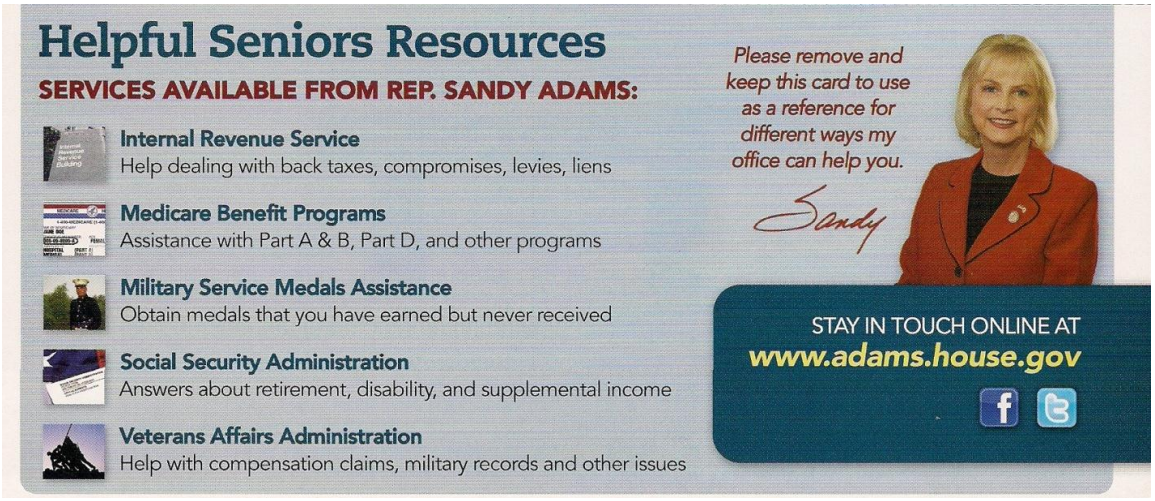
The takeaway here is that bullet points and highlighted text will probably garner the most attention, and should be used if you expect constituents to give the mail piece a quick read. However, a letter may be more appropriate if it is crucial for constituents to read every word you send to them.

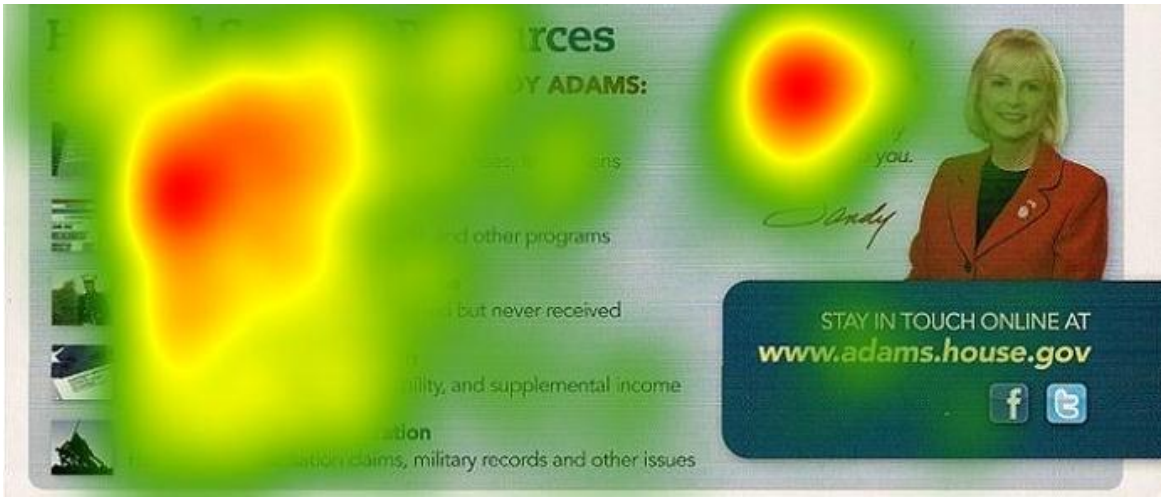
4) **Most respondents viewed the mail pieces as having three main purposes—but only two of these are associated with Members' official duties**

The three purposes are:

a) <u>To show that the Member is trying to be helpful</u>

Especially in Round 2, we heard over and over again how respondents liked certain mail pieces or e-newsletters because it shows them that the Member is trying to be helpful. One mail piece had a list of phone numbers for veteran-specific resources, and another offered helpful senior contacts on a tear-off card for the constituents. Below is an image of the latter tear-off card, followed by the aggregate heat map results from Round 2:





Both mail pieces received very positive feedback, and nearly every time we asked respondents what they liked best about the mail pieces, we heard comments about how Adams is "trying to help" or "trying to do something." This was true for all of the mail pieces. The following comment was said about the piece with the Veterans' phone numbers:

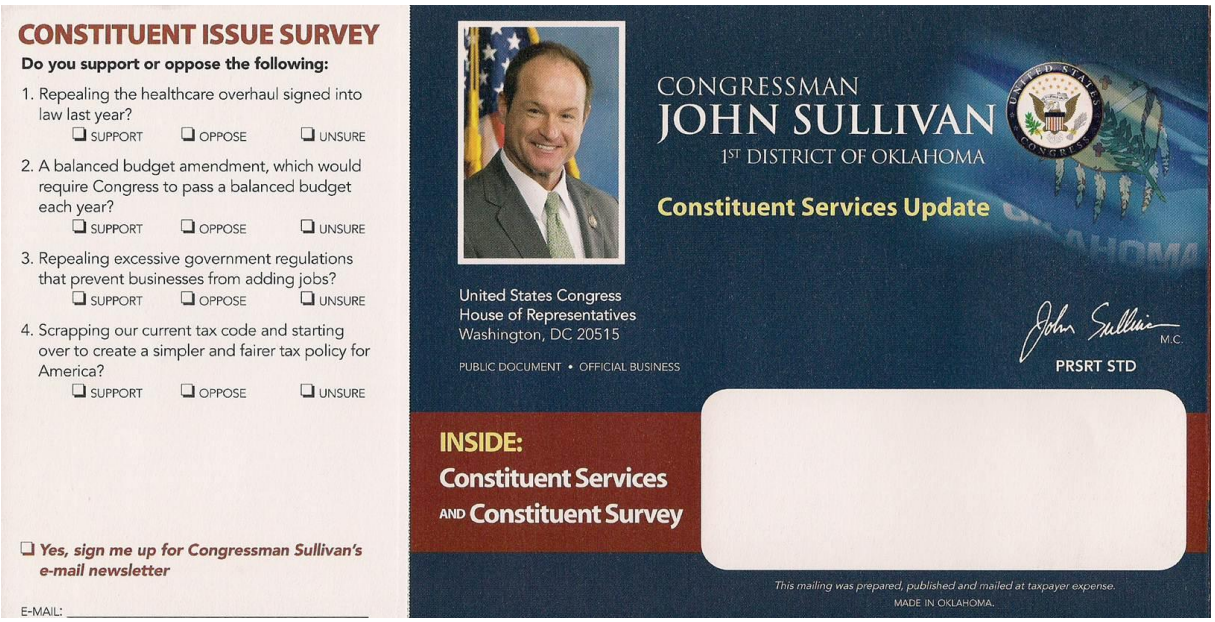
> *"She's trying to do something for veterans and trying to help. I like the phone numbers on the front page. Instead of tooting her own horn, she seems to be more helpful, which makes me think better of her." – Cathy, Daytona*

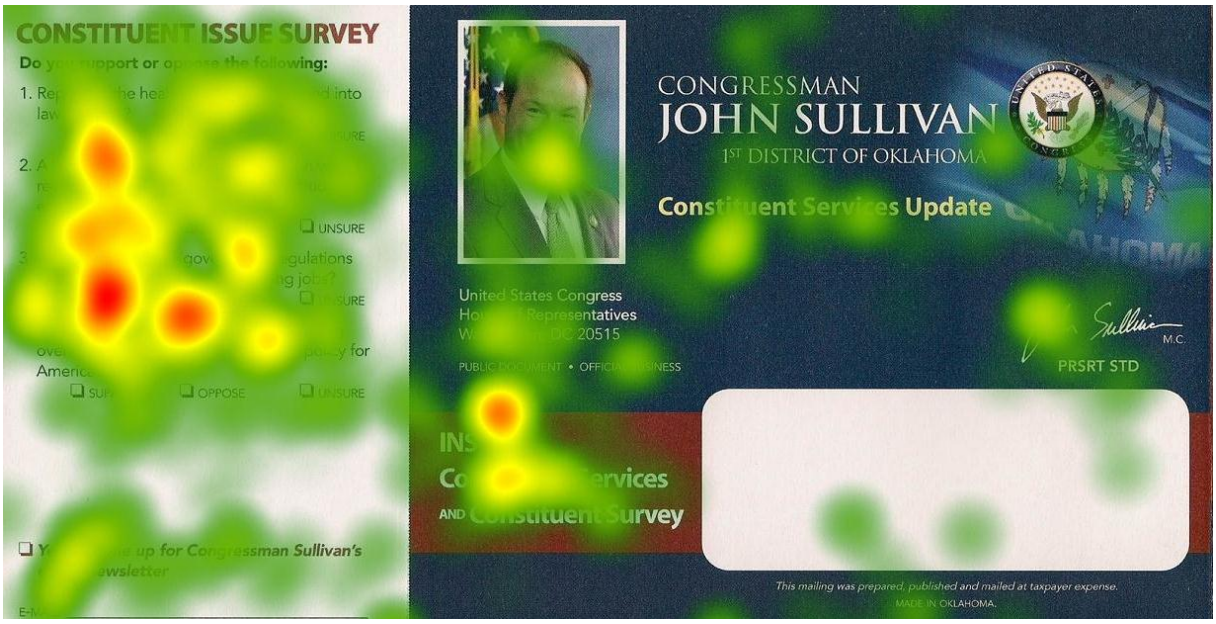
b) <u>To show that the Member wants to hear from his/her constituents and to keep his/her constituents updated</u>

In Round 1, we heard positive feedback from nearly every respondent when the direct mail pieces included surveys asking constituents for their opinions. The fact that the Congressman wanted to hear from them made most respondents view him more favorably. They also liked that he wanted to provide information to his constituents in order to keep them updated on events in Washington, as well as constituent services. And, he offered many ways to contact him and connect with him.

> *"I liked that you could sign up for his e-mails—not something I'd do, but I like that he offers it. It shows he's reaching out." – Tyler, Tulsa*

Below is the aggregate heat map of one of part of this mail piece we showed respondents in Tulsa:





The heat map shows that respondents spent a significant length of time reading the survey at the left portion of the e-newsletter, which is represented by the red coloring.

In Round 2, we heard fewer comments about how the Congresswoman wanted to hear from them, but one respondent did make the following comment:

> *"I'm interested in what she's saying, but if she's corresponding with me, I want it to be so that she knows what my concerns are [instead of just telling me what she's doing, or that she's in my district]." – Liz, Daytona*

The big takeaway here is this: Make your mail piece a dialogue rather than a monologue.

c) <u>To show that the Member wants to be re-elected (even if that's not the point of a franked mail piece)</u>

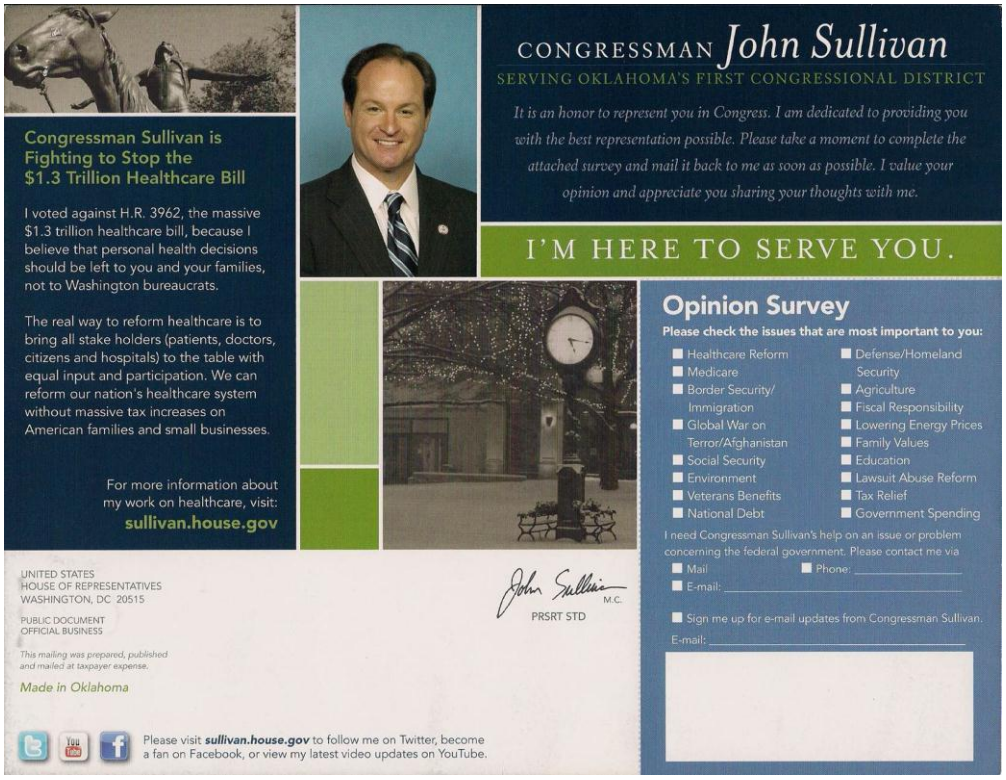
Be aware that a number of people will wrongly assume franked mail pieces are campaign material.

> *"I'm not expecting much, not sure if it'll be interesting. I label it as junk mail—I assume it's campaign material even though I really know it's from his office. He's tooting his own horn, and making himself look good." – John, Tulsa*

Even after our moderator pointed out that a franked mail piece was paid for at taxpayer expense, one respondent in Daytona thought the mail pieces were campaign literature. The respondent pointed out the irony that the Congresswoman talks about the misuse of taxpayer dollars on the front side of the mail piece, and then labels the piece as "prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense" on the back side.

5) **If there's a tear-off card in your franked mail piece, make sure that it is prominent so that respondents actually mail it back**

Response rates on survey cards apparently could be much higher if mail pieces were better designed. For example, nearly all of our respondents did **not** notice that this mail piece had a tear-off card until closer inspection:



"I would've had to think about it. [The tear-off card] is not obvious." – Sharon, Tulsa

"It wasn't immediately clear that it was a tear-off card." – Rich, Tulsa

We heard similar comments about one of the mail pieces studied in Daytona, the bottom portion of which appears here:

Stay in touch with
Representative Adams,
and learn more about these and
other important issues online.

www.adams.house.gov

24th District of Florida Constituent Survey

1. Should Congress pass a Balanced Budget Amendment like Florida has?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Unsure

2. Do you support increasing taxes to pay for higher federal government spending?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Unsure

3. Do you support freezing federal spending at FY08 levels (i.e. before the recession) and stopping new government hiring?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Unsure

SAVE TAXPAYER FUNDS AND SIGN UP FOR MY E-NEWSLETTER UPDATES.
❑ Yes ❑ No

E-mail: _____

Most respondents did not realize that the survey above was a tear-off card. When we pointed out the perforation to one respondent and asked her what she was supposed to do with it, she answered that she could keep it for future reference so that she'll be prepared to vote on those specific topics in the next election. On the other hand, it was clear to most other respondents that the survey in this mail piece was meant to be torn off and mailed in:

A RESPONSIBLE PLAN

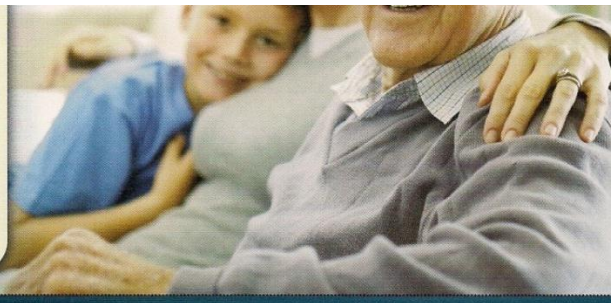
✓ No changes for anyone 55 or older

FOR THOSE 54 AND YOUNGER, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO:

✓ Keep traditional Medicare if you want it

✓ Pick from competing plans for the coverage you want

For more information, please visit my website at *adams.house.gov*.



24TH DISTRICT ISSUE SURVEY

1. Do you think the estate tax should be repealed?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Unsure

2. Do you support strengthening Medicare to protect benefits for current seniors and future recipients?
❑ Yes ❑ No ❑ Unsure

3. Questions/Comments on Medicare:
_____
_____
_____

❑ YES, I would like to receive regular e-mail updates from U.S. Representative Sandy Adams.

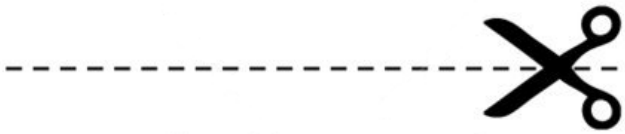
E-mail: _____

Please print clearly. E-mail addresses are not shared with anyone.

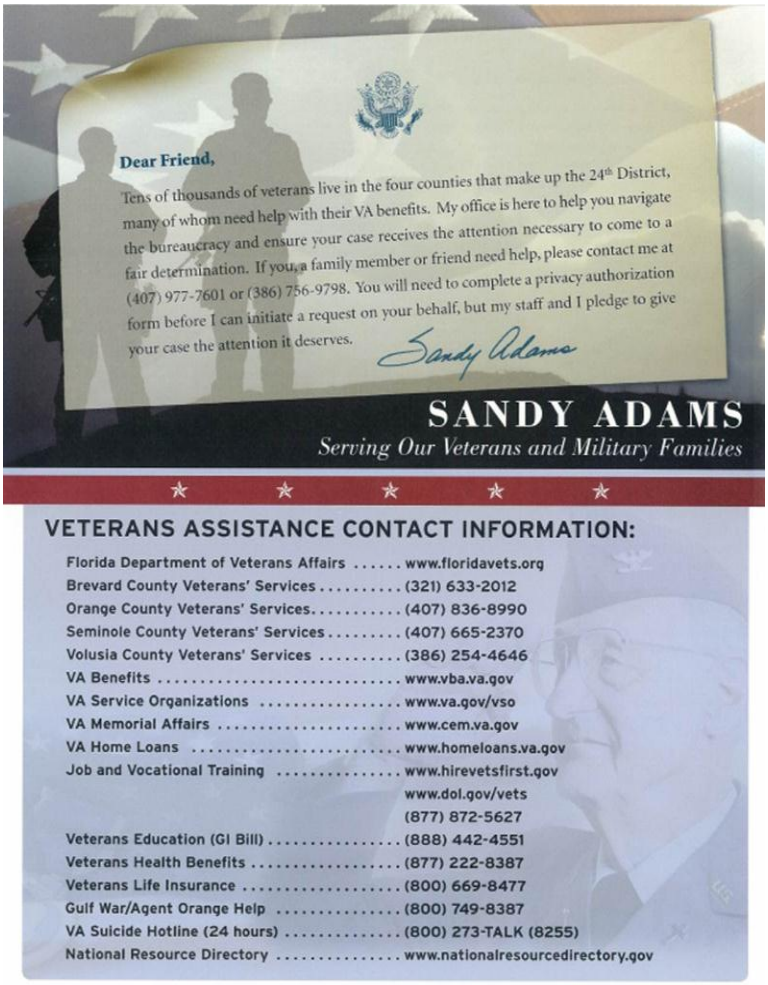
015

One respondent in Round 2 also suggested making the tear-off portion on the first image a different color to help it stand out from the rest of the mail piece. We believe this is why it was clear on the second image immediately above that the survey was on a tear-off card.

In addition to a perforation, we suggest printing a dotted line around the tear-off in a color that stands out from the background. And even though it is a perforation and doesn't need to be cut with scissors, include the scissor marks along the perforation on both sides of the cards to better indicate that it should be torn off. Here's an example:



Important information for constituents, and not just surveys, should also be perforated and clearly labeled that it can be torn off. This holds true for the bottom half of this veterans mailing sent by Rep. Adams:



Dear Friend,

Tens of thousands of veterans live in the four counties that make up the 24th District, many of whom need help with their VA benefits. My office is here to help you navigate the bureaucracy and ensure your case receives the attention necessary to come to a fair determination. If you, a family member or friend need help, please contact me at (407) 977-7601 or (386) 756-9798. You will need to complete a privacy authorization form before I can initiate a request on your behalf, but my staff and I pledge to give your case the attention it deserves.

Sandy Adams

SANDY ADAMS

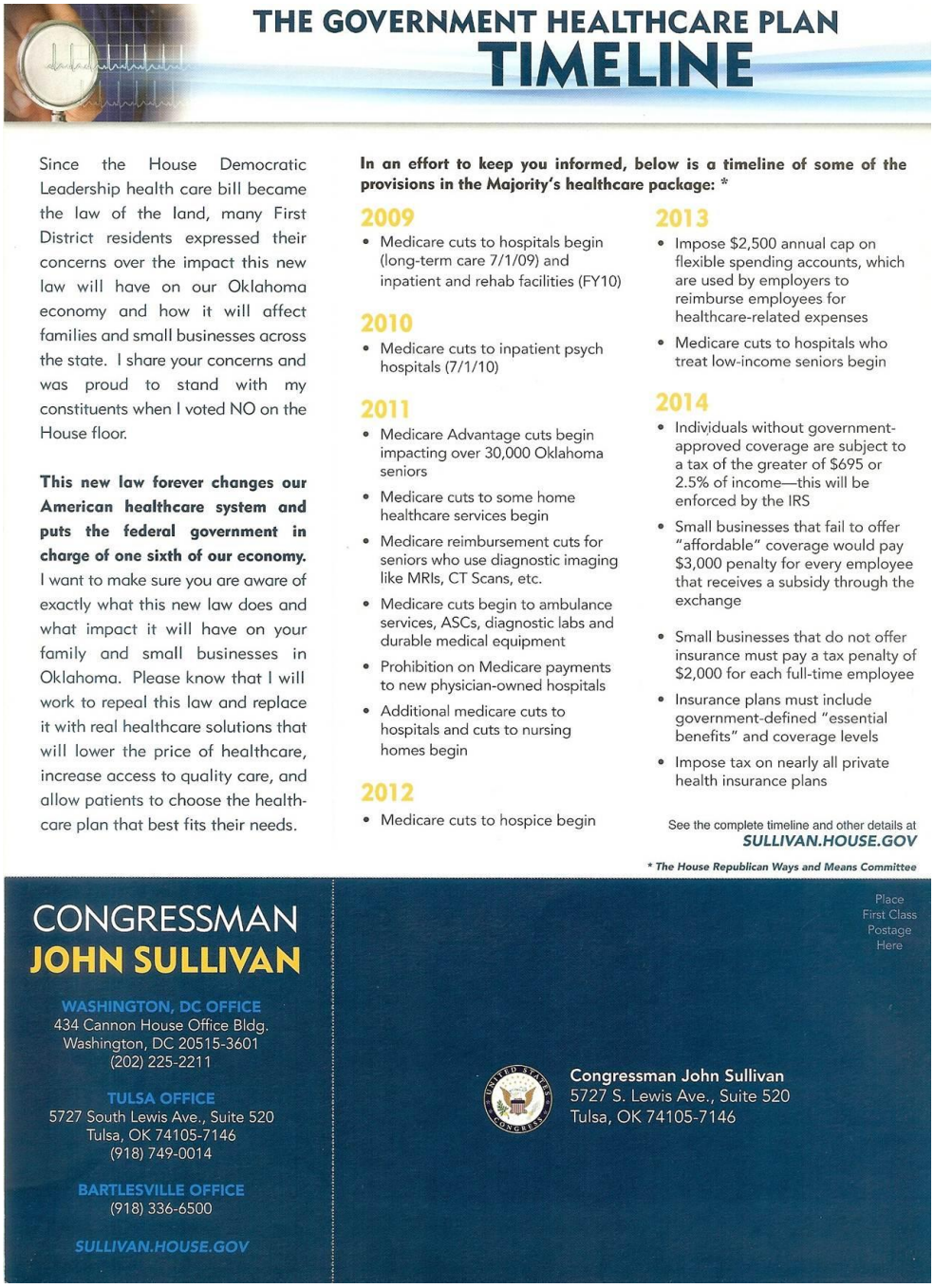
Serving Our Veterans and Military Families

VETERANS ASSISTANCE CONTACT INFORMATION:

Florida Department of Veterans Affairs	www.floridavets.org
Brevard County Veterans' Services	(321) 633-2012
Orange County Veterans' Services	(407) 836-8990
Seminole County Veterans' Services	(407) 665-2370
Volusia County Veterans' Services	(386) 254-4646
VA Benefits	www.vba.va.gov
VA Service Organizations	www.va.gov/vso
VA Memorial Affairs	www.cem.va.gov
VA Home Loans	www.homeloans.va.gov
Job and Vocational Training	www.hirevetsfirst.gov www.dol.gov/vets (877) 872-5627
Veterans Education (GI Bill)	(888) 442-4551
Veterans Health Benefits	(877) 222-8387
Veterans Life Insurance	(800) 669-8477
Gulf War/Agent Orange Help	(800) 749-8387
VA Suicide Hotline (24 hours)	(800) 273-TALK (8255)
National Resource Directory	www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov

6) Many respondents liked the "past/present/future" timeline in one mail piece

We showed respondents the following mail piece, and noticed that a lot of time was spent on the portion where the years 2009-2014 were mapped out with details about the measures that were/would be implemented in each year:



THE GOVERNMENT HEALTHCARE PLAN
TIMELINE

Since the House Democratic Leadership health care bill became the law of the land, many First District residents expressed their concerns over the impact this new law will have on our Oklahoma economy and how it will affect families and small businesses across the state. I share your concerns and was proud to stand with my constituents when I voted NO on the House floor.

This new law forever changes our American healthcare system and puts the federal government in charge of one sixth of our economy. I want to make sure you are aware of exactly what this new law does and what impact it will have on your family and small businesses in Oklahoma. Please know that I will work to repeal this law and replace it with real healthcare solutions that will lower the price of healthcare, increase access to quality care, and allow patients to choose the health-care plan that best fits their needs.

In an effort to keep you informed, below is a timeline of some of the provisions in the Majority's healthcare package: *

2009
- Medicare cuts to hospitals begin (long-term care 7/1/09) and inpatient and rehab facilities (FY10)

2010
- Medicare cuts to inpatient psych hospitals (7/1/10)

2011
- Medicare Advantage cuts begin impacting over 30,000 Oklahoma seniors
- Medicare cuts to some home healthcare services begin
- Medicare reimbursement cuts for seniors who use diagnostic imaging like MRIs, CT Scans, etc.
- Medicare cuts begin to ambulance services, ASCs, diagnostic labs and durable medical equipment
- Prohibition on Medicare payments to new physician-owned hospitals
- Additional medicare cuts to hospitals and cuts to nursing homes begin

2012
- Medicare cuts to hospice begin

2013
- Impose $2,500 annual cap on flexible spending accounts, which are used by employers to reimburse employees for healthcare-related expenses
- Medicare cuts to hospitals who treat low-income seniors begin

2014
- Individuals without government-approved coverage are subject to a tax of the greater of $695 or 2.5% of income—this will be enforced by the IRS
- Small businesses that fail to offer "affordable" coverage would pay $3,000 penalty for every employee that receives a subsidy through the exchange
- Small businesses that do not offer insurance must pay a tax penalty of $2,000 for each full-time employee
- Insurance plans must include government-defined "essential benefits" and coverage levels
- Impose tax on nearly all private health insurance plans

See the complete timeline and other details at
SULLIVAN.HOUSE.GOV

*** The House Republican Ways and Means Committee**

CONGRESSMAN
JOHN SULLIVAN

WASHINGTON, DC OFFICE
434 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-3601
(202) 225-2211

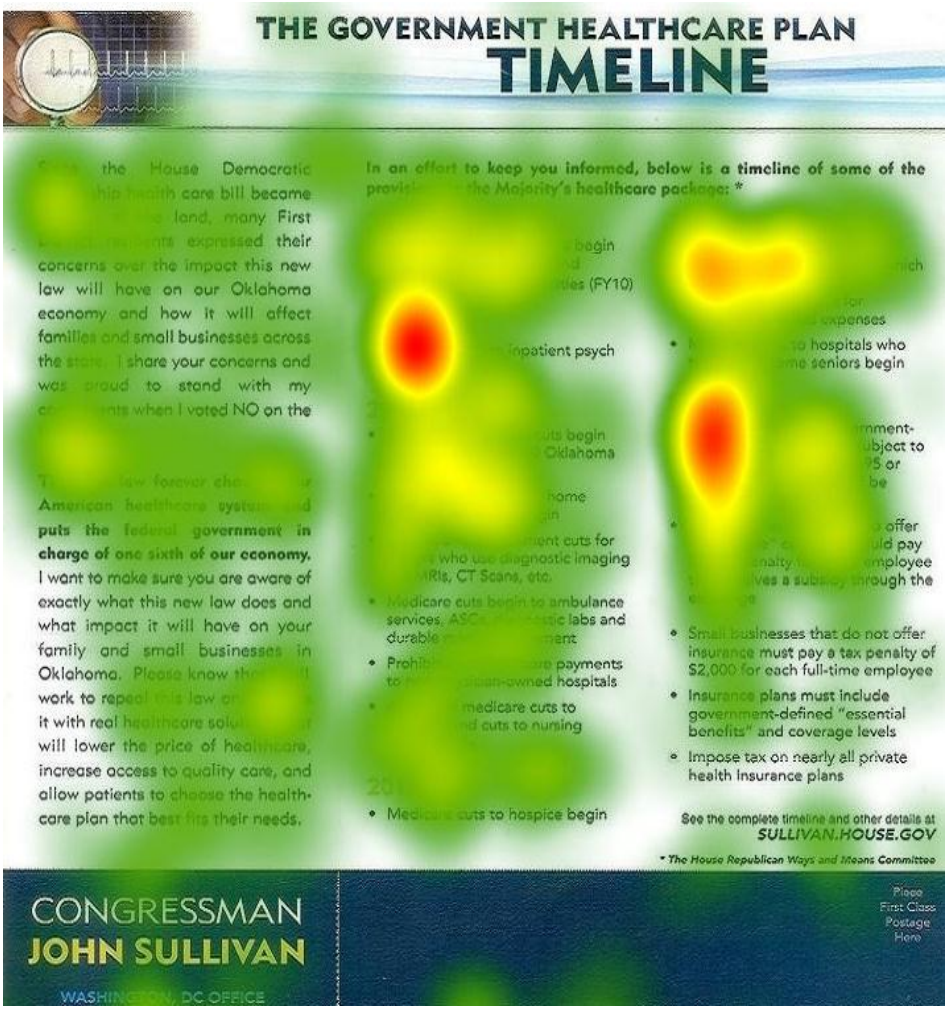
TULSA OFFICE
5727 South Lewis Ave., Suite 520
Tulsa, OK 74105-7146
(918) 749-0014

BARTLESVILLE OFFICE
(918) 336-6500

SULLIVAN.HOUSE.GOV

Place
First Class
Postage
Here

Congressman John Sullivan
5727 S. Lewis Ave., Suite 520
Tulsa, OK 74105-7146



When we asked respondents why, we heard the following reasons:

> *"The timeline told me this is what had happened and this is what you plan to do in the future." – Tyler, Tulsa*

> *"He seems to be doing this best about telling us what's going on now and what's let up to the state we're in." – Sharon, Tulsa*

This idea of hearing about what happened before, what's happening now, and what's going to happen is a concept we uncovered in past research, which we call the past/present/future construct. This will be mentioned later in the report since we asked respondents in Round 2 about including an index in the e-newsletters that revolve around this construct (see finding #14).

7) Direct mail needs to be tailored to those most likely to value it; text size matters

It is important to keep sending franked mail to certain audiences that like getting printed mail. When we asked what one respondent liked best about a particular Sullivan piece, we heard:

"The contact information, and ways to get help. Not everyone is computer-literate and has access to the same facts." – Sharon, Tulsa

Many of these non-computer-users are probably seniors, so also make sure the text on mail pieces is big enough to read.

"Make print a little larger and easier to read. You have to work to see it now." – Ken, Daytona

"I can read it comfortably, the dark big print [has high contrast to the background], and it's separated by different colors, which is good. As people get older, they have a hard time reading small text, so they need bolder print as she has here." – Maurice, Daytona

8) Photographs of the Member with constituents received more attention and positive feedback than stock photos

In watching respondents' eye movements, we noticed that pictures of the Member interacting with constituents got slightly more attention than "stock" photos. Here are some comments we heard about pictures of the Members with constituents:

"I was looking at the picture and trying to see the kinds of people he's talking to—if they were in business attire or casual clothes. I'd care more about seeing him talking to normal people." – Rich, Tulsa

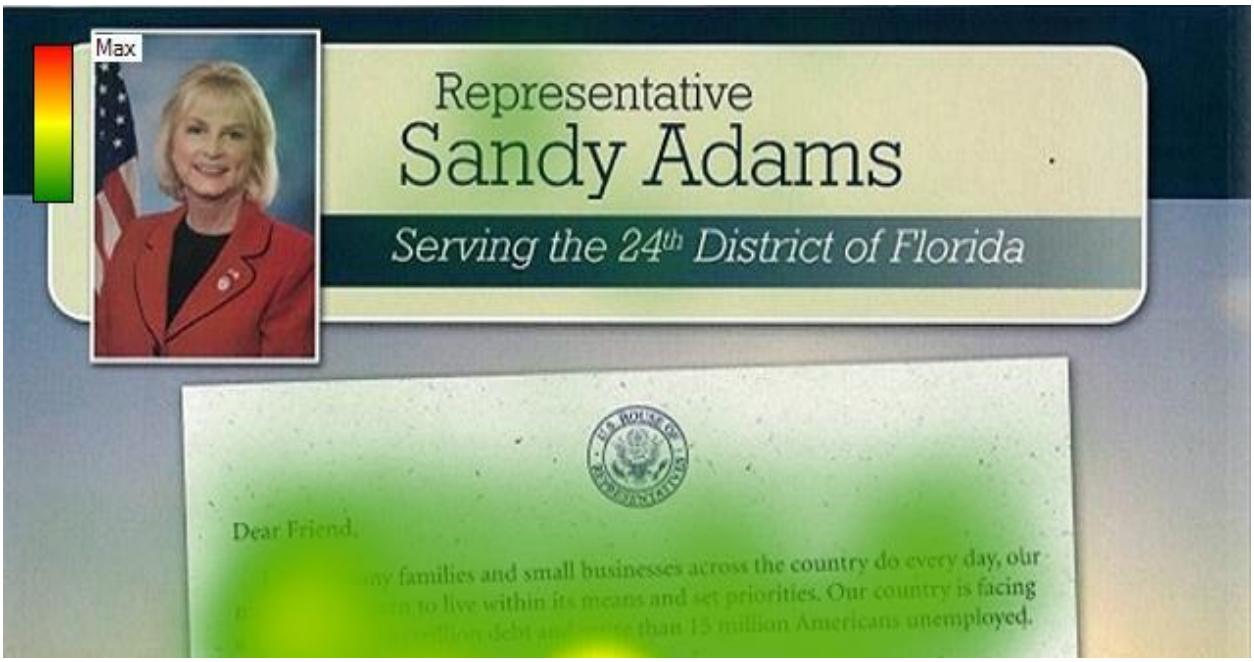
"The picture catches my eye and makes it more personal for me. She is with them and shows she's in the county doing things. It made me keep paying attention because I thought that [the rest of the mailer] might have something to do with me." – Ashley, Daytona

And here are some comments we heard about the stock photos:

"Put pictures of her actually doing something – [right now it's] a guy cutting up credit cards and doctors – none of her actually doing anything, just her and a bunch of clip art. If she's standing with these workers, it shows she supports those workers. I'd like to see her actually getting involved, maybe it should be her cutting up that [Federal spending] credit card." – Mark, Daytona

"I'd put her in the picture. Why can't she be at a nursing home or shaking the hands of seniors? A picture would add a personal touch – otherwise, it could be anyone else's mail piece." – Mark, Daytona

We also noticed that not much time was spent looking at both Sullivan's and Adams' formal headshot photos:



Two images used in the same mail piece

We asked one respondent in Tulsa why he didn't seem to be paying any attention to the pictures of John Sullivan:

> *"I know what Sullivan looks like and I don't really care. If it were a three-eyed ogre I probably would've paid attention." – Mike, Tulsa*

A FEW OTHER MINOR POINTS ABOUT FRANKED MAIL

9) Reasons for liking mail pieces were often content-based

We asked respondents what they liked best about each mail piece, and heard over and over again mentions of the issues covered in the mail piece. This is important because it shows that content really matters to constituents.

Many respondents also seemed to like when many different topics were covered on one piece because they felt like they were getting a good overview of what was going on.

> *"The proposals are short, sweet, and to the point." – Maurice, Daytona*

10) Footnote any statistics you include with credible sources

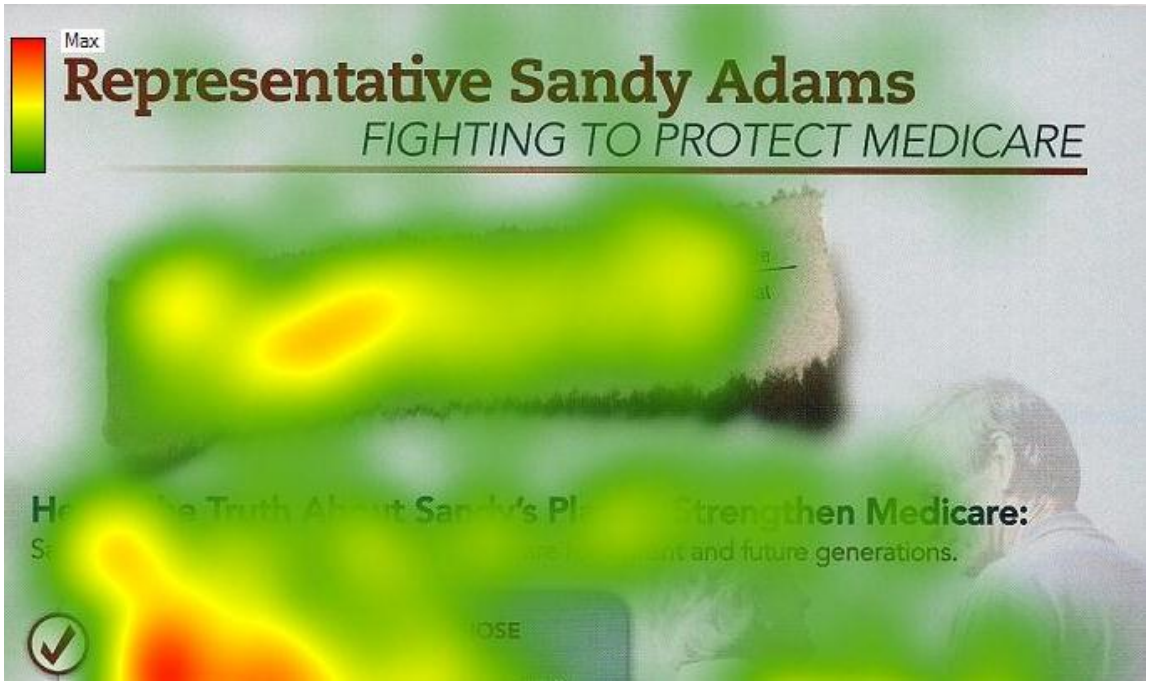
One respondent mentioned that there was no footnote on a mail piece after a specific statistic was cited.

> *"I need more proof because that doesn't ring true to me. Where's the footnote? Maybe I'd be more likely to believe it. Add footnotes where you can because I lose interest as soon as I see something I don't believe." – Cathy, Daytona*

This is something we've heard before in past research, and it is not clear why more participants did not bring up the lack of footnotes in these mail pieces, but it is still good practice to use footnotes when possible.

11) Titles at the very top of the pages were generally overlooked

Keep in mind when you are creating franked mail pieces that the titles at the top of pages are often overlooked.



What this means is that often the headlines are ignored. The content of the rest of the mailer, relying on bullet points and bolded text in the body, needs to convey the purpose of the piece.

C. WEBSITE

12) The good news: Respondents were able to complete important yet simple tasks quickly and easily

Respondents were asked to perform a set of commonly-performed tasks with the Congressional websites. First, we asked them to locate the Representative's biography, which, we know from Google Analytics research, is one of the top reasons people visit a Congressional website. We then asked them to find the page where they'd be told how to contact his/her Washington, DC office—another reason people commonly visit these sites. Nearly all respondents performed both of these tasks very quickly—within a few seconds. For the Daytona respondents, we also asked them to find the search box on the website, and most found this somewhat or very quickly as well.

13) The bad news: It was a hassle for respondents to find out how their Member voted on a particular issue

We gave respondents the following instructions: "I'd like you to find the information that tells you how the Congressman/woman voted on the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare." Unfortunately, Tulsa respondents found this task to be a hassle.

Most of the Tulsa respondents eventually found their way to the "Healthcare" webpage on Sullivan's site. And, many felt they knew how he voted on the Affordable Care Act after reading one or two press releases.

The heat map shows us that respondents didn't spend a lot of time reading the block text on the "Healthcare" page, and they tended to jump down to the "Press Release" links (indicated by the red spot):

Overall, Sullivan's site was user-friendly, since most respondents found out how the Congressman voted on Obamacare, although it could have been made more explicit for them.

To say it was a challenge for the Daytona respondents to find how Sandy Adams cast any votes on Obamacare would be an understatement. Many respondents were unsuccessful and gave up completely before finding the answer. When given the task, they tended to: 1) read the "Latest News" on the home page; 2) hover over "Issues & Legislation;" 3) choose within "Issues & Legislation" the "Vote Record" tab, and scroll through a reverse chronological list of recent votes before either giving up or starting over.

Even after identifying the location of the search box in the task immediately prior to this one, so that it was primed in their minds, only one of the 12 Daytona respondents first turned to this functionality to search for the answer. And, only one of the 12 respondents made it to the "Healthcare" page (which was a sub-page under "Issues") to see the Congresswoman's stance on the topic area. But before reading the content on this page she was quickly distracted by the "Vote Record" button located on the right side, and wrongly assumed it would show Adams's healthcare-related vote records.

14) There are ways to improve websites to make them easier for constituents to find how their Member voted on a particular issue

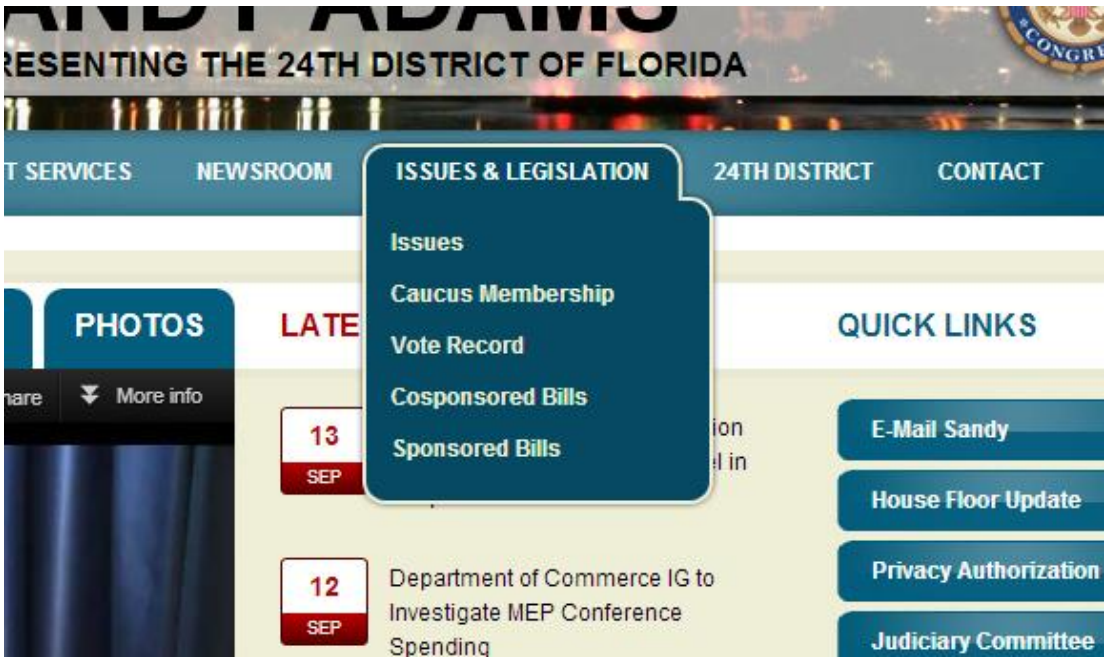
We suggestion doing the following:

- Make it easy for users to find pages on specific issues they might be interested in:

We recommend showing "Policy Issues" in the menu bar, with all of the categories listed in a dropdown. This way, users will be able to see all of the categories available before leaving the home page, and should be more likely to find the information they are looking for.

DO THIS:

NOT THIS:



If the format of your website doesn't give you the liberty to have the different issues in a separate drop-down menu, make sure it's at least labeled as "Policy Issues" in the drop-down options. One respondent was thrown off by the word "Issues," assuming it was synonymous with "problems," and would not detail the Congresswoman's stance on particular subject matters.

Also, that fact that "Issues" is repeated under "Issues & Legislation" was confusing to some respondents. One respondent did not think that this was clickable, so never ended up finding the "Healthcare" page. So, make sure you don't repeat items in the drop-down menu that are already listed in the menu bar.

- Be explicit about your position on the issue:

This can be done either in the description of the Member's stance, or by allowing users to categorize the Member's voting record by specific topic areas. The website could also include another prominent search box within the "Vote Records" page—to help constituents find what they are looking for more efficiently.

- Put the search box in an easy-to-locate position and make it stand out:

This can be done by making the search box white with a "search" button next to it, which is what computer users are used to seeing and will quickly recognize.

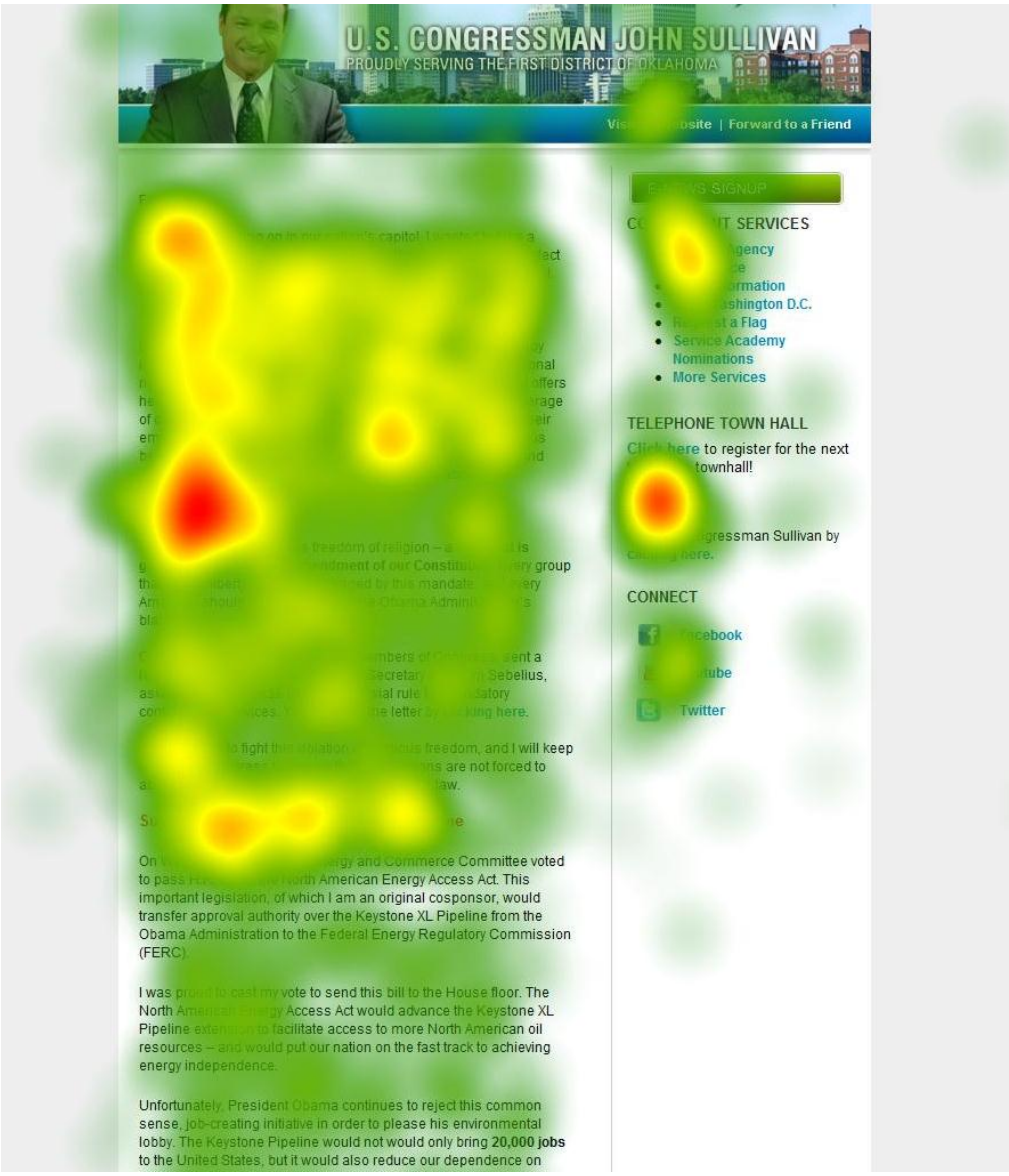
"I forgot that you could type it in [to search what you're looking for]. I wouldn't have to change anything [about the website] if I remembered where the search box was – maybe make it a white bar." – Kathy, Daytona

"A little more eye-level and white instead of dark blue would've been better." – Ashley, Daytona

D. E-NEWSLETTERS

15) The e-newsletters tended to get read more thoroughly than the franked mail pieces

We asked respondents to read two e-newsletters from their Member, and instructed them to look at it the way they'd look at an email attachment sent to their in-boxes. We observed that most respondents spent more time reading the e-newsletters than they did the franked mail pieces. This was especially apparent for certain respondents who seemed to skim the mail pieces very quickly, but then took their time reading most of the e-newsletter, like this:



We asked one respondent in Round 1 why he seemed to spend more time on the e-newsletter:

> *"I spent more time reading the e-newsletters because e-mail is a little more personal than bulk mail, and they're using my money [for franked mail] instead of e-mailing me for free. I'd at least start reading [the e-mail]." – Mike, Tulsa*

16) Include an index or overview at the top of your longer e-newsletters with hyperlinks to sections below. And, constituents will appreciate it if you incorporate the past/present/future construct

For longer e-newsletters, respondents would like to see an overview at the top of the page with hyperlinks to specific sections within the e-newsletter.

We noticed with the eye-tracking that one respondent seemed more interested in the second topic of the first e-newsletter we showed, but spent less time reading it, indicating that the e-newsletter may have been too long and he got tired of reading at that point. Our moderator proposed an itinerary or index at the top, with links to different subjects, and this respondent liked the idea:

> *"I like that idea. You can go further in depth and hit what [topics] you want." – Tyler, Tulsa*

In Round 2, we asked respondents about this idea of an overview at the top of the page and those we asked agreed it would be helpful. Based on what we found in Round 1 with the franked mail piece that had the past/present/future construct (see finding #6), we decided to incorporate this idea as part of the e-newsletter index when we asked Round 2 respondents about it. This seemed to be viewed favorably as well:

> *"That [index at the top] would definitely make it feel more organized, and I could go to where I wanted to go to. If I don't want to worry about what was happening last week and I just want to know what is happening next week, and what is going to pertain to me in the immediate future, that would definitely make it a little easier." – Ashley, Daytona*

> *"That'd be good for people like me who want to know what's happening quickly, compared to the people who have the time to sit and read and research." – Cathy, Daytona*

> *"I'd like that because you can pick and choose what you want to read about." – Ken, Daytona*

> *"You actually get to choose which one you want to go to, instead of having to go through everything to find [what you want.]" – Sheri, Daytona*

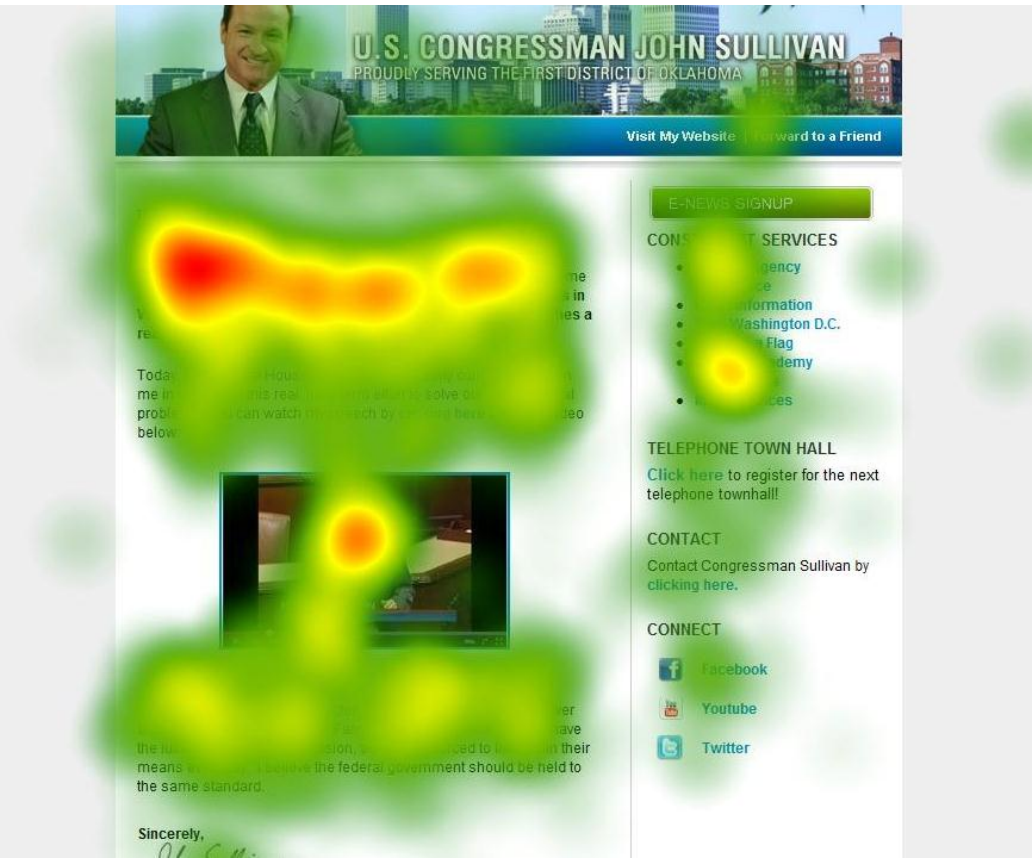
In order for readers here to get a better sense of what something like this could look like, we created a mock-up shown below:

Please keep in mind that we are researchers and not graphic designers! Ask your vendor if they could create something like this for you and it should help your constituents get the most out of your e-newsletters.

17) When available, include a video in the e-newsletter and embed it. Otherwise, make sure the image of the video has a play arrow in the center

One respondent in Round 1 suggested that the video be embedded on the page, if possible, since it would look neater. An embedded video would also load faster than re-opening it in a whole new window (which is what happens with videos that are hosted elsewhere). Embedding would be beneficial for constituents with a slow internet connection or a slow computer.

Below is a heat map that shows readers gave the video just as much attention as the first paragraph of the e-newsletter:



When we asked, "What did you like best about the second e-newsletter?," most Tulsa respondents mentioned the inclusion of the video.

To make it clear that an image in the e-newsletter is a playable video, you should put an image of a play button (right facing triangle inside of a square or oval) over top of the video:

This is what it should look like if you embed it, but if you just include a screen cap of the video, this additional imagery will help constituents realize that there is a video for them to view.

18) Include a time code in the image of the video, or mention in the text of the e-newsletter how long the video will be

In Round 1, respondents were pleasantly surprised that the video was roughly 90 seconds long, and viewed the Congressman more favorably for including the video in his e-newsletter.

> *"The short video—a one minute video, I have time for that, but six minutes, I would've clicked off for making me watch a whole session of Congress. One to one-and-a-half minutes is good, unless it's action packed." - Tyler, Tulsa*

In Round 2, most respondents did not bother to click the Sandy Adams video (they were not sure they were allowed to do so), so we asked them how long they thought the video might be. Most answered between two and three minutes, and were surprised when we informed them that it was actually seven minutes long. We then asked them if they would have clicked if they'd known the video was 90 seconds long (the length of Sullivan's video), and most answered yes. The only caveat to this was that respondents who were reading the e-newsletter did not feel the need to click on the video since they believed it was sufficiently summarized in the text above it.

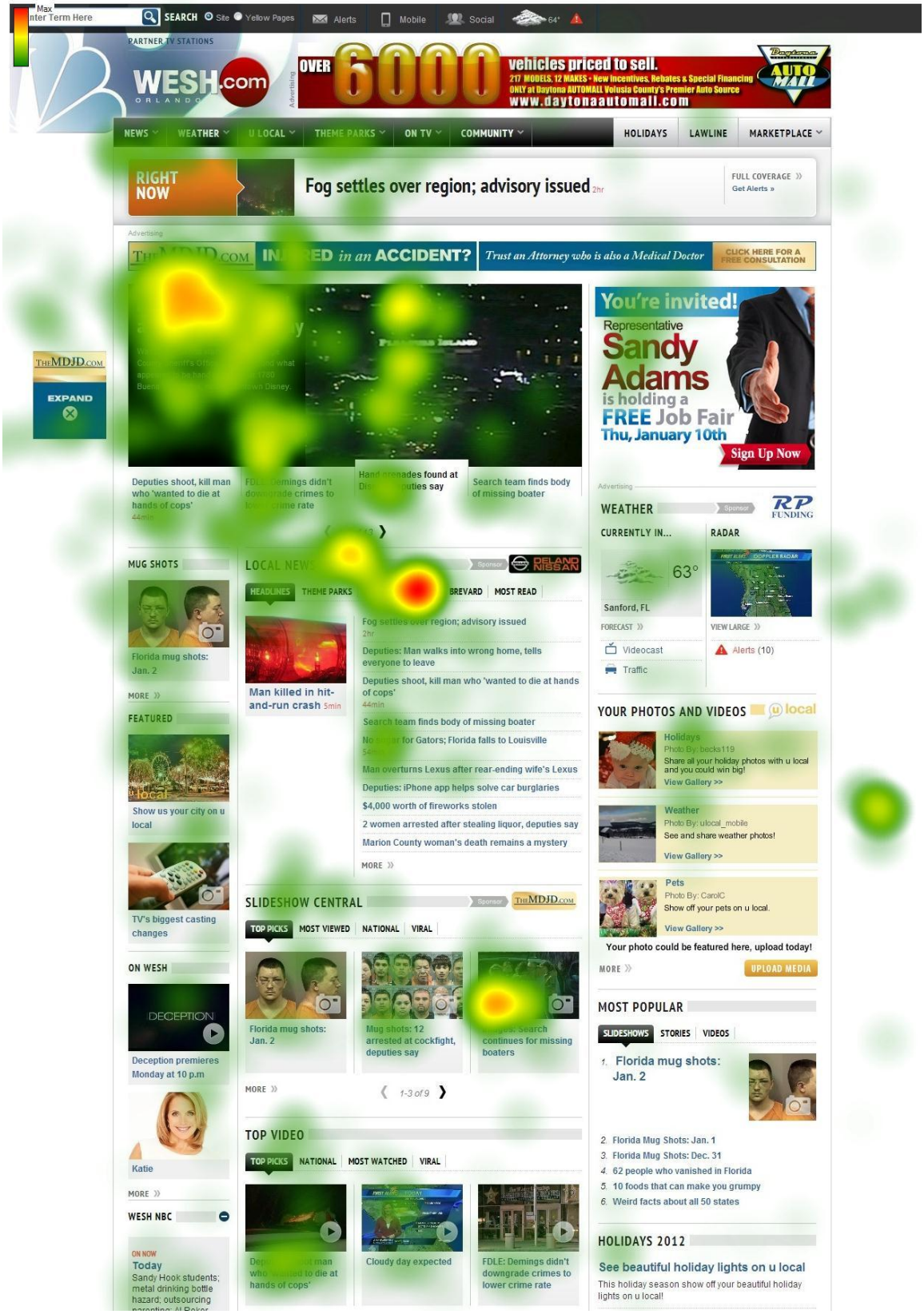
So, if Members would like constituents to watch a video, they need make sure to place it higher up on the page, and have most of the descriptive text below the video image so that people might bother to click. Below is an example we created:

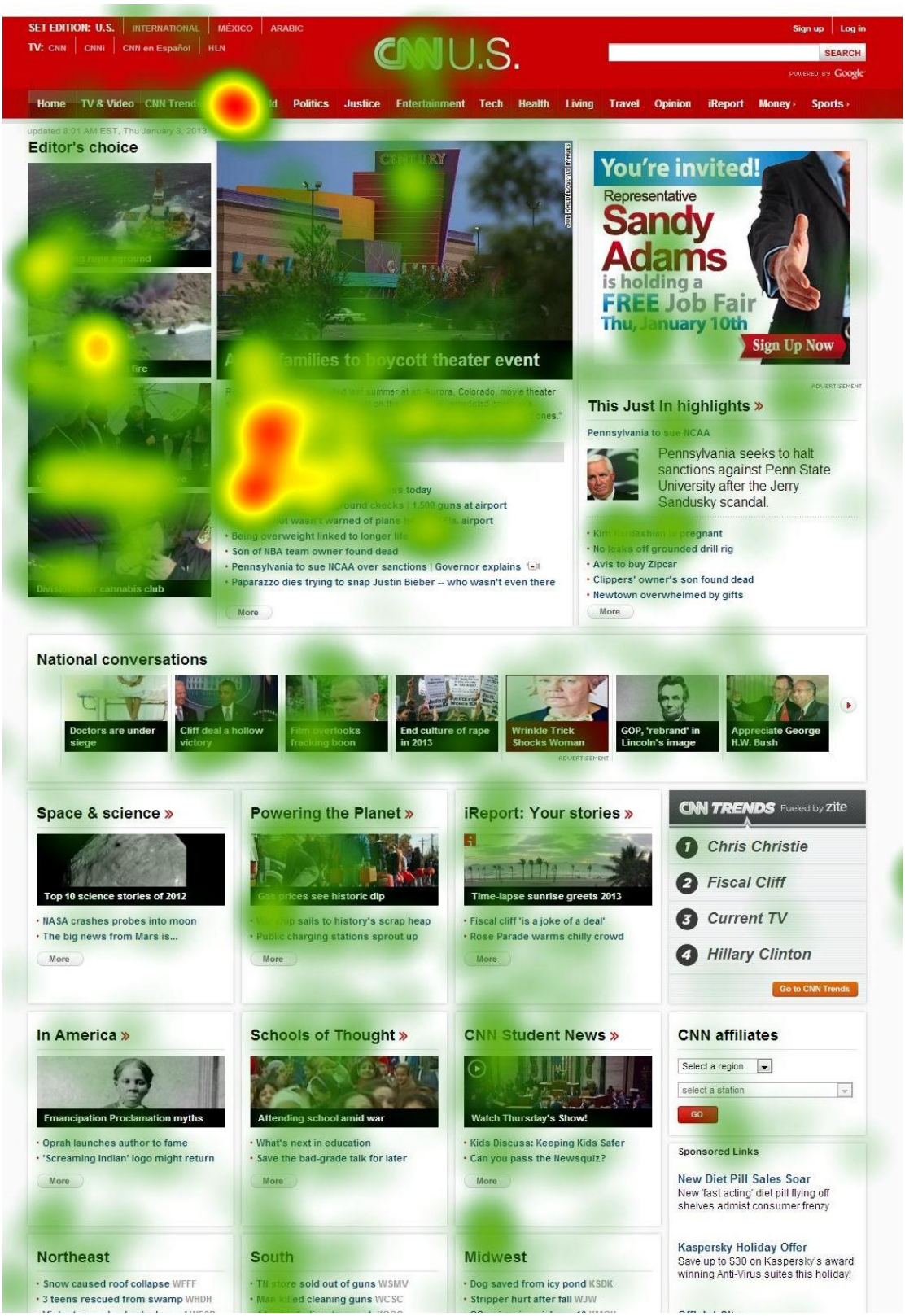
APPENDIX I

Round 1

Round 2


News-JournalOnline.com | Racing | Flagler | E-Edition | Parade | USA Weekend | News-Journal Events | Brides
Subscribe | Sign In
The Daytona Beach News-Journal
Tostitos FIESTA BOWL
4 OREGON
5 KANSAS STATE
PREVIEW >
TONIGHT
COVERAGE BEGINS
8:00 PM/ET
Search
Web Search by YAHOO!
62° L/FOG, DAYTONA BEACH, FL | SUBSCRIBER SERVICES | MOBILE | PLACE AD
Business
Entertainment
Living
Opinion
Obituaries
Classifieds
Real Estate
Jobs
Cars
FIND IT FAST: TODAY IN PRINT | MUGSHOTS | NEWS OF RECORD
New year means many questions for local hospitals
MORE STORIES
Tax bill could help Speedway expansion
Main St. bar could get Bike Week reprieve
Volusia facing 4th largest fine
is facing the fourth-largest fine among 31 Florida school districts that failed to meet state constitutional class-size limits last fall, READ MORE
Hospital to offer health insurance
MORE STORIES
Andy Romano park shaping up nice'
Flagler charter school closes abruptly
R&B group will take Flagler Auditorium up, up and away
Volunteer work leads to long-sought reunion
CRIME
A man shot near DeLand late New Year's Day died of his gunshot injury at the hospital where he was dropped off, a sheriff's spokesman said Wednesday. READ MORE
Naked man shot after Miami homeowner says he choked dog
A naked intruder shot after allegedly throttling a Miami family's dog and trying to bite its owner is refusing to cooperate with authorities. READ MORE
MORE CRIME
New Year's gunfire lands Daytona man in jail
Palm Coast man accused of firing gun to scare wife
Woman surrenders in NSB store robbery
Flagler man calls for help in robbery; deputies find 100 pot plants
BUSINESS
Gas distributor to expand its presence here with real estate purchase
A supplier of gas cylinders for industrial and medical use and seller of welding equipment has purchased the former Sears lawn and garden builder here on the READ MORE
Business briefs
Event to look at challenges facing women in business PALM COAST — Cheryl Tanenbaum, senior vice president and chief financial officer for Intracoastal Bank, and Heather Bevan, social READ MORE
MORE BUSINESS
Family carries on legacy of late DeLand businessman DeMarsh
Business briefs
New DeLand retailer aims to be a catalyst in creating downtown arts district
Business briefs
Harold, McClelland, state football picks
Press released its all-state 1A teams Wednesday with five players being named to the first team.
Matanzas hires Nettles as football coach
Matanzas hired Jeff Nettles on Wednesday to succeed Keith Lagocki as head football coach. READ MORE
MORE SPORTS
Class 1A, 2A all-state football teams
Seabreeze product Janikowski completes another successful year
College basketball roundup: Stetson men, women win
Sullivan keys Auburn over Florida State 78-72
Daily Deals
Click Here for Online Coupons
You're invited!
Representative Sandy Adams is holding a FREE Job Fair
Thu, January 10th
Sign Up Now
MOST READ | MOST EMAILED | MOST RECENT
Half of oldest identical twins — at 103 — still sharp, she wants you to know
Body of 1 missing boater found on Lake Jesup
Volusia deputies shoot, kill armed, suicidal man
No. 22 Louisville stuns No. 4 Florida, 33-17, in Sugar Bowl
College basketball roundup: Stetson men, women win
Internet + Home Phone from AT&T
get a hole-in-one deal
less than $39/mo for 12 months
Score More
Details
PHOTOS | YOUR PHOTOS
Ormond Beach's Andy Romano
First Day Hike Program at Bulow
Missing Men in Lake Jesup
New Year's Eve Around The World
Homeless Camps
Go Karts Take the Track


Max
Enter Term Here
SEARCH
Site
Yellow Pages
Alerts
Mobile
Social
PARTNER TV STATIONS
WESH.com
ORLANDO
OVER 6000 vehicles priced to sell.
217 MODELS, 12 MAKES • New Incentives, Rebates & Special Financing
ONLY at Daytona AUTOMALL Volusia County's Premier Auto Source
www.daytonaautomall.com
NEWS
WEATHER
U LOCAL
THEME PARKS
ON TV
COMMUNITY
HOLIDAYS
LAWLINE
MARKETPLACE
RIGHT NOW
Fog settles over region; advisory issued 2hr
FULL COVERAGE
Get Alerts
IN AN ACCIDENT?
Trust an Attorney who is also a Medical Doctor
CLICK HERE FOR A FREE CONSULTATION
EXPAND
Deputies shoot, kill man who 'wanted to die at hands of cops'
Search team finds body of missing boater
You're invited!
Representative Sandy Adams is holding a FREE Job Fair
Thu, January 10th
Sign Up Now
MUG SHOTS
Florida mug shots: Jan. 2
MORE
FEATURED
Show us your city on u local
TV's biggest casting changes
ON WESH
Deception premieres Monday at 10 p.m
Katie
WESH NBC
ON NOW
Today
Sandy Hook students; metal drinking bottle hazard; outsourcing
LOCAL NEWS
HEADLINES
THEME PARKS
BREVARD
MOST READ
Man killed in hit-and-run crash 5min
Fog settles over region; advisory issued 2hr
Deputies: Man walks into wrong home, tells everyone to leave
Deputies shoot, kill man who 'wanted to die at hands of cops' 44min
Search team finds body of missing boater
Man overturns Lexus after rear-ending wife's Lexus
Deputies: iPhone app helps solve car burglaries
$4,000 worth of fireworks stolen
2 women arrested after stealing liquor, deputies say
Marion County woman's death remains a mystery
SLIDESHOW CENTRAL
TOP PICKS
MOST VIEWED
NATIONAL
VIRAL
Florida mug shots: Jan. 2
Mug shots: 12 arrested at cockfight, deputies say
1-3 of 9
TOP VIDEO
TOP PICKS
NATIONAL
MOST WATCHED
VIRAL
Cloudy day expected
FDLE: Demings didn't downgrade crimes to lower crime rate
WEATHER
CURRENTLY IN...
RADAR
63°
Sanford, FL
FORECAST
VIEW LARGE
Videocast
Traffic
Alerts (10)
YOUR PHOTOS AND VIDEOS
Holidays
Photo By: becks119
Share all your holiday photos with u local and you could win big!
View Gallery >>
Weather
Photo By: ulocal_mobile
See and share weather photos!
View Gallery >>
Pets
Photo By: CarolC
Show off your pets on u local.
View Gallery >>
Your photo could be featured here, upload today!
UPLOAD MEDIA
MOST POPULAR
SLIDESHOWS
STORIES
VIDEOS
1. Florida mug shots: Jan. 2
2. Florida Mug Shots: Jan. 1
3. Florida Mug Shots: Dec. 31
4. 62 people who vanished in Florida
5. 10 foods that can make you grumpy
6. Weird facts about all 50 states
HOLIDAYS 2012
See beautiful holiday lights on u local
This holiday season show off your beautiful holiday lights on u local!


SET EDITION: U.S. | INTERNATIONAL | MÉXICO | ARABIC
TV: CNN | CNNi | CNN en Español | HLN
CNN U.S.
Sign up | Log in
SEARCH
Home | TV & Video | CNN Trends | Politics | Justice | Entertainment | Tech | Health | Living | Travel | Opinion | iReport | Money | Sports
Editor's choice
families to boycott theater event
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Avis to buy Zipcar
Clippers' owner's son found dead
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Action 9: Thousands may see long term insurance hikes
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bright sunshine shone down on Bob
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in Orlando
The many floats of the 2013 Rose Parade
Photos: Zoo baby animals
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U.S. Headlines
Gov. Christie blasts Boehner, Republicans
Gov. Chris Christie's blunt talk has long been one of his hallmarks. But Christie, who has verbally tangled with many, showed Wednesday he's
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More businesses close up shop in Baldwin Park
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hit child, drove away
2 injured
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APPENDIX II

Quick Guide for Effective Online Ads, Franked Mail, Websites, and E-newsletters

A. OFFICIAL ONLINE ADS

- **Be robust in your outreach**: Deliver multiple impressions to your web-using constituents (just one impression to each web-user will most likely go unnoticed). In other words, place your ad on multiple sites, multiple times.

B. FRANKED MAIL

- **Control what's likeliest to get read**: Use bullet points and bolded text when you want to grab readers' attention; use block text in a letter form when it's crucial for constituents to read every word you send them.
- **Make your mailing actionable**: Include information about constituent services or other important resources to show that you're trying to be helpful.
    - Put the information on a tear-off card so constituents can save it for reference.
- **Solicit feedback—*smartly***: Ask survey questions on a tear-off card for constituents to mail back in to show that you value their opinions.
    - Make the tear-off card prominent so it's obvious it should be saved if it's for reference, or mailed back if it's a survey.
    - Put the tear-off portion in a different color than the rest of the mail piece.
    - Print a dotted line around the perforation that stands out from the background.
    - Include scissor marks around the perforation as an obvious visual cue.
- **Demonstrate your accessibility**: Include multiple contact methods and addresses throughout the mail piece to show your constituents that you want to hear from them.
- **Incorporate policy timelines**: When a policy is being implemented over time, use a timeline (by year) to show the law's passage and implementation schedule.
- **Tailor your mail pieces**: If you are mailing mostly to seniors, keep the type fonts large.
- **Don't appear in photos alone**: When possible, include pictures of yourself interacting with constituents, rather than using stock photos which won't get as much attention, and won't help constituents view you more favorably.
- **Footnote statistics**: Know that your data will be questioned, particularly if it is counter-intuitive. If you don't cite a credible source, that data will be dismissed—or worse still, it will undermine your reputation.

C. WEBSITES

- **Label with precision**: Instead of having a button on the toolbar labeled "Issues," denote "Policy Issues" instead, since it's clearer what information constituents will find there.
    - Make sure "Policy Issues" has its own drop-down menu so that viewers can easily see the different public policy topics you offer information on before leaving the home page.
- **Don't make them hunt**: Make your vote on particular issues explicit and easy for constituents to find.
    - In the descriptions of where you stand on policy issues, include links to votes.
    - Allow users to sort vote records by topic area.
    - Include an additional search box with the "Vote Records" page.
- **Make "Search" prominent and attractive**: Put the search box in an easy-to-locate position, preferably near or in the menu bar. Have it look inviting and distinct, and encourage its use by including visually-engaging design elements.

D. E-NEWSLETTERS

- **Include an index**: You need some sort of overview at the top of your longer e-newsletters with hyperlinks to the sections below so constituents don't have to review the whole document to know what's in it.
- **Provide a "temporal" structure**: Incorporate the past/present/future construct into the index and the body of the e-newsletter. In other words, tell them what you did, tell them what you're doing, and tell them what you're going to do.
- **Be brief**: Keep the text short, sweet, and to the point.
    - Provide links at the end of each segment for constituents to "click to read more."
- **Use videos**: Include videos in the e-newsletter and embed them.
    - Make sure there is a play button over the image of the video.
    - Include a time code, or reference the length of the video in the text.
    - Keep the video under three minutes and preferably around 90 seconds.
    - Place text about the video topic below the video itself, so constituents will still get some value from watching the video if they have not read the summary yet.