

SOCIAL MEDIA #FTW!: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON AMERICAN
POLITICS

by
Kenneth Scott Ames

A thesis submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts in Government

Baltimore, Maryland
April 2014

© 2014 Kenneth Scott Ames
All Rights Reserved

Abstract

Social media has transformed politics in America. Its effect has impacted the way candidates campaign for the presidency, Members of Congress operate their offices, and advocacy organizations communicate with policymakers and supporters. Social media allows politicians and organizations a method to connect directly and without filters with people across the country, assemble a constituency, and solicit their support at a reduced cost and greater reach than traditional media. Social media is not simply the next in a line of communications technologies: it has changed everyday activities and connected people in a manner never before possible. The rise of smartphone technology has enabled this trend since people can access the Internet almost anywhere making a mobile device a potential organizing and fundraising tool. Social media has transformed politics in America because it creates an instantaneous multi-directional public dialogue that offers the ability to rapidly analyze the data and learn from the findings on an unprecedented scope.

Thesis advisor: Professor Dorothea Wolfson

Readers: Representative William F. Clinger, Jr., and Professor Robert Guttman

PREFACE

While I was contemplating my thesis topic, I knew I wanted to write about a topic that was timely, relevant, and interesting in the field of political communications. Many of my first classes at Johns Hopkins University were on government, politics, and the presidential election. At first, I wanted to write about trends in presidential elections, but I could not figure out a way to tackle the topic in a way that would achieve my goal. In my research of presidential elections, I began to notice a pattern emerge telling the tale of politicians utilizing cutting edge communications technologies to win. Most associate Franklin D. Roosevelt with the radio and his fireside chats; John F. Kennedy identifies with the advent of the television; and a few students in this field recognize Newt Gingrich owes his rise to cable television. It dawned on me that American politics just witnessed another such moment: Barack Obama's rise and reelection due to social media.

Now that I was focused on presidential elections from a social media standpoint, it naturally made sense to write the other two chapters about Congressional operations and advocacy because I have experience in both from my professional background. Having worked in a Congressional office, for a third party email vendor, and government contractor that provides online offices to the House of Representatives, I gained a unique perspective and had some incredible access and resources at my disposal in order to research the topic.

The following chapters of my thesis are my case for how social media has transformed the communications strategies of presidential campaigns, Congressional operations, and advocacy organizations. I am most exciting knowing that we've just scratched the surface of the potential of these communications technologies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout my life, believing that one person can make a difference has motivated me. This principle drew me to Washington for college, brought me to Capitol Hill, and then drove me into advocacy and communications. The common theme running through my career is my desire to help others and leave the world in a better position than we inherited it. I pursued my master's degree in government with a concentration in political communications at Johns Hopkins University with the encouragement and assistance of several people whom I would like to recognize.

Thank you to my parents, Alan and Anita Ames, who provided me with the best upbringing possible. They taught me character, integrity, determination, and loyalty through challenging me, encouraging my curiosity, and supporting me in my endeavors; and to them, I am eternally grateful. Thank you also to my sister, Amanda Ames Nager, brother-in-law, Ryan Nager, brother, Matthew Ames, and sister-in-law, Jennifer Parsons Ames. I would be remiss if I did not offer a special thanks to my aunts and uncles and cousins, especially Marsha Fradine, Ronald (of blessed memory) and Maryann Berger, Evan (of blessed memory) and Sheila Raine, and David and Nancy Wluka. My family is the source of my motivation.

Thank you most sincerely to Arnie Thomas (of blessed memory) for pushing me to pursue this degree. He supervised me at CQ Roll Call for over four years and taught me that even in a digital age relationships matter. He served as my professional and personal mentor and liked to remind me that there are no accidents in life, always take care of the client, and that a martini is earned through experiencing life. He passed away

suddenly on April 12, 2014, days after I read him this acknowledgement and just a month prior to joining me at graduation.

Thank you to two of the most influential and admired men I had the pleasure to serve: Congressmen Steny Hoyer and Barney Frank. It was a privilege to work for them where I learned the reason we are called to public service is not to enrich ourselves but to improve the lives of others and to leave the world in a better place than how we found it.

Thank you to my professors at Johns Hopkins University: Benjamin Ginsberg, Robert Guttman, Daniel Guttman, Rameez Abbas, Dorothea Wolfson, Michael Siegel, Mark Stout, and Jennifer Bachner. I also owe thanks to all of my teachers from the Sharon, Massachusetts, school system and my professors from The George Washington University.

Thank you to my peers at the Congressional Management Foundation for collaborating with me on this important topic. I especially want to thank Brad Fitch, Susie Gorden, and Beverly Bell. I have had a working relationship with this wonderful organization since 2007, which exists as a resource to Congress.

Thank you to the several people who helped me research, write, and edit my thesis. I want to specifically mention and thank Congressmen William Clinger, Tom Perriello, Alan Nunnelee, and Mark Takano; Barkley Kern, Maura Pierce, Mike Fulton, Judy Schnieder, Jerri Ann Henry, Bill Murphy, Caitlin Rush, Sean Evins, Clinton Britt, Melissa Ortiz, Yuri Beckelman, Brett Morrow, Tom Scanlon, Keith O'Neil, David Ferreira, Mark Levine, Alan Rosenblatt, Joshua Baca, Rob Bluey, and Tom Crabtree. Thank you also to my boss, Ken Ward, CEO at Fireside21, for his encouragement and interest in this topic.

Last, but definitely not least, thank you to Laura Goldin for her love, patience, humor, and understanding. She has been generous with her encouragement of me while I pursued this degree. I hope I can be as supportive throughout our lives together as she has been to me, particularly during the thesis writing process.

Dedicated to my niece and goddaughter, Molly Nager, and my nephews, Drew Nager and Evan Ames.

Chapter One Summary of Key Findings:

Social media played a key role in President Obama's elections. His campaign had the advantage on social media in the 2008 primaries and the 2008 and 2012 general election and emerged victorious in every contest. Social media played a key role in his primary victory over Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. While the political climate and history in 2008 was in President Obama's favor, his team still put together a more impressive social media strategy than Senator John McCain. In 2012, President Obama relied on his social media network and the power of incumbency to defeat Mitt Romney, whose team did not effectively utilize current communications technologies.

Social media is being used to enhance regular campaign functions, such as fundraising, strategy, and organizing. Candidates can use social media to connect with voters, engage with them in real time, and organize their supporters. These three campaign functions routinely rely upon social media and in some cases these tasks can blend together.

Challenges remain as social media democratizes elections, taking control from the campaign, and enabling individuals and outside groups to share their message without the traditional filters. Third party groups and individuals now have the ability to perform campaign functions like editing videos, sharing content such as photographs, and creating animations and memes. User-generated content can be influential and effective in making a political point.

Social media has fundamentally altered presidential campaigns by providing a way to circumvent the filter of traditional media, allowing campaigns to directly and expediently connect with voters and empowering citizens to have an active role in the election. Social media plays an instrumental role in helping citizens share information and has fundamentally altered presidential campaign communications. The campaign that better utilizes social media will be positioned to succeed.

Chapter Two Summary of Key Findings:

Social media is affecting the political process. Since Members have the ability to reach far more people outside their Congressional district, they have the ability to reach out to more people who they can recruit as supporters and donors. And, outside groups can exert an influence by utilizing their membership to pressure elected officials.

New communications technologies present opportunities for Members of Congress to connect with their audiences. With the filter of traditional news sources, Members are able to connect directly with their constituents and build a following of citizens who agree with them that live beyond their district's lines. That helps a Member raise their profile, appeal to a larger audience, and solicit donations.

Congressional offices are adopting social media technologies faster than previous communication technologies. Because the costs of establishing and maintaining social

media accounts on various sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are cheaper, reach more people, and are more authentic, Members of Congress are taking to this medium faster than previous communication technologies. Because their MRA has declined, they have been forced to look for innovative ways to do more with less while still trying to send their messages.

Social media is one tool, but it is not the only communications tool. Members continue to use traditional methods such as snail mail, email, town hall meetings, and appearing at events. But, social media is another way to engage citizens. Members understand they need to communicate with people in the manner to which they are accustomed to and expect a reply from their elected officials.

Chapter Three Summary of Key Findings:

Advocacy organizations are utilizing social media to enhance their influence on the political process. It allows for quick mobilization and sharing of information. Outside groups can draw supporters from all across the country and activate them at the appropriate time to contact their elected officials or to solicit donations.

Social media has made it simpler for outside groups to identify followers, strategize, and coordinate. It is important and necessary for citizens to play an active role in a working democracy. Social media lets people interact freely and without many restrictions.

Outside groups are at the height of their political process. Today, they wield more influence over the political process than in ever before in American politics. Conservative groups demonstrated this in the most recent government shutdown. Many advocacy organizations use social media to engage in fundraising campaigns as well as issue advocacy.

The campaign, elected official, or advocacy organization that uses social media possesses an advantage over the competition. It remains important to connect with voters and recruit supporters in order to prevail in an issues debate. By comparison, traditional methods appear slow, dated, and ineffective. Social media is faster at sharing information and provides useful data that can be studied so that the results can be implemented.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Summary of Key Findings	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Social Media’s Impact on Presidential Campaigns.....	10
Literature Review.....	12
History of Social Media Use by Political Campaigns.....	12
Definitions.....	14
Fundraising.....	15
Strategy.....	17
Organizing.....	20
Challenges.....	22
Methodology.....	25
Case Analysis.....	26
Forty-Seven Percent.....	29
Hurricane Sandy.....	36
Conclusion.....	42
Chapter 2: Social Media’s Impact on Congressional Operations.....	46
Literature Review.....	47
History of Constituent Communications.....	49
Definitions.....	55
Methodology.....	58
Case Analysis: The Government Shutdown of October 2013.....	59
The Cost of Communicating.....	63
The Changes in Congressional Office Operations.....	65
Authenticity.....	68
Challenges.....	74
Conclusion.....	79
Chapter 3: How Advocacy Organizations Use Social Media to Affect Public Policy.....	83
Literature Review.....	84
Definitions.....	84
Function of advocacy groups.....	85
Aims of advocacy organizations.....	89
How Congress Processes Communications.....	92
How Advocacy Groups Communicate with Policymakers.....	95
Methodology.....	98
Case Analysis: The Government Shutdown of October 2013.....	98
Overview of the Shutdown.....	100
The Social Media Defense of ObamaCare.....	104
User Generated Content During the Shutdown.....	107
The Turning Point.....	108

End of the Shutdown.....	109
The Downsides of Social Media.....	113
Which Side is Winning?.....	117
Conclusion.....	120
Thesis Conclusion.....	123
Findings.....	127
Limitations of This Research.....	131
Appendix A: Interview with Representative Bill Clinger.....	134
Appendix B: Interview with Representative Alan Nunnelee.....	138
Appendix C: Interview with Representative Mark Takano.....	143
Appendix D: Interview with Alan Rosenblatt.....	150
Appendix E: Interview with Rob Bluey.....	164
Appendix F: Interview with Representative Tom Perriello.....	175
Appendix G: Interview with Joshua Baca.....	189
Appendix H: Statement from Tom Crabtree.....	212
Bibliography.....	213
Curriculum Vitae.....	224

THESIS INTRODUCTION

On December 5, 2002, Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott spoke at Strom Thurmond's hundredth birthday party, the first and only sitting U.S. Senator to reach that age. Lott remembered Thurmond's 1948 presidential run, a platform that was overtly segregationist, as he honored his colleague. In his praise, he remarked, "I want to say this about my state [Mississippi]: When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either." The media that was at the event didn't give his remarks coverage, deeming there to be no story. But, weblogs picked up on the comments and they began to spread to other bloggers who editorialized and also discovered that Lott had a history of making such comments in private settings. In the weeks after the birthday party, Lott was forced to step down from his leadership position.¹

Social media has transformed politics in America. Even in its infancy, as described in this story, it caught many people by surprise. This Lott incident foreshadowed the power of social media to change politics. Its effect has impacted the way candidates campaign for the presidency, Members of Congress operate their offices, and advocacy organizations communicate with policymakers and supporters. Social media is not simply the next in a line of communications technologies: it has changed everyday activities and connected people in a manner never before possible. When radio, television, and cable television became mainstream, they presented opportunities for politicians to reach new audiences. But, those conversations went one-way, and the

¹ Shirky, Clay. *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations*.

capability to respond in kind was not practical. Social media is transformative because it creates an instantaneous multi-directional public dialogue that offers the ability to rapidly analyze the data and learn from the findings on an unprecedented scope.

This interactive quality coupled with the capacity to examine its metrics distinguishes social media from simply being the next in a line of communications technologies that alter the way people receive news and information. The first iteration of the Internet, referred to as Web 1.0, belongs in a comparison with radio, television, and cable television as new inventions that simply shared information from source to reader. Web 2.0, also known as social media, enabled interaction between two people or groups and the sharing of ideas, videos, photos, and news. Social media has altered human interactions through its capability to instantly share thoughts, photos, and videos and have them recorded on a platform that permits viewing them at one's choice along with the ability to comment and send to others.

Internet technology has been available since the late 1960s and utilized by the government, more specifically in military and higher education settings. It was not until the mid-1990s that it became prevalent in use among the general public, who used the Internet to obtain general information. This first wave of Internet use is referred to as Web 1.0 and was based on the one-way, mass communication model of information being transmitted from sender to receiver. The second generation of the Internet is called Web 2.0, which refers to two-way communication between web users and web providers of information. This real-time interactivity has been termed, "social media," and its platforms have revolutionized the way organizations communicate with their publics.²

It is crucial that politicians and advocates understand the impact social media is having on politics in America in order to spread messages to their audiences and keep

² Fulton, Mike. *Social Media and Online Advocacy*. West Virginia University: Online Graduate Program, Integrated Marketing Communications 693S Public Affairs, Unit 07. Summer semester 2013.

their pulse on the hot topics relevant to the local and national debate. Effective politicians are in tune with the concerns of their constituency; this is an indispensable quality to possess in order to win at the ballot box. Savvy advocates must remain well versed in the tools and methods to motivate their membership to activate them to influence policymakers. It is important to engage citizens where they congregate like malls, supermarkets, and parades to name a few. With the explosion of social media, it becomes paramount to seek out the voters where they converge online.

It is also important to fathom how social media is changing politics in America because the shrewd politician or advocate can adapt their strategies to increase maximum effectiveness by analyzing the immense amounts of data available. Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, to name a few, provide useful analytics that are easy to digest. One can see how popular a story on Twitter is by how many retweets it receives; or how poignant a photograph or video with a description on Facebook by the number of likes; or how engaging a video on YouTube by the number of times it is viewed or shared. If some content does not receive attention, the owner of the account can learn from the experience and adjust future postings. Social media provides the opportunity for leaders to communicate with citizens and directly hear from them expeditiously.

In order to observe how social media has altered politics in America, this thesis studied three principal areas that have been impacted: presidential campaigns, Congressional operations, and advocacy organization application and methods. This thesis was crafted by examining relevant research, especially for definitions and to test their findings. For much of the current events, it was also necessary to study news articles, tweets, and televised reports. The first chapter relies on counterfactual

examination to explore how the 2012 presidential election might have transpired in the absence of social media, thus demonstrating its power. The second and third chapters survey the government shutdown during October 2013 for instances of how social media was utilized and speculate on how it may have contributed and enabled the shutdown. A substantial amount of this thesis relies upon personal interviews of current and former Members of Congress as well as experts in social media, the Internet, and communications.

There are numerous types of social media platforms for various functions such as: social networking (Facebook), publishing (WordPress), photo sharing (Flickr), audio sharing (iTunes), video sharing (YouTube), and microblogging (Twitter).³ Mobile technology like iPhones, Blackberries, and Androids, has assisted with the adoption of social media. The ease of being able to take a picture or video and share it instantly has transformed the way people shop, socialize, interact, and communicate.⁴

Social media allows citizens and elected officials to converse on any number of matters. People are better able to organize, assemble, and communicate because of social media. “These mediums allow Members to communicate directly with constituents (and others) in a potentially interactive way that is not possible through mail or e-mail. For Members and their staff, the ability to collect and transmit real time information to and from constituents could be influential for issue prioritization, policy decisions, or voting behaviors.”⁵ “Issues are used to legitimize political struggles, build coalitions, and

³ Fulton, Mike, Social Media and Online Advocacy, Unit 07.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Glassman, Matthew Eric and Jacob Straus and Colleen Shogan. *Social Networking and Constituent Communication: Member Use of Twitter During a Two-Week Period in the 112th Congress*. (Congressional Research Service 2013) 11.

mobilize politically. An issue is legitimized when it is converted to appeal broadly. Building coalitions around issues is important, but using an issue as a wedge to break up the other side is also effective. And, when mobilizing, the issue should have a moral side for which to motivate one's supporters and attack opponents."⁶ Social media streamlines mobilizing and also provides effective tools to quickly inspire followers or demonize rivals.

The first chapter argues that social media has fundamentally altered presidential campaigns because it removed the filter of traditional media. Without having to rely on news organizations to decide what stories to air, when to air them, and for how long, campaigns are free to connect directly with voters and engage them through their preferred method and at their leisure. The ability to connect directly with voters in an expeditious manner and receive their input enables campaigns to communicate with more people and enlist their support than in previous elections. Additionally, it empowered citizens to coalesce around ideals and candidates that related to them and provided the tools for citizens to affect the campaign.

Without social media, it would have been nearly impossible for then-Senator Barack Obama to challenge then-Senator Hillary Clinton, let alone defeat her for the Democratic nomination. Yet, the team Obama assembled created their own social network that raised so much money they opted out of public financing, reached more volunteers than previously possible, and cultivated an online community of supporters who shared stories and experiences that reinforced their beliefs, dedication, and energy. Obama was able to use the network his team created in 2008 for advocating for his

⁶ Ginsberg, Benjamin. *Class notes from Government and Politics*. Johns Hopkins University. September 20, 2011.

policies once in the White House and to win reelection in 2012. Taking note of his success, policymakers and advocates began copying his model.

In 2008, the President ran a very sophisticated digital campaign for 2008. You think about the leaps he made from 2008 to 2012 were enormous technologically, and using social media particularly. The point I'm getting at was that election opened the eyes of people to use social media tools to communicate with voters, to microtarget voters, to get the message out. I would say the common thing I heard in 2009 from clients, and people who were running for campaign offices, or whatever it was, it was like, "I want what Obama did."⁷

Obama's team set the standard for using social media. It energized a movement, powered by young people and relied on mobile technology to change virtually every aspect of presidential campaign communications, like fundraising, organizing, and processing information. During his reelection campaign in 2012, Obama maintained his digital edge, besting the Republican nominee, Governor Mitt Romney, online and in the election. Most observers agree that Obama benefitted more from social media than Romney because he engaged a larger audience, provided superior resources, and had reliable technology to make sure his supporters voters. Carol Mumford, a Republican National Committeewoman from Rhode Island, observed, "What the Obama campaign did was run a national campaign like a local election."⁸

The second chapter assesses the way Congressional offices communicate with their constituencies and the role social media played in the shutdown in October of 2013. After the Republicans took control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections, the G.O.P. leadership reduced the operating budget, forcing Members to look

⁷ Baca, Joshua. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 6, 2014.

⁸ Barbour, Henry, and Sally Bradshaw, Ari Fleischer, Zori Fonalledas, and Glenn McCall. "Growth and Opportunity Project." The Republican National Committee. 2013. 46.

for more cost effective ways to operate their official offices. Staffers adopted social media as a preferred method to communicate out of necessity, but also because it allowed them to reach their targeted audiences better than previous methods. “The whole idea is to get [voters’] attention. In the case of Newt, that was C-SPAN. And the Contract with America got people engaged.”⁹

During the shutdown in October of 2013, some offices furloughed staffers, leaving only a handful to perform the duties of an entire Congressional office. Astute Senators and Representatives and their staff realized that social media could help them raise their profile, talk directly to their constituency, and raise money. Members of Congress are able to communicate with constituents through online methods at minimal expense, in large part due to the cost of franking and mailing printed letters and newsletters. These functions can be done electronically and reach more people faster. This was particularly useful during the shutdown when events transpired quickly: social media allowed Members and their staff to keep citizens informed almost in real time. In comparison, during the shutdowns in the mid 1990s, it took days or longer for constituents and their elected officials to exchange letters. “Social media digital tactics from Facebook to cultivating emails to being able to communicate [with] 100,000 people in the click of a mouse at no cost, adds fuel to the fire to keep them doing these things... [T]he 150,000 or the 10 million followers they have on Twitter, that’s a larger audience that a lot of people have, and it’s instant.”¹⁰

⁹ Clinger, Bill. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. October 22, 2013.

¹⁰ Baca Interview.

The third chapter of this thesis discusses how advocacy organizations have noticed the paradigm shift and adjusted tactics to influence the political process. Social media has simplified how groups identify followers, coordinate with their members, and strategize. The result has been the unparalleled power to sway the political process in America like never before possible. And while these outside groups are more influential today than they have been in great part due to social media, their existence serves as a check on the government. “A more informed and active citizenry is good for democracy because it will urge Congress to act on issues that have overwhelming public support.”¹¹

In the government shutdown of October 2013, the power of outside advocacy groups was demonstrated as conservative organizations forced the hand of the Republican leadership into a tactic it resisted. “Twitter gives more people the tools to exert political power than ever before.”¹² This turn of events would not have been possible absent social media because it afforded these groups the ability to bypass previous filters and connect directly with their followers, energize them through messaging, and utilize them to exert pressure on their elected officials to hold firm on the demand to fund the rest of the government except for The Affordable Care Act. “From an advocacy perspective, now social media is being pitched as an engagement tool where it used to be pitched as a communications tool.”¹³

While this thesis did not delve deeply into social media’s affect on traditional journalism, it clearly has transformed the media. News organizations report tweets of notable figures famous in pop culture, sports, and politics; and these public conversations

¹¹ Rosenblatt, Alan. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 3, 2014.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Baca Interview.

become part of the national dialogue. Prior to social media, journalists would ask for a response to a quote. What social media has done is speed up the process and spread the reach. Plus, there is greater authenticity when viewed in their own words and writing. A good illustration of this phenomenon occurred on November 23, 2013. Senator John Cornyn, in response to President Obama's announced deal on Iran, tweeted: "Amazing what WH will do to distract attention from O-care." To which, David Plouffe, a top Obama advisor, replied, "No, a real distraction would be war. Like Iraq." Rep. Nunnelee reflected on this phenomenon of journalists reporting on tweets: "I did find it fascinating that a lot of mainstream news sources report what Members tweets. I think they are picking that up quicker than we are sending out a news release."¹⁴ It would be interesting to read research about how social media has transformed what the press reports.

Senator Lott was one of the early victims of the power of social media. His remarks, initially overlooked, created a whirlwind of activity, made possible because of the interactive nature of social media that led to the Bush White House pushing him from his leadership position. And, this was only possible because of the online tools available that helped individual citizens connect with one another to piece together a larger picture:

Prior to our current generation of coordinating tools, a part-time politics junkie like [Ed] Sebesta and amateur commentators like the bloggers would have had a hard time even discovering that they had mutual interests, much less being able to do anything with that information. Now, however, the cover of finding like-minded people has been lowered and, more important, deprofessionalized.¹⁵

¹⁴ Nunnelee, Alan. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. November 14, 2013.

¹⁵ Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody*, 63.

Chapter 1: Social Media's Impact on Presidential Campaigns

In June of 2007, Leah Kauffman, a college student, singer, and songwriter, posted a music video called “I Got a Crush on Obama” on the *Barely Political* YouTube channel. It featured a girl singing about her crush on then-Senator and Presidential hopeful, Barack Obama. It caught the attention of the electorate as millions viewed it online. This racy, amateur video was light-hearted, but it provided a real boost to the little-known candidate, casting him as a Tiger Beat heartthrob and capturing the attention of the media and the nation. Yet, what distinguished this video from previous political videos was that it did not feature anyone famous and was completely user-generated. Kauffman was not in any way affiliated with the campaign, but her video became so popular that it was selected as one of Newsweek’s top ten memes of the decade.¹⁶

Social media has altered the way that presidential candidates run for office. Prior to video sharing, Kauffman’s song would have received little attention since it would have been nearly impossible for her to distribute the video beyond a core group. If Barack Obama’s campaign wanted to create an ad of this sort, it would have to direct time, resources, and money to producing the video and buying airtime. But social media has a democratizing affect on the way that campaigns function by altering the dynamics. What was once only plausible for the official campaign to execute is now available to nearly anyone: campaigns have less control over the content that voters will see. Yet, there is tremendous upside for a presidential candidate whose team can utilize social media to perform vital campaign roles.

Social media is not just another platform for politicians and the public to

¹⁶ Bennett-Smith, Meredith. “Obama Girl ‘Still Got a Crush’ On the President in New Music Hit From Leah Kauffman.” *The Huffington Post*. September 6, 2012.

communicate: it is transformative because it has changed the speed, tone, and nature of political communications and produces hordes of data that can be analyzed. This is a fundamental shift in human behavior and culture that affects how populaces communicate.¹⁷ No longer do people need to pick up a newspaper in the morning or wait for the evening news or rely on finding a computer with Internet access: now millions of American voters receive information and messages instantly on their smartphones nearly wherever they are. Social media has become instrumental for presidential campaigns by providing the tools to combine important campaign functions including devising strategy, raising money, and organizing grassroots volunteers. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become so popular and widely used in the culture they have forced candidates to engage voters on these websites out of necessity or risk losing an advantage to their opponents.

This chapter will examine the relationship between the rise of social media and its effect on presidential campaign communications. It is important to ask, how has the rise of social media affected how presidential campaigns communicate with potential voters? The literature review will peer through the lens of President Obama's 2008 campaign. While an unorthodox approach, it is practical in this instance because a great deal of literature on this topic emerged from this campaign. It begins with a brief history of social media and definitions. Then, it will focus on three specific and crucial aspects of campaigns: fundraising, strategy, and organizing before discussing how President Obama's campaign team maximized its benefits and addressed a few of the challenges.

In the next section, the case studies will test the predictions from the literature

¹⁷ Anderson, Dennis. "How has Web 2.0 reshaped the presidential campaign in the United States?" (2009) 2.

review through offering counterfactual analysis about how the 2012 presidential campaign may have transpired in the absence of social media. It presents two watershed moments from the 2012 election, removes social media from the equation, and hypothesizes how events likely would have transpired without social media, mostly by looking at how Governor Romney's team performed. Finally, it concludes by examining social media's affect on the outcome of the 2012 presidential election.

Literature Review

In 2007, Hilary Rodham Clinton was the clear frontrunner for the Democratic nomination for president. Yet, despite her advantage in name recognition, accomplishments, and fundraising prowess, Barack Obama bested her in the battle for delegates and on January 20, 2009, was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States. How did the first-term junior Senator from Illinois with a short list of achievements edge out Clinton and former Senator and Vice-Presidential nominee, John Edwards, and then defeat the Republican nominee, decorated Vietnam War veteran and Senator, John McCain, to become our nation's first African American chief executive? Aaker and Chang¹⁸ argue that a key element in Obama's successful campaign was that his team used the technology of social media as a central tenet of its strategy that helped with fundraising while empowering volunteers who felt they could make a difference. In victory, Obama's presidential campaign has revolutionized campaigns forever. This review will examine the selected body of literature on social media and how it has changed how presidential campaigns communicate with potential voters.

History of Social Media Use by Political Campaigns

¹⁸ Aaker, Jennifer, and Victoria Chang. "Obama and the power of social media and technology." *The European Business Review* (2010): 17-21.

Since the advent of the modern campaign, candidates for elected office and their staff have utilized newspapers, telephones, faxes, and email in order to spread their messages to potential voters in a quest to win the Electoral College. Radio invited Franklin Roosevelt into the homes of millions during the Great Depression; television was crucial in John F. Kennedy's victory; and the Internet exploded during Bill Clinton's administration. In fact, Clinton referred to himself as the president at the emergence of the Internet era.¹⁹

Early in 2004, Howard Dean became the front-runner for the Democratic nomination by building a following of bloggers and activists on the Internet, mostly through Meetup, an early social network that allowed groups to self-organize.²⁰ However, his support from the online community did not result in a groundswell of support at the Iowa Caucus, which he lost thus beginning his eventual decline. For the 2008 election, the Obama campaign recruited former Dean technology staffers who directly influenced the direction of their online strategy, implemented what worked, and learned from their previous mistakes. Additionally, by the time the 2008 election season commenced, more people were using Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube making it the first presidential contest in which these popular social networking sites were widely available to voters.²¹ Without social media, Obama very likely might have not been a viable candidate in the primaries against Senators Clinton and Edwards because he

¹⁹ Leuschner, Katy. "The Use of the Internet and Social Media in U.S. Presidential Campaigns: 1992-2012." (May 2012) 6.

²⁰ Wolf, Gary. "How the internet invented Howard Dean." *WIRED magazine* 12, no. 1 (2004).

²¹ Hanson, Gary, Paul Michael Haridakis, Audrey Wagstaff Cunningham, Rekha Sharma, and J. D. Ponder. "The 2008 presidential campaign: Political cynicism in the age of Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube." *Mass Communication and Society* 13, no. 5 (2010), 585.

wouldn't have been able to find and connect with his audience, solicit money from them, or motivated them to support his campaign and recruit their friends and family.

Modern presidential campaigns have evolved significantly in the past century. They have become large operations that require numerous paid staffers working together with thousands of volunteers. Within months after the midterm elections, candidates begin forming exploratory committees and declare their candidacy resulting in campaign organizations that can last up to two years if they make it through the primary and all the way to Election Day. At the heart of these organizations are three crucial functions: fundraising, organizing, and strategy. With the rise of social media, the lines between these three has been blurred as their functions overlap and can be done faster and on a larger scale and raise record sums of money. Aronson²² states that the scope and speed of social media enables campaigns to reach so many more people than earlier examples of communication technology innovations that contribute to the fundamental change in human culture. The following discussion will examine and explain how these campaign functions are done differently in the social media era. A quick note: while these campaign functions are being categorized for the sake of analysis, there is actually quite a bit of overlap among them.

Definitions

The accepted definition of “social media,” “new media,” or “Web 2.0” refers to Internet technologies that include campaign websites, blogging, Internet fundraising tools, and social networking sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Social media, as defined by the Merriam Dictionary, is a term used to describe “forms of

²² Aronson, Elise D. "Cyber-Politics: How New Media has Revolutionized Electoral Politics in the United States." *Colgate Academic Review* 9, no. 1 (2012) 3.

electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal message, and other content.”

“Going viral” is a term used to define the social media phenomenon whereby a picture, link, or video spreads quickly throughout an audience that repeatedly shares the content with their network who forward it along to their friends and so forth. Social media has made the speed and ease of communications almost instantaneous. Due to the near real-time speed and simplicity millions of potential voters are attracted to platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube where content sharing is simple with a vast reach.

UrbanDictionary.com defines FTW as “For the Win.” It adds an animated emphasis to the end of a comment, message, or post often used acerbically. “It originated from the game show *Hollywood Squares* where the result of the player's response is expected to win the game.”²³

Fundraising

Donating online is not new; however, easily sharing content by posting to Facebook or sending a Tweet can inspire others to take similar action. Politicians have always gone where the people are in order to spread their message and solicit donations; Obama’s team realized the potential of social media and tactically applied it, especially in key aspects like fundraising, strategizing, and organizing. Anderson²⁴ explains that before 2008, presidential campaigns used the Internet mostly to share information with some capabilities to raise money. However, when Obama’s team fully embraced Web 2.0 technologies in order to bring communities together around his messages, he was able

²³ UrbanDictionary.com

²⁴ Anderson, “How has Web 2.0,” 2.

to raise record sums of money.

Obama's web campaign was so successful that they shattered previous fundraising records, affording him the war chest necessary to operate a national campaign through Election Day.²⁵ It gave him the freedom to opt out of the public financing systems for presidential campaigns and exceed the limits imposed. Since this system was created in 1976 in the wake of Watergate, every candidate has participated. Obama's supporters were able to donate small sums of money by texting from anywhere as well as sharing content quickly and easily. The texting program allowed supporters to subscribe and donate through their handheld devices.²⁶ As a result of these innovations, Obama set impressive campaign records as his team raised \$750 million and more people gave to his campaign than any other campaign in American history with almost 4 million donors.²⁷

Dinner with Barack was a great example of how the campaign used the new technology to raise money, giving a spin on an old concept. Traditionally, only bundlers and high-dollar donors can afford intimate dinners and other events with presidential candidates, essentially buying access average citizens are not provided. In line with his populist image, Obama's campaign created an ongoing drawing that selected donors of any amount to dine with him and discuss their concerns.²⁸ Frequently, supporters would receive emails asking for low-dollar donations of \$3 or \$5 to be entered for a chance to have dinner with Barack. The campaign drew winners in a novel way: they picked one dinner guest at a time then shared that winner's story across their platforms. This

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Aaker and Chang, "Obama and the power."

²⁷ Bradley, Tahman. "Final Fundraising Figure: Obama's \$750 M." ABC News. December 5, 2008.

²⁸ Aaker and Chang, "Obama and the power."

strategy encouraged a large audience to continue to donate for the chance to join Obama and the selected winners for the remaining seats at the table, advanced the campaign's narrative, and solicited more money.

The Obama campaign also took full advantage of texting as a strategy to fundraise and organize. Semiatin²⁹ explains that since most people own a cell phone and many use a smartphone like an iPhone or BlackBerry, a candidate can turn a rally into a fundraiser by asking supporters to call or text their donation. This is the technology already in use to raise funds from concertgoers for a variety of causes and relief efforts. A candidate can now campaign and raise money simultaneously: the technology allows for on-the-spot participation. People are more likely to take action at the time of the request, and if the campaign takes advantage this technology, they should see a better return on investment.

Strategy

President Barack Obama's pioneering use of the Internet in 2008 drew comparisons with President John F. Kennedy's groundbreaking use of television in 1960. Both Kennedy and Obama faced questions about their heritage and deftly utilized the new medium to appeal to voters. Kennedy used television to discuss his Catholic faith that assuaged many of the majority Protestant voters while Obama gave a well-received speech on race in America that reverberated across the Internet. Both strategically leveraged the technologies available to maximize their effectiveness and win.

If you ever go back to that first debate between Kennedy and Nixon, where there was a first TV debate, and I always remember my grandfather saying, if you listen to it on radio everybody thought Nixon won. If you watched in on TV everybody thought Kennedy won because he was

²⁹ Semiatin, Richard J., ed. *Campaigns on the cutting edge*. (CQ Press, 2012) 139.

young, sharp, and good-looking. [T]hat sort of happened again in 2012 in a lot of ways. Obama was cool in 2008. He was cooler than Hilary Clinton and John McCain. He was cooler than Mitt Romney in 2012. A lot of that coolness was because he was so instant because of the device you have on your phone... Removing aside the political differences and broader geopolitical things that were occurring at the moment, he was more accessible, he was cooler, and he was legitimized in many ways because of this.³⁰

Devising a blueprint for an eighteen-month campaign requires creativity, planning, and execution. Core tenets of campaigns like raising money, going door-to-door, appearing at rallies in key states, and phone banking remain crucial today. Social media can enhance these core strategic functions of a campaign by decentralizing the operation and empowering volunteers. What Obama's team did was to give more responsibility to their local offices and volunteers that was possible through their reliance on social media.

Obama's team realized the potential of social media and altered their fundraising goal from total dollars raised to total number of donors. Joe Rospers, a veteran of the Dean campaign and a founding partner of Blue State Digital said that they set their goals by the number of people giving: their success was measured by number of donors and not the dollar amount.³¹ Putting the emphasis on number of donors spread their appeal to a larger number of supporters than traditional campaigns that sought after high-level donors. The Obama campaign effectively incentivized their low-level donors by showcasing a particular milestone such as the 100,000th donor by email or sharing a moving story of why one supporter backed Obama the blog and the website. And, through their email-matching program, they solicited non-donors to give any amount

³⁰ Baca Interview.

³¹ Aaker and Chang, "Obama and the power."

pledging they would find a match from someone who had already donated. This was incredibly successful, according to Rospers, as they raised tens of millions of dollars and connected hundreds of thousands of people with other grassroots supporters.³²

Fundraising and organizing are no longer two separate aspects of the campaign: social media has brought them both into a symbiotic relationship.

While fundraising is a crucial aspect of a campaign's overall election strategy, getting people to dedicate their time is also critical. Obama's social media strategy made it convenient for their volunteers to help was what separated their efforts from their rivals. His grassroots team was able to integrate the old with the new and devised innovative programs as *Walk for Change*, a grassroots-canvassing program that held statewide canvasses in early-voting primary states.³³ It was marshaled on three principles: respect, empower, and include. Rospers explained that *Walk for Change* allowed supporters to organize over 1,000 events using their planning tool, built a broad movement, and got more people involved, and then the campaign posted videos of these events. This was a display of integrating the new with the old.

In addition to stuffing his campaign coffers, the Obama campaign deftly exploited new media for strategic purposes. MyBarackObama (MyBO) was critically important after the primary loss in New Hampshire because it allowed the campaign to support their followers, according to David Plouffe.³⁴ After winning Iowa yet losing New Hampshire, Obama's supporters may have felt discouraged, but MyBarackObama, the campaign's social media network, functioned to keep supporters focused. Similar to a coach

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

motivating a team after a loss, the website let supporters know about the next primary or caucus and kept morale high. Social media made it easier for volunteers to take more ownership and feel like they had a stake – the campaign created MyBO.com which enabled supporters to connect with others, make calls at home from their own phone, and see if a neighbor needed a ride to the polls and then they could report their efforts.

Organizing

In the first few weeks and months after his campaign announcement, Barack Obama's team relied on three ideals of social media: accessibility, transparency, and innovation. Early on, his website featured his campaign schedule, an official blog, BarackTV (a video channel), and MyBO.com. Over one thousand grassroots groups responded in the first day of his announcement by using the site's online tools for their own organizing.³⁵ It was evident in the beginning that in order to topple the heavily favored Clinton, they would need to take advantage of their technology and use it to raise funds and organize supporters.

Obama's web tools were replacing or supplementing long-time campaign operations like phone banking, town halls meetings, mass mailings, and advertisements and commercials. Neighbor-to-Neighbor, a tool available to Obama supporters on his website, matched volunteers to undecided voters who needed to be contacted and provided them with resources like scripts, customized fliers, and reporting mechanisms for the campaign to track. Volunteers used this tool to make eight million calls from their own phones and at their convenience.³⁶ People still came in to local Obama headquarters

³⁵ Harfoush, Rahaf. *Yes We Did! An inside look at how social media built the Obama brand*. (New Riders, 2009) 5.

³⁶ Aaker and Chang, "Obama and the power."

to phone-bank, but the ease of using Neighbor-to-Neighbor made it more convenient and allowed volunteers to call people in their hometown, adding an element of familiarity.

Email was another powerful method to reach voters. Obama's campaign charged their email team with three goals: message, mobilization, and money.³⁷ Mass mailings by email is preferable as it reduces costs and saves volunteers time stuffing envelopes. Campaigns can micro-target voters by specific criteria and issues and send them ads applicable to them. Obama's campaign drafted over than 7,000 customized emails personalized to potential supporters.³⁸

Social media has also made it easier for sharing campaign videos. Previously, radio spots and TV ads were only accessible to viewers. However, today ads are available on the candidates' website or their YouTube account for convenient viewing. Obama's campaign team regularly posted his speeches and rallies on their YouTube page, bypassing the mainstream media to give voters their unfiltered view. Obama's campaign team was especially active, posting over 1,000 videos watched by thousands.³⁹ YouTube was founded in 2005 and is now visited over 190 million times a month. It played a crucial role by enabling political videos to reach potential voters and their friends.⁴⁰

A campaign's success is likely tied to how versatile they are at mobilizing volunteers, disseminating and sharing information to supporters, and keeping their base

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Kowitt, Beth. "The YouTube Election: The Obama Campaign is Taking Its Message Directly to the Internet's Huge Audience." July 18, 2008.

⁴⁰ Aronson, "Cyber-Politics."

motivated. While television remains relevant, it is not interactive like the Internet.⁴¹ For instance, a candidate's video team no longer needs to rely on the evening news to show clips of speeches: the campaign can now control the dissemination of this content more effectively and in accordance with their campaign's narrative. Bruce Gronbeck, director of the University of Iowa Center for Media Studies and Political Culture, explained that the sheer expansion of Politics 2.0 is the big change that enables campaigns to create videos and distribute their message in a way that wasn't possible in the past.⁴²

Challenges

Social media greatly impacted the last presidential election, yet pitfalls remain for campaigns. The same platform that allows a candidate to take its message directly to the voter can also replay a candidate's gaffe repeatedly. Fiedler⁴³ argues that the Internet provides voters with a different vantage point to view campaigns. Prior to video-sharing sites like YouTube, a candidate's gaffe would enjoy a fleeting minute on the evening news before moving on to the next story; its moment in history would be short-lived and rarely would leave a lasting impact. But YouTube gives eternal life to such moments as they can be replayed a myriad of times at the viewer's leisure and shared with others, extending these ripples across the Web without being screened by a gatekeeper who could censor, truncate, and verify the substance.

The ease of sharing, the speed, and absence of filters between the source and the viewer changed the strategy of the last two presidential campaigns. The interactive

⁴¹ O'Brien, Cameron C. "Electioneering Across the Ages: Examining the Application and Implication of Media-Based Mobilization in American Presidential Campaigns Post-Radio." (2012).

⁴² Kowitt, "The YouTube Election."

⁴³ Fiedler, Tom. "Bloggers Push Past the Old Media Gatekeepers." *Nieman Reports* 62, no. 2. p 38. (2008).

quality of social networking enables easy content sharing. If a candidate misspeaks or is caught on video in a private situation, the potential exists for that video to “go viral” before the campaign has a chance to apply its spin.⁴⁴ In 2008, McCain famously remarked during the financial crisis that the “the fundamentals of our economy are strong,” while Obama clumsily tried to explain that some voters are “bitter” and “cling to their guns and religion.” In 2012, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney made a litany of unforced errors (47%, binders full of women, corporations are people, et al) that haunted him throughout the remainder of the campaign. Inventive users can splice images together and create montages of gaffes and instantly share them with a large audience. This presents a challenge for campaigns since material that was once only available to a few for editing is now accessible by many including those that would seek to damage a candidate’s image.

User-generated content can be both beneficial and damaging to a campaign. While “I Got a Crush on Obama” helped the then-candidate’s image, it created an awkward moment for his family. In response to a question about his reaction to the video at the time, he said that he wished people would think about the impact has on kids and families.⁴⁵ And, in August of 2007, Mitt Romney’s campaign revealed a competition giving his supporters the opportunity to create a television ad that would air in New Hampshire. However, a Democratic operative named Bruce Reed won with a farcical entry that spoofed Romney and gave his critics another opportunity to mock him. This is a pitfall when campaigns mix their top-down approach with the bottom-up spirit of user-

⁴⁴ Aronson, “Cyber-Politics.”

⁴⁵ Falcone, Michael. “Obama on Obama Girl.” *The New York Times*. (August 20, 2007).

generated content: there runs the risk of surprise results.⁴⁶ Plus, while humorous, user-generated content “may not lampoon voters’ perceptions of politicians as once thought. However, although the challenger’s credibility remained intact, Romney’s favorability significantly decreased after exposure to the satirical portrayal.”⁴⁷

The Internet also has an abundant memory. Every message emailed or video posted can be saved forever. A college student today could be videotaped in an awkward position that thirty years from now some opposition researcher could find it and share it instantly. An ambitious and potential future candidate just in high school or college today will have to be mindful that whatever is posted might be used against them in future campaigns. Already some who are eager to enter elected office have to mind their online reputation and use privacy settings appropriately. Whereas someone growing up in the Eighties or Nineties may have stayed away from illicit drug use fearful that a youthful indiscretion would disqualify them down the road, today’s youth must be heedful about what they and others post online about them. That’s current technology – it is anyone’s guess what will be possible in thirty years? Candidates must assume that they are being recorded and private moments can become public: it can be only a matter of time before old video surfaces. This is a change in how social media has transformed presidential campaigns.⁴⁸ Social media has fundamentally altered presidential campaigns by removing the filter of traditional media, allowing campaigns to directly and expediently connect with voters, and empowering citizens to have an active role in the

⁴⁶ Lee, Timothy. “Romney Learns About the Pitfalls of User-Generated Content.” Techdirt.com. (October 2, 2007).

⁴⁷ Rill, Leslie A., and Christopher LB Cardiel. "Funny, Ha-Ha The Impact of User-Generated Political Satire on Political Attitudes." *American Behavioral Scientist* 57, no. 12 (2013), 1751.

⁴⁸ Sematin, “Campaigns on the cutting edge.”

election.

Methodology

Monday Morning quarterbacking is a hobby of many politicians and campaign veterans. They may speak on panels or to colleagues over a beer and ponder, “If only we had gone on the air sooner,” or, “Maybe it wasn’t such a good idea to exploit the grieving widow in our radio spot,” or, “Let’s be thankful that our opponent’s business records were disclosed.” Pundits ponder the hypotheticals frequently; to examine the underlying question of this chapter, it is worth considering how social media affected the presidential campaigns by removing it from the equation.

Fearon⁴⁹ provides a good blueprint for structuring a counterfactual testing in political science and explaining the value. He lays out the argument that counterfactual propositions can assist political scientists and that they are helpful when too few cases exist and many variables are present but offers no answer as to how viable they are. While we cannot say for certainty what would have been different, we can venture a good guess that can be deemed credible when used explicitly and carefully.

The following two case studies rely on counterfactual analysis to form reasonable conclusions about how the 2012 election could have transpired in the absence of social media. The first of the two thought experiments wonders what would have happened had it not been possible to share far and wide Mitt Romney’s comments that were secretly taped in which he uttered his now-infamous forty-seven percent line. It starts by looking at his campaign’s reaction, how Obama’s team exploited the remarks, and how average citizens were able to play an integral role. Then, it removes the power of social media

⁴⁹ Fearon, James D. “Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science.” *World Politics*, Vol 43, No. 2. (1991), 169.

and makes an educated guess as to how the events surrounding the debut of the clip might have ensued. The second case focuses on Hurricane Sandy. While it would be interesting to remove the storm from hitting land in the U.S. or occurring at all, this chapter focuses on social media and the counterfactual is more convincing by simply removing it from the equation. It then follows the same line of thinking as the forty-seven percent case study by looking at Romney's team, Obama's team, and the general public's roles.

Case Analyses: Forty-Seven Percent and Hurricane Sandy

Modern presidential campaigns are complex organizations with many factors, both internal and external. If any number of events had transpired differently at various times the outcomes possibly could have changed. Had then-Vice President Richard Nixon not agreed to debate on live television, perhaps then-Senator John Kennedy would not have won in 1960. Had Senator Eugene McCarthy not decided to run for the Democratic nomination in 1968, perhaps President Lyndon Johnson would have sought re-nomination and beaten then former Vice President Richard Nixon. Had Ross Perot not run as an independent in 1992 perhaps President George H.W. Bush would have won re-election. And, of course, had Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections Theresa Lepore not designed the infamous "butterfly ballot" in Florida in 2000, it is likely that Al Gore would have won the presidency.

Presidential campaigns are rampant with questions and second-guessing about how things might have transpired had a key event turned out another way; therefore, it is feasible to study social media's impact through counterfactual analysis. By removing social media from the equation, it is possible to make an educated guess about events and

their results – this will be helpful in understanding the role of these Internet based social technologies.

Every presidential election has at least one moment that could have changed the result and the direction of the nation. President Barack Obama owes his two victories in large part to social media’s ability to communicate quickly to a broad audience and to be shared with an even larger population. As discussed earlier in the literature review, Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton was the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination for president: she had the advantages of name recognition, legislative accomplishments, and fundraising ability. Yet, Obama won because his team maximized the benefits of social media for fundraising, organizing, and strategizing that propelled him to the White House. Social media has provided campaigns a means to reach out directly to citizens without filters, bestowed upon voters the tools to be more politically active and engaged, and created the ability to micro-target specific messages to voters based upon their interests and preferences. Had his campaign staff not recognized and exploited these new realities, it is very likely that Clinton would have won her party’s nomination and gone on to become our nation’s first female president.

But what if social media did not exist? What if Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or any of the popular medium that allow for speedy and easy sharing never were invented? To understand social media’s impact on presidential campaigns, it is valuable to re-examine crucial moments from the recent election to guess how the race might have resulted in absence of these tools. Fearon⁵⁰ argues that a traditional case study can be limiting in political science, especially in the absence of viable cases to study. Because

⁵⁰ Fearon, “Counterfactuals,” 170.

this chapter focuses on the role of social media and because the last presidential election is so fresh and too small of a sample size for many viable case studies to choose, it is appropriate to rely on counterfactual hypothesis testing. In 2012, there were two key events where the power of social media was on full display: the revelation of Mitt Romney's forty-seven percent video and Hurricane Sandy. Each one of these can be examined as a case study by removing social media from the equation and hypothesizing what would have transpired.

Social media played a huge role in Barack Obama's election in 2008 and his reelection depended heavily on it as well. Denying Obama a second term was the stated goal of the Republican Party and its eventual nominee, Mitt Romney. Historically, sitting presidents face a high probability of reelection, winning nineteen times and only losing ten times in elections in which an incumbent president was running. In spite of this trend, however, Romney was well positioned for victory since he challenged the incumbent during a period of economic hardship, dissatisfaction, and high unemployment. Although the incumbent was vulnerable, Romney was unable to capitalize on this opportunity and he ultimately faltered when unexpected events transpired.

Mitt Romney should by many traditional metrics and expectations have won the presidency. On paper, he was a very strong candidate: he possessed the ability to finance his campaign and raise money from a vast network, he could organize and attract a loyal core of talented staffers, he was good-looking, articulate, and influential – qualities that recent successful candidates for the presidency possessed, namely Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Obama. His resume was impressive and politically advantageous: he was the son of a popular governor of a battleground state; he had a record of accomplishment

as the head of a successful business; and he displayed bipartisanship as a Republican governor of a Democratic-leaning state.

Yet, for all of his advantages, Romney could not shake the view that he was out of touch with the average American voter. His vast personal wealth became an issue during the campaign: whereby his business acumen was core to his argument that he was the right man for this job during the economic downturn, he had trouble connecting with the average voter. Each gaffe brought back to life a previous one and reinforced in people's minds that Romney had trouble understanding their problems. Without social media, these gaffes would have received a few days of play on the news and then faded from people's minds. Yet with the existence of YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, these videos continued to be shared and viewed longer than the news cycle because they lack the filter that traditional news media provides. Romney's opponents benefitted from this and could harp on this narrative in both the primary and general election. And while the influence of social media is not the sole reason why he lost, it did hamper his odds of winning. Had social media not been available it is possible the election outcome would have been altered; therefore, it is an interesting thought experiment to ask the question, "What if something were different?"

Forty-Seven Percent

For instance, what if Scott Prouty had not been able to spread his recording of Mitt Romney at a May 17, 2012, fundraiser in Boca Raton, Florida, in which he uttered his now-famous forty-seven percent comment that reinforced the perception that he was out of touch with voters? Also, would Hurricane Sandy have dominated the news without the ability of voters to share what was going on in the storm as it happened?

Would it have dominated the news the way it had, paralyzing the campaign? Would it have presented Obama with the opportunity to appear bipartisan and presidential and share this narrative to so many voters? By asking “what if” we can look at these case studies and understand how social media impacted presidential campaign communications in the 2012 race. Social media played a pivotal role in the election, so by removing it and playing events to their logical conclusion, it becomes a valuable exercise in determining its impact on communicating with voters.

Social media played a critical role in spreading the video containing Mitt Romney’s forty-seven percent statement and his other reflections on the race. At a fundraiser on May 17, 2012, in Boca Raton, Florida, Scott Prouty secretly recorded Romney’s remarks to Republican supporters who had donated or bundled at least \$50,000 to his campaign. Clips of his candid statements to donors at this event went viral. In the most notorious remark coming out of that recorded speech, Romney shared his view that, “There are forty-seven percent who are with [President Barack Obama], who are dependent on government, who believe that, that they are victims, who believe that government has the responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing.”

In an exclusive interview with Ed Schultz of MSNBC that aired on March 13, 2013, Scott Prouty revealed his motivations for eventually posting clips of the video. He was offended by Romney’s lack of empathy for the workers as he described his tour of a Chinese factory that employed work-camp living conditions while head of Bain. Prouty explained to Schultz that he was insulted that Romney could accept the factory’s explanation that the fences and guards were to keep people out from coming in to work

and that he didn't like outsourcing and "vulture capitalism." Prouty was moved to act by his belief that Romney was being hypocritical by saying one thing in public and another in private – a problem that doomed Trent Lott a decade earlier. "You shouldn't have to pay \$50K to hear what the candidate thinks." He was also inspired by Bill Clinton, who he met at an event he worked, as the former president came back to meet and thank the staff, in contrast to Romney who arrived late, barked orders at the help, spoke to and socialized only with invited guests, and quickly left for the next event.

Once Prouty made the decision to release the video, he made it his mission to get the video to go viral on his own by posting it online and sharing it on popular sites.⁵¹

I decided I was going to make a 24-hour a day push to make sure it went as far and wide as it possibly, possibly could go. It's been a long journey for sure. A lot of people think I just sent it to the news media on a disc or something and then forgot about it. I had been pounding it. I wanted to have build-up. I wanted to have it viral as much as I could possibly get it viral. And then I was hoping obviously a serious reporter could jump in it at the right time [and] make it pop. I wish I almost did it a little bit later because I think it would have been more crushing. But it all worked out obviously.⁵²

Prouty shopped it to Daily Kos and posted snippets on YouTube and posted on the comment sections of The Huffington Post. Interestingly, he was unable to get the video to go viral on his own and turned to a reporter when his efforts failed to catch fire.⁵³ He connected with Mother Jones' Washington Bureau Chief, David Corn, and his researcher James Carter IV, President Carter's grandson; Prouty chose them because he liked Corn's investigative work on Romney and the Hong Kong-based Global-Tech

⁵¹ Cherkis, Jason and Ryan Grim. "Scott Prouty, '47 Percent' Filmmaker, Reveals Identity on 'The Ed Show.'" The Huffington Post. (2013).

⁵² Schultz, Ed. Exclusive Interview with Scott Prouty, the 47% Filmmaker. The Ed Show. 16:42. (March 13, 2013).

⁵³ Cherkis and Grim, "Scott Prouty."

Appliances, a corporation that profited from U.S. outsourcing.⁵⁴ Together, they achieved Prouty's stated goal of utilizing social media to show millions of voters what Romney tells high-dollar donors behind closed doors, and it changed the course of the campaign.⁵⁵

After going viral in September, these clips greatly damaged Romney, as their influence was instantaneous and vast. This example demonstrates the power of social media not only to amplify a blunder but for it to spread far and wide. This wasn't the first recorded verbal mistake a candidate made – like Senator Trent Lott, Senator George Allen's was felled after his "macaca" comment was caught on video during his reelection campaign in 2006 – yet in those six years, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube matured exponentially permitting more people to view it quicker. Social media has the ability to magnify the impact of blunders with peer-to-peer sharing of content. And Romney was already reeling from several verbal gaffes; a sampling of the most memorable include: "I'm also unemployed," "Corporations are people, my friend," "I like being able to fire people who provide services to me." "I'm not concerned with the very poor; we have a safety net there."

Obama's campaign and people opposed to Romney were able to compile these perceived gaffes and present Romney in a negative light. It was possible for pro-Obama supporters to define Romney as someone that cared only about the wealthy and splice clips together to support this portrait. And while a few videos that were released by the Romney camp roamed the Internet, the clips from the May fundraiser overwhelmed and blunted their efforts to change the narrative and voters' perception. Adding fuel to the

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Corn, David. 47 Percent: Uncovering the Romney Video That Rocked the 2012 Election. William Morrow. (2012).

fire, Obama's campaign augmented the impact by crafting its own shareable content for social media to spread and compound Romney's wounds, further highlighting Romney's team's troubles utilizing social media.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Romney's Twitter account was silent on the issue. His campaign's response was anemic at trying to clarify or spin this in his favor.⁵⁷ Their social media strategy made barely a reference to it, instead trying to continue to raise funds and steer the conversation to issues it felt were Romney's strengths. Romney himself disavowed the comments at an interview with Sean Hannity of Fox News on October 4, 2012, speaking with a conservative reporter known for criticizing President Obama. He told Hannity that, "Now and then you're going to say something that doesn't come out right," and "In this case, I said something that was just completely wrong." He added, "I absolutely believe, however, that my life has shown that I care about 100%. And that's been demonstrated throughout my life. This whole campaign is about the 100%. When I become president, it will be about helping the 100%."⁵⁸

But, the video clips were so damaging that it paralyzed Romney's camp. There is a saying in politics that if you are explaining, you're losing; and it is difficult to image an effective distraction from these comments aside from a blunder or failure from the other side. While Romney did have a good first debate and was attacking the Obama Administration for what transpired in Benghazi, the forty-seven percent comments stuck.

⁵⁶ Tweney, Dylan. 47% in 24 hours: How social media magnified secret Romney videos. *Venture Beat*. (2012).

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ Hannity, Sean. Exclusive Interview with Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. *The Sean Hannity Show*. (2012).

Obama's campaign team deftly utilized social media's ability to distribute information far and wide and fast. In past elections, gaffes had a shelf life on the news cycles that lasted a few days or a week and then they moved on to new topics. Yet, the Internet has a long memory as sites like YouTube can store videos like a library stores books. With just a few clicks and minimal effort, such damaging videos can continue to spread, infiltrating various networks and groups whereby users can view the video at their leisure where in the past they would have to wait for it to be played on the evening news or read about it in the newspaper or newsmagazine. Instead of allowing Romney to change the topic, the video clips of these comments were racing across Twitter and Facebook. Users were able to make their own videos so an Obama supporter not affiliated with the campaign could mesh sound bites together, add some music, and creatively cast Romney in a negative light. Before social media, few had the technological tools or know-how to craft such videos, but now the barrier to create these is low and the ability to share them is far greater than it ever was.

But what if Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, or any social media site did not exist? What if Scott Prouty, a college educated bartender who regularly serviced high-dollar events, was unable to share what his Canon camera recorded? He had failed to get the video to go viral on his own and only succeeded when he collaborated with David Corn. But, assume that his only avenue was to hope a reporter picked up on the recording and deemed it newsworthy. In this case, if the reporter worked for a newspaper, the comments would lose much of its effectiveness if a voter merely relied on reading the words rather than Romney's. If a local or major broadcast network picked up on the comments, voters could only watch them when played. There would be no ability to

share the comments with friends to any degree by which social media enables. Many felt these comments were a game-changer that tilted the election in Obama's favor, and a large part of the damage caused by the comments was due directly to social media's ability to share to large audiences quickly.

Continuing with this line of reasoning, could Romney have actually won the presidency in an era without social media or at least had a better chance of winning? The video was recorded in May of 2012 and Prouty decided to release clips within a month of the event. But, it failed to latch on initially; it only went viral in September of 2012. From the point that the video caught the public's attention, Romney's team had a few bad weeks where it could not change the conversation. It did not have a good week until the first presidential debate where an energized Romney outperformed a lackluster and disinterested Obama on his 20th wedding anniversary to Michelle. But, there is a natural tightening in the polls that occurs, and in September, Obama enjoyed a longer than expected post-convention bounce. Had Obama outperformed Romney in the debate, it might have been the nail in the Romney campaign's coffin. Instead, it re-energized Republicans and the news media picked up on a favorite storyline: the comeback.

Yet, if social media didn't exist, how might this sequence of events transpired? It is plausible that Obama enjoyed a longer-than-expected post-convention bounce because the effects of the video buoyed his poll numbers. Alternatively, if the video never spread or had the regular shelf life of a network news story, it is reasonable to assume that the conversation of the campaign would have shifted back to the economy, the jobs report, and unemployment numbers. Romney's team could have continued with their blistering attacks on the Obama Administration's handling of the Benghazi terrorist attack. By the

time the first debate came around, Romney may have actually been able to take a lead outside the margin of error in many polls instead of merely pulling even or slightly ahead. Playing this further, the pressure really would have been on Obama to perform well in the second and third debates and the heat over Benghazi could have intensified. Maybe Romney would have been able to go on the offensive longer, putting the president and his team on the defensive. That could have changed the dynamics of the race. The first debate allowed Romney to show his human side and appeared to display empathy for average Americans. Romney scored points with one-liners that voters seemed to latch onto that maybe would have stuck with people through the election.

It is reasonable to conclude that without social media's effectiveness for sharing content far and wide with ease, many Americans may never have been deluged with Romney's behind closed door assessment of the race, the issues, and the people he conceded will not vote for him. While it is difficult to determine the exact toll this episode cost Romney, in an election determined by four percentage points in the popular vote, that number would have been closer. With a few million votes shifting in a few key states, Romney might have been president today.

Hurricane Sandy

This second case looks at how the prevalence of social media during and after Hurricane Sandy affected the presidential campaign. Mitt Romney's chances of becoming president were diminished because of how social media amplified his forty-seven percent gaffe. As explored earlier, removing social media from the equation clearly would have aided Romney's chances. Would Romney's odds of winning the presidency been improved had social media not been around for Superstorm Sandy?

In late October 2012, Hurricane Sandy slammed into the Eastern United States, becoming the second-costliest hurricane in United States history while earning it the title of largest Atlantic hurricane on record as measured by diameter. It caused damage and destruction that cost upwards of \$50 billion and was responsible for dozens of deaths. Every state from Florida to Maine was affected by the hurricane; in fact, twenty-four states were impacted including two battleground states, Michigan and Wisconsin. The superstorm made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey, which was the state that incurred the most severe damage, and the storm's surge flooded the streets and subway tunnels of New York City. But what made this particular hurricane politically relevant was that it hit the United States one week from Election Day 2012, forcing both campaigns to suspend their operations.⁵⁹

Natural disasters test leaders, so they present opportunities and perils for elected officials. A poor response can be harmful as President Bush can attest to in the wake of his administration's handling of Hurricane Katrina. On the other hand, a strong response can boost a leader's public opinion: Velez and Martin argue that Obama did receive a bounce in his numbers due to the perception that he managed the government's disaster response well. They argue that political leaders are expected to act in the aftermath of natural disasters and their response is an opportunity for the electorate to judge elected officials on how they orchestrate the relief efforts.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Velez, Yamil, and David Martin. "Sandy the Rainmaker: The Electoral Impact of a Super Storm." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 02 (2013): 313.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 314.

External events test the competency of our leaders and the public rewards and punishes accordingly. Gasper and Reeves⁶¹ add that while weather events are random, they do impact elections as the public considers governmental responses to such events when they go to the polls. When natural disasters strike, voters look towards their leaders and candidates for office. Gasper and Reeves found that an election's outcome hinges upon the actions of politicians in face of unexpected crises.

Hurricane Sandy presented both President Barack Obama and his Republican challenger, Governor Mitt Romney, with the opportunity to display leadership. The test for President Obama, as the incumbent, was to appear compassionate, competent, and responsive, an easy hurdle which he accomplished. As an added bonus, he earned high praise for his efforts from Republican Chris Christie, Governor of New Jersey, who had been mentioned as a possible Vice President selection for Romney and has been mentioned as a 2016 contender for the White House. Christie's comments gave bipartisan political cover to Obama in the crucial final days of the campaign.

Governor Romney, on the other hand, had a more difficult road to navigate. As the challenger, his hurdle was convincing voters that he could be president: they needed to be able to believe he could fill the role and lead the recovery efforts. But, he was boxed in to a degree, and the potential existed for him to hurt his image. If he continued to attack Obama on other issues, the possibility existed that he could come across as unsympathetic toward the storm victims. Romney was unable to capitalize on the opportunity and the race remained stuck where it had been before: Obama held a slight

⁶¹ Gasper, John T., and Andrew Reeves. "Make it rain? Retrospection and the attentive electorate in the context of natural disasters." *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 2 (2011): 340.

but steady lead in the Electoral College and in most polls. In fact, Obama's numbers may have been improved due to his effective handling of the hurricane. Romney's inaction and the persistent narrative that he only cared about wealthy Americans, on the other hand, damaged his chances.

And while the storm battered a large swath of the country, another storm was surging through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. A virtual community formed between those who were hunkered down inside as they shared their experiences through social media, reporting events through pictures, videos, and memes as the events unfolded. Someone in Nevada could see what was transpiring on the East Coast and grasp the fallout through the various social media sites shared by those in the storm's path, provided they were able to remain connected. Many used their experiences to share with large audiences user generated content that lambasted and mocked the former Massachusetts Governor.

To what extent did social media hurt Romney during the hurricane? A hashtag on Twitter titled #MittsStormTips became popular, sharing fake suggestions from Romney such as "Make sure all your binders of women are up high from flood waters and locked secure from high winds," "Folks if you do not have a vacation home to go to on higher ground borrow one from your parents," "Stack poor people in front of the chateau to keep out flood waters," and more.⁶² The hashtag even took to assuming how someone as wealthy as Romney was riding out the storm.⁶³

⁶² #MittstormTips Twitter.

⁶³ Friar, Christine. "Romney's Storm Tips Twitter Doles Out Important Advice." The Huffington Post. (2012).

Taking social media out of the race changes the dynamics of the campaign. Because social media has made it easier than ever to keep track of everything candidates have said, it is more difficult for candidates to disown statements they made in past elections or during the primaries when they usually have to appeal to the base of the party that do not play so well in the general election where they have to appear more moderate. Social media made it easy to create and spread videos of Romney “debating” himself by juxtaposing clips from Romney’s earlier runs for office, including as far back as his 1994 run for the Senate against Ted Kennedy.

In Sandy’s aftermath, videos circulated from a Republican primary debate on June 11, 2011, where Romney stated he supported divesting power from FEMA and giving disaster relief responsibility to the states and private sector:

Every time you have an occasion to take something from the federal government and send it back to the states, that's the right direction. And, if you can go even further and send it back to the private sector, that's even better. Instead of thinking, 'In the federal budget, what we should cut?' we should ask the opposite question: 'What should we keep?' We cannot afford to do those things without jeopardizing the future for our kids.⁶⁴

Conservatives argue what Romney was explaining in the debate was a tenant of smaller government: that things are better handled as locally as possible. Governor Romney’s spokesman, Ryan Williams, repeated this sentiment in the aftermath of Sandy. Through a press release, he reiterated Romney’s position that states should be in charge of emergency management when responding to storms and other natural disasters in their jurisdictions because local first responders know what they need. But, in the wake of a natural disaster, Romney’s own words seem insensitive. Without social media, it is possible this video from nearly eighteen months prior wouldn’t have had the influence it

⁶⁴ Romney, Republican Presidential Debate.

did. Its presence boxed in the response from Romney's staff, essentially forcing them to double down.

Another instance of social media hurting Mitt Romney was a video that surfaced from the Republican National Convention. In his acceptance speech and on national television, Romney mocked the notion of climate change and President Obama's vow to curtail global warming. A user-generated video injected Romney's words then showed the effects of Hurricane Sandy to the applause of the convention's delegates. Plus, old comments resurfaced from 2003 when he was Massachusetts' governor and sated, "I will not create jobs or hold jobs that kill people. And that plant kills people," while standing in front of a coal-powered plant in Salem.⁶⁵ The ability of social media to pick up on a theme and repeat it so that it becomes ingrained versus old media which runs a story and then moves on was a factor in the 2012 election.

Additionally, many considered the storm to be the race's October surprise that tilted the outcome in Obama's favor. Former Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour was convinced that Hurricane Sandy halted Romney's resurgence. He believed that had the storm not occurred, Romney's campaign would have had a better chance to talk about the economy, debt, and deficit. Barbour felt this was a disadvantage to Romney as it knocked them off their game. Karl Rove also believed that for nearly a week the campaign halted because the country could only focus on the devastation of the hurricane. But, without social media spreading images and videos and awing Americans everywhere, would the campaign have suspended temporarily? Perhaps social media is

⁶⁵ Gerken, James. "Romney vs. Sandy' Video Stresses 'Climate Change Isn't a Joke' in Wake of Hurricane." The Huffington Post. (2012).

the reason that everyone felt the significance of what was going on across the country. Remove social media from the equation and ask how would the race have looked like?

Without social media, the campaigns probably would not have suspended. Parts that were furthest away would not have been impacted by the constant images shared over Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Obama would have visited the areas and paid close attention to the recovery efforts, but he would not have had the platform to appear as bipartisan and presidential as he did. The mocking through the virtual communities and his lack of action wouldn't have hurt Romney – his campaign was paralyzed by a lack of suitable options on how to proceed. Likewise, his FEMA comments might not have been seen by as many people or at all.

Again, Obama was boosted by an outside event and took full advantage of it for political gain while Romney's team was unable to direct the conversation. Of course, perhaps the public did get to see how Romney would react in crises and social media only amplified the effect. It isn't likely Romney would have won in the absence of social media, but the 2012 race could have been closer.

Conclusion

The way that the Obama campaign used social media has changed elections. Many liberals already are motivated by the belief that individuals can make a difference: what Obama and his team did was supply the tools and encouragement to reinforce that belief, advance their narrative, and make people feel they were part of a movement. The Internet has been around for some time, yet Obama's team was able to harness the power of social media to encourage citizen involvement, grassroots advocacy, and engage people on an unprecedented scale that ultimately propelled Barack Obama to two

presidential victories. Harfoush⁶⁶ observes that a group of young people, through the Internet and other digital technologies, changed every aspect of presidential campaign communications including the way that money is raised, the manner by which candidates campaign and organize, and how the electorate digests the issues and engages in political action.

Obama's campaign was particularly deft in their blending of new with old media. His campaign's skill with the social media applications and technologies allowed them to raise historic sums of money and establish his brand with a message, symbol, and logo that was easily identified nationwide. Without being able to accomplish these impressive feats, he likely would not have won in 2008.⁶⁷ Steve Grove of YouTube observes that Obama was a very talented candidate, a great communicator, and a campaigner whose approach matched and mirrored very well with the Internet: openness, inclusiveness, self-organizing, and grassroots. Without this approach and philosophy, Grove claims, Obama would not be president.⁶⁸ Obama was able to win because of the innovative and astute manner by which his campaign staff understood and deployed social media technology.

It was inevitable that the rise of social media would affect the ways in which presidential campaigns and voters communicate. First, it changed the dynamics from a one-way stream of messages from the campaign to the voter. Second, it removed the filter of traditional media. Third, it allowed for greater ease and speed of communications that spread at a rate never before seen. Fourth, it has empowered citizens to actively participate and have an active role in the election.

⁶⁶ Harfoush, *Yes We Did*, 7.

⁶⁷ Aronson, *Cyber-Politics*, 5.

⁶⁸ Aaker and Chang, "Obama and the power."

Recent presidential elections have relied less upon traditional mediums like print media, television, radio, and the telephone because of the rise of social media. As technology improves, older methods that were once cutting edge are supplanted by newer and more efficient methods of communicating with the voter. Social media will continue to expand until it is mature at which point, history teaches us, the next big thing will come along to change the game yet again.

There exists much speculation as to why the race went in President Obama's favor. Some argue Obama had a better message, others argue that Romney never made his case, and others will say that pivotal moments such as the forty-seven percent video and Hurricane Sandy swayed the election toward the incumbent. Each of these events challenged Romney's team, exposed the candidate's flaws, and changed the course of the election. Nate Silver, whose model correctly predicted the last two presidential elections by state, offered a few hypotheses as to why Obama held the edge that he maintained through Election Day in his November 5, 2012 blog: he won the second and third debates, the jobs report and economic news were encouraging, Obama's ground game lapped Romney's, and Obama's approval rating hovered close to fifty percent in many surveys – a threshold that usually predicts a close reelection for the incumbent.⁶⁹

Indeed, social media has connected people, allowed content sharing, permitted quick communications, and given birth to a creative expression of ideas. Certainly, there is a prevailing notion that Obama is president because his team was the best at understanding, deploying, innovating, and adapting the possibilities of social media. As people become less reliant on traditional media like newspapers, magazines, and the

⁶⁹ Silver, Nate. "Did Hurricane Sandy Blow Romney Off Course?" Five Thirty Eight Blog on New York Times. (2012).

evening news broadcasts; social media races forward, still in its infancy, as innovators explore better ways for people to share and connect. Presidential campaigns must stay at the cutting edge in order to emerge victorious.

There is consensus that Obama benefitted more from social media than Romney. His operation was more effective because he engaged a larger audience, provided better resources through MyBarackObama.com, and had a better model for turning out the vote. He also had the power of incumbency. Ultimately, no one reason is the answer, but rather, a series of events that in the end trended Obama's way that enabled him to emerge victorious. Presidential campaigns no longer need to rely on the filtering of their message through traditional media outlets such as television, newspapers, or radio because social media has created a way to circumvent these channels in order to take the message directly to the voter. Social media played an instrumental role in helping candidates connect with voters, and it has fundamentally altered presidential campaign communications.

Chapter 2: Social Media's Impact on Congressional Operations

The budget impasse of October of 2013 forced a partial federal government shutdown and drew comparisons to the last time Congress and the president faced off regarding spending and priorities. Then-Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich was at the center of the conflict during the winter of 1995-96, butting heads with then-President Clinton. During the October 2013 shutdown, Senator Ted Cruz from Texas took advantage of an agreement with Harry Reid to speak on the Senate Floor for twenty-one hours against President Barack Obama's signature law, the Affordable Care Act, colloquially known as "ObamaCare." C-SPAN broadcast Cruz's "faux-buster," a display that reminded Steve Kornacki⁷⁰ of MSNBC about how Gingrich exploited C-SPAN by relying on the new technology of cable television to craft his ascent to prominence and leadership.

"Back in 1984, C-SPAN was a novelty, it was only five years old, and cable television itself wasn't much older than that." Kornacki⁷¹ painted the picture of an America in the mid-1980s where half of the country wrapped aluminum around rabbit ears to watch the three big broadcast networks of NBC, ABC, and CBS, their only available options. Fox News did not exist; in fact, Fox did not exist. It was in this atmosphere that Newt Gingrich recognized the "potential significance of that special cable television channel devoted to showing everything happening on the House floor without any commentary, without any interruption."⁷²

⁷⁰ Kornacki, Steve. "Did Newt Gingrich set the stage for Ted Cruz?" Up with Steve Kornacki. MSNBC. (2013).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

Broadcast on cable television, C-SPAN was a substitute for the traditional methods: it gave Gingrich the opportunity to speak directly to the conservatives across the country and make a name for himself as a hero to the party base, circumventing the filters, commentary, and disruptions. “This was how he made his name: not by passing laws, not by chairing a committee, not by working with his colleagues, but by using the new technology to talk directly to the American people.”⁷³ And while cable television is now conventional, social media is currently where cable television was in the mid 1980s, an alternative mode that hasn’t yet been regulated and brought mainstream.

C-SPAN was as integral to Gingrich’s strategy as social media was to President Obama’s, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Gingrich followed in the paths of politicians who took advantage of innovative communications technology to connect with and expand their political base. Franklin D. Roosevelt utilized the radio for fireside chats. “Television brought John Kennedy and his family into America’s living rooms as had been the case with no president before.”⁷⁴ Gingrich changed the way by which Congress operated as Members of the House and Senate followed in his footsteps much like they have adopted the methods pioneered by Obama. This chapter will summarize the selected body of literature on the adoption of social media in Congress as a means to correspond with the American public in the face of dwindling resources.

Literature Review

On November 2, 2010, voters sent a message to President Obama and the Democratic leadership in Congress by giving the Republican Party a sixty-three-seat gain

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Moore, Frazier. “In life and especially death, JFK changed TV.” *The Boston Globe*. (2013).

in the U.S. House of Representatives and a six-seat net in the Senate. This wave swept Speaker Nancy Pelosi from power in the House and reduced Majority Leader Harry Reid's advantage in the Senate from a near-filibuster proof level. Driven by the public's anger over the economy and running on a platform opposed to the Affordable Care Act, the Republicans returned to the majority in the House just four years removed from being ousted in the wave election of 2006 and elevated John Boehner of Ohio as Speaker. Fueled by a new political entity known as the Tea Party, which was committed to reducing the debt, the Republicans laid out their plan to curtail federal spending. In a gesture to demonstrate that Congress could save taxpayer dollars, the new Republican leadership reduced their own operating budget, known as the Member Representational Allowance (MRA) significantly.⁷⁵

This cut in their MRA caused problems for Members who were confronted with difficult decisions over standard office functions. Forced to operate with a smaller budget, office managers began cutting subscriptions, reducing salaries, constricting staff size, reducing franked mail and newsletters, and more. Out of necessity, staffers had to scour for savings; and out of opportunity, social media emerged as a favorite means of communicating with constituents. The staffers that embraced this new technology are more likely to view social media as a benefit and believe the Internet has improved constituent communications.⁷⁶ Citizen engagement is a fundamental obligation for a Member of Congress and social media allowed them to reach their targeted audiences better than previous technologies or processes. Because of its popularity, speed, and low

⁷⁵ Brudnick, Ida. "Congressional Salaries and Allowances." Congressional Research Service. (2013), 3-4.

⁷⁶ Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). #SocialCongress: Perceptions and Use of Social Media on Capitol Hill. (2011), 7.

costs, Congress quickly turned to social media to replace traditional methods to reach out and connect with citizens and address the problems caused by their shrinking budget.

Members of Congress are tasked with representing their constituents and keeping them informed of their activities. It is in the Member's best interest to stay in touch with citizens by sharing and promoting their messages. Traditionally, they have relied on newsletters and letters sent through the postal service by utilizing their franking privilege. Yet, this is a costly drain on their MRA, especially since most communications are received electronically via email, tweets, and Facebook messages and comments. Members face many challenges in performing their duties including an increasing national and in-district population, a staff size that has remained the same since the 1970s, and a budget that has been decreasing steadily since 2010.⁷⁷ Senators and Representatives face many constraints on their ability to communicate with constituents. In light of these issues, what is the impact of social media on how Members of Congress correspond with the American public?

History of Constituent Communications

Communications between the governing and the governed are essential in a healthy democracy. According to Pitkin⁷⁸ and Fenno⁷⁹, the central duty of legislators is to exercise representation for their constituency. Members want to be able to manage their constituent communications effectively so they do not miss an opportunity to

⁷⁷ Goldschmidt, Kathy, and Leslie Ochreiter. *Communicating with Congress: How the Internet has changed citizen engagement*. Congressional Management Foundation, (2008), 39.

⁷⁸ Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. *The concept of representation*. University of California Press, (1967).

⁷⁹ Fenno, Richard F. *Congress at the grassroots: Representational change in the South, 1970-1998*. UNC Press, (2000).

connect with those back home.⁸⁰ This has been the case since the founding of this nation because this system of democratic government is reliant upon an active and engaged electorate. As the United States grew from the Thirteen Original Colonies into one nation of fifty states, the means by which people correspond improved and spread. From letters to radio to television to fax and to the Internet, elected officials and candidates have always depended upon communications tools to keep in touch with those they represent. Innovation presented elected officials with new technologies and gave them the ability to spread their messages to more people faster than possible.

According to the Congressional Management Foundation⁸¹ in “Setting Course,” Members of Congress started accepting email messages in 1994, and gradually the number of emails received started to surpass all other methods combined: postal mail, faxes, and phone calls included. In fact, electronic communications now comprise 85% of constituent correspondence.⁸² CMF also points out that staffing levels have remained the same since the 1970s while the average district has more than tripled in size. In 1912, the number of Representatives in the House was set at 435 voting members: districts were 210,000 people back then while today they are well over 700,000.⁸³

In addition to the growth of Congressional districts, citizens are engaging their Representatives and Senators more often. CMF⁸⁴ found that nearly half of all Americans have had contact with their Member of Congress in the past few years. This presents an opportunity and a challenge to Congressional offices. Prior to 2010, Members had a

⁸⁰ Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*. (2012), 216.

⁸¹ CMF, “Setting Course,” 216.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, “Communicating with Congress,” 9.

sufficient budget to send franked mail. But, in the last few Congresses, that MRA has declined. Before social media, staffers typically spent between 30-70 percent of their time on constituent correspondence,⁸⁵ a significant percentage of their resources. Now, offices are devoting more time and resources to their social media outreach because it allows them to reach more people than before, the benefits far outweigh the negatives, and it is worth the time they invest.⁸⁶

Elected officials are very cognizant that it is important to seek out their audience by how they receive and share information, and as the public shifts its methods, so too must Congress follow. Representative Alan Nunnelee⁸⁷ and his office use social media as one of an array of communications tools: “It’s a way to disseminate information quickly, but it’s not the silver bullet.” As a result, several Members have realized the benefits social media offers of reaching more people at a lower cost and have changed the way by which their offices function. In fact, while Congress has been slow to adapt to other technologies, “this has not been the case with social media.”⁸⁸

Congress may have also been quick to adapt because, since the 2010-midterm elections, the MRA has declined steadily since the 2010-midterm elections returned the House to a Republican-controlled majority. Each Representative’s MRA is now roughly 89% of the amount it was in 2010 due to a 5% then a 6% reduction.⁸⁹ And while the Internet has provided new methods for citizens and Members of Congress to share information, organize, and communicate, it has been able to do so in a way that helps

⁸⁵ CMF, “Setting Course,” 216.

⁸⁶ CMF, #SocialCongress, 6.

⁸⁷ Nunnelee Interview.

⁸⁸ CMF, #SocialCongress, 3.

⁸⁹ Brudnick, “Congressional Salaries,” 3-4.

members keep costs down and reach more people. As offices struggle to perform their functions and keep staff and district offices open, shifting communications functions to a medium that can reach more people faster at a lower cost is very appealing.

While this shift away from traditional methods helps Members of Congress reach more of their constituents and non-constituent supporters quicker, this trend is simply following the paradigm that each emerging media endures. As a new information communications tool, it seems now that these social media sites are primed to change the world and transform how we communicate. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other popular social media websites exploded relatively recently. “Not only have social networks increased their visibility and gained members, more people today are online and have broadband connections. A higher percentage of the public is using the Internet for political purposes than in previous election years.”⁹⁰

Yet, these tools are developing exactly as one might expect. When considering the scope and possibilities of social media, Tim Wu⁹¹ reminds us that for each of the new information technologies of the past, people thought they were going to alter the communications landscape. But, each new technology eventually matures once it has caught on with the general public. The story of the early days of radio is an apt comparison to today’s emerging social media tools. Wu recalls the broadcasting of a boxing match in 1921, which was novel at the time. Live radio broadcasting would soon explode as a popular communication method, keeping people informed even though they

⁹⁰ Williams, Christine B., and Girsh J. Gulati. "Facebook grows up: An empirical assessment of its role in the 2008 congressional elections." *Proceedings from Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago* (2009), 17.

⁹¹ Wu, Tim. *The master switch: The rise and fall of information empires*. Random House LLC, (2011), 5.

were not at the event. However, broadcasting on the radio actually dates back closer to 1912, but it took some time to for general adoption. That is similar to email, which had been around since the late 1960s, but the public did not take advantage of it until the 1990s.⁹² Even social media had a few false starts through Friendster and MySpace.

Each new communications technology improves upon what came before and is capable of reaching more people faster than its predecessors. Often, the emerging medium is “essentially up for grabs.”⁹³ Wu discusses how radio, prior to the Internet, was the greatest open medium of the day, and a blueprint for how “an open, unrestricted communications economy looks like.”⁹⁴ A few early adopters played with the novel new method, and eventually, this power was in the hands of nearly anyone.⁹⁵

While Gingrich understood this with cable television and C-SPAN and Obama took advantage of social media, as described in the previous chapter, it can take time for the rest of Congress to adapt. Twitter is predominantly a way by which to disseminate information and measuring that outreach potential makes it valuable to politicians.⁹⁶ But, Twitter adoption did not occur overnight: in fact, only Representative Eric Cantor joined prior to Obama’s first tweet on April 29, 2007, with the average adopter taking almost two years to join.⁹⁷ Today, when new Members are sworn in, one of their first tasks while setting up their office is to create Facebook and Twitter accounts.”⁹⁸ Rep.

⁹² Ibid, 34.

⁹³ Ibid, 35.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 35-36.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁹⁶ Chi, Feng, and Nathan Yang. "Twitter adoption in Congress." *Review of Network Economics* 10, no. 1 (2010), 26.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 8-9.

⁹⁸ CMF, Setting Course, 215.

Nunnelee⁹⁹ observed that new Members that came into Congress when he did in 2011 or later “have utilized social media from day one.”

Congress is paying more attention to social media and devoting more of their resources. Every Senator has a Twitter account, as do more than ninety percent of Representatives. According to CMF’s report, #SocialCongress, senior managers and social media managers view Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as somewhat or very important for communicating their Members’ views.¹⁰⁰ Staffers are using the tools to understand their constituents’ views as well as to share the Members’ opinions and activities. “Not only do lots of people follow Members of Congress, but many Members follow lots of people back. And Members also talk to people on Twitter (occasionally... some Members more often than others). Many also have staff monitoring and reporting on what is being said on Twitter.”¹⁰¹

Since Representatives want to be able to spread their message, understanding how social media is used will help them find the “poli-fluentials,” politically influential individuals, in their district to target. And while “traditional forms of communication are still their top choices to inform constituents about what the Senator or Representative is doing,” social media is gaining in preference to their preferred methods of online communications, namely websites and e-newsletters.¹⁰² “Congressional offices are able to communicate more directly with constituents without the filter of media organizations.

⁹⁹ Nunnelee Interview.

¹⁰⁰ CMF, #Social Congress, 3.

¹⁰¹ Rosenblatt, Alan. “Social Advocacy & Politics: Drunk Dial Congress and Yell at Them for the Shutdown.” Social Media Today. (2013).

¹⁰² CMF, #Social Congress, 3.

Congressional offices now have the capacity because of technology to be their own media centers.”¹⁰³

Definitions

Facebook is a social media platform founded by Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg, in 2004. Originally open only to college students, it expanded gradually to allow anyone to sign up within a few years. “Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them.”¹⁰⁴

Twitter is a real-time information network that connects people through Tweets; small bursts of information utilizing up to 140 characters. Created in 2006 off an idea from co-founder Jack Dorsey, he imagined Twitter as a communications platform where groups of friends could follow what they were doing based on status updates. Twitter was developed as a way to answer the question, “What are you doing?” Today, people use it to follow news, photos, and conversations.¹⁰⁵

YouTube is a platform that allows people to share and watch videos. Founded in February of 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim, three former PayPal employees, they subsequently sold it to Google. More than 1 billion unique users visit YouTube each month and over 100 hours of video are uploaded every minute. Plus, it reaches more US adults ages 18-34 than any cable network.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Takano Interview.

¹⁰⁴ Facebook, About.

¹⁰⁵ Twitter, About.

¹⁰⁶ YouTube, About.

Flickr is an online photo management and sharing application that aims to help people make their photographs available to their friends and family and to enable new ways of organizing photos and video.¹⁰⁷ Created in 2004 by Ludicorp, Yahoo has owned it since 2005. As of March 2013, it hosted over 8 billion photos posted from its 87 million users; 3.5 million new images are uploaded each day.¹⁰⁸

Pinterest is a social media tool intended “for discovering things you love, and doing those things in real life. Ben Silbermann, Evan Sharp, and Paul Sciarra co-founded [it] in March 2010. Since then, [Pinterest has] helped millions of people pick up new hobbies, find their style, and plan life’s important projects.”¹⁰⁹

Poli-fluentials refers to people who participate in online political activities. It is a term invented by the Institute for Democracy, Politics, and the Internet (IPDI). “They are technologically savvy online consumers of news and political information who serve as opinion leaders in their communities – both on and offline.”¹¹⁰

Who is using social media and how can they interact with their elected officials? Pew Research Center shows that “as of September 2013, 73% of online adults use social networking sites. 71% of online adults use Facebook, 18% of online adults use Twitter, 17% use Instagram, 21% use Pinterest, and 22% use LinkedIn.”¹¹¹ With so many constituents online and engaged in social media, politicians must maintain a presence on these popular sites.

¹⁰⁷ Flickr, About.

¹⁰⁸ Jeffries, Adrienne. “The Man Behind Flickr on Making the Service ‘Awesome Again.’” The Verge. (2013).

¹⁰⁹ Pinterest. Press.

¹¹⁰ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, *Communicating with Congress*, 6.

¹¹¹ Duggan and Smith, “Social Media Update 2013,” Pew Research. (2013).

Politicians are able to interact with citizens frequently and in real time. An elected official usually has two Facebook pages, one for campaign use and another for official business. The Member or staff can post comments ranging from their agenda to how they voted to their views on popular culture. Facebook allows them to share content such as video or photographs. Constituents can “like” these activities, “comment” on them, and “share” them with their friends. Constituents can also post directly on a Member’s page a question, comment, or share a link. Each Member can decide if they will reply and how. Representative Nunnelee directs his staff not to engage in long back-and-forth conversations; otherwise it could consume a significant amount of time.¹¹² “Facebook has become a virtual town hall; politicians are asking the people who ‘like’ them on Facebook their stances on everything from tax cuts to North Korea.”¹¹³

On Twitter, Members can tweet out content such as video, photos, and links to stories. They can also “retweet” someone else’s tweet or quote the tweet and modify it, usually noted with the letters MT for modified tweet; “favorite” a tweet, similar to a Facebook like; and “reply” to the tweet. Tweets are limited to 140 characters so abbreviations are common. A constituent can engage in a conversation on Twitter and Facebook depending upon the original distribution method. Some applications allow citizens to send a comment across various social media platforms at the same time: for example, Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, allows users to share a photo to Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr simultaneously. Interestingly, Twitter users are 33% more likely to be Democrats.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Nunnelee Interview.

¹¹³ Schlesinger. “How Politicians Use Facebook.” ABC News. (2010).

¹¹⁴ Baer. “11 Shocking New Media Statistics in America.” The Social Habit. (2012).

Congressional offices are adapting to social media as a means to communicate with constituents and supporters faster than they have for past communications technologies. The speed and reach of social media sites, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, are very appealing to Members of Congress. Additionally, social media has much lower costs than traditional methods, which has been particularly useful as Members strive to perform their regular duties in the face of reduced resources and an expanding population. Social media has helped alleviate many of the constraints and challenges on their ability to communicate with constituents and perform their official functions. The downside is that social media websites can harden the position of the parties since news travels quicker, citizens can reinforce their beliefs by connecting with other like-minded individuals making it less likely they would abandon their position, and negotiations are tougher to carryout under intense scrutiny. Social media continues to serve as an attractive method for connecting Members of Congress with the American public, but it can also make it tougher to compromise when necessary to govern.

Methodology

In order to test the predictions of the literature review, the government shutdown during October 2013 is an acceptable case study as it provides an instance of a national crisis where Members relied on social media to communicate quickly and at low cost. Congressional Republicans, who controlled the House, battled President Obama and Democrats, who controlled the Senate, over spending priorities and the implementation of The Affordable Care Act. Republicans in the House of Representatives engaged in a unique strategy to prevent the health care law from being executed refusing to pass

funding authorization to keep the rest of the federal government operating unless Obama and the Democrats agreed to their demands.

A significant percentage of this research is based on personal interviews conducted in October and November of 2013 with Representatives Bill Clinger (R-PA), Mark Takano (D-CA), and Alan Nunnelee (R-MS). These original documents have been transcribed and are included in the appendix. By relying on interviews with Members of Congress and comparing their views on social media, it is possible to witness how technology has evolved and explore how it is currently being used. Plus, through examining tweets and postings, it possible to see just how Congress communicated with citizens in an effort to win the public relations war and gain leverage toward the ultimate conclusion of this standoff. As a former Congressman, Rep. Clinger provides historical perspective through first hand knowledge from participating in the Newt Gingrich shutdowns of 1995 and 1996. And as current Members, Representatives Takano and Nunnelee offer their up-to-date experiences on the recent shutdown and opinions on trends of social media's use.

Case Analysis: The Government Shutdown of October 2013

On October 1, 2013, at midnight, many core government agencies, programs, and personnel stopped operating as Congress and the president failed to reach an agreement to fund regular government operations. This government shutdown was fought over funding for President Obama's signature health care law; Democrats and the president wanted to pass a "clean" spending bill and raise the debt ceiling, which was due to be breached on October 17, while House Republicans tried to gut the president's health care law in exchange for funding the government and raising the debt ceiling. Over the next

two weeks, the President and Members of Congress took to all available communications technologies to spread their narrative to gain leverage in the budget dispute. The battle to spin the shutdown in their favor makes this confrontation an excellent opportunity to test the veracity of the predictions drawn earlier in the literature review.

In order to examine the effect of social media in Congress and how it affected the shutdown, it is relevant to examine four aspects of social media's impact: the costs of communicating for a Congressional office, the changes in how offices operate, the authenticity of the messages, and challenges. It is also beneficial to compare the shutdowns of 1995 and 1996 with the most recent one in October 2013 since the speed and reach of the available technologies to communicate affected the outcomes. In each standoff it is worth examining the role of communications technology between Congress and its constituents and how it affected the process.

In 1995, there wasn't the ability to send a tweet or post to Facebook or quickly reach large audiences. Representative Bill Clinger, who retired from Congress in 1997, would send messages out by direct mail, US postal mail, and mass-faxes like many of his colleagues. During the Newt Gingrich-led shutdowns, he described how he reached his constituents, "What I did was explain what was going on and why because then there was no means to reach large people with the same message. We weren't using email yet, but even if we were, you still have to have an actual email address to send it out to."¹¹⁵ He noted that a big difference was that in 1995 and 1996, negotiations were going on at the time but, "This time, there were no negotiations, just throwing hand grenades and not

¹¹⁵ Clinger Interview.

discussing how they might compromise.”¹¹⁶ This is an effect of social media being used to bypass traditional methods of negotiation.

Representative Mark Takano agreed that the sense of urgency could be detrimental to the legislating process. In the 2013 shutdown as well as the vote to authorize military action in Syria, he noted that the situations were changing by the hour. When that is the case, he urges prudence and reflection before sending out too many messages over social media because it can come off as a lack of contemplation. He’s noticed this absence of caution displayed by some of his colleagues and suggests, “I think sometimes, with social media, it is important to know when to hold back and not react to every little development. You do yourself a disservice by not showing more reflection. There is too much immediacy, and that can be a problem in legislating.”¹¹⁷

Many Members feel that immediacy and need to get their point of view out there in the stream of the news cycle quickly while displaying consideration for the issue at hand. Representative Alan Nunnelee’s communications director, Jordan Russell, expressed that offices believe it is important to share their views quickly and across all of the platforms because sometimes people aren’t checking email, but instead are looking at Twitter. “If you don’t, people wonder about your presence.”¹¹⁸

Yet, once the message is sent out, it may only be reaching people who are like-minded. Since Facebook is a closed platform where only friends, family, and other approved individuals can view comments, it is possible to populate one’s newsfeed with similar points of view. Even in Twitter, while it is an open conversation, people can filter

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Takano Interview.

¹¹⁸ Nunnelee Interview.

out sources. Rep. Nunnelee witnessed this effect, “I find that people that thought the shutdown was a good idea talked all among themselves about why it was a good idea and people that thought the shutdown was a bad idea talked among themselves about why it was bad and there really wasn’t a lot of crossover conversation.”¹¹⁹

This mentality creates a hardening of positions where someone feels as though they are part of a larger population. “It solidifies your thinking,” according to Rep. Clinger. “It is harder to sway you to another point of view since you think you are representing a part of a group and this strengthens you. If they all believe it too, then you must be right. It makes it more difficult to sway them from their point of view and creates distrust of the other side.”¹²⁰

In the shutdown, outside groups made it much harder for Congress and the President to negotiate. Rep. Clinger stated social media gives groups the impression that they are right and cannot compromise because the rest of the country is wrong, so they must hold together.

The advocacy groups involved in the shutdown were using social media to spread the message to hang tough and fight to the end even that it was abundantly clear it was a fool’s errand. The Club for Growth and Heritage Foundation helped them solidify their support because it could go that much faster. In my time, you had to do it by mail and there was a lag time and we were slow to react to challenges and changes, which gave us time to work out the details.¹²¹

The next chapter of this thesis will expand on the role that these partisan advocacy groups played in the shutdown as they constantly whipped their citizens, charged them to spread their message, and let their elected officials know to hold the line. Rep. Takano

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Clinger Interview.

¹²¹ Ibid.

thinks that as these advocacy groups refine their methods, it could lead to more problems through increased polarization. “We’ll see if community and advocacy groups get more sophisticated so we can see a far more organized use of social media.”¹²²

In addition to outside groups, social media provides multiple sources of information that didn’t exist just a generation ago. This is a major shift in the way political information is disseminated, according to Rep. Nunnelee, who recalls how he used to receive news.

When I grew up in the 1960s, at 6:00 P.M. at night Walter Cronkite came on and all of America watched Uncle Walter. He signed off his broadcast with ‘and that’s the way it is.’ And when Uncle Walter said that, all of America accepted that. There were really only about two or three news sources at the time. Now, there are millions of media sources but what I find is that out of those millions, I can’t monitor all of them, so any individual tends to gravitate toward those news sources that automatically support what they already believe and so you have opinions being reinforced but not challenged. And I think that is one of the things contributing to polarization of politics in America. And I don’t see that changing, in fact, I see us going to more sources and someone is going to further gravitate to those that reinforce what I already believe. It’s becoming like an echo chamber.¹²³

The Costs of Communicating

Comparing the shutdowns, it is evident that today’s technology costs less and has the ability to reach far more people. Plus, in the 1995 and 1996 shutdowns, budgets were increasing, not shrinking as they have been recently; it wasn’t necessary to maximize the value for every dollar. Driven by the need to communicate with more people while keeping costs low, the House has adopted social media websites faster than previous communications technologies. Since the beginning of the 112th Congress, House offices have had to figure out how to reach more constituents while their budgets continue to

¹²² Takano Interview.

¹²³ Nunnelee Interview.

decrease. The Congressional Management Foundation¹²⁴ provided guidance for how offices could manage their shrinking resources by examining their expenditures on franked mail and high-cost printed materials and consider devoting more attention to electronic constituent communications. Social media has been an attractive alternative to traditional medium because they provide the ability to reach far more people at a low cost, effectively stretching the value of effort and money spent on communicating their message.

Many Congressional staff reported to CMF¹²⁵ that as a result of the budget cuts they were planning on decreasing direct mail to constituents while increasing electronic communications. Many offices have revamped their outreach communications plans to rely far more on email and less on the USPS or “snail mail” to maintain visibility in the district. One shared employee also emphasized, “mail is far and away the most expensive communications medium we use.”¹²⁶ While during the 1995 and 1996 shutdowns, communications relied on these mailers that were slow and expensive, the 2013 shutdown was communicated quickly and cheaper by electronic methods.

Rep. Takano’s office invested in Facebook ad buys in an effort to get more people to like his page, diverting funds that in the past would have been spent on mailers because it presents a better value. “Once we get someone to like us our message, it goes out automatically. If we had to mail these people all the time, the cost would be a lot more expensive. There’s a lot more we can do with a lot less money. There’s been a dramatic decrease in the amount of franked mail as offices are transitioning over to

¹²⁴ Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). *Managing the 2012 Budget Cuts in House Offices*. (2011), 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 7.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*.

digital platforms.”¹²⁷ Rep. Nunnelee¹²⁸ agrees, “Yes it is saving money. Offices used to spend a lot on direct mail and franking, and it was expensive. It definitely helps us save money and operate efficiently.” During the shutdown, Members took to their Facebook and Twitter pages to share their views with followers as events transpired.

CMF¹²⁹ also reported on strategies that offices are considering for operating within the budget cuts. For constituent communications strategies they are shifting from postal mail to electronic means, replacing printed mail pieces with telephone town hall meetings. And while the costs are less than traditional media, there is a misperception that it is free. Rep. Nunnelee¹³⁰ observed that, “It’s free in that it doesn’t cost to access it, but it does require staffing to monitor and maintain it, probably more so than even traditional media.” While many elected officials are using social media to communicate at low cost with the public, Amanda Eamich, director of web communications at the Department of Agriculture, points out that, “Social media is free like a puppy is free: even if it is free, your people have to sit and watch... and respond.”¹³¹

The Changes in Congressional Office Operations

With the shift in strategy to reach more people for less money, offices are also adjusting the way in which they operate. Currently, a Member’s office employs more staffers focused on communications than on legislative efforts. Rep. Takano hired Brett Morrow as communications director; his background is in entertainment marketing. Along with Kirk McPike, his chief of staff with campaign experience, and Yuri

¹²⁷ Takano Interview.

¹²⁸ Nunnelee Interview.

¹²⁹ CMF, Managing, 9.

¹³⁰ Nunnelee Interview.

¹³¹ Shoop, Tom. “How is Social Media Like a Puppy?” NextGov.com. (2012).

Beckelman, his legislative director and a veteran Hill staffer, they comprise what has been called Takano's social media "three-headed monster."¹³² "I'm fortunate to have a staff who brings a background in social media and technology and that think of Internet memes and info graphics. It's an integration of being able to write well and to think visually which brings together a number of skills. Future Members need to think about people who have this background as the kind of staff you want to hire."¹³³

Morrow added, "We don't always expect everybody to get every joke, and not everything hits. But we think it's best just to be creative and see what happens out there. Staffers often tell me you guys are having way too much fun with this. But we really realize that it is important to tie politics into other people's fascinations and fandoms."¹³⁴

Rep. Clinger recalled that in 1995, there was no Twitter, Facebook, or anything similar. "Newt was able to use C-SPAN and incorporated it as a major outreach effort to connect with people. He wasn't interested in his Congressional district; he was interested in shaping the views of the nation. Speaker Tip O'Neill ordered the cameras to span the room to show that no one was listening, but that didn't blunt his message."¹³⁵ He also recalled that Dick Armey and others would join Gingrich in speaking for an hour or two on their agenda. This strategy worked in building their audience by pontificating to the cameras, Rep. Clinger said. Now, Members can send video of these speeches out to followers through quickly and at little cost.

¹³² Suebsaeng, Asawin. "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media: Congressman Mark Takano's secret weapon? Being funny on the Internet." Mother Jones. (2013).

¹³³ Takano Interview.

¹³⁴ Suebsaeng, "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media."

¹³⁵ Clinger Interview.

Rep. Takano described his view of the effect technology has had on how modern offices are operating:

You don't have to be like Newt Gingrich exploiting the late night Special Order hours where you are talking to an audience that I'm hard pressed to believe actually exists which is the whole C-SPAN audience. That's how he got started: people who watched C-SPAN regularly and built a core of people interested in what he had to say. I think of the use of the medium how can I stay more in touch with my constituents and get a sense for what social problems are out there.¹³⁶

Currently, Rep. Nunnelee's¹³⁷ office communicates important messages through social media, their preferred method, in addition to traditional methods. They aim to communicate important messages without overloading and utilize Facebook and Twitter regularly. The office sends out a newsletter usually once a week, but will make an exception if there is a high profile issue. "We try not to overwhelm people, but rather give them useful information." They are cognizant that while social media enables a conversation, it isn't possible to get involved in a lengthy discussion. "I made the decision that we would disseminate information but that I would not engage in follow up discussions with the belief that if I chose to do so I would spend all of my time debating back and forth with a handful of people."

And, in Rep. Takano's office, he has empowered his staff to take initiative and will bounce ideas off of them. Sometimes, he will come up with an idea and his staff will suggest that it may be better on Twitter or Facebook than on Tumblr, for instance. And sometimes, his staff will veto an idea.¹³⁸ His is an office that was established during the boon of social media and realizes how office functions have shifted.

¹³⁶ Takano Interview.

¹³⁷ Nunnelee Interview.

¹³⁸ Takano Interview.

Glossy mailers and the six o'clock news are no longer how Members of Congress reach their constituents. Our constituents want us to speak to them where they are, and that's online, so I am happy to oblige. However, you're competing with a lot of other noise online, so we have to be creative and avoid clichés to break through. Going this path is cheaper, more immediate, involves more two-way communication, and in the end, is more meaningful to the debate.¹³⁹

Authenticity

A meaningful dialogue is a more authentic contact between Member and constituents. With the rise of email arose distrust between constituents and Members of Congress over the authenticity of the messages. Third party email vendors and advocacy groups bombarded Congressional offices with letters signed from constituents, but since the text was identical, they were not as influential as a hand written communication.¹⁴⁰ On the flip side, citizens desire authentic engagement and replies to their messages, but they feel Members are sending form letters or replies that do not address their comments and thus they feel disconnected from Congress.¹⁴¹ Social media has helped return some of the retail politics and has become a vital means of communicating between elected officials and constituents. Grow and Ward conclude that elected officials, such as Members of Congress, can demonstrate their authenticity online by 1) supplying their biographies on their profiles and sharing their non-political side, 2) using the latest technological features, 3) permit and respond to constituent comments, and 4) virtually interact with constituents.¹⁴² While their online presence is important, in-person participation is still key as voters consider this along with their online authenticity when

¹³⁹ Suebsaeng, "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media."

¹⁴⁰ Fitch, Brad and Kathy Goldschmidt. *Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy*. CMF (2005), 4.

¹⁴¹ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, *Communicating with Congress*, 10.

¹⁴² Grow, Gabrielle, and Janelle Ward. "The role of authenticity in electoral social media campaigns." *First Monday* 18, no. 4 (2013).

making their electoral choices. And since the MRA is less than it was just a few years ago, it is beneficial that social media helps them reach more people quicker and for less, which was vital in getting their message out to citizens during the most recent shutdown.

Social media provides Members the opportunity to share their personality with a larger audience. Their hope is to connect with people and recruit them as followers. And, on political matters where they may not agree, showing a personal side can get people to be more receptive to their views. “I do think that social media helps people get to know me more as a person. Some of the more high profile things that we’ve done and had the most hits and responses are those that are not political but those that are personal.”¹⁴³

During the 2013 shutdown, the Major League Baseball playoffs were occurring, giving Paul Kaplan, a Braves fan and Rep. Jack Kingston constituent, the opportunity to poke fun at the logic. He satirically wrote a letter to Rep. Kingston requesting Congress overturn the result of the Braves-Dodgers playoff series, which the Dodgers won, so that the Braves could advance, comparing it with his take on the Republican strategy of shutting down the government until it got its way on The Affordable Care Act. Rep. Kingston replied in kind, using baseball-speak and deftly turning the issue to his advantage with humor, displaying an authentic use of wit and social media.¹⁴⁴¹⁴⁵

Rep. Takano has been surprised by some of the discoveries he’s made using this media. For instance, their most recent surge in likes has come from young Latinos from

¹⁴³ Nunnelee Interview.

¹⁴⁴ Calcaterra, Craig. “Applying government shutdown logic to the baseball playoffs.” Hardball Talk. NBC Sports. (2013).

¹⁴⁵ Calcaterra, Craig. “Congressman responds to fan letter applying government shutdown logic to the Braves-Dodgers game.” Hardball Talk. NBC Sports. (2013).

his district that he says has been very gratifying. He's received a lot of attention on comprehensive immigration reform due to his response to a Republican letter on immigration that sparked debate about the issue as well as the method:

We're famous for a letter that I corrected. One of my Republican colleagues circulated a letter asking Speaker Boehner not to bring the Senate comprehensive immigration compromise bill to the Floor. I'm a teacher and took my red pen to the letter as a teacher would. I gave it an F grade and I said, 'Please see me after votes,' adding, 'you failed in respects to the assignment that was to find a pathway for 11 million undocumented people a path to citizenship.' It had an enormous response. That letter went viral. It played upon my background as a high school English teacher. It sparked intense debates in grammar forums and people debating if I should use a red pen as some think it is demoralizing to students. This broke open a new form of communicating. I still get comments on the red pen letter and am still surprised how many people remember that, so this latest style of advertising has been very successful.¹⁴⁶

"The tongue-in-cheek mark-up quickly made the rounds on Tumblr and Facebook and the office later included it in a blast email."¹⁴⁷ This letter worked because it used the latest technology and tapped into the frustration over the immigration debate in a manner that was funny, creative, and drew upon shared experiences. People recall the experience of having a paper marked to pieces by a teacher and the letter likely caused the reader to laugh. Even teachers and grammar blogs shared and debated this particular piece. Takano's background as a teacher granted authenticity to it as it spread through social media sites and others as it introduced his personality to new audiences.

Rep. Takano¹⁴⁸ has also observed that citizens take to social media to share their interactions with him with others. "A veteran wrote me on Veterans Day, so I thought it was important to communicate with him and that we not just send him a form letter. It's

¹⁴⁶ Takano Interview.

¹⁴⁷ Suebsaeng, "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media."

¹⁴⁸ Takano Interview.

very meaningful to reach a person like that and hear how gratified they are to hear from their Congressman – that’s a great experience!” His communications director, Brett Morrow, added an instance of a constituent who tweeted, “Amazing how a phone call from Representative Mark Takano makes everything clearer. He’s such a class act. I’m glad I voted for him!” Takano understands the value when a constituent hears directly from their Member because there is a crossover effect of providing positive constituent interactions, as they will share that with their friends and neighbors and is a valuable testament that cannot be purchased or faked. “It is authentic and an outside validation of the work we do.”¹⁴⁹

In his office, Rep. Takano and his staff are pushing new ways to reach constituents to understand their concerns. “I really like the concept of the YouTube town hall. I think we might have been the first office to actually do a town hall on YouTube. It is a new twist on an old technology.”¹⁵⁰ Understanding that personal interactions are important to constituents, telephone and Internet town hall meetings are an effective means to increase a citizen’s trust and perception of their lawmakers.¹⁵¹ He views the mediums as a way to stay in touch with his constituents and get a sense for what problems are on their minds. Sometimes that is through social media and sometimes through traditional methods, like simply calling a constituent. “It’s sort of a self-generating communications eco-system.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Lazer, David, M. Neblo, K. Esterling, and K. Goldschmidt. "Online Town Hall Meetings: Exploring Democracy in the 21st Century." *CMF, Washington, DC* (2009), 11.

¹⁵² Takano Interview.

While Representative Takano shared how social media is beneficial connecting with constituents and permitting them to easily share their appreciation for his efforts as well as demonstrate his outreach, Representative Nunnelee recalled an instance where the speed allowed him to prevent a misperception from spreading.

When I was in the state legislature before I came here, I met with a group of parents of handicapped children [that] were opposed to legislation. So I listened and said if everything they told me is true, I agree with you and this would not be a good bill and intend to vote no. Midweek the bill came up and I voted yes. Within thirty minutes I started getting nasty phone calls, “Alan, we thought you were different. You’re just another lying politician. I can’t believe it.” I said, “Wait a minute – let me send you an amendment that was offered. You would have had no way of knowing this amendment was offered but based upon the conversation we had, I think this amendment addresses what your concerns were.” So I sent them the amendment and within thirty minutes they replied and said, “Alan you’re exactly right, this made it a good bill and we’d have voted for it too.” Prior to email, I could have done all of this by mail, but that intervening time period could have been days or weeks and they would have been going to ball games, church, and the grocery store telling people how Alan lied to them. As it was in this case, we had the issue resolved swiftly. If that happened that quickly with email, it can happen much more quickly with social media.¹⁵³

Rep. Nunnelee’s example illustrates how much easier and quicker it is to disseminate information with the public in an authentic manner. In the shutdown, events were happening at a rapid pace accelerated due to the technology that wasn’t possible in 1995 and 1996. Rep. Clinger¹⁵⁴ recalled his experience during the earlier shutdown for comparison. The main sources available during an era prior to the widespread use of email and the Internet were newsletters, town meetings, and hands-on face-to-face interactions. “I don’t think they do as much of that now since more can be done on the Internet. The main thing I would do is pen an op-ed piece for all the local

¹⁵³ Nunnelee Interview.

¹⁵⁴ Clinger Interview.

newspapers. I'm sure they wouldn't need to do that now as they can focus their message to the individual constituents. Now, you can shape your message to target your constituency. It wasn't as large of a universe that you had to get to."

Rep. Takano warns that social media can have a canned feeling so it is important to be mindful what an office posts. While he is not authoring everything that goes out, his team works to make sure the material is fresh. Routine status updates from the House Floor or a mundane play-by-play of a hearing can come off as forced. With that in mind, Rep. Takano's office has a vetting process in place that isn't afraid to veto an idea of his they think may not work. "I think it is important that successful people on the Hill have smart staff that won't be yes people."¹⁵⁵ Added Morrow, "Congress is a place that can stifle a lot of creativity, but we're trying to do something different and creative."¹⁵⁶

Press 101 is still important since a Member can take advantage of knowing how the news cycle works when timing their communications for release, according to Rep. Takano.¹⁵⁷ Traditional media is still relevant since getting the message to a hyper connected reporter can amplify the reach. In the previous chapter of this thesis, it was noted that Scott Prouty finally succeeded in getting his video of Mitt Romney's infamous 47% remark to go viral by connecting to David Corn, a Mother Jones editor, who had the resources and experience to spread it.

The creativity, freshness, and viral nature of social media can bestow the personal touch that helps Members of Congress come off as genuine and breaks down the formalities. The material that offices generate can be sent out and edited by their

¹⁵⁵ Takano Interview.

¹⁵⁶ Suebsaeng, "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media."

¹⁵⁷ Takano Interview.

followers, and this cooperation bridges the divide even further. “Due to the opportunities to collaborate and share on social media, it is presumable that these opportunities offer politicians the possibility to be more transparent in their communication, perhaps helping them establish authenticity.”¹⁵⁸ Members want to connect and present themselves as likeable to the public, and social media enables their efforts.

Challenges

Rep. Clinger¹⁵⁹ believes that while social media has many benefits, it can be responsible for hardening a person’s opinion. Prior, if one person had an opinion, they may feel that no one else agreed and be more willing to abandon that position in a compromise or be open to hearing a different point of view. The problem social media creates is it gives people of like mind a way to interact. Social media enables citizens to organize and form coordinated campaigns to attack a Member’s stance; in fact, it has contributed to the polarization on Capitol Hill by exaggerating the divide between the parties. Rep. Clinger thinks this is the case:

Social media creates an additional level that he has to deal with because the Member is faced with coordinated opposition to his position... When a group believes it is right, it makes it much more difficult to sway them from their point of view, especially with the discrediting of the Congress during the shutdown because no one trusts you anymore... Since so many Republicans are in reliably safe districts, they only have to worry about a primary challenge. And because of this, that like-mindedness is solidified and reinforced by social media. Being able to connect with others who share their view gives them the impression that “we are in this together while the rest of the country is going to hell in a hand basket and we need to hold together.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Grow and Ward. "The role of authenticity."

¹⁵⁹ Clinger Interview.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Rep. Takano is also concerned about the downsides. He wants to be able to hear from his constituents and sees groups from outside his district interfering. “I don’t like when on the Affordable Care Act you get ideologues on both sides coming in and obscuring what I can see from my own constituents. I want to see what’s going on there. Sometimes we have to clear the deck a little bit to see what my constituents are saying, pro or con. We want to encourage a conversation and don’t want others to interfere.”¹⁶¹ Plus, he is also worried about the effect social media is having on the level of professionalism in journalism. “There is this sort of netherworld, this blurring of rules. People don’t always know what ‘on the record’ and ‘off the record’ means. As a public official, you are on notice all the time in this Twitter/cell phone/camera environment.”¹⁶²

Rep. Clinger agreed with the difficulty for Members in an environment where everyone has a camera and can send that video around the world in a matter of seconds. He noted the example of Rep. Randy Neugebauer confronting a park service ranger outside of the barricaded World War II Memorial, shuttered due to the 2013 shutdown, and telling her that she should be ashamed of herself.¹⁶³ “For example, Randy Neugebauer wouldn’t take that hit because there wouldn’t have been a camera present. It’s the same effect with George Allen [making the Macaca remark] and Romney’s 47% comment.”¹⁶⁴ He believes the proliferation of cameras and the ability to spread videos quickly means that elected officials need to be mindful that everything they say is public knowledge and can damage them rapidly.

¹⁶¹ Takano Interview.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Blake, Aaron. “Rep. Randy Neugebauer says he apologized for confronting park ranger.” The Washington Post. (2013).

¹⁶⁴ Clinger Interview.

While the lack of filters helps Members reach people directly, Rep. Clinger¹⁶⁵ points out, “You can get a lot of inaccuracies without filters.” Rep. Nunnelee would agree in the danger of the speed, especially as it is concerned with sending out incorrect information, which can be difficult to correct:

I do think there is a danger in the social media and that is not going to change, which you have to find a way to live with. Social media allows [coffee shop] rumors to be magnified thousands of times and they can go around the nation as quickly as they can around the coffee shop table. By its very nature, there is no editorial function, no filter – so there may be no basis of truth. And I find there is something about the printed word that people tend to take as being more credible than they would a spoken rumor... I have the opportunity to talk with not 5 but 50,000 people immediately. I don't see anything changing that but I see it as a serious problem.¹⁶⁶

Having an event on camera or words recorded and a method to share them quickly with the public can prove disastrous for public officials since everything you say or do is public knowledge. Pictures and video are much more persuasive than words, and social media provides the visuals making it quite effective. Visual images are important and make a larger impact than simply reading about it: seeing it is powerful.

Representative Trey Radel was contacted for an interview for this chapter, but before a time could be scheduled, he was arrested for cocaine and pled guilty to possession. After seeking treatment in Florida, he resigned his seat on January 27, 2014. His peers admired his use of social media to connect with constituents, and on while on a plane from his Congressional district to D.C, he live tweeted his review of Jay Z's new album, surprising some followers who assumed the tweets were from staff. By showing his personality, he could connect with people that didn't share his opinion, but seeing his

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Nunnelee Interview.

taste in music, they were open to also hearing his political views. For example, @ShawnCP92 tweeted, “Whatever political differences I may have with @treyradel, he’s still my favorite Rep. because of his sublime taste.” This Twitter session gained him 278 followers, “a nine time increase over his normal daily followers count.”¹⁶⁷ However, the very social media that helped him gain prominence spread the news of his legal troubles. The irony is noted that what social media created it can also destroy.

Comments posted by the public can also devolve quickly from thoughtful discourse to crude name-calling. While Rep. Nunnelee has established a system to encourage authentic dialogue, he does not want it to unravel from polite discussion. “I think I have a pretty open comment policy and, for the most part, I will allow people to criticize or praise me as long as they don’t use profanity. Contrary to what people may think, I do read the responses. Quite honestly, I’ve got a handful of people that always have a comment. I don’t pay attention to those as much.”¹⁶⁸

During the shutdown, many comments on both sides of the aisles blamed the other side, and even decried their own leadership. ClotureClub.com, a website created by and for Hill staff, assembled some of the nastier comments posted on Speaker John Boehner’s Facebook wall and created an Internet meme called “Tea Party Insult Generator.” Users visit the page and hit refresh to see an actual comment deriding the Speaker. And, when Nelson Mandela died, even some outrageous comments were posted

¹⁶⁷ Evins, Sean. “Beats by Trey: Congressman Radel tweets review of Jay Z’s #MCHG.” Twitter Media Blog. (2013).

¹⁶⁸ Nunnelee Interview.

on Senator Ted Cruz's Facebook page because he called Mandela "an inspiration for defenders of liberty around the globe."¹⁶⁹

Another downside to improved technologies is the loss of personal relationships between members from different states and parties. While the 1995 and 1996 shutdowns occurred in an era where Members were beginning to commute to D.C. for votes two or three days a week rather than live in the capital city, there were plenty of relationships between the Members to work out a deal. Rep. Clinger¹⁷⁰ thinks that it is a mistake that Members are not bringing their families to live in D.C. as much since it is easy to travel back and forth. He remembered when he was chairman of the House Oversight Committee; Rep. Mark Sanford was a freshman and slept in his office rather than rent a room. In Rep. Clinger's opinion, Members that followed that path experience an amorphous connection. He sees that Members feel it is politically advantageous to be seen as an outsider and someone connected to their district. But, modern conveniences deprive Congress of the intangible benefits that personal relationships can help develop. "If you don't know your opposition, you can think they are all evil as hell. You no longer have a personal relationship and no intention to compromise, as they are evil on the other side. There used to be more collegiality. That did exist in those times. Reagan and Tip would fight like hell and then drink together in the Board Room."¹⁷¹

Plus, he noticed people might be tiring of some social media sites and their over-sharing of information and intrusion into privacy. "The bloom is off the rose of Facebook. People are not as addicted as they once were. That would seem to raise a

¹⁶⁹ Wood, Jacob. "Tea Party Insult Generator: From Actual Insults Posted to John Boehner's Facebook Wall." Cloture Club. (2013).

¹⁷⁰ Clinger Interview.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

challenge for Congressmen who need to ask themselves if it is still serving their purpose or are they getting diminishing returns for their efforts?”¹⁷²

Conclusion

Constituent communications is one of the central duties for a Member of Congress, so new communications technologies present opportunities for them to connect with their audiences. Historically, it has been important for Senators and Representatives to receive and respond to messages from the people they represent so that their views are registered and the Congressperson corresponds their opinions in a reply. Members of Congress rely on staffers to assist with this role and pay for these costs and staffers’ salaries out of their MRA, which they appropriate. Yet, while the country’s population and individual Congressional districts continue to grow, staff size has remained the same while their budget to run their office has steadily declined. That forced Members to be innovative in order to get their message out with limited resources like staff and money.

Social media is affecting the political process. It provides a direct path to the voters allowing for a bypass of traditional media filters, and this is an opportunity to raise one’s profile by speaking directly with a constituency. On the eve of the most recent shutdown, Senator Ted Cruz staged a twenty-one hour speech on the Senate Floor against The Affordable Care Act. As a result, he gained more than 20,000 new Twitter followers, which is ten times the average followers he would gain in a normal day.¹⁷³ A few months earlier, in his home state of Texas, State Senator Wendy Davis attempted a thirteen hour filibuster of an abortion bill that gained more than 180,000 viewers on the

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Lee, Traci. “Ted Cruz cruises to online stardom.” MSBNC. (2013).

YouTube channel that live streamed the special Senate session.¹⁷⁴ Social media also encourages interactions as Rep. Takano compared the two scenes by tweeting out a Photoshopped image referencing Kanye West during Cruz's filibuster: "Ted Cruz, IMA let you finish but Wendy Davis had the greatest filibuster of all time!"¹⁷⁵

During the shutdown, Twitter "proved itself as THE indispensable tool in keeping up with all of the happenings on the Hill."¹⁷⁶ With the invention of electronic communications, Members have been able to capitalize on a method to reply to constituent mail at minimal cost. Sending an email does not accrue the expense of buying paper and toner for the printer or posting, which they mail through their franking privilege. Members can reach more constituents at less of a cost by utilizing digital communications.

Social media provides benefits regular email does not. Traditional email has a limited reach since it must be sent to an actual email address. It can be expensive to buy lists of email addresses and purchasing email addresses can be costly and have a high rate of undeliverable messages. While it is true that you can forward an email, it cannot go viral with the speed and precision that social media sites like Facebook and Twitter offer. Plus, an email just does not have the wit that can be shared through an image or a creative Tweet or Facebook posting. Social media is changing the dynamic between Member and the people they represent and that transformation extends beyond the borders of a Congressional district. Social media allows them to communicate with audiences that were inaccessible to them through traditional methods.

¹⁷⁴ Kelly, Heather. "Texas Filibuster on Abortion Bill Rivets Online." CNN. (2013).

¹⁷⁵ Suebsaeng, "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media."

¹⁷⁶ Cillizza, Chris. "Winners and losers of the government shutdown." The Washington Post. (2013).

Members have constraints upon them (limited staff, funding, and resources) so each new communications technology offers a way for them to reach new audiences. Eventually each technology matures, and by the time it goes mainstream, barriers are erected that filter the communications. While social media is certainly a new technology now, at some point it will mature and possible that filters established.

Rep. Takano foresees that more Congressional offices are going to think of their office as a media center, in part because the equipment is now inexpensive and its reach expansive. “That whole YouTube town hall we did with a camera that was affordable and accessible that we could have here. It’s a new way of thinking how you connect and communicate with the public. I think it’s going to be tremendously powerful. It has implications for how journalists are going to be trained. It is going to be a new way for citizens to affect change as well.”¹⁷⁷

Rep. Nunnelee agrees that there is a transformation occurring:

I do think that this is a major shift in the way we disseminate information, not just political information but whether its products or service or just talking to friends. But our country has gone through transformations like this before. You saw it with the advent of cable; prior to that you saw it with the advent of broadcast television prior to that radio. And you saw the political environment adapt to the method available to get information out to people. And what I think that is going to drive all of it any elected official that is successful has learned to communicate with people in the way they are receiving information. People are not going to change their habits just because I want to do something different or just want to do something the same. Those elected officials that become successful learn to reach people where they are.¹⁷⁸

It is unknown exactly how social media will mature, but there are already predictor signs. Twitter and Facebook sell ads and the opportunity to promote certain

¹⁷⁷ Takano Interview.

¹⁷⁸ Nunnelee Interview.

posts of Tweets. Some people have grown tired of Facebook and taken breaks or removed their accounts entirely. Speaker Tip O’Neill put one of the first filters on C-SPAN in place as he ordered the cameras from time to time to scan the room and show how empty it was, but that did not blunt Gingrich’s message. In fact, Gingrich had found his method to reach his audience, and it came at very little cost since speaking on the Floor is a right for Congressmen. Rep. Takano¹⁷⁹ noted that the new media permits a higher degree of accountability, as citizens are able to hold their public officials up to a microscope. Alan Rosenblatt believes that “having more direct access to lawmakers is obviously democratizing. It also increases trust in government, which facilitates better government in a virtuous circle.”¹⁸⁰ So even though social media will mature and filters will develop, there will always be the opportunity for innovative thinking to take communications in a new direction, either on existing platforms or creating the next big thing.

¹⁷⁹ Takano Interview.

¹⁸⁰ Rosenblatt Interview.

Chapter 3: How Advocacy Organizations Use Social Media To Affect Public Policy

The first chapter of this thesis discussed how social media has altered the way that candidates run for the presidency while the second examined the impact of social media on how Congressional offices correspond with their constituencies. Web 2.0 technologies have altered the way that candidates run for the presidency and Congressional offices operate. The speed and reach of sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube makes it possible to reach audiences previously inaccessible. An apt historical comparison is the advent of the assembly line: what once had to be handcrafted was replaced by specialized machines and less manpower. Social media has had a similar effect in transforming politics in America. These technologies have made it just as easy for groups outside the government to organize and coordinate their efforts in order to influence lawmakers with similar tactics to what campaigns and elected officials utilize.

Advocacy organizations understand this paradigm shift and have embraced it as they utilize these new emerging methods. Their purpose is to advance a certain cause, to advocate for a specific constituency, and to educate elected officials. Social media has made it easier for these groups to coalesce, to find like-minded individuals, to study the statistics and learn how to use it effectively, and to spread their messages. As a result, advocacy groups are more powerful today than in the past, and the integration and adaptation of social media in everyday activities is a major reason. This third chapter will address the question: what impact has social media had on how advocacy organizations affect public policy?

This chapter will delve into understanding social media's impact on how advocacy groups affect public policy first by examining the role of these organizations,

their goals, and their methods. The previous chapter of this thesis considered the government shutdown of October 2013 and how Congressional offices utilized social media in an attempt to win the messaging war; this chapter will scrutinize the same instance from the point of trying to understand how advocacy organizations implemented Web 2.0 strategies and technologies to influence the political outcome.

It is also worth noting that the explosion of social media occurred in the wake of the Citizens United ruling. The consequences of this case meant that many of the laws regulating money in politics were gutted, resulting in an infusion of campaign cash being spent in an election and on issues education. Further research can provide valuable insight to the correlation between the new laws regulating money in politics and the eruption of social media as a vital communications tool. However, that topic is beyond the scope of this thesis, which is limited to social media's role in American politics.

Literature Review

For this chapter on the effect social media has had on non-profit advocacy groups in their attempts to affect public policy, it is necessary to define and study the role advocacy groups have had in American politics, identify the goals of these organizations when they lobby, and then discuss their methods and tools.

Definitions

Astroturf is defined by *Campaigns & Elections* magazine as “a grassroots program that involves the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them.” The term is derived from Astroturf, a substitute for grass.

According to its website, “The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to helping Congress and its Members meet the evolving needs and expectations of an engaged and informed 21st century citizenry.” Capitol Advantage, Fireside21, DDC Advocacy and other sponsors have supported CMF and its research into constituent communications. Through their Communicating with Congress series, CMF discovered that rapid developments in web-based technology has made it easier and cheaper to contact Congress, yet less actual communicating is occurring despite an increase in the number of messages sent to Congress because neither the senders nor the receivers “have learned to use it in ways that facilitate truly effective communications.”¹⁸¹ This distrust of the authenticity and source of the communication is a problem that email campaigns encounter.

Function of advocacy groups

Andrews and Edwards¹⁸² define an interest group “as voluntary associations independent of the political system that attempt to influence the government.” Nonprofit organizations can predominantly be defined as:

[I]nvolved with lobbying or disseminating information directed toward broad societal objectives or collective goods rather than outcomes of benefit only to their own members. Even when advocacy organizations represent a particular group – such as women, members of minority’ groups, physically handicapped people, victims of drunk driving, and potential victims of handgun attacks – there is an implicit assumption that actions benefiting these people will benefit all of society.¹⁸³

The members that comprise advocacy groups vary greatly. Some groups require that members pay dues or donate to their charity; many are open to anyone that signs up

¹⁸¹ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, *Communicating with Congress*, i.

¹⁸² Andrews, Kenneth T., and Bob Edwards. "Advocacy organizations in the US political process." *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 30 (2004), 481.

¹⁸³ O’Neill M. *Third America: The Emergence of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (1989), 110.

for their newsletter by opting in online; and others tier their membership based on criteria such as how active they are, how much time or money they donate, how often they share or send the group's message, or by attendance at annual meetings or important conferences. "Organizational memberships may not ensure a broad range of face-to-face interaction among individual members, but they do build significant connections among the organizations involved, leading to stronger infrastructures and issue networks."¹⁸⁴

Advocacy groups were formed for the purpose of influencing politics and elections: this is not a recent phenomenon. In their book *Presidential Power: Unchecked and Unbalanced*, Crenson and Ginsberg discuss how the American Bimetallic League, an interest group comprised of an alliance of silverites, elevated their issue to the forefront of the 1896 election.

The organization's existence and vigor was one portent of a new alternative to political parties – organized interest groups. "What was novel in the late nineteenth century," writes Elisabeth Clemens, "was the intent and organizational technologies to link 'lobbying' to significant numbers of voters who would be guided by associational ties rather than by partisan loyalty." The emergence of organizations with mass membership advocating reform outside the framework of political parties "represented the distinctive contribution of popular associations to the weakening of the party system."¹⁸⁵

Advocacy groups have been a part of American politics for quite sometime, as this story demonstrates, and they have advanced their agendas through organizing citizens to pressure elected officials in their favor. Plus, they have relied upon the communications tools and methods available to achieve these means. While the

¹⁸⁴ Andrews and Edwards, *Advocacy Organizations*, 488.

¹⁸⁵ Crenson, Matthew A., and Benjamin Ginsberg. *Presidential Power: Unchecked and Unbalanced*. WW Norton & Company, (2007), 114.

technologies have improved since the turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries significantly and beyond, the goals of these outside groups to influence politics remain the same.

Grossman¹⁸⁶ found that “interest groups likely play an important role in producing significant policy change. From the perspective of policy historians, interest group influence is quite common.” According to Obar, Zube, and Lampe,¹⁸⁷ advocacy groups are relying on the Internet to achieve legislative objectives. “The Internet has had a positive impact on the activities of social movement organizations by increasing the speed, reach, and effectiveness of communication and mobilization efforts.” Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites are being used to complement offline actions of advocacy organizations.¹⁸⁸

McNair¹⁸⁹ believes that democracy requires an educated populace informed by multiple sources of information in order to form and persuade the government. This evidence must be truthful and accessible to all in the public sphere. Citizens are urged to take an active role in decision-making, and the media and advocacy associations educate and influence the public on the important matters of the day.

¹⁸⁶ Grossmann, Matt. "Interest group influence on US policy change: An assessment based on policy history." *Interest groups & Advocacy* 1, no. 2 (2012), 188.

¹⁸⁷ Obar, Jonathan A., Paul Zube, and Clifford Lampe. "Advocacy 2.0: An analysis of how advocacy groups in the United States perceive and use social media as tools for facilitating civic engagement and collective action." *Journal of Information Policy* 2 (2012), 4.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 6

¹⁸⁹ McNair, Brian. *An introduction to political communication*. Taylor & Francis, (2011), 20

In his book the "Nonprofit Organizations and Political Advocacy," Craig Jenkins¹⁹⁰ cites James Madison's concern that the "mischief of faction" could undercut democratic government. "Nonprofit advocacy is seen as contributing to this political 'overload' by promoting 'single-issue' positions and political innovations, such as town hall meetings and direct democracy. Jenkins explains that the chief purpose of advocacy leaders is framing concerns in a way that they have wide appeal and attract the press.

The literature on congressional lobbying argues that the most effective approach is informational lobbying that emphasizes research and insider information, avoids "burning bridges" and creates information dependency. But nonprofit advocates often single out members of Congress or regulatory bodies by identifying "dirty dozens," organizing media events, staging protests that castigate decision makers, and mounting high-profile lawsuits. These tactics suggest that, at least for nonprofit advocacy, information lobbying, positive relations, and continued access are less critical than maintaining a clear moral stance, mobilizing constituents, and pressuring elites.¹⁹¹

Social media has opened up pathways to share a message, identify sympathizers, and mobilize people to act through expedited channels that were previously unavailable. Clay Shirky¹⁹² shares a story that "demonstrates the ease and speed with which a group can be mobilized for the right kind of cause." He retells a May 2006 incident where a woman leaves her Sidekick in the backseat of a taxi in New York City. She is planning her upcoming wedding and has stored important information in her smartphone. Her fiancé is able to figure out who has the phone and locate an email address for the individual, yet when confronted and asked for the phone back, they are met with hostility. The groom-to-be used Digg, MySpace, his personal website, and a bulletin board to

¹⁹⁰ Jenkins, Craig. "Nonprofit Organizations and Political Advocacy." *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, ed. Walter W. Powell and Richard S. Steinberg (2006): 307.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 322.

¹⁹² Shirky, Here Comes Everybody, 12.

generate a groundswell of support. This created a local and national media frenzy that pressured the police to act, resulting in the arrest of the young lady and the return of the phone. What this example reveals is that with the right tools, strategy, and message, it is possible to rally citizens behind a cause that can exert influence on policymakers.

Aims of advocacy organizations

Identifying what these groups are trying to achieve is a good starting point to understand how social media has changed their approaches. It is important to consider the strategies and methods advocacy groups rely upon to advance their stated goals. Not all groups are aiming to propose and pass legislation. Some want to oppose legislation or government action. Some are striving to form coalitions and build membership. Others merely want to bring attention to their issues. This section will provide readers with a sense of the goals of advocacy groups.

While the Internet and social media have changed the way Americans work, go about their day-to-day activities, and gather and spread information; it is no surprise that they have also affected how citizens participate in politics. Interest groups are utilizing their online presence to inform their followers about what is happening in Congress and to educate them on their position. CMF found that these “organizers of grassroots advocacy campaigns can help facilitate more positive communications between Members and citizens.”¹⁹³ Because people are turning to advocacy for their information, they have an obligation for encouraging democratic dialogue, according to CMF.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, *Communicating with Congress*, vi.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

As the Internet and social media has developed, Aaron Guiterman,¹⁹⁵ Vice President of Interactive Strategy at DDC Advocacy, has observed changes by which these groups operate. One noteworthy difference he noticed is the way advocacy groups manipulate data and analytics to identify target audiences and plot how to activate them towards their goals. Prior to social media, campaigns would mobilize activists based upon objectives to influence an issue through letter generation, phone calls, and fly-ins; and this strategy has not changed. Social media has altered the way organizations can analyze their efforts, Guiterman continues, by providing the ability to “have an inside look at how advocates, constituents, and consumers are talking about the issue in real time and also understand what demographics, behaviors, and values motivate them to take [action].”¹⁹⁶

Guiterman further explains key differences between past efforts and current methods made possible by social media. Prior to Web 2.0, groups would mobilize and engage their advocates, but once the campaign had ended, the communications and engagement ceased. “Social media allows us to keep the dialogue going. We can continue to educate them over time to keep them engaged and educated and groom what we call ‘DDC Advocacy Champions’ so if another issue comes up, we don’t have to re-recruit and identify constituents.” There is value added since groups can facilitate a long-term dialogue on social media, which makes it easier to activate this audience in the future. “It is just a matter of reaching out to them.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Guiterman, Interview by Mile Fulton.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

The way in which outside groups are organized can dictate how they advocate. For example, Heritage Foundation is a 501C(3) while Heritage Action is a 501C(4). Heritage Foundation uses social media as an education tool by targeting audiences they deem necessary “to persuade and activate in order to achieve victory.”¹⁹⁸ Heritage Action, however, can target Congress directly and use social media tools for this purpose. “There are different tactics involved with each organization, but certainly the combination between the two is quite powerful.”¹⁹⁹

Advocacy groups serve several functions. They must educate their members, organize them, and coordinate their efforts. Interestingly, CMF found that people trust the information they receive from organizations more than their Representative.²⁰⁰ Aided with social media, advocacy groups are succeeding in their aims to affect the political process. It is remarkable that people rely more on these groups for their information on the issues of the day than they do from their elected leaders.

Advocacy groups want politicians to take an interest in their purpose and agree to work toward their goals. Corresponding with elected officials has existed since the dawn of the country, evolving over time to rely upon hand-written letters, telegraphs, postcards, faxes, and electronic communications. When email first became available, Members simply had a regular email address. Yet, as email use grew among advocacy groups, Congressional staff had an increasingly difficult duty in processing the growing volume, identifying constituent communications from out of district writers, and replying within a timely manner.

¹⁹⁸ Bluey, Rob. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. DC (2014).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, *Communicating with Congress*, 23.

How Congress Processes Communications

By 2007, the large influx of messages had overwhelmed Congressional email inboxes. Because so many messages were identical in wording, some staffers questioned the legitimacy of these form communications and wondered if constituents were aware that organizations were sending these messages with their knowledge and consent.²⁰¹ That led to an effort by some Member offices to block these messages so that could not be transmitted to a Member's inbox, to delete them upon receipt, or to file them without sending a substantive reply. The Congressional Management Foundation formed the Communicating with Congress working group to bring interested stakeholders together to discuss the status of constituent correspondence and to form a consensus between Congressional offices, advocacy organizations, and third party vendors on a solution. From that, came best practices recommendations including aggregating grassroots communications, verifying that these messages originate from constituents, identifying the sponsoring grassroots organization as well as their vendor, and clearly stating the topic of the message.²⁰²

Mr. Rosenblatt was a strong voice in the Communicating with Congress working group. He argued that a number of staffers overstated the amount of Astroturf they received because they were overwhelmed by the volume and were seeking excuses to declare as much of it as fake as possible so they could discard it. "Most of the time when

²⁰¹ Fitch and Goldschmidt, *Communicating with Congress*, 4.

²⁰² Hysom, Tim. *Communicating with Congress: Recommendations for Improving the Democratic Dialogue*. Congressional Management Foundation. (2008), viii-ix.

you press the Congressional staff about all these campaigns that are out there sending fake messages to Congress for concrete example... it's all rumor."²⁰³

Rosenblatt believes that with social media, the potential for the kind of abuse claimed by a few Congressional staffers is just as high and the probability of it is perhaps just as low. It is harder to identify a constituent who uses social media because, unlike sending an email through a webform that verifies the address, no such authentication is available. Yet, Rosenblatt challenges the notion that Members of Congress can only be concerned with correspondence from within their district or state:

The argument I've been making for the campaigns that I've been doing is that if a Member of Congress starts to ignore people because they don't live in their district, they don't live in their state, we can make them ignore at their peril because we can leverage people to disrupt their Facebook page, to flood the zone on Twitter so that when people search for that Member of Congress, they're going to find a lot of negative comments about them out there... There's all sorts of ways that people who are not in the district or state can actually disrupt them on social media, if they choose to ignore them. The common reaction in a Member's offices is, "Oh, the franking privileges don't let us communicate with people outside of our district." That is actually a misreading of the franking privileges. The franking privileges of course, used to work at the Congressional office of the chairman. So the franking privileges created restrictions back in the day when it was strictly about how many sheets of paper you got. That's the original limitation on franking is you got X amount of sheets of paper to send mail out to constituents. When the paper was gone, your privileges were done for the year. Because you're not using email and social media to put your messaging out that practical limitation no longer exists. It was the practical limitation that they did as a business practice to only communicate with constituents that can work for you and now that business practice justification is gone so it's back to, "Oh you should be communicating with people who can influence, that affect your ability to do your work or people you feel like you're obligated to respond to."²⁰⁴

Mr. Baca expands on how the boundaries of constituent communications have changed from his time working on Capitol Hill. "If we got a letter from a person in

²⁰³ Rosenblatt Interview.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

North Carolina and we're from New Mexico, we would put the letter in internal mail and send it to that North Carolina office," stamped respectfully referred not acknowledged.²⁰⁵

Over time, emails surpassed all other methods combined to become the primary method of corresponding with Congress, forcing Members to utilize webforms on their websites to process these electronic communications and filter non-constituents so they could prioritize messages from their district. "The rise of webforms and development of constituent relationship management software (CRM) was a result of the immediate need to identify constituents," explained Mr. Crabtree²⁰⁶, longtime Business Development Manager for Lockheed Martin, owners of Intranet Quorum (IQ), one of the CRM software options that manage constituent interactions. "This smart technology has enabled Congressional offices to quickly process these large advocacy messages and provide reporting to Members and staff."²⁰⁷ Other choices for Congressional offices include Symfodium, iConstituent, and Fireside21.

According to Ken Ward, CEO at Fireside21, the CRM is key to enable a Member of Congress to perform their constituent representational duties because "good constituent service translates into higher approval ratings across the political spectrum."²⁰⁸ Mr. Ward continues to explain that, "Responding to letters, phone calls, emails, and other digital communications requires multiple levels of approval and edits to ensure the content aligns with the member's views and strategy."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁵ Baca Interview.

²⁰⁶ Crabtree, Thomas. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. DC, (2014).

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Pearlman, Nathaniel G., ed. *Margin of Victory*. ABC-CLIO, (2012), 93.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 94.

Constituent communications increased fourfold between 1995 and 2004, which necessitated that CRMs develop the capability to process the deluge of messages, track the constituent's record, and send a reply.²¹⁰ Ward explains, "Elected officials are constantly innovating and adapting their strategy as new communication mediums arise."²¹¹ And, he discusses that, "The crux of the challenge is that as communications options for citizens increase and diversify, the technology on the legislator side must be consolidated to provide an integrated, strategic approach to constituent communication."²¹²

While electronic communications has increased to become the dominant form of connecting with Congress, the speed of email and social media has changed constituent expectations. Crabtree recounts a conversation he had with a Member about this evolution:

He observed that before email, constituents did not expect an immediate response. They sent a letter, it took a few days to arrive in Washington, and it took several weeks to go through the process of generating and sending a response permitting the Member and staff time to think about a reply. Constituents did not expect a response for several weeks. Now, because of the instant nature of electronic communications, people expect an immediate response. There is not as much time to really think through and produce a substantive response. Another issue for Member offices is the conversational nature of email. Email correspondence has the potential to be a back and forth. Member offices do not have the resources to engage in that.²¹³

How Advocacy Groups Communicate with Policymakers

However, if offices need specialized systems to handle the influx of messages, it is worth asking, what technologies are the driving force corralling so many

²¹⁰ Fitch and Goldschmidt, *Communicating with Congress*, 4.

²¹¹ Pearlman, *Margin of Victory*, 94.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Crabtree Interview.

communications? Many nonprofits and advocacy groups rely upon third party email vendors, such as Capwiz, Voter Voice, DDC Advocacy, and Convio, for their online grassroots advocacy communications. These tools allow organizations to build onto their websites the ability to send action alerts to their members. “Websites or microsites (specialized issue-based sites developed to link to a main organization’s website) are one of the core building blocks of any advocacy campaign. Having a robust online presence enhances the traditional methods of lobbying at all levels.”²¹⁴

These tools allow grassroots organizations to quickly match a constituent with their legislator: this is microtargeting. DDC Advocacy advises advocacy groups with a more hands-on approach. Social media has amplified their interest through its speed and ease. Mr. Baca observes, “You can now at the click of a button turn on your grassroots and your activist networks, and demand something, close something down probably, and have more influence than you’ve ever had before.” He recommends that organizers of campaigns must make advocacy “easy, simple, to the point, and quickly to executive with as few steps as possible.”²¹⁵

Social media has become the ultimate form of engagement.²¹⁶ For instance, if an organization is dedicated to animal rights and the “Please Don’t Kill Puppies” bill is on the Floor of the House, it can hire Capwiz, Voter Voice, or one of the competitors to build a platform that will enable the group to email their supporters, ask them to send a message to their elected officials, and track these efforts. Many times, these messages are already crafted by the organization so the citizen merely has to sign their name and

²¹⁴ Fulton, Social Media.

²¹⁵ Baca Interview.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

click send. Sometimes, the group allows individuals to craft their own or alter the prepared message. “The site and its many components are the platform for engagement, fundraising, and advocacy for this important cause.”²¹⁷

CMF confirms that the increase in communications as a result of online advocacy has “reduced the quality of constituents’ communications to Congress.”²¹⁸ Many staff expressed frustration that the organizers of grassroots campaigns merely coax citizens to send messages to Congress. The increase in communications afforded by electronic communications has led to a decline in the quality of the reply. Often, constituent communications are not answered on the specific issue or not answered at all. Ward points out the challenge Congressional staff face: “With vast amounts of interactions, how can a small team with limited resources keep track and make sense of a near-endless amount of constituent communications.”²¹⁹

Capitol Advantage devised a campaign to humanize the messages to demonstrate their source was actual people not Astroturf. When an office is inundated, it can become easy to lose sight that there is an actual person behind each communication. To add a personal touch to the countless messages, they attached photos and stories of the people behind the Capwiz messages. The project culminated with a thank you reception on the Hill targeting legislative correspondents, the staffer responsible for processing the messages. At the reception, the focus was on thanking staff and introducing them to actual constituents who wrote them through Capwiz and their advocacy organization. This was effective as more offices removed blocks on the messages, reducing the number

²¹⁷ Fulton, *Social Media*.

²¹⁸ Fitch and Goldschmidt, *Communicating with Congress*, 4.

²¹⁹ Pearlman, *Margin of Victory*, 94.

of offices that rejected Capwiz messages to nearly zero. While Congressional staffers feel frustrated by the added work, they appreciate that this is good for democracy.²²⁰

Methodology

It is appropriate to examine the statements of the literature review by looking at recent presidential campaigns as well as the government shutdown of October 2013. These served as case studies for the first two chapters and will be valuable to reexamine from the prospective of non-profit advocacy organizations. A considerable portion of this research is derived from the personal interviews conducted in February of 2014 with Alan Rosenblatt, a Visiting Professor at Johns Hopkins University and the founder and host of the Internet Advocacy Roundtable; Rob Bluey, Director of Digital Media and Editor in Chief of the Foundry at the Heritage Foundation; former Representative Tom Perriello, President and CEO of the Center for American Progress Action Fund; and Joshua Baca, Vice President of Client Relations at DDC Advocacy. The transcribed interviews are available in their entirety as they are included in the appendix.

Case Analysis: The Government Shutdown of October 2013

Conservative outside groups were able to form the coalition necessary to implement its strategy to oppose funding The Affordable Care Act because social media provided the technology, the methods, and the data to spread their message and urge their supporters to make their voices heard. Without a smartphone connected to the Internet and social media applications in the hands of millions of citizen-activists, it would have been near impossible to keep activists informed and engaged; conservative groups shared up-to-the minute information and provided clear instructions for their supporters to make

²²⁰ Fitch and Goldschmidt, *Communicating with Congress*, 5.

their voices heard by key policymakers and leadership. Social media not only enabled the shutdown: it sustained it by hardening positions as both sides dug in and pledged not to compromise.

Social media has helped conservative activists connect and interact. They are able to share news from sites that tilt conservative, like breitbart.com, washingtontimes.com, theblaze.com, wnd.com, and mrconservative.com. These five sites “are among the most shared on Facebook, but do not rank among the most visited sites... These sites have relatively modest audiences... [yet] got 22% of their traffic from Facebook referrals – far more than any other grouping of news sites.”²²¹

Chris Cillizza explains his theory about this phenomenon:

Conservatives are a remarkably well-organized and tight-knit group. It's why every book from a conservative author shoots to the top of the best-seller list. It's why Fox News Channel's primetime programming regularly doubles that of its cable competition. It's why Rush Limbaugh has no talk radio equal among liberals. It's not terribly surprising then that organizational closeness extends to the digital space where conservatives use Facebook to share stories/links from a handful of conservative websites.²²²

This case study will examine how outside groups took to social media during the shutdown in October of 2013 to support the Republicans' stance or defend the president's signature piece of legislation. It will discuss how social media enabled conservative groups to build and sustain the momentum that pressured Republican leadership into agreeing to take a stand over The Affordable Care Act on the debt ceiling and funding for the government. It will look at the turning point in the shutdown and how social media

²²¹ Amy Mitchell et al. *Social, Search & Direct: Pathways to Digital News* (Pew Research Center, 2014), 17.

²²² Cillizza, Chris. “What Facebook can tell us about conservatives.” *The Washington Post*. (2014).

swung public opinion. It will examine the technologies and methods utilized, discuss the downsides of social media, and assess the aftermath of the shutdown.

Overview of the shutdown

The government shutdown of 2013 ended on October 17 just after midnight when President Barack Obama signed an agreement to resume most governmental functions. For over two weeks, the President and Congressional Republicans failed to resolve the funding gap that left many federal employees and departments in legislative limbo. Unlike in 1995 and 1996 when the Internet was in its infancy and Web 2.0 technologies did not exist, this latest shutdown played out across social media platforms as people could connect with and share their views and user generated content more widely than they could during the previous standoff between Democratic President Bill Clinton and Republican Speaker Newt Gingrich. More than simply sharing their thoughts on the recent shutdown, organizations were able to affect the process through social media to advocate their position, corral their supporters, and influence key politicians.

The main sticking point behind the shutdown was the desire by conservative advocacy groups to defund the president's signature health care law, the Affordable Care Act. In an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal the day the government reopened, Jim DeMint, a former senator from South Carolina and the president of the Heritage Foundation, explained why his organization coordinated with other conservative elected officials and outside groups and picked this fight.²²³

While discussing the cause of the shutdown on the Daily Show, Senator DeMint responded to Jon Stewart's assertion that the Heritage Foundation was promoting

²²³ DeMint, Jim. "We Won't Back Down on ObamaCare." Wall Street Journal. (2013).

shutting down the government as a tactic: “We did not think we should proceed with the implementation of ObamaCare. It was not ready for prime time, we did not think it should be funded, and that would delay it.”²²⁴ Along with Senators Ted Cruz and Mike Lee and conservatives in the House of Representatives, DeMint felt they were fighting a law that was “unfair, unfeasible, and unaffordable.” They were able to coordinate and “fight the good fight” through social media, keeping intact their coalition and informing their supporters. Through these methods and communications tools, they maintained discipline within their coalition.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Senator Cruz spoke on the Senate Floor for twenty-one hours against The Affordable Care Act in the days prior to the shutdown, and it earned him more than 20,000 new Twitter followers.²²⁵ Many observers speculated he chose this tactic to raise his profile by relying on the mediums of C-SPAN and social media to grow his supporters, similar to Gingrich’s approach decades earlier. Baca observes that: “Advocacy has sort of come full circle where it’s not just outside groups anymore who are doing it. It’s individuals. Individual elected officials who are engaged in advocacy through email addresses, through Facebook followers to Twitter followers, and you can instantly become a national star at a click of a mouse.”²²⁶

Heritage Action hosted a number of town hall events throughout the country in August of 2013 as they laid the groundwork for their strategy for the impending confrontation over the budget and the new health care law. According to Mr. Bluey, they relied upon new media technologies like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to mobilize:

²²⁴ Stewart, Jon. Interview with Jim DeMint. “The Daily Show. March 4, 2014.

²²⁵ Lee, “Ted Cruz.”

²²⁶ Baca Interview.

Digital was a key component of that, and coming out of August and when Congress was coming back in September we launched our first billboard advertising campaign in Times Square. You might say, “Well, how is that connected to digital, a call to action on that billboard was an SMS campaign?” We collected cell phone numbers to keep people in the know about what was going on with the defund fight... I can tell you, because we saw tremendous gains on Facebook and Twitter during that time, but Facebook in particular. I believe that October 1st, the day the shutdown began, we saw the largest gain in terms of likes. I think the first week of the shutdown we gained something like 130,000 likes on our Facebook page. Some of that was through advertising, but a lot of that, as I understand it, through Facebook itself. The shutdown was a huge event on Facebook. There were so many people talking about it throughout the country that people were just at that moment looking for information. Very rarely do you have something in Washington, a policy debate, rise to that level.²²⁷

Conservative groups were able to influence the strategy of the Republican leadership and force them into a course of action they initially resisted. Speaker John Boehner stated after the standoff that the shutdown fight over The Affordable Care Act was not his choice.²²⁸ “I think that as a result of what the Republican Caucus was able to do, they pulled him in that direction. I think that was a direct result of American people calling in and having an impact. I think that could probably go back to the impact of the roll of digital in terms of making that happen (Bluey 2014).”

Another aspect of social media that enabled conservative groups to proceed with their shutdown strategy is the ability to spread one’s content directly to their audience. “If you’re at Heritage, you don’t have to worry about whether the Washington Post is going to carry your op-ed making the case for defund ObamaCare. You could reach more people than the Washington Post possibly could through your Facebook page, if

²²⁷ Bluey Interview.

²²⁸ Siddiqui, Sabrina. “John Boehner: Conservative Groups Have Lost All Credibility.” The Huffington Post. (2013).

you have a big enough followership.”²²⁹ Prior to social media, traditional news organizations served as filters and distributed the content they saw fit. Yet, as discussed in the preceding chapters, people can access news and information on their schedule. Traditional media and its methods still have their place as a source of news and information, but they have less control over the news cycle.

Social media also allows advocacy groups to coordinate with elected officials. Senators Ted Cruz and Mike Lee and Tea Party House Republicans synced their efforts with outside groups like Heritage. Mr. Rosenblatt explained how this works:

Members of Congress are now almost universally using social media to push out their positions and their messages. There is an opportunity for advocacy organizations to be able to retweet with endorsement tweets from Members of Congress that are Facebook posts from Members of Congress that are saying things that they agree with and share them with their members which brings that position of those Members of Congress into the inbox of those activists. As well when there are Members of Congress who tweet out or post on Facebook things that are contrary to that organization, they are able to respond in such a way that their audience sees it as well.²³⁰

After Mitt Romney’s defeat in 2012 and the Republican’s failure to capture control of the Senate, the Republican National Committee circulated a report titled, “Growth and Opportunity Project,” a postmortem of the election with recommendations for best practices to employ to win future elections. It discussed a number of technological and organizational detriments and suggestions for fixing them. They devoted a chapter to designing a playbook for their “Friends and Allies” consisting of

²²⁹ Bluey Interview.

²³⁰ Rosenblatt Interview.

“advocacy organizations to think tanks to political action committees to SuperPACs to associations.”²³¹

In this section on third party groups, the RNC recommends several adjustments, including competitive primaries, better utilizing technology and data, building a better ground game, sharing information and consistent messages, and avoiding groupthink:

Peggy Noonan recently wrote about how our Party has stifled debate and how groupthink has taken over. She quoted Joe Scarborough saying, “Everybody’s afraid to talk.” She then related that in 1994 the Republican Party “was alive with ideas: John Kasich on the budget, Jack Kemp on taxes, John Engler on welfare reform, Tommy Thompson on crime control. This was the bubble and fizz of a movement at its height.” Third-party groups that promote purity are hurting our electoral prospects. As Noonan quoted Scarborough again, “The national conversation is more constricted, with radio stars, websites and magazines functioning as unofficial arbiters and limiters of domestic and foreign policy debate.” Our friends and allies are in a strong position to help promote the Party’s ideas and encourage a diversity of ideas and solutions consistent with our core principles.²³²

Yet, many outside conservative groups chose to resist and discard the proposals of the report. “All year, outside groups like Heritage Action and Club for Growth have laid down their own law in terms of messaging, leading the GOP into one morass after another.”²³³

The Social Media Defense of The Affordable Care Act

The first chapter examined how Obama used social media to win the presidency twice. After his first victory, he transitioned his campaign into an advocacy organization, Organizing for Action (OFA). This large social media network that he built to get elected became his advocacy organization pushing his agenda. The millions of people that joined

²³¹ Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, and McCall, GOP, 44.

²³² Ibid, 56.

²³³ Linkins, Jason. “The RNC Wrote A 100-Page Autopsy, But Apparently Nobody Read It.” The Huffington Post. (2013).

his social network, myBarackObama.com, could be summoned to contact their Congressmen and women to advocate for the president’s agenda. “He's going to be the first president to be connected in this way, directly, with millions of Americans,” Joe Trippi said.²³⁴

OFA explicitly states its mission right on his website: “Our work didn’t end on Election Day. Organizing for Action will support the legislative agenda we voted on, train the next generation of grassroots organizers and leaders, and organize around local issues in our communities.” In September 2013, leading up to the eventual shutdown, OFA released a video and shared it through its platforms titled, “Enough Already,” which called on Republicans to stop opposing The Affordable Care Act and avert the pending budget crisis:

Forty times. That's how often a group of Republicans have voted against ObamaCare just to prove their allegiance to their party's right wing. Okay, they've said their piece. But now they've gone even further, threatening to shut down the government if ObamaCare isn't dismantled. It could disrupt Social Security and veterans' benefits, hurt job growth, and undermine our economic recovery. Tell these House Republicans: Enough already.²³⁵

During the shutdown, it operated as an informational center on the Affordable Care Act and informed people how to sign up and the benefits of the law. Plus, it galvanized its supporters through its Twitter account @BarackObama by sharing information, such as highlighting the consequences of the shutdown. And, it created a “Truth Team” to advance the president’s narrative of the law:

Opponents of ObamaCare are spending millions of dollars to try to confuse, mislead and scare Americans when it comes to the law. The OFA Truth Team is a dedicated group of supporters who want to push back against the lies, myths, and misinformation out there with cold, hard

²³⁴ Murray, Shailagh and Matthew Mosk. “Under Obama, Web Would Be the Way.” The Washington Post. (2008).

²³⁵ Organizing for America website.

facts. Truth Team members have access to tip sheets, regular updates, and all the facts and figures you need to make sure your friends, family, and coworkers know the facts. If you care about telling the real story about ObamaCare – and making sure Washington sticks to the facts – you should be part of the OFA Truth Team.²³⁶

After the shutdown, President Obama continued to rely on social media to make his point. In March of 2014, facing mounting pressure from the Republicans over The Affordable Care Act, a website with glitches when it launched, and initial numbers that did not meet expectations, he appeared on comedian Zach Galifianakis's *Between Two Ferns* that streams on funnyordie.com, a website started by Will Farrell, in order to urge young Americans to get coverage. In doing so, his appearance helped boost enrollments and cemented his role in history as the first social media president. "The president's appearance to persuade young people to sign up for health insurance is a key moment for the Internet, much like Franklin Roosevelt's fireside chats were for radio and the Kennedy-Nixon debate for television," according to Dick Glover, CEO of the website.²³⁷ President Obama used the medium to interact with his targeted audience, something that all presidents and politicians do in order to relate with the public.²³⁸ "Obama was fully engaged in the atmospherics of the program: snapping back at Galifianakis, grimacing with exasperation at the host's scornful treatment of the healthcare website, feigning shock at the 'reveal' that the broadcast had been done inside the White House itself."²³⁹

While some expressed disdain for the president's choice to participating in a viral video, he merely followed the path of previous chief executives in taking to the best

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Bauder, David. "Obama's 'Funny or Die' skit over 15 million hits." The Associated Press. (2014).

²³⁸ Greenfield, Jeff. Yes, Lincoln Would Have Done 'Between Two Ferns.' The Daily Beast. (2014).

²³⁹ Ibid.

available method to connect with voters. Lincoln relied on storytelling; John F. Kennedy appeared on *The Tonight Show* with Jack Paar; Richard Nixon asked, “Sock it to ME?” on *Laugh-In*; Bill Clinton played his tenor sax on Arsenio Hall; and George W. Bush brought a slide show to the White House Correspondents Association dinner, an event covered by C-SPAN.²⁴⁰ Politicians seek ways to humanize themselves through the medium where the people are, and judging by the millions of viewers who saw the video and the 40% jump in traffic to healthcare.gov, the president achieved his goal.²⁴¹

User Generated Content During the Shutdown

Social media also permitted people to easily and quickly share their frustration, opinions, and information on the shutdown more widely than twenty years ago. Policymakers and advocacy groups on the Right and Left took to social media to rally their supporters and promote their messages in an attempt to gain political leverage. On Twitter, humorous hashtags abounded including #ShutdownPickUpLines and #NoBudgetNoPants²⁴² while comedians like Seth MacFarlane took advantage of the opportunity to make a joke, “Per several Family Guy episodes: whenever there’s a government shutdown, we can all steal a zoo animal. Go get yours.”²⁴³ In one of the more creative and popular avenues to vent, DrunkDialCongress.org encouraged citizens to get drunk and then randomly connect with a Congressman. The site, created by Revolution Messaging, even provided talking points to potential drunk dialers such as, “If you can yell at a Park Ranger after forcing the government to shut down then I get to yell

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Aigner-Treworgy, Adam. “HealthCare.gov gets 40% jump in traffic after Funny or Die video.” CNN. (2014).

²⁴² Klein, Kaitlyn. “Social Media Plays Role in Response to Government Shutdown.” The University Daily Kansas. (2013).

²⁴³ MacFarlane, Seth. Twitter @SethMacFarlane (2013).

at you”; “My grandma can’t get her cancer treatment”; “I can’t watch the panda”; “You had one job to do and you failed;” and, “You guys aren’t funding the police that are protecting you???”²⁴⁴ Humor is effective in crafting a point, and social media allows for users to generate and share this content widely.

In a confrontation like the shutdown, images can be used effectively to make a point. Social media allows advocacy groups, politicians, and individuals to craft their own campaigns and not rely on traditional filters. Mr. Baca believes that creative graphics are quite influential.

Now you want a picture that easily communicates what you’re trying to convey. You may have a link to something. You may link to an article. You may be linking to a take action side or to a phone line or whatever it is. That graphic now plays such a critical role in getting your message out it’s become all about engagement. I definitely would say creative graphics are the most influential. I think videos are second. [Then] I would say catchy, short, concise, easy to digest status updates, and I think linking a plain news article is the bottom of the totem pole now.²⁴⁵

The Turning Point

While social media helped build the momentum for the shutdown and sustained it by solidifying its supporters, it also helped sway public opinion in favor of the Democrats and President Obama. Rep. Perriello believed the Democrats had a tougher job since they were not fighting for something: they were on defense. Yet momentum appeared to swing against Republicans when videos surfaced of Rep. Neugebauer yelling at a National Park Ranger or other Representatives posing for photo ops with Veterans trying to see the World War II Memorial that was shuttered because of the shutdown. That led

²⁴⁴ Rosenblatt, “Social Advocacy & Politics.”

²⁴⁵ Baca Interview.

to a strategy where House Leadership attempted to open up the government one program at a time, but Democrats and the President held the line.

My analysis of what happened on social media with the shutdown was it seemed to go good for them for a while and then it really backfired on them. You started hearing stories of ... I think of the times when their members of the congress were like at World War II and memorial being through the shutdown. They were like, we've got to open this memorial and welcome these veterans, and la, la, la, la, and everybody was like, look at those guys fighting for principle, and then you started hearing all these other things that are happening because of the shutdown, and it kind of turned on them. I think initially it was probably in their favor and then I think over time it probably worked against them.²⁴⁶

Mr. Baca reminds elected officials that because so many people have smartphones with cameras and videos enabled and accessible to the Internet, that public officials have to always assume they are on the record. George Allen had this problem in his Senate reelection campaign. A politician getting caught on an open microphone isn't new, but social media amplifies gaffes because it can be so accessible to so many people in a matter of minutes. Mr. Baca points out that the incident could simply be based on appearances. It is easy for someone to record a real or perceived transgression and send it to millions of people in seconds.

I could be a Senator and I go to Old Ebbitt's tonight, and I have three martinis. I may not be intoxicated but somebody may get a picture of me and my eyes may be red – it may be because of my contacts, maybe that I have red eyes – they could take that and they could post it. It'd be like, look at this guy he's a complete drunk at Old Ebbitt's and it escalates out of control. There are no filters to whether that's true or not. In fact the lawmaker is left in the defensive position where they're not innocent until proven guilty. They're guilty until proven innocent. All of these things have caused that breakdown in so many ways.²⁴⁷

End of the Shutdown

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

The shutdown ended with minor concessions from the Obama Administration as Congress reopened the government without changes to the Affordable Care Act and the debt ceiling was extended for a few months. Democratic Senator Patty Murray and Republican Paul Ryan were tasked with negotiating a budget since they head their respective budget committees. After the crisis ended, Speaker John Boehner weighed in with his reaction to the role that outside groups played in the budget impasse.

This budget agreement takes giant steps in the right direction. It's not everything I wanted. But when groups come out and criticize an agreement that they've never seen, you begin to wonder just how credible those actions are. Yesterday, when the criticism was coming, frankly I thought it was my job and my obligation to stand up for conservatives here in the Congress who want more deficit reduction, stand up for the work that Chairman Ryan did. He did good work on behalf of the American people.... [Outside groups] are misleading their followers and pushing our members in places where they don't want to be. Frankly, I just think they have lost all credibility. They pushed us into this fight to defund ObamaCare and to shutdown the government. Most of you know and my members know that wasn't exactly the strategy I had in mind. But, if you will recall, the day before the government reopened one of these groups stood up and said, "Well, we didn't really think this would work."²⁴⁸

And then John Boehner raised his voice, contorted his face, and cried, "Are you kidding me?!" His frustration was directed at conservative outside groups who he felt manipulated many House Republicans into a fight it could not win. The clip of Boehner shrieking became a popular meme on the Internet,²⁴⁹ and in clever use of his reaction, the Speaker's website used the image at the conclusion of his "Gif Guide For How to #GetTalking About ObamaCare."²⁵⁰

Chairman Ryan, on an appearance on Meet the Press with Senator Murray, reflected on Boehner's outburst with his annoyance that outside advocacy groups played

²⁴⁸ Siddiqui, "John Boehner."

²⁴⁹ Shabad, Rebecca. "Incredulous Boehner goes viral." The Hill. (2013).

²⁵⁰ Boyd, "Gif Guide," (2013).

in the shutdown: “I think John just kind of got his Irish up. He was frustrated that these groups came out in opposition to our budget agreement before we reached a budget agreement. I was frustrated too.”²⁵¹ Yet, realizing that he did not want to endure their wrath, he defended their role in the process: “I think these are very important elements of our conservative family. I would prefer to keep those conversations within the family. These taxpayer groups are indispensable to keeping taxpayer interests accounted for. We all believe the same thing with respect to our ultimate goal.”²⁵²

In February, Congress passed and President Obama signed legislation suspending the debt ceiling until March 2015. Just a few months earlier, conservative groups had clamored and cajoled Republican leadership into a fight over the future of the Affordable Care Act, trying to use as leverage government funding bills and the threat of defaulting on the country’s financial obligations to extract concessions. Republican leadership shied away from an opportunity to revisit the fight, bringing up and passing a “clean” bill without any conditions. After addressing his conference to announce the deal, Speaker Boehner exclaimed, “You’re not even going to clap for me for getting this monkey off of our backs?”²⁵³

This time, social media was relatively quiet, compared to the action leading up to and including the October 2013 shutdown, much to the chagrin of outside conservative groups who appeared to be in a fight for the Republican Party with leadership and the business community. They remain a “nuisance of establishment Congressional leadership and incumbent GOP lawmakers in the 2014 election cycle. These groups have

²⁵¹ Ryan, Paul, and Patty Murray. “Meet the Press with David Gregory.” (2013).

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Newhauser, Daniel. “The End of Debt Limit Brinkmanship?” Roll Call. (2014).

boosted Tea Party challengers who otherwise would have been nearly impossible campaigns against incumbents and pressured lawmakers on the Hill to vote more in line” with them.²⁵⁴

While Tea Party Congressmen demanded Boehner resign and outside conservative groups expressed their outrage, the moment passed with little fanfare, as the public seemed hardly aware. Majority Leader Eric Cantor predicted that they had lost their advantage over the way the shutdown transpired. Rep. Peter Welch added, “Democrats learned a lesson when we negotiated when we shouldn’t have and Republicans learned a lesson when they refused to negotiate when they should have. The tactic of threatening default has lost its legitimacy, because it failed.”²⁵⁵

Some rank-and-file castigated leadership for passing up the chance to make another stand. One anonymous Republican observed that leadership wasn’t willing to shoot the hostage and lost the showdown because they were not unified: “The only way we could win this fight is if we could make the president think we’re crazy enough to do it, get the business community to chill out and then somehow win the PR battle with the American people by saying we have to deal with these bigger issues.”²⁵⁶ The Wall Street Journal chided Senator Ted Cruz, who orchestrated the shutdown in collaboration with outside conservative groups, for forcing Senate Republicans to take a meaningless

²⁵⁴ Strauss, Daniel. “How the GOP Plans to Crush the Tea Party Revolt.” Talking Points Memo. (2014).

²⁵⁵ Newhauser, Roll Call, (2014).

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

procedural vote on the debt-ceiling, knowing that he could not stop it from passing and have no plan if another showdown commenced.²⁵⁷

The Downsides of Social Media

In 1995 and 1996, the Republican leadership was clamoring for the showdown with Bill Clinton over spending priorities. In comparison, the shutdown in October 2013 was driven by outside conservative groups pushing the leadership to do so. Heritage Action, Tea Party Express, and FreedomWorks, along with Senator Ted Cruz, really pushed the shutdown to attempt to defund or delay the Affordable Care Act.²⁵⁸ They relied on social media in order to hold Republicans in Congress accountable. In the previous chapter, former Representative Clinger observed how social media could strengthen your point of view by finding others who are like-minded and speculated on how that contributed to the strategies leading up to and during the shutdown and a hardening of positions:

Plus, the advocacy groups got involved in the shutdown and through social media could spread the message to hang tough and fight to the end. It was abundantly clear that this was a fool's errand, but they couldn't see beyond their echo chamber. With their resolve strengthened the Club for Growth and the Heritage Foundation worked to help them solidify their support. Social media made it possible to happen that much faster and aided in their belief that they were fighting the good fight. In my time, you had to do it by mail and there was a lag time, which meant we were slow to react to challenges by comparison.²⁵⁹

Social media allowed these outside groups to inform their constituencies of developments as they occurred, to keep the pressure on the elected officials and

²⁵⁷ Wall Street Journal. "The Minority Maker: Ted Cruz hurts his party by forcing a meaningless debt-ceiling vote." (2014).

²⁵⁸ Peters, Jeremy. "Cruz, Tea Party Hero, Rankles Senate G.O.P Colleagues." The New York Times. (2013).

²⁵⁹ Clinger Interview.

leadership to stay true to the mission, and to reinforce their belief that they were united, which strengthened their resolve. This feeling of being part of a larger group made it less likely that someone would change their mind or consider a compromise. In this instance, social media produced the perception that one is part of a larger movement. This created an echo chamber as those with similar views found each other and fortified their beliefs and hardened their position. In fact, the RNC's Growth and Opportunity Project acknowledges this problem: "The Republican Party needs to stop talking to itself. We have become expert in how to provide ideological reinforcement to like-minded people, but devastatingly we have lost the ability to be persuasive with, or welcome to, those who do not agree with us on every issues."²⁶⁰

Mr. Bluey agrees that social media creates an echo chamber. Heritage's followers comprise of conservatives while liberal organizations tend to have liberal followers. One of his concerns that arise from this problem is that Heritage is unabashedly a conservative think tank, but they are not a Republican think tank. "There have been plenty of instances in the past where we've worked with Democrats and Independents on particular policy ideas because they were willing to champion them."²⁶¹ But, it can be hard to reach people on other issues if only communicating with similar-minded citizens. And sometimes when attempting to form coalitions to work with people on other issues, some elements may resist entreaties.

People love what Ted Cruz is saying, but if all of a sudden you're working with a Ron Wyden or Joe Lieberman or one of the more liberal Members of Congress who might have a tendency to engage in those kinds of discussions, I think that's harder to achieve. And I think that the important thing is for organizations or influential users of Twitter to make sure that

²⁶⁰ Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, and McCall, GOP, 5.

²⁶¹ Bluey Interview.

they are seeking out alternative views and ideas and engaging in the debate. I think that we can certainly do a better job of it, and I think that's probably what most people want to see.²⁶²

It seems to be the case that social media can make it difficult for someone who has made so many public statements to compromise as in the instance of the shutdown. But, does this also have a polarizing affect on the followers of these conversations on Twitter or Facebook? Mr. Rosenblatt believes it can be improbable to retreat having made so many public comments. He explains the psychology behind this phenomenon:

This whole notion that the more I tweet on a particular position on a given issue, the more I set into concrete that that's my position and the harder it is for me to move off of it because I've created such a public claim to that position. In that context, certainly you get a lot of people who harden their position. At the time, I would probably suggest that the vast majority of the people who are making hard decisions on social media had them before they started tweeting, and it wasn't because they tweeted they actually became hardened in it. Those people that don't have hard positions tended to be more watchers as opposed to participants. When I get into twitter debates with people, the first question I always ask myself is, "Can I convince this person to change their mind?" If the answer is no, the follow up question I ask is, "Are there people watching the conversation I had with this person that I could convince to come to my side who are not stating their views but simply watching what people are saying about it."²⁶³

Mr. Baca is concerned that people are increasingly wary about privacy. With the news of the lengths the American government has admitted to spying on citizens and foreign nations, he wonders if there will come a tipping point where people tune out of social media? "There's a growing concern about these companies, like Facebook and Twitter, [that] have so much access to your personal information and they're collecting a

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Rosenblatt Interview.

bunch of data on you they use for a bunch of really sophisticated micro targeting stuff. At what point do people say enough?”²⁶⁴

While social media has made it easier to communicate faster and wider than ever before, there remain some limitations. For example, Twitter campaigns have trouble cajoling members of their email list to send a tweet to their elected officials due to the difficulty of providing them with a custom link. Rosenblatt suggests it is more effective to microtarget and ask specific supporters to tweet at a Member serving on the relevant committee or perhaps an undecided swing vote. “If you can create a trade list of ten Members of Congress that are really crucial to winning this election, then you go about your list to target them regardless of where they live and push out the messages that way.”²⁶⁵ He states that by tweeting at the Member it exerts pressure on them. To complement the effort, the organizer should tweet a link to the search query of people tweeting at the Congressman to a reporter. “The story they sell is that all these people are tweeting a Member of Congress about this issue so they’re using all that Twitter activity.”²⁶⁶

Baca describes another limitation to social media: some strategies do not work on other platforms. For example, he believes that what might be effective on Facebook wouldn’t work on Twitter.²⁶⁷ While Twitter has become a site to share news, Facebook is an engagement tool. Rep. Takano explains the limitations imposed by the rules of the House: “We are limited by House Ethics rules as to how we can purchase ads as far as how we can word and target the ad. We’re only allowed to target people in our district

²⁶⁴ Baca Interview.

²⁶⁵ Rosenblatt Interview.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Baca Interview.

according to House rules.”²⁶⁸ In spite of these limitations, social media is having a transformative effect on politics in America.

Which Side is Winning?

Outside conservative groups, like Club for Growth and the Heritage Foundation, accumulated the clout to force the Republican leadership into a strategy it opposed. Heritage Action for America, the political arm of the Heritage Foundation that is led by CEO Mike Needham, was able to raise millions of dollars and build a grassroots network through online social media tools. The group’s stated mission became to force the Republican leadership to act, and they invested “\$550,000 into a digital advertising campaign targeted at Republican congressional districts and worked its social media base to muscle GOP lawmakers into supporting” the effort to defund The Affordable Care Act.²⁶⁹

Despite how effectively conservative groups utilized social media leading up to and during the shutdown, Rep. Perriello believes progressives use social media better:

I don’t think there’s any question the Left has had a huge advantage on this. Even I would concede that. Again, I think there have been different theories on why the Left is much better than the Right on this. I think the Right is catching up, and I think some of it, it’s been more organic growth on the Left, genuine grassroots. I think that in some ways because there had been a bigger gap in progressive infrastructure than conservative infrastructure, which had been built up for forty years through churches and community groups and direct mail campaigns and everything else, and so it was a structure there that was sort of a vacuum on the Left. The Right is making up for it in a couple of ways, mainly that they just have so much money to throw at it that they can try to get at it that way. Plus, they already have kind of built in concentrations of support. They have outlets like Fox and the things where they can really focus a message and then drive people out to the sites, and those things are certainly very successful.

²⁶⁸ Takano Interview.

²⁶⁹ Miller, Zeke. “Hidden Hand: How Heritage Action Drove DC to Shut Down.” Time: Swampland. (2013).

I think they are catching up, but I think it's pretty fair to say the Left was ahead of the game on that initially.²⁷⁰

However, Mr. Baca disagrees and believes conservatives are winning the social media front. In his opinion, because the president is a Democrat, the Right is more active on social media. "When Obama was running for re-election, he's a winner in social media. When he's governing, he's the loser in social media. The Republicans have done a good job in pointing out the flaws and using social media to bring to life the flaws of his governing philosophy."²⁷¹

Mr. Baca further explains that Republicans have used social media adeptly to highlight flaws and missteps the president has made. In this case, using social media brings to life the shortcomings of his viewpoint on governing. "Today I would argue that because of where we stand at this snapshot in history at this snapshot moment, I think the conservatives are probably dominating social media."²⁷²

Yet, in the Growth and Opportunity Project published by the Republican National Committee, they acknowledge that, "Democrats had the clear edge on new media and ground game, in terms of both reach and effectiveness."²⁷³ The section on campaign mechanics further explains Obama's tactics, "Marrying grassroots politics with technology and analytics, they successfully contacted, persuaded and turned out their margin of victory. There are many lessons to be learned from their efforts, particularly with respect to voter contact."²⁷⁴ The report also implores Republican operatives to rely

²⁷⁰ Perriello, Tom. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. DC, (2014).

²⁷¹ Baca Interview.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, and McCall, GOP, 24.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 25.

on data, commit to greater technology and digital resources, and discard intuition or traditional ways of doing things:

A commitment to greater technology and digital resources in all areas referenced above is critical. These are not stand-alone functions but tools that must be used to improve the quality and effectiveness of our voter contact. Much has been written about the Democrats' advantage in this area. The need to integrate these functions across all levels of both the national Party structure and national campaigns is clear.²⁷⁵

Additionally, in the section on technology under the chapter on "Friends and Allies" the report acknowledges that Democrats and President Obama established and maintained his technological advantage, which it used in concert with a dynamic organizational effort.²⁷⁶ The Obama campaign had more data on voters than any other political campaign in history, a result made possible by social media, as it allows for examination as discussed earlier by Guiterman. "This data collection and analytics effort was woven through every aspect of the campaign, including testing and re-testing innovative approaches to connecting with voters and integrating the use of data and analytics throughout the campaign."

While it is up for debate which political side is winning the social media battle, it is clear that advocacy groups are having success influencing policymakers through its use. Mr. Baca believes that lawmakers are afraid of the online perception and recounts an instance involving a client concerned with a vote in the Senate:

We ran a phenomenal campaign in this [Senator's state] from making sure there was positive news coverage about the issue, making sure the local impact was understood, and so forth and so on. We got [the Senator's] vote, but in the lead up to the vote, I remember one of our lobbyists went in to meet with him to check the status of where he was and whatnot, and he was concerned over one post. He had the one thing he focused on I

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 46.

remember. A senior Senator, Republican, afraid of a primary, said something along the lines like, “What’s caused me the most angst is someone posted on my page, and it generated 200 comments, and all these people are telling me that I shouldn’t vote for this because of whatever reason.” One, how do you know any of those people are even in your district or state? Two, that’s what’s causing you angst? So yes, I think there is that ability because of perception because it’s so there. It’s just like any kind of page. If we write an advocacy Facebook page for any of our clients and let’s say we’re running a campaign that’s about pro small business, and someone goes on our page and posts, “You’re actually pro big business,” and our client sees it, they’re freaking out. It’s right there and anybody can do it.²⁷⁷

Conclusion

Is Madison’s trepidation of the “mischief of faction” justified as a result of the influence outside groups exert on current policy? Are these groups overloading the process, aided by the speed and ease of social media? Or, perhaps these groups are providing a necessary function of informing the public and framing concerns with wide appeal, as outlined by McNair and Jenkins. The answer is that while these outside groups are more powerful than ever before, aided largely by the advent of social media, their presence is helpful in a working democracy.

It is truly remarkable how outside groups drove Republican leadership into a course of action it had denounced months earlier as a loser. This would not be possible without social media’s ability to connect with individuals and share information. Absent the previous filters, these groups wield significant influence over strategy and policy that wasn’t possible in the past. Outside groups are relying on social media to corral people to take action and call their Members of Congress. “If the phones aren’t ringing, they’re more inclined to fall in line with what leadership wants.”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Baca Interview.

²⁷⁸ Bluey Interview.

Social media has also permitted groups to transcend state and congressional district lines. As Mr. Rosenblatt pointed out earlier about franking, Members are not limited to sending messages only to constituents, contrary to the misperception. Rep. Takano ads, “There are 750,000 people in our Congressional District, but not everybody who likes us is in the district. Somehow they get referred through friends or go viral.”²⁷⁹ Social media has no limit to how many citizens can be reached on any post meaning Members are engaging their constituencies inside their district and across the nation. And if Members can reach beyond their districts, as Senator Cruz did with his Floor speech leading up to the shutdown and Newt Gingrich did at the beginning of C-SPAN to find their supporters, advocacy groups are not bound by these lines either. If a Member chooses to ignore a campaign, Mr. Rosenblatt offers a way to get their attention:

Issue campaigns can organize people tweeting at a Member of Congress to vote a particular way on a bill. These campaigns are as much public and press facing as they are Congress facing. But they don't directly interfere with a Member's outgoing message. On Facebook, campaigns can organize supporters to hijack any update posted by a Member on its wall. By forcing every wall post to shift focus to the campaign's message in the post's comments, issue groups can disrupt Members' ability to get out its own messaging (2014)... [And] we can easily change this calculus by using Twitter to shame Members who ignore Twitter.²⁸⁰

Social media and the Internet have transformed how politicians interact with the public.²⁸¹ Candidates and policymakers have always needed to reach out and contact voters through the means and methods they prefer. While in the past those methods were primarily radio, television, and print media, now they must also engage people on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube because of their popularity. Social media

²⁷⁹ Takano Interview.

²⁸⁰ Rosenblatt Interview.

²⁸¹ Hysom, *Communicating with Congress*, vii.

is so effective partly because it is quantifiable: large amounts of data can be examined and manipulated with speed and ease. Advocacy groups have embraced this and learned how to successfully apply these lessons in their campaigns to elected officials. Social media is not just another platform to correspond: it has transformed political communications between campaigns, Congresspeople, and advocacy groups.

THESIS CONCLUSION

Social media has transformed politics in America, notably in the three areas discussed: presidential campaigns, Congressional operations, and non-profit advocacy. How people are connected to one another can now be studied, quantified, and exploited to achieve one's goals. This aspect along with the two-way nature of popular sites that allow fast and far-reaching interaction makes social media not just the next in line of communication technologies but a revolutionary development affecting human behavior. Business, education, leisure, and politics are just a few areas of society that are affected. "Social media is one of the most important global leaps forward in recent human history. It provides for self-expression and promotes mutual understanding. It enables rapid formation of networks and demonstrates our common humanity across cultural differences. It connects people, their ideas and values, like never before."²⁸²

Presidential campaigns now have the ability to reach voters directly. The first chapter of this thesis demonstrated how candidates no longer have to rely on the filter of traditional media deciding what content to air and when. Social media provides an avenue directly to the voter and facilitates a dialogue rather than a lecture. These interactions can be tracked, quantified, and utilized to determine how to deploy resources. Obama's team built a social network that gave users the power to access lists of people in their neighborhood they could call with their appeal; record when they have voted early so they could concentrate on getting those who hadn't voted to the polls; and donate online or on their smartphone. Campaigns are now able to better track their engagement

²⁸² Omidyar, Pierre. "Social Media: Enemy of the State or Power to the People?" The Huffington Post. (2014).

with voters and volunteers who, in turn, are able to support their candidate faster and more efficient.

The Republican Party's "Growth and Opportunity Project" points out that Mitt Romney won individuals over the age of 30 by 1.8 million votes, yet he lost those under 30 by 5 million votes. Part of the reason, the report acknowledges, was messaging and social issues, but another part was they were not utilizing current communications technologies:

We also need to communicate with young voters where they get their information. We can't use old communication tools for young voters. Technology is second nature to young voters. Using social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and Instagram is important, but we also need to be actively looking for and utilizing the newest and most cutting-edge social media platforms to engage this generation.²⁸³

Obama was so successful that he created a new model by which others try to emulate. Similar to how President Franklin D. Roosevelt pioneered radio and John F. Kennedy forged a bond with voters on television, Obama led the public movement into the social media age by demonstrating its power to organize, analyze, and revolutionize data and networks. While many Americans use Facebook and Twitter simply to post cat videos or answer quizzes, social media has opened up channels that have altered politics through the power to communicate and President Obama set the standard for others and energized a movement.²⁸⁴

Congressional office operations have also changed in the wake of social media. The second chapter explored the evolving relationship of Member of Congress and constituent since the two-way nature of social media permits a quicker exchange of ideas.

²⁸³ Barbour, Bradshaw, Fleischer, Fonalledas, and McCall, GOP, 21-22.

²⁸⁴ Omidyar, "Social Media."

Forced by a decline in their operating budget, many offices realized the advantages social media offered, namely the ability to communicate farther, faster, and cheaper than relying on franked mail or newsletters. Plus, since constituents were moving their communications to social media, it was important that Members follow and respond in kind. Members seek to capture the attention of voters, engage them on the issues, and stay informed on their concerns, and social media allows them to accomplish these goals.

Rep. Nunnelee discussed earlier his belief that social media is a tool, but it isn't the silver bullet. "When the phone rings off the hook it still gets everyone's attention. Another way Members keep a pulse of things is by monitoring social media."²⁸⁵ Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram have become important tools for campaigns and elected officials, but they are part of the overall outreach strategy. Politicians are using their online presence to organize, fundraise, and communicate. They still march in parades, attend town hall meetings, canvass their districts, shake hands at commuter stations, and stand outside supermarkets and other public gatherings. The newsletters that Rep. Clinger sent to keep his constituency informed on his positions, particularly during the 1995-1996 shutdowns, are not as prevalent today. Staffers are receiving fewer blue postcards or yellow petitions from constituents organized by advocacy organizations; in return, they are sending the bulk of their replies by electronic methods as the Congressional Management Foundation has observed.

During the shutdown in October of 2013, Congressional offices were able to stay in touch with their constituency in a manner that simply wasn't possible in 1995 and 1996 when the Internet was still a novelty. So much more can be done today with a click

²⁸⁵ Nunnelee Interview.

of a mouse or remotely on a smartphone like a Blackberry, iPhone, or Android.

Congressional staff used electronic communications to perform traditional operations like sending out newsletters by email instead of printing and sending them through franking.

Members were in touch with citizens instantaneously, so they could hear from people urging them to stand their ground on either side due to the prevalence of social media.

The final chapter examined how powerful advocacy organizations have become in influencing policy because of the tools and strategies social media provides. It is much simpler today for these organizations to identify followers, strategize, and coordinate with their members and other groups and, in some cases, politicians. Outside groups wield more influence over the political process than in the past. It is remarkable how conservative groups worked closely with their supporters and certain Senators and Representatives to demand a course of action Speaker Boehner went along with yet opposed. In 1995 and 1996, then-Speaker Newt Gingrich asserted control over the shutdown; by comparison, this recent shutdown was driven by outside groups who pressured the Republican House Leadership. Without social media providing the means to organize, it is easy to believe the shutdown may not have taken place.

The campaign, elected official, or advocacy organization that is using social media is at an advantage over the competition. Where Howard Dean failed to turn his online followers into volunteers on the ground, President Obama was able to build a robust social media network that enabled him to fundraise, organize, and build a network that carried him to the White House. Then, he was able to take that operation and turn it into an advocacy organization to promote his agenda and pressure Congress and then use it again for his reelection. Since, politicians and advocacy organizations alike have been

trying to copy what Obama did, yet some don't even realize what it was Obama was able to accomplish.²⁸⁶ While there are downsides to social media, Mr. Rosenblatt points out the importance and necessity an active citizenry plays on a working democracy. Social media lets people interact freely and without many restrictions. "From mobilizing young voters here in the U.S. to the roots of the Arab Spring in the Middle East, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and others have played not just an important role, but also an instrumental one."²⁸⁷

Findings

Social media is influencing all aspects of politics, from organizing to fundraising to strategizing and beyond. Former Rep. Tom Perriello agrees that social media is affecting politics and offers his take on Senator Ted Cruz's push to fight the implementation of The Affordable Care Act.

Ted Cruz was pretty up front that he was building his email list off of that. That email list is a new form of power because of your ability to raise money from it and generate letters... The email list is still pretty powerful, but now it is primarily powerful because of its ability to raise money, which drives a lot in politics. Someone like Ted Cruz can be relevant if he can be raising millions of dollars off of an email list of millions of people.²⁸⁸

There is a difference of opinion regarding if the Left or Right is using social media better. Rep. Perriello argues that the Left is winning the social media front. While he thinks the Right is catching up, the Left was ahead from the beginning because it grew its grassroots more organically and genuinely than the Right. He believes the Right is

²⁸⁶ Baca Interview.

²⁸⁷ Omidyar, "Social Media."

²⁸⁸ Perriello Interview.

able to close the gap because “they just have so much money to throw at it.”²⁸⁹ Mr. Baca contends that depending upon which party occupies the Oval Office; the opposition party will do better at social media. In his opinion, when one disagrees with the direction set by the Administration, one tends to be more motivated to organize to resist those policies. He points to President Obama as an example; his team was without peer in 2008 and 2012 in beating Senator McCain and Governor Romney, respectively, but was outdueled when defending his priorities.

Historically, the party out of power is more motivated to join and stop an agenda with which it disagrees, so perhaps it is possible that social media aided the rise of the Tea Party in 2010 while the Democrats rested on their laurels won in 2008. There is consensus that what President Obama’s campaign was able to accomplish in 2008 and 2012 set the standard by which others are attempting to copy. If it were not for social media, it is likely that the October 2013 shutdown would not have occurred since it allowed conservatives who were motivated to defund The Affordable Care Act to coalesce around a strategy and force the hand of Speaker Boehner. In that regards, the Right was winning in the lead up in beginning. However, the president and Democrats remained united in a way they had not in previous budget standoffs. Plus, social media shared images of Republicans posturing politically that turned the momentum.

Social media has enabled politicians and advocacy organizations to work outside of the traditional state or district lines. With the cost of elections soaring, politicians rely on social media to find people across the country that agree with them and are willing to donate. Recently, politicians have been rewarded for making incendiary comments and

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

social media has helped spread those clips and raise significant sums of money. For example, when Representative Joe Wilson yelled, “You lie!” at President Obama during a joint session of Congress in September 2009, it had the effect of helping him and his opponent raise money. Rep. Alan Grayson has compared the Tea Party to the KKK in fundraising solicitations. Provocative comments can spread quickly because of the technology with the effect of raising money and one’s profile. “There are 750,000 people in our Congressional District, but not everybody who likes us is in the district. Somehow they get referred through friends or go viral.”²⁹⁰

While Congressmen can reach beyond their districts for support and donors, advocacy groups are also able to disregard these boundaries. If a politician can fundraise and draw support from beyond their district and state, then advocacy groups can seek to influence elected officials. “There are many advocacy organizations that are using social media to engage in fundraising campaigns as well as issue advocacy.”²⁹¹

The mobility of social media is an effective check on politicians. Since almost everybody has a cell phone and camera and Internet access, policymakers should assume they are always on the record. Elected officials should be mindful to stay consistent since what they say in D.C. can get back to their district faster than they can.

I think there’s some very positive ways that this is holding politicians more accountable, and I think there’s negative ways, like a lot of things in life. I think there’s a tradition where it was easier for people to say one thing in Washington and a different thing back home, or even back home they might say different things at the Chamber of Commerce lunch than at the Union Breakfast, and so I think it’s forced a certain amount of accountability, transparency, and even consistency on that, which is probably good. I think it is also often misused; a line is taken out of context that doesn’t really mean that, so then you get to the point that you’re just doing less communicating with the public, you’re walking

²⁹⁰ Takano Interview.

²⁹¹ Rosenblatt Interview.

on eggshells, and you're particularly less likely to sit down with people on the other side of the aisle, knowing that anything you say can get taken out of context.²⁹²

Mr. Baca speculated on the new political landscape that social media has created. He compared what President Obama did by turning his campaign operation into Organizing for America and how Senator Ted Cruz cultivated a network of supporters throughout the nation. It has become the case that elected officials are more concerned with messaging and advocacy than they have with legislating, and social media's part in politics is expanding:

I would just say that I think broadly speaking when you look at social media and the role it's playing in advocacy and in politics in governing, it's continuously evolving. It's evolving. What's going to be the next big thing that Facebook or Twitter can do or what is the next Twitter? If there's a growing influence in things like Tumblr and BuzzFeed all these new platforms, I think people are getting bored with Facebook and Twitter.²⁹³

Social media has also humanized Members of Congress with their constituents. Politicians can show their personal side by posting on non-political material, and it can make citizens feel a connection. "It allows Members to look human. And one of the biggest challenges that Congress often faces is the dehumanization of Congress. One of the reasons that they have a low approval rating is because it's easy to hate people you don't know. Social media allows Members of Congress to get to know their constituents as people on both sides of the aisle," Mr. Fitch said.²⁹⁴ Mr. Rosenblatt agrees that it can improve public perception of trust in government by making it seem more accessible. "In a way, the more Members of Congress use social media to share their point, the better it

²⁹² Perriello Interview.

²⁹³ Baca Interview.

²⁹⁴ Velencia, Janie. "Members Get Personal on Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest." Roll Call. (2014).

is to building a relationship with constituents and the better it is for advocacy organizations to create a stronger relationship with champions of Congress.”²⁹⁵

Limitations of This Research

This thesis looked at three specific areas of politics in America, but it did not examine other important aspects. Smartphones and their mobility aided the rise of social media. Could social media have taken off simply on laptops and personal computers or vice versa? Did social media and smartphone technology evolve together, relying upon the other in order to grow? What effect would these developments have had on politics in America? Perhaps a future researcher will study how the adoption of smartphone technology increased the popularity of social networks.

While this thesis did not have the opportunity to delve into the impact social media is having on the news, Rep. Takano believes, “I don’t think traditional media is going away: we need professional, trained journalists.”²⁹⁶ Scott Prouty needed David Corn at Mother Jones and his network that enabled his video of Mitt Romney’s 47% comments to go viral. While it is possible for content to catch fire and be seen by many, it is still helpful to access the connections that traditional media possess. While some wonder if social media will replace traditional journalism, the more likely scenario is that the press will continue to evolve their strategies to incorporate the helpful aspects. Nearly every journalist and news organization is on Twitter.

Forty-five years ago you tuned in to the six, ten o’clock news, you got your newspaper in the morning. A lot of things have happened. It wasn’t so in your face right? It’s so in your face now, and then you have all these other tools to do things with it, I think it caused that restless aggression of

²⁹⁵ Rosenblatt Interview.

²⁹⁶ Takano Interview.

... there's a lot of angst out there in society, and I think social media has played a big part of that.²⁹⁷

The explosion of social media occurred alongside the Citizens United ruling. Although President Obama and the American people were using social media prior to the ruling and under the old campaign guidelines, the timing and its impact on money in politics cannot be overlooked. Further research on the correlation between Citizens United and the rise of social media in politics is warranted.

There were a few others areas this thesis did not have a chance to scrutinize. For example, has social media become the predominant means of communication for politicians? Has it caused an increase in dialogue between constituents and politicians or has it resulted in creating a room where everyone is shouting? One shortcoming is that this thesis only surveyed current and former House of Representatives Members; it did not have the chance to speak with a Senator. It would be fascinating to assess if social media is a good prediction of elections. It would also be worthy to see if the findings of this thesis are applicable to other countries. Granted, other democracies operate differently and some countries do not elect their leaders, but allowing for certain differences, would these findings pass muster? These are questions and points worthy of further research.

Social media has profoundly changed the manner by which people interact and gather information, and while research continues to study the impact, its effect is so massive that further study remains necessary while the technology and methods mature. It has proven to be transformative on society, especially in politics. While it is still in its infancy, there are a lack of filters in place allowing for freedom of use and innovative

²⁹⁷ Baca Interview.

ways to connect people and ideas. It will be interesting to observe going forward how it is used, how it will evolve, and what will come next. Politics continues to adapt with ever-changing technologies, and there will be an opportunity for the forward-thinking politician who can utilize the advantage. The elites no longer have control, and that democratizes politics by actually giving people the power to influence.

APPENDIX A: Interview with Representative Bill Clinger, October 22, 2013

Mr. Ames: What is the downside of social media?

Rep. Clinger: “It creates a problem because social media gives people of like mind a way to interact. It may harden a person’s opinion. Social media creates an additional level that he has to deal with because the member is faced with coordinated opposition to his position.”

Mr. Ames: How did the new media of C-SPAN help establish New Gingrich and how does it compare today?

Rep. Clinger: “In 1995, there was no Twitter, Facebook, or anything like it. Newt was able to use C-SPAN and incorporated it as a major outreach effort to connect with people. He wasn’t interested in his Congressional district; he was interested in shaping the views of the nation. Speaker Tip O’Neill ordered the cameras to span the room to show that no one was listening, but that didn’t blunt his message. Dick Armev and others would pontificate for an hour or two and it worked.”

“Our main sources of reaching out, prior to email and the Internet, were newsletters, town meetings, and hands-on face-to-face interactions. I don’t think they do as much of that now since more can be done on the Internet.”

“You can get a lot of inaccuracies without filters. Members aren’t going to indulge in that. The whole idea is to get their attention. In the case of Newt, that was C-SPAN. And the Contract with America got people engaged.”

“The main thing I would do is pen an op-ed piece for all the local newspapers. I’m sure they wouldn’t need to do that now as they can focus their message to the individual constituents. Now, you can shape your message to target your constituency. It wasn’t as

large of a universe that you had to get to. But, the other thing social media does that poses a real problem for Members is everyone has a camera. For example, Rep. Randy Neugebuer wouldn't take that hit because there wouldn't have been a camera present. It's the same effect with George Allen and the 'Macaca remark' and Romney's 47 percent comment: if it hadn't been the proliferation of cameras and the ability to spread those videos so quickly, it wouldn't have damaged their image the way it did. Everything you say or do is public knowledge."

Mr. Ames: What are some other unanticipated consequences of social media?

Rep. Clinger: "Because you have a hardening of a position and you feel as though you are part of a larger population, then it solidifies your thinking. It is harder to sway you to another point of view since you think you are representing a part of a group and this strengthens you. If they all believe it too, then you must be right. It makes it more difficult to sway them from their point of view. Especially with the discrediting of the Congress during the shutdown because no one trusts you anymore. Social media gives the impression that we are all in this together - the rest of the country is going to hell in a hand basket, and we need to hold together."

"So many Tea Party districts are gerrymandered and that like-mindedness is solidified and reinforced by social media. One of the reasons Democrats are unlikely to get control of the House is due to the Tea Party constituents who are not fazed by the national media. They are more interested in what the Members are telling them."

"The advocacy groups involved in the shutdown were using social media to spread the message to hang tough and fight to the end even that it was abundantly clear it was a fool's errand. The Club for Growth and Heritage Foundation helped them solidify their

support because it could go that much faster. In my time, you had to do it by mail and there was a lag time and slow to react to challenges.”

Mr. Ames: How effective are visuals?

Rep. Clinger: “Visual images are important. Social media provides the visuals. It is more effective than words.”

Mr. Ames: Could you compare the two shutdowns?

Rep. Clinger: “It hurt us. In 1996, I wasn’t running, but it hurt a lot of Members because of it. The difference there was negotiations were going on at the time. This time there were no negotiations, just throwing hand grenades and not discussing how they might compromise.”

“In 1995, we sent messages out by direct mail, snail mail, and mass-faxes. What I did was go on and explain what was going on and why because then there was no means to reach large people with the same message.”

“Members not living here and bringing their families is big mistake. If you don’t know your opposition, you can think they are all evil as hell. You don’t have a personal relationship and no intention to compromise, as they are evil on the other side. There was more collegiality as we would socialize and got to know one another. But that started to deteriorate as Members stopped moving here. I remember when I was chairman of House Oversight Committee; Mark Sanford was a freshman and camped out in his office. Without roots in D.C. and to other Members of Congress from both parties, it’s an amorphous connection and not very profound.”

“Reagan and Tip would fight like hell and then drink together in the Board Room.”

“Barney was on my committee, and he scared me to death because if he was against you, you were in big trouble. But he was very decent. My son is now the chief counsel for the Financial Services Committee and dealt with Barney a lot, but he was always fair to him and a good guy to work with.”

Mr. Ames: Thank you for your time. Anything else to add?

Rep. Clinger: “It nearly killed George H.W. Bush - he paid a price campaigning on no new taxes and agreed to new taxes.”

“Email you have to have an email address to send it out, but that’s not the case with social media.”

“The bloom is off the rose of Facebook. People are not as addicted as they once were. That would seem to raise a challenge for Congresspeople who need to ask themselves, ‘Is this serving my purpose? Am I getting diminishing returns for my efforts?’”

APPENDIX B: Interview with Representative Alan Nunnelee, November 14, 2013

Mr. Ames: How has social media's "free cost" helped your office lower costs?

Rep. Nunnelee: "It's free in that it doesn't cost to access it but it does require staffing to monitor it and maintain it – probably more so than even traditional media."

Mr. Ames: How does your office utilize social media?

Rep. Nunnelee: "I think we use it as another tool. It's not the silver bullet. It's a functional tool. Contrary to what people may think, I do read the responses. It's a way to disseminate information quickly. When the whole concept of Twitter developed I never could understand the status updates and it seemed narcissistic. We try to communicate important messages but not overload. I made the decision that we would disseminate information but that I would not engage in follow up discussions with the belief that if I chose to do so I would spend all of my time debating back and forth with a handful of people. I think I have a pretty open comment policy and for the most part I will allow people to criticize or praise me as long as don't use profanity. I do read their comments. Quite honestly, I've got a handful of people that always have a comment. I don't pay attention to those as much."

Mr. Ames: Do you find there are some people in your district that are more influential than others?

Rep. Nunnelee: "I think probably the most significant retweets we have is not those people that comment but people that read it and it helps us drive our message. When I am back in the district, I continually have people tell me they appreciate it. We utilize Facebook and Twitter during the week and send out a newsletter usually once a week or

make an exception if there is a high profile issue then twice a week. We try not to overwhelm people but rather give them useful information.”

Mr. Ames: Do you see a shift going on in ways your colleagues are communicating with constituents?

Rep. Nunnelee: “I haven’t because most of the people that came into Congress when I did in 2011 have utilized social media from day one.”

Mr. Ames: Does social media help return the conversation to retails politics and get to know you more as a person?

Rep. Nunnelee: “I do think that social media helps people get to know me more as a person. Some of the more high profile things that we’ve done and had the most hits and responses are those that are not political but those that are not political. I do think there is a danger in the social media and that is not going to change, which you have to find a way to live with. We’ve always had coffee shop rumors. You can go to the local coffee shop and start a rumor at ten in the morning and it is spread around by lunch. Social media allows those rumors to be magnified thousands of times and they can go around the nation as quickly as they can around the coffee shop table. By its very nature, there is no editorial function, no filter - so there may be no basis of truth. And I find there is something about the printed word that people tend to take as being more credible than they would a spoken rumor. And so if they are sitting around the coffee shop table and someone says ‘I heard this’, if it is something completely unbelievable it goes out one ear and out the other and not repeated whereas if it is printed on the computer screen, people pass it along because it is in print.”

“I have the opportunity to talk with not 5 but 50,000 people immediately. I don’t see anything changing that but I see it as a serious problem.”

“We retweet stuff that leadership puts out or happy birthday to the Marines is something we can type ourselves or just hit retweet.”

“I do see another major shift in the way we disseminate political information. When I grew up in the 1960s, at 6PM at night Walter Cronkite came on and all of America watched Uncle Walter he signed off his broadcast with ‘and that’s the way it is.’ And when Uncle Walter said that, all of America accepted that. There were really only about two or three news sources at the time. Now, there are millions of media sources but what I find is that out of those millions, I can’t monitor all of them, so any individual tends to gravitate toward those news sources that automatically support what they already believe and so you have opinions being reinforced but not challenged. And I think that is one of the things contributing to polarization of politics in America. And I don’t see that changing in fact I see us going to more sources and someone is going to further gravitate to those that reinforce what I already believe. It’s becoming like an echo chamber.”

Mr. Ames: Do you find social media is helping the office save some money?

Rep. Nunnelee: “Yes, it is saving money. Offices used to spend a lot on direct mail and franking and it was expensive. No real way to measure how effective it is. Our email lists are related. It definitely helps us save money and operate efficiently. Use it for surveys and feedback.”

Mr. Ames: How do you view the role social media played in the shutdown?

Rep. Nunnelee: “I find that people that thought the shutdown was a good idea talked all among themselves about why it was a good idea and people that thought the shutdown

was a bad idea talked among themselves about why it was bad and there really wasn't a lot of crossover conversation."

Mr. Ames: Do you find the speed made it harder during the shutdown?

Rep. Nunnelee: "I don't know that the speed changed the dialogue. What I did learn, with regard to the speed of email, occurred when I was in the state legislature before I came here. Over a weekend I met with a group of parents of handicapped children and there was legislation that was coming up. And these parents were opposed to this legislation and they told me why. So I listened and said if everything you tell me is accurate, I agree with you and this would not be a good bill and I intend to vote no. Midweek the bill came up and I voted yes. Within thirty minutes to an hour I started getting nasty phone calls. 'Alan, we thought you were different. You're just another lying politician. I can't believe it.' I said 'wait a minute – let me send you an amendment that was offered. You would have had no way of knowing this amendment was offered but based upon the conversation we had, I think this amendment addresses what your concerns were. Sent them the amendment and within thirty minutes they replied and said 'Alan you're exactly right, this made it a good bill and we'd have voted for it too.' Prior to email, I could have done all of this during the mail but that intervening time period that could have been days or weeks they would have been roaming around going to ball games, church, and the grocery store telling people how Alan lied to them. As it was in this case, within 120 minutes we had the issue resolved. If that happened that quickly with email, it can happen much more quickly with social media. I can immediately send out what I voted and why."

Jordan Russell, Communication Director: “We have to get our point of view out there in the stream of the news cycle and social media because people are instantaneously reacting so have to get it across your platforms because sometimes people aren’t checking email but looking at Twitter. If you don’t, people wonder about your presence.”

“I did find it fascinating that a lot of mainstream news sources report what Members tweets. I think they are picking that up quicker than we are sending out a news release.”

Mr. Ames: Thank you for your time! Do you have any other comments to add?

Rep. Nunnelee: “I do think that this is a major shift in the way we disseminate information, not just political information but whether its products or service or just talking to friends. But our country has gone through transformations like this before. You saw it with the advent of cable; prior to that you saw it with the advent of broadcast television prior to that radio. And you saw the political environment adapt to the method available to get information out to people. And what I think that is going to drive all of it any elected official that is successful has learned to communicate with people in the way they are receiving information. People are not going to change their habits just because I want to do something different or just want to do something the same. Those elected officials that become successful learn to reach people where they are.”

APPENDIX C: Interview with Representative Mark Takano, November 20, 2013

Mr. Ames: What social media methods has your office tried that has been effective?

How has it helped your office lower costs?

Rep. Takano: “The news feed ads are doing really well. A lot of our likes are from organic sources like the immigration letter. I’ve noticed a lot of traction for the immigration response. I was thinking how are we going to reach as many constituents as possible? There are 750 thousand people in our Congressional District, but not everybody who likes us is in the district. Somehow they get referred through friends or go viral. Buying likes has been effective.”

“There are surprises that I’ve discovered using this media. But our most recent surge in likes has come from young Latinos from the district and that’s been very gratifying because I want to make sure our message what we’re doing on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform is aware of what we are doing. So this latest style of advertising has been very successful.”

“Once people like us, our message goes out. If we had to mail these people all the time, the cost would be a lot more expensive. We are limited by House Ethics rules as to how we can purchase ads as far as how we can word and target the ad. We’re only allowed to target people in our district according to House rules. Once we get someone to like us our message goes out all the time automatically. It’s like an email list almost, but it is better than email as we can do catchy info graphics. There’s a lot more we can do with a lot less money. There’s been a dramatic decrease in the amount of franked mail as offices are transitioning over to digital platforms.”

Mr. Ames: What are some of the downsides?

Rep. Takano: “There are only so many times you can go at the same group with the same message. We have to be careful because a lot of people don’t use social media, especially our senior citizens.”

Mr. Ames: How does your office function with the new media?

Rep. Takano: “I’m fortunate to have Brett Morrow as my communications director who comes with a background from the private sector having worked in Hollywood. I also have a chief, Kirk McPike, and a legislative director, Yuri Beckelman, and a staff who bring a background in social media and technology so I have a good team of people in the office that think of Internet memes and info graphics. It’s an integration of being able to write well and to think visually which brings together a number of skills. Future Members need to think about people who have this background as the kind of staff you want to hire.”

“Sometimes I will come up with an idea and my staff will suggest that may be better on Twitter than Facebook, for example.”

Mr. Ames: What do you see as the differences between traditional and social media methods of communication?

Rep. Takano: “I think you can get the personal touch across in a letter; that’s an art form all in its own. We can do so much more with imagery. Printing costs are brought back to almost nil – the cost of what we do in the office. There are some ways we want to communicate through traditional means but we are going to be more strategic about that since it is more costly. I think there is a place for each new communications technology.”

Mr. Ames: What impact did you see as a result of your immigration letter?

Rep. Takano: “We’re famous for a letter that I corrected. One of my Republican colleagues circulated a letter asking Speaker Boehner not to bring the Senate comprehensive immigration compromise bill to the Floor. I’m a teacher and took my red pen to the letter as a teacher would. I gave it an F grade and I said, ‘Please see me after votes,’ adding, ‘You failed in respects to the assignment that was to find a pathway for 11 million undocumented people a path to citizenship.’ It had an enormous response. That letter went viral. It played upon my background as a high school English teacher. It sparked intense debates in grammar forums and people debating if I should use a red pen as some think it is demoralizing to students. This broke open a new form of communicating. I still get comments on the red pen letter and am still surprised how many people remember that.”

Mr. Ames: What innovative ways are you using social media?

Rep. Takano: “I really like the concept of the YouTube town hall. I think we might have been the first office to actually do a town hall on YouTube. It is a new twist on an old technology as you can get thousands of people on a conference call, but I’d like to see an emerging way to use the telephone with YouTube as easily as we can reach thousands of people through the telephone. Not everybody has the technology to see you and ask you questions.”

“Congressional offices are able to communicate more directly with constituents without the filter of media organizations. Congressional offices now have the capacity because of technology to be their own media centers. We’ve looked at getting our own teleprompter so that we don’t have to use the caucus teleprompter and schedule time there. For our YouTube town hall on immigration we simply used this office as the set.”

“I see the same thing happening for public offices, especially in the Congress as we develop our own ways to communicate with their constituents.”

Mr. Ames: Whom do you admire for their use of social media?

Rep. Takano: “Another prominent example is Senator Cory Booker. I don’t know how he amassed his online following. He was mayor of a city; he was not in the Congress. You don’t have to be like Newt Gingrich exploiting the late night Special Order hours where you are talking to an audience that I’m hard pressed to believe actually exists which is the whole C-SPAN audience. That’s how he got started: people who watched C-SPAN regularly and built a core of people interested in what he had to say.”

Mr. Ames: What are effective methods for communicating with constituents? And how does the new media compare with traditional means?

Rep. Takano: “I think of the use of the medium how can I stay more in touch with my constituents and get a sense for what social problems are out there. Sometimes it won’t be on social media as much as it is about just sitting down and calling them. It’s sort of a self-generating communications eco-system.”

“A phone call from me to them on an issue is probably more productive – I like to feel connected to my constituents. I scan the posts that people put on my Facebook page. I try to separate them from the trolls; those outside my district that try to make an impression. I clear out the noise to get a sense of what is on people’s minds.”

Brett Morrow: “Some of the medium cross over – the Congressman has call time. He will call constituents in the district who have problems or opinions. What we’ve noticed is sometimes people will take their experiences and post about it on Facebook or on Twitter. Just yesterday someone tweeted, ‘Amazing how a phone call from

Representative Mark Takano makes everything clearer. He's such a class act. I'm glad I voted for him!' There's a crossover effect. That's something you can't buy."

"It's an outside validation of the work we do. That's generated by citizens who feel empowered to communicate outside of traditional media. I don't think traditional media is going away: we need professional, trained journalists."

"I am concerned about the level of professionalism in journalism. There is this sort of netherworld, this blurring of rules. People don't always know what 'on the record' and 'off the record' means. As a public official, you are on notice all the time in this Twitter/cell phone/camera environment. There is a higher degree of accountability. The new media really allows citizens to really hold their public officials to a higher form of accountability than ever before."

Mr. Ames: What do you see as some of the pitfalls and downside of social media?

Rep. Takano: "The level of interference from outside the district. I don't like when on the Affordable Care Act you get ideologues on both sides coming in and obscuring what I can see from my own constituents. I want to see what's going on there. Sometimes we have to clear the deck a little bit to see what my constituents are saying pro or con. We want to encourage a conversation and don't want others to interfere."

Mr. Ames: Does social media convey a degree of authenticity to messages?

Rep. Takano: "I think that social media can have a canned feeling to it. I have a team working on it so I'm not authoring everything that goes out, but I trust a lot of my team to have good judgment. I'll get an idea and sometimes the team vetoes it. There is a vetting process that we have in the office. And I think it is important that successful people on the Hill have smart staff that won't be yes people. One of the things we look for when

people email us is letters that are self-generated from people. They stand out and go to the top of my list for call time. A veteran wrote me on Veterans Day so I thought it was important to communicate with him and that we not just send him a form letter. It's very meaningful to reach a person like that and hear how gratified they are to hear from their Congressman. That's a great experience."

Mr. Ames: What effect did social media have on the way in which the recent shutdown transpired in public and behind the scenes?

Rep. Takano: "Things with the shutdown and Syria were happening incredibly fast that they were changing by the hour. So I think sometimes with social media it is important to know when to hold back and not react to every little development. I think that is a test of judgment. Some of my colleagues – I won't get into who – there is a point where too much tweeting out comes off as lack of contemplation. You can do yourself a disservice by not showing more prudence or judgment or reflection: there is too much immediacy and that can be a problem. I can see that in legislating. We'll see if community and advocacy groups get more sophisticated so we can see a far more organized use of social media. That could lead to some problems as well."

"When the phone rings off the hook it still gets everyone's attention. Another way Members keep a pulse of things is by monitoring social media."

Mr. Ames: Have you experienced a similar situation to Rep. Nunnelee's where the speed of social media helped prevent a potential communications problem?

Rep. Takano: "I think on Syria. Syria, I think for everyone on the Hill, both Democratic and Republican. I think social media for something as pivotal as a strike – the mood of this on the Hill a lot of Members."

Mr. Ames: Have other Members asked for your advice in tutoring them on social media?

Rep. Takano: Nita Lowey and Corrine Brown have. I told Corrine you need to take that clip of her yelling, “Shame!” on the Floor and put it to the song “Shame, shame, shame!” Corrine said, “Have your staff show me how to do that.” She was also urging the White House to use apps to enroll people in ACA.”

Mr. Ames: What are the implications of social media on Congressional offices?

Rep. Takano: “The implications are that more and more Congressional offices are going to think of their office as a media center. The equipment has gotten so inexpensive. That whole YouTube town hall we did with a camera that was affordable and accessible that we could have here. It’s a new way of thinking how you connect and communicate with the public. I think it’s going to be tremendously powerful. It has implications for how journalists are going to be trained. There will still be a role for professional journalists. It is going to be a new way for citizens to affect change as well.”

APPENDIX D: Interview with Alan Rosenblatt, Visiting Professor at Johns Hopkins University February 3, 2014

Mr. Ames: Thanks, Alan, for helping me out here. I appreciate it. I may not have told you, I'm writing my thesis on social media and politics. The first two... It's a three-chapter effort. The first chapter I looked at social media in the presidential campaigns. I looked at Obama '08 and Romney 2012 and for my case study, I focused on Romney '12, his Sandy, Hurricane Sandy as well as his 47% comments and the counterfactuals with both of those, saying let's play at both scenarios. What happens if there is no social media to spread 47% or Mitt storm tips and other user generated content? For my second chapter, I looked at how congressional offices are utilizing social media and I talked to reps Mark Takano and Alan Nunnelee as well as former Rep. Bill Clinger to get their takes on how it's affecting their office, and also found that with the drop in the MRA, offices have been quicker to adapt to social media than in the past.

Mr. Rosenblatt: What's an MRA?

Mr. Ames: Their budget.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Okay.

Mr. Ames: For how much they can afford to spend on things and for...

Mr. Rosenblatt: So as their budget drops they get less or more social media?

Mr. Ames: Right. As they cut their budget, it became in their best interest to look to other ways to do things they would normally would do like, printed newsletters. Well it's a lot cheaper to send it out electronically.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Okay.

Mr. Ames: And for this chapter, I'm looking at how advocacy groups are using social media to connect with elected officials. You being at the intersection of social media and the Internet, I wanted to get your take to see, where do you think that... How has social media affected advocacy groups? Let me start with that.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Okay. You want me to talk about how social media has affected advocacy groups?

Mr. Ames: Right.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Everything is otherwise from organizations doing more and more work to use social media's [carpet to join 02:41]. There's a couple of dividing lines that you can think about. One is the [obvious 2:51] organizations that are content producers. They use social media to push their content out. It becomes a really good way to drive traffic to websites. With [CMN 03:04], Google +, [ironic interestingly 03:06] Pinterest. Increasingly, LinkedIn is a really good base to drive traffic to content but of course Facebook is the reign supreme on that. I think something around the order of 25 or 26% of all traffic to websites are being driven from Facebook user base.

The campaigns that are doing advocacy, in particular, campaigns. They use their social media to push out their action links. Over conversions are always a big challenge for social media. If you're asking people to click on a link and go to a page and take action, it works and depending on how compelling it is, it either can work very, very well. But if it's not worth it to them, it can be kind of annoying where you can suspect. For example, when you go to a change.org petition and you sign the petition, there is a button to share it onto social media.

A lot of what I've been seeing lately is "sign my petition" with a link to change.org. I would never ever click on something like that because I have no idea what it's about and there's usually a lot of suspicious links out there that really make me worry about it. On the other hand the thing is, if the text was put in so that it says: Click here to sign my petition to end bombing in Syria, end the use of drones spying on American citizens. That would dramatically increase the likelihood that I or anybody else would click on it. There's a lot of that aspect to it. There's also a lot of people in the current organizations that are trying to use it for fundraising and like with advocacy, if you look across the range in which organizations are using it drive advocacy campaigns, they're using it to do fundraising campaigns. The overall conversion rates across all those examples is probably relatively low however, if you start sorting out those that are doing it well and ones who are just doing it for the sake of doing it. The idea of difference between good change.org and the bad change.org that type of messaging. Then you start to filter out those who are doing it poorly and look at those who are following best practices, and then you say, "Fine, it's doing pretty well.

Mr. Ames We participated in the CMS Communicating with Congress project. I'm writing a little bit about that for the history section. Would you say that social media has been able to add a level of authenticity to some of the communications that wasn't there with the form communications that were being sent to congress?

Mr. Rosenblatt: The question of authenticity of messages being sent to congress, for the most part I'm going to argue with lazy people in congress that didn't want to process the incoming email.

Mr. Ames: Okay.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Most of the time when you press the members of congressional staff about all these campaigns that are out there sending fake messages to congress for concrete examples. I have never actually met anybody that can give me one. It's all rumor, it's all this or that. I remember I was on a panel with Justin [Boomer 06:48] many years ago and they took comment that, "Oh yeah, it's happened to us." He was the first and only person that ever gave me a concrete example of that. There's that element to it. The social media side of it. The potential for abuse is just as high and the likelihood of it is probably just as low. The issue when it comes to authenticating, "Is this your real voice? Is this your picture or not?" gets muddled when it comes to social media because it's difficult to identify if the person is within the district or the state, within the community [municipal 07:31] district and within state of the senator or not and for some member's offices that matters. The argument I've been making for the campaigns that I've been doing is that if a member of Congress starts to ignore people because they don't live in their district, they don't live in their state, we can make them ignore at their peril because we can leverage people to disrupt their Facebook page, to flood the zone on Twitter so that when people search for that member of congress, they're going to find a lot of negative comments about them out there. We can even have the right [inaudible 08:10] status as a reach for [inaudible 08:13] primary opponent or against their general election opponents. There's all sorts of ways that people who are not in the district or state, can actually disrupt them on social media, if they choose to ignore them. The common reaction in member's house, in member's offices is, "Oh, the franking privileges don't let us communicate with people outside of our district." That is actually a

misreading of the franking privileges. The franking privileges of course, used to work at the congressional office of the chairman.

Mr. Ames Right.

Mr. Rosenblatt: So the franking privileges created restrictions back in the day when it was strictly about how many sheets of paper you got. That's the original limitation on franking is you got X amount of sheets paper to send street mail out to constituents.

When the paper was gone, your privileges were done for the year. Because you're not using email and social media to put your messaging out that [active 09:10] limitation no longer exists. It was the [inaudible 09:12] that they did as a business practice to only communicate with constituents that can work for you and now that business practice justification is gone so it's back to, "Oh you should be communicating with people who can influence, that affect your ability to do your work or people you feel like you're obligated to respond to because you either represent them directly or because you're making [inaudible 09:36] registrations that will affect them even though they're not direct learning constituents."

Mr. Ames: Right and would you say that during the shutdown, Senator Ted Cruz used his Faux-a-Buster to reach people and that was a way one, to raise his profile outside of his district and two, to fundraise.

Mr. Rosenblatt: It is interesting, it works both ways. Members are now using it to raise their national profile and to fundraise nationally and advocacy organizations are able to leverage larger audiences to truly target the movers and shakers on any given issue with a direct link. An interesting thing that I spoke of [inaudible 10:21] Kevin Brady's office in Texas. He's a Republican in a very conservative district that has an 80%

election margin. Well not margin but he wins 80% of the vote every cycle which means that for him, he doesn't have to listen to people outside of his district. In fact he doesn't have to listen to anybody on Twitter because he's going to get elected no matter what. Certainly his former social media person told me that, quite [inaudible 10:52] they didn't pay attention to anything that wasn't really in their district ever on social media and [inaudible 11:00] matter is the opposition came after them on social media because they knew that those people didn't vote for him anyway and that they couldn't affect the outcome of this next election. All of this members of congress making that re-election calculus and to see whether or not [inaudible 11:17] were public or not. If they feel that they can get away with ignoring people on social medias because their margin of victory is great enough than they can certainly begin to do that.

Mr. Ames: Going off on that, how are advocacy groups getting their messages out to their supporters and getting their supporters to take action through social media, to influence public policy.

Mr. Rosenblatt: There's a variety of tools, you can use a Twitter petition tool called Actly or even just simply tweet a petition format tweet that people can retweet and you're targeting an individual member of congress on the tweet. One of the things that comes out of that is the old days what's happening is get active and salsa where you put in you zip code and it matches your [inaudible 12:17] email to your member of congress. Social media is a little different. There was an experiment a few years ago called guvluv.org where you can put in your zip code and it would match you to the twitter account of your member of congress so that you could tweet at them but that hasn't been updated in a long time. Nobody [inaudible 12:38] really development in that respect.

I'm of the opinion that when it comes to a twitter campaign, it's problematic trying to get every member of your email list to tweet their individual member of congress because it's hard to give them a custom link choice. There are tools that would let you do that but more importantly, I think it's better to do the research and figure out who really are the movers and shakers of this issue? Who is the King Kennedy chair, who is the key swing vote on the committee, who is the key swing vote on the form? If you can create a trade list of say 10 members of congress that are really crucial to winning this election, then you go about your list to target them, regardless of where they live and start kind of push out the messages that way.

I think it can be fairly effective that way. Twitter is more like delivering the message to them and the pressure gets put on the member of congress. The organizer reaches out to the press with a link to the search query for people tweeting at that member of congress. The story they sell is that all these people are tweeting a member of congress about this issue so they're using all that Twitter activity to leverage a press franking [inaudible 14:03] as part of your effort.

Facebook is a little different because you can organize your Facebook supporters to post on a member's Facebook page. Even if it turned out that they deleted the original post on the page, you can comment on what they're posting so that no matter what they try to talk about on their Facebook page, you can turn every single one of those posts into a discussion about the issue you wanted to be discussed on the comments of that post. That becomes disruptive to where [inaudible 14:38] Facebook to interact in the message app which is a very difficult impact that you can have on that member of congress. They're more likely to [inaudible 14:50] I think than the Twitter petitions.

Mr. Ames: Okay. Let's go to the most recent shutdown because that's what I'm going to use as the case study for this chapter. The effect that social media had on the shutdown. Some would argue that it was because of social media that some on the right and some on the left hardened their position to keep the shutdown going as long as it could because social media can create an echo chamber where you only hear your side of the argument. Did you find that to be the case or was that not the case, what's your impression?

Mr. Rosenblatt: Part of the issue is there is plenty of research in the psychoc field. Psychology talks about how the more somebody states their position in public on an issue, the more they lock themselves into defending that position. Once they've gone out so far on a limb on any given position, the ability to get them to publically renounce their own views becomes almost impossible. This research was backed, it talked about people in face-to-face conversations which didn't happen an awful lot of time. When you throw social media to the gym, this whole notion that the more I tweet on a particular position on a given issue, the more I set into concrete that that's my position and the harder it is for me to move off of it because I've created such a public claim to that position. In that context, certainly you get a lot of people who harden their position. At the time, I would probably suggest that the vast majority of the people who are making hard decisions on social media had them before they started tweeting and it wasn't because they tweeted they actually became hardened in it. Those people that don't have hard positions tended to be more watchers, lawyers as opposed to participants. When I get into twitter debates with people, the first question I always ask myself is, "Can I convince this person to change their mind?" If the answer is no, the follow up question I ask is, "Are

there people watching the conversation I had with this person that I could convince to come to my side who are not stating their views but simply watching what people are saying about it.”

Mr. Ames: That’s interesting so you’re saying is sometimes the point of the discussion one, the person I’m engaging, can I change their mind? Two, if I can’t change their mind, can I change their followers mind?

Mr. Rosenblatt: Or even the intersection of their followers my followers, or even combine their followers my followers plus any hashtag community that was into the situation. I’ll often when I respond to something in a debate and I know that they’re not going to move on the issue. I want to have a debate that includes hashtags of an audience of people who are interested in this issue for them to see the debate [inaudible 18:02]. I’ll move the debate in such a way as to make sure I always get my facts and arguments and logics an emotional pulls out there and also get them to state, really kind of draw from them, framings of their arguments and positions that are the least flattering to their position.

If I can get them to say something in support of their argument that reveals them to be an asshole then I have exposed the audience that’s watching the conversation. It shouldn’t really be back [inaudible 18:39] very mean spirited voters not things that are in the benefit of people in general. If I could frame it that way, if I could get that to happen, I’d consider that to be a real [inaudible 18:52].

If I can turn all the things that I have [inaudible 18:56] with people on any given issue and turn them all into public spectacles of being jerks. There are a lot of people out there who are trying to figure out what position to go on. Emotionally they’re going to go, “I

don't want to be associated with a term like that." There's an element of that in what I do when I engage in public debates on Twitter. It goes beyond the facts and figures. You have to remember that you have to win someone over emotionally before they will even listen to your facts and figures, if they start out disagreeing with you.

Mr. Ames: A smart social media expert for one of these organizations would follow the strategy?

Mr. Rosenblatt: Ideally. It is a challenge. I was a social media professional once in an organization. The organization may not give you the latitude to do these kinds of things.

Mr. Ames: Do you recall any instance during the shutdown where the strategy was successfully employed?

Mr. Rosenblatt: I only recall specific [crosstalk 20:01]. This is how I approach things. I [inaudible 20:06] I would get into debates. I was running the CAPAction twitter handle and also the pompous me twitter handle. I had a lot more latitude to do things than in the [inaudible 20:24] campaign which was really when I was in an editorial department and was sort of the brand protector whereas the CAPAction was [inaudible 20:33] on advocacy and so I had more latitude to do stuff. [Inaudible 20:39].

My favorite debate back then was the whole argument that 49% or 51% of Americans don't pay taxes. I had a whole process where I had links to a couple of New York Times articles and links to the congressional [inaudible 21:08] office table that [inaudible 21:11] tax policy center report. All of that number had come from. I think 47% don't pay taxes. I was able to systematically, when I saw somebody making that argument, there was this whole "I'm part of the 53" was the tag that was going around. That was the first time I

was able to go look, the report is very clear. This is only talking about federal income tax. When you take into considerations saving net tax, sales tax, excise tax, high income tax, all these other tax. The number is actually less than 10% of Americans pay their own taxes.

The argument is that people need to be paying taxes in order to feel like they [inaudible 21:57] in order to be a credible participant in the debate. Well that's true for over 90% of the population. If you're concerned that a larger percent of the people aren't paying their fair share of taxes, well don't forget that the top 1% make as much money as the bottom 15%. You really can't pull [inaudible 22:20] out of a [inaudible 22:21]. I would take those numbers and I had that argument down packed and I was able to unleash it every month or so against somebody that I found out there that was pushing [inaudible 22:32]. We literally got that message out there and to bring people on. I've had a lot of people messaging me back saying so glad you're making this clear, so glad that you're [crosstalk 22:44] clarifying it up. And other people are able to turn around and retweet it.

Mr. Ames: So there's the benefit there.

Mr. Rosenblatt: Function of really coming up with what's the calmest way to debunk this argument coming from the other side and use it over and over again.

Mr. Ames: What would say, and I'm glad you brought us to this point, to my next question is: What has social media changed about the strategy that advocacy groups are employing to connect their followers with their elected officials?

Mr. Rosenblatt: About connecting followers to their elected officials.

Mr. Ames: Yeah, how has social media changed the game between connecting constituents with elected officials?

Mr. Rosenblatt: It works a couple of different ways. One is to the extent that members of congress are now almost universally using social media to push out their positions and their messages. There is an opportunity for advocacy organizations to be able to retweet with endorsement tweets from members of congress that are Facebook posts from members of congress that are saying things that they agree with and share them with their members which brings that position of those members of congress into the inbox of those activists. As well when there are members of congress who tweet out or post on Facebook things that are contrary to that [inaudible 24:17] organization, they are able to respond in such a way that their audience sees it as well. There's that aspect of it.

On the congressional side, at the same time that that's happening, the fact that members of congress are using social media to talk about things and positions and actually interact with constituents, I think goes an awful long way to improving public perception of trusted government because the more accessible [that human 24:46] feels, the more you trust him so there's an element of that. In a way, the more members of congress who use social media to share their point, the better it is to building a relationship with constituents and the better it is for [advocacy 25:04] organizations to create a stronger relationship with champions of congress, [inaudible 25:11] of congress among their membership.

Mr. Ames: Okay. Obviously when fighting through all the noise that's out there in social media, how important would you say being creative in your message is?

Mr. Rosenblatt: I think being creative in your message in some respects is extremely important. Essentially you have to think through the noise. Now that said, sometimes being very factual, sometimes being straightforward. There are ways to make that [inaudible 25:51] through the noise too. Being creative is not the only way to make your point but certainly it can be a very big plus to that. These days' people are using photos, caption photos [inaudible 26:08] and that decreases the likelihood that people would share it. As more and more people use photos, it becomes harder and harder to get people to share it [inaudible 26:20]. You have to be more creative about what your photo looks like and what it says. There's some subtleties in terms of messaging. On Martin Luther King Day I was social media director for [inaudible 26:36] campaign and I posted on Facebook and Twitter a photo of Martin Luther King at a table in an office, leaning forward talking to President Johnson. That is a black man talking to the President in 1964, 65. That era there was the whole civil rights movement.

That speaks volumes quite by itself and then what I did was I took a quote about Martin Luther King, [inaudible 27:10] I can't remember the exact aspect of it, about the [bulbous 27:16] of what he was doing that [inaudible 27:18] had said and I put the quote between the two, between Johnson and King and then underneath the quote I wrote [inaudible 27:26]. The quote it was such that it could have applied to anyone of the three of them. Saying it about Martin Luther King the way I positioned it on the picture, it could apply it to all three of the people in the picture as well as [inaudible 27:42]. That was my intention and I think that way the piece of [inaudible 27:48] actually appeals a wide range of reactions, increasing the number of people that might be interested in sharing.

Mr. Ames: I hadn't thought about it that way. Well this has been really helpful, Alan, do you have anything else that you'd like to add?

Mr. Rosenblatt: I think I'm good for now but if you have more questions by all means shoot me an email or give me a call and I'll follow up.

Mr. Ames: I appreciate that, I certainly have a lot of material to go on and I'll follow up with you.

APPENDIX E: Interview with Rob Bluey, Director, Digital Media and Editor in Chief of the Foundry at the Heritage Foundation, February 4, 2014

Mr. Ames: Thank you for your time. Let me give some overview for you as to what I'm looking to do here. I'm a graduate student at Johns Hopkins, the one over at Massachusetts Avenue, and I'm defending my thesis in just a couple of months. You write it in three chapters, my topic is social media in politics, how its been effecting various aspects. First I looked at the presidential campaigns, I looked at Obama of '08 and Mitt Romney of 2012, and specifically for my case studies I looked at 47% comment and Hurricane Sandy, and I did counterfactuals to say had social medial not existed, how would have 47% played out. How would what happened during Hurricane Sandy have played out and came to a conclusion as to the role that social media in spreading news and other user generated content in these instances. The second chapter I looked at how it's effecting Congress and I really used the recent shutdown as my case study, taking a look at - and I interviewed two Congressmen, Mark Takano on the left and Alan Nunnelee on the right, as to how they were using social media to communicate and their impressions and whatnot. Now I'm looking at how outside groups are using social media to affect the political process. I've know Tom for a while and he said you were a good guy to talk to and would be knowledgeable. I guess hearing that, what are your immediate thoughts?

Mr. Bluey: Yeah, no. I mean well, I lead the digital team at Heritage and I'm also the editor in chief of the Foundry. The Foundry has existed for the past six years

mostly as a policy blog, and we're in the process of re-launching it as a media brand for Heritage. We certainly view digital media as a very important piece. What we're trying to do day in and day out is to persuade and activate audiences that we need to achieve conservative policy victories. I think digital kind of comes first and foremost these days because that's how you move the needle and drive the debate on the issues that the Heritage Foundation cares about.

Mr. Ames: Great, and ... one of the things - I'm looking at two aspects for the advocacy groups, how they play in the presidential campaign and how they played in the shutdown, so I'll start first with how they played in the most recent shutdown and I'm comparing that to the 95-96 shutdown. Would you say that advocacy groups are more powerful now because of social media, less powerful now, or about the same and social media hasn't really impacted that?

Mr. Bluey: I think there's no question that they're more powerful because you no longer have the barriers to communicate directly with the American people. I think that's what's so great about social media, that you can have that conversation directly with your members, your constituents, really audiences all over the world and the globe without having to worry about having to filter through the Washington Post or whatever publication might be covering the policy debate that matters to your organization. Being able to break through and take that message directly to the American people in the government shutdown debate was really quite significant. In fact, digital was key part of ... we view it not so much as the government shutdown debate, but the defund ObamaCare debate. So the defund

ObamaCare debate started to pick up momentum in late July and early August by laying the groundwork, and over the course of the August recess, Heritage and Heritage Action held a number of, I think a total of nine town hall events throughout the country, all where digital played a important role in terms of mobilizing people to come out to these events, and using Twitter and Facebook and Instagram to promote and highlight the actual events. Digital was a key component of that, and coming out of August and when Congress was coming back in September we launched our first billboard advertising campaign in Times Square. You might say well, how is that connected to digital, a call to action on that billboard was an SMS campaign? We collected cell phone numbers to keep people in the know about what was going on with the defund fight over the course of ... the billboard actually stayed up through December. It didn't have a defund specific message, it was more general about ObamaCare, and so as we built up to October 1st, that critical date, there was a lot of work that had been done in the digital space to really gather that momentum. I can tell you, because we saw tremendous gains on Facebook and Twitter during that time, but Facebook in particular, I believe that October 1st, the day the shutdown began, we saw the largest gain in terms of likes. I think the first week of the shutdown we gained something like 130,000 likes on our Facebook page. Some of that was through advertising, but a lot of that as I understand it through Facebook itself, the shutdown was a huge event on Facebook. There were so many people talking about it throughout the country that people were just at that moment looking for information. Very rarely do you have something in Washington, a policy debate,

rise to that level. For us, we were certainly in the news because of our role, but also I think people were coming to us trying to understand why it mattered and what they should think about it. Certainly we wanted to use our digital platforms to provide those answers.

Mr. Ames: Okay. That's interesting to hear. It does fit in line with what I've been finding. You certainly said you used the digital media platform to activate folks who agreed with you and to get them to communicate with Congress and to keep fighting the good fight, if you will?

Mr. Bluey: Yeah. Absolutely. We have Heritage Foundation which is a 501C(3), and then Heritage Action, which is a 501C(4). Each organization is using digital in a different way. We can't as a 501C(3), we can't lobby Congress. So our purpose in using social media is to educate a large group of Americans, the target audience that we think is going to be needed to persuade and activate in order to achieve victory.

Heritage Action, on the other hand, is using social tools to speak directly to members of Congress, call members of Congress, doing some of the targeting to put pressure on them. That's kind of ... there are different tactics involved with each organization but certainly the combination between the two is quite powerful.

Mr. Ames: Okay. Would you say that, one of the things that I'm looking at is part of the downside of social media, is some folks believe that it allows an echo

chamber, so that those on the left and those on the right are only talking to each other and that's further hardening their positions. Would you say you saw that happening or would you say ... ?

Mr. Bluey: That's absolutely ... I certainly agree with that. I think that if you were to look at my followers and the Heritage Foundation's followers, you'd probably ... it would be mostly made up of conservatives and I think the same would be true of a liberal organization and a liberal journalist or whomever is that person. I think that's just the nature of how those things work. I do have concerns about that, particularly because Heritage is not a ... we're a conservative think tank. We're unabashedly conservative. But we're not a republican think tank. There have been plenty of instances in the past where we've worked with democrats and independents on particular policy ideas because they were willing to champion them. Joe Lieberman is somebody who immediately comes to mind on school choice issues, as an important kind of ally for Heritage throughout the years.

I think it's harder to probably break through or you have people who then in addition, you tend to face a lot more pressure. People love what Ted Cruz is saying, but if all of a sudden you're working with a Ron Wyden or Joe Lieberman or one of the more liberal members of Congress who might have a tendency to engage in those kinds of discussions, I think that, you know, that's harder to achieve and I think that the important thing though is for organizations or influential users of Twitter to make sure that they are seeking out alternative

views and ideas and engaging in the debate. I think that we can certainly do a better job of it and I think that's probably what most people want to see.

Mr. Ames: Yeah.

Mr. Bluey: Good, because I think that ... I think if that debate of ideas, of policy ideas, that's what we're really after and I think that sharpens everybody when you have that kind of conversation. Twitter does make it a little more challenging than say a traditional type of media.

Mr. Ames: That's interesting. I was talking with Alan Rosenblatt yesterday, and one of the things that he said was that you can use Twitter to engage in discussions with those on your side and those on the other side, and part of the benefit is (1) you engage in it because can you change the other person's mind? Or (2) can you change their followers' minds based on the validity of the argument. Is that a tactic that you engage in? Trying to sway or influence the opinions of somebody else's followers by engaging in the debate?

Mr. Bluey: Yeah, I certainly think that that is something that Heritage tries to do. I think that the challenge with some of these platforms is that you have to recognize that there are certain audience segments that you're reaching. In some cases we're reaching conservatives. If we want to try to reach the moveable middle, the official Heritage Twitter account might not be the best way to do that. There might be individuals at the Heritage Foundation who have that ability. There could be other brands associated with an organization. You see this all the time in

terms of commercial brands. You have the official brand and then you have kind of a spin off in an attempt to appeal to the different market segments. I think the same that's true in industry and business is also true in the politics and policy stage, and that's just something we need to do a better job and be smarter. Obama did so well in terms of the targeting that his campaign in 2012 for certain segments of the population. I think ... I've known Alan for a long time and I think Alan's a great guy and very smart on these issues. I think that it is a challenge to be able to do that, because I mean naturally you are reaching [inaudible 0:14:15] lifeline. But it can be done; it certainly can be done.

Mr. Ames: I like that segue mentioning Obama and the 2012 campaign. What do you think that they were successful in doing that Romney wasn't so successful in doing in 2012.

Mr. Bluey: I think primarily just tapping into the emotions of people using digital media. The content that they were producing was ... and this was true in 2008 as well, I think that they just had a great eye or an instinct for content that would mobilize people, persuade people to their issues. A great example was, I think it was the second debate, the whole binders full of women comment. That was something or even, I think it was in the previous debate ... wasn't the Big Bird comment in the previous debate? I think that those were things that we on the right were like oh ... you know, and the binders full of women we're just like [inaudible 0:15:28] this is nothing. The Obama campaign was actually able to turn it into something that fit into the narrative that they had been pushing for

many months about Romney and women. So when you see the election results and you see Obama did so well among single women, you can probably look back on a lot of the messaging that they played out over social media, just in the digital phase, and say well jeez, that really did have an effect in terms of moving the needle. So I would say, basically when it comes down to it, that they essentially did that. The Obama campaign was able to move the needle more effectively using digital media than the Romney campaign was. I think that they probably had more talent working on it; they had an advantage in that respect. I think that they probably had better technology, but I think that ultimately it comes down to, they were just producing more compelling content at the end of the day that was able to activate their voters more than Romney was able to activate his voters.

Mr. Ames: Yeah, that's definitely something that I looked at as well in the first chapter. How effective did you think that outside groups were in the last presidential election? Were any able to move the needle? Were they relying on old technology? Were those that were relying on social media more successful?

Mr. Bluey: I think that some organizations had wins here and there that probably had an impact. You look at [inaudible 0:17:15] Priorities USA that put out the ad where the husband [inaudible 0:17:23} wife dying and it caused such an uproar in terms of whether it was truthful or not. At the end of the day, whether it was truthful or not, I think that they achieved what they were trying to get done which was that it certainly damaged Mitt Romney's reputation. When you can point to those things and say yeah, they were able to move the needle because people just

looked at Mitt Romney differently after that. Regardless of whether or not the believed the actual ad or whether it was a complete lie, they were able to build a significant buzz around that. It got traditional media coverage; it got shared in a variety of ways on socials. The other, and I'd say for Heritage, there were moments where I think we felt, oh, jeez, we're really doing this. I remember in the aftermath of [inaudible], we put out a short video that at the time did very well for us. I think it probably had 250,000 You Tube views, [inaudible 0:18:25] wrote a piece on it saying it was the most effective political video of the 2012 campaign. Heritage is not even - we're not allowed to take a political stance, but again, in a purely educational perspective, we felt that it was important to call attention to this issue. For a day there were a lot of people talking about Benghazi. Probably come of it can be attributed to the fact that we had released this video. I don't remember the exact time; I think it was either late September or early October when we put the video out. I think that those are the types of ways that organizations can have an impact. They change the narrative for a particular day in a campaign. By and large, the campaign is going to go on. They've got their plan in place for the final sixty days for that sprint, and they're going to be doing things and then there's going to be moments where an outside organization can step in and boom, change the conversation.

Mr. Ames: Right, coming back to the more recent shutdown and one of the quotes that I got was from a long time older Rep, Bill Klinger who is one of the advisors at Johns Hopkins, and they also provide him to us for good quotables if we need them. Was one of the reasons that the shutdown was able to last as long as it does

because groups like Heritage and ... what was the other one that he said ... Were able to effectively use social media to achieve the goals of moving the needle and corralling their supporters to connect with their elected officials. Would you say that's accurate? That it were able to last as long and the defund ObamaCare fight was able to make news and get in front of the national debate?

Mr. Bluey: Yeah, I think that what you saw was clearly a large section of the American public that has soured on Obama care as a result of two months of hearing nothing but bad news. I don't think it helped that on October 1st when the website went live there were all sorts of problems, although you didn't start to hear about them really until the shutdown was over. But I mean, people were still experiencing problems [inaudible 0:21:03] whether or not it was actually gaining the front page covers of the Washington Post is another matter. I think that yes, you had constituents calling members of Congress saying that we want you to take a stand on [inaudible 0:21:21] that moves a member of Congress quite a bit when they have that feedback coming in. If the phones aren't ringing, they're more inclined to fall in line with what leadership wants. This was a case where John Boehner has said after the fact that it was probably not the direction that he would have gone, but I think that as a result of what the republican caucus was able to do, they pulled him in that direction. I think that was a direct result of American people calling in and having an impact. I think that could probably go back to the impact of the roll of digital in terms of making that happen. I'd also point you back to the debate in 2007 over the immigration bill where social media was in its infancy. There was a Facebook and there was a Twitter, but certainly

they did not have the influence in terms of the political or policy debates that they do today. At the same time, people still were finding ways to be getting information and being active. I mean the Drudge Report existed; Rush Limbaugh existed. There's always going to be those other things that are out there, and I think social just, as I said at the top of the conversation, social helps just break through those barriers and you don't necessarily have that filter anymore. If you're at Heritage, you don't have to worry about whether the Washington Post is going to carry your op-ed making the case for defund ObamaCare. You could reach more people than the Washington Post possibly could through your Facebook page, if you have a big enough followership.

Mr. Ames: It's funny, you mentioned John Boehner, because one of the things after - and he makes his are you kidding me, comment - what I thought was real interesting about that was his team then took the gift of him saying "are you kidding me" and they put this gift bag together for talking points - what to say over Thanksgiving about ObamaCare. It talks about the president with his "you can keep it" or something like that, and it ends with John Boehner "are you kidding me?" So he kind of owns that moment, which I thought was really an interesting use of the media. Well, I hit the end of my questions here. Do you have anything else that you'd like to add?

Mr. Bluey: I think we've covered pretty much everything. Is there anyone else you want to talk to ... or...? Let me know how it turns out and if you have any follow up questions based on what we talked about, give me a buzz.

**APPENDIX F: Interview with Representative Tom Perriello, President and CEO of
Center for American Progress Action Fund, February 5, 2014**

Mr. Ames: I'm getting my master's in government at Johns Hopkins and I'm finishing up with my thesis on social media in politics. It's divided into three chapters, and the first chapter I looked at, the presidential campaign how the social media impacted it. I really looked at Mitt Romney in 2012 using counterfactuals to say if social media hadn't existed how would 47% comment had played out, how would hurricane Sandy have played out. In my second chapter I looked at, in Congress, how social media is being used and I've been using the shutdown as my case study for that. For the last chapter, which I'm excited to talk to you about, I'm really looking at how advocacy groups are using social media to impact politics, especially as outside groups. I will start out with my first question, being one of my contentions that social media has allowed outside groups such as yours to have more influence over the political process. Would you agree that that's the case?

Rep. Perriello: I think the short answer to that is yes. I think there's no question that they've had more influence than they might otherwise have. I think the fact that that has happened contemporaneously with the explosion of money in politics, which I think has been even stronger force means that I wouldn't say advocacy groups have more influence now than they did before social media, but if you control for that factor, if you understand what I'm saying, then I would definitely say that it has been more effective. I think probably also in certain

ways it's the other contemporaneous major factor in American politics right now, which has been the sort of radicalization of gerrymandering, which yes has always been around, but has not ever since been anything like what we're seeing now. Have those made it easier, made groups more and less effective. I know these things don't relate directly, but I'm just trying to sort of set the context, more effective in the sense that people, many members now worry more about primaries than they do about general elections. Primaries allow the ability to bring together a group of people that care intensely about something that may not actually be a majority to exert significant political influence, and again this fear of being primary means that if you can show that you have real base intensity behind your issues then you're going to have more power. These things are reinforcing each other and in some cases working at direct odds with each other, along with several other factors, but all that having been said, I think that advocacy groups are more effective, those who are able to exist in a social media state and be effective at it.

Mr. Ames: Let me pick up on one of the points about money in politics because I've also noticed that it's been, through social media, many of the advocacy groups have been able to reach audiences and donors that they haven't in the past, so is it possible that social media is not just influencing it through the way that it exists, but it's also enabling these organizations to fundraise beyond numbers that were possible in the past?

Rep. Perriello: I think that's probably true. I certainly think it's a lot easier to reach your most intense supporters than the rather random and resource intensive direct mail strategies of the past or the [perg 04:45] model of knocking doors in the past, right? You would have to recruit thousands of college students to go and knock doors all summer to build your base of membership if you're [perg 04:53] or Sierra Club, or you bought it the way the right built it, which was essentially buy a built mailing list, where you might be spending a great deal of money to reach a percentage of people who actually support your ideas. Social media, because of all the ways that it works, makes it easier to have your supporters find other supporters. If you take the growth of the progress, for example, the vast majority of people coming to our website now are coming through either Facebook or a Twitter link of some kind, i.e., peer recommended as opposed to Google search before, where someone Googles CBO healthcare and then we're one of the first ones that comes up. In that sense, you can get into the basis certainly. I would also though distinguish advocacy groups whose theory of influence is based on some level of popular support versus those who are not. For example if you're human rights watch, you are an advocacy group on some level but you've never been a membership group. It's never going to be an issue necessarily because, yes, people care when folks are being tortured, but they also don't really want to look at it. Social media is not going to have nearly as much influence, and might even undermine it, relative to a group that, say, wants to raise the minimum wage or lower student loans and wants to build up a membership base.

Mr. Ames: Focusing on the most recent shutdown, how did you observe these outside groups affecting the shutdown? Do you think they had some influence, little influence, or no influence?

Rep. Perriello: I think, again, this combination of factors, as I would see it, had a big influence. Ted Cruz was pretty up front that he was building his email list off of that. That email list is a new form of power because of your ability to raise money from it and generate letters, et cetera. I would sort of go back to, I guess, there have been a few generations now of, at least online organizing, from the old kind of Move On model that deemed America move on space into some of these other things. The email list is still pretty powerful, but now it's primarily powerful because of its ability to raise money, which drives a lot in politics. Someone like Ted Cruz can be relevant if he can be raising millions of dollars off of an email list of millions of people. I do think that was a part of it, but again, I think it goes to this combination of the polarization that's happening anyway with the redistricting, which was that a whole lot of Republican members who knew this was terrible policy, and even knew it was terrible politics for the party as a whole saw it as being a threat to them getting primaried in their own district. That means you end up with a ridiculous shutdown instead of a deal, and social media has been one factor. Of course, one of the problems with social media, which doesn't undermine your ... I know you're asking very specific questions and I'm giving you rambling answers, but is this way in which social media, of course, and the Internet in general, filters and all of [inaudible] work on the fact that you're probably more likely to only hear from two groups of people once you're

online. From a political standpoint, one, people who already agree with you, and two, people who absolutely disagree with you in the most obnoxious way that it's only going to reinforce your original beliefs. I think this has become a problem because then if you're really right wing you're only hearing from other right wing people and that makes you reinforce their beliefs and yadda, yadda, yadda, so those are all problems.

Mr. Ames: I am asking a few specific questions, but if a thought comes to you about social media in a different aspect, feel free to go in that direction because I really do want to hear about your expertise in this manner. I did have a chance to talk to Heritage Foundation about how they operated during the shutdown, and part of what you said validates what they were doing with regard to how they were using social media in order to get their folks to connect with Congress and give a voice to their message and on the other side of the aisle during the shutdown, certainly OFA and some of other liberal groups, progressive groups were doing the same to support the president's position. Could you talk about that a little bit and the strategy involved?

Rep. Perriello: It's very hard for me to be objective. I think there are some ways in which the two sides just operate very differently on this stuff. The government shutdown was good for the polling numbers of progressives, but I'm not sure it helped build any lists. In part that was, for whatever reason, the left wasn't arguing for anything. As well as it went, one of the interesting things about it was on actual policy, the conservatives didn't really lose any ground, which was you

basically agreed to a budget compromise that was literally to the right of the original Ryan budget. Here you had a situation where Democrats or progressive online groups who were excited to go and reinforce how crazy the Republicans were, but there was nothing that the liberals were fighting for. There wasn't something where it was like let's have a tax on rich to cover universal Pre-K, right? And then you negotiate it out and then you give that up and the right gives up, whatever, you know, getting rid of ObamaCare and you end up in the middle. It was an asymmetric fight in that sense, which you could look at and say, well, the Democrats in the White House gave no ground in the end, which is true, but that was only because they had literally given up 100% of the ground and accepted 100% of the Republican decision on the actual budget, which is what it was supposed to be about. You strike that and say, I think, you could go back to this and say this is the right understanding but to build lists, as they were trying to do, you have to create stakes for it and defensive stakes or whatever they want to destroy the president. Where does all that go to? I don't if they did stuff but if they did stuff from a defensive position. I'm trying to think of a group that's really doing social media building right now on the left or the center-left. We're sort of a different model here because we're news oriented, so that's more of like trying to provide a client with a product, which is people want good timely news about what's going on. We can start with the minimum wage fight, I guess. I can't think of a group that's really doing a major list-building exercise. I think our groups are trying to do more of making sure the media has accurate facts and that the people have accurate facts about this, but again, that might just be my bias.

Mr. Ames: How are you making sure that people and the media are having your accurate facts? What tools are you taking? What strategies are you employing?

Rep. Perriello: I think you saw from this yesterday when the CBO came out with a report and initially the right wing gets the means out there and the journalists eat it up like hotcakes. ‘Oh, this says that ObamaCare is going to destroy all these jobs’, when in fact it’s making a very different argument and doing so on terms that Republicans themselves had argued for. Groups like ours were tracking down the talking points from Republicans from a few years ago, conceding the exact point, breaking our numbers, getting that to journalists. When you can create a [Granville 13:52] online where journalists are starting to realize they screwed this one up then you can help drive the corrections of the stories, and in this case you got to the point that even Paul Ryan was saying, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, wait a second; this isn’t quite what people thought it was.” Facts matter but you also have to have the ability to leverage those facts into the media through direct outlets or other means.

Mr. Ames: Are there certain methods or platforms that are better than others? For example, is Facebook a better platform? Is Twitter a better way to get it out? Some are experimenting with YouTube and Tumblr. Do you find one is more successful than the other?

Rep. Perriello: It depends a little bit on what your product is. We probably have the most growth right now in Facebook and Twitter. We do Tumblr and Pintrest

and those other things, and I understand less. It's certainly a situation now where people are most likely to decide what to read based on what their friends are telling them is interesting. There's just a glut of information out there. People don't necessarily trust the sources, so the question is how do you get to people? Well, we have email lists of folks who get daily and even some get hourly updates from us. They are going to then want to share that with their friends so the more people who are in the first concentric circle, the quicker it is that you get out to a louder circle you obviously want to try to hit. I think most groups try to, be connected to hundreds of talking heads and producers on TV shows and the like, but yeah, a lot of it is just producing a good product, like anything else, so we have a lot of direct readers of our website and making it easy in every way to share that more broadly.

Mr. Ames Who would you say as being more successful using social media: the right, the left, it's pretty much a tie?

Rep. Perriello: I don't think there's any question the left has had a huge advantage on this. Even I would concede that. Again, I think there have been different theories on why the left is much better than the right on this. I think the right is catching up, and I think some of it, it's been more organic growth on the left, genuine grassroots. I think that in some ways because there had been a bigger gap in progressive infrastructure than conservative infrastructure, which had been built up for 40 years through churches and community groups and direct mail campaigns and everything else, and so it was a structure there that was sort of a

vacuum on the left. Unions had occupied less and less spaces, faith communities, the Democratic Party itself. Social media, particularly I think to the extent that it coincided with the Bush years when people just assumed everybody else was really pro-George Bush and then suddenly found online all these other people that were concerned about it. People make theories that liberalism is more close to credible thinking. There's the artistic community, and comedians tend to be more there and a lot of social media plays on creativity and innovation and the [inaudible 00:17:13] so I think that those are reasons. Obviously, young people have tended to be more progressive and particularly in the early years were dominant online in the social media space, and I'm sure people have much more research theories than those. The Right is making up for it in a couple of ways, mainly that they just have so much money to throw at it that they can try to get at it that way. Plus, they already have kind of built in concentrations of support. They have outlets like Fox and the things where they can really focus a message and then drive people out to the sites, and those things are certainly very successful. I think they are catching up, but I think it's pretty fair to say the left was ahead of the game on that initially.

Mr. Ames: Do you think that, and I'm glad that you brought that up because it ties into my next question nicely, do you think that it's a viewing preference? For example, on radio, one would argue that the right is doing a far better job of reaching their audience by using talk shows, but on the left, as you mentioned, we're doing a better job with social media, so do you think it's the way that

people process the news that divides them between right or left in which method they prefer?

Rep. Perriello: I don't know. It's a little bit of a chicken and egg question. I find talk radio to be pretty intolerable when people can sit there for two to three hours at a time listening to Limbaugh when I was coming of age in the late '80s, and yet people do it. Some of that I think is the financial issue that the right was more comfortable with the idea of essentially partisan news, whereas the left really saw the news as something that should be independent and came around late on that, and even now I think, again, there's not equivalence. If you look at MSNBC versus Fox comparison, they are actually exceedingly different in the sense that the most intellectual show on MSNBC is a conservative show, which is Morning Joe in the Morning, and two, the news is almost always played straight. Whereas there's plenty of liberal commentary, but the news itself is, again, played basically out of the NBC newsroom. Whereas with Fox, everything about the way that the news is communicated is and has been that, and there's not a single liberal show and really a single federal liberal commentator regular on the network. While Morning Joe is the most intellectual, there are also conservatives that are on several of the other shows. I think that even now the extent to which conservatives are more comfortable with the idea of, and propaganda is a very charged word, but something that is more like conservative news, whereas liberals feel like the news should be played straight and the punditry can be left of center. All of that's in the mix. I think that the radio versus other thing, yeah, there may be something to it. Maybe you could get into some very folksy sense of 'well

rural communities are more like being in their car for a long period of time,' but tell that to someone who is commuting from Northern Virginia into D.C. that we don't spend a lot of time in our cars. Again, I'm sure people have done some very thoughtful analysis of those distinctions or I would just be talking out of my rear.

Mr. Ames: How do you think that the mobility of social media, everybody has a cell phone, which means they have a camera and they have access to the Internet. How do you think that's affecting the political process? For example, when you were in Congress, always knowing that perhaps the microphone was on when you had your George Allen 'Macaca' moments or your Randy Neugebauer moments. How do you think that's playing out?

Rep. Perriello: I think there's some very positive ways that this is holding politicians more accountable, and I think there's negative ways, like a lot of things in life. I think there's a tradition where it was easier for people to say one thing in Washington and a different thing back home, or even back home they might say different things at the Chamber of Commerce lunch than at the Union Breakfast, and so I think it's forced a certain amount of accountability, transparency, and even consistency on that, which is probably good. I think it is also often misused; a line is taken out of context that doesn't really mean that, so then you get to the point that you're just doing less communicating with the public, you're walking on eggshells, and you're particularly less likely to sit down with people on the other side of the aisle, knowing that anything you say can get taken out of context. I think in terms of the Tweeting from the floor and the like, I

think some of that is good. I think it forces politicians can either do that directly or others, their staff, responding to things in the news. This is probably where I'm a little old school. I think it would be that there is value to people breathing and reflecting before they speak sometimes. When it feels like, and this has as much to do with the 24-hour news cycle, but I do think social media drives a lot of it, as soon as something happens you're supposed to have a comment out and have a comment first and sometimes you actually should take a breath, read the report, hear from a few different points of view, and then get out a statement. I do think that social media tends to reward the quickest and often the most extreme or most outspoken and that's not always a good thing; that can rise up more extreme voices in ways that aren't always constructive, but that's part of where we are.

Mr. Ames: Do you have anything else you'd like to add?

Rep. Perriello: Yeah, distinguishing social media from technology, there are some amazing things that can be done. One of the examples that always struck me was I did more town hall meetings than anyone else during the healthcare. Somehow we did 100 hours of town hall meetings and we literally had 1,500 people showing up at town hall meetings, where normally it's like seven random dudes who stood up at every town hall for the last 25 years, making the same point. It was amazing in some ways as a moment of old-school civil discourse or civic engagement: people coming to a town hall meeting, right? What could be more old-fashioned than that? Of course part of what was driving people there was social media and another thing to organizing the strongest voices on the right and the left and a

couple of things that were interesting about it. One, after the first one, partly because they were so contentious, those town hall meetings almost felt to me like online discourse but live. People were rude, they were uncivil, and a lot of people weren't, by the way, a lot of were very well behaved, which you also find online. It just doesn't tend to get any attraction. We did all these meetings and I'm very proud of us having done them and I think it was what I owed to my constituents, but then we did a tele-town hall meeting and we actually got more people on one tele-town hall meeting than all of the other hundred hours of town halls combined, and it wasn't just the people who already had a point of view and wanted to come to express it to me; it was actually people who were undecided because this was ... I don't know if you know how these work, but you have to call into peoples' homes and say, 'you can join a live tele-town hall with your congressman, just press one to enter the town hall, hang up if you don't want to.' We would get like 12,000 people on the phone, right? If you just got a free phone call it's a little bit curious, you can sit there, you're finishing up your dishes, or your meal, or whatever. I think the average time for sitting on ended up being like 20 minutes, so here you're reaching people who are your classic undecided voter, your classic engaged citizen, engaged enough to want to know something. In those ways technology can be used to reach and engage, and I think deepen the deliberation at the same time that there are other ways in which it's obviously going to make it more challenging. One of the things with advocacy groups that I think is tricky, there can be a muting effect, and the healthcare bill was definitely emerged from this, which is that you have so much incoming because the cost of engagement

has dropped to literally zero that you then have so much that you can't distinguish anything, including who's a constituent and who isn't, whether this is someone who got shipped in from the outside, how intensely they feel about it, et cetera. In the old days, where you literally had to go look at someone's face and get them to check a box on a postcard and send it in or write a letter, it was a very different style then. Here's a flooding of your office with 12,000 emails a day, which then means you basically just have to stop responding to your email. I'm babbling on about it a little bit, but I think we're still trying to figure this out. It's obviously exciting, but it's also something that can breakdown discourse as well as melds it.

Mr. Ames: Thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate your insights and it's been very valuable to talk with you, Congressman.

APPENDIX G: Interview with Joshua Baca, Vice President of Client Relations at DDC Advocacy, February 6, 2014

Mr. Ames: The questions that I want to ask you have to do along the lines of history of advocacy. I'll give you a background where I am in my thesis so far, as I've got the general lit review done, definitions, and whatnot but really talking to you about advocacy and the tools that people have used and the evolution of the tools would be extremely helpful to me. If you just want to start and then I'll jump in with questions.

Mr. Baca: I would say the evolution of advocacy tools is one that's pretty interesting I would say in a lot of ways. I would argue that advocacy was the forefront leader integrating technology tools into this and making what advocacy is today. What I mean by that is, you look at companies like ours, others of our competitors, one of the very basic themes that companies try to do initially with advocacy was how could you quickly pair up an individual with the legislator, and what is commonly known today as intra-district matching. That's the ability to, and this goes back to the old direct mail days, all that sort of stuff. That was their form of micro targeting was the extended zip code and getting those paired up with the individual because of the way congressional lines are drawn. We may be in the same zip code but we may have two very members of Congress because of the last four that are associated with that.

I think I would argue advocacy was at the forefront in bringing integrating and technological tools because the ability, at least us with the company, when we were able to integrate that everything else came standard after that. Everything evolved from that. Exactly what I mean by that is one, you could then build an advocacy website today that still uses inter-district matching to pair somebody up with a legislator. Now, you may be asking them to share a Facebook graphic. You may be asking them to send an email. You may be asking them to make a call. You may be asking them to write a letter. You may be asking them to jump to a town hall meeting. You may be asking them to Facebook about it, Tweet it, share a graphic, what ever it is. That basic tool was the foundation I would argue for most of what we still do today. Without that tool how do you really know who you're targeting?

Mr. Ames: That's a great point and leading to my next question having to do with, what role has social media had in the ... what place does it have in this evolution? Is it part of it? Is it the next line? Or is it like you say, helping somebody with their district matching?

Mr. Baca: It's continuously evolving. I always am drawn back to 2009 is when I always have to recall this moment. In 2008 the President ran a very sophisticated digital campaign for 2008. You think about the leaps he made from 2008 to 2012 were enormous technologically, and using social media particularly. The point I'm getting at was that election opened the

eyes of people to use social media tools to communicate with voters, to microtarget voters, to get the message out. I would say the common thing I heard in 2009 from clients, and people who were running for campaign offices, or whatever it was, it was like, "I want what Obama did." But if you ask them what Obama did most of them didn't really know, which I found to be very interesting. I think what's important about that was that was the moment of legitimacy for social media, and it gave it a sense of credibility. Pre 2008, there was social media. There was Facebook, I think then there was MySpace, Twitter existed. I have never known this to be true and it's something you maybe you want to look at, but someone once told me that Obama didn't have a Twitter account in 2008, or was very late to have a Twitter account in 2008.

Mr. Ames: 2007.

Mr. Baca: Something like that.

Mr. Ames: I did see that status in my thesis research.

Mr. Baca: He was late to it or something I don't know. I heard that.

Mr. Ames: Only Eric Cantor beat him on the house side to have a Twitter account.

Then again Obama built myBO.com.

Mr. Baca: Maybe it was his campaign too. I don't know if his campaign had it. I've heard that story from various sources on both sides but I don't know if it's

true. It's something you may want to look at too. I think 2008 was the moment of legitimacy. I think if you look from 2008 to 2012, and where we are now past 2012, now heading into 2014, I would say it was short of a communications tool. I think when I look at the way I communicate to social media clients, I communicate as an extension of communications, meaning this was another avenue for you to get your message out.

Meaning, this was another avenue for you to share news stories, what was important you, and that was the sophistication behind it for 2008, 2010, and everybody started bringing applications and I remember at one point, we integrated our district matching into Facebook. We built an app that you could build into Facebook and if I were a Facebook fan of a human rights campaign, whoever it is, all of their fans could go to this application on Facebook, stay in Facebook, and do advocacy actions there. I thought that was ground breaking. Now, I obviously didn't work on the Obama campaign but a lot of the stuff that I've read on the things that they did in micro targeting their social media audiences, getting friends to do stuff who were identified as voters who were on the fence or soft or whatever. That was revolutionary in regard to it was a modern geo TV effort. It was beyond a modern GOTV effort where I would probably think that most campaigns in 2012 were still out doing calls, and knocking doors.

Obama's campaign did a very good job of that too, but what was missing was how much that sophistication in social media played a role in ensuring that their micro targeting was off the charts. The point is it was a

communications tool. It became a GOTV tool and now it's the ultimate form of engagement. It's an engagement tool now. I think it'll still continue to play a GOTV tool when appropriate and clearly it think that's where campaigns are going. This whole world that exists today in regard to the BuzzFeed culture, graphics, and one of the six things you need to know about this, and something that's shareable and easy to digest. It no longer is the situation where you want to click on a link and read a long article. That was so 2008, 2009. Now you want a picture that easily communicates what you're trying to convey. You may have a link to something. You may link to an article. You may be linking to a take action side or to a phone line or whatever it is. That graphic now plays such a critical role in getting your message out it's become all about engagement. It's like, how creative and how engaging can my graphic be that other of my friends, instead of liking my post, they're now sharing. If you follow, and I by no means am an expert in this but if you follow the way Facebook monitors the algorithm, it's put a big emphasis on graphics now and shareable content. It's no longer about, we have this argument with clients all the time, not an argument, but we have a debate with them, just because you get 10,000 likes on something you put up on your page, that's not necessarily a good measurement anymore. I would rather get 5,000 shares than I would rather get 10,000 likes.

Mr. Ames: How do you incentivize clients to think that way, and how do you approach it so they are sharing rather than just getting likes?

Mr. Baca: It starts at the very beginning. From an advocacy perspective now social media is being pitched as an engagement tool where it used to be pitched as a communications tool. It goes along with it where social media is called new media now, it was digital media, now it's advocacy, whatever it is. No one really knows what bucket it falls in, in so many ways. I think that's great because it falls into very many different buckets. It falls into media, it's great Twitter, it's an excellent tool for, and it's the breaking news tool for what you do. Facebook is an engagement tool in very different things. Clients sometimes have a hard time understanding that what you do on Twitter isn't necessarily the same thing you do on Facebook. You may. Twitter is a great place to share a bunch of news and follow influence if you do that sort of thing. Facebook is you want engagement I think.

Mr. Ames: And you think that videos and photos are more influential?

Mr. Baca: Yes. I definitely would say creative graphics are the most influential. I think videos are second. I would say catchy, short, concise, easy to digest status updates, and I think linking a plain news article is the bottom of the totem pole now. Everybody can go get news. There're so many sources to get news from right? Even me as an individual if I take off my advocacy hat I get turned off when I look at my Facebook view, and everyone's posted an article. I get news from so many other places.

Mr. Ames: Right. You just want to see a cat video?

Mr. Baca: I want to be entertained in some way. I want to be engaged do you see what I mean? If I wanted to read news I go to Twitter. If I go to Facebook I want to see BuzzFeed, if that's right word. I want to see something that's engaging, catchy, something that makes me want to do something.

Mr. Ames: So, each of the social media sites has it's own appeal?

Mr. Baca: They're own appeal. Not each social media site is the same for every issue, for every client, or every campaign, or for whatever it may be.

Mr. Ames: Going through them because I'm also looking into how advocacy groups have effected their shutdown, the most recent shutdown, would you say advocacy groups were more influential, same influential, as they were perhaps in the '95,'96 shutdown, which I'm comparing this to? Do they have a bigger voice because of social media?

Mr. Baca: I think it seems they had a bigger voice because of social media. I not necessarily sure they had bigger voice overall. I think just because you're the loudest person in the room you're the smartest, like the vocal minority.

Mr. Ames: I was talking on the record with somebody over at heritage about what they were doing for instance the Obama camp fight, not the shutdown fight, and what I found interesting was their use of social media to one, solidify their support, and two, it hardened the people who already agreed with them and made them feel they were all in this fight together.

Mr. Baca: I think that's great example of the engagement philosophy of using a tool like Facebook. Those are for your hard, hard, hardcore supporters. They're [inaudible 12:01] in. Why would you want them? Look at it this way, if you have a hardcore supporter who hates Obama care, who is passionate about the Heritage Foundation, why would you just post a news article on your feed? What do you give that passion and advocate to do? You've got to make advocacy easy, simple, to the point, and quickly to execute with as little many steps as possible. When you're driving people to a page to then liking it, you want it to all occur as quickly and simply as possible. You don't want to be got you're going to lose people through the process. That's a great example of where the engagement content is so critical and I think what I would argue in many ways is it looked like they were the strong majority. I don't know if that's necessarily the truth. They may have been the strong majority on social media, but public opinion or whatever on social media don't necessarily probably ... I don't know, if I was in a number of them, I wouldn't think they would match up.

Mr. Ames: It was also pointed out that when you make a public comment and it's out there in print, it's harder to back off it and to compromise, so some of the members couldn't come to the table and negotiate and resolve the shutdown.

Mr. Baca: I think that's probably true. I think the age of social media, I would argue, has caused a breakdown in [comedy 13:36] that existed in Washington.

It's no longer ... everything is so instant that you could say an honest mistake something that you didn't mean to say. I probably say a lot of things everyday that I don't mean to say because you're pulled in so many different directions.

Mr. Ames: Something like a joke as I mean there's a communication's director on her way to Africa saying, "I hope I don't HIV, just kidding," and ...

Mr. Baca: It blows up.

Mr. Ames: ... it blows up and she's out of a job before she can ...

Mr. Baca: Out of a job. I would argue that beyond social media I think digital media when you look at it like the Politicos and the instant ability to get a news story out, I think that has caused a big break down in the process here is because, before, you tune into this ... 45 years ago you tuned in to the six, ten o'clock news, you got your newspaper in the morning. A lot of things have happened. It wasn't so in your face right? It's so in your face now, and then you have all these other tools to do things with it, I think it caused that restless aggression of ... there's a lot of angst out there in society, and I think social media has played a big part of that. Sometimes too much information is bad, an inaccurate or untruthful information. Anything you put on Facebook or Twitter could be deemed true, or someone could think it's true and it's not true. It could be inaccurate. It could be misleading. It could be a flat out lie.

Mr. Ames: With the entire signal and the noise just trying to find this.

Mr. Baca: How do you break through all that clutter? I think that's caused a big problem with that.

Mr. Ames: Also in the shutdown and I was talking with CAP, Center for American Progress, is part of what played in the social media as far as the strategy, was on the right, they were fighting for something. They were fighting to defund Obama care, and on the left, they were more playing defense during the shutdown, because on the budget numbers they'd already seeded the point.

Mr. Baca: So you think the right won the shutdown on social media?

Mr. Ames: No I'm not saying the right won. I'm just bringing out that each of them used social media in a different way. The right was using it on attack and the left was using it to defend the line in the sand if you will.

Mr. Baca: I think the social media sort of backfired on them in a lot of ways too. It's a good example where they were ... I love to see analytics or numbers and this is just me as a person speaking from what I saw. I don't have any measureable number. My analysis of what happened on social media with the shutdown was it seemed to go good for them for a while and then it really backfired on them. You started hearing stories of ... I think of the times when their members of the congress were like at World War II and memorial being through the shutdown. They were like, we've got to open

this memorial and welcome these veterans, and la, la, la, la, and everybody was like, look at those guys fighting for principle, and then you started hearing all these other things that are happening because of the shutdown, and it kind of turned on them. I think initially it was probably in their favor and then I think over time it probably worked against them.

Mr. Ames: The point that you bring up was Randy Neugebauer.

Mr. Baca: Yeah he was the one.

Mr. Ames: He was the one yelling at a park police, why don't you open these? She's like you shut us down we can't. An instant like that was caught on one of these devices, mobile devices, so everywhere members are now on the record, where twenty years ago ...

Mr. Baca: Literally everywhere you go, and there's this, that thing has created a culture that ...

Mr. Ames: That thing is the social media, the phone.

Mr. Baca: The phone you just pointed out. That has created a culture I think of where everybody thinks they're constantly fishing for things. They're constantly looking. That's the [inaudible 18:03] politics from that. We're having a super bowl party with family and my friends, and we're all having a good time, we're watching the game, we have significant others there, there're wives, there're girlfriends, there's food. One of our buddies

spills his beer all over here. What's the first things one of the guys does, takes a picture of it. The next thing he posts it on a friends Facebook page, who's not there, look at how stupid Scott is for spilling his beer all over himself? Do you know what I mean? Escalate that to the political side of this. I could be a senator and I go to the Old Ebbitt tonight and I have three martini's, I may not be intoxicated but somebody may get a picture of me and my eyes maybe red, it maybe because of my contacts, maybe that I have red eyes, they could take that and they could post it. It'd be like, look at this guy he's a complete drunk at Old Ebbitt and it escalates out of control. There are no filters to whether that's true or not. In fact the lawmaker is left in the defensive position where they're not innocent until proven guilty. They're guilty until proven innocent. All of these things have caused that breakdown in so many ways. In a world of advocacy you could argue that has caused the breakdown in so many ways in the process. You can now at the click of a button turn on your grass roots and you're activist networks, and demand something, close something down probably, and have more influence than you've ever had before.

Mr. Ames: Are advocacy groups having more success because of social media on the hill and moving ...

Mr. Baca: I think yes. I think because the perception. I think because lawmakers are afraid of the perception. I'm always continuously surprised. We had a

client that we worked with last year. We had a vote in senate. We ran a phenomenal campaign in this guys district from making sure there was positive news coverage about the issue, making sure the local impact was understood, so forth and so on. We got his vote but in the lead up to the vote I remember one of our lobbyists went in to meet with him to check the status of where he was and whatnot, and he was concerned over one post. He had the one thing he focused on I remember. A senior senator, republican, afraid of a primary, said something along the lines like, “what’s caused me the most angst is someone posted on my page and it generated 200 comments, and all these people are telling me that I shouldn’t vote for this because of whatever reason”. [Hype 20:44] one, how do you know any of those people are even in your district or state? Two. That’s what’s causing you angst. So yes, I think there is ability because of perception because it’s so there. It’s just like any kind of page. If we write an advocacy Facebook page for any of our clients and lets say we’re running a campaign that’s about pro small business, and someone goes on our page and posts, you’re actually pro big business, and our client sees it, they’re freaking out. It’s right there and anybody can do it.

Mr. Ames: Now you mentioned the senator and seeing the 200 comments on his Facebook page.

Mr. Baca: They were silly. I went on it and I saw them. I was like, that’s what you’re worked up about?

Mr. Ames: Is it the same as it was 20 years ago where his phones would blow up over an issue?

Mr. Baca: Yeah but you would know if they were from your state or not. That's the difference. When someone I used to work with on Capitol Hill we used to get our phones ring. Yes, we've really got an environment issue and ...

Mr. Ames: The fax goes off the wall.

Mr. Baca: ... the fax goes off. But you were instantly able to verify whether they were in State or not. Now there's no verification. A senator from North Carolina's constituents might as well be nation wide because anyone can go to this North Carolina's senator's page and kind of stir and can communicate with him. It can be instant.

Mr. Ames: And Ted Cruz is coming to the floor speaking to the entire nation to raise his profile increase his contact list, and raise often then.

Mr. Baca: And many members are doing that. It's an advantage. It's an opportunity for them to create their national network. The boundaries of what used to be constituent communications where you used to get a letter from your office, I remember when I was on the hill mail was a big thing. I can't imagine what they do now, but we used to get thousands of pieces of mail every month. I can imagine especially digital communications. Prime example. If we got a letter from a person in North Carolina and we're

from New Mexico, we would put the letter in internal mail and send it to that North Carolina Office.

Mr. Ames: Respectfully referred not acknowledged.

Mr. Baca: How do you do that now?

Mr. Ames: Here's your tweet.

Mr. Baca: Yeah you can't. But the perception out there and the fear that causes that, oh my God, these people think I'm a tax raiser, these people think I'm going to cut their Medicare. If people think I don't want to do that, in many ways it's yes. Point made yes. It totally changes the narrative in advocacy.

Mr. Ames: And that completely plays into all of the governing by crisis as you were with the shutdown, with the debt limit.

Mr. Baca: And the advocacy organizations aren't, they're not candidates. President Obama turned his campaign operation into Organizing for America. People like Ted Cruz were cultivating a national network. Now you have elected officials who have become more ingrained in caring about advocacy than they do about legislating. I would argue they become more interested in cultivating those networks than they are about passing bills. They didn't spend that much money passing good legislation as they do in cultivating a network of Facebook followers. Maybe that would be a

better place for it. It's now the advocacy has sort of come full circle where it's not just outside groups anymore who are doing it. It's individuals. Individual elected officials who are engaged in advocacy through email addresses, through Facebook followers to Twitter followers, and you can instantly become a national star at a click of a mouse.

Mr. Ames: Do you think some advocacy groups may be losing credibility as a result and the one I'll bring up is Boehner has this, Are you Kidding me? Referring to what was it heritage or the article. It was like oh we know the strategy never was going to win, and also being against the Murray-Ryan budget deal before it was even announced.

Mr. Baca: Are they losing influence because of social media or are they losing influence because of other items, because those are two different questions.

Mr. Ames: Well, maybe social media is giving them the ability to send before they think it through.

Mr. Baca: All of these social media digital tactics from Facebook to cultivating emails, to being able to communicate to 100 thousand people in the click of a mouse at no cost, adds fuel to the fire to keep them doing these things. Whether you or I think they're illegitimate, that's different, but the 150 thousand or the ten million followers they have on Twitter, that's a larger audience that a lot of people have, and it's instant.

Mr. Ames: So, they may be caring more about the people following them than caring about the issue.

Mr. Baca: When there became more about all the people following. Correct. If you're asking like a governing process how these groups influence, that's a different question. They're not mutually exclusive to these people. Sarah Palin's a good example. Sarah Palin cares about riling up her activist network. That's her mission in life. She'll never be a governor. She'll never be a senator, never run for President. She'll always have some sort of speculation as long as she's in the limelight as she's running for President because she has like 20 million Facebook fans or whatever it is. Those fans are super-passionate about her. We could probably do a broad analysis of the country they're probably less than 1% of society. The numbers are miniscule but that 20 million people she can have influence and an impact with. Whether you or I agree she's influential in the broader governing process, that doesn't matter.

Mr. Ames: She has her niche.

Mr. Baca: She has her niche, and it's impactful. It's impactful to people who legislate. It's impactful to process whether or not she's serious about the process it still seriously impacts the process. The question is it just depends. In a governing perspective probably groups both on the left and the right have lost some credibility. I think both have probably made some miscues. Both have probably gone too far in things but that doesn't

mean that they're not influential. They have niche audiences that they're extremely influential with.

Mr. Ames: Do you have anything else to add?

Mr. Baca: I would just say that I think broadly speaking when you look at social media and the role it's playing in advocacy and in politics in governing, it's continuously evolving. It's evolving. What's going to be the next big thing that Facebook or Twitter can do or what is the next Twitter? If there's a growing influence in things like Tumblr and BuzzFeed all these new platforms, I think people are getting bored with Facebook and Twitter. I'm curious to see particularly on the Republican side because I think the perception of Twitter followers they were behind on technology. I'm very curious to see if they've closed the gap in 2016, and if they have closed the gap, what are those new tools that they bring out that enhanced the debate? Will it always be as simple as a click of a mouse to assert your influence? I'm curious to see if that remains. Is that long-term? Or is it just a short-term popular thing right now? I don't know.

Mr. Ames: That maybe part of my closing conclusion what you just said because that's looking forward what's the next big thing.

Mr. Baca: It's a much broader thing with social media. Yesterday Twitter came out with their quarterly following numbers, and some of their measurements of engagement show there was somewhat of a decline and their market

value stock declined. They were concerned about the long-term profitability of Twitter. I think that's indicative of the whole whether it's political or not. Is it sustainable long-term?

Mr. Ames: I saw one of these quotes. It was Facebook isn't the next MySpace. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, are the next NBC, ABC, and CBS.

Mr. Baca: Yes I probably agree with that in some capacity. I think generally speaking there's a growing concern about privacy and I think there's a growing concern about these company's like Facebook and Twitter have so much access to your personal information and they're collecting a bunch of data on you they use for a bunch of really sophisticated micro targeting stuff. At what point do people say enough? Then, does that legitimize their opinion when she loses her followers, or her followers aren't as engaged as they used to be. Does that delegitimize a Ted Cruz or would a Barak Obama be as significant figure today if he didn't have social and digital media though he did in 2010 and 2012. Who knows? We may have had [inaudible 30:35] as President.

Mr. Ames: Actually my first chapter pretty much says we have Obama because of social media.

Mr. Baca: I would probably agree with that to a certain extent and I think that's also a larger reason why Barak Obama won and Mitt Romney didn't. I think if Mitt Romney was running in 2004, and ... if Mitt Romney were running

in 2006 or 2008, and it was against Barak Obama, he would've probably won.

Mr. Ames: Even accounting for being an advantage of an incumbent?

Mr. Baca: Yeah I guess that's fair. If both are equal okay? In an open election, and social media and digital media weren't as big as ... I compare that in some ways to the Kennedy Nixon debate. If you ever go back to that first debate between Kennedy and Nixon, where there was a first TV debate, and I always remember my grandfather saying, if you listen to it on radio everybody thought Nixon won. If you watched it on TV everybody thought Kennedy won because he was young, sharp, and good-looking. I think that was sort of a flat ... like that sort of happened again in 2012 in a lot of ways. Obama was cool. He was cool in 2008. He was cooler than Hilary Clinton. He was cooler than John McCain. He was cooler than Mitt Romney in 2012. A lot of that coolness was because he was so instant because of the device you have on your phone. You could go to an Obama rally and take a picture and that would virally spread through all your networks and there was a sense of coolness that came with him. It was cool to be an Obama supporter. It was not cool to be a McCain supporter. Removing aside the political differences and broader geopolitical things that were occurring at the moment, he was more accessible, he was cooler, and he was legitimized in many ways because of this.

Mr. Ames: But you have that and again, I really touch on this in my first chapter, FDR radio, Kennedy TV.

Mr. Baca: Barak Obama social media.

Mr. Ames: Newt Gingrich and cable television.

Mr. Baca: Cable Television that's a good one. Cable television made Newt Gingrich a star.

Mr. Ames: Made Newt Gingrich a star and ...

Mr. Baca: Legitimized him.

Mr. Ames: Yeah.

Mr. Baca: With each of those things the media then you legitimized them. I'm sure if you go back there was skepticism about whether Kennedy was prepared to be President. There was skepticism about FDR and lots of things you could point to, but each one of those things sort of gave them a sense of legitimacy because they ended up using it to their advantage. They were the candidates, for the moment, for that specific piece of technology that may have helped them in many ways. So what's the next thing right?

Mr. Ames: What's the next thing?

Mr. Baca: It may not be for 50 years again.

Mr. Ames: Oh that reminds me of another question that I asked others was, when it comes to ... let me phrase this. Who's viewing [inaudible 33:37] is it on the right hands down the winning talk radio? I mean you've got Rush Limbaugh, and all the rest ...

Mr. Baca: What's going to happen when Barak Obama is no longer President I think there's going to be [inaudible 33:52] myself.

Mr. Ames: What I was starting to delve into was looking into those on the right the way they process the news listening to radio are those on the left processing it through social media?

Mr. Baca: Isn't that indicative of the problems that parties have in some ways. Republicans tend to be older, white conservative voters. Democrats now tend to be younger, urban, a little bit more affluent voters. The problem that exists for Republicans is how do they tap into that piece of it to get their message out.

Mr. Ames: So who's winning in social media would you say?

Mr. Baca: It depends. Who's winning right now? I would probably say conservatives and I think it has to be because of the person who occupies the White House. I think there's a natural inclination that he has done the best job I would argue to unify and divide the republican parties. Barak Obama.

Mr. Ames: Like what [inaudible 34:58] did for the left?

Mr. Baca: Not even close. I think he's much more. When Obama was running for re-election, he's a winner in social media. When he's governing, he's the loser in social media. The Republicans have done a good job in pointing out the flaws and using social media to bring to life the flaws of his governing philosophy. They've not done a good job of using social media to bring to life the flaws of his campaign because it plays to his campaign. It plays to their governing strategy using these things. Maybe it's a little bit of fear. A theory what to do right? He's not the transformational figure when he has to cut [inaudible 35:38] as he is when he's on the campaign trail talking about hope and change. That's awesome for social and digital media. When you're cutting bad crisis deals that are necessarily aren't popular.

Mr. Ames: Not necessarily good.

Mr. Baca: That's awesome media. Do you know what I mean? It can either criticize you. Today I would argue that because of where we stand at this snapshot in history at this snapshot moment, I think the conservatives are probably dominating social media. It just takes a Todd Akin or a Richard Murdock or a government shutdown, for that to potentially change.

Mr. Ames: Thank you very much!

**APPENDIX H: Statement from Tom Crabtree, former Director of Business
Development at Lockheed Martin Integrated Technology, February 6, 2014**

As email use grew among advocacy groups, staff had increasing difficulty processing the growing volume. The technology had not been implemented to easily identify groups and quickly respond. A big issue for the staff was how to identify who is a constituent and who is not. The rise of webforms and development of constituent relationship management software (CRM) was a result of the immediate need to identify constituents. It forced constituents to a form to give a full address. The form then became a vehicle to have a consistent format to deliver the message to the CRM. Parallel efforts by CRM vendors led to developments of technology to group incoming messages based on common language and automatically assign responses. This smart technology has enabled Congressional offices to quickly process these large advocacy messages and provide reporting to Members and staff.

As an aside, years ago, I had a conversation with a Member about the evolving use of email. He observed that before email, constituents did not expect an immediate response. They sent a letter, it took a few days to arrive in Washington, and it took several weeks to go through the process of generating and sending a response permitting the Member and staff time to think about a reply. Constituents did not expect a response for several weeks. Now, because of the instant nature of electronic communications, people expect an immediate response. There is not as much time to really think through and produce a substantive response. Another issue for Member offices is the conversational nature of email. Email correspondence has the potential to be a back and forth. Member offices do not have the resources to engage in that.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aaker, J., and V. Chang. "Obama and the power of social media and technology." *The European Business Review*: <http://www.europeanbusinessreview.com>. 2009.

Aigner-Treworgy, Adam. "HealthCare.gov gets 40% jump in traffic after Funny or Die video." CNN. March 13, 2014.
<http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2014/03/12/healthcare-gov-gets-40-jump-in-traffic-after-funny-or-die-video/>

Anderson, Dennis. "How has Web 2.0 reshaped the presidential campaign in the United States?" 2009.

Andrews, Kenneth T., and Bob Edwards. "Advocacy organizations in the US political process." *Annual review of sociology* (2004): 479-506.

Aronson, Elise D. "Cyber-Politics: How New Media has Revolutionized Electoral Politics in the United States." *Colgate Academic Review* 9, no. 1. v 7. 2012.

Baca, Joshua. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 6, 2014.

Baer, Jay. "11 Shocking New Media Statistics in America." *The Social Habit*. 2012.
<http://socialhabit.com/downloads/>

Barbour, Henry, and Sally Bradshaw, Ari Fleischer, Zori Fonalledas, and Glenn McCall. "Growth and Opportunity Project." *The Republican National Committee*. 2013.

Bauder, David. "Obama's 'Funny or Die' skit over 15 million hits." *The Associated Press*. 2014. <http://boston.com/2014/03/14/obama-funny-die-skit-over-million-hits/dQIbajmFm9BXz4aQ2Ru33K/story.html>

Bennett-Smith, Meredith. "Obama Girl 'Still Got a Crush' On the President in New Music Hit From Leah Kauffman." *The Huffington Post*. September 6, 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/06/obama-girl-still-got-a-crush-on-obama-leah-kauffman_n_1861489.html

Blake, Aaron. "Rep. Randy Neugebauer says he apologized for confronting park ranger." *The Washington Post*. October 18, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2013/10/18/rep-randy-neugebauer-says-he-apologized-for-confronting-park-ranger/>

Bluey, Rob. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 4, 2014.

- Boyd, Katie. "Gif Guide for How to #GetTalking About ObamaCare." December 20, 2013. <http://www.speaker.gov/general/illustrated-guide-how-gettalking-about-obamacare>
- Bradley, Tahman. "Final Fundraising Figure: Obama's \$750 M." ABC News. December 5, 2008.
- Brudnick, Ida. "Congressional Salaries and Allowances." Congressional Research Service. January 15, 2013.
- Calcaterra, Craig. "Applying government shutdown logic to the baseball playoffs." Hardball Talk. NBC Sports. October 8, 2013. <http://hardballtalk.nbcsports.com/2013/10/08/applying-government-shutdown-logic-to-the-baseball-playoffs/>
- Calcaterra, Craig. "Congressman responds to fan letter applying government shutdown logic to the Braves-Dodgers game." Hardball Talk. NBC Sports. October 9, 2013. <http://hardballtalk.nbcsports.com/2013/10/09/congressman-responds-to-fan-letter-applying-government-shutdown-logic-to-the-braves-dodgers-game/>
- Cherkis, Jason and Ryan Grim. "Scott Prouty, '47 Percent' Filmmaker, Reveals Identity on 'The Ed Show.'" The Huffington Post. March 13, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/13/scott-prouty-47-percent_n_2870837.html
- Chi, Feng, and Nathan Yang. "Twitter adoption in Congress." *Review of Network Economics* 10, no. 1 (2011).
- Cillizza, Chris. "What Facebook can tell us about conservatives." The Washington Post. March 15, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2014/03/15/what-facebook-can-tell-us-about-conservatives/>
- Cillizza, Chris. "Winners and losers of the government shutdown." The Washington Post. October 16, 2013. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/10/16/winners-and-losers-of-the-government-shutdown/>
- Clinger, Bill. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. October 22, 2013.
- Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). *Managing the 2012 Budget Cuts in House Offices*. 2011.
- Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide*. 2012.
- Congressional Management Foundation (CMF). *#SocialCongress: Perceptions and Use of Social Media on Capitol Hill*. 2011.

Cogburn, Derrick L., and Fatima K. Espinoza-Vasquez. "From networked nominee to networked nation: Examining the impact of Web 2.0 and social media on political participation and civic engagement in the 2008 Obama campaign." *Journal of Political Marketing* 10, no. 1-2. 189-213. 2011.

Corn, David. 47 Percent: Uncovering the Romney Video That Rocked the 2012 Election. William Morrow. 2012.

Crabtree, Thomas. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 6, 2014.

Crenson, Matthew A., and Benjamin Ginsberg. *Presidential Power: Unchecked and Unbalanced*. WW Norton & Company, 2007.

Deighton, John, and Leora Kornfeld. Obama versus Clinton: the YouTube primary. Harvard Business School. 2008.

DeMint, Jim. "We Won't Back Down on ObamaCare." *The Wall Street Journal*. October 17, 2013.

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304410204579141690140598008>

Duggan, Maeve and Aaron Smith. "Social Media Update 2013." Pew Research Internet Project. December 30, 2013. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/12/30/social-media-update-2013/>

Esterling, Kevin M., Michael A. Neblo, and David MJ Lazer. "Means, motive, and opportunity in becoming informed about politics: A deliberative field experiment with members of Congress and their constituents." *Public opinion quarterly* 75, no. 3 (2011): 483-503.

Esterling, Kevin M., David MJ Lazer, and Michael A. Neblo. "Connecting to Constituents The Diffusion of Representation Practices among Congressional Websites." *Political Research Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (2013): 102-114.

Facebook. About. <https://www.facebook.com/facebook>

Falcone, Michael. "Obama on Obama Girl." *The New York Times*. August 20, 2007.

Fearon, James D. "Counterfactual and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." *World Politics*, Vol 43, No. 2. p. 169-195. January 1991.

Fenno, Richard Francis. *Home style: House members in their districts*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978.

- Fenno, Richard F. *Congress at the grassroots: Representational change in the South, 1970-1998*. UNC Press, 2000.
- Fiedler, Tom. "Bloggers Push Past the Old Media's Gatekeepers." *Nieman Reports* 62, no. 2. p 38. 2008.
- Fisher, Louis. *Constitutional conflicts between Congress and the president*. University Press of Kansas, 1997.
- Fitch, Brad and Kathy Goldschmidt. *Communicating with Congress: How Capitol Hill is Coping with the Surge in Citizen Advocacy*. Congressional Management Foundation. 2005.
- Flickr. About. <https://www.flickr.com/about/>
- Friar, Christine. "Romney's Storm Tips Twitter Doles Out Important Advice." *The Huffington Post*. October 29, 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/29/romneys-storm-tips-twitter_n_2041230.html
- Fulton, Mike. *Social Media and Online Advocacy. West Virginia University: Online Graduate Program, Integrated Marketing Communications 693S Public Affairs, Unit 07*. Summer semester 2013.
- Gasper, John T., and Andrew Reeves. "Make it rain? Retrospection and the attentive electorate in the context of natural disasters." *American Journal of Political Science* 55, no. 2 (2011): 340-355.
- Gerken, James. "'Romney vs. Sandy' Video Stresses 'Climate Change Isn't a Joke' in Wake of Hurricane." *The Huffington Post*. November 2, 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/02/romney-sandy-video_n_2061995.html.
- Ginsberg, Benjamin. *Class notes from Government and Politics*. Johns Hopkins University. September to December 2011.
- Glassman, Matthew Eric and Jacob Straus and Colleen Shogan. *Social Networking and Constituent Communication: Member Use of Twitter During a Two-Week Period in the 112th Congress*. Congressional Research Service. 2013.
- Golbeck, Jennifer, Justin M. Grimes, and Anthony Rogers. "Twitter use by the US Congress." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 61, no. 8 (2010): 1612-1621.
- Goldschmidt, Kathy, and Leslie Ochreiter. *Communicating with Congress: How the Internet has changed citizen engagement*. Congressional Management Foundation, 2008.

Greenfield, Jeff. Yes, Lincoln Would Have Done 'Between Two Ferns.' The Daily Beast. (2014). <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/03/12/yes-lincoln-would-have-done-between-two-ferns.html>

Grossman, Matt. Interest group influence on US policy change: An assessment based on policy history. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*. Vol. 1, 2, 171-192. Macmillian Publishers. 2012.

Grow, Gabrielle, and Janelle Ward. "The role of authenticity in electoral social media campaigns." *First Monday* 18, no. 4 (2013).

Guiterman, Aaron. Interviewed by Mike Fulton. Social Media and Online Advocacy. *West Virginia University: Online Graduate Program, Integrated Marketing Communications 693S Public Affairs, Unit 07*. YouTube 7:08. January 8, 2013. <http://youtube.com/watch?v=OjAYq49-p04&feature=youtu.be>

Gulati, Girish, and Christine Williams. "Communicating with constituents in 140 characters or less: Twitter and the diffusion of technology innovation in the United States congress." *Available at SSRN 1628247* (2010).

Hale, Amy. "How the Stress of Disaster Translates to "I Voted." *Psychology Today*. November 6, 2012.

Hanna, Alexander, Ben Sayre, Leticia Bode, JungHwan Yang, and Dhavan V. Shah. "Mapping the Political Twitterverse: Candidates and Their Followers in the Midterms." In *ICWSM*. 2011.

Hannity, Sean. Exclusive Interview with Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan. *The Sean Hannity Show*. 16:42. October 4, 2012. <http://foxnewsinsider.com/2012/10/04/video-mitt-romney-paul-ryan-sit-down-with-sean-hannity-in-first-interview-since-debate/>

Hanson, Gary, Paul Michael Haridakis, Audrey Wagstaff Cunningham, Rekha Sharma, and J. D. Ponder. "The 2008 presidential campaign: Political cynicism in the age of Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube." *Mass Communication and Society* 13, no. 5. p 584-607. 2010.

Harfoush, Rahaf. Yes we did: An inside look at how social media built the Obama brand. *New Riders Pub*. 2009.

Hawkings, David. "Ted Cruz showed he can talk the talk but his walk is harder to measure." *Roll Call*. September 25, 2013.

Hysom, Tim. *Communicating with Congress: Recommendations for Improving the Democratic Dialogue*. Congressional Management Foundation. 2008.

Issenberg, Sasha. "A More Perfect UNION." *Technology Review* 116, no. 1 (2013): 38-49.

Jeffries, Adrienne. "The Man Behind Flickr on Making the Service 'Awesome Again.'" *The Verge*. March 20, 2013. <http://www.theverge.com/2013/3/20/4121574/flickr-chief-markus-spiering-talks-photos-and-marissa-mayer>

Jenkins, C. "Nonprofit Organizations and Political Advocacy." *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*, (2006): 307-332.

Johnson, Thomas J., and David D. Perlmutter. "Introduction: The Facebook election." *Mass Communication and Society* 13, no. 5. p 554-559. 2010.

Kelly, Heather. "Texas Filibuster on Abortion Bill Rivets Online." *CNN*. June 26, 2013. <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/26/tech/social-media/texas-filibuster-twitter/>

Klein, Kaitlyn. "Social Media Plays Role in Response to Government Shutdown." *The University Daily Kansas*. October 8, 2013. <http://kansan.com/news/2013/10/08/social-media-plays-role-in-response-to-government-shutdown/>

Kornacki, Steve. "Did Newt Gingrich set the stage for Ted Cruz?" *Up with Steve Kornacki*. MSNBC. September 29, 2013. <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/46979738/vp/53137968#53137968>

Kowitt, Beth. "The YouTube Election: The Obama Campaign is Taking Its Message Directly to the Internet's Huge Audience." July 18, 2008.

Lazer, David, M. Neblo, K. Esterling, and K. Goldschmidt. "Online Town Hall Meetings: Exploring Democracy in the 21st Century." *Congressional Management Foundation, Washington, DC* (2009).

Lee, Timothy. "Romney Learns About the Pitfalls of User-Generated Content." *Techdirt.com*. October 2, 2007. <http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20071002/005530.shtml>

Lee, Traci. "Ted Cruz cruises to online stardom." *MSBNC*. September 27, 2013. <http://www.msnbc.com/martin-bashir/ted-cruz-cruises-online-stardom>

Leuschner, Katy. *The Use of the Internet and Social Media in U.S. Presidential Campaigns: 1992-2012*. May 2012.

Linkins, Jason. "The RNC Wrote A 100-Page Autopsy, But Apparently Nobody Read It." *The Huffington Post*. December 30, 2013. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/30/rnc-autopsy-2013_n_4520289.html

Madia, Sherrie A. *The Social Media Survival Guide for Political Campaigns: Everything You Need to Know to Get Your Candidate Elected Using Social Media*. August 7, 2011.

MacFarlane, Seth. Twitter @SethMacFarlane 1:40 AM. October 1, 2013.

Mayhew, David R. *Congress: The electoral connection*. Vol. 26. Yale University Press, 2004.

McHugh, Molly. How Social Media, Data Mining, and New-Fangled Technology Tipped the 2012 Election. *Digital Trends*. November 10, 2012.

McNair, Brian. *An introduction to political communication*. Routledge. 2011.

Mergel, Ines. "'Connecting to Congress": The use of Twitter by Members of Congress." *ZPB: The Journal for Political Consulting and Policy Advice* (2012): 108-114.

Merica, Bryan. The Next Step in Social Media Monitoring. *Campaigns & Elections*. February 14, 2013.

Miller, Zeke. "Hidden Hand: How Heritage Action Drove DC to Shut Down." *Time: Swampland*. September 30, 2013.

<http://swampland.time.com/2013/09/30/hidden-hand-how-heritage-action-drove-dc-to-shut-down/>

Mitchell, Amy, Mark Jurkowitz, Kenneth Olmstead, Katerina Eva-Matsa, Michael Keegan, and Jan Boyles. *Social Search & Direct: Pathways to Digital News*. Pew Research Center. March, 2014.

Moore, Frazier. "In life and especially death, JFK changed TV." *The Boston Globe*. October 19, 2013. <http://www.boston.com/ae/tv/2013/10/19/life-and-especially-death-jfk-changed/H25mGyy3C2Osd0obUNIn1K/story.html>

Mordeci, Adam. "How to make that one thing go viral; Just kidding!" *Upworthy*. 2012. <http://www.upworthy.com/how-to-make-that-one-thing-go-viral-just-kidding>

Murphy, Samantha. Behind the Social Media Campaign of Obama and Romney. *Mashable*. September 28, 2012. <http://mashable.com/2012/09/28/social-media-obama-romney/>

Murray, Shailagh and Matthew Mosk. "Under Obama, Web Would Be the Way." *The Washington Post*. November 10, 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/10/AR2008111000013.html>

Newhauser, Daniel. "The End of Debt Limit Brinkmanship?" *Roll Call*. February 11, 2014. <http://blogs.rollcall.com/218/the-end-of-debt-limit-brinkmanship/>

Nunnelee, Alan. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. November 14, 2013.

Organizing for Action. <http://my.barackobama.com/page/s/organizing-for-action>

Ovide, Shira, and Evelyn Rusli. How Facebook, Twitter Court Political Campaigns. The Wall Street Journal. November 2, 2012.

Omidyar, Pierre. "Social Media: Enemy of the State or Power to the People?" The Huffington Post. February 27, 2014.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pierre-omidyar/social-media-enemy-of-the-b_4867421.html?utm_hp_ref=world

O'Brien, Cameron C. "Electioneering Across the Ages: Examining the Application and Implication of Media-Based Mobilization in American Presidential Campaigns Post-Radio." 2012.

O'Neill M. *Third America: The Emergence of the Nonprofit Sector in the United States*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1989.

Parkin, Michael. "The Impact of Multimedia Technology on Candidate Website Visitors." *Journal of Political Marketing* 11, no. 3. p 143-164. 2012.

Parmelee, John H., and Shannon L. Bichard. *Politics and the twitter revolution: How tweets influence the relationship between political leaders and the public*. Lexington Books, 2011.

Pearlman, Nathaniel G., ed. *Margin of Victory*. ABC-CLIO, 2012.

Perriello, Tom. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 5, 2014.

Peters, Jeremy. "Cruz, Tea Party Hero, Rankles Senate G.O.P Colleagues." The New York Times. September 25, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/26/us/politics/cruz-tea-party-hero-rankles-senate-gop-colleagues.html>

Peterson, Rolfe Daus. "To tweet or not to tweet: Exploring the determinants of early adoption of Twitter by House members in the 111th Congress." *The Social Science Journal* (2012).

Pinterest. About. <http://about.pinterest.com/press/>

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. *The concept of representation*. University of California Press, 1967.

Plouffe, David, and Erik Davies. *The Audacity to Win*. Washington: Viking. 2009.

Reeves, Andrew. "Political disaster: Unilateral powers, electoral incentives, and presidential disaster declarations." *The Journal of Politics* 73, no. 04. p 1142-1151. 2011.

Rill, Leslie A., and Christopher L. B. Cardiel. *Funny, Ha-Ha: The Impact of User-Generated Political Satire on Political Attitudes*. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 2013.
<http://abs.sagepub.com/content/57/12/1738>

Rosenblatt, Alan. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. February 3, 2014.

Rosenblatt, Alan. "Social Advocacy & Politics: Drunk Dial Congress and Yell at Them for the Shutdown." *Social Media Today*. October 15, 2013.
http://socialmediatoday.com/Social_Advocacy_Politics/drunk-dial-congress-and-yell-them-shutdown

Ryan, Paul, and Patty Murray. "Meet the Press with David Gregory." December 15, 2013.

Schlesinger, Jennifer. "Votes, Photos, and Book Recommendations: How Politicians Use Facebook." *ABC News*. December 15, 2010.
<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/politicians-facebook-photos-videos-votes-reach-constituents/story?id=12358070>

Schultz, Ed. Exclusive Interview with Scott Prouty, the 47% Filmmaker. *The Ed Show*. 16:42. March 13, 2013.
http://www.nbcnews.com/id/45755822/ns/msnbc-the_ed_show/vp/51170895#51170895

Semiatin, Richard J. *Campaigns on the cutting edge*. CQ Press, 2012.

Shabad, Rebecca. "Incredulous Boehner goes viral." *The Hill*. December 12, 2013.
<http://thehill.com/blogs/twitter-room/other-news/192963-boehner-to-conservative-groups-are-you-kidding-me>

Shapiro, Matthew A., Libby Hemphill, and Jahna Otterbacher. "Doing What I Say: Connecting Congressional Social Media Behavior and Congressional Voting." (2012).

Shirky, Clay. *Here comes everybody: The power of organizing without organizations*. Penguin.com. 2008.

Shoop, Tom. "How is Social Media Like a Puppy?" *NextGov.com*. June 4, 2012.
<http://www.nextgov.com/technology-news/tech-insider/2012/06/how-social-media-puppy/56069/>

Sides, John, and Lynn Vavreck. *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Siddiqui, Sabrina. "John Boehner: Conservative Groups Have Lost All Credibility." The Huffington Post. December 12, 2013.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/12/12/boehner-conservative-groups_n_4433631.html

Silver, Nate. "Did Hurricane Sandy Blow Romney Off Course?" Five Thirty Eight Blog on New York Times. November 5, 2012.

<http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/05/nov-4-did-hurricane-sandy-blow-romney-off-course/>

Smith, Aaron. "The Internet's role in campaign 2008." Pew Internet & American Life Project 15. 2009.

Smith, Kristian Nicole. "Social Media and Political Campaigns." 2011.

Smith, Richard A. "Interest group influence in the US Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1995): 89-139.

Stewart, Jon. Interview with Jim DeMint. "The Daily Show. March 4, 2014.

Stieglitz, Stefan, and Linh Dang-Xuan. "Political Communication and Influence through Microblogging--An Empirical Analysis of Sentiment in Twitter Messages and Retweet Behavior." In *System Science (HICSS), 2012 45th Hawaii International Conference on*, pp. 3500-3509. IEEE, 2012.

Strauss, Daniel. "How the GOP Plans to Crush the Tea Party Revolt." Talking Points Memo. February 11, 2014. <http://talkingpointsmemo.com/dc/gop-establishment-fights-tea-party-outside-groups>

Suebsaeng, Asawin. "Meet Congress' Best Democrat on Social Media: Congressman Mark Takano's secret weapon? Being funny on the Internet." Mother Jones. September 25, 2013.

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/09/rep-mark-takano-best-democrat-social-media-twitter-tumblr>

Takano, Mark. Interview by Kenny Ames. Personal Interview. Washington, DC. November 20, 2013.

Tweney, Dylan. 47% in 24 hours: How social media magnified secret Romney videos. Venture Beat. September 18, 2012.

<http://venturebeat.com/2012/09/18/47-in-24-hours-how-social-media-magnified-secret-romney-videos/>

Twitter. About. <https://twitter.com/about>

UrbanDictionary.com

Velencia, Janie. "Members Get Personal on Instagram, Tumblr, and Pinterest." Roll Call. January 22, 2014.

http://www.rollcall.com/news/members_get_personal_on_instagram_tumblr_and_pintere-st-230314-1.html?pg=3

Velez, Yamil, and David Martin. "Sandy the Rainmaker: The Electoral Impact of a Super Storm." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 46, no. 02. p 313-323. 2013.

Wall Street Journal. "The Minority Maker: Ted Cruz hurts his party by forcing a meaningless debt-ceiling vote." February 12, 2014.

Williams, Christine B., and Girsh J. Gulati. "Facebook grows up: An empirical assessment of its role in the 2008 congressional elections." Proceedings from Midwest *Political Science Association, Chicago* (2009).

Wood, Jacob. "Tea Party Insult Generator: From Actual Insults Posted to John Boehner's Facebook Wall." Cloture Club. Accessed 10/17/13.

<http://clotureclub.com/tea-party-insult-generator/>

Wolf, Gary. "How the internet invented Howard Dean." *WIRED* magazine 12, no. 1. 2004.

Wu, Tim. *The master switch: The rise and fall of information empires*. Random House Digital, Inc., 2011.

YouTube. About. <http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/>

#MittsStormTips. Twitter. October 2012.

<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23mittstormtips&src=typd>

Curriculum Vitae

Kenny Ames grew up in Sharon, Massachusetts, a town halfway between Boston and Providence. Born to Alan and Anita Ames, he is the oldest of three: his younger siblings are Amanda Nager and Matthew Ames. He attended Sharon High School where he excelled in creative writing, history, and soccer. Turning down opportunities to play college soccer in New England, he pursued his dream to live in Washington, D.C. Kenny enjoyed his time at The George Washington University as he majored in English and minored in creative writing and religion. He pledged Sigma Nu Fraternity, was named 1998 Athlete-of-the-Year, served in leadership roles, and was inducted into the Order of Omega. During his free time, he played racquetball with legendary Celtics great, Red Auerbach, and Aubrey Jones, son of Hall-of-Famer Sam Jones.

After graduating in 1999, Kenny was hired as special assistant to Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD). In that job he coordinated the Member's appearances, liaised between the Member and his staff, and served as body man. After the 2000 election, he joined the staff of his hometown Representative, Barney Frank. Over six years, he served in a variety of roles including legislative correspondent, system administrator, and legislative assistant. Next, he joined Capitol Advantage, a third party email vendor that helped constituents communicate with their elected officials. After a year, the company was bought by Roll Call. It was then Kenny met Arnie Thomas, who was his supervisor for four years. Together, the two served as the client relationships team, taking care of the needs of the clients, building and maintaining networks and relationships, and engaging key customers, including Capitol Hill. Through several mergers and various projects, Arnie has remained a trusted friend and mentor. When his time at CQ Roll Call

ended in 2012, Kenny was recruited to join Fireside21 as Director of Outreach. With his connections on the Hill, he helped double the number of customers that use their premiere product to track constituent correspondence. Since January, Kenny has been volunteering as an advisor and director of communications and social media to Mark Levine for Congress. Mark joined Barney's staff as counsel on the same day Kenny started, and the two have been close friends since. It has given Kenny an opportunity to apply many of the lessons learned while researching this thesis.

Kenny also is active in volunteer activities. He is president of the Young Lobbyist Network; a writer at ClotureClub.com; a board member of the Young Professionals Division and Civil Rights Steering Committee for the DC chapter of the Anti-Defamation League; a member of the Ben Gurion Society of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington; and an active member of the DC Road Runners Club. Additionally, he is past-president of the U.S. Senate Toastmasters and an accomplished speaker having won several speech contests.

In his free time, Kenny enjoys spending time with his fiancé, Laura Goldin, his friends, and family. He is attempting to complete the Fifty State Marathon Club. Harry Truman suggested that if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. Sammy is a true friend: a Springer Spaniel, the same kind as Charlotte, the beloved pet for his former boss, Steny Hoyer. Kenny and Sammy can often be spotted running the trails and streets of D.C. together.