

# Influencing Congress from Your Front Porch

*Strategies for Engaging Lawmakers on  
Their/Your Home Turf*

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Congressional Management Foundation

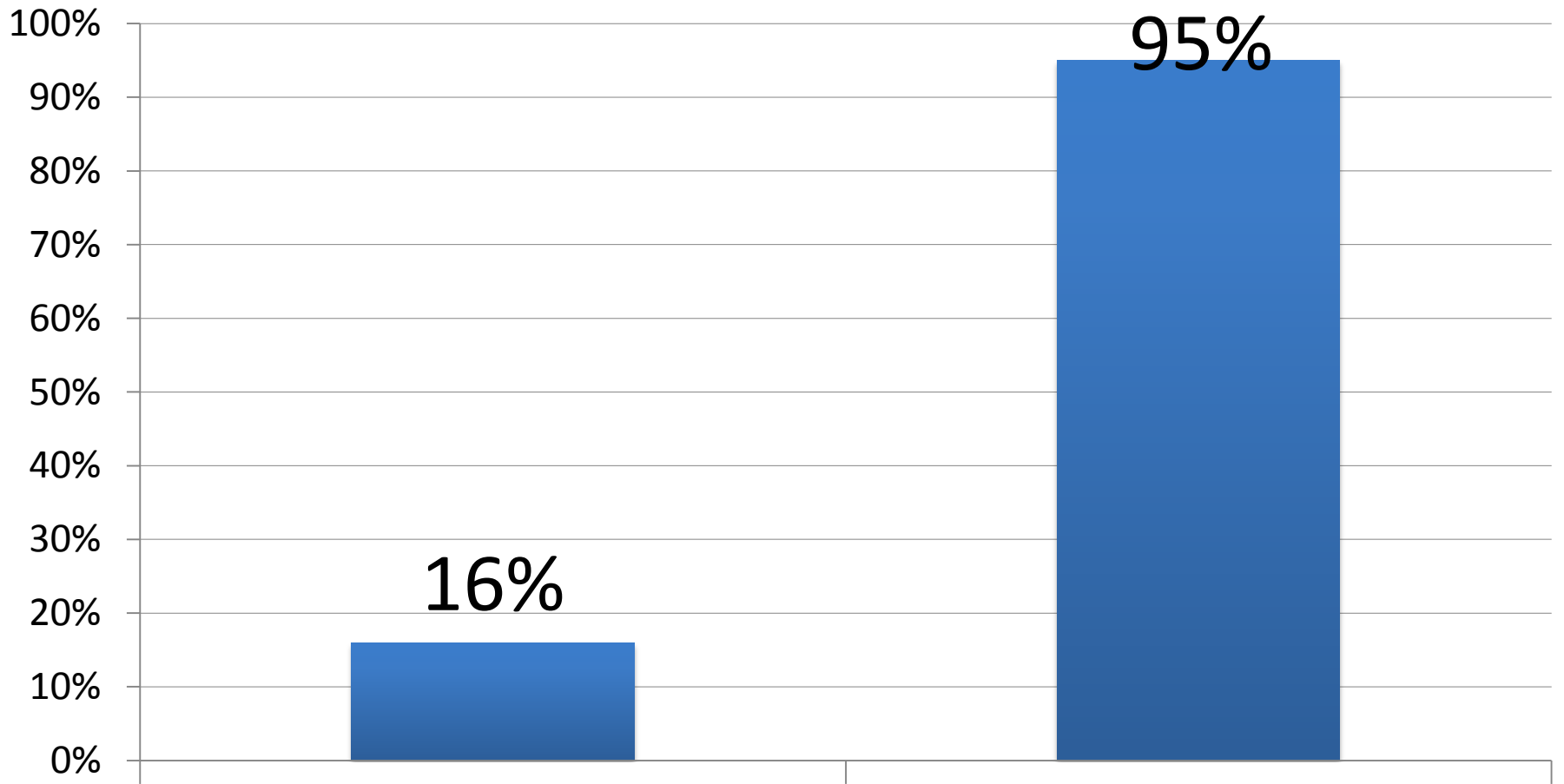
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“Does your representative in Congress care what you think?”

(Rasmussen National Survey – 2013)

“Please rank the most important aspect of your job.”

(Congressional Management Foundation Survey of U.S. House of Representatives Members – 2011)



*“Congress cares about  
what I think.”*

- Public Opinion

*“Staying in touch with  
constituents.”*

- Member of Congress Opinion



# Agenda

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- Environment in Congress
- How Do Members Spend Their Time and Who Do They Talk To?
- How to Build Relationships Back Home

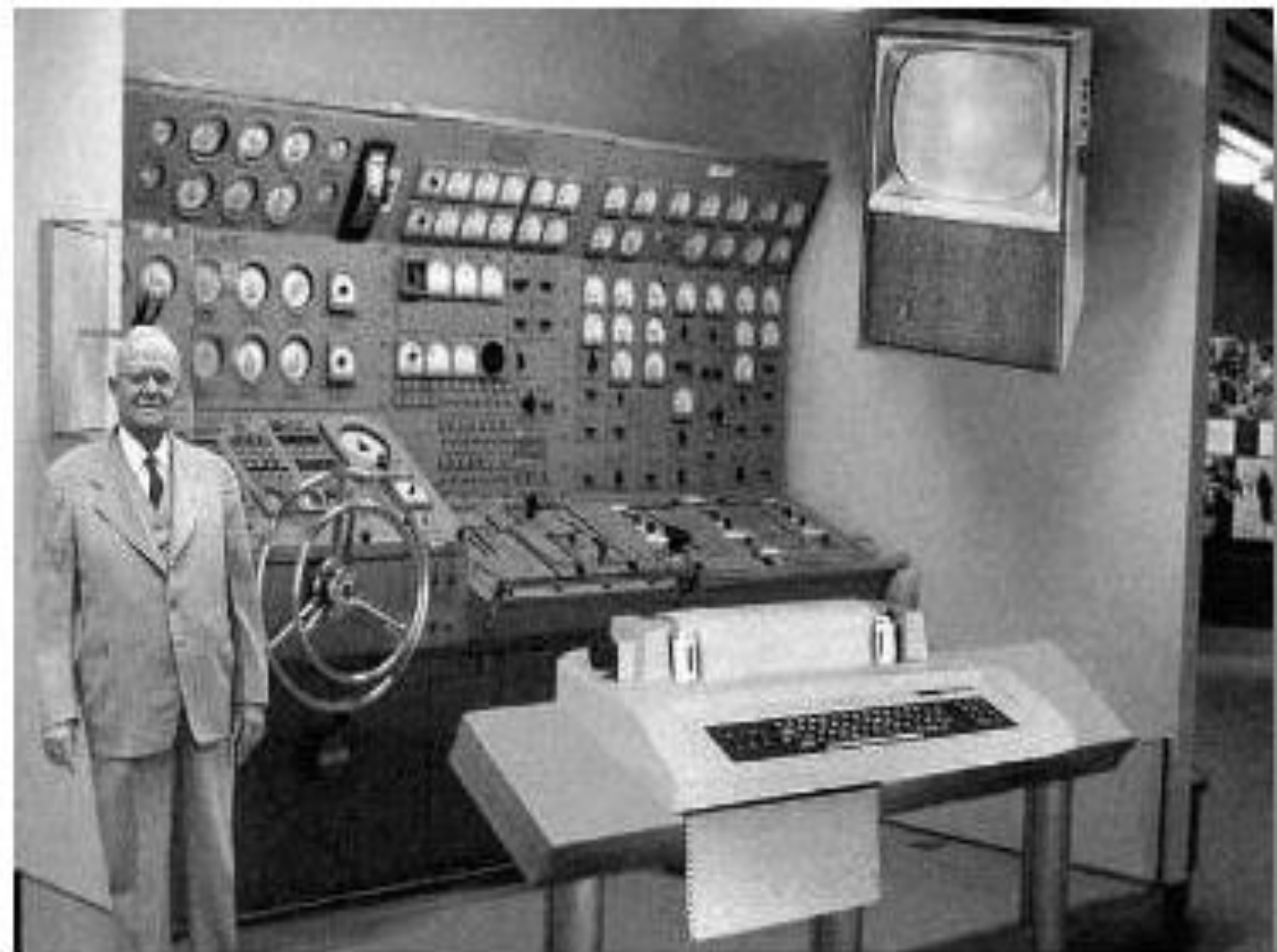
# Sources

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- Focus Groups with Congressional Staff
- Surveys with Congressional Staff
- Interviews with Members of Congress and Staff

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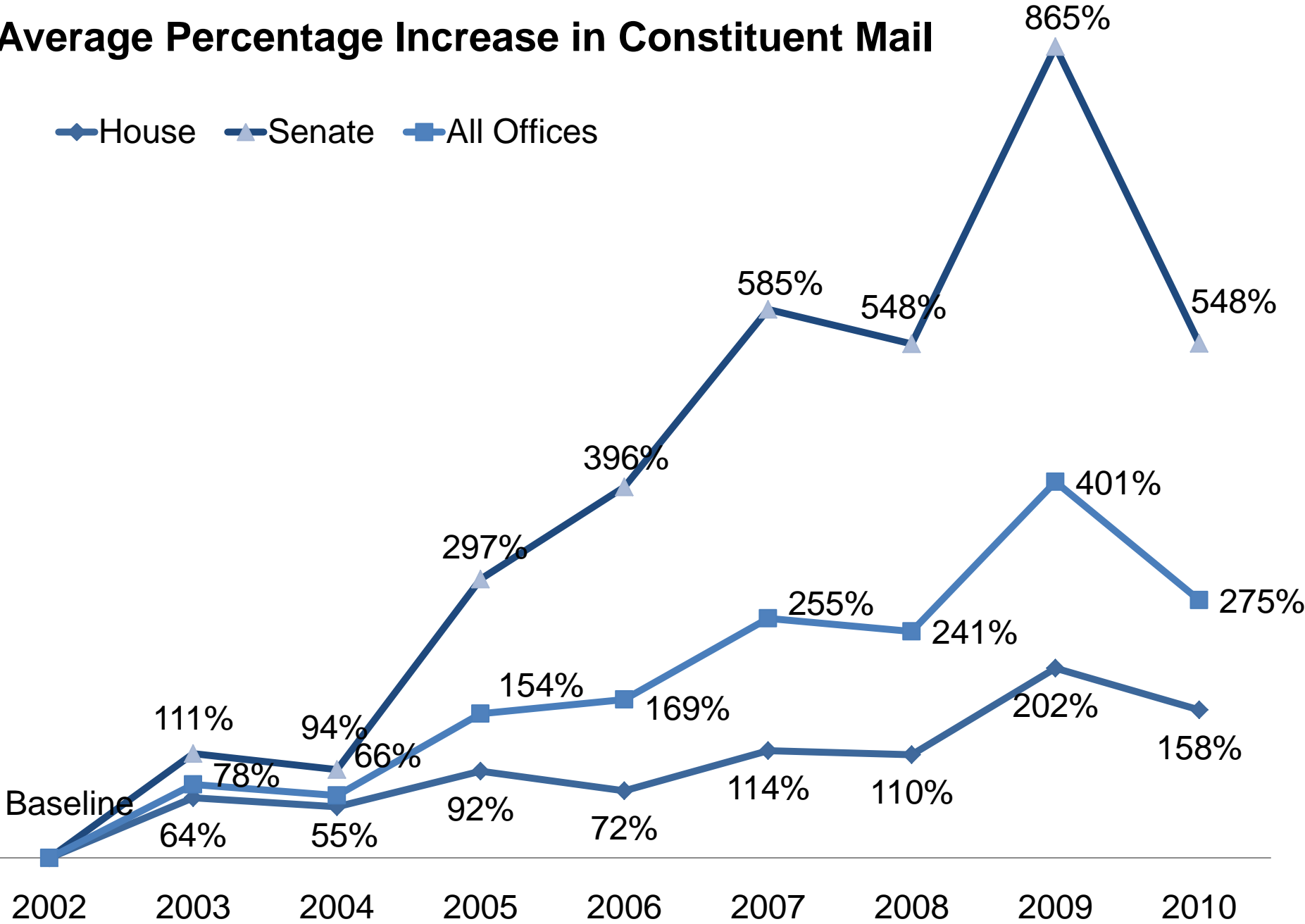
# Environment in Congress





# Average Percentage Increase in Constituent Mail

◆ House ▲ Senate ■ All Offices



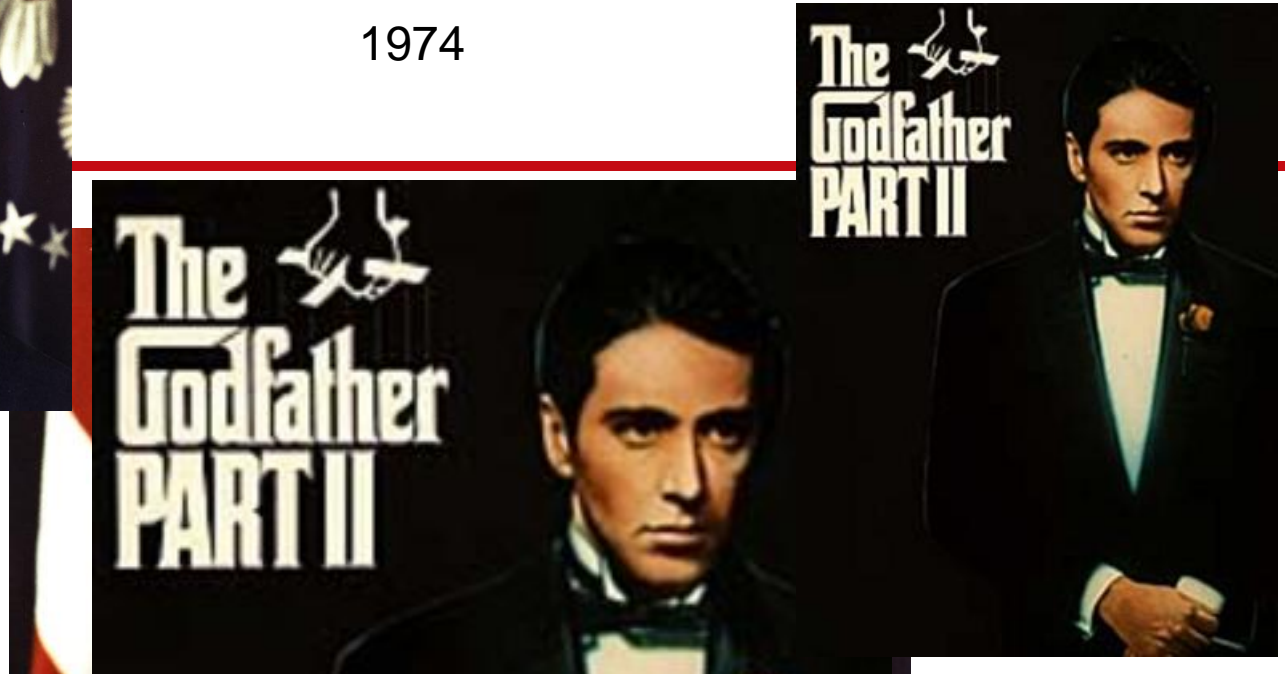
# Staffing

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Number of Full Time House Staff 18

Year House Staff Number Frozen 1974

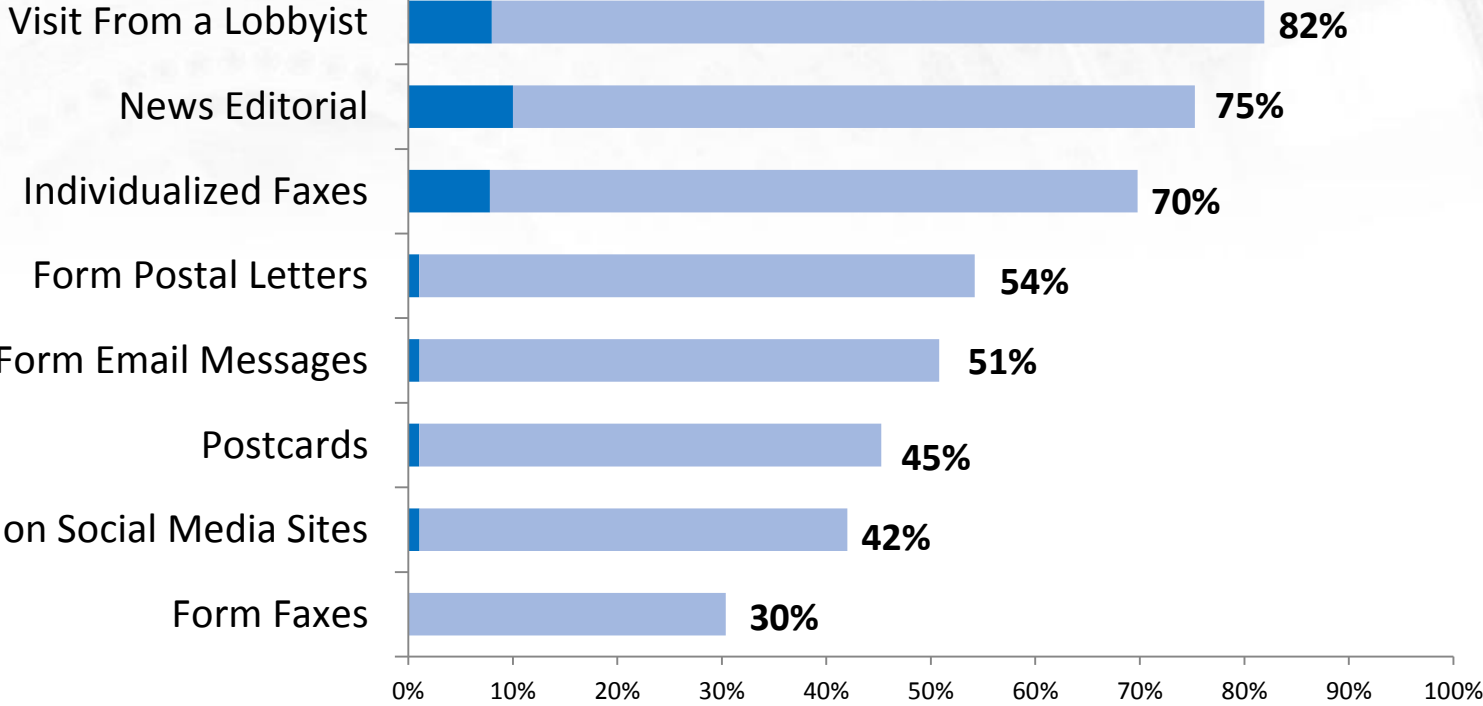
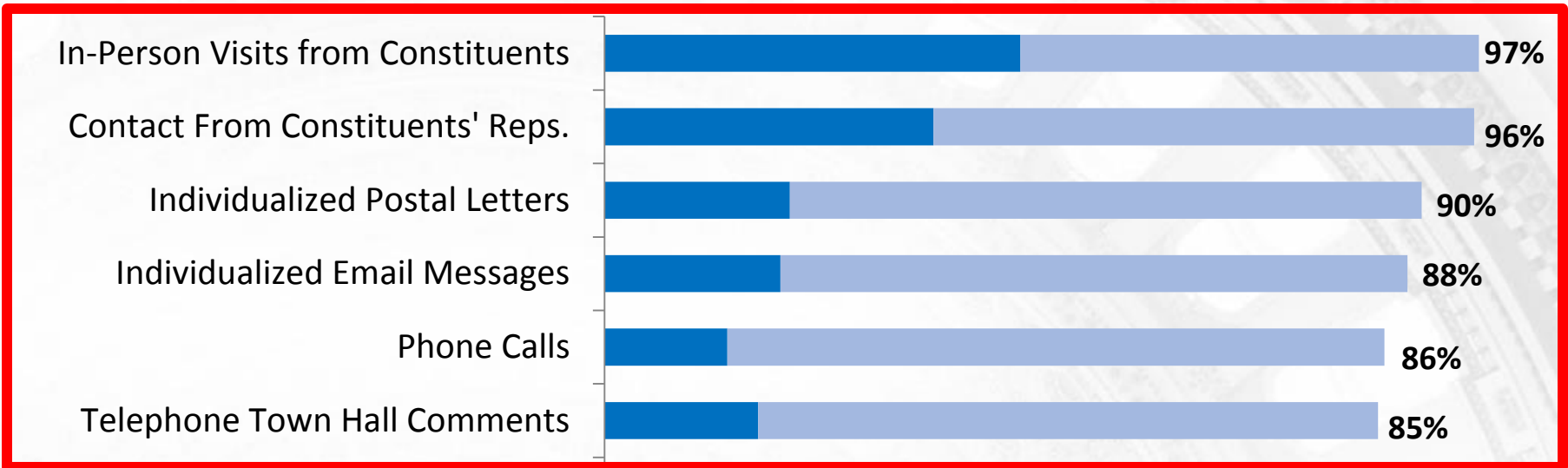
1974



55 gal

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**"If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his/her decision?"**



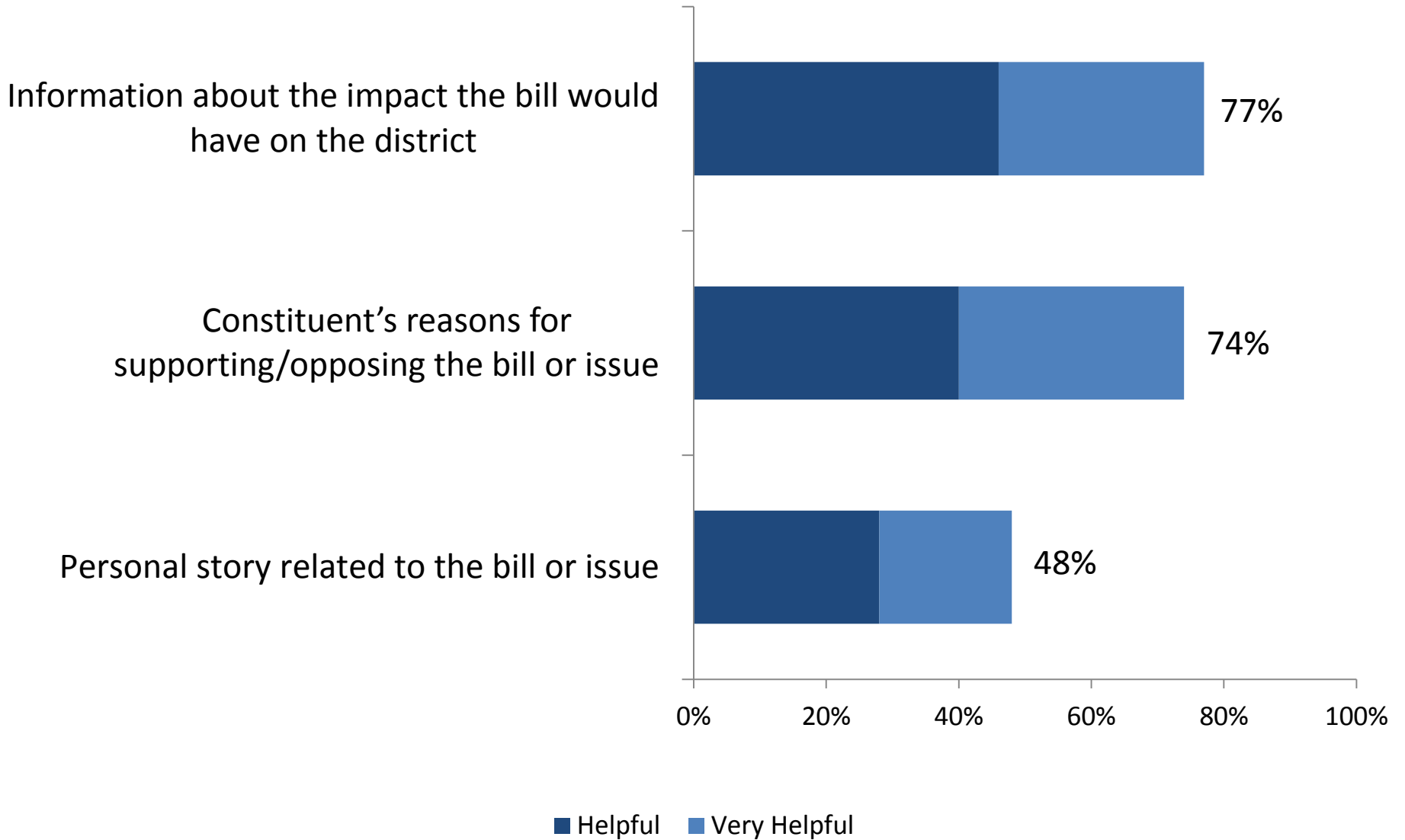
■ A Lot of Positive Influence    ■ Some Influence

# Survey Question

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“How helpful is it for messages from constituents to include the following?”

# Message Includes...



# The Power of a Personal Story

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## **H.R.2784**

**“No Private Contracts To Be Negotiated When the Patient Is Buck Naked Act of 1997”**

## **SEC. 3 CERTAIN SITUATIONS WHERE IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE TO NEGOTIATE A PRIVATE CONTRACT**

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To promote equality in the negotiation of private contracts, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services shall issue regulations prohibiting the discussion or signing of private contracts at any time—

(a) the patient is buck naked and the doctor is fully clothed (and conversely, to protect the rights of doctors, when the patient is fully clothed and the doctor is naked);

(b) the patient is wearing one of those short, flimsy little hospital gowns that don't close in the back;

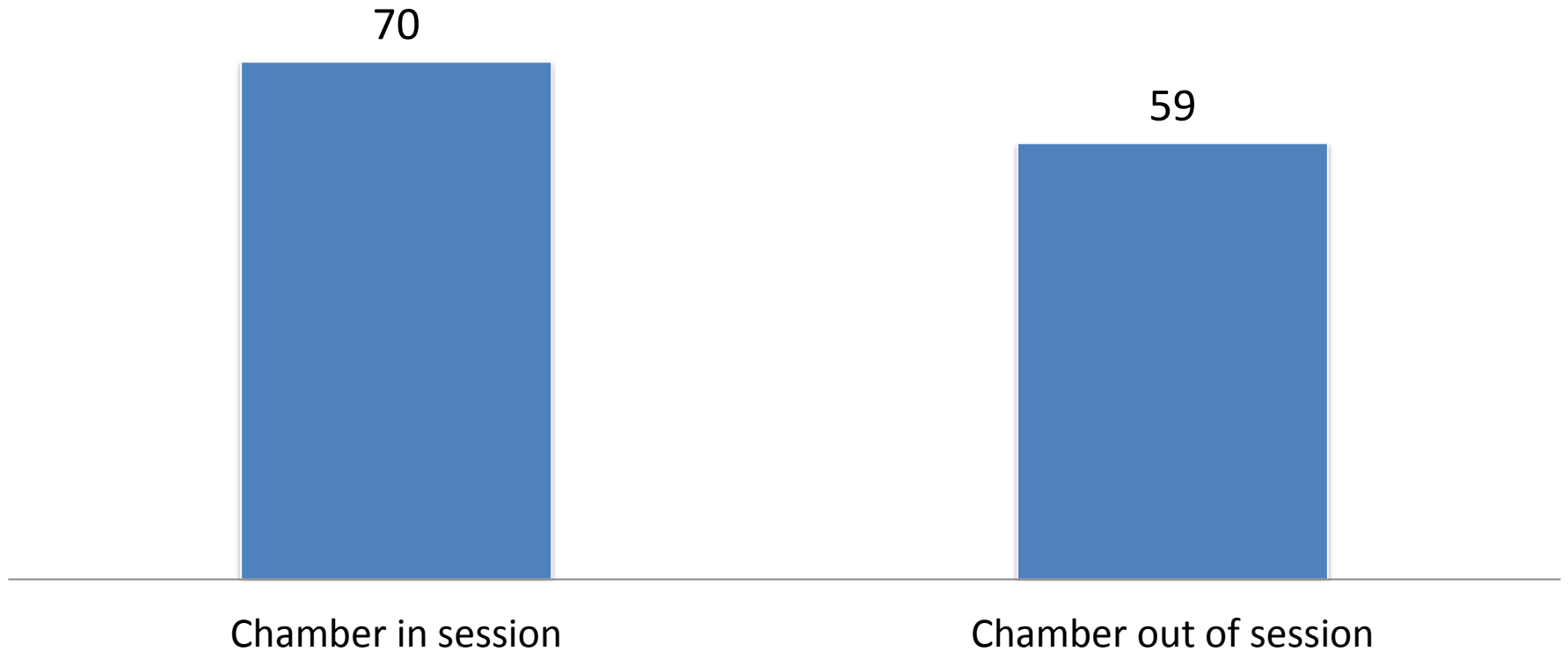
(c) during any sigmoidoscopic or proctoscopic examination of the gastrointestinal tract or a digital rectal examination of the prostate;

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How Do Members Spend Their Time  
and Who Do They Talk To?

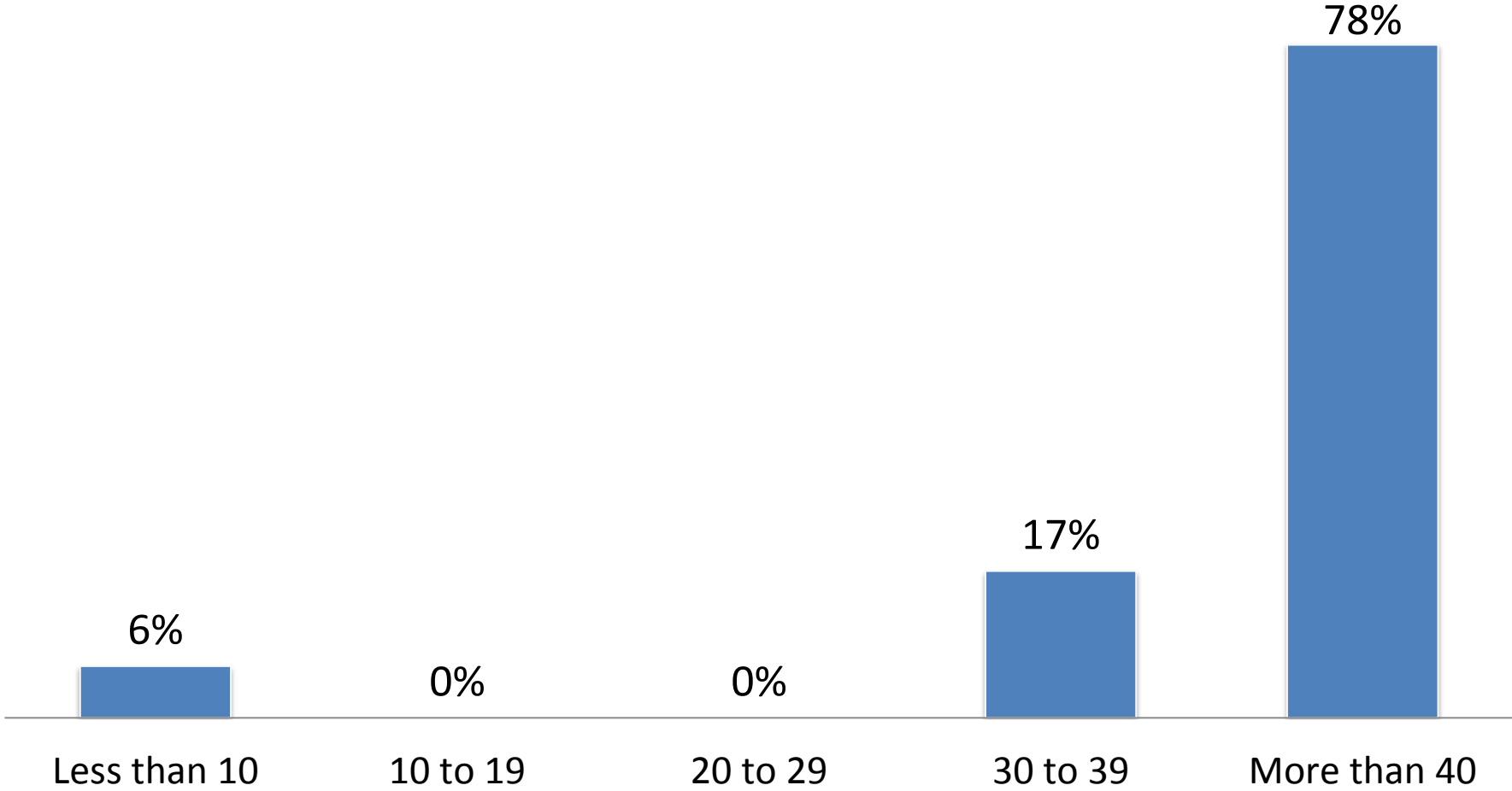
# Average Hours Per Week Worked by Members

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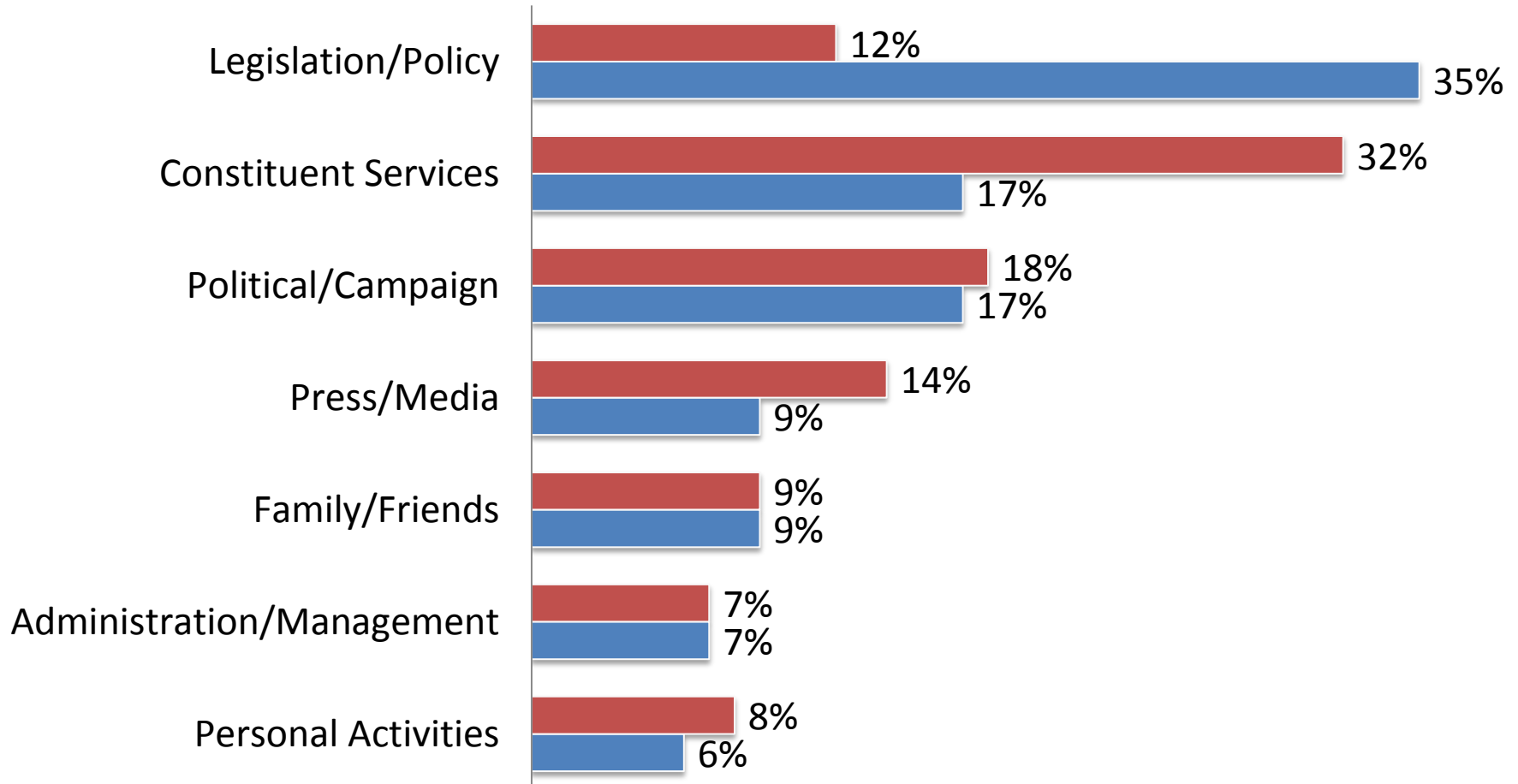
# Number of Weekends Per Year Members Spend in Congressional District

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# Member Time Spent on Major Activities

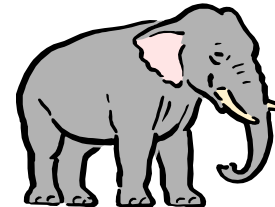
■ Congressional District   ■ Washington, D.C.



# Who & What Does Congress Listen To?

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- Expert Constituents
- Passionate Constituents
- Angry Constituents
- Influential Constituents
- Conscience



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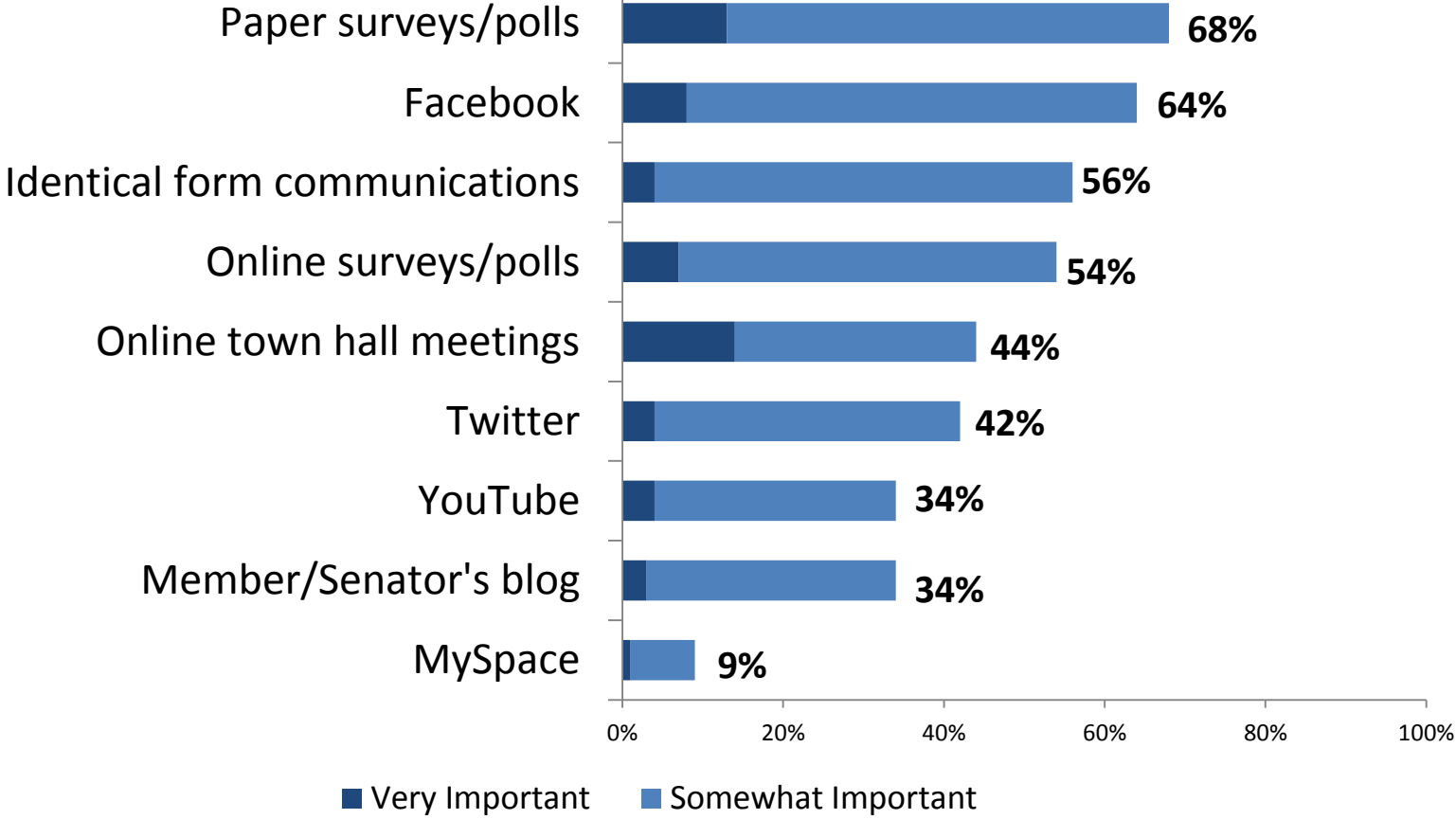
# How to Build Relationships Back Home



# Survey Question

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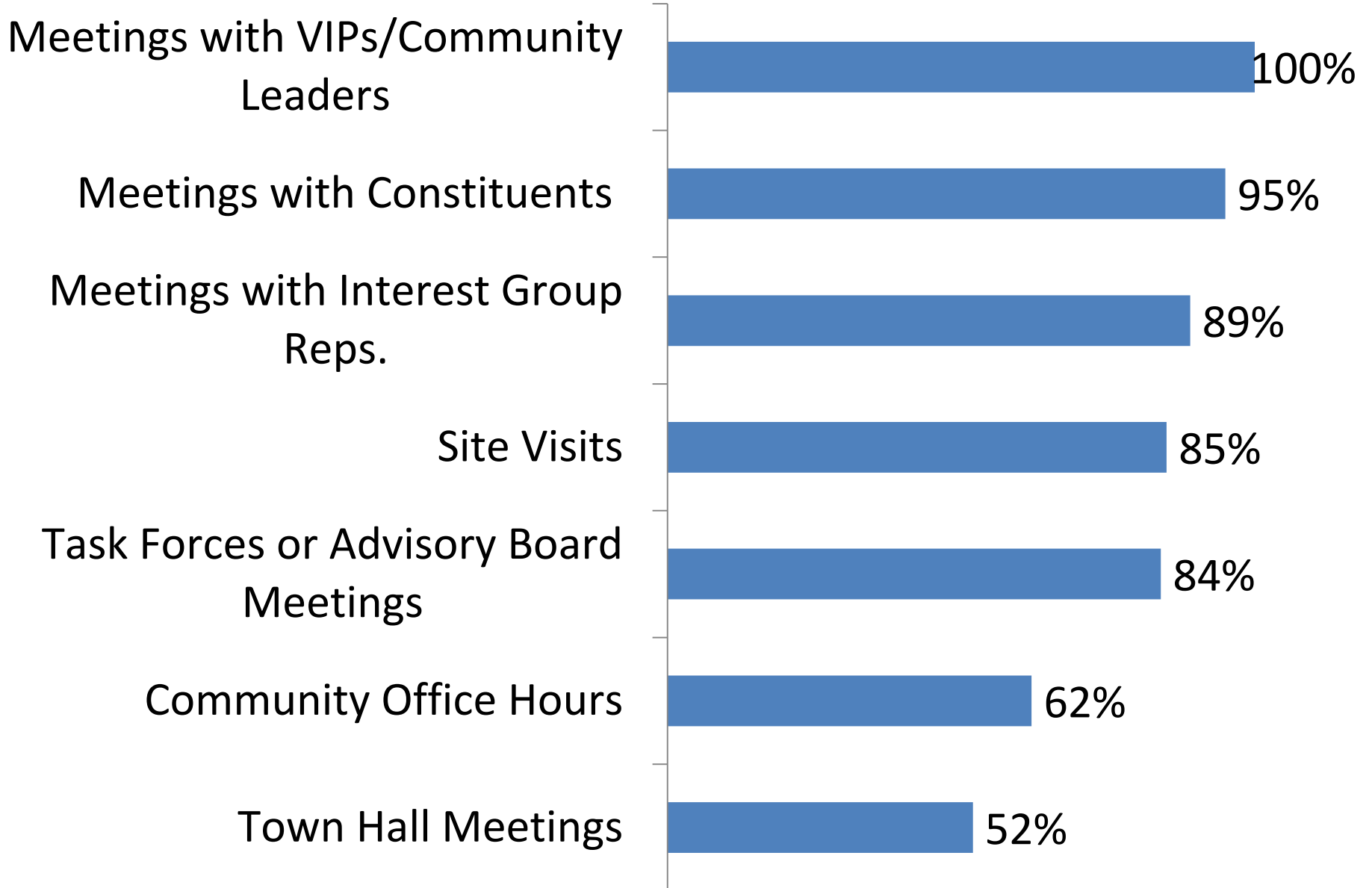
“In your opinion, how important are the following for understanding constituents' views and opinions?”



# Survey Question

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When your Member is trying to develop new ideas for issues and legislation, how important are the following activities?



# Survey Question

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Which three of the following strategic factors are most important for determining whether your Member will personally attend an event or meeting in the district?

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## **Top 3 Factors**

- 64% Number of Constituents Attending
- 54% Opportunity to Advance the Member's Strategic Goals
- 37% Member's Interest in the Issue

## **Bottom 3 Factors**

- 21% How Often the Member has Previously Interacted with Group
- 15% Opportunity to Interact Informally with Attendees
- 4% Number of VIPs Attending

# Helpful Hints



*“Be gracious and look for common ground.”*

*“Highlight the opportunities to mix with constituents/employees/members rather than staged presentations.”*

*“If they are friendly, and even if we don't agree, most likely I will approve a meeting with the Congressman.”*

# Survey Question

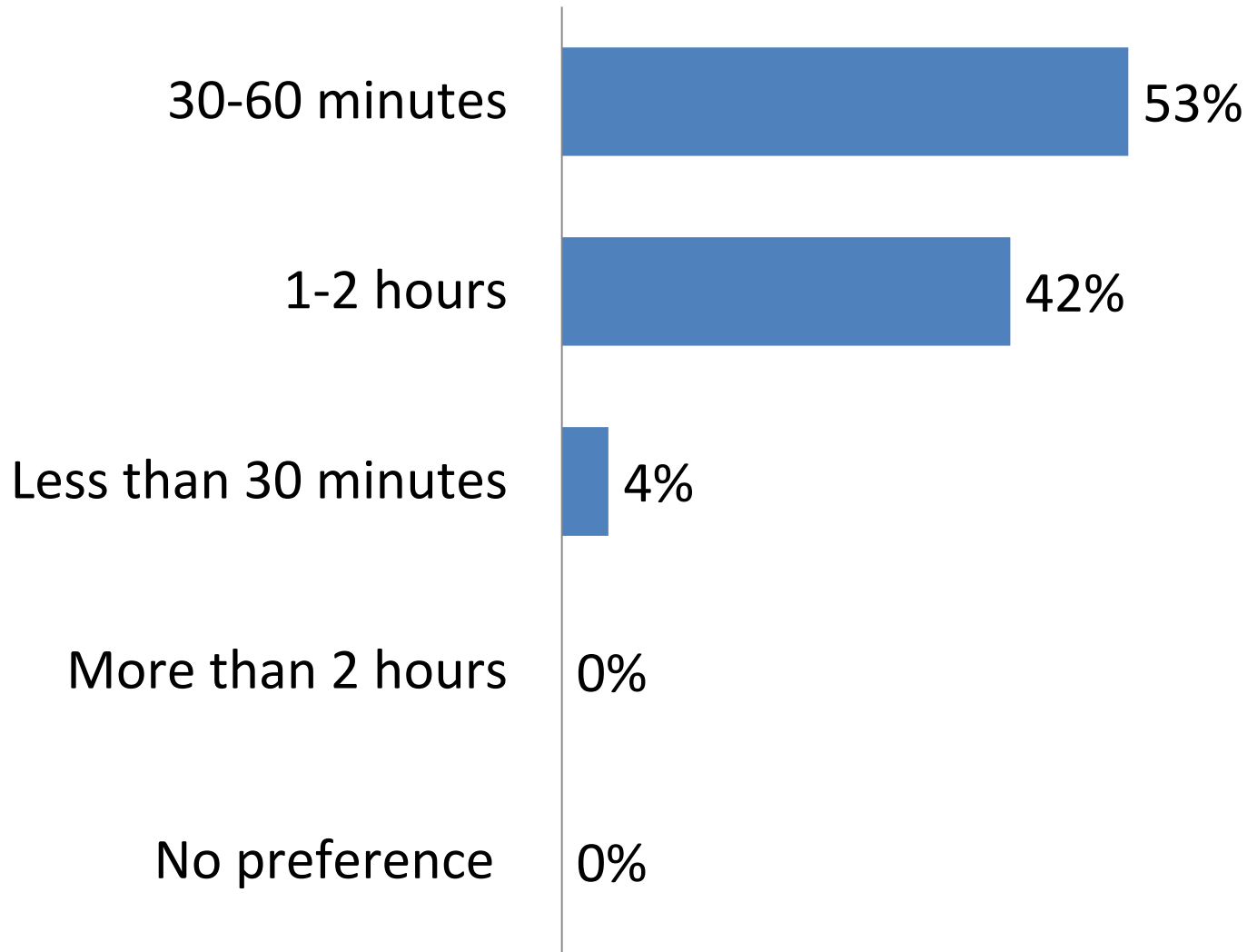
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When your Member attends a site visit in the district (touring factory, visiting child care center, etc.), how long should the visit ideally take?



# Ideal Length of Site Visits

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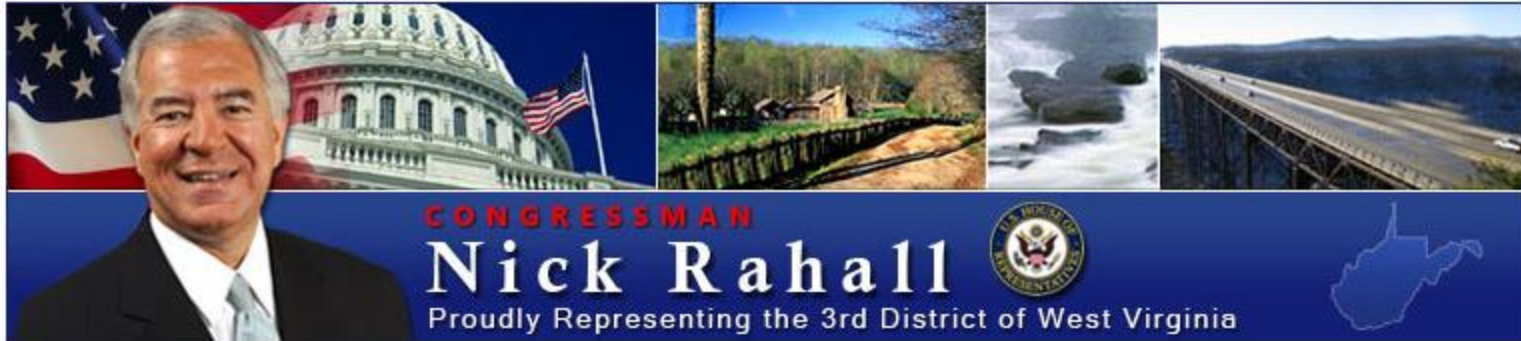


# Attend a Town Hall Meeting

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# Invite Legislator to Your Facility



**CONGRESSMAN**  
**Nick Rahall**  
Proudly Representing the 3rd District of West Virginia

The banner features a portrait of Congressman Nick Rahall on the left. To his right are four small images: the U.S. Capitol building, a rural landscape with a wooden bridge, a rocky coastline with waves, and a long highway bridge over a river. The text 'CONGRESSMAN Nick Rahall' is in large white letters on a blue background, with 'Proudly Representing the 3rd District of West Virginia' below it. A circular seal of the U.S. House of Representatives and a map of West Virginia are also present.

- Home
- About Nick
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- Issues
- Newsroom / Multimedia
- FY2011 Appropriations Requests
- FY2010 Appropriations Requests
- Fiscal Year 2010 Surface Transportation Project Requests

## Health Care



Access to affordable health care is one of the top challenges facing our Nation in the 21st century. It is a problem that affects both the young and old alike. It hits businesses and forces them to make tough choices

## E-NEWSLETTER SIGNUP

E-mail Address:

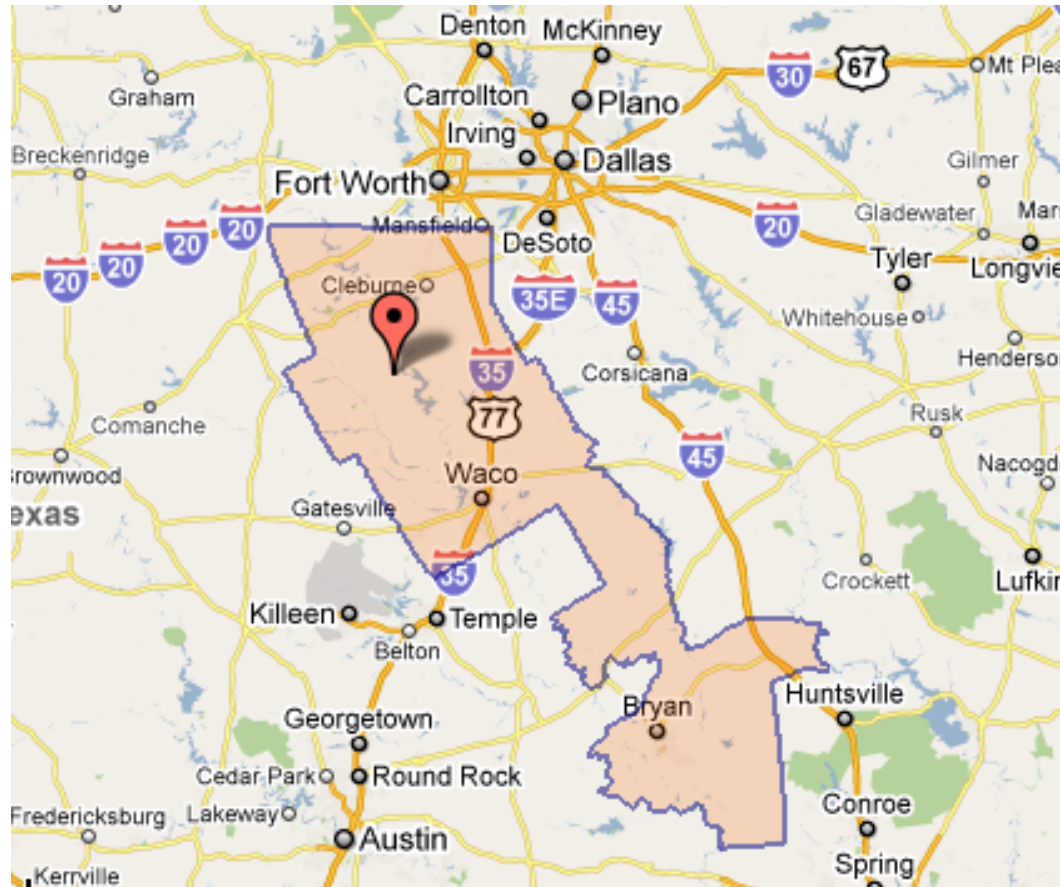
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# Set Up In-State Meetings



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October 30, 2008

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### Thank you, Congressman Engel

**To the editor:**

In recent years a number of products from China have been contaminated: pet food, toothpaste, children's toys and now milk products.

Beijing did not allow staterun media to break the news of the tainted milk until after the Olympics, even though it was known in July. Information censorship endangers lives.

For this reason I am particularly grateful to Congressman Engel for co-initiating a letter (that 60-plus Congress members joined in signing) to French-based satellite company Eutelsat, requesting that it reinstate independent U.S.-based Chinese-language New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV) to its Asia satellite.

New Tang Dynasty TV carries news the Chinese regime wants to keep quiet. NTDTV provides a platform for Chinese citizens to let the rest of the world know what is going on in China. Thank you, Congressman Engel, for taking the lead in supporting free media so that we will all be safer and better informed.

**KENT KONKOL**



E-mail this



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*“We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”*

*- Thomas Jefferson*

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR  
*A More Perfect Union*



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