

Policy and Advocacy Communications 101



December 7th, 2022



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Ice Breaker



Share in the chat: What is one thing you've learned through the Advocate Academy so far?

Theory: Basics of Policy and Advocacy Communication



Strong and Persuasive messages consider...

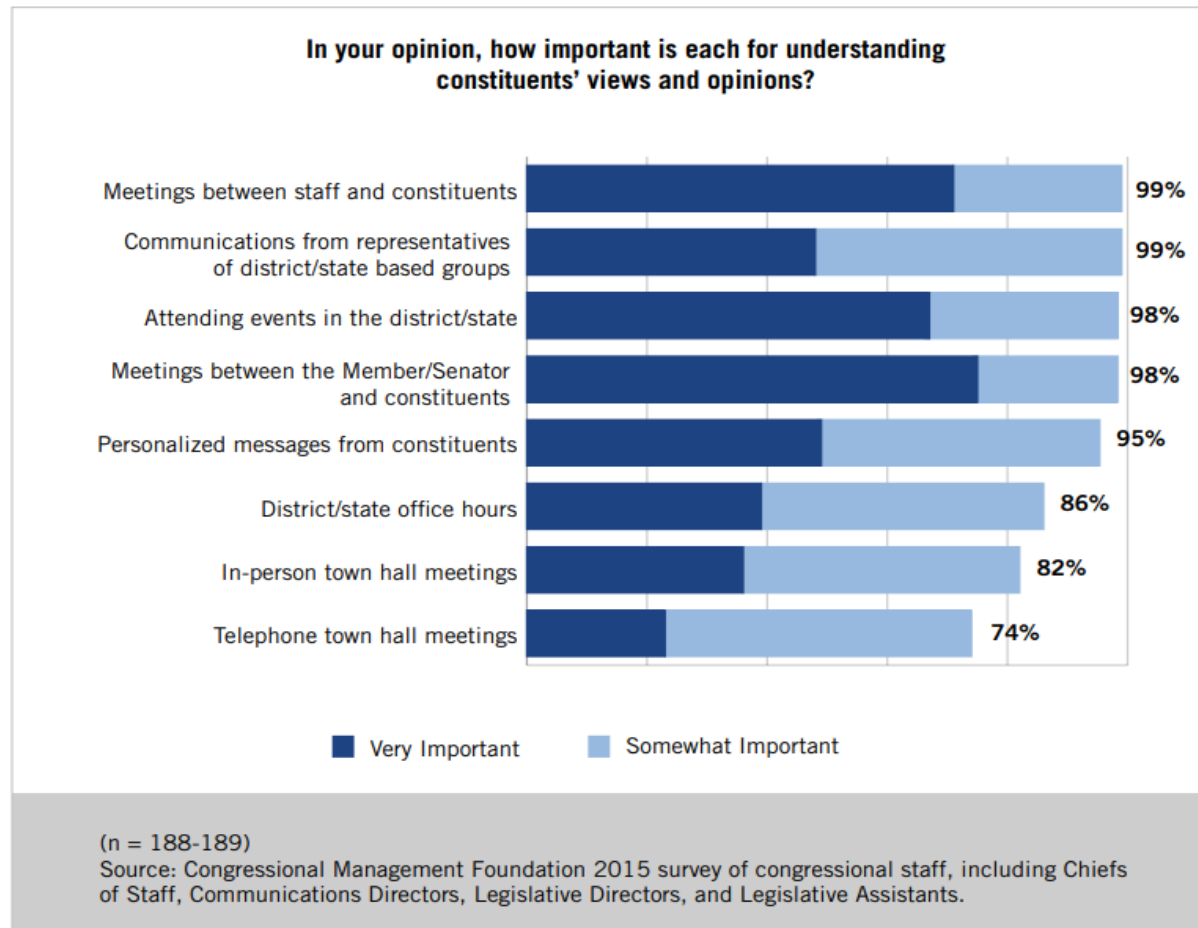


- Who is delivering the message – effective messengers
- What the advocate is sharing – research and evidence
- Why the advocate is sharing it – storytelling
- Where the advocate is sharing it – in what setting
- How the advocate delivers the message– through what medium

Who is delivering the message



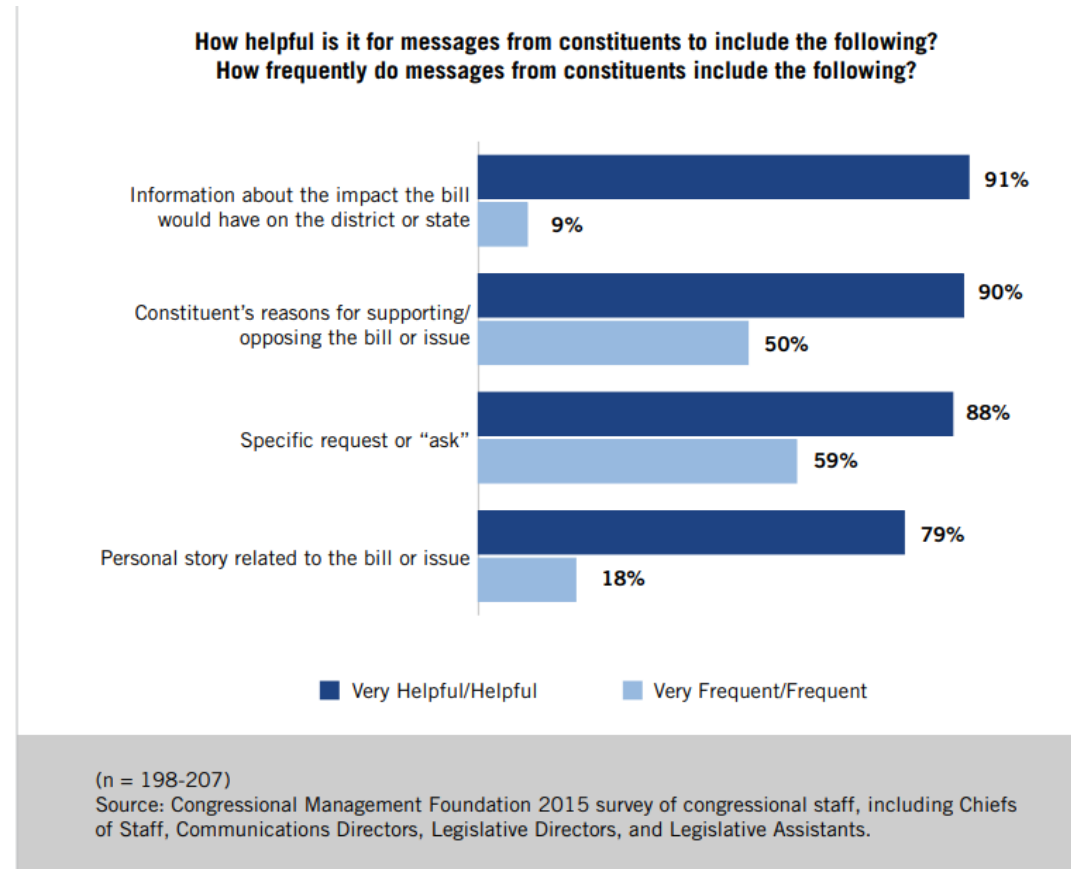
Elected officials place a high value on groups and citizens who have built relationships with the official and their staff.



What the advocate shares



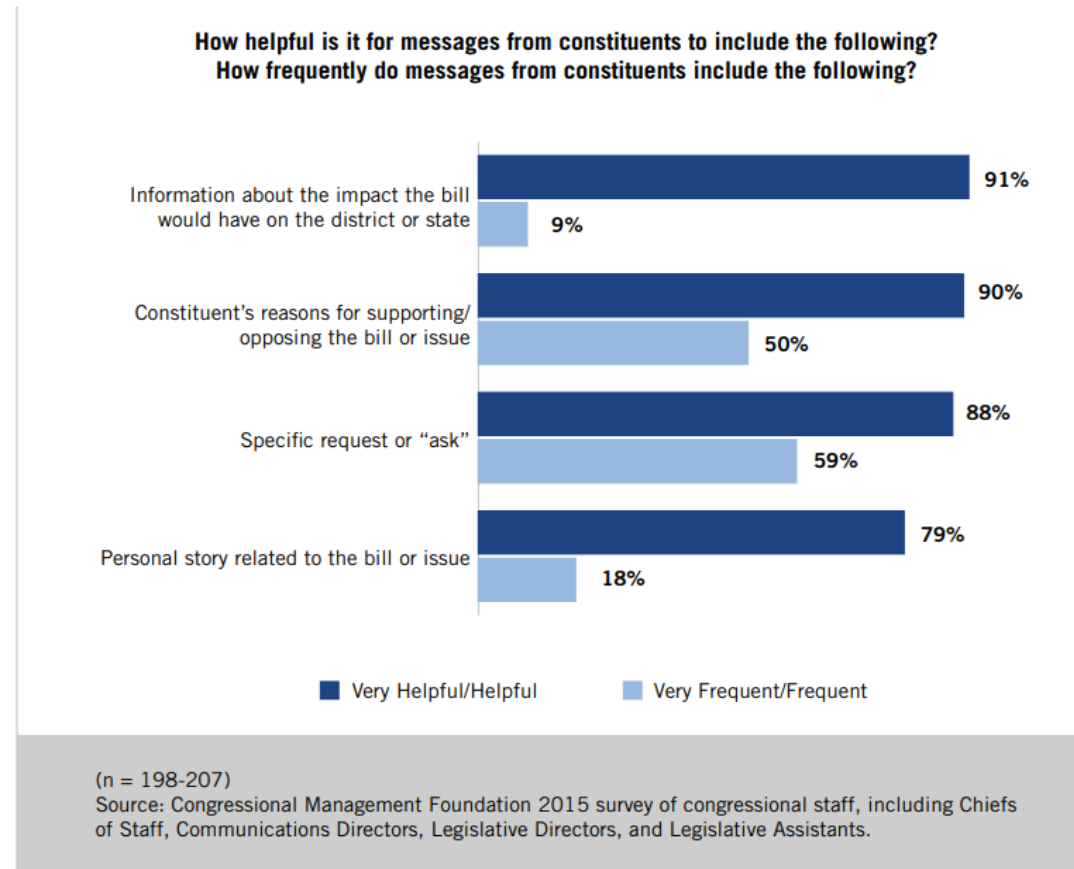
Elected officials look for certain particular information, including: number of constituents affected; estimated economic impact; success stories from the community



Why the advocate is sharing it



Citizen advocates are more influential and contribute to better public policy when they provide personalized and local information to elected officials



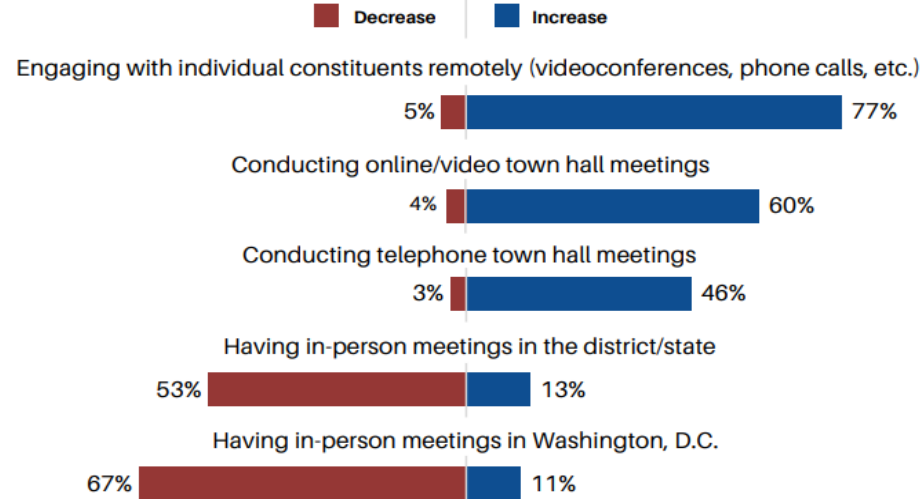
Where the advocate is sharing it



COVID has shifted this advocacy message delivery dramatically, and many more elected officials and their staff expect to their work to expand virtually

Figure 9 | Anticipated Changes to Constituent Engagement in the Future

Looking to the future and the long-term impact the COVID-19 crisis is likely to have on your office operations, please indicate whether you expect to increase, decrease, or keep the same amount of time and resources dedicated to the following.



(n=81-97)

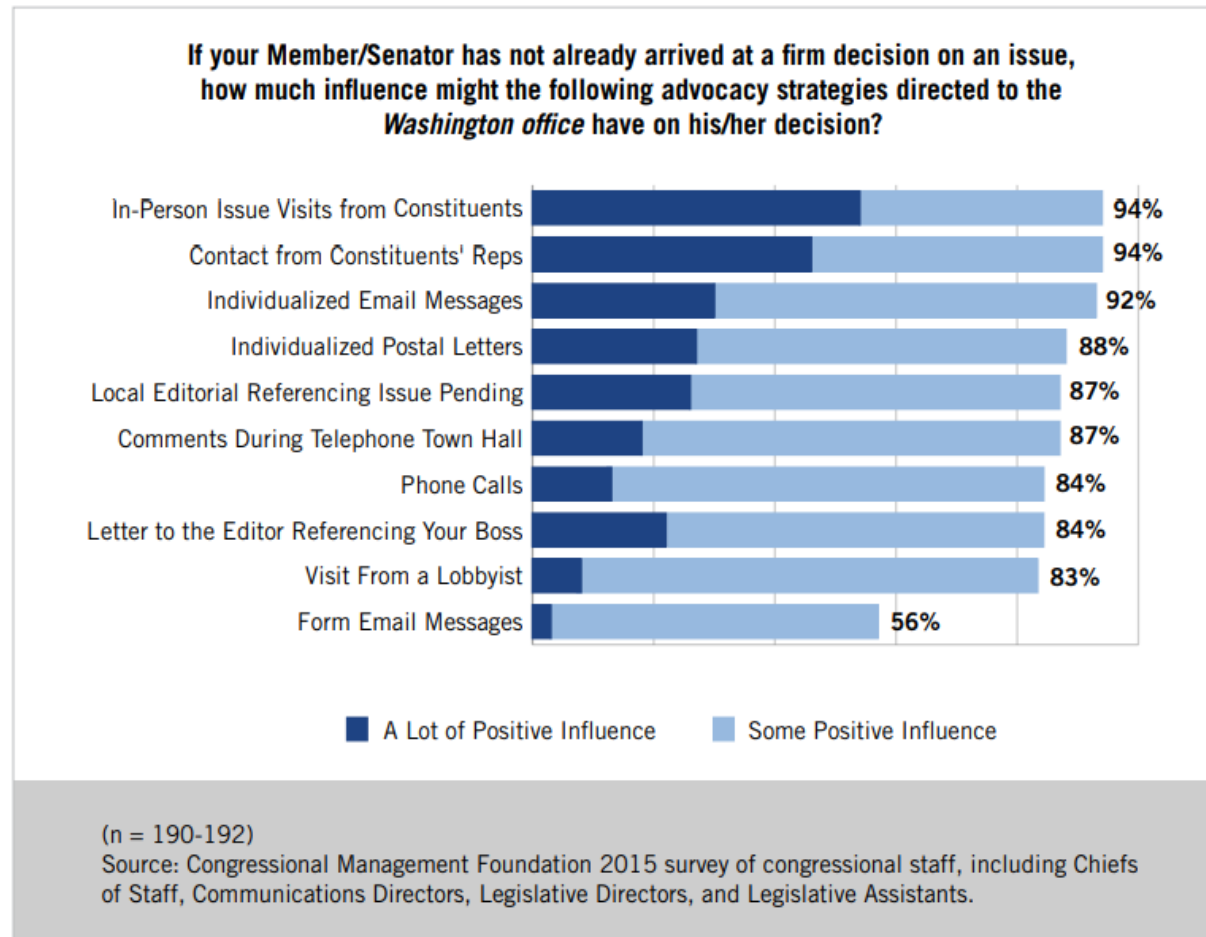
Note: "Don't Know/Not Sure" responses were excluded.

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

How the advocate delivers the message



Direct constituent interactions have more influence on lawmakers' decisions than other advocacy strategies



When communicating with elected officials, effective messages:



- ***Have a specific ask and clear goal in mind***

- ***Discuss the impact/importance and urgency for***



- ***Are addressed with a lens that would be appealing to their perspective and passions***



- ***Connect to humans; have an emotional appeal***

- ***Respond to what the opposition has to say***

(n = 190-192)

Source: Congressional Management Foundation 2015 survey of congressional staff, including Chiefs of Staff, Communications Directors, Legislative Directors, and Legislative Assistants.

Theory to Practice: Personalizing your Advocacy Communication



Determining your ask



Policy asks (ideal)	Relationship-building asks
Mostly for Legislative branch; sometimes Executive or Judicial	Apply to Executive and Legislative branch officials; helps get to wins on policy asks
Introduce, vote for, or vote against legislation	Visit people or places in the community that relate to the issue (i.e. a school-based mentoring program celebration; mentoring conference)
Send a letter to a government agency about a specific concern	Write an article for your newsletter or local/national media
Draft or sign onto Dear Colleague Letters (or other formal methods of communication)	Share a message on social media to communicate support for your issue
Help you find and gather information from agencies and research services	Make a speech on the House or Senate floor about the issue
Submit a statement to the official record	Hold a town hall/community meeting on the issue
For Executive branch: request to change agency rules, such as grant preferences	

What not to ask for



- The official to take action for the specific purpose of benefitting you
- Anything related to money or support for their campaign

Impact: Research, Data, and Talking Points



- Consume quality media that reports on the latest research

HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS

The infographic is a vertical rectangle with a black header containing the title "HOW TO SPOT FAKE NEWS" in white, bold, sans-serif font. Below the header, the content is organized into two columns. Each tip consists of a red icon, a bold title, and a short explanatory sentence. The tips are: 1. Consider the Source (person with question mark icon): Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info. 2. Read Beyond (magnifying glass over lines icon): Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story? 3. Check the Author (quill pen icon): Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real? 4. Supporting Sources? (stack of papers icon): Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story. 5. Check the Date (calendar icon): Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events. 6. Is it a Joke? (mask icon): If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure. 7. Check your Biases (scales of justice icon): Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement. 8. Ask the Experts (graduation cap icon): Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

 CONSIDER THE SOURCE Click away from the story to investigate the site, its mission and its contact info.	 READ BEYOND Headlines can be outrageous in an effort to get clicks. What's the whole story?
 CHECK THE AUTHOR Do a quick search on the author. Are they credible? Are they real?	 SUPPORTING SOURCES? Click on those links. Determine if the info given actually supports the story.
 CHECK THE DATE Reposting old news stories doesn't mean they're relevant to current events.	 IS IT A JOKE? If it is too outlandish, it might be satire. Research the site and author to be sure.
 CHECK YOUR BIASES Consider if your own beliefs could affect your judgement.	 ASK THE EXPERTS Ask a librarian, or consult a fact-checking site.

Impact: Research, Data, and Talking Points



- Review websites of organizations you trust
 - MENTOR's Advocacy Resources page
 - General mentoring talking points
- Research the officials you're advocating to
 - Scan their legislative record, committees, party
 - MENTOR's legislative scorecard
 - Google their name with key words to see if there are past statements on the topic
 - Look for connections with their life experience and those close to them
- Bring data of your own community and industry impact
 - Number of constituents affected; estimated economic impact; success stories from the community

Connecting to Humans: Articulating your Personal Story



These questions can help shape your story:

- Why did you become an advocate for this issue?
- How does this issue you are advocating for affect you?
- Do you have friends, family, clients, customers, or colleagues with compelling stories that you can lift up/share?

ACTIVITY: Your Personal Story



-5 minutes to share in the chat-

- Share ~3 sentences about your personal story: why you want to advocate for an issue you care about
 - Could be connected to policy you chose in your memo
- **Example:** I decided to become an advocate for mentoring because I personally experienced how a school-based mentoring program helped me and my get on track academically and eventually the first in my family to enroll in college. Before I had a mentor and enrolled in the mentoring program, I lacked positive outlets, connections, and motivation to stay engaged in my academics. I want to be able to give to others the relationships that helped get me to where I am today, as someone who is directing a mentoring program.

Responding to the Opposition



- Identify potential opponents
- Research and think about why they might oppose your policy ideas
 - Hint: you might be able to find this explicitly!
- Be prepared with responses to the question of who opposes your ideas

Advocacy Communications to Action – Examples from the Real World



Meetings with Elected Officials and Staff



- Determine if it might be helpful to invite others to your meeting - Who
- Do your research on the official; look for areas of connection – What and Why
- Contact the office to request a meeting (virtual or in person) - Where
- Prepare your asks and talking points (specific to this office) – What and Why
 - Remember: they're people too; you're the expert!
- Ask if they have taken a position on the issues you are advocating for - How
 - Be diplomatic 😊
 - You don't have to know all the answers
- Follow up with contact info and a brief, locally specific (if possible) leave behind materials
 - Follow up again 3-4 weeks later

Giving Public Testimony



- Determine who is best to deliver your message (who)
- Make sure you have research and data to back up your position in your testimony (what)
- Make the policy personal (why)
- Check ahead of time to understand the public body's rules (where)
- Keep your message concise; generally 3-5 mins. is the rule of thumb (how)

Building Coalitions and Community Organizing



- Determine leaders/deliverers (who)
- Create a shared agenda/asks and talking points (what)
- Use stories from different constituencies to connect with others (why)
- Determine in what settings the tactics are taking place (where)
- Identify the specific tactics and activities that will be employed to advance the work forward (how)

Next Steps



Final assignment!



- Worksheet through Google Forms
 - Impact
 - Connecting to Humans
 - Communicating with a Lens
 - Responding to Opposition
 - Evaluation

Upcoming Opportunities



- Graduation from the Academy!!
- [MENTOR's Capitol Hill Day](#) – registration is live!
- More to come next Spring...

Questions?

