

# Creating a Digital Democracy

The Impact of the Internet on Public Policy-Making

Tom Price, Writer Andrew D. Foos, Research Assistant



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Enough has already been said about the Internet to fill a 100-GB hard drive. In the last five years, words and phrases such as “e-commerce,” “home page,” “URL” and “hyperlink” have entered our common language. You can check stock prices, read the news, trace your genealogy, or buy and sell just about anything on the Net.

But not a great deal has been said about the role the Internet is playing in public policy development. How does it affect the democratic process? Does it make government more responsive or does it increase legislative gridlock? Does it help citizens understand complex issues or does it merely contribute to information overload? In the advocacy arena, who wins and who loses?

Several recent studies have been conducted on the use of the Internet in campaigns and elections (and they are referenced in this report). They have analyzed online political advertising and fundraising techniques, the use of Web sites by members of Congress and similar subjects of interest. Other studies, most notably by The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, have examined quantitatively how many Americans surf the Net for election news or engage in online discussions about politics. These researchers have contributed mightily to our understanding of how the Internet is perceived and how it is being utilized in political “commerce.”

What has been missing, we believe, is a qualitative analysis of how the Internet is changing the rules of the game. Polls and surveys tell us about current attitudes and behavior, but they do not often allow us to speculate on where the trends are taking us. For that perspective, we decided to conduct a “focus group” of 41 opinion-leaders from both houses of Congress, the executive branch, state legislatures, activist groups, corporations, the news media, labor unions, academia, political consulting firms and associations.

In short, we decided to ask the experts.

The result is this comprehensive report on the impact of the Internet on public affairs. The author is Tom Price, who worked for more than 20 years as a political writer for Cox Newspapers in Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio. Now a Washington-based free-lance writer, Tom also has written extensively on technology issues for various publications and online services. Andrew Foos, who recently received his MBA in strategic management and public policy from George Washington University, provided invaluable research assistance including the development of the charts and appendices.

The study is sponsored by the Foundation for Public Affairs, the research and information clearinghouse affiliate of the Public Affairs Council. The Council is the leading professional association for public affairs executives. It provides unique information, training and other resources to its members to support their effective participation in government, community and public relations activities at all levels. Its 575 corporate, association and consultant members work together to enhance the value and professionalism of the public affairs practice, and to provide thoughtful leadership as corporate citizens.

We hope this report increases understanding of the power of the Internet — including what it can and cannot do to encourage public participation in politics. As new technology developments continue to unfold, we are confident that many of the trends identified here will become even more pronounced. In the meantime, we welcome everyone’s reactions and suggestions for future research. Please contact the Foundation for Public Affairs at the accompanying address or e-mail us (of course) through our Web site at [www.pac.org](http://www.pac.org).



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AFFAIRS

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Foundation for Public Affairs  
2033 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
[www.pac.org](http://www.pac.org)  
(202) 872-1750

**President**

Douglas G. Pinkham

**Executive Director**

Leslie Swift-Rosenzweig

Douglas G. Pinkham  
President

# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	i
Prologue .....	4
It's Changing Everything . . . Almost .....	5
Process This .....	5
Linking Millions to Millions .....	6
A Lever to Move the World .....	7
The Activists' Tool .....	8
Leveling the Playing Field .....	9
Business Plays Catch-up .....	12
The Tools on the Hill .....	13
Internet Timeline .....	16
In the Laboratories of Democracy .....	18
Netting Votes and Winning E-lections .....	19
All the News All the Time .....	21
Virtual Certainty: No Virtual Government .....	24
Appendix 1: Sources .....	26
Appendix 2: Useful Internet Sites .....	27
Notes .....	28

## Prologue

Here's how Senator Conrad Burns describes himself on his congressional Internet site: "auctioneer, broadcaster, county commissioner, football referee, livestock field-man and Marine."

Here's something he could add: "Information-Age geek."

For this Montana Republican does as good a job as anyone of exemplifying the diverse cast of characters working to establish the Internet as America's new public square.

The most prominent photographs on Burns' Web site show him wearing a dark business suit topped by a white cowboy hat. He tells how he was reared on a farm in Missouri, volunteered for the Marines, then tackled a series of jobs tied to Montana agriculture.

He also notes his more recent employment: chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee's Communications Subcommittee; No. 2 Republican on the Science, Technology and Space Subcommittee; cochairman of the **Congressional Internet Caucus**.

In those roles, Burns is a recognized leader of the drive to open the Internet to commerce. He arranged the first interactive cybercast of a congressional hearing. He promotes the use of telecommunications technology by his colleagues on Capitol Hill. He maintains a "digital dozen" agenda of legislative priorities, such as supporting the growth of broadband data networks, expanding online markets and making government easily accessible on the Internet. He envisions Montana overcoming the challenges posed by its vast and sparsely populated landscape through the application of electronic communications technologies to such activities as telemedicine, distance learning and remote commerce.

Despite his faith in the Internet, however, Burns flies home during every congressional recess — and one or two weekends a month while Congress is in session — for up close and personal contacts with the people of Montana.

The 1999 Memorial Day recess, for instance, found him at Missoula, Ronan, Great Falls, Kalispel, Billings, Dillon, Helena and Malmstrom Air Force Base (among other places), addressing a Kiwanis Club, presenting a check to a children's shelter, cutting the ribbon at a housing project, speaking to the Montana Logging Association, attending a town hall meeting on Social Security, and sitting for an interview with *Rural Montana Magazine* (among other things). Not to mention the meetings with the governor and other state officials, and the trip to Glacier National Park to show off the spectacular Rocky Mountain scenery to visiting U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott.

"You need to meet your constituents face-to-face," he explains. "They want to know if you're real people." Similarly, he adds, "the personal relationships that are developed on the floor of the Senate, in our daily work, are very important."

"The Internet is a communication tool," Burns says. "It will never replace personal relationships that are developed in the political arena."

This is how David Broder covers politics in the age of the Internet.

At the personal computer on his desk in the newsroom of *The Washington Post*, the dean of American political writers surfs the World Wide Web. There, in cyberspace, he reads

newspapers published in far-flung communities he plans to write about. He searches for the work of local and state-capital-based political columnists. He checks the Web sites of candidates, organizations that are promoting or opposing state ballot issues, and the government agencies that post the official descriptions of those measures. He downloads the reports of political pollsters.

Thanks to C-SPAN and CNN, he can tune in to congressional floor debates and many major committee hearings without traipsing up to Capitol Hill. He can download transcripts of other public events from Internet sites.

Broder, who started covering national politics during John F. Kennedy's successful run for the presidency in 1960, finds that the Internet gives reporters "a huge advantage in terms of access to information."

"There's just so much more information available now," he says. "At the click of a mouse, it's there."

But this also is what David Broder does as he covers public affairs in the Age of the Internet:

He walks along residential streets, knocks on the doors of houses, and asks the occupants what is on their minds. He attends political rallies, party meetings and congressional hearings. He climbs on campaign buses and airplanes. He interviews the candidates face-to-face.

The conversations he's been having for decades at the homes of rank-and-file voters are "not a substitute for polling," Broder says. "But they give you insights that, as far as I'm concerned, you can't get out of a poll."

Similarly, he declares, a reporter cannot cover an event thoroughly through the filter of television. "You always see things yourself," he explains, "that don't make it onto the television picture."

At the Porter Novelli public relations firm's Washington office, Executive Vice President Chuck Greener "cannot think of a communication program that we have done in the last three years that did not have a Web site as an integral part." Greener, a veteran political consultant and former congressional aide, predicts that "there will be virtually no statewide political campaign in 2000 that does not have a Web site, and most hotly contested congressional races will have them as well."

Greener is a firm believer in e-mail and other Internet-based communications tools as powerful forces for influencing public policy. Porter Novelli's staff now includes technical experts who specialize in helping clients use the Internet.

But, Greener warns, as he contemplates the future of public-affairs communication and lobbying in the new millennium, "I don't think you dare underestimate the importance of effective lobbyists who understand public policy and have established relationships with members and credibility with members. They still have tremendous impact."

"The Internet is a great tool," adds Porter Novelli Senior Vice President Suzy DeFrancis. "But there's no substitute for that one-to-one conversation or knowing what's in the mind of a congressman. The good lobbyists are up there on the Hill all the time."

# It's Changing Everything . . . Almost

So this is the bottom line on the impact of the Internet on public policy:

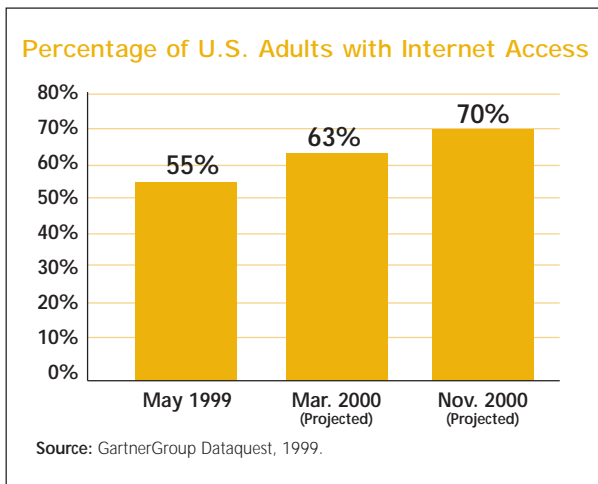
- It profoundly changes the way the participants — politicians, government officials, lobbyists, activists, consultants, and journalists — go about their business.
- It increases the transparency of public affairs, allowing easier and greater access to government documents and permitting competitors to keep tabs on what their counterparts are doing online.
- It enables the news media to gather more information more quickly and transmit it instantly around the world.
- It facilitates access to raw information (and misinformation)

for anyone with the interest and energy to look — and it underscores the need for trusted intermediaries who can sort the cyberwheat from the cyberchaff.

- It tries to push everyone into the fast lane. Its potential for driving change seems nearly limitless.
- But, it has not changed the political life of the average Jane and Joe, who still pay little attention to politics and government.
- And it has not — and will not — remove face-to-face, arm-squeezing, back-slapping, physical contact from the sport.

## Process This

This stuff changes at warp speed, as the cyber-savvy like to say, but here are some data to process:



More than half of U.S. adults had Internet access by mid-1999, a proportion that is projected to rise to 63 percent in early 2000 and 70 percent by the time the next president is elected.<sup>1</sup>

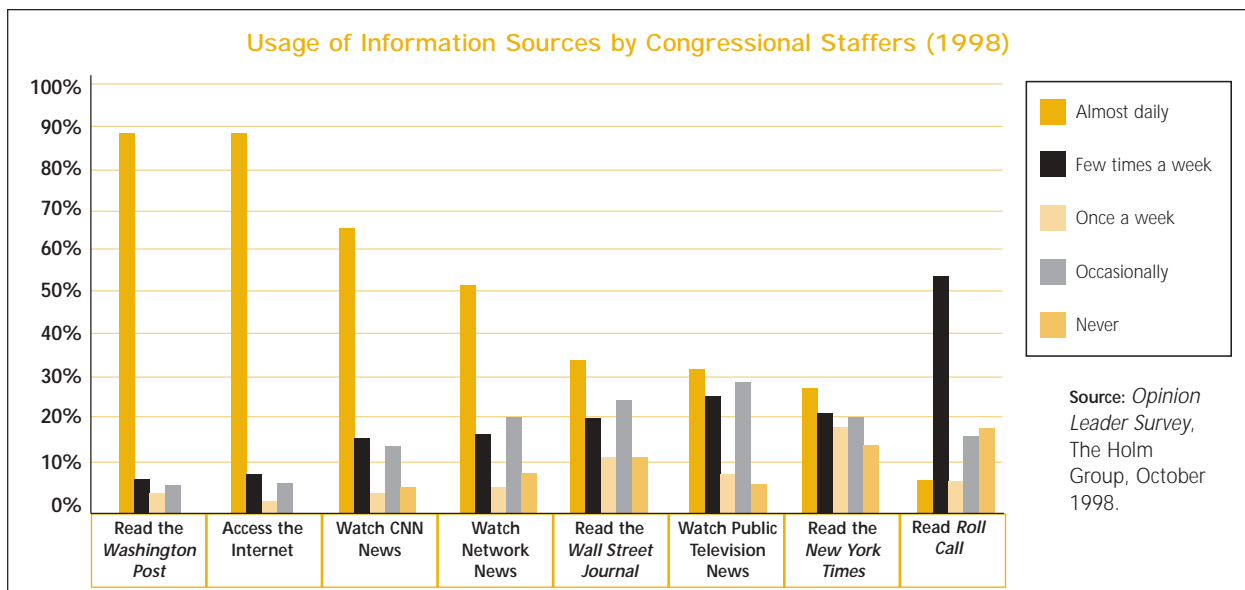
The number of U.S. Web sites passed 5 million in 1999, up from 26,000 in 1993.<sup>2</sup>

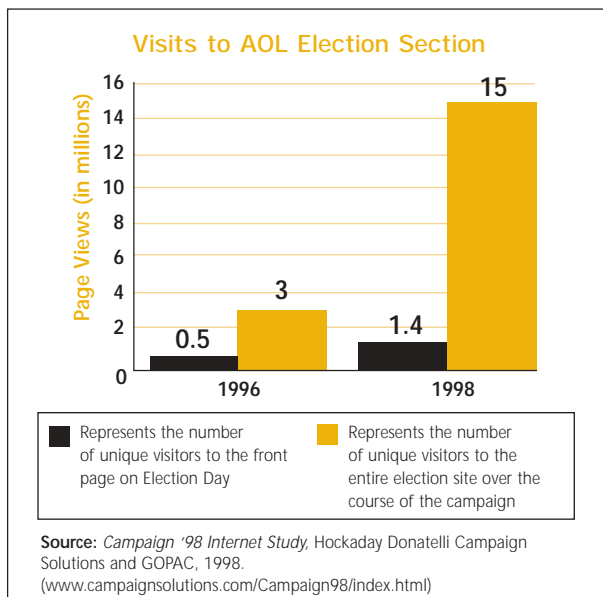
All U.S. senators and 94 percent of House members had Web sites in the spring of 1999, according to researchers at American University, who rated 86 percent of the congressional sites as better than the average Web site for user friendliness. All congressional committees had Web sites, as did many House leaders.

Nine of every 10 congressional offices were using e-mail, and the rest said they planned to start.<sup>3</sup>

The same number of Capitol Hill staffers use the Internet every day as read *The Washington Post* — 88 percent. That is more than turn daily to CNN (66 percent), network news (53 percent) or *The New York Times* (28 percent).<sup>4</sup>

The *Congressional Record* is posted on the Web after each





day Congress is in session. The text of nearly every congressional bill is posted shortly after it is introduced and revisions within 48 hours of markup.

America Online reached 17 million households in 1999, more than the combined circulation of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Time* and *Newsweek*.<sup>5</sup>

The online version of *The Washington Post*, washingtonpost.com, was attracting 300,000 visitors each day and a total of 1.9 million unique visitors a month in 1999. At the same time, the printed *Post* was selling 759,000 copies daily and about 1.1 million on Sundays.<sup>6</sup>

Nearly all U.S. newspaper and magazine journalists have Internet access.<sup>7</sup>

The front page of AOL's election section recorded 1.4 million unique visitors on Election Day 1998 and 15 million throughout that campaign, triple the 1996 figures.<sup>8</sup>

Up through 1999, three of AOL's five most-popular live events of all time were political chats.<sup>9</sup>

## Linking Millions to Millions

"Bill Gates says that the Internet is of equal significance to the invention of the printing press and the arrival of the Industrial Age, and I think he's right," said Phil Noble, a prominent international political consultant who publishes the **PoliticsOnline** Web site. "I think eventually it is going to change politics and public policy more than the telephone and TV combined."

The reason, he explained, is that it's turning the "traditional communications model" on its ear. "The traditional communications model is one to millions — one publisher, one TV station, one radio station to millions — and whoever owned or controlled the communication technology controlled the content.

"The Internet takes the ability to be a television station, a broadcaster, a publisher, and puts it in the hands of millions of people. Instead of having one communication to millions, all of a sudden you have millions with the ability to communicate with millions."

Chris Casey, technology adviser to Senate Democrats, suggested at a mid-1999 conference that a more accurate analogy might be to the telegraph, which could be viewed as "more of a communication revolution" than the telephone, television or the Internet.

Like the telecommunications technologies that followed it, Casey noted, the telegraph permitted instant communication over large distances. Before telegraph lines were strung across the country, he pointed out, "information traveled no faster than the fastest horse could run."

"Bill Gates says that the Internet is of equal significance to the invention of the printing press and the arrival of the Industrial Age, and I think he's right."

Phil Noble, political consultant

## A Lever to Move the World

The most dramatic evidence to date of the Internet's power to shape public policy is supplied by the **International Campaign to Ban Land Mines**, which received the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for convincing more than 100 nations to sign a comprehensive anti-mine treaty in only five years.

A global confederation of 1,400 activist groups in more than 90 countries, the campaign was praised by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan for having made "the international community a living, thriving reality, and not just the hope of a distant future."

The campaign was launched in October 1992 by just six groups — Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, Medico International, the Mines Advisory Group, Physicians for Human Rights and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. Like the Internet, it was created to be a flexible network. Also like the Internet, it exploded in size. And the Internet supplied the campaign's most valuable tools.

In 1993, the founding organizations hired Jody Williams as coordinator, and she did much of her work from her house in Putney, Vt. On winning the Nobel Peace Prize, she was asked what secret weapon enabled such a diverse, far-flung confederation of activist groups to move the world. "E-mail," she replied.

"Coordination has been the key to this campaign," said Mary Wareham, a Human Rights Watch staffer who served as the land mine campaign's U.S. coordinator. "The Internet is an organizing tool, and it's our communications network."

Because e-mail can be read and answered at the convenience of the sender and recipient, it enabled Jody Williams to carry on conversations with activists on six continents as she could not have done by telephone. It also enabled the activists to communicate much faster and with greater certainty than they could have by mail. But the central work of convincing governments to support a treaty was old-fashioned, person-to-person lobbying.

"Face-to-face contact is really important," Wareham said. "We were banging on the doors of everybody on a regular basis."

During the critical days of final treaty negotiations in September of 1997, e-mail linked those who were conducting the face-to-face lobbying around the world. Campaign activists monitoring the negotiations in Oslo filed daily reports to the campaign's e-mail list, "to let them know what was going on and enable them to take action in their capitals," Wareham recalled.

The point was to hold diplomats in Oslo true to the promises made by government officials back home. "We heard the Australian delegation was supporting an effort to create a big

loophole," Wareham said, offering an example. Alerted by e-mail from Oslo, activists went to work in Canberra, she said, and Australia opposed the loophole.

To try to drum up public support in the United States, which has refused to agree to the treaty, campaign activists rode a bus from San Francisco to Ottawa, where the treaty was to be signed on December 3. The "Ban Bus," as they called it, pulled out of San Francisco on October 1 with a cell phone, digital camera and laptop computer as the key equipment on board.

"We spoke to any audience that would listen," using e-mail to invite supporters and the news media to turn out for rallies, meetings and interviews, Wareham said. Posted reports and photographs were posted on the campaign's Web site each night.

"The Web site is very helpful," Wareham said. "You can answer all kinds of questions by just saying: 'Go to the Web site, and come back if you have more questions.'"

"We put an announcement on the Web site about an activity in March (1999), and I was surprised to get all these calls from the press because they were looking at the Web site."

With the treaty signed by more than 130 nations and ratified by more than 80, the campaign has focused its attention on the big holdouts — notably the United States and Russia — and on implementation. The Internet again is the most important tool.

The campaign is using some of its Nobel Prize money to purchase computers and Internet access for activists in the developing world.

"People doing mine clearing and victim assistance will e-mail what happened during the day in Cambodia or Afghanistan or Angola or Mozambique," Wareham explained. "These people can report on their actions removing the mines or on violations of people putting new mines in the ground."

To publish a 1,100-page report on compliance with the treaty in 1999, Wareham used e-mail to coordinate the work of 80 researchers in more than 100 countries.

"Governments have been surprised from the beginning how we take the lead in having the best information and the most in-depth information and having the information before they do," she said. "Information is power for us in this campaign."

Now that Williams has stepped aside as international coordinator to become an "international ambassador" for the campaign, the current "coordination team" is made up of three activists on three continents, including one lead coordinator. "This campaign hasn't got a home base," Wareham pointed out. "Our central place is the coordinator. And it doesn't matter where she goes.

"She has one e-mail address, and everyone knows it."

# The Activists' Tool

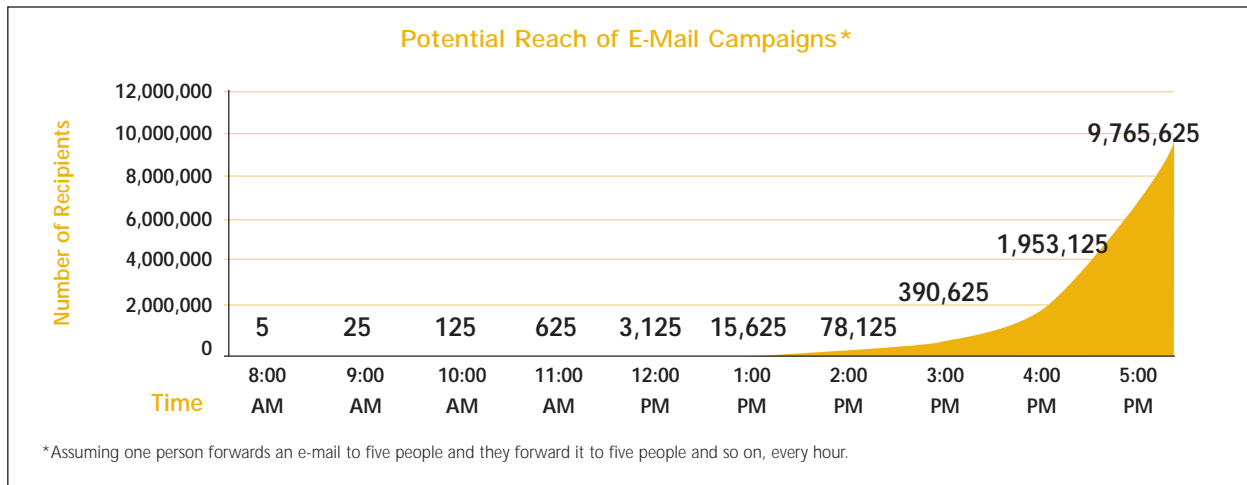
The Internet clearly boosts the effectiveness of activist groups at all spots on the political spectrum, because it enables them to mobilize their members and sympathizers much more efficiently than they could in the days before Web sites and e-mail.

The Libertarian Party — known to the general public primarily for fielding principled but unsuccessful candidates for elected office — knocked America's leading financial regulators on their heels with an e-mail campaign against a proposed new banking regulation.

and ended up with a 12-percent increase," says Pam Fielding, the NEA's former "cyberadvocacy coordinator."

The teachers' union generated more than 20,000 e-mails to Congress on the issue from its Web site and through targeted advertising it purchased on the Juno e-mail service, according to Fielding, who cofounded the e-advocates Internet advocacy consulting firm in 1999. Overall, between mid-1998 and mid-1999, the NEA used the Internet to generate nearly 60,000 messages to Congress on education topics.

DefendYourPrivacy.com www.defendyourprivacy.com



Proposed in late 1998 by the Federal Reserve Board, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Office of Thrift Supervision and the Comptroller of the Currency, the regulation would have required banks to scrutinize customers' banking patterns more closely in an effort to detect illegal money laundering.

Sounding alarms about invasions of privacy, the Libertarians called for protests against what the regulators titled the "Know-Your-Customer" regulation and the critics labeled the "Spy-on-Your-Customer" rule. The Libertarians issued statements to the news media, alerted their 11,000-member e-mail list and set up the **DefendYourPrivacy.com** Web site. The Web site made it easy for visitors to e-mail the FDIC and to encourage their online friends to do the same.

The regulators withdrew the proposal on March 23, 1999, citing "an unprecedented number of comments" — more than 250,000, most in the form of e-mail generated by the Libertarians' Web site. It is extremely rare for the FDIC to receive more than a few hundred comments on even the most controversial proposals.

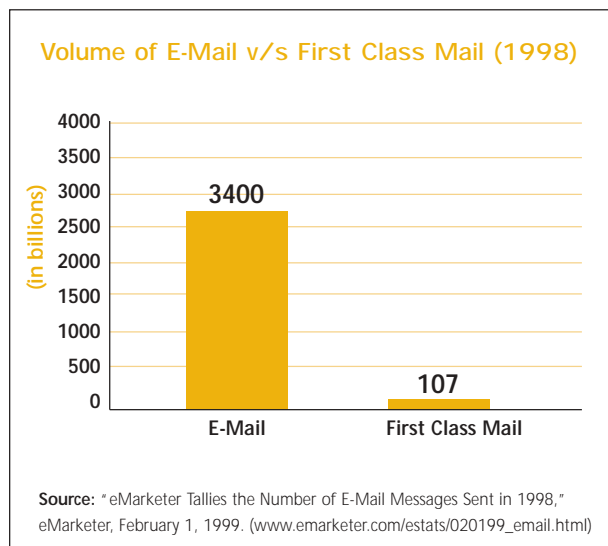
The regulators' retreat led Libertarian Party National Director Steve Dasbach to declare that "the computer mouse is mightier than the musket, and the World Wide Web is the political organizing tool of the 21st Century."

Similarly, the **National Education Association** (NEA) believes an e-mail campaign helped nudge Congress into increasing education's share of the 1999 federal budget. "We went in (to the budget debate) looking at 15 percent in cuts

The e-mails augment the work of NEA lobbyists on Capitol Hill and NEA members' personal contact with legislators. The NEA requests copies of the messages sent from Juno and its Web site, and lobbyists take them to meetings with the senders' senators and representatives. It is what Fielding describes as "the double-decker approach — send it to the Hill, then go and tell them you sent it to the Hill."

"You don't have to convince a teacher that it's important to help kids," Fielding notes. "But, in their busy, busy lives, it's

National Education Association www.nea.org





hard to convince them to do what you want them to do. We were able to tap into our membership because, through the power of the technology, they could send an e-mail to Congress if we asked them to. And, if they wanted to, they could do it at 2:00 in the morning.

"In the past, we'd call a state affiliate, the state affiliate would call a local affiliate, the local affiliate would call a building rep, and the building rep would try to get a classroom teacher to — we hoped — write a letter."

Richard Viguerie, the conservative direct-mail pioneer, likens Internet-based activism to the "under-the-radar" mail-based activities that boosted conservative causes in the 1970s and 1980s while moderates and liberals puzzled over why they were losing political ground.

"Above the radar news" comes from newspapers, television and news magazines, Viguerie explains. Direct mail is "under the radar," he says, because it is seen for the most part only by the people to whom it is addressed.

"The Internet is very much in that mode of flying under the radar," he says. "It's public, but it doesn't have a high profile."

That Viguerie is building a Web presence — abandoning what he calls "my attempt to get in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the last American to become computer literate" — is strong testament to the Internet's mushrooming significance. He says he expects that his new conservative Internet portal "will be the biggest thing I've ever done."

Former Christian Coalition Executive Director Ralph Reed believes the Internet will be "transformational" — the latest in "a series of technologies that are democratizing the political process, making it possible (for activist groups) to

bypass gatekeepers and the traditional print and broadcast media to communicate directly with their constituents."

According to Reed, who now runs his own consulting firm, the **Christian Coalition's** Web site recorded "a huge number of hits from our grassroots and other people who were interested in finding out about us, giving us direct access to our membership and our constituency that we never had before, and without a great expense. The capital expense of getting underway is almost nil. There's no postage, no printing."

From the opposite pole of America's family values debate — Margaret Conway, managing director of the **Human Rights Campaign**, American's largest political organization for gays and lesbians — comes agreement with Ralph Reed on at least one topic.

"For very, very little cost, you can have amazing effect, if you have real grassroots power out there," Conway has found. "The fact that you can mobilize nationwide in a matter of hours, if you have access to activists with e-mail, is just completely different from what it used to be. Getting somebody to call 10 people is really more difficult than getting somebody to e-mail 10 people."

The Human Rights Campaign, Conway reports, uses the Internet "constantly" to conduct conversations with volunteers around the country and to respond to questions about the organization and its stands on issues.

"When people call up and ask for information, we don't have to mail it to them," Conway explains. "We say: Here's how you can get it on our Web site. We almost never do mass mailings to our board members anymore. We can e-mail them. The speed — and the money saved — is enormous."

## Leveling the Playing Field

It seems that every activist group of any significance has set up a Web site, established e-mail as a primary communications device and learned to use the Internet as a key research tool. Together, these steps have diminished — though not eliminated — the advantage enjoyed by organizations with sophisticated Washington operations.

Because government agencies are posting so much information online, an individual with Internet access in Alaska or Hawaii can obtain many documents that formerly were available only to those who knew which specific Washington door to knock on. E-mail allows organizations to share that information instantly with their members and allies. And because so much of this happens in the open — at Web sites or on e-mail lists to which anyone can subscribe — organizations can keep tabs on much of what their opponents are up to.

Visit the typical activist group's Web site today, and you can:

- Read the organization's positions on the issues it deems most important.
- Identify your U.S. senators and representative by typing in your ZIP code.
- Send your comments to those policy-makers, using a message prepared by the organization, or writing your own message based on the organization's suggestions.
- Check congressional voting records.
- Track legislation.
- Volunteer.
- Make a financial contribution using your credit card.
- Sign up to receive the organization's e-mail alerts.

Because some regard e-mail as being only marginally effective on Capitol Hill, organizations are utilizing technologies

*“10 years ago, if you were a screwball who believed a whole set of wacky ideas, you felt relatively isolated — you now have the means of connecting with hundreds if not thousands of like-minded screwballs.”*

Andrew Kohut,  
The Pew Research Center for The  
People & The Press

that translate e-mail into other forms of communication.

One common tactic is to transform e-mail into faxes, which tend to be viewed as more effective than e-mail although less effective than letters and face-to-face meetings.

Typically, the process begins when the individual activist clicks on a button at the organization's Web site or responds to an e-mail alert. The individual writes a message, then e-mails it to the organization which sends the message on

to congressional fax machines. If the organization sends the fax from a point in the Washington area, the entire process has essentially no cost.

A growing number of organizations are also using the Internet to generate phone calls to Congress. Using one method, the individual clicks on a Web site button and fills out a form which asks for, among other things, the individual's phone number. A phone connection is established that enables the individual to speak with a congressional staffer while the organization's talking points are displayed on the

caller's computer screen. The process also can begin with the individual calling in response to an e-mail alert. In either case, the call can be completed at no cost to the caller.

Organizations strive to maximize interactivity on their sites to make them as compelling as possible to visitors.

The **AFL-CIO**, for instance, has created an online calculator that a visitor can use to see what his income would be today if it had risen as fast as CEO compensation has since 1994. The calculator promotes the labor organization's argument that corporations are paying executives too much and rank-and-file workers too little.

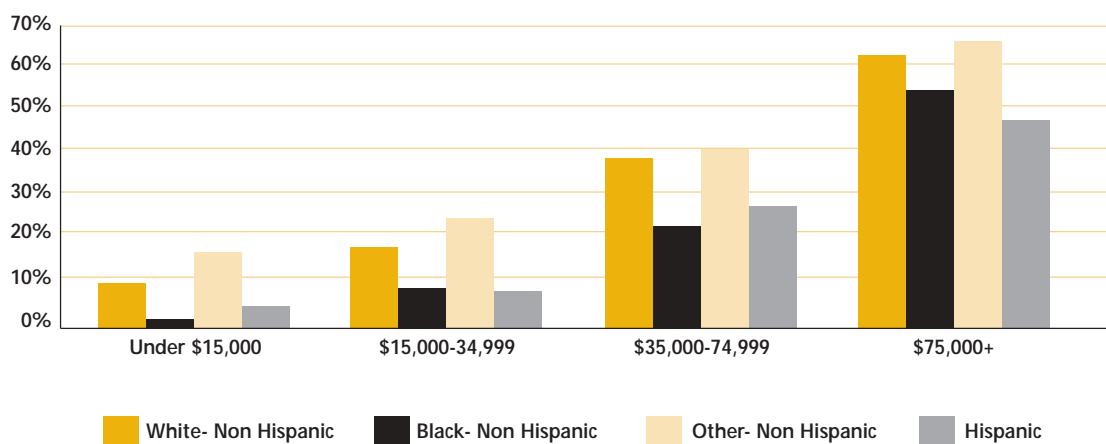
At the other end of the political spectrum, visitors to House Majority Leader Dick Armey's **Flat Tax** Web site can calculate what their taxes would be if the Texas Republican's flat-tax legislation were adopted and then compare that with their current tax burden. It promotes Armey's argument that flatter taxes are better taxes.

Organizations can use the Internet to facilitate communications even with members and sympathizers who are not online.

“Every local union has some members who are online,” **United Auto Workers** Webmaster Nancy Brigham explains. “So they can tap in to our Web site and find things out that they then can diffuse throughout the rest of the membership with flyers, bulletin boards, whatever. We can update information on our Web site several times a day if we want to, whereas before it took us weeks to get information out.”

Internet-based activism supplies leaders with information that was more difficult — or impossible — to obtain in the past. An organization can count contacts with specific government officials when they occur in e-mail sent from a Web site or by patch-through phone calls. It is even possible to monitor the content.

Percentage of U.S. Households Using the Internet by Race/Origin and Income (1998)



Source: National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, using December 1998 Current Population Survey. ([www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fttn99/contents.html](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fttn99/contents.html))

"In the old days," says Conway of the Human Rights Campaign, "you'd mail an action alert to your activists and then you'd pray and you never knew what happened. With patch-through calling and e-mail you can actually find out how many people have responded."

The NEA requests copies of the e-mails that its members send to public officials, Fielding explains. "Those personal messages tell us stories we can share with a reporter who calls, and they help us if we're looking for somebody who would be good to provide testimony on the Hill."

Because it is easy, Internet-based activism lures the previously inactive into political activity, and sets the stage for their continuing involvement, according to AFL-CIO Publications Director Donna Jablonski.

"You're moving the public along the continuum of activism," she explains. "Somebody who sends an e-mail has committed himself in some way to an interest-level on a topic and is more likely to follow up."

All of this can be "for better or for worse," in the opinion of Andrew Kohut, former president of The Gallup Organization who now directs **The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press**.

"If you have an abiding interest in a narrow problem, you now have a much greater capacity to track what's being said about the problem or what's going on with regard to the problem than you ever had before. People are now bonded together in communities that were very loosely knit or did not exist at all 10 years ago.

"It's for the better in the case of giving people the opportunity to exchange views and come together with like-minded people. It's for the worse in that 10 years ago, if you were a screwball who believed a whole set of wacky ideas, you felt relatively isolated — you now have the means of connecting with hundreds if not thousands of like-minded screwballs."

Another concern is that the poor will fall further behind as the more affluent use the Internet to increase their political influence. "I'm gratified by how there has been an

increase in Web use by African Americans," says Clarence Page, the nationally syndicated, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist of *The Chicago Tribune*. "But I suspect those are mostly middle class African Americans. Poor kids in the inner city are the real issue.

"Just as Andrew Carnegie and others subsidized libraries in the past and governments have subsidized libraries, we need to talk about how we can best subsidize computers to get them into the hands of the kids who need them most."

The Internet has been especially valuable to *ad hoc* groups that "organize around an event or a decision or a vote and then go away," according to Bruce Bimber, who heads the **Government and Politics on the Net Project** at the University of California at Santa Barbara's Political Science Department. The successful banking protest launched by the Libertarian Party is a prime example.

Like Kohut, Bimber has mixed feelings about this Internet-facilitated activism. "The diversity of voices is going up," he notes. "While that seems quite appealing, it may contribute to gridlock."

It is a view that finds support on Capitol Hill.

All of this online advocacy means that "some times things are easier to stop," says Michael Gessel, a veteran congressional aide who now is Democratic staff director of the House Rules Committee's Subcommittee on the Rules and Organization of the House. "You send an e-mail to all your friends and say Congress is about to do this horrible thing so write your congressman immediately.

"It's easier to knock something down than to build it up."

"The diversity of voices is going up. While that seems quite appealing, it may contribute to gridlock."

Bruce Bimber, University of California at Santa Barbara

## Business Plays Catch-up

Many corporations field sophisticated lobbying shops in Washington and state capitals. And they would appear to possess natural strengths for using the Internet to advance their political interests, given their financial resources, experience at influencing public policy and use of telecommunications as a business tool.

As Ken Deutsch, vice president for Internet strategic communications at Issue Dynamics, Inc., puts it: "There are more corporate employees sitting at desktops with personal computers, whom companies have the potential to mobilize, than citizens who check their e-mail (at home) every day.

But talk with corporate public affairs personnel, and they seem to believe that the citizen activist groups have seized the advantage on the online political battlefield.

"Instead of our members trying to track down our lobbyists and playing phone tag with them, we've used our Web site to bottle those lobbyists, capture information and put it online — so our members at their convenience can get what they need quickly."

Denise Wible, Ohio Chamber of Commerce

ic communications systems are all they need.

These internal systems, called Intranets, allow corporations to use many of the same tactics employed by activist groups. Corporate grassroots directors — usually young and technoliterate — operate sophisticated networks that link employees, retirees and even suppliers. Volunteers are briefed regularly about public policy issues and called into action when their help is needed. For large companies in particular, these grassroots information networks also help to keep worldwide public affairs staff up-to-speed on the status of priority issues.

Many do use the Internet for political research and communication, however, and some business associations are establishing the kind of Internet-based services that have

become common among the citizen groups. Just as activists outside Washington have reaped major benefits from Internet access, independent business men and women — who have no Washington or state capital presence and little time for lobbying — could use the Internet to expand their political influence.

An Internet-based service being built by the **Ohio Chamber of Commerce** puts business lobbyists in that state "light years ahead of where we were four to six years ago," according to Pete Dobrozi, who directs state lobbying for the Dayton-headquartered Mead Corporation.

The chamber saves Dobrozi's time first by identifying bills introduced in the Ohio General Assembly that are of particular importance to business. He marks those that are of particular importance to Mead, then receives notification by e-mail each time anything happens to the bill, "whether it's a committee hearing, an amendment, a floor action."

In a private, password-protected area of the chamber's Web site, a chamber member can search for a bill, check its status, see the chamber's position on the bill and read comments by the chamber lobbyist who is responsible for it. The member can obtain additional information by e-mailing questions to the lobbyist. The site also includes an on-line guide to Ohio's elected officials.

"Instead of our members trying to track down our lobbyists and playing phone tag with them," Denise Wible, the chamber's communications director, explains, "we've used our Web site to bottle those lobbyists, capture information and put it online — so our members at their convenience can get what they need quickly."

The service is part of "a revolution in information going out to independent businessmen," Wible points out. "The corporate community has always hired people [such as Dobrozi] who have had the ability to get their hands on information. What's happening with the Internet is that it's starting to reach out and get information into the hands of folks who are busy running their businesses and don't have a full-time lobbyist."

The transparency of the Internet changes the way parties interact, according to Dobrozi's boss, Mead's vice president for government affairs, Ronald Budzik. "State legislatures, executive branch staffs, international organizations and governments around the world are all hooked up to the Internet and they share information instantly."

A 1997 initiative to regulate waste in packaging in California turned out to be a copy of a regulation considered in Germany less than a year before, Budzik says. The proposal "never went anywhere" in California, he adds, "but the point is that anybody in the world can pick up what's happening anywhere else."

In an Ohio effort to bring activists, businesses and governments to agreement on environmental issues, Budzik points out, "utilities, city governments, environmental groups and

other parties can share information immediately through the Net. Somebody pulls down information about what they're doing in Texas and Oregon and copies of that get sent to everybody.

"It always took time to get information" in the past. "You had to hire a clipping service. You had to use the media. Now

"It always took time to get information" in the past. "You had to hire a clipping service. You had to use the media. Now you get the actual communications between groups."

Ronald Budzik, Mead Corp.

you get the actual communications between groups.

"You can easily get the data that flows across the environmental groups. Go to a Web site and get any information that comes off of it. All it takes is an e-mail address to sign up" for many activist groups' e-mail alerts.

Budzik can assign Mead employees to monitor Web sites, chat rooms, e-mail services and other Internet sources in their areas of expertise.

Matthew Benson, senior director at the Bivings Woodell public affairs con-

sulting firm, told a 1999 Public Affairs Council conference that monitoring takes advantage of the Internet's potential to be "a great place for early warning on emerging issues."

"You really have a global reach when you're on the Internet," said Eric Rabe, Bell Atlantic's assistant vice president for corporate communications, at the same conference. "If you're not on the Net in this day and age, you might as well be working out of a cave."

Congressional aide Gessel agrees. "My use of the Internet has progressed to the point that I expect organizations to post information on the Internet, and if their Web pages aren't well organized and don't post the information I'm looking for I'm disappointed."

"I think any organization that intends to communicate with the public has to post its positions and other information on the Net. This is a very public face. It's like stationery and the person who answers the telephone. Organizations should know this is the way they're going to be judged."

"I think any organization that intends to communicate with the public has to post its positions and other information on the Net."

Michael Gessel, congressional aide

## The Tools on the Hill

When Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) paid his most recent visit to the one-room Granville Village elementary school in central Vermont, the kids were full of questions.

Erica wanted to know if the fifth-term Democrat has grandchildren. (One, named Roan Seamus Leahy.)

Taylor and Jack asked if Leahy believes in Champ, the legendary Lake Champlain monster. ("I would not be surprised if something is out there.")

Chris wondered what a senator does. (Lots of things.)

And, when Leahy turned the tables and asked the Granville school children what they would do if they were senators, the kids had lots of answers.

Lyndsay would fight against land mines, and Emily and Sammi would fight crime.

Benny would fund bug research.

Erica would raise money for the homeless.

Chris would eat cookies and play with his computer, a platform that led the other students to vow they would never vote for him.

Chris's plan was not so far off the mark, however, because Leahy was typing on his PC at that very moment. From a corner of his office in the Senate's Russell Building in Washington, he was using the Internet to converse with the Granville pupils in their 19th Century schoolhouse 500 miles away.

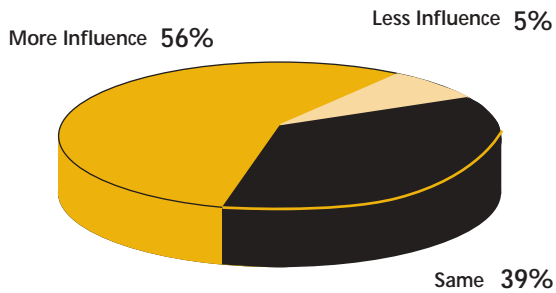
After begging forgiveness for his occasional typos ("I like to think I am a better senator than a typist"), Leahy told the children that "I enjoy these chats more than almost anything I do here."

"I am a lifelong Vermonter and I get homesick when I am down here," he told them. "This brings me closer — and we didn't have anything like this when I was your age a LONG time ago."

Leahy conducts Internet chats with Vermont school children on a regular basis. He posts information of importance to Vermonters on his Senate Web site. He says he treats e-mail the same as postal mail.

Leahy — perhaps the most cyber-savvy senator — is not alone in his embrace of the Internet. A small but growing

### Congressional Staff Perceptions of the Future Influence of the Internet on Congress (1998)



Source: *Congressional Use of the Internet: A Summary Analysis of a Survey of Congressional Offices*, American University's Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies, and Bonner and Associates, 1998.

cadre of federal legislators are discovering the value of the Net and putting it to work on **Capitol Hill**.

Over in the House, for instance, Republican Whip Tom DeLay of Texas has pushed congressional documents onto the Web and instructs his staff to communicate with him by e-mail.

The e-mail edict has made both DeLay and his staff more efficient, reports James Smith, a former DeLay aide who now runs the House Republican Conference's Communication and Information Center. "You don't waste his time. You don't call him at home. You don't interrupt him. You don't have to wait for a meeting to end or catch him in the Hall or the office.

"You send him e-mail that he can read at his own pace. Decisions get made at his convenience. You can get decisions from him much faster."

As more lawmakers follow DeLay's lead, Smith notes, it flattens the House culture the way business management hierarchies have been flattened recently. Power is diminished for the

aides who decide who gets an appointment and which information gets passed into the congressman's office. Low-level staffers, who seldom get invited to the inner office, can influence the legislator's decision-making with well-reasoned e-mail.

Another cyber-savvy representative, Virginia Democrat Rick Boucher, also believes that "we are just enormously more efficient because of the expanded use of e-mail and the greater access to information that comes with the World Wide Web."

"People are more inclined to contact you if they can do it in 15 seconds by sending an e-mail message than if they have to find an envelope, stamp it and mail a letter."

Rep. Rick Boucher (D-Va.)

Boucher, a founder and cochairman of the Congressional Internet Caucus, thinks it's great that lawmakers are "hearing more rapidly from their constituents through e-mail."

"People are more inclined to contact you if they can do it in 15 seconds by sending an e-mail message than if they have to find an envelope, stamp it and mail a letter," he has found.

Most members of Congress cringe at that thought, however, believing they are already overburdened with constituent mail. The ease of e-mail, they think, tends to encourage poorly thought-out, dashed-off notes that aren't worth the electrons they're written on.

These politicians also have a natural inclination to favor face-to-face communication — "It's a personality type," Brookings Institution scholar Steven Hess says — and to discount the value of faceless, seemingly impersonal e-mail.

"When somebody writes to me through e-mail, or even with a typewritten letter, it is much different than when I

see him in person," Democratic Representative Tony Hall of Ohio observed during a Rules Committee hearing on using the Internet in Congress. "E-mail is so impersonal."

Hall, one of Congress's leading human-rights activists, has traveled to some of the most unpleasant spots on earth because he has to "see, hear, touch and smell" a place to understand it. As he put it, "If I cannot eyeball you, I cannot see you, I cannot see your body language, I can't really listen to you."

As a result of these common attitudes, the Internet revolution is touching members of Congress primarily through

"If I cannot eyeball you,  
I cannot see you, I cannot see  
your body language,  
I can't really listen to you."

Rep. Tony Hall, (D-Ohio)



their aides, whose lives have changed dramatically. Staffers wear out a lot less shoe leather trudging from office to office in search of documents and to deliver communications. Instead, they wear out fingertips on keyboards and mouse buttons as they process e-mail and search the Web.

**“The Internet ... lowers the barriers to entering the game”**

James Smith,  
House Republican Conference

Because of the Internet, “I am more efficient today,” says congressional aide Gessel, who has worked for Hall since 1981. “In terms of staff doing research, it has made the job easier. I can find congressional documents more easily on the Internet than I can in my own files.” When a constituent calls requesting a document, he said, “I’ll either download it and fax it to them or point them to the Internet site.”

Because of their staffs’ access to the Internet, Smith points out, “policy makers have access to better information now and to more current information. You can get a study from a journal off the Web immediately and don’t have to wait two or three days for it to come from the Library of Congress. You can get **Congressional Research Service reports** from the congressional Intranet, and members can put them on their Web sites if they want to.”

Routinely posted online are the *Congressional Record*, bills, leadership notices, roll-call votes, floor and committee schedules, and whatever statements, press releases and other items individual members want to make available to the public. Many items also are available through e-mail subscriptions.

Much of this information “used to be available only to people who knew somebody on Capitol Hill who would send it to them or who would physically walk up here” and know which door to knock on, Smith notes.

The executive branch also is placing enormous amounts of material online. At the **White House** Web site, you can search for and subscribe to a wide array of administration publications, including press releases, briefings, reports and transcripts. There are links to Cabinet departments and other agencies, as well as special links for state and local government employees who are seeking information about federal programs.

**“It’s more effort to do a letter than an e-mail. The total effort put into 100 letters is a lot more than 100 e-mails.”**

Michael Gessel,  
congressional aide

“It’s definitely more transparent,” according to Elaine Kamarck, a key member of Vice President Gore’s “reinventing government” team who now directs the Kennedy

School of Government’s “Visions of Governance for the 21st Century” research program at Harvard University.

It’s “very revolutionary” that agencies are posting proposed regulations on the Internet and inviting e-mailed comments, Kamarck says. “It’s going to take this out of the hands of paid lawyers and lobbyists and really open it up.”

“It’s no longer true that lobbyists know all that’s going on and have all the latest information,” agrees Link Hoewing, assistant vice president for issues analysis in Bell Atlantic’s Washington office. “Many more people know what’s going on in Congress. It’s kind of democratized the process.”

While there is widespread agreement that the Internet, in James Smith’s words, “lowers the barriers to entering the game,” there is much debate about its value as a direct lobbying tool.

**Effectiveness of Constituent Communications with Congress**

Highest



Lowest

- Personal Visit (Washington, D.C.)
- Personal Visit (Home District)
- Personal Letter
- Phone Call
- Fax
- E-Mail
- Petition
- Mass Mail

Source: Michael Lord, Babcock Graduate School of Management, Wake Forest University, 1999.

Among most lawmakers and their aides, there is a clear hierarchy of communication effectiveness. At the top is the in-person appeal from a constituent or a representative of many constituents, such as a union leader or major employer. Next come personal letters and phone calls. At the bottom is the mass generated postcard or e-mail campaign. Somewhere near the bottom is the individual e-mail.

“In evaluating a communication, the politician asks if this person cares enough about this issue that it may change how he votes in the next election,” Ken Deutsch, of Issue Dynamics Inc., explains. “If the person cared enough to come to the office for a meeting and he’s a constituent, he might care enough about the issue to vote differently. If he just had to click on a button on a computer, the commitment might not be enough to vote differently in the next election.”

It is what congressional aide Gessel describes as “weighing political will.”

*continued on page 18*

**1844**

Samuel F.B. Morse demonstrates his Morse Code, sending the message 'What hath God wrought' from Baltimore to Washington, D.C.

**1946**

The Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer (ENIAC), the world's first general-purpose electronic computer is dedicated.

**1860**

The Pony Express begins carrying mail between St. Joseph, Missouri, and San Francisco. It is replaced by the telegraph in 1861.

**1931**

The first regularly scheduled television broadcast airs from W2XAB, an NBC-owned station in New York City.

**700 BC**

Greeks use homing pigeons to carry messages.

**1877**

The commercial telephone is introduced and the first telephone line installed in Boston.

BC to 1800's

beginning 1900's

30's to 40's

60's

**1436**

Johannes Gutenberg develops the first printing press using movable type.

**1920**

The first commercial radio station, KDKA in Pittsburgh, begins operation.

**1960**

Debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon are the first between presidential candidates to be nationally televised. The debates are largely credited with helping Kennedy defeat Nixon.

**1858**

The first transatlantic cable is laid between Canada and Ireland; However, the signal is so weak that it takes several hours to send only a few words.

**1895**

The radio is invented by Guglielmo Marconi as a form of "wireless telegraphy." First used to transmit Morse Code without the need for wires, it is soon used to transmit voice signals as well.

**1876**

Alexander Graham Bell's famous "Mr. Watson, come here, I want you" is the first message transmitted by telephone.

**1933 - 1935**

Franklin Roosevelt uses the radio for 30 "Fireside Chats" aimed at communicating directly with citizens on a broad range of topics.



**1993**

The World Wide Web (WWW) is created by Dr. Tim Berners-Lee of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). His development of the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) lays the groundwork on which the Web is based. The use of HTTP profoundly changes the way information is organized, presented, and accessed on the Internet.

**1981**

The first IBM PCs are introduced.

**1995**

The Library of Congress comes online with its THOMAS Web site. Citizens now have nearly instant access to the *Congressional Record*, voting records, and the text of all bills in Congress.

**1999**

The Federal Election Commission rules credit-card contributions are eligible for federal matching funds.

**1999**

Steve Forbes becomes the first presidential candidate to formally announce his candidacy with an online presentation.

**1998**

The Starr Report is released and immediately published on the Internet. Several Internet Service Providers (ISPs) respond by adding extra capacity to meet the expected increase in volume of Internet traffic.

**1998**

Congress receives more than 1 million e-mails per day during the House Judiciary Committee's hearings on the impeachment of President Clinton. Normally, the congressional average is 80,000 e-mails a day.

→ 80's to 90's →

**1983**

The ARPANET adopts one uniform set of protocols (TCP/IP). This decision leads to the term "Internet," referring to the network of networks that utilize the TCP/IP protocols.

**1969**

The Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency creates an experimental network called ARPANET, laying the foundation for today's modern Internet.

**1996**

The Internet is extensively used for the first time in a presidential campaign. Republican nominee Bob Dole's reference to his campaign site during a nominees' debate leads to an increase from 500,000 to more than 2 million "hits" per day.

**1998**

More than two-thirds of all candidates create Web sites during their campaigns.

**1993 - 1994**

The graphical Web browsers Mosaic and Netscape Navigator are introduced. Their ease of use makes the Internet more accessible and appealing to the general public.

**1998**

Jesse Ventura is elected governor of Minnesota. The effective use of e-mail and the Internet is widely credited for his successful third-party candidacy. This is the first case in which the Internet played a significant role in determining the outcome of an election.

**1999**

For the first time, all major party presidential candidates maintain Web sites.

**1993**

The White House comes online.

continued from page 15

"I think it's a basic rule that the more effort you put into something the more it shows you care," Gessel says. "It's more effort to do a letter than an e-mail. The total effort put into 100 letters is a lot more than 100 e-mails." Many experts argue, however, that e-mail can be effective when it is used at the right time in the right way.

"If you're trying to establish an issue as a new mass issue that has a very large following," Deutsch says, "then generating large amounts of mass-generated communication can be very effective."

"If you have several hundred e-mails coming into an office

from the district or state," consultant and former congressional aide Chuck Greener says, "you can't ignore it."

Professor Bruce Bimber puts it this way: "When members of Congress see there's an unorchestrated, honest grassroots interest in an issue, they tend to pay attention. And the Internet has the potential of allowing that to happen."

Still, says Rebecca Fairley Raney, who covers the Internet and politics for *The New York Times'* online service, "based on everything I know and all the interviews I've done, if I had something I really wanted to register my opinion on in Congress, I'd send a letter."

## In the Laboratories of Democracy

In Washington, D.C., members of Congress are forbidden to carry laptop computers into the Senate and House chambers. Congressional leaders fear that lawmakers typing on computer keyboards might disrupt proceedings.

In contrast, a growing number of state legislatures are supplying computers for use in the chamber. During 1999, members in 39 of the 99 state legislative bodies could even surf the Internet and send and receive e-mail while in session, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

This is evidence that, in determining the best ways to mix the Internet and public affairs, the states will play their traditional role as "the laboratories of democracy," Rutgers University professor Alan Rosenthal says. "There are 99 state legislative bodies [two in each state except Nebraska, which has one], so there are many more opportunities for experimentation."

Bringing the Internet into legislative chambers could "really change the deliberative process," adds Rosenthal, who specializes in studying state governments.

Lawmakers "can get messages right there from constituents, corporations, various groups," he notes. "If constituents can reach legislators on the floor, if lobbyists can get messages in, that may result in committees losing influence."

Rosenthal expects to see "virtual" committee hearings, with witnesses and lawmakers linked from outside the capital. And political consultant Phil Noble predicts that states will lead the way to online voting as early as the 2004 elections.

But neither suggests that state legislatures are any more likely than Congress to turn themselves into "virtual" bodies.

"It seems to me what distinguishes the legislative process

is the interpersonal relations and dealing that go on," Rosenthal says. "The process is not linear, not sequential. It's kind of chaotic — not a three-ring circus, but a hundred or a thousand rings. Things are taking place at every moment — the considerations, the deals, the agreements the coalition building. I'm not sure how you do that by the Internet."

For state officials and their staffs, the Internet is a valuable tool for learning what their counterparts are doing about similar challenges around the country, according to Mary Anne Sharkey, communications director for Ohio Governor Bob Taft II.

"We know we're not reinventing the wheel," she says, so it's helpful to see what other states have done on issues Ohio is facing.

Sharkey also uses the Net to keep tabs on public opinion within Ohio. "I will make a round of checks online and get a quick read on where we are and who the governor needs to pick up the phone and talk to and who we need to visit," she explains. "I'm able to see newspapers in small towns that I would never ever see otherwise. Even the smallest papers are online now."

"Things are taking place at every moment — the considerations, the deals, the agreements the coalition building. I'm not sure how you do that by the Internet."

Alan Rosenthal, Rutgers University

## Netting Votes and Winning Elections

Jesse Ventura's 1998 gubernatorial campaign faced a pleasant dilemma after the Minnesota State Fair. Some 5,000 fair attendees had stopped at Ventura's booth and signed up to volunteer. The campaign needed to enter their names into its volunteer database and get campaign materials into their hands as quickly as possible.

Campaign Webmaster Phil Madsen sent an appeal over "Jesse Net," the campaign's e-mail list, and 70 supporters offered to help enter the data. Madsen gave them an online test, and decided that 48 were capable of doing the job.

He shipped about 100 sign-up sheets to each of the 48, and they entered the data at a secure space he created at Ventura's Web site.

"Old way: several (telephone) calls, one volunteer," Madsen told a George Washington University conference on online politics after Ventura's upset victory. "New way: one e-mail message, dozens of volunteers."

The state fair data entry was but one of several ways the Internet helped Reform Party candidate Ventura defeat the heavily favored Democratic and Republican nominees.

Volunteers were recruited by the Web site and managed with e-mail. Ventura raised campaign contributions — even loans — online. The Ventura "Geek Squad" took digital photos of campaign events that were quickly posted at the Web site, stirring continued interest after the event was over.

Madsen believes that filling the Web site with position papers helped to establish Ventura as a serious candidate, despite his status as a former professional wrestler running as an underdog third party nominee. And, in the closing days of the campaign, get-out-the-vote efforts and Ventura's 72-hour caravan to campaign rallies were coordinated through the Net.

"Old way: several (telephone) calls, one volunteer.  
New way: one e-mail message, dozens of volunteers."

Phil Madsen,  
Ventura campaign webmaster

Ventura's victory captured national attention as an improbable upset, and as possibly the first Internet-driven campaign win.

Madsen put that in perspective by saying that Ventura "could not have won the election without the Internet" but that "it's also important for everybody to realize we didn't win the election because of the Internet."

"We won by three percent of the vote," he noted. "The neat thing about a 3-percent victory is that anybody in the campaign

can take credit for that three percent that they helped produce."

Republican Steve Forbes made some history in mid 1999 by becoming the first presidential candidate to formally declare his candidacy during an online event. And campaign Web sites have become common.

But, as veteran Democratic political consultant Steve Murphy put it, they have tended to be "a metaphor for everything's up to date in Kansas City," rather than a tool that campaign managers believed would swing elections.

According to a study by Elaine Kamarck at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, nearly all major party statewide candidates had Web sites in 1998, as did 57 percent of all candidates in competitive U.S. House races.<sup>10</sup> Researchers at American University found that 75 percent of all Senate candidates had Web sites during the 1998 general election, as did two-thirds of general election candidates for open House seats.

Looking at results, however, the American University researchers found that winners were just slightly more likely than losers to have Web sites in the 1998 general election for Congress.<sup>11</sup>

There also is an apparent downside. A candidate in Georgia had to apologize for spamming voters. And one campaign manager told American University researchers that his candidate's Web site had been accessed just 16 times — and 14 of those were the candidate himself checking the online counter to see how many people had visited. As Roger Stone, director of advocacy advertising for the Juno e-mail service, puts it, "It's not 'Field of Dreams.' If you build it, they don't necessarily come."

Kamarck concludes that the Internet "may have been a factor" in victories by Democratic Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts in 1996, Republican Governor Christie Todd Whitman of New Jersey in 1997 and Democratic Senators Barbara Boxer of California and Russ Feingold of Wisconsin in 1998.

Although one study claims to show that banner advertising on Web sites could move voters' opinions, the Net's clearest value — as demonstrated by the Ventura campaign — has been as a grassroots tool.

"When voters are drawn to a candidate," Kamarck explains, "the Net becomes, in the hands of someone who understands old fashioned political organizing, a powerful and inexpensive way to mobilize the voters, raise money from them, and keep them engaged in the campaign."

Feingold, for instance, did not have enough money to

"I expect 10 years from now or 20 years from now people will look at the way candidates and governments are using the Internet now and say, 'Gee, they really didn't understand the potential of this thing.'"

David Broder, *The Washington Post*



meet his supporters' requests for yard signs, according to Chris Casey, technology adviser to Senate Democrats. So he put a build-your-own kit on his Web site — a virtual sign, as it were, that could be downloaded and printed, along with instructions for making a frame for it with a coat hanger.

Candidates also are posting campaign literature that their supporters can download, print and distribute, and electronic postcards that supporters can e-mail to their friends.

Planting a traditional grassroots tool in cyberspace, 1998 Democratic Senate candidate Evan Bayh of Indiana posted an electronic bumper sticker that his supporters could display on their own Internet home pages. The Web site for **Steve Forbes' 2000 Presidential campaign** offers post cards, banner ads and computer background images.

Kamarck reports that 42 percent of the sites she studied in 1998 provided fundraising information and 11 percent

whereby it's harder to find people watching the same thing, listening to the same thing," Steve Murphy has found. "It's making it much more difficult to communicate the same message to everybody at once."

As a result, he says, "there are people who believe that organizational politics are about to rebound. Person-to-person communication, voter contact, mobilization in general are more important because our mass-media techniques are neither as effective in reaching everybody nor have as much impact as they once did. The Internet has all kinds of potential for mobilizing campaign participation. Think of it in the old terms as a voter-contact vehicle as opposed to a mass-media vehicle."

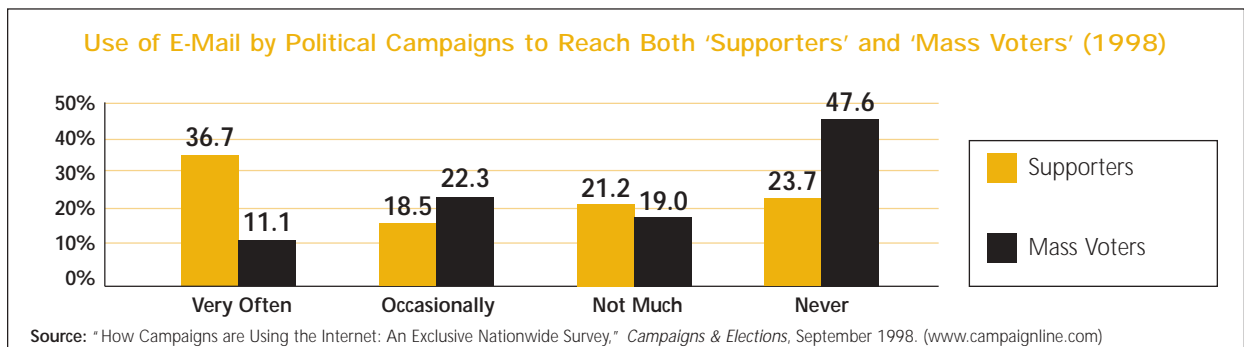
While not functioning as a mass medium like television, the Internet does enable individuals to bring topics to public attention, however, and that forces candidates "to be much more responsive to ordinary citizens," Murphy says. "Issues are being raised on Web sites by voters that campaigns would never have responded to in the past, and you have to figure out a way to respond."

That new transparency is a boon to good-government organizations such as the **Center for Responsive Politics**, which produces reports about politicians and money.

In the past, the center's typical 1,300-page report on campaign contributions would be published sometime after the election and would have no impact on the race, Larry Makinson, the center's executive director, said at a mid-1999 National Press Club program on the state of online politics. Now, regular updates are posted on the Web, which makes the information timely and useful for the news media and interested citizens.

The reports are formatted so they can be printed out on standard 8 1/2 by 11 paper.

Said Makinson: "We envision someone taking this to a



allowed supporters to use their credit cards to make campaign contributions on line.<sup>12</sup>

The Federal Election Commission gave a boost to Internet fundraising in the 2000 presidential campaign by ruling that contributions made by credit card can qualify for matching federal funds. Previously, credit card contributions would not be matched.

"The Internet is part of the divergence phenomenon

town meeting and waving a sheet of paper and saying, 'What about this contribution?' The most valuable thing citizens can do is let (politicians) know we are watching."

Without the Internet, these kinds of reports would never reach the general public, Makinson pointed out.

"There's no way even *The New York Times* would print this much information about contributions to candidates," he said.

In a mid-1999 interview with (appropriately) the

AllPolitics.com Internet news site, Democratic National Committee Chairman Joe Andrew declared that "whichever party can figure out how to most effectively and efficiently communicate through the Internet will be the party that will dominate the future."

*Washington Post* politics writer David Broder figures that the political importance of the Internet "is bound to grow."

"It takes a while to figure out how a really important technological breakthrough can be adapted to your political pur-

pose, or to measure what the impact of it is on the political system and the political culture," Broder says. "We're very much in the beginning stage of this."

"Just as we now look back at those first television ads in the Eisenhower campaign and say, 'Boy, it was pretty crude,' I expect 10 years from now or 20 years from now people will look at the way candidates and governments are using the Internet now and say, 'Gee, they really didn't understand the potential of this thing.'"

## All the News All the Time

Rebecca Fairley Raney, of *The New York Times'* online service, may be the quintessential Internet Age reporter.

Online visionaries say the Internet Age promotes independence and free agency rather than corporate employment, and Raney is a freelancer who writes primarily for *The Times* but is not a *Times* employee.

She covers national politics and the Internet, but she isn't stationed in the hub of U.S. politics, Washington, D.C. Instead, she works from her rural home in the California mountains about 100 miles from Los Angeles.

"I live," she says, "by listservs, electronic newsletters and e-mail. The fact that it's possible for me to live 100 miles from anywhere and break Washington stories before the Washington press corps would not have been possible 12 years ago."

The Internet has changed the news media at least as much as it's changed anything. It has created competition and challenge for established news organizations, but also has offered the established media new news-gathering tools and global reach. It has ripped out the media's role as gatekeeper because it has ripped down the gates. But in the cacophonous babble that it has spawned on line, it has created a new need for trusted guides. And the traditional news organizations may be best positioned to offer that guidance.

*American Journalism Review* reported in June 1999 that there were 4,925 newspapers online worldwide, 2,799 of them in the United States. Many simply post part of their printed content on the Web, but others — including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* — are creating online services that mesh some of their printed content with Web-unique product. It is at once a step ahead and back to the future.

In terms of covering the news, says washingtonpost.com Politics Editor Mark Stencel, online newspapering is "in many ways a return to the afternoon edition." Because they could not compete with television's immediate coverage of news events, newspapers responded by downgrading hard-news coverage and emphasizing analysis and other, softer content.

Because the online newspaper can be updated as often as its editors wish, Stencel says, "the Internet is putting newspapers back into the breaking news business," he said.

Currently, most of that breaking news comes from the newspapers' shoveling wire service reports onto their Web sites. But *Post* reporters occasionally have filed stories for the online edition when the final print deadline had passed, and Stencel expects that to happen more often. Washingtonpost.com conducts live chats with newsmakers who answer readers' questions. *Post* reporters and editors frequently participate in chats. And the print and online versions of the *Post* are learning synergy.

When the print *Post* publishes a report based on a voluminous database or a massive compilation of government documents, all of the data and all of the documents can be posted online.

Other media are discovering the benefits of having an online presence, Stencel notes. ABC reporters working with the PoliticsNow Web site during the 1996 campaign "figured out that it was a great outlet for them," he says, "because their notebooks had so much more in them than they could convey in a two-and-a-half-minute television story."

The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press surveys reveal a growing appetite for online news, center Director Andrew Kohut reports. In late 1998, 20 percent of the American public was going to the Internet for news at least once a week and nearly 10 percent were doing so every day, he says. They look primarily for weather, sports scores,

"If a story is broken  
by a newspaper,  
you're not down  
on the (newspaper's)  
loading dock at 1 a.m.  
to pick up what  
they're saying.  
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the Internet."

Steve Murphy,  
political consultant

stock quotes and headlines. And they turn most often to the television networks' Web sites.<sup>13</sup>

Among the most eager — if selective — online news consumers are those in the public affairs business.

As political consultant Steve Murphy puts it, "If a story is broken by a newspaper, you're not down on the (newspaper's) loading dock at 1 a.m. to pick up what they're saying. It's posted on the Internet."

Exxon government affairs manager Woody Madden checks newspapers online the night before publication when he's expecting a story about his company.

"I can go into *The Houston Chronicle's* Web site at 10:30 p.m. and read the headlines and the lead articles for the next day's newspaper," he explains. "If I'm looking for something, I'll do that with *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. I was on vacation at my brother's house in Colorado and I knew the *Times* was going to do a story on us. We got on the Web late at night in Colorado and found the story."

Newsmakers are taking the new online media seriously, Deputy White House Press Secretary Beverly Barnes has found. Top Clinton Administration officials have been made available for online chats. The White House press office has assigned a staffer to serve online news media.

The Internet — along with other telecommunications technologies — also is making newspaper reporters much more efficient.

"All you need is a phone line and your laptop, and not only does it enable you to file (stories to the newspaper) it enables you to surf the world. You can get everything in your hotel room that you can get at the office."

Carl Leubsdorf,  
*Dallas Morning News*

"There's a great deal more information that you can get without ever leaving your desk," notes *Dallas Morning News* Washington Bureau Chief Carl Leubsdorf, a long-time Washington correspondent and national politics writer.

"When I covered Capitol Hill in the '60s and '70s, the only way you could cover the House or Senate was to sit in the galleries and watch the debate. Now you can go back to your office and watch it on C-SPAN.

"In the old days you had to go to the White House briefing or the State Department briefing to know what was said there. Now it might be on TV, and there's a Federal News Service transcript" available online by subscription.

When traveling, Leubsdorf points out, "all you need is a

phone line and your laptop, and not only does it enable you to file (stories to the newspaper) it enables you to surf the world. You can get everything in your hotel room that you can get at the office."

Because of the Internet, says Cox Newspapers Washington Bureau Chief Andrew Alexander, the Cox bureau no longer needs a librarian. The correspondents "all do their own research at their desks. The depth of our reporting is much greater. It probably allows us to get into our stories a lot more voices that are not official voices and that are outside Washington. By checking Web sites, we're hearing what people outside Washington are saying, and we have the opportunity to follow up."

"During the Kosovo conflict, I routinely checked the many Web sites that deal exclusively with the issue — Serb Web sites, Serb government Web sites, Serb American Web sites. There's a Kosovo Liberation Army Web site that I used to help craft the coverage of our own reporter in Albania."

One thing that has not changed is that there still has to be that reporter on the ground in Albania, just as there still are reporters swarming Capitol Hill, trailing candidates across the country, and chatting up sources over lunches and beers.

"Virtually all of the reporters that I care about do research on the Internet," says Eric Rabe, assistant vice president for corporate communications at Bell Atlantic. "But, when something happens very fast, people still pick up the phone. The relationships between me and my staff and the most important people who cover us are still important."

As Carl Leubsdorf puts it: "There's still no substitute for being there and talking to the players in their neighborhoods and watching candidates in their milieu."

Even Rebecca Raney, holed up on her California mountain, believes in the importance of personal contact. "My source base is very wired," she notes. "It almost seems suspicious if you want to meet face-to-face."

But — when she's completed all the online research she can do on a story and it's time for interviews — she moves offline. "I need to call people up and chat," she says. "I try to avoid e-mail interviews. I'd really rather talk on the phone."

The Internet — coupled with the round-the-clock cable news channels — has pressed the news media's accelerator to the floor. Reporters and editors used to think in terms of morning and evening newspaper cycles. An evening network

"The depth of our reporting is much greater. It probably allows us to get into our stories a lot more voices that are not official voices and that are outside Washington."

Andrew Alexander,  
Cox Newspapers

news cycle was added. Now, the cycle never ends, and there is relentless pressure to file news reports instantly.

"When I covered the Camp David Summit 20 years ago, it ended on a Sunday and for the Monday paper I wrote the main story," Leubsdorf recalls. "For Tuesday's paper, I wrote the reaction story. For Wednesday's paper, I wrote the political fallout story. Today you do that all in the Monday paper. Now it's live on CNN as soon as it happens. Then it's all over 'Inside Politics,' 'Crossfire,' 'Larry King.' By the next day, you've got polling on it."

With the perpetual cycle, editors are having a harder time deciding what is news.

"Our editors might think something is more important than it really is because it's on CNN all day," Leubsdorf points out. "Or they may take the attitude that, since it's been on the air all day, it's not news any more."

Internet speed also can bring instant feedback to journalists, which columnist Clarence Page thinks is great.

"I did a column yesterday, and already I have four e-mails about it," Page, who works from *The Chicago Tribune's* Washington Bureau, said. "It will be three or four days before I get any snail mail."

Because Page finds e-mail so much easier to use, he's more likely to reply to his e-mail correspondents.

The speed and openness of the Internet actually bestow mixed blessings on the news media and their audiences, according to political scientist Bruce Bimber.

"To the extent that news organizations, because of the speed and continuous cycle, have less quality control, that's bad," Bimber says. "On the other hand, there may be some stories and issues that get out and get attention that might have been crowded out otherwise. Information of particular interest to specific groups can travel on the Internet and form an informal news network as a kind of alternative to the mainstream media."

Several newspapers — including *The Dallas Morning News* — had to recall erroneous stories that they had hastily posted on the Internet in order to be the first to report the news. The established news media also are tempted to abandon their traditional standards of accuracy when allegations are made public through Web postings that might emanate from organizations or individuals who don't even pretend to follow conventional journalistic methods of verification.

One of the biggest challenges to the media is "to resist the temptation to report something just because it's, 'out there,'" Alexander says.

It's not just a matter of verifying the accuracy of an item, Alexander emphasizes, but also of judging whether it's worthy of publication even if true — a report of a politician's sex-

ual indiscretion, if it appeared to have no relevance to his public life, for example.

It's also not safe to dismiss unconventional sources out of hand, he warns. Matt Drudge, author of the *Drudge Report*, is widely reviled by traditionalists as something less than a "real" journalist. Yet much of what he reports — most famously that *Newsweek* magazine was sitting on the Clinton-Lewinsky exposé — has turned out to be true. And his Web site is a convenient source of links to an enormous number of news media sites of all sorts.

Drudge argues that he is a harbinger of a near future when "every citizen can be a reporter, can take on the powers that be."

"The Net gives as much voice to a 13-year-old computer geek like me as to a CEO or speaker of the House," Drudge said when invited to deliver a National Press Club address in 1998. "We all become equal. Now, with a modem, anyone can follow the world and report on the world — no middle man, no big brother. I envision a future where there'll be 300 million reporters, where anyone from anywhere can report for any reason. It's freedom of participation absolutely realized. Clearly there is a hunger for unedited information, absent corporate considerations."

Others believe the opposite.

Drudge is right that the era of the gatekeeper is over, they concede. No longer will editors — selecting information for limited newspaper space and limited broadcast time — also determine what information never reaches the public at all. The Internet has no limits, so information deemed unworthy of publication in a particular newspaper, can be posted easily someplace on the Web.

But the Web then becomes an overgrown information jungle that cries out for guides who can help the public decide what is useful and true. And who is better positioned to supply those guides than the established media themselves?

"When you have information overload," political consultant Phil Noble notes, "then who synthesizes and edits and interprets and orders that information becomes of greater value. What becomes critical on the Internet is brand, and that applies to news and information as well as products. Who is it who is taking all this stuff and providing it to me in a way I think is relevant and credible and useful to me? Those brands are going to become incredibly important."

"The Net gives as much voice to a 13-year-old computer geek like me as to a CEO or speaker of the House. We all become equal."

Matt Drudge,  
*Drudge Report*

# Virtual Certainty: No Virtual Government

Project Vote Smart [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)

Smart Voter [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)

In only a few short years, the Internet has changed the playbook – if not the rules – of the game. Members of Congress talk about cybercasts and Web fundraising as if they had been engaging in both all their political lives. Reporters gain access to a trove of information and generate stories 24 hours a day. Activists are better able to coordinate volunteers and play watchdog in an increasingly transparent society. Corporations harness the grassroots potential of their employees, suppliers and retirees; unions do likewise with their members. The doors of government, meanwhile, open wider as the public moves closer to the public policy-making process.

In the future, with improvements in Internet technology and more creative thinking by those who employ it, everyone should be able to make more informed decisions. Already, voter information sites such as **Project Vote Smart** and **Smart Voter** provide citizens with detailed information on candidates and office holders and help them understand policy issues.

For those already interested, but who have never been involved in politics, the opportunities are boundless. In a 1998 study sponsored by Hockaday Donatelli Campaign Solutions and GOPAC, over 90 percent of campaign volunteers who signed up via the Internet had not been recruited. For more than half of this group, it was their first experience volunteering for a political campaign.<sup>14</sup>

To the ears of many Internet enthusiasts, all of this activity from all of these players sounds like the makings of a virtual government, or at least a digitally-based, direct democracy.

But here's a good bet about the future: Even if all Americans get linked to the Internet, they won't tear down their national and state capitols.

Despite some digital visionaries' dreams, there will be no virtual legislatures with lawmakers conducting all their legislative business from their home PCs. Neither will there be direct democracy by an online plebiscite.

There is a distinction between "what we can do and what we should do," declares political consultant Phil Noble, who is no slouch of an online visionary in his own right. "Just because you can do something, doesn't mean you necessarily ought to. Just because we will be able to vote online doesn't mean we ought to get rid of representative democracy."

"The more tools there are, the more valuable will be those who can use the tools well."

Michael Gessel,  
Congressional aide

Americans eventually will vote online, Noble predicts. But it will be to elect the public officials who will go to Washington, the state capitols and city hall to set public policy.

Many believe that American democracy works precisely because lawmakers from around the country – or around a state – come together in one place.

Mary Anne Sharkey, the Ohio governor's aide, tells of talking with a black legislator from Cleveland who "had never met someone who lived in Appalachian Ohio until she became a member of the General Assembly. Then she came to realize that inner city kids and poor rural kids have a lot of the same issues."

"Some of the most important work we do," adds Representative Boucher, "is conducted in committee during hearings or during markups, where there is face-to-face discussion about the minutia of the issues that we are grappling with."

Besides, public opinion expert Kohut says, "people don't want to make a decision every moment about every thing that comes down the pike. They're not sitting in front of their PCs, ready to give thumbs up or thumbs down on the latest health care policy or the latest foreign policy question."

"It's almost impossible to imagine how you would write a budget in a plebiscite."

David Broder,  
*The Washington Post*

Pointing to the most important bills that come before every legislature every one to two years, David Broder wonders if the average citizen "is going to want to spend a lot of time passing routine appropriation bills."

"Budget making, I think, is almost inherently something you need to do in a representative assembly of people who are prepared to negotiate and make the tradeoffs," Broder explains. "It's almost impossible to imagine how you would write a budget in a plebiscite."

The Internet does increase opportunities for citizens to influence public policy. But Andrew Kohut does not agree that the Internet is causing the average American to become more politically active.

## Online Political Activism (As a percentage of Internet Users)

	1996	1998
Got news or information about elections	22%	15%
Engaged in political discussions online	11%	11%
Used e-mail to send political messages	17%	15%
Visited issue-oriented Web sites	--	28%

Source: *The Internet New Audience Goes Ordinary*, The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, 1999.



“People don’t  
want to make a  
decision every moment  
about everything that  
comes down the pike.”

Andrew Kohut,  
The Pew Research Center  
for The People & The Press

Internet users have tended to come from groups that are more politically active than average in the first place, Kohut points out. As more Americans go online — and the online world becomes “more mainstream” — the proportion of Internet users who are interested in politics is going down, he says. During the 1998 campaign season, for instance, just 15 percent of Americans with online access turned to the Internet for election news and information, down from 22 percent in 1996, according to surveys by The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press, which is directed by Kohut.

While this result may be explained in part by the normally expected drop of interest from the 1996 presidential campaign, other findings in the surveys underscore Kohut’s analysis. Just 11 percent of those who had gone online within the previous year used the Internet for election news, compared with 19 percent of longer-term surfers. Just 7 percent of the newer Internet users had e-mailed a group or official about a

public issue, compared with 21 percent of the more-experienced users. Just 7 percent of the new users had engaged in an online discussion about politics, compared with 14 percent of longer-term users.<sup>15</sup>

“The opportunity is there,” Republican congressional aide James Smith says, “but it still takes hard work and knowledge about how the system works [to influence public policy]. People don’t become activists unless they want to be. And they won’t be effective unless they want to work hard at it.”

Democratic congressional aide Michael Gessel agrees. “I no more expect people who lack political and government skills to become better at dealing with government because of new computer-related tools than I expect new word-processing programs to turn people into writers.”

In fact, Gessel predicts, the Internet actually will increase the influence of “the middle men — the lobbyists, the associations, the citizen action groups, the government affairs operatives — because they will have better access to both the people and the policy makers.

“The more tools there are, the more valuable will be those who can use the tools well.”

If that’s the case, the answer to the question of the Internet’s impact on public policy-making may be a simple one.

Because of information technology, this nation may see a much higher level of total political activity -- but only from the minority who truly care about politics.

## Appendix 1: Sources

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5. **Representative Rick Boucher** (D-Va).
6. **Nancy Brigham**, Webmaster, United Auto Workers.
7. **David Broder**, Political Correspondent and Columnist, *The Washington Post*.
8. **Ronald Budzik**, Vice President, Government Affairs, Mead Corporation.
9. **Senator Conrad Burns** (R-Mt).
10. **David Carle**, Press Secretary, office of Senator Patrick Leahy, (D-Vt).
11. **Margaret Conway**, Managing Director, Human Rights Campaign.
12. **Pete Dobrozi**, Director, State Government Affairs, Mead Corporation.
13. **Suzy DeFrancis**, Senior Vice President, Porter Novelli.
14. **Ken Deutsch**, Vice President, Internet Strategic Communications, Issue Dynamics, Inc.
15. **Pam Fielding**, Principal, e-advocates.
16. **Michael Gessel**, Democratic Staff Director, U.S. House Rules Committee Subcommittee on the Rules and Organization of the House.
17. **Faye Gorman-Graul**, Director, Washington Office/Government Relations, Dow Corning Corporation.
18. **Chuck Greener**, Executive Vice President, Porter Novelli.
19. **Steven Hess**, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution.
20. **Link Hoewing**, Assistant Vice President, Issues Analysis, Bell Atlantic.
21. **Donna Jablonski**, Publications Director, AFL-CIO.
22. **Elaine Kamarck**, Executive Director, Visions of Governance for the 21st Century, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.
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24. **Carl Leubsdorf**, Washington Bureau Chief, *The Dallas Morning News*.
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32. **Ralph Reed**, President, Century Strategies.
33. **Alan Rosenthal**, Professor, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University.
34. **Mary Anne Sharkey**, Communications Director, office of Governor Bob Taft II (R-Oh).
35. **James Smith**, Director, Communication and Information Center, House Republican Conference.
36. **Mark Stencel**, Politics Editor, Washingtonpost.com.
37. **Ray Towle**, Director, Public Policy Division, American Society of Association Executives.

38. **Richard Viguerie**, Chairman, American Target Advertising.
39. **Mary Wareham**, Senior Advocate, Arms Division, Human Rights Watch.
40. **Denise Wible**, Communications Director, Ohio Chamber of Commerce.
41. **Linda Woggon**, Vice President, Government Affairs, Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

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2. **Chris Casey**, Technology Advisor, Democratic Technology and Communications Committee, United States Senate. Presentation at National Press Club Program on the State of Online Politics. May 27, 1999.
3. **Larry Makinson**, Executive Director, Center for Responsive Politics. Presentation at National Press Club Program on the State of Online Politics. May 27, 1999.
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3. **Jody Williams**, International Ambassador, International Campaign to Ban Land Mines. Excerpt from "The Lexus and the Olive Tree," by Thomas L. Friedman, (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1999). [www.lexusandtheolivetree.com/globalization.htm](http://www.lexusandtheolivetree.com/globalization.htm)

## Appendix 2: Useful Internet Sites

### Political Parties

1. Democratic National Committee – [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)
2. Libertarian Party – [www.lp.org](http://www.lp.org)
3. Reform Party – [www.reformparty.org](http://www.reformparty.org)
4. Republican National Committee – [www.rnc.org](http://www.rnc.org)

### Federal Government Sites

1. White House – [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)
2. House of Representatives – [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)
3. United States Senate – [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)
4. Congressional Internet Caucus – [www.netcaucus.org](http://www.netcaucus.org)
5. House Republican Conference – [hillsource.house.gov](http://hillsource.house.gov)
6. House Democratic Caucus – [dcaucusweb.house.gov](http://dcaucusweb.house.gov)
7. Library of Congress – [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)
8. Supreme Court – [supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/index.html](http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/index.html)
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2. Senator Patrick Leahy – [www.senate.gov/~leahy/](http://www.senate.gov/~leahy/)
3. Representative Rick Boucher – [www.house.gov/boucher/](http://www.house.gov/boucher/)
4. Representative Tony Hall — [www.house.gov/tonyhall/](http://www.house.gov/tonyhall/)
5. Governor Jesse Ventura – [www.jesseventura.org/](http://www.jesseventura.org/)

### Special Interest Sites

1. AFL-CIO Executive PayWatch – [www.aflcio.org/paywatch/ceou\\_compare.htm](http://www.aflcio.org/paywatch/ceou_compare.htm)
2. The Benton Foundation – [www.benton.org/Practice/Best/advoc.html](http://www.benton.org/Practice/Best/advoc.html)
3. Center for Democracy and Technology – [www.cdt.org](http://www.cdt.org)
4. Center for Responsive Politics – [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org)
5. Christian Coalition – [www.cc.org](http://www.cc.org)
6. Corporate Watch – [www.corpwatch.org/trac/links/links.html](http://www.corpwatch.org/trac/links/links.html)
7. DefendYourPrivacy.com – [www.defendyourprivacy.com](http://www.defendyourprivacy.com)
8. E-the People – [www.e-thepeople.com](http://www.e-thepeople.com)
9. Flat Tax Calculator – [www.flattax.gov](http://www.flattax.gov)
10. Human Rights Campaign – [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)
11. If Not Now – [www.ifnotnow.com](http://www.ifnotnow.com)
12. International Campaign to Ban Landmines – [www.icbl.org](http://www.icbl.org)
13. MoveOn.Org – [www.moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org)
14. National Education Association – [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)
15. Ohio Chamber of Commerce – [www.ohiochamber.com](http://www.ohiochamber.com)
16. United Auto Workers – [www.uaw.org](http://www.uaw.org)
17. The Virtual Activist – [www.netaction.org/training/](http://www.netaction.org/training/)

### Voter Education Sites

1. Project Vote Smart – [www.vote-smart.org](http://www.vote-smart.org)
2. Smart Voter – [www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)
3. Web, White, and Blue – [www.webwhiteblue.org](http://www.webwhiteblue.org)

### General Political/Public Policy Sites

1. Campaigns and Elections – [www.campaignline.com](http://www.campaignline.com)
2. CNN/AllPolitics.com – [www.allpolitics.com](http://www.allpolitics.com)
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10. Politics 1 – [www.politics1.com](http://www.politics1.com)
11. PoliticsOnline – [www.politiconline.com](http://www.politiconline.com)
12. Roll Call – [www.rollcall.com](http://www.rollcall.com)

### Academic Studies/Think Tank Sites

1. Campaign '98 Internet Study – [www.campaignsolutions.com/Campaign98/index.html](http://www.campaignsolutions.com/Campaign98/index.html)
2. Congressional Use of the Internet: A Summary Analysis of a Survey of Congressional Offices – [www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/research1.htm](http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/research1.htm)
3. The Digital Citizen – [www.hotwired.com/special/citizen/](http://www.hotwired.com/special/citizen/)
4. Falling Through the Net – [www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/digitaldivide/](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/digitaldivide/)
5. Georgia Tech Univeristy's Graphics, Visualization & Usability Center's World Wide Web User Surveys – [www.gvu.gatech.edu/user\\_surveys/](http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/)
6. Government and Politics on the Net Project – [www.polsci.ucsb.edu/~bimber/research](http://www.polsci.ucsb.edu/~bimber/research)
7. The Internet News Audience Goes Ordinary – [www.people-press.org/tech98sum.htm](http://www.people-press.org/tech98sum.htm)
8. Kennedy School's Visions of Governance for the 21st Century – [www.ksg.harvard.edu/visions](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/visions)
9. Net Gains: The 106th Congress on the World Wide Web – [www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/netgain.html](http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/netgain.html)
10. Speaking Up in the Internet Age: Use and Value of Constituent E-Mail and Congressional Web Sites – [ombwatch.org/www/ombw/html/summary.html](http://ombwatch.org/www/ombw/html/summary.html)
11. Untangling the Web: Internet Use During the '98 Election – [www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/article.htm](http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/article.htm)

## Notes

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[www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/netgain.html](http://www.american.edu/academic.depts/spa/ccps/netgain.html)
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- 10 Elaine Ciulla Kamarck, *Campaigning on the Internet in the Off-Year Elections of 1998*, 1999.  
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