Keys to Civic Engagement

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Reaching Constituents – Inside and Out

• Fun facts from website research

• 50 States - 50 Networks

• Old technology: Television!
Fun Facts from Website Research

• Research conducted in early 2010 to test effectiveness of *ncta.com* website

• Quantitative and qualitative

• Respondents: journalists; Congressional & FCC staff; think tank execs; public policy wonks
Fun Facts from Website Research

• Key findings among respondents

  – Virtually all acknowledged the role of the web in delivering timely and important information

  – But, most are overwhelmed by deluge of information

  – More than half complained of the difficulty of examining websites with *too much information*
Fun Facts from Website Research

- Key findings among respondents
  - 60 percent said they welcome timely email alerts providing significant new information
  - Half said they follow these email leads to click through to more information
  - Half said it is difficult to stay current on proposed legislation and reports from Congressional committees and federal agencies
Fun Facts from Website Research

• Key findings among respondents
  – Many complained it is difficult to sift through poorly designed websites that make it difficult to find relevant information
  – What they are seeking:
    • Access to industry data
    • Timely news developments
    • Regulatory filings and policy statements
    • Press statements
    • News about relevant events
Fun Facts from Website Research

• Key findings among respondents
  – Time pressures are paramount
    • Reporters said their visits to all websites are “as brief as possible” and they have little time to explore new sites
    • Majority said they don’t browse through multiple links on site – “they get the information and data they need, and then leave the site”
Fun Facts from Website Research

• Recommendations & conclusions
  – Keep sites clean, simple, uncluttered
  – Push information to those who care to opt in
  – Less text; more video
50 States – 50 Networks

• State Public Affairs Networks (“State-SPANS”)

“…Using programming, funding, and organizational models tailored to each individual state…networks provide C-SPAN style, gavel-to-gavel, non-partisan, unfiltered coverage of the daily activities of state government, including state legislative, court and agency proceedings, as well as public policy events, supplemented with a variety of produced public affairs programming.”
50 States – 50 Networks

- State Public Affairs Networks ("State-SPANS")
  - Often emulate C-SPAN
  - Management, funding, and operating models vary widely
  - Most also present in cyberspace
  - Enjoy the advocacy of an association, National Association of Public Affairs Networks, which has launched the "50 States – 50 Networks" initiative
State-SPANs in 25 States

- New York
- Connecticut
- Rhode Island
- Pennsylvania
- New Jersey
- Delaware
- South Carolina
- Florida
- Ohio
- Kentucky
- Michigan
- Wisconsin
- Illinois
- Minnesota
- Arkansas
- Louisiana
- Nebraska
- Texas
- Montana
- Washington
- Oregon
- Nevada
- California
- Alaska
- Hawaii
50 States – 50 Networks

• Value of the State-SPANs
  – Picking up the slack in coverage of state government
  – Pipeline via mass media to households
  – Long-form coverage of issues, providing substantial time for many points of view
50 States – 50 Networks

• Value of the State-SPANs

“...Networks provide the public with unfiltered access to state government and the actions of their elected representatives as well as an unbiased view of other civic activities...Long-form ‘process’ coverage supports government transparency and accountability at a time when traditional media organizations are reducing coverage of state government and issues.”
Old Technology – Television!

• In some areas, traditional avenues to constituents continue to exist through cable and other television media
  – “PEG” Access
  – Local Access
  – Leased Access
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