Legislative Correspondence Management Practices: Congressional Offices and the Treatment of Constituent Opinion

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CHAPTER I

CONSTITUENT INFLUENCE ON CAPITOL HILL

It is a sound and important principle that the representative ought to be acquainted with the interests and circumstances of his constituents.

- James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, No. 56

Give close and prompt attention to your mail. Your votes and speeches may make you well know and give you a reputation, but it's the way you handle your mail that determines your reelection.

- Speaker of House William Bankhead, quoted in Kefauver and Levin (1947)

In a representative democracy, elected officials are expected to act "in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin 1967, 209). Such a definition of representation and the function that Representatives should serve corresponds to the political system envisioned by the Founding Fathers. And the Founding Fathers designed the House of Representatives in particular to facilitate this responsiveness to constituents. In *The Federalist Papers* No. 35, Hamilton indicates that direct elections held every two years should lead to responsive behavior from Representatives: it is "natural that a man who is a candidate for the favor of the people, and who is dependent on the suffrages of his fellow citizens for the continuance of his public honors, should take care to inform himself of their dispositions and inclinations and should be willing to allow them their proper degree of influence upon his conduct" (Hamilton). From the Founders' perspective, by developing "an immediate dependence on, and an intimate sympathy with, the people," members of the U.S. House of Representatives would come to understand the preferences of the people that they represent and would act in line with those preferences in Congress (Madison, *The Federalist Papers* No. 52).

Following from the Founders' vision, Representatives' efforts to discern and respond to constituent policy preferences are an essential part of democracy in practice. In their efforts to respond to their constituents, Representatives should "seek out popular opinion…[and] give it weight if not the determinative voice in decisions," (Key 1964, 412). However, as Key (1964) notes, how elected officials learn about district preferences "in the day-to-day work of government presents…a phenomenon about which our systematic data are limited…[and] a certain amount of surmise must substitute for hard knowledge" (431).

Key's observation about our limited understanding of congressional learning still holds true today. Indeed, an extensive literature in political science has sought to assess the quality of representation evident in the American polity without attention to how representation functions in practice or, more specifically, how Representatives develop their understandings of the districts that they serve. Learning about constituent policy preferences is a prerequisite to responsiveness and to the effective representation of constituent interests. By concentrating on how congressional offices discern district opinion, this project extends the conventional focus of representation research from estimating the scope of responsiveness to understanding how responsiveness can be achieved. This chapter will lay the foundation for this effort to understand congressional learning, beginning with an overview of the policy responsiveness studies that have characterized much of the empirical study of representation in political science to date.

Representation and Policy Responsiveness

Studies of the quality of representation that Members of Congress provide for their districts have focused, almost exclusively, on their policy responsiveness to constituent views. These studies tend to concentrate on the roll-call voting decisions that members of Congress make on the House or Senate floor. Research in this tradition seeks to identify the influence that

constituents have over the decisions of their elected representatives, typically by estimating the extent of alignment between a representative's roll-call voting and the policy preferences of her constituents.[1] Through their focus on dyadic representation, these studies develop our understanding of the relationship between representatives and their constituents and assess how effective legislators are as agents for their constituencies.

In this research, scholars consider the influence that constituents have over their representatives' ideology and general legislative record (Erikson 1971, Kuklinski 1977, Elling 1982, Bullock and Brady 1983, Hood, Kidd and Morris 2001, Bishin 2000, Griffin and Newman 2005, Clinton 2006) or over their representatives' vote choice on a specific issue (Jackson and King 1989, Barrett and Cook 1991, Bartels 1991, Overby, Henschen, Walsh and Strauss 1992, McDonagh 1993, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Holian, Krebs and Walsh 1997). Taken together, both general roll-call record studies and issue-specific studies show that "across a number of different policies and time periods…constituency opinion affects congressional behavior" (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 9). In addition to identifying a trend of policy responsiveness that remains robust across different research designs, existing research has also identified several conditions where elected officials demonstrate higher levels of policy responsiveness.

Characteristics of policy issues themselves can dictate how closely Representatives and Senators adhere to constituent preferences. Studies consistently find that members of Congress are highly responsive to constituency opinion on salient political issues (Page and Shapiro 1983,

[1] This research admittedly only captures a representative's policy responsiveness, a limited definition of representation (Eulau and Karps 1977). While the large majority of representation studies focus on policy responsiveness evident on roll-call votes, other work considers additional ways members of Congress might operate as effective representatives of district interests, including through service responsiveness (i.e. casework (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987)), allocation responsiveness (i.e. pork barrel spending (Bickers and Stein 1994)), and other forms of policy responsiveness (i.e. bill co-sponsorship decisions (Harbridge 2013), position-taking (Highton and Rocca 2005)).

Bartels 1991, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Bovitz and Carson 2006, Griffin and Flavin 2007, Canes-Wrone, Minozzi and Reveley 2011). The heightened public concern associated with salient issues suggests that constituents are better able to hold representatives accountable for their actions on these issues, thereby inducing congruent behavior from their representatives (Krosnick 1990, Bovitz and Carson 2006). Additionally, the clarity of public opinion surrounding an issue facilitates policy responsiveness. Where there is a substantial and stable pull for policy change in one direction, elected officials are likely to align with constituency views (Cavanaugh 1982, Page and Shapiro 1983, Bartels 1991, Theriault 2005).

Several aspects of elections influence the degree of policy congruence that Senators and Representatives display in their legislative behavior. Senators exhibit higher levels of policy responsiveness as their next election nears (Kuklinski 1978, Elling 1982, Overby, Henschen, Walsh and Strauss 1992, Levitt 1996). The competitiveness of district elections has long been hypothesized to affect the behavior of members of Congress; however, research concerning the relationship between Representatives' electoral security and their congressional actions has produced decidedly mixed results. In some studies, electoral vulnerability has been linked to higher levels of responsiveness to constituency preferences (MacRae 1952, Froman 1963, Kuklinski 1977, Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Holian, Krebs and Walsh 1997, Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2001, Griffin 2006). However, others have found minimal differences in responsiveness between safe and unsafe Congressmen (Powell 1982, Bartels 1991).

Representatives have been shown to alter their voting behavior following institutional changes or shifts in their political circumstances. When the 17th Amendment effectively shifted Senators' political principals from state legislatures to state electorates, the policy preferences of

Senators' constituencies emerged as a significant influence on Senators' voting behavior (Gailmard and Jenkins 2009). Following a redistricting, Representatives tend to change their voting behavior to align with the opinions of their new constituencies (Glazer and Robbins 1985, Stratmann 2000, Leveaux-Sharpe 2001, Leveaux and Garand 2003, Boatwright 2004, Crespin 2010). Broader changes to the electoral bases of the political parties also impact the voting behavior of individual representatives; Hood, Kidd and Quentin (2001) show that the liberalization of southern Democratic Senators' voting records can be attributed to the growing presence of African Americans in the Democratic electoral coalition.

Though the degree of agreement observed between representatives' actions and citizen views can vary, depending on conditions like an issue's salience, research shows that Representatives and Senators consistently demonstrate responsiveness to the policy preferences that their constituents hold. Presumably, members of Congress maintain records that align with their constituents' views in an effort to improve their electoral prospects. Though Representatives and Senators are likely motivated by multiple goals (i.e. creating good public policy, accruing influence in Congress), members of Congress are commonly classified as "single-minded seekers of reelection" (Mayhew 1974, 5; see also, Fenno 1973). Since their efforts to secure good public policy or climb the ranks in their chamber depend upon winning reelection, members of Congress are necessarily focused on their electoral goal above all others. Representatives hope constituents will reward them at the polls for voting in line with district opinion.[2] However, constituents tend to have very limited awareness of the legislative work that their Representatives and Senators are doing in Washington. As a result, constituents typically

[2] Developing roll-call voting records that align with district preferences is only one way that members of Congress seek to secure their reelection. Representatives engage in many other activities in their efforts to improve their electoral prospects – advertising, credit-claiming, position-taking, casework and pork barreling (Mayhew 1974, Fiorina 1989).

lack the information necessary to reward their elected officials for their congruent roll-call behavior (Miller and Stokes 1963, Converse 1964, Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996).[3] Why, then, do members of Congress vote in line with district preferences so consistently, even when their constituents are unlikely to hold them accountable for their votes?

There is a widely held belief among representatives that their roll-call votes are visible to constituents and can be an important factor in constituents' voting decisions (Miller and Stokes 1963, Mayhew 1974, Fiorina 1974, Fenno 1978). Though members of Congress understand that constituents do not closely monitor every roll-call vote, some number of their votes will be watched and will come to matter at their next election. Their concern arises from uncertainty about which votes will come to matter (Fenno 1978).[4] This concern is only heightened when, with each election, members of Congress see some of their peers unexpectedly lose their bids for reelection. The specter of these losses reminds Representatives that one "misstep [can] wipe out [their] political careers," further fueling the belief that their legislative actions can be consequential (Fiorina 1974, 124).

Empirical evidence corroborates this impression; Representatives are, in fact, likely to face electoral consequences if their actions are "out-of-step" with constituent preferences (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002; see also, Erikson 1971, Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995, Jacobson 1996, Bovitz and Carson 2006, Griffin and Flavin 2007, Ansolabehere and Jones 2010, Canes-Wrone, Minozzi and Reveley 2011). Though "it is rare to find evidence of roll call positions contributing directly to electoral wins or losses given that so few incumbents are

[3] In contrast, other work contends that constituents are able to assess their Representatives' behavior on issues (particularly those issues that are important to them; see Krosnick 1990) and use those judgments to inform their voting behavior (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010).

[4] Attentive publics, issue publics, or potential challengers are likely to monitor Representatives' actions more closely than the remainder of the constituency (Arnold 1990, Krosnick 1990). As a result, it is more likely that the policy issues that these motivated and interested constituents consider important will come to matter in elections.

defeated from one election to the next," research shows that members of Congress who depart from the preferences of their constituents are likely to receive a lower share of the vote in the next election (Bovitz and Carson 2006, 305). And the electoral penalties that incongruent incumbents might incur are not insignificant. Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan (2002) estimate that a large shift toward the ideological extreme of their party can cost an incumbent Representative 2 percentage points in their next election; this punishment for policy non-responsiveness is comparable in magnitude to the effects of other factors commonly recognized as contributing to electoral outcomes, including freshman status and challenger quality. Each of these studies affirms the sense of members of Congress that their voting decisions do matter and that they "should rationally be concerned with the electoral impact of legislative voting" (Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002, 137).

While valuable for assessing the quality of representation provided in the American political system, the voluminous research in the policy responsiveness tradition fails to explore how the dynamics of representative-district relationships make policy responsiveness possible. How does the connection between representatives and their constituents actually function?

One response to this question has been manifested in efforts to refine our definition of constituency. Following from Fenno's articulation of the "nest of concentric circles" that characterizes a Representative's view of his district, recent scholarship has identified relevant subgroups within the broader geographic constituency and tested whether representatives' actions reflect the preferences of these subconstituencies (Fenno 1978).[5] By identifying and

[5] Subconstituencies that have been the subject of recent studies include: voters (Griffin and Newman 2005, Bafumi and Herron 2010), contributors (Bafumi and Herron 2010, Powell 1982), high-income constituents (Bartels 2008, Gilens 2005), Representatives' co-partisans in the district (Wright 1989, Brady, Brody and Ferejohn 1990, Clinton 2006), and Representatives' potential supporters (also known as the prospective constituency; Bullock and Brady 1983, Levitt 1996, Bishin 2000). In another approach to measuring subconstituency influence, Miler (2010) identifies issue-specific subconstituencies that were interested in policy outcomes for four particular bills before Congress in the early 2000s.

studying subsets of the district, subconstituency studies have captured, in part, the differentiated constituency groups that representatives see and interact with in their districts. These studies reveal that representatives develop a complex set of relationships within their districts where some subconstituencies are prioritized over others.

Research focused on subconstituencies does provide a more nuanced view of the relationships that representatives maintain with their districts. However, like the more traditional policy responsiveness work in the field, this research does not specify how representatives build and sustain these relationships within their districts. As a result, this research still fails to articulate how representatives interact with and learn about their constituents in practice. Indeed, the vast majority of research connecting constituency and/or subconstituency preferences to representatives' behavior has lacked attention to a critical intermediate step in the translation of constituency preferences into representative behavior: how do members of Congress learn what constituency preferences are?

In order for Representatives to react to constituent opinion, they need to be informed of what that opinion looks like. In fact, the effective representation of constituent interests depends on the ability of Representatives and their congressional staffs to know what policy actions their constituents prefer. Most existing scholarship has relegated this key information-gathering step into a black box; this project directly explores this process of congressional office learning.

Constituency Opinion and Representatives' Decision-Making

Though no scholarship to date has articulated the ways that congressional offices discern the policy preferences of their districts, existing literature on legislator decision-making can provide a foundation for this research question. In stark contrast to the policy responsiveness

approach that characterizes much of the study of representation, some scholarship has laid out more developed models of how constituent attitudes are integrated into the decision-making processes of members of Congress. These theoretical models develop the connection between members and their constituents, engaging how district attitudes fit into legislator's decisions. Early work following this approach incorporates legislator perceptions of constituent opinion, which captures the subjective nature of Representatives' understanding of their districts. Later work articulates comprehensive decision-making models that legislators utilize when faced with a roll-call vote in Congress. Each of these approaches elaborates on the way that the Representative-district relationship operates and, to some extent, identifies the information that legislators require to meaningfully incorporate constituent views into their decisions.

Legislator Perceptions of Constituent Opinion

As part of their theory of the Representative-district relationship, Miller and Stokes (1963) indicate several pathways through which constituent attitudes can influence congressional behavior. According to Miller and Stokes' (1963) familiar model, Representatives can cast their roll call votes based on their own attitudes or their perceptions of district attitudes, both of which can be informed by actual constituency attitudes on a given policy. By introducing legislator perceptions of constituent opinion as a pathway for district views to influence legislative behavior, Miller and Stokes (1963) identify an intermediate step in translating constituent preferences into legislative outcomes – a step that involves discerning constituent views in some way.

Though they elaborate on this additional point in the process, Miller and Stokes' (1963) analysis weakens this step's viability as a meaningful conduit for constituency influence on

elected officials. Using their data, they examine how closely member perceptions match the reality of constituent opinion in their district. Assessing how accurately members of Congress perceive constituent attitudes reveals that Representatives operate with "very imperfect information about the issue preferences of [their] constituenc[ies]" (56). In two of the three issue areas that Miller and Stokes consider, the correlation of actual district opinion with legislator perceptions of district opinion is quite low.[6] Other work evaluating the perceptual accuracy of legislators finds that members of Congress or state legislators have varying degrees of success in correctly determining constituency attitudes (Hedlund and Friesema 1972; Uslaner and Weber 1979; McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). More recently, Miler (2010) argues that a legislator's perceptions of his district's interests are "rarely accurate reflections of the objective reality of district composition" (103).[7]

Such studies of perceptual accuracy are useful in illuminating what representatives know about their districts. However, many studies in this area fail to consider how legislators actually develop their perceptions of their constituents and their policy attitudes. Miller and Stokes (1963) caution that lawmakers face a strong potential for developing biased assessments of constituency views since their interactions with constituents will occur mostly with more organized, more well-informed voters. Miler (2010) offers a comprehensive analysis of the determinants of legislator perceptions; her study confirms the biased nature of legislator perceptions, finding that perceptions of constituent interests are "systematically skewed in favor of those [constituents] active in contacting or contributing to the legislative office" (102). Miller and Stokes (1963) and Miler (2010) both suggest that the limited scope of interactions that Representatives can expect

[6] For foreign affairs, the correlation between actual district opinion and the Representative's perception of district opinion is only 0.19; for social welfare, the correlation is 0.17. However, for civil rights, the "charged and polarized" issue that they study, Representatives have a much more accurate perception of constituent opinion (r=0.63).

[7] For more discussion of Miler (2010), see Chapter 4, Correspondence Management and Perceptual Accuracy.

to have with their constituents informs the perceptions – or, in most cases, misperceptions – that Representatives develop about the shape of opinion in their districts.

Constituency Influence in Congressional Decision-Making Models

Offering a more comprehensive understanding of the potential for constituency influence in Congress, Fiorina (1974) and Kingdon (1989) each articulate models of representative decision-making, which highlight the roles that constituency attitudes might play in legislative decisions. In Fiorina's (1974) model, the roll-call voting decision made by a Congressman is a function of (1) his current probability of reelection, (2) the distribution of groups concerned about the issue,[8] and (3) the strength of those groups, with their strength determined by their capacity to change the representative's subjective probability of reelection (Fiorina 1974). Taken together, these components can provide an idea of whether a particular roll-call vote is likely to cost the Representative enough of his vote share at the next election to dissuade him from casting that vote. To make these projections, the Congressman needs to assess the configuration of interested voters and groups, the likelihood that these voters will care about the issue in a future campaign and the capacity for these voters to impact his probability of reelection. Following these calculations, the representative will aim to cast a roll-call vote that results in a comfortable probability of reelection.[9]

Fiorina's model offers a more developed framework for how constituent opinion is incorporated into legislative decisions. That said, while Fiorina identifies interested voters and their strength as aspects of constituent opinion that representatives need to consider when

[8] The distribution of groups can include groups that might be made to care about the issue at the time of the next campaign. As Fiorina notes: "less important than whether constituents actually care is whether the representative thinks they can be made to care" (33).

[9] In Fiorina's perspective, this comfortable probability of reelection should be at or above the Representative's "aspiration level," the level the member himself judges to be a satisfactory probability of reelection.

approaching a given vote, he doesn't articulate how members of Congress acquire this information. He does note, however, that each component of this decision-making calculus is subjective, in that it is informed by the Representative's own perceptions, and he argues that "the explanation for a representative's voting behavior lies in his perceptions, not in ours" (40). But this argument begs the question: how are these perceptions formed? What information do congressional offices have that gives the legislator an idea of what groups are invested in a policy, and their relative strength?

Going further than Fiorina's singular focus on constituent influence in Congress, Kingdon (1989) acknowledges that several different actors can influence the choices that Congressmen make, including other members of Congress, party leadership, interest groups and the executive branch. Still, even as one of many actors vying for an opportunity to influence members of Congress, the constituency is the "only actor in the political system to which the congressman is ultimately accountable" (Kingdon 29).

Even with electoral motives that encourage responsiveness to the district, discerning constituent attitudes and deciding when to act on them is not a straightforward process. Kingdon argues that only strongly held views in the district should weigh on legislator choices: "the congressman does not need to vote in agreement with everything his constituents say, but only on matters about which they feel intensely" (41). When constituents feel intensely about a policy, there is a much greater likelihood that Representatives will behave consistently with district opinion about that policy. The operating assumption for members of Congress is that the more intensely a constituent feels about a given issue, the more likely they are to take into consideration their Representative's action on that issue the next time that they cast a ballot. To ignore intense opinion is to risk electoral retribution.

To function according to Kingdon's decision-making model, members of Congress must identify a vote as relevant to their bid for reelection and determine the direction and intensity of opinion on the issue within their district. When a legislator sees a vote as important in helping him achieve his reelection goal, he will act in line with district opinion, but only when that district opinion is intense. Kingdon does briefly introduce possible resources to draw on for this type of information, suggesting that familiarity with the district and direct communications from the district are mechanisms through which legislators can obtain this information.

The Information Environment in Congressional Offices

Though each of these theories expands on how constituent opinion comes into play in legislative decisions, each is incomplete. Work on legislator perceptions of constituent opinion has generally omitted discussion of how these perceptions are shaped. Fiorina (1974) and Kingdon (1989) list the requisite information that members of Congress and their staffs must have to react to constituent opinion: legislators must discern both the direction and the strength of opinion in their district. With this information, the congressman can determine the electoral relevance of the issue and make an informed decision about how constituent opinion should affect their vote.

It is important to note that to comport with each of these models of decision-making, members of Congress must discern both the direction and strength of opinion in their district *on specific policy issues*. Many scholars have argued that representatives need only know the "general disposition" or have "a sense of the general preferences of the district" in order to represent district opinion effectively (Kuklinski 1978, 168; Bishin 2000, 397; see also Jackson and King 1989, Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995). These scholars contend that since "public

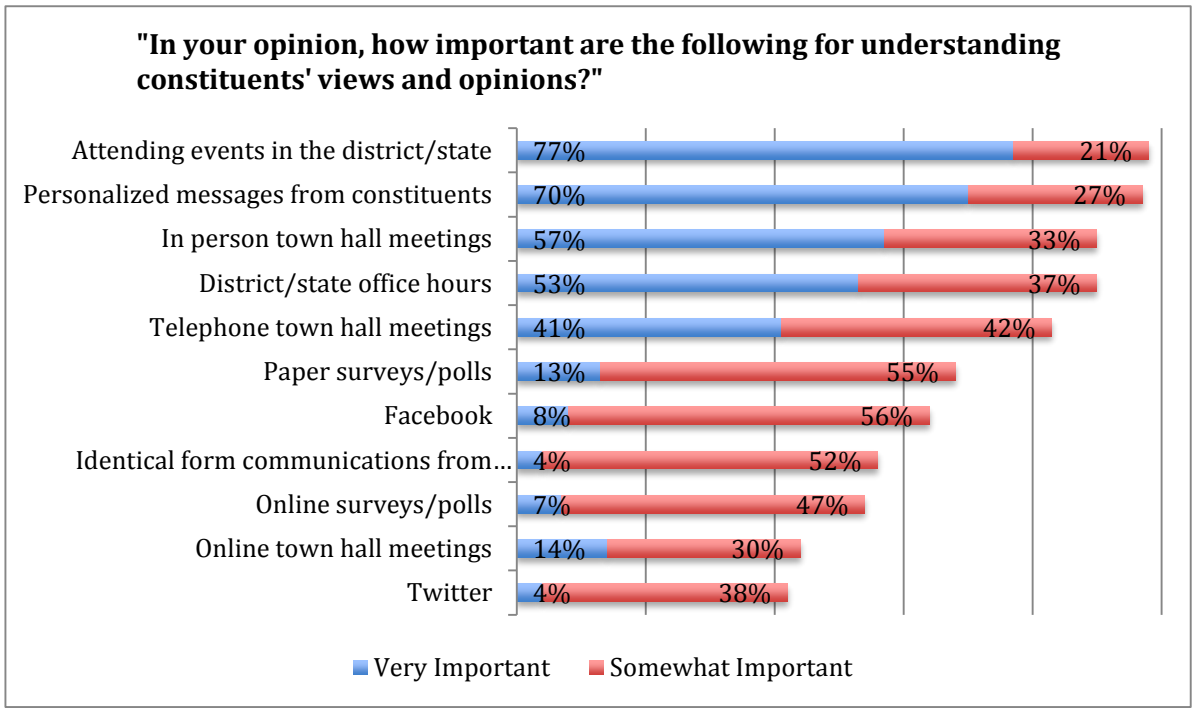
preferences only rarely crystallize on specifics," elected officials would prefer to have "preference information about broad issue areas that [they] can then translate into positions on specific policies" (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995, 545; Jackson and King 1989, 1160).

The reliance on general policy dispositions as a substitute for preferences on specific policies poses problems for members of Congress. First, there is a great deal of uncertainty inherent in translating preferences on broad dimensions into preferences on specific issues (Hedlund and Friesma 1972).[10] More importantly, general dispositions of the district do not convey any information about opinion intensity; how intensely constituents feel varies across different policy issues and cannot be captured by general public preferences. Fiorina (1974) and Kingdon (1989) clearly state that knowing the intensity of opinion is crucial to projecting the electoral consequences that policies could have. Any source of information that lacks this – including the general disposition of constituents – will fall short of the qualities that Kingdon (1989) and Fiorina (1974) identify as essential. Acknowledging the value of issue-specific information to members of Congress, where can Representatives and their staffs turn for this information? Kingdon (1989) suggests that correspondence and direct contacts would be valuable resources, but, beyond that general advice, the existing work fails to explore how members of Congress can actually obtain the requisite information.

Congressional offices have access to numerous resources that they can use to assemble information about the direction and strength of opinion on specific policy issues. Personal contacts, scheduled events, and town hall meetings are all opportunities for members of Congress and their staffs to see and hear, firsthand, what is driving public opinion, and what issues are capturing the attention of their districts. Offices can conduct their own polls or surveys

[10] Scholars have acknowledged this in the context of trying to infer policy preferences from election results, noting that the vote is "a rather blunt instrument for the communication of information about the needs and preferences of citizens" (Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie 1993, 304; see also Bartels 1991, Verba 2003).

Figure 1.1. Resources Congressional Offices Utilize to Understand Constituent Opinion.



Data from Congressional Management Foundation (2011a), *#SocialCongress: Perceptions and Use of Social Media on Capitol Hill.*

with district residents, or they can gather opinion information from existing surveys. Additionally, offices receive and manage thousands of pieces of direct correspondence from constituents, in the form of phone calls, emails, letters, faxes, Facebook posts and Tweets. Surveys conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) indicate that congressional offices consider many of these resources to be important tools for gauging public opinion (Figure 1.1).

With this wide array of resources that congressional staffers consider important for understanding constituents' views, it is necessary to reflect on which resources are the best suited to provide information about the direction and intensity of district attitudes on specific issues. While some idea about whether people support or oppose a particular policy change can be found with relative ease from each of these sources, the intensity with which they hold those

views is more difficult to discern (Frantzich 1986; Kingdon 1989). Scholars have argued that, in the absence of clear information about intensity of opinion, "Members evaluate it indirectly according to the amount of effort required to communicate" (Frantzich 1986, 81). Simply stated, the greater the effort expended to communicate a position, the more intensely the individual holds the view. When a constituent puts in the time and energy necessary to attend a rally in the district, or visit the district congressional office, or write a personalized letter or email to communicate his views on an issue, it signals to the congressional office that he cares about the issue and feels strongly about what should be done to address it. Intensely held opinions are more likely to weigh on the minds of voters at the ballot box; hence, "the more effort put into communicating an idea or position, the more likely that the member's utilization of that idea or supporting that position will serve as a key factor in the constituent's next electoral decision" (Frantzich 2003, 37; see also Kingdon 1989).[11]

Among contacts with the district that can effectively inform legislators, it is reasonable to suggest that correspondence may be the most important way for constituents to convey both the direction and intensity of their attitudes. As noted by Clapp (1963, 73), "mail is regarded as important in revealing what constituents are thinking about" and, through personalization of their emails, letters, phone calls or faxes, district residents are able to send clear signals to congressional offices about the strength of their views. Though constituents can similarly communicate their intensity in other ways, such as attendance at town hall meetings or other events in the district, opportunities for this kind of direct contact with elected officials are much

[11] Findings from the CMF (2011a) survey, reported in Figure 1, seem to correspond with this. Staffers identify the sources of information that require more personal investment from constituents as "very important" tools for discerning constituent views. Reaching out to the congressional office in less costly ways – by responding to surveys or by forwarding form contacts – is unlikely to capture opinion intensity as well; these forms of communication are rated as "somewhat important" tools for determining constituent opinion.

more limited; and "with face-to-face communication less likely, the role of more indirect communications such as the mail looms larger" (Frantzich 1986, 20).[12]

It should be no surprise, then, that managing correspondence from constituents is widely viewed as an important part of a Representative's job (Frantzich 1986). Nearly 90% of House staffers surveyed by the Congressional Management Foundation report that handling constituent communications is a high priority in their office (CMF 2011b). This close attention to constituent communications is nothing new. Writing in 1947, Representative Estes Kefauver (D-TN, 3) noted that "mail is the most practicable way of maintaining a close relationship between Congress and the people…. [The] chief reliance in 'feeling the pulse of the people' must be placed on the mail" (Kefauver and Levin 1947).

Congressional Correspondence Management in Political Science

Despite the obvious importance of constituent correspondence to congressional offices and the valuable information it can provide, we know very little, as a discipline, about this process; and what we do know is largely based on anecdotal evidence. The limited set of conclusions from this evidence is summarized here and represents the conventional wisdom about how congressional offices operate, and how they react to constituent correspondence.

Descriptions of correspondence management in Congress have been rare, but Clapp (1963) and Frantzich (1986) each provide brief accounts of congressional office practices for handling contacts from the district. Both scholars outline roughly the same process: one staffer sorts incoming correspondence and assigns it to the relevant legislative staffer who is tasked with

[12] Recently, Representatives seem to be turning away from the town hall format (Peters 2013). As observed in the *New York Times*, "people from both parties say they are noticing a decline in the number of meetings"; it is suggested that the angry tone at town halls in recent years has left Members reluctant to utilize this type of forum to engage with their constituents (Peters 2013). According to responses to this study's survey, 84% of offices surveyed do conduct town hall meetings in the district.

developing the appropriate response. As incoming contacts are processed, the staffer assigned to sort correspondence identifies and catalogs the subject matter of each contact, adding this information to a "card file" (Clapp 1963, 73) or to a mailing list (Frantzich 1986). Clapp (1963), writing about the Congressman's "work as he sees it," indicates that most Representatives want to see the legislative mail that they receive, but their role is typically limited to signing the responses drafted by his staffers.

Though they provide some of the only information to date about congressional office processing of constituent contacts, Clapp (1963) and Frantzich (1986) offer quite limited accounts of correspondence management. Additionally, since the time Clapp (1963) and Frantzich (1986) penned these brief descriptions, technological advances have dramatically changed the capabilities of legislative offices to process incoming contacts and of constituents to reach out to their elected officials.[13] The volume of contacts that offices now expect on a daily basis has increased substantially, particularly since Congress' incorporation of the Internet into their communications systems in the mid-1990s (CMF 2005, CMF 2011b).[14] Given the significant changes both in technology and in citizen advocacy, these early descriptions of correspondence management practices are unlikely to translate to the modern Congress.

Putting aside Clapp (1963) and Frantzich (1986), most attention in political science treatments of constituent correspondence has focused on how offices perceive personally drafted correspondence compared to "stimulated" communications. These stimulated contacts trace their origins to initiatives that are coordinated by organized interests with a stake in a policy area. The

[13] Frantzich (1986) writes during the early stages of congressional adaptation to computers. The House took a decentralized approach, allowing House offices the option to use their office funds to purchase computer equipment; at the time of his research, not all House offices were operating with computers.

[14] In 1995, all House offices combined handled 23 million letters or emails from constituents. In 2004, offices received approximately 109 million letters or emails from the district, which represented more than a 300% increase in constituent contacts since the Internet was introduced to Congress in 1995 (CMF 2005).

prevailing argument is that these large-scale grassroots campaigns are easily identified by representatives and are generally dismissed (Dexter 1956; Zeigler and Peak 1972; Fiorina 1974; Schlozman and Tierney 1986; Kingdon 1989). In fact, writing in 1956, Dexter articulates a portrait of the congressional perception of stimulated mail that has been largely unchallenged: that most congressional mail comes from a few sources, that "inspired mail tends to seem unduly uniform" and that stimulated mail campaigns can be spotted instantly (20). In these studies, we hear that Representatives express "disdain" for stimulated mail and see the constituents who communicate through interest group initiatives "as being neither intense about their preferences nor numerous enough to count much" (Kingdon 1989, 219; 57). As Schlozman and Tierney (1986) summarize, "the conventional wisdom has generally held that communications inspired by organizations usually betray their origins and that elected officials ignore or discount constituent communications bearing the scent of having been orchestrated" (195).

Interest groups tend to operate with Capitol Hill's aversion to interest group generated mail in mind, trying to adapt to congressional office practices. Aware that congressional offices catch onto grassroots campaigns quickly, many interest groups report going through extensive steps to camouflage their involvement in inspiring contacts (Schlozman and Tierney 1986). In Schlozman and Tierney's (1986) large-scale survey of Washington interest groups, more than two-thirds of interest groups that use grassroots pressure report making some attempts to obscure the source of contact and make it appear sincere. Dexter (1956), Zeigler and Peak (1972), Fiorina (1974) Schlozman and Tierney (1986) and Kingdon (1989), together with the interest group tendency to disguise their involvement, all suggest that interest group inspired contacts don't contain much information that is valued by members of Congress and, therefore, they are

discounted. Existing surveys of legislators and their staffs, however, have found that at least some weight is given to interest group inspired contacts.

In 1981, the now-defunct *STAFF: The Congressional Staff Journal*, a periodical produced on the Hill in the late 1970s and early 1980s, conducted a survey of congressional staffers. An article summarizing interviews with congressional staffers about their mail practices confirmed the "attention-getting power of communications from constituents" (*STAFF* 1981, 5). The authors found that spontaneous and individually composed letters ranked 1st, and orchestrated mail from constituents ranked 11th, on a list of 96 types of communication that are visible in congressional offices.[15] Kollman (1998) cites a Gallup survey of members of Congress, which finds that more than 70% of legislators rated non-form personal letters as having "a great deal of influence," whereas less than 25% of surveyed legislators rated computer-generated postcards as having "a great deal of influence" (Kollman 74).

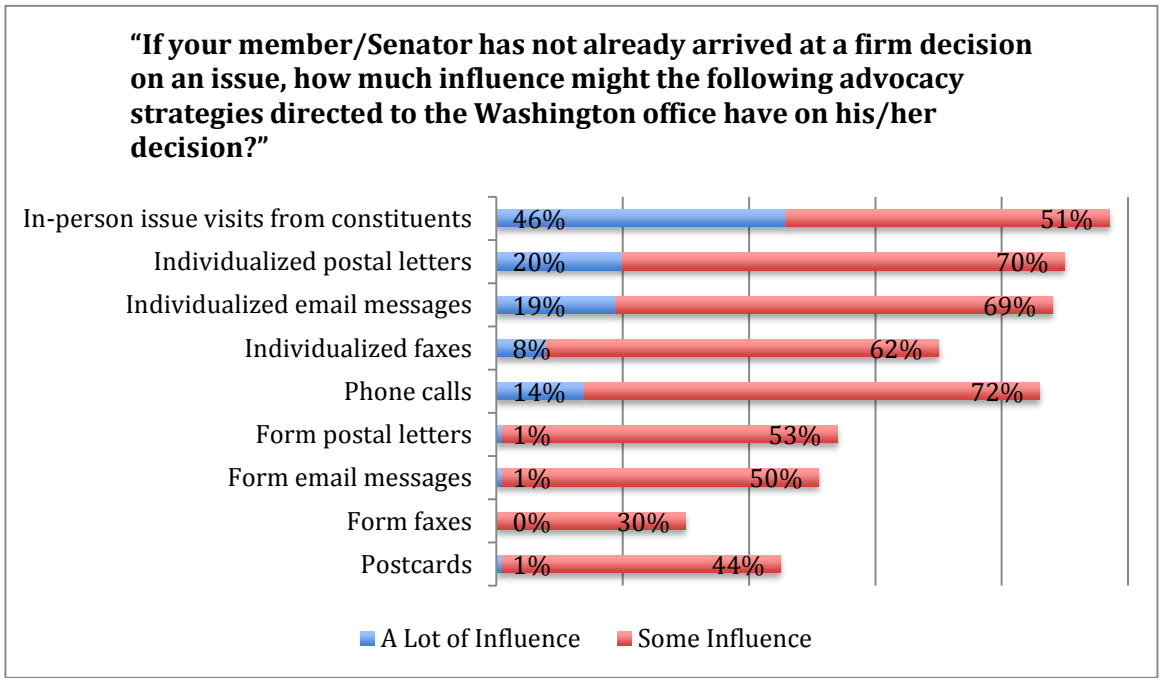
If stimulated contacts from constituents come to an office in sufficient quantity, there are some indications that the cautious congressman will pay attention to the numbers. Drawing on his research on reciprocal trade in the 1950s, Dexter (1977) argues that the voting decisions of Southern congressmen on the legislation were driven primarily by the significant number of contacts that they received, noting that "some southern Congressmen received more mail on the reciprocal trade question in a few weeks than they normally did in months on all issues combined…. They ha[d] never seen anything of the sort before" (Dexter 1977, 20). A staffer interviewed by Schlozman and Tierney (1986) suggests that this attention to large influxes of correspondence is a natural reaction for Representatives: "The congressman has to care that

[15] This result only suggests that orchestrated mail attracts the attention of staffers, yet it does not necessarily imply that attention translates into influence. Past references to this article (see Schlozman and Tierney 1983, 1986; Kollman 1998) have suggested otherwise, stating incorrectly that orchestrated mail ranked 11th out of 96 types of communication *in its ability to influence members of Congress*.

somebody out there in his district has enough power to get hundreds of people to sit down and write a postcard or a letter – because if the guy can do *that*, he might be able to influence them in other ways" (196, emphasis in original). Though they do not require much effort on the part of the individual constituents sending it, a flood of form contacts signals that a potential issue instigator is active, has the capacity to call attention to the issue, and has a group of constituents that are listening to him (Arnold 1990).

Though much of the evidence of how congressional offices perceive constituent contacts is anecdotal in nature, recent work by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) offers a more systematic view of the influence that different forms of constituent communication can have in congressional offices. Asking congressional staffers to indicate the influence that several different forms of communication might have on decisions being made in their office, CMF finds

Figure 1.2. Influence of Various Forms of Communication from Constituents on Representative Decision-making.



Data from the Congressional Management Foundation (2011b), *Communicating with Congress: Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy on Capitol Hill.*

a great deal of variation in the importance offices that attach to different contacts (Figure 1.2). Individualized letters, emails or faxes are more influential than form messages, though 50% of staffers indicated form letters or emails had some influence in their office. About 90% of staffers reported that individualized letters or emails would have some degree of influence on their member's decisions, with about 20% saying that they would have a lot of influence.

Given these competing findings, the conventional wisdom that communications that come to a congressional office as a result of an interest group campaign are ignored or discounted should be reconsidered. Kollman (1998), using less resolute terms than previous scholars, articulates what the existing evidence has suggested thus far: "constituent communications that seem to lack orchestration by a central organization…are more influential than obviously highly orchestrated ones" (75). In reality, however, no definitive account of how contacts are received and weighed in Congress has been written. True to conclusions drawn by Berry in 1977, the results thus far are still a "mixed picture of congressional attitudes" toward constituent communications (Berry 1977, 234).

Outline of the Project

This project seeks to replace our existing anecdotal understanding of constituent communications in Congress with "hard knowledge" (Key 1964, 431). While we have some idea about which forms of communication are available to congressional offices and which they find most valuable, there has been no systematic treatment of the ways that constituent attitudes are actually *received* in congressional offices. Using an original dataset constructed from surveys and interviews with congressional staff in 107 House offices, this dissertation will offer the first detailed description of how constituents contacts are treated by congressional offices.

Drawing from this original dataset, chapter 2 will provide rich description of the correspondence management practices used across Capitol Hill. Offices are free to adopt any correspondence management system that they choose and the dataset reveals that, indeed, congressional offices take different approaches to the tasks involved in managing correspondence. Some offices maintain extensive records of all contacts that they receive, while others keep more limited records, choosing not to log phone calls or faxes or social media contacts in to their correspondence databases. Many offices establish mail reports to share information about correspondence with others in the office, but there are differences across offices in how frequently the reports are circulated and which staffers read the reports. Why are these different correspondence management practices observed across congressional offices? In chapter 3, various district and legislator characteristics will be considered as possible explanations for the varying correspondence systems operating in Congress.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will turn to analyses using office correspondence practices as independent variables, assessing how the legislative behavior of members of Congress is related to their office communications processes. The relationship between office correspondence systems and the accuracy of staffer perceptions of public opinion will be the focus of chapter 4. Chapter 5 will evaluate how an office's approach to constituent communications affects the policy responsiveness of legislators. Chapter 6 will consider how office correspondence practices relate to Representatives' legislative activity, focusing in particular on Representatives' ability to advance their legislative agendas through Congress. A concluding chapter will provide an overview of the findings from the project and introduce several promising future directions for this research agenda.

CHAPTER II

DESCRIBING CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON CAPITOL HILL

There are 435 different ways it's done.

- Member of Congress, on correspondence management in Congress[16]

If correspondence from constituents is to meet its potential as a tool for offices to learn about district opinion, offices need to have an organized system for managing correspondence. Having established practices means that offices can efficiently process incoming contacts and translate them into useful information that can be applied to policy decisions. As noted in the first chapter, we have no systematic knowledge of how contact management systems in Congress operate. Using interview and survey data, this chapter outlines the mechanics of contact management on Capitol Hill, providing the first description of correspondence management practices that draws on reports from a large sample of congressional offices.

Before moving into this detailed discussion of congressional treatment of constituent correspondence, the chapter will provide an overview of basic congressional office organization and congressional staff job responsibilities, to provide context for the array of internal office operations that will be explored throughout this project. I then outline the data collection procedures employed in this research, and the characteristics of the resulting sample of congressional offices. I will highlight the volume of correspondence that offices typically receive from constituents, demonstrating that handling contacts from the district can be a substantial task for a congressional office. Then, several aspects of correspondence organization will be

[16] From interview with congressional staffer and member of Congress, March 2014

discussed, including which contacts offices record, what information is logged with each incoming contact, and what kind of system offices have in place to summarize the content of constituent correspondence to make it accessible to other staff in the office.[17] Differences in the ways congressional offices manage their correspondence emerge from this discussion; these differences can have important implications for how constituents connect with their elected Representative, and how Representatives and their staffers integrate district opinion into their legislative decisions.

Congressional Staff and Office Organization

In the modern Congress, each Representative acts as "the head of an enterprise," managing an office of up to 22 personal staffers (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981, 559).[18] As the chief executives of their own legislative enterprises, Members of Congress are given freedom to manage their personal offices as they see fit. The autonomy that each Representative has to structure their offices means that "there is considerable variety in ways that members organize their staffs" (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981, 560). The ability of Members of Congress to structure office operations extends to the assignment of job titles and the responsibilities that are associated with each title. The independence that Members have to designate job duties results in a lack of uniformity in staff positions across congressional offices; even staff that share the same title can have different responsibilities from one office to the next (Carlile 1981). Still, similarities in several staff positions can be observed across offices, making the basic

[17] By dealing with each part of the correspondence management system in this order, this organization of the chapter closely reflects the order in which offices actually process incoming contacts.
[18] According to the *Member's Congressional Handbook*, Representatives may employ up to 18 permanent staff members and 4 additional staffers (e.g. paid interns, shared employees, part-time employees, etc.). In 2010, the average congressional office had 17.4 employees (2010 House Compensation Study).

responsibilities assigned to each staff position at least roughly comparable across offices.[19]

Several staffers are relevant to the correspondence management tasks that are the focus of this study; job descriptions for each of these staff positions are summarized below, drawing from the 2010 House Compensation Study (HCS) list of primary duties for staff in each position.

Legislative Correspondents. Legislative Correspondents are central actors in processing communications from constituents. They are responsible for coordinating all contacts that the office receives, and for managing the responses that are sent to constituents. Legislative Correspondents are typically involved in every aspect of correspondence management that takes place within an office, but they often receive support and assistance from staff in other positions, including Staff Assistants and Legislative Assistants.

Staff Assistants. Staff Assistants perform various administrative tasks in most offices, including receiving and sorting incoming constituent contacts, particularly phone call contacts.

Legislative Assistants. Legislative Assistants are primarily tasked with monitoring legislative developments, drafting policy initiatives, coordinating legislative strategies and advising the Representative on the policies that fall within their assigned issue areas. Legislative Assistants may also share in the responsibility of drafting constituent correspondence in their issue area.

Not every office employs a Legislative Correspondent. In offices that operate without a Legislative Correspondent, responsibilities for managing constituent communications either fall to a staffer in another position or are distributed among several staffers. Relying on data from a

[19] The similarities in basic job descriptions across offices are confirmed by the recent House Compensation Study, which was commissioned by the Chief Administrative Officer of the House and surveyed Chiefs of Staff about several aspects of their office's internal organization. The survey included a job description for each staff position and asked Chiefs of Staff to indicate how closely that description reflected the responsibilities assigned to that staffer (either "very well", "somewhat closely" or "not very well"). For each staff position discussed here, at least 60% of House Compensation Study survey respondents indicated that the responsibilities that the survey listed for each staff position aligned "very well" with their office's job descriptions.

past survey conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation, it is clear that – other than Legislative Correspondents – Legislative Assistants and Staff Assistants are the staffers that are most often involved in correspondence management tasks.[20] Offices without designated Legislative Correspondents typically assign all the responsibilities associated with organizing and responding to constituent contacts to staff that serve in these two positions.

Chiefs of Staff and Legislative Directors can also be involved in correspondence tasks, typically overseeing the work done by Legislative Correspondents, Legislative Assistants and Staff Assistants.

Legislative Director. The Legislative Director in a congressional office is primarily tasked with advising the Representative on all policy areas and assisting with the development of legislative initiatives and policy positions.

Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff serves as the Representative's primary policy advisor and is central to the development and implementation of all policy objectives and strategies for the office. In most cases, the Chief of Staff manages all activities for both the D.C. and district congressional offices.

The managerial role played by the Chief of Staff in most offices is confirmed in the 2010 HCS. The study finds that a large majority of congressional offices operate with a "centralized structure", where all D.C. and district staffers report directly to the Chief of Staff who, in turn, reports directly to the Representative himself.[21] In this structure, Legislative Correspondents are part of the legislative team and report directly to the office's Legislative Director who then

[20] The data used to draw this conclusion were shared with the author by the Congressional Management Foundation. It is the survey data that CMF utilized to inform their 2011 reports cited elsewhere in this chapter.
[21] The large majority of offices report that they operate with this centralized structure. A minority of offices have either a (1) "parity structure" where the Chief of Staff and the District Director are given authority over their separate domains (the Chief over the D.C. office and the District Director over all district operations) and each reports directly to the Representative; or a (2) "functional structure" where the Chief of Staff, District Director, Legislative Director, Press Secretary and Executive Assistant/Scheduler are each responsible for their own assigned areas and each report directly to the Representative.

reports to the Chief of Staff.[22] In their position as lower-level staff within the office hierarchy, Legislative Correspondents have little autonomy (Romzek 2000). In fact, the task of organizing constituent communications itself is considered a highly regulated and routinized task within offices, leaving little room for staff involved in the processing of correspondence to deviate from established office procedures. Romzek (2000) notes that "rules about how mail is to be handled….[and] careful checking and clearance of mail that goes out of personal offices exemplif[ies] [the] close supervision and low levels of discretion" that is typical for lower-level staff (Romzek 2000, 431). In the hierarchical structure of most congressional offices, Legislative Correspondents, and the Staff Assistants and Legislative Assistants who often assist them, operate under the supervision of senior staff and closely adhere to existing office policy about how to handle constituent correspondence.

Having now identified the key staffers involved in handling constituent communications and where they stand in relation to other staff in the congressional office, the chapter now turns to a discussion of the research methods that were used to collect the dataset for this study.

Data Collection and Sample Composition

In June 2012, interview requests, along with a brief overview of the research project, were sent to the Chief of Staff in each Representative's office. Following these requests, 29

[22] Legislative Assistants also report directly to Legislative Director. Also, in the other organizational structures identified by the House Compensation Study – parity and functional structures – Legislative Correspondents and Legislative Assistants still report directly to the office Legislative Director. The position of Staff Assistants relative to others in office varies – they can report to the Legislative Director as well, but they may report to other senior staff.

interviews were conducted between July 30 and August 10, 2012. In most offices, the Legislative Correspondent was interviewed.[23]

The Representatives whose offices participated in the interviews belonged to both political parties, with 15 offices belonging to Democratic Representatives and 14 offices belonging to Republican Representatives. The average number of terms that had been served in Congress for the sample was 5.9 terms, with a range of tenures from first term Representatives to veteran legislators serving their 18th term.

The interviews included questions about how offices record constituent contacts that they receive and what qualities make particular contacts stand out. The interviews also incorporated a discussion of interest group generated mail. More specifically, staffers were asked to estimate the percentage of their mail that they perceive to be part of an interest group initiative, and how easily they could identify contacts that come from this kind of coordinated campaign.[24] These exploratory interviews proved highly informative about the basic functioning of office correspondence management systems.

In order to build on these initial interviews, a survey was constructed to gather information about the different constituent communications systems that are in use across a large number of congressional offices. The survey asked staffers to detail the correspondence management system that their office employs, their office's policies for responding to constituent communications, and the other activities that their office engages in to learn about constituent attitudes (i.e. town halls, polls, etc.). The survey also included questions about how information from constituent communications might factor into policy decisions made in their office. In

[23] In 8 offices, a Legislative Assistant was interviewed. In 2 offices, the Legislative Director was interviewed. In 1 office, the Chief of Staff was interviewed. In each case, the person being interviewed had direct knowledge of the office's mail processing and was able to answer questions about the system without any difficulty.
[24] The interview protocol used in these summer 2012 exploratory interviews can be found in Appendix B.

addition, staffers were asked to assess district opinion on several high profile policy issues that Congress had recently considered.[25] [26]

Survey Recruitment and Administration

In late August 2013, an invitation to participate in the survey of congressional staffers was circulated by email to the Legislative Correspondent in each Representative's office. Given that several congressional offices do not employ a staffer in the position of Legislative Correspondent, a similar introductory email was sent to Legislative Assistants, when relevant.[27] These requests included a brief overview of the research, as well as the topics that the survey would focus on. A link to complete the online survey was also included in each of these emails. Though Legislative Correspondents and Legislative Assistants received follow-up emails about the research on a regular basis throughout the fall of 2013, the response rate remained low.[28]

In an effort to improve the response rate, several changes were made to the survey recruitment process in late fall 2013.[29] Beginning in December 2013, emails introducing the project and inviting participation in the research were sent to the Chief of Staff in each Representative's office. This change was made in recognition that, in many cases, staffers need approval from higher-level staff in their office before they can agree to participate in research or surveys. In another change to the survey recruitment and administration process, staff were also

[25] The complete survey instrument for the 2014 congressional staff survey can be found in Appendix A.
[26] The results that are reported throughout this project will draw from this 2014 congressional staff survey data, with information from the 2012 exploratory interviews incorporated, when relevant, to provide context and/or to elaborate on findings that emerge from both the early interviews and the survey data.
[27] As noted above, offices without Legislative Correspondents will often distribute responsibility for correspondence management tasks to staff in other positions, including Staff Assistants and Legislative Assistants. Legislative Assistants were selected here, as they are in a better position to speak to questions about the way that information from constituent correspondence is utilized in decision-making within the office.
[28] Between August 26 and December 14, 2013, only 30 congressional offices had completed the survey.
[29] Advice on ways to improve the survey response rate was solicited from a Chief of Staff, a Legislative Correspondent who had completed the survey, and a lobbyist who maintains frequent contact with congressional staffers.

offered the opportunity to respond to the survey questions in an in-person interview. Invitations to participate in interviews were again circulated by email to Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Correspondents and, where necessary, Legislative Assistants in each congressional office. Interviews were also solicited by walking into Representatives' Capitol Hill offices, briefly introducing the research and asking to speak with the Legislative Correspondent. These interviews were conducted during two separate weeks in early 2014 (March 4-7 and May 12-16).[30]

Survey Sample

After extensive follow-up efforts were made with each House office, 107 congressional offices responded to the survey. Of these 107 respondents, 67 offices answered the survey online, and 40 offices participated in interviews.[31] A descriptive overview of the sample characteristics and how they compare to the overall House can be found in Table 2.1. 55.1% of the sample participants were from Republican offices and 44.9% were from Democratic offices, closely reflecting the party breakdown of the House as a whole. The average length of service for Representatives from offices surveyed was 3.93 terms, or 7.9 years in Congress. Though offices surveyed ranged from freshmen members who have yet to complete a full term in the House to veteran members who have served more than 20 terms, a large proportion of the offices in the sample have only a few years of experience in the House. 18 offices in the sample belong to freshmen Members, first elected in 2012; 23 are offices of sophomore members, first elected in 2010 and having completed only one full term. Together, 38.3% of surveyed offices belong to

[30] The content of the interviews corresponded to that covered in the online survey; however, adjustments were made to some questions to better accommodate the face-to-face interview format. The specific changes that were made to the survey instrument are all noted within the survey instrument in Appendix A.

[31] As with the initial interviews in 2012, the survey respondent in most offices was the Legislative Correspondent. However, there were staffers in other positions completing the survey in some offices: Legislative Assistants (in 19 offices); Legislative Directors (in 4 offices) staff in the office press team (i.e Press Secretary, Communications Fellow, etc.) (in 3 offices); Chief of Staff (in 1 office); and Deputy Chief of Staff (in 1 office).

Table 2.1. Characteristics of Sample House Offices, Compared to Characteristics of all House offices.[32]

	Sample Characteristics	**House Characteristics**
Partisanship		
	59 Republican Offices *(55.1%)*	234 Republican Offices *(53.8%)*
	48 Democratic Offices *(44.9%)*	201 Democratic Offices *(46.2%)*
Average Tenure in Office		
	3.93 Terms (or 7.9 years)	4.6 terms (or 9.1 years)
Freshmen Members		
	18 Representatives *(16.8%)*	75 Representatives *(17.2%)*
Members with Less than Two Years House Experience		
	41 Representatives *(38.3%)*	157 Representatives *(36.1%)*
Members with Committee Leadership Positions		
	12 Representatives *(11.2%)*	48 Representatives *(11.0%)*
Members with Subcommittee Leadership Positions		
	50 Representatives *(46.7%)*	245 Representatives *(56.3%)*
Members with Party Leadership Positions[33]		
	6 Representatives *(5.6%)*	27 Representatives *(6.2%)*
Female Members		
	22 Representatives *(20.6%)*	79 Representatives *(18.2%)*
African-American Members		
	14 Representatives *(13.1%)*	40 Representatives *(9.2%)*

[32] Partisanship, Average Tenure in Office, Freshmen Members and Members with Less Than 2 years House Experience, Female Members and African-American Members for the House of Representatives as a whole reflect the value of each characteristic based on the makeup of the chamber at the start of the 113th Congress. (Source: Manning 2014). Committee and Subcommittee Leadership Positions for the House of Representatives as a whole reflect the number of chairmanships, vice chairmanships and ranking member positions held by Representatives as of May 2014. (Source: List of Standing Committees and Select Committee and their Subcommittees of the House of Representatives.)

[33] Here, party leadership is defined as the service in one of the leadership offices identified in the Almanac of American Politics. According to the *Almanac of American Politics* definitions, 10 Representatives serve in Republican party leadership and 17 Representatives serve in Democratic party leadership.

freshmen or sophomore members; this closely aligns with the actual House population, of which 157 members (approximately 36% of the chamber) had served in the House for 2 years or less at the start of the 113th Congress (Manning 2014). The racial and gender breakdown of the sample also closely approximates the numbers of female Representatives and African-American Representatives currently serving in the House.

Many of the participants in the survey come from offices active in both committee and party leadership. 12 offices surveyed belong to a Representative who serves in a committee leadership position, as either a committee Chairman, Vice Chairman or Ranking Member. 50 offices in the sample are involved in a subcommittee leadership role, either as Chairman, Vice Chairman or Ranking Member. Six offices that completed the survey are involved in party leadership, in some capacity.

Though appeals were sent to all House offices, several offices have a policy restricting staffers from participating in outside surveys of any kind. Indeed, 192 offices replied that they would not be able to respond to the survey because of an extant office policy that restricted survey participation. The pervasiveness of this no-survey policy is a significant impediment to research on Congress, particularly research that focuses more directly on the operations of individual congressional offices.[34]

The Correspondence Workload

Before detailing the logistics of contact management systems, it should be noted that the task of managing district communications has grown tremendously in recent years. In 1995, all

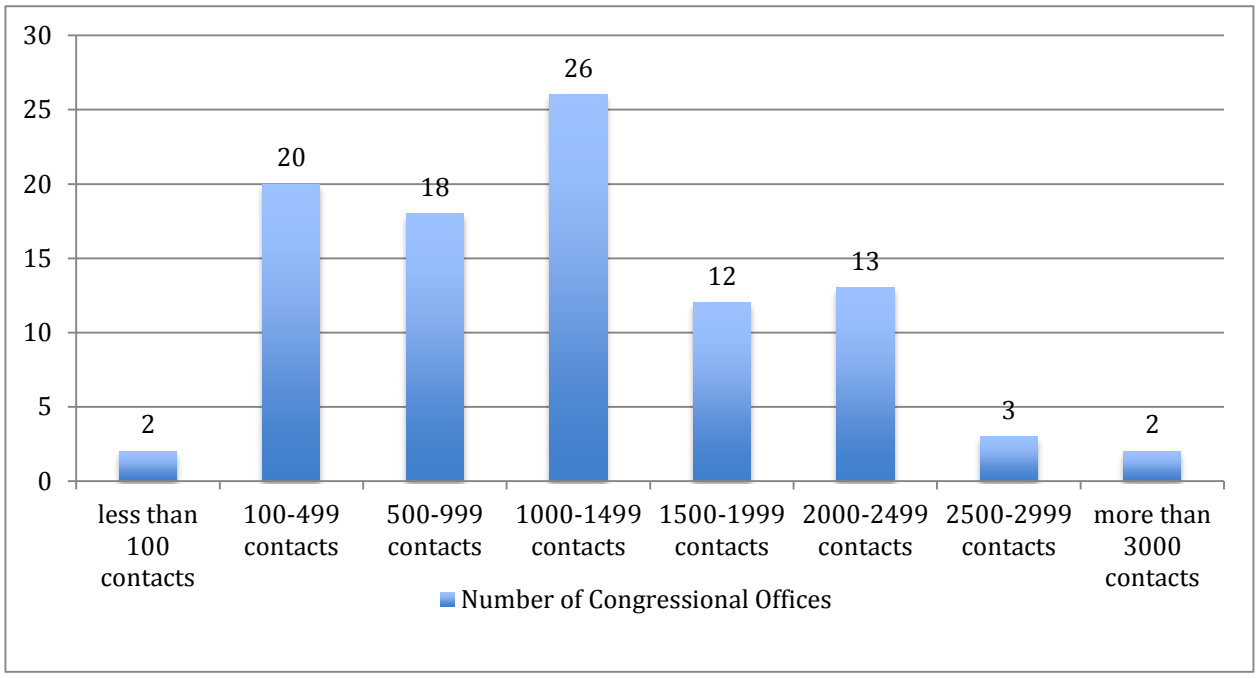
[34] To evaluate the implications of this widespread policy for this project, data is being gathered on the characteristics of these no-survey offices; once such information has been collected, the sample of participating offices will be compared to the no-survey offices to check for any systematic differences between the two sets of congressional offices. Concern about bias introduced by the types of offices that responded relative to those who did not participate is somewhat ameliorated given that the sample approximates the characteristics of the House as a whole.

House offices combined handled 23 million letters or emails from constituents. In 2004, offices received approximately 109 million letters or emails from the district, which represented more than a 300% increase in constituent contacts since the Internet was introduced to Congress in 1995 (CMF 2005). Moreover, anecdotal evidence from a Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) survey of congressional offices finds that offices have seen a 200%-1000% increase in constituent communications between 2002 and 2010 (CMF 2011b).

As the volume of contacts that congressional offices receive has significantly increased, congressional staffers have previously reported that the management of correspondence can be overwhelming and, for many offices, the sheer amount of contacts has forced the office to redirect time and energy into handling constituent communications. In response to a CMF survey, 46% of staffers stated that their offices have shifted resources from other priorities to manage the high volume of constituent contacts, and 58% of staffers reported that they spent more time on constituent communications than they did two years earlier (CMF 2011b). Only 48% of staffers in the House felt that they had the resources necessary to manage constituent contacts effectively (CMF 2011b).

Though this project's survey did not include questions about changes over time in the volume of communications that offices receive, staffers were asked to estimate the number of contacts that they receive in an average week while Congress is in session. Such information provides a snapshot of the average volumes of contacts that offices handle on a weekly basis during the 113th Congress. The responses indicated that there was wide variation in the volume of contacts that each office reported receiving, with 22 offices estimating that they receive less than 500 contacts in an average week, and 18 offices reporting that they handle at least 2,000 constituent contacts on a weekly basis (Figure 2.1). The modal response to this question was

Figure 2.1. Number of Contacts that Offices Receive in an Average Week



1,000 contacts per week. Staffers estimated that quieter weeks (typically district work period weeks) bring in much lower numbers, with 35.5% of offices reporting that they were likely to get 300 contacts or less in these types of weeks. Busy weeks, on the other hand, could elicit huge numbers of district contacts. 32.1% offices reported that a busy week could easily see above 2,500 contacts, and eight offices indicated that the typical volume for a busy week was at least 5,000 contacts.

Staff across all offices, regardless of the amount of correspondence that they handle, indicated that their office is well-equipped to manage constituent correspondence. In a departure from the findings of the Congressional Management Foundation cited above, 78.5% of participating offices responded that they have sufficient resources to manage constituent communications, and 71% indicated that they can effectively handle all of the information that they receive.

Even as offices report being more capable of meeting the demands of constituent correspondence, it is clearly a challenging task to handle the large numbers of constituent contacts that they receive from the district; staffers acknowledge that there is room for improvement. Recognizing that correspondence management is "always a game of catch-up" and that "there's always a backlog," several staffers expressed a desire to have more staff and more resources that were dedicated to correspondence.[35] Congressional staff numbers have remained at nearly the same level since the late 1970s; staffers are acutely aware of the lack of staff growth and, in several interviews, expressed their frustration that congressional staff levels haven't kept pace with the increasing correspondence workload (Brookings 2013).

Other staff noted that organizing and responding to incoming contacts presents a challenge, since it requires a great deal of knowledge about a diverse range of policies. As one staffer articulated, "with so many constituents writing about so many different things, there's a lot of information to handle."[36] As the primary staffer responsible for all correspondence tasks, the typical House Legislative Correspondent is expected to be fluent across all policy areas, and attaining this breadth of policy knowledge is difficult. As a way to contend with this expectation, several staffers mentioned wanting to follow the Senate's model for correspondence management. In contrast to House offices that typically have one (or possibly two) Legislative Correspondents who handle all incoming contacts, Senate offices employ multiple Legislative Correspondents who each handle correspondence for a specific subset of issues that are designated as part of their portfolios. Under this system, Senate Legislative Correspondents are able to specialize so as to develop expertise in certain issue areas, which presumably makes their

[35] Quotes come from interviews with congressional staff conducted in 2014.
[36] Interview with congressional staff, 2014.

research and response drafting efforts easier.[37] In the House, Legislative Correspondents have to be "generalists" and must learn about each issue that contactors write about.[38] Many staffers are cognizant of these substantial differences in correspondence management capabilities across the two chambers; however, the approaches to handling contacts can differ in marked ways across House offices as well.

Correspondence Management in Congress: "There are 435 different ways it's done."[39]

Like most other aspects of internal office operations, congressional offices are given the freedom to organize their contact management system however they choose.[40] The leeway for offices to structure office correspondence systems as they see fit results in a Capitol Hill comprised of 435 "individually managed offices, each with its own practices."[41] Thus, observers of correspondence management in Congress are likely to see "a wide range of ways offices handle correspondence."[42] This section will identify the "wide range of ways" offices organize and manage their incoming correspondence, highlighting points where the treatment of correspondence diverges across offices, and recognizing trends that are common across offices.

[37] This information about how Senate offices are structured comes solely from House staffers. It was beyond the scope of this project to survey Senate offices about their correspondence practices, though, as detailed in Chapter 7, future work in this research agenda will certainly focus on describing and explaining Senate correspondence management systems.
[38] As will be discussed in further detail below (see *Staff Involvement in the Drafting or Approval Process*, page 59), several offices task Legislative Assistants who have issue-specific expertise with developing and drafting responses to constituent contacts. Though their involvement can be seen as an approximation of the Senate approach, Legislative Assistants still must divide their attention between assisting with correspondence duties and their primary responsibilities as legislative aides and issue specialists for the office.
[39] Interview with congressional staffer and Member of Congress, March 2014.
[40] Offices are subject to rules and regulations about what constitutes reimbursable expenditures, how many employees they are able to hire, etc.. These rules are detailed in the *Member's Congressional Handbook*, maintained and updated by the House Administration Committee. As long as offices act in accordance with these broad rules, however, they have substantial leeway to organize their offices as they see fit.
[41] Interview with congressional staffer, August 2012.
[42] Interview with congressional staffer, March 2014.

Correspondence Management Technology

All congressional offices have access to correspondence management software systems; there are several vendors that market such systems that are specifically designed for use by government officials. To avoid building their own programs to manage correspondence, most offices rely on one of these software systems.[43] Though offices can choose between several options for their correspondence management software, one staffer who has experience using several of the different systems observed that there is actually little difference between the systems.[44] Each system available offers very similar functions, including the automation of a large portion of communication entry for congressional staff.

More specifically, all emails that come into the office are automatically logged into these software systems. Since email accounts for the majority of the constituent contacts that most offices receive, the delivery of emails directly into the system eases some of the burden of contact management.[45] These systems also include many functions to help staffers categorize incoming correspondence. Staffers are able to sort email correspondence easily, with the option to group together emails that share a large percentage of text. These processing capabilities simplify the Legislative Correspondent's task of identifying the issue content of each contact. Additionally, these sorting features allow staffers to identify email campaigns coordinated by

[43] The Chief Administrative Officer of the House negotiates contracts with the vendors of several of these correspondence management systems to ensure that congressional offices have access to them at affordable rates. Some of the most popular correspondence management systems currently in use on Capitol Hill include Intranet Quorum, iConstituent, Fireside21 and Spry. Of offices in the survey sample, 64 rely on Intranet Quorum, 25 use iConstituent, 9 use Fireside21 and 6 use Spry.
[44] Interview with congressional staffer, May 2014.
[45] 80.1% of offices in the sample estimated that more than half of their incoming contacts are emails; 45.5% of all surveyed offices reported that more than 70% of their incoming correspondence from constituents comes through email.

interest groups with minimal effort.[46] The systems also include options to compile summary statistics about incoming and outgoing constituent correspondence.

Even as software for managing correspondence has become increasingly sophisticated, the system is not fully automated, and still requires the attention of staffers. Congressional staff must manually enter information from phone calls, faxes, social media contacts, and postal letters into their correspondence management system.[47] All contacts, even those that are automatically delivered into the correspondence system, must be sorted and have several pieces of additional information added to the contact's record. Offices have varying policies for what kinds of communications they will include in their databases and what kinds of information should be listed with each incoming contact.

Forms of Communication and Their Treatment Across Offices

Though all offices receive emails, letters, phone calls, faxes, and social media contacts from citizens, different offices have different policies regarding what forms of communication will actually be logged into their correspondence database (Table 2.2.). More than 95% of offices in the sample recorded all incoming letters and emails. The overwhelming majority of offices are likely entering these forms of communication because the contact entry process for both of these forms has been simplified. As described above, emails are automatically delivered into the

[46] In some interviews, staff mentioned that they can also sort by IP address of the sender and easily identify interest group campaigns this way; the contacts generated by an interest group effort are routed through the interest group's website so they all originate from the same IP address. Further information about the congressional staff perspective on interest group coordinated campaigns is provided in the concluding chapter.

[47] A recently introduced program facilitated by the Chief Administrative Office for the House delivers electronic scans of postal mail directly into an office's correspondence management system. Offices enrolled in this Digital Mail program have their incoming postal mail delivered automatically into their correspondence management system, which saves staff from having to enter the contacts in manually.

Newly elected members to the 113th Congress were automatically enrolled in the Digital Mail program; other offices can choose to participate or not. As of December 2013, 235 House offices participate in the program (CAO Semiannual Report, July - December 2013).

contact management system and many offices participate in the Digital Mail program for direct delivery of postal mail into their system. Beyond letters and emails, however, there is much less uniformity across offices. Only 79% of offices surveyed, for example, record phone call contacts. In interviews, several offices indicated that they would only record a phone call into their correspondence management system if the caller requested or warranted a response.[48] Fewer offices record incoming faxes, with only 65% of surveyed offices recording personalized faxes and 56% recording form faxes.

Remarkably few offices incorporate contacts that come through popular social media websites into their contact records. Only 10 offices surveyed enter Facebook messages into their

Table 2.2. Office Treatment of Each Incoming Form of Communication.

	Number of Offices that Record Each Type of Contact
Phone Calls	84 offices *(78.5%)*
Personalized Letters	103 offices *(96.4%)*
Form Letters	102 offices *(95.3%)*
Personalized Emails	104 offices *(97.2%)*
Form Emails	105 offices *(98.1%)*
Personalized Faxes	70 offices *(65.4%)*
Form Faxes	60 offices *(56.1%)*
Messages from Facebook	10 offices *(9.4%)*
Messages from Twitter	6 offices *(5.6%)*

Percent of all Sampled Offices including the form of communication into their contact records can be found in parentheses.

[48] These staffers said it was rare for a phone call to necessitate a response. The staffer answering the phone is typically able to answer any question that might be calling about.

correspondence databases and only 6 offices record messages received on Twitter. These findings indicate that most congressional offices have yet to integrate social media contacts into their contact management process. While nearly every congressional office maintains a social media presence (Roback and Hemphill 2013),[49] social media contacts tend to be handled separately within the office, often by the Press Secretary or Communications Director. Hence, the staffers responsible for social media are distinct from the staffers who are responsible for managing traditional communications from the district.[50] This finding stands in contrast to recent conclusions drawn by the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF).

In a 2011 report, CMF suggests that Congress has quickly adapted to social media. Drawing on data from a 2010 survey of congressional staff, CMF contends that "congressional offices are using social media to help gauge public opinion, augmenting traditional tools used for that purpose" (CMF 2011a). They report that 64% of staffers surveyed think that Facebook is a "somewhat" or "very important" tool for understanding constituents' views and opinion, and 42% feel the same way about Twitter (CMF 2011a). However, looking at the CMF survey data more closely, it is clear that very few staffers consider Facebook or Twitter to be very important tools, especially when compared to the percentage of staffers who rate personalized messages as very important tools (see summary of CMF findings in Figure 1.1, chapter 1). The importance of Facebook and Twitter in congressional offices seems minimal when these numbers are seen next to the much higher importance ratings given to messages from constituents and town hall meetings in CMF's own survey data. Interestingly, judgments by Hill staffers about the importance of Facebook and Twitter for discerning constituent opinion are actually similar to the

[49] All offices in the survey sample have a social media presence, at least on Facebook.
[50] In interviews, a few staffers suggested that the Press Secretary or Communications Director would occasionally bring social media contacts to their attention. In these cases, the Press Secretary was usually asking about the response that a Facebook or Twitter contactor should receive from the office. In each of these cases, the social media contact would stay out of the formal contact database of the office.

importance ratings given to form communications from the district, a type of contact that is routinely entered into constituent contact management systems in congressional offices. Though the CMF takes their survey results as evidence that social media is an important tool for staff to discern constituent opinion, the failure to incorporate social media contacts into the offices' overall communications database means that social media remains peripheral in most offices' correspondence systems. Regardless of how CMF's conclusions are interpreted, the results from this project reveal that Congress still has work to do to harness the potential of social media as a way to understand and react to district opinion.

Incorporating social media more seriously into constituent contact management practices is not without obstacles. Neither Facebook nor Twitter requires subscribers to include the personal contact information that offices typically require to identify a contactor as a district resident.[51] Though profiles on both sites typically list a user's city of residence and, on Facebook, a user has the option to list a full address, such information is not required, so it is difficult to place those who post, message, or tweet as residents of the congressional district. Additionally, a few staffers expressed concern about the time that inclusion of social media could take up in an already overburdened office, suggesting that incorporating social media could easily become "all-consuming" and it would be a "slippery slope" to begin the practice of recording and responding to social media contacts.[52] [53]

[51] Further information on office policies regarding district residency verification is provided in the *Contact Information* section below (pg. 44-47).
[52] Quotes are from interviews with staffers, August 2012.
[53] A recent update to one of the popular correspondence management software systems, Intranet Quorum, advertises the "seamless integration of social media interactions" into their operating system. Intranet Quorum (IQ) describes their new capabilities this way: "IQ can import any comments or messages received on your Facebook account to IQ. Once they have been imported into IQ, if a comment comes from an identifiable person, the comment can be linked and stored in that person's IQ Contact record….With incoming Facebook messages, IQ can capture the message, reply to the message through Facebook and then save and store the entire conversation within IQ" (Intranet Quorum). No offices surveyed had any experience with this social media element of IQ, so the

Though social media contacts are an exception, the large majority of offices surveyed are including all traditional contacts they receive from constituents in their correspondence systems. The finding that most offices maintain correspondence databases that incorporate emails, letters, phone calls and faxes is unsurprising, since legislators at any stage in their careers can stand to gain from maintaining an up-to-date and complete list of all contacts to the office. By recording each contact that an office receives, legislative offices can construct a valuable mailing list to facilitate better outreach efforts. Keeping track of what issues contactors are focused on provides an important opportunity for congressional offices; the staff can put together issue-specific newsletters or action alerts that keep constituents informed about their Representative's actions on the policy areas that each constituent most cares about.[54] Beyond their application for constituent outreach, a complete correspondence database can offer valuable information about the issue preferences and priorities of constituents.

Information Included with Incoming Contacts

The value of a correspondence database for revealing constituent policy preferences and for facilitating responses and district outreach efforts depends in large part on what information is actually logged with each contact and the respective detail of each contact record. Information included in contact records consists of the constituent's contact information and a basic summary of the content of their correspondence, where the content is typically identified by codes for the (1) the issue of interest, (2) the contactor's position on the issue and (3) the response that the

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functionality of this new feature for offices can't be determined at this time. If it works as intended, this could facilitate the incorporation of social media contacts into correspondence databases for a larger number of offices.

[54] When asked if their office sends issue-specific outreach, 74.4% of offices in the sample report sending updates to constituents based on issues they've written in about previously. 17.8% send some update on a weekly basis, 15.6% send them monthly, 23.3% share issue updates quarterly, 6.7% send them annually. 11% of offices indicated that they send issue updates to constituents at another interval ("sometimes", "when the moment presents itself", "if something big has happened"). Though many offices do use their constituent correspondence databases to put together outreach, 25.6% of offices never send issue-specific updates to their constituents.

contactor should receive. The specificity of contact records varies across offices, with some offices incorporating more detailed notes about the content and the quality of correspondence. Each category of information that offices typically include with contact records will be highlighted below, with the survey data used to indicate how many offices in the sample report including each type of information within their correspondence database (Table 2.3).

Contact Information. After the office receives any contact, Legislative Correspondents, interns or other low-level staffers who sort incoming communications must first identify the address of the contactor, and every contact that an office receives should be verified as coming from a district resident. For phone calls, faxes, and letters, staffers will have to confirm the contactor's residence themselves. For email contacts, most offices in the sample have the email contact function on their website set up so that constituents are asked to submit their full ZIP code (ZIP code+4) before writing in the text of their message. If a contactor enters a ZIP code that falls outside district boundaries, an error message will appear alerting the constituent that they don't live in the congressional district and the website will not allow them to send their message to the office.[55] Employing this type of ZIP-code-first filter ensures that outside-the-district emails do not make it to congressional offices.[56] Not all offices use such a filter, however; 24.3% of the offices in the sample direct potential contactors to the full email contact form immediately, without first requiring entry of ZIP code information. Hence, out-of-district

[55] Email contacts that are organized by a third party (i.e. an interest group) typically follow a similar process, asking contactors to provide their full addresses to ensure that the contact will go to the appropriate member of Congress. This also ensures that the full contact information that is required by congressional offices is included in the contacts that the third party is coordinating.

[56] A citizen living outside the district could get around this constraint by entering a fake within-the-district address for themselves, which would prevent them from being filtered out of the correspondence system. It is unclear how widely this kind of deception is used by the public, but political scientists have used such tactics in the past to gather data about responses to constituent requests (Dropp and Peskowitz 2012, Kalla and Broockman 2014) and congressional newsletter content (Goodman, Grimmer, Parker and Zlotnick 2013).

emails will likely be delivered into their correspondence database, and staff will need to go through and remove them, or flag them as out-of-district.

For most offices, in the absence of district address confirmation, contacts are not recorded into their office database. A significant minority of offices in the survey sample (26%), however, indicated that they would record contacts from outside the district in their correspondence database. Several of these offices indicated that contacts from outside the district can come into their system automatically; and once there, they are identified as out-of-district contacts and do not receive a response from the office. In interviews with staffers, however, it was clear that some offices had made a conscious decision to incorporate contacts from non-district residents into their correspondence databases. Different rationales were offered for this decision, including: a desire to respond to all residents of the state, even if they're outside the district itself, a desire to connect with people who may be part-time residents of the district reaching out from their out-of-district permanent address, and a desire to maintain a complete and transparent record of office interactions with the public. Additionally, some of the decisions to record contacts from outside the district may be driven by redistricting. Four offices interviewed in 2012 noted that they would record contacts from citizens in their state, or just outside their district; each office cited the new district boundaries that would soon take effect in the fall 2012 election as the driving factor behind this decision.[57]

Even though several offices that were surveyed are more lenient about the inclusion of out-of-district contacts, there is still a need for staffers to collect contact information, including a complete address, from individuals reaching out to the congressional office. When logging a contact into their correspondence system, an office typically tries to obtain as much contact information as possible. Not only does this allow them to identify the contactor as a constituent,

[57] Further analysis on the effects of redistricting on contact management practices are provided in Chapter 3.

it also helps facilitate the office's response and any future contacts. When entering a contact into their database, all offices record the name and address of a contactor; 92.5% of offices also record the contactor's email address and 81.3% of offices list the contactor's phone number.

Offices have been able to simplify the collection of much of this contact information, especially for contacts that come through the Congressman's official website. The email web form present on each Representatives' website includes several required fields for the constituent's contact information (name, full address, and email address). For other contacts that come in, staffers must collect addresses themselves. Addresses are easily identified for incoming postal mail by checking return addresses. Phone calls that the office receives begin with the congressional staffer asking the caller to provide their address or, at minimum, their ZIP code. Caller ID on the congressional phone system also lists the incoming phone number so staffers can verify that it is a within-district area code.

Though several offices do include out-of-district contacts in their systems, there is necessarily a substantial emphasis on correctly identifying contactors as district residents for most congressional offices. A large proportion of staff have reported previously that they feel overwhelmed by the volume of incoming contacts (CMF 2011b); hence, they do not have the time to take in and respond to additional contacts from non-constituents. Offices interviewed in 2012 also cited, on more than one occasion, that congressional ethics rules bar communication with non-constituents. This represents a strict interpretation of House ethics rules; as the House Ethics Manual states, the statute "does not prohibit a Member from ever responding to a non-constituent" (310).[58] The widespread practice to exclude outside-the-district contacts can be

[58] House rules require members to only apply the Member's Representational Allowance to activities or expenditures that "support the conduct of the official and representational duties of a Member…with respect to the district from which the member is elected" and that "as a general matter, a Member should not devote official resources to casework for individuals who live outside the district" (House Ethics Manual, pg. 310). There is some

seen as largely a function of the limited staff resources that offices have with which to manage incoming communications.

Though the rule excluding outside of district communications from office contact databases is in place in a large majority of congressional offices, it seems that not all contactors are aware of the importance of providing an address in communications with Congress. Some staffers noted that callers to the office will object to staffers' request for their address information, arguing with the staff that the Congressman should represent the views of all Americans and not screen their calls so that only district residents can voice their opinions. The reluctance of some callers to provide their contact information may contribute to the decision made by just over 20% of offices in the sample to exclude phone calls from their correspondence databases.

Additionally, many staffers expressed frustration at large-scale interest group campaigns that seem to disregard the office's need to verify a contactor's residence. It is common for an office to receive petitions, "we the undersigned" letters or batches of postcards, all hand delivered by an interest group leader or lobbyist. In several cases, these lack full addresses for people who have signed the petition, letter or postcard. Without sufficient information to identify these signers as district residents or to send an official response to the petition signers, the office does not take the time to enter these contacts into their databases. In the words of one staffer, it shows a "total lack of understanding of how offices work when interest groups send this format of stuff."[59]

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ambiguity in these rules, since responding to ordinary correspondence would not necessarily constitute casework on behalf of non-constituent.

[59] Interview with congressional staff, August 2012.

Table 2.3. Information Offices Include with Each Contact Record

	Number of Offices That Include This Information[60]
Contact Information	
Name	107 offices *(100%)*
Address	107 offices *(100%)*
Email Address	99 offices *(92.5%)*
Phone Number	87 offices *(81.3%)*
General Issue Area Contact Deals With	95 offices *(88.8%)*
Position Taken on the Issue of Interest	69 offices *(64.5%)*
Information about the Response that Contactor Should Receive	70 offices *(65.4%)*
Note on Contact Quality	51 offices *(49.5%)*
Note on Form of Communication for Incoming Contact	102 offices *(98.1%)*

Percent of all Sampled Offices including the information in their contact records can be found in parentheses.

Contact Text. One of the features provided by correspondence management software is that the text of incoming emails is retained with the contact record. Scans of postal mail and faxes are also stored within the correspondence database.[61] Having the text of emails, letters and faxes logged into the correspondence management system means that the staff can easily refer back to the contact itself at any point. For offices that record phone call contacts, the content of the phone call must be summarized and written up into the database by the staffer answering the phone that day.

[60] An office is listed as including the information if their policy is to always record that information. For example, 8 offices report that they include the position that a constituent takes on an issue only sometimes, depending on the issue. These 8 offices were not counted as listing the position a constituent takes on an issue.

[61] These scans of postal mail can be uploaded into the system by staff themselves once the letter has been delivered to the congressional office, or, for offices that participate in the Digital Mail program from the Chief Administrative Officer of the House, the digital scans of postal mail are uploaded into the office database remotely from the off-site mail processing facility.

Issue Area Information. When sorting incoming correspondence, the vast majority (88.8%) of offices surveyed attach an issue code label to the contact record. These issue tags are intended to provide a sense of the issue area that the contact relates to, and to facilitate the response drafting process. These labels can vary in their degree of detail, as some are broad issue categories (e.g. immigration) and others can be more specific (e.g. immigration_amnesty).[62] More detailed labels may provide a better summary of the content of a letter or email, but extensive detail in these issue tags can make the tag system potentially cumbersome and difficult to work with.

Issue Position Information. With each correspondence record, offices can also include information that specifies the position that the contactor has taken on the issue that they are writing about. 69 offices (64.5% of the sample) report that they make a note of the contactor's stance on the issue of interest in the contact record. 30 offices do not record the constituent's position; 8 offices indicated in interviews that they might use a position label, but that it would depend on the issue. Though a majority of offices do include a statement of a contactor's position in their contact record, 35.5% of offices surveyed either never list the position a contactor has expressed, or only list that information sometimes.

In interviews, several staffers did mention that the easy access to the text of an email or letter gave them an opportunity to see what the constituent had to say, even in the absence of a pro-/con- position listed with the contact record. While staffers can return to the original contact to assess the stance that a constituent advocated for, it could become time-consuming to revisit contacts at a later time. By including a note or comment on the position taken at the time that a

[62] From the survey questions asked, the level of detail that offices employ in their issue labels cannot be determined for each office surveyed.

contact is first sorted, such information can be utilized to understand quickly and simultaneously the content of a large amount of correspondence.

Response Identifying Information. Another key component of each contact record is information to identify the response that a constituent should receive to their correspondence. 70 offices (65.4% of the sample) include a code to identify the response that should be sent to the contactor. When an appropriate response letter was already prepared, several staffers indicated that, rather than assign a code to identify the correct response, they would assign the relevant response to the contact record as correspondence was first sorted. 37 offices (34.6% of the sample) don't add a note to identify the response that the constituent should get from the office.

Contact Quality. An important attribute of correspondence that can be noted in the office's correspondence management system is its degree of customization. As observed here and elsewhere (e.g. CMF 2005, CMF 2011b, Schlozman and Tierney 1986), congressional staff greatly value personalized correspondence from constituents. In these contacts a constituent provides, in her own words, information about how an issue is personally relevant in her life.[63] About half (49.5%) of the offices surveyed incorporate a note in their correspondence database to signify that a contact is unique or deemed to be of high quality. Including such a note can easily direct attention to these contacts. Identifying a contact as high quality might ensure that the contact receives a response from the office that is consistent with the effort that the constituent put forth; several staffers emphasized that they try to match the quality of the incoming contact in the reply that they send out. Staffers also indicated that they would use a

[63] As one staffer put it, she tries to learn two key things from reading constituent correspondence: how interested an individual is in the policy, and how it affects an individual personally, neither of which can be learned without a personalized message.

note about contact quality to assure that a unique message was brought to the attention of other staff in the office.[64] Though staffers widely agree that personalized contacts are highly valued, a slight majority of offices that were sampled do not denote a contact's quality in their correspondence database.

The capacity of correspondence management software to sort contacts by the amount of shared text may minimize the need for offices to include a note about contact quality. Filtering the contents of the correspondence database by shared text may quickly reveal which contacts are unique. This function of correspondence software may explain why more office do not include an explicit comment on contact quality in their records. In fact, a few staffers interviewed in August 2012 indicated that this sorting was how they would identify personalized contacts in their database.

Form of Communication. The large majority of offices surveyed (98.1%) include a note on the form of communication for each incoming contact (i.e. whether the contact was a phone call, an email, etc.). Some staffers mentioned that they would use this note to identify what format of response the constituent should receive from the office; some offices reported that they attempt to match the format of the incoming contact in their response (e.g. with email contactors receiving an email back). Previous work has suggested that congressional offices might value some forms of communication over others (Frantzich 2003; CMF 2005, 2011a). If there are different valuations for phone calls compared to faxes or emails compared to letters, the contact form note in the system can offer staff an easy way to distinguish between these different forms of communication.

[64] Further exploration of office practices for sharing the text of contacts with other staff in the office will be discussed below; see page 56.

Summarizing Correspondence: The Mail Report

As contacts are received and logged into the correspondence system, only staff involved in sorting the incoming correspondence see the content of any mail, email, faxes or phone calls. These staffers, typically the Legislative Correspondent, sometimes with the assistance of Staff Assistants or interns in the office, may develop a good sense of constituent opinion simply through their exposure to each incoming communication in the sorting process. Their work assembling and maintaining a correspondence database provides the entire office with a rich resource for understanding constituent opinion. This large amount of information about constituent interests and preferences, however, needs to be shared with other staffers in the office for it to be fully integrated into the dialogue and decision-making of an office. Translating the content of the extensive correspondence database into digestible information for others usually takes the form of a mail report.

Mail reports are memos that are compiled and circulated to keep other staffers informed about constituent opinion and issue priorities. 92% of offices in the survey sample report that they assemble mail reports. Though the large majority of offices utilize mail reports to summarize the status of correspondence, how often these reports are circulated, who receives them, and what content they include varies across offices.[65] The frequency, content and audience for the reports have implications for their relative informativeness. If these reports are circulated very often, are widely shared among a large number of staff, and contain extensive information, then their capacity to educate the rest of the office about constituent correspondence may be enhanced.

[65] That such differences in mail report practices are observed is surprising given that each of the software packages offices use for their contact management systems has options to compile various statistics to put together mail summary reports; by relying on the correspondence management software, briefings with similar content on the volume and content of district communications could be compiled without much effort in any congressional office.

Frequency of Mail Reports. Mail reports are circulated at different intervals in different offices. For many offices, mail reports are circulated as a regular part of office operations. Awareness about constituent correspondence is being raised at a daily, weekly or bi-weekly interval in more than 70% of offices. 65.7% of offices surveyed compile mail reports on a weekly basis. 5 offices circulate their report every other week and 2 offices, responding that their reports are produced at another interval, indicate that they put together mail reports daily. Another 8 offices report circulating mail reports on a monthly basis.

Just under 20% of offices surveyed have reports at much less frequent intervals, only under certain conditions, or don't produce mail reports at all. 3 more offices responded that their mail reports are compiled at another interval (annually in one office, "irregularly" in one office, and "periodically" in one office). 9 offices responded that they produce mail reports only as they are needed. For these offices, conditions where they were likely to compile a report include: when there was a big or high priority issue (2 offices); when a large campaign is received or a

Table 2.4. Frequency of Mail Reports in Congressional Offices.

	Number of Offices That Circulate Mail Reports at this Interval
Weekly	67 offices *(65.7%)*
Bi-Weekly	5 offices *(4.9%)*
Monthly	7 offices *(6.9%)*
As Needed	9 offices *(8.8%)*
At another interval	6 offices *(5.9%)*
Never	8 offices *(7.8%)*

Percent of sampled offices compiling mail reports at each interval can be found in parentheses. Only 102 offices answered this survey question.

large increase in correspondence volume is observed (3 offices); when certain issues come to the House floor (1 office); when the "content of correspondence is deemed proper to share with other staff" (1 office); or at the request of another staffer in the office (1 office).[66] 8 offices do not ever produce mail reports.

Content of report. What offices choose to incorporate in their mail reports has implications for the level of awareness that other staffers in the office will have about constituent correspondence. To understand what information is included in office mail reports, the survey included an open-ended question that asked staffers to specify the content that appears on the report that their office uses.[67] Several common elements of mail reports emerge from these staffer descriptions, including:

- Total volume of incoming correspondence, listing the total number of new contacts that were logged into the correspondence database for the time period covered by the report. *Included by 60 offices (71.4%)*
- Total volume of outgoing correspondence, indicating the total number of responses that were sent out to constituents for the time period covered by the report. *Included by 45 offices (53.6%)*
- Total volume of pending correspondence, indicating the number of contact records that are still awaiting a response from the office. *Included by 24 offices (28.6%)*
- Length of time mail has been pending, identifying the age of mail that remains in their system. *Included by 19 offices (22.6%)*

[66] One office that responded with "as needed" did not specify the conditions where the office would put the report together.
[67] 84 offices that put together mail reports answered this question. Percentages listed are out of the 84 offices that responded.

- Status update on pending responses, listing the responses that are currently in the process of being drafted, edited or approved. *Included by 17 offices (20.2%)*

This information provides a summary of the aggregate volume coming in and going out of the office. The different numbers about pending responses provide an estimate of office responsiveness to constituent contacts.

The way that the issue content of correspondence is elaborated on in mail reports varies across offices, and not every office includes issue-specific information about correspondence. The mail reports of 14 offices only include the aggregate number information detailed above; these offices do not provide any account of the issues that the incoming contacts addressed. The remaining 70 offices that offered descriptions of their mail reports do indicate that they include summaries of correspondence content, but the level of detail provided is different across offices. In 29 offices, every issue that emerged during the time period that was covered by the report is listed along with the numbers of contacts received in each issue category. For 41 offices, the mail report features the "top" incoming issues from the time period that was covered, where the total amount of incoming correspondence for each issue determines its status as a top issue. Though many offices simply stated that they listed top issues without identifying how many issues would likely be included on that list, several offices specified the number of top issues that they include in each mail report, which ranged from 1 issue (in 1 office) to 25 issues (in 1 office). Most commonly, offices reported listing the top 3 or the top 5 issues from the office's recent incoming correspondence.

While some indication of the issues covered in the incoming correspondence is informative, the mention of only top issues in the mail report may result in a limited understanding of constituent opinion. Given the numerous issues that staffers hear about over the

course of a week, a list of the top 3, top 5, top 10 or even top 25 issues doesn't necessarily summarize the broad range of policies that constituents are writing about.[68]

Additionally, many offices appear to omit information about the positions that constituents have taken on the issues that they are writing about. Only 9 offices specified that they list the breakdown of the pro-/con- stances that constituents have taken on an issue in their mail report. It is possible that more offices are able to get a sense of the issue positions in correspondence based on how they label the issues on their mail report. For example, an issue could be listed as simply "immigration" or it could be listed as "pro-comprehensive immigration reform," where in the latter case, a constituent's issue position is built into the issue label itself, so no further pro-/con- stances note is needed. The survey did not include a question that would give a sense of which kinds of issue labels are commonly used on mail reports, so it is difficult to gauge how many offices actually have access to constituent issue position information in their mail reports. Though only a few offices actually report including pro-/con- information in mail reports, it is entirely possible that more offices are able to get this information from their reports.

The regular compilation and circulation of mail reports also provides an opportunity to directly share the text of correspondence with other staff. 21 offices reported that they would include the text of contacts from constituents with the mail report. When asked to articulate the conditions under which the text of individual contacts would be attached to the report, staffers identified several features of a contact that may justify its inclusion in the mail briefing: if it is unique, interesting or important (in 5 offices); if it represents a large volume of contacts the office received (in 5 offices); or if the contactor was an important person in the district (i.e. an elected official, local leader, etc.) (in 1 office). Additionally, staffers suggested that

[68] Staffers say that they hear about "anything and everything" in a single week and issues covered by incoming correspondence can "run the gamut". Some staffers report that their office receives contacts that deal with well over a hundred different issues over the course of a week.

correspondence might be included as a way to seek advice on how best to respond to a sensitive or highly technical contact (in 5 offices) or at the request of another staffer (3 offices). Even among offices that report attaching original contacts to the mail report, it appears that the actual inclusion of correspondence with the report is limited to only particular circumstances. Hence, in many cases, only lower-level staffers like the Legislative Correspondent, Staff Assistant and Interns are actually likely to read what constituents are writing. This is true even for personalized communications from constituents. Since staffers commonly express an appreciation for personalized contacts, it seems incongruous that relatively few offices have any established way to draw office attention to these contacts, either by including them with the mail report or by making a note of contact quality in the correspondence management system.

Audience for Mail Reports. Among offices that produce mail reports, there are differences in the extent to which those reports are shared with others staffers in the office. Table 2.5 lists congressional staff positions and indicates how many offices in the sample circulate the office's mail report to staffers in that position. Senior leadership in congressional offices are quite likely to receive the correspondence report. Of the offices surveyed, 77.8% reported that their Chief of Staff receives the mail report while the Legislative Director reads the report in 67.8% of offices. Additionally, half of offices surveyed shared the mail report with the Member of Congress herself. One would expect that much of the information that is commonly presented in mail reports is useful for Representatives as well as their higher-level staffers. More specifically, mail reports often provide updates about the status of pending responses to constituents, which is likely valuable to Representatives and senior staff alike in their roles as office managers, as this helps them to assess the functionality and effectiveness of the office's

Table 2.5. Audience for Mail Reports for Congressional Offices.

	Number of Offices that Circulate Mail Report to Staffers in This Position[69]
Member of Congress	45 offices *(50.0%)*
Chief of Staff	70 offices *(77.8%)*
Deputy Chief of Staff	28 offices *(31.1%)*
Legislative Director	61 offices *(67.8%)*
Communications Director	26 offices *(28.9%)*
Legislative Assistant	40 offices *(44.4%)*
Systems Administrator	17 offices *(18.9%)*
Staff Assistant	27 offices *(30.0%)*
Intern	12 offices *(13.3%)*

Percent of sampled offices that compile mail reports that share the reports with staffers in each position can be found in parentheses.

mail program. Additionally, awareness of the content of constituent contacts can help inform the decisions and the recommendations that offices make.[70]

Legislative Assistants also stand to gain from exposure to district opinion through office mail reports. By sharing mail reports with them, Legislative Assistants are given useful information from constituent correspondence. Contacts from the district can reveal the possible electoral ramifications of legislative proposals within a Legislative Assistant's policy area, which they can combine with their policy-specific knowledge to better inform their work and their legislative recommendations. The degree of familiarity that Legislative Assistants have with

[69] 5 offices that reported employing mail reports did not answer this question identifying which staff in the office receive the mail report; these answers come from the 90 offices with mail reports that did respond to the question.
[70] The potential for mail reports to inform legislative decision-making depends largely on the type of information included; if the mail report lacks issue-specific information, then its role as a resource when making decisions may be limited.

constituent opinion that is conveyed in correspondence may be limited without access to the office's mail report. 40 offices, or about 44.4% of the sample, share the mail report with Legislative Assistants. In a smaller number of offices, mail reports are circulated to lower level staffers, including Staff Assistants and interns. In some offices, the Communications Director and the Systems Administrator also receive the report.

Staff involvement in the drafting or approval process

Mail reports are one way that others in the office can be made aware of constituent correspondence and the issues that are driving constituents to reach out. Many offices are structured so that other staffers are involved in the process of drafting, editing or approving responses that constituents will receive. Even without reading a mail report or hearing about the content of correspondence in a staff meeting, staffers will gain exposure to correspondence through their involvement in response development.

The Legislative Correspondent, the staffer responsible for most correspondence tasks, is still the staffer most likely to be involved in researching, drafting and editing responses that offices are working on. Still, a large number of offices have Legislative Assistants involved in the response drafting process at some point. Legislative Assistants research and draft new responses in 58% of the offices surveyed. They also review and make edits to new, and previously existing, responses in many offices.[71]

Senior staff are less directly involved in researching and drafting responses themselves, but they are likely to play a role in editing responses. 60.1% of offices have Legislative Directors reviewing and editing new responses, and 44.4% of offices involve their Legislative Directors in

[71] A previously existing response is one that has been written and approved at an earlier time and is now part of the office's "letter library". Common edits to responses from the letter library include updating the response content to reflect recent legislative developments or recent activity of the Representative in the issue area.

Table 2.6. Staff Involvement in Developing Responses for Constituent Correspondence.

	Number of Offices that Include Staffer in this Position in Response Development
Legislative Correspondent	
Reviewing and Editing Existing Responses	77 offices *(77.8%)*
Researching and Drafting New Responses	89 offices *(89.9%)*
Reviewing and Editing New Responses	60 offices *(60.6%)*
Legislative Assistant	
Reviewing and Editing Existing Responses	44 offices *(44.4%)*
Researching and Drafting New Responses	57 offices *(57.6%)*
Reviewing and Editing New Responses	49 offices *(49.5%)*
Legislative Director	
Reviewing and Editing Existing Responses	44 offices *(44.4%)*
Researching and Drafting New Responses	18 offices *(18.2%)*
Reviewing and Editing New Responses	60 offices *(60.1%)*
Chief of Staff	
Reviewing and Editing Existing Responses	26 offices *(26.3%)*
Researching and Drafting New Responses	8 offices *(8.1%)*
Reviewing and Editing New Responses	44 offices *(44.4%)*

Percent of sampled offices that involve staffers in each position in each correspondence task can be found in parentheses. Only 99 offices answered these questions.

editing existing responses. Chiefs of Staff tend to play a lesser role in editing responses than Legislative Directors; in 44.4% of offices, Chiefs of Staff edit new responses and, in 26.3% of offices, they are also involved in editing existing responses. Beyond the role that they might play in actually crafting responses, Legislative Directors and Chiefs of Staff are typically responsible for approving responses before they go out.[72] Even if they aren't connected to the drafting process, their role in approving the outgoing responses means that they will be exposed to correspondence in their final review of response language. In 68 offices, Legislative Directors approve responses, whereas in 60 offices, Chiefs of Staff approve responses.

[72] Romzek (2000) suggests that, in approving responses, the Chief of Staff is primarily concerned with the political acceptability of a response while the Legislative Director will ensure that the content of a response is compatible with the Representative's stated policy positions.

Table 2.7. Direct Involvement by Representatives in Correspondence Management Tasks.

	Number of Offices that Include Representative in Each Correspondence Task
Sorting/batching incoming mail	0 offices
Choosing text from letter library	0 offices
Reviewing/editing responses from letter library	18 offices *(18.2%)*
Approving responses from letter library	28 offices *(28.3%)*
Researching new responses	3 offices *(3.0%)*
Drafting new responses	4 offices *(4.0%)*
Reviewing/editing new responses	26 offices *(26.3%)*
Approving new responses	42 offices *(42.4%)*
Sending outgoing correspondence	3 offices *(3.0%)*

Percent of sampled offices that involve Members of Congress themselves in each correspondence task can be found in parentheses. Only 99 offices answered these questions.

Representatives themselves can become a part of the day-to-day mail management system in offices. Direct involvement from Representatives in the correspondence operations of the office varies widely, from members whose only interaction with correspondence is the occasional question directed to the Legislative Correspondent, to members who are active in drafting responses to constituents and who personally sign each outgoing letter. Hands-on involvement in the mail process provides Representatives with awareness of correspondence content and constituent issue priorities that goes beyond what they could hope to learn from a regular mail report. Similar to senior staff, Members of Congress tend to be involved in editing or approving responses; however, there are three offices where the Representative is personally researching and drafting new responses to constituents (Table 2.7).

The inclusive response drafting and review process in place in many offices may improve staff familiarity with incoming correspondence. By including other staff in the development of responses, the office is also able to incorporate the issue expertise that is possessed by Legislative Assistants, Legislative Directors or Chiefs of Staff, which can ease the burden that

falls on Legislative Correspondents to write competently about every issue that they hear about. Still, this widely shared responsibility for writing responses is not without its challenges. The involvement of more people in the process is likely to lower the efficiency of the office's mail system. Delegating responses to others in the office means that turnaround times may be slower since the other staff have a variety of other tasks that they are also responsible for.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has provided the first in-depth account of how congressional offices handle the large volume of emails, letters, phone calls, faxes and social media contacts they get from constituents on a weekly basis. Despite similarities in the kinds of technology offices have available to assist them in this task, correspondence management practices vary across offices in many ways.

Not all offices record every contact that they receive from their constituents, with many offices choosing to exclude phone calls or faxes from their correspondence databases. The level of detail contained in each contact record varies, with many offices omitting information about constituents' policy positions. Contact records that exclude information about the positions constituents are advocating for may limit the office's ability to develop an accurate sense of district opinion.

For most offices, the knowledge about constituent opinion that is contained in the correspondence database is not conveyed to all other staff in the office. Though the large majority of offices circulate regular mail reports that provide an overview of recent correspondence trends, there are a limited number of staff who actually see the report in most offices. Additionally, the mail reports assembled in most offices provide only a partial picture of what incoming correspondence looks like, listing only the top issues and/or omitting information

about constituent policy positions. As a result, mail reports may provide information about the top issue priorities of constituents but typically they do not provide any sense of where constituents actually stand on these priority issues or capture the breadth of issues constituents care about.

The variety of approaches to correspondence management outlined throughout this chapter matters greatly for constituents' ability to connect with their elected officials; as one staffer observed, "constituents' experience in one district might be very different from constituents' experience in another district."[73] It is important to examine when constituents might expect to have these different experiences with their Representatives. With the diversity in correspondence management practices identified, what explains why offices choose to adopt the systems that they do? Do Congressmen representing competitive districts handle correspondence differently? Do correspondence management systems differ between offices of junior and senior Members of Congress? What effects do changes in district population, brought on by redistricting, have on office correspondence policies? Do the delegate or trustee representational roles that Members of Congress adopt influence the treatment of correspondence in their offices? Is the way that congressional offices approach correspondence an extension of their broader constituency relations efforts? The next chapter will explore these questions, using survey data to assess several hypotheses that may explain variation in correspondence management across offices.

[73] Interview with congressional staff, March 2014.

CHAPTER III

EXPLAINING THE VARIATION IN CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Clear differences emerge in the way that congressional offices approach correspondence management, in regards to the information that they choose to record in their contact databases, and in the ways that they share information from correspondence with other staffers in the office. Why do offices adopt the correspondence management practices that they do? This chapter advances five primary hypotheses, each of which seeks to explain the different ways that offices treat constituent correspondence. Analyses will consider whether Representatives' electoral security, seniority, newly-redrawn districts, representational role orientations, or home styles influence the approach that they take to constituent correspondence.

District Competitiveness

Legislators who represent competitive districts are expected to emphasize activities that will further their electoral goals. Generally, it is expected that facing a close election "sensitize[s] [the Congressman] to the wishes of constituents in his quest for support at the next election" (MacRae 1952). The typical tests of this "marginality hypothesis" look for evidence of higher rates of party disloyalty, or greater policy responsiveness from legislators representing more competitive districts. By cultivating strong records of policy responsiveness, Representatives demonstrate to their districts that they are faithfully representing the opinions of their constituencies.[74]

[74] Though the ability of constituents to factor their representative's policy decisions into their vote choices is questionable, most Representatives think that their constituents do vote with their legislative records in mind (Miller and Stokes 1963, Bernstein 1989).

Numerous studies have found support for the marginality hypothesis, with greater correspondence between constituency opinion and legislator behavior evident in competitive districts. Representatives who just endured a close election demonstrate less party loyalty in their roll-call voting (MacRae 1952, Froman 1963). In competitive districts, candidates tend toward more moderate ideologies, and the candidate closest to the average district opinion is more likely to win the election (Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2001). However, other studies have found minimal responsiveness differences between congressmen from competitive and from non-competitive districts (Powell 1982, Bartels 1991). Bartels (1991) notes that "representatives who win with 100% of the vote appear to be about as responsive to constituency opinion as those who win with 51% of the vote" (468).[75]

Though most assessments of the relationship between district competitiveness and legislator behavior have focused on policy responsiveness, votes taken in Congress are not readily accessible to many constituents, indicating that responsiveness on roll-calls may not represent the most obvious route for Representatives seeking to enhance their electoral prospects (Fiorina 1989, Ashworth 2005, Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006). Other activities – such as casework, pork projects, and district outreach – are each more easily visible to constituents and, as a result, could be more rewarding for members of Congress who are preoccupied with reelection. Fiorina (1989) contends that constituent service activities have become an increasingly prominent part of the work of members of Congress. Marginal congressmen in particular have "found it increasingly possible to base their reelection on their non-controversial activities – their casework and success in procuring the pork – rather than on their lawmaking

[75] The mixed results evident across tests of the marginality hypothesis is potentially a function of the typical measurement of marginality as Representatives' most recent election returns. These objective measures don't correspond well with Representatives' subjective assessments of their reelection prospects; even when every objective indicator suggests that a Representative will win reelection with little difficulty, legislators remain overly cautious about their likelihood of success (Fenno 1978).

activities," (48). Indeed, scholars have found behavioral differences between marginal and non-marginal legislators for many of these other electorally-oriented activities, including casework (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987),[76] distributive benefits for the district (Stein and Bickers 1994, Bickers and Stein 1996), and office responsiveness to constituent requests (Dropp and Peskowitz 2012).

The practices that congressional offices adopt for handling constituent correspondence can play a crucial role in Representatives' efforts to secure reelection. Developing a system that lists all incoming contacts from the district, records constituent position information and shares the content of contacts with relevant staff may promote the "heightened sensitivity to constituents' wishes" that is expected from Representatives in electorally competitive districts (MacRae 1952, 1055). Correspondence systems that effectively assemble constituent opinion information can facilitate both policy responsiveness and district outreach efforts, adding to Representatives' capacity to build and maintain relationships with constituents and, in turn, bolstering their electoral prospects.

> ***District competitiveness hypothesis:*** Representatives from competitive districts will establish inclusive correspondence management systems, with comprehensive correspondence databases and informative mail report practices.

Seniority

Representatives with more seniority in Congress have developed and successfully maintained relationships with their districts over a prolonged period of time. By engaging with constituents over the years, more senior legislators have gained a strong understanding of the dynamics within their districts – "the more senior that members become…the more likely they

[76] See also casework studies of state legislators (i.e. Freeman and Richardson 1996, Ellickson and Whistler 2001). These studies at the state level do not find a significant relationship between district competitiveness and the amount of time a state legislator dedicates to casework.

will know what constituent sentiment actually is" (Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, 548). Representatives' longer history with the district also alleviates their electoral concerns to some extent, leading to a "partial displacement over time of the reelection goal by the goal of influence in the House" or good public policy (Fenno 1978, 43). These shifting priorities mean that legislators with more seniority may be more likely to direct their efforts and their staffers' efforts toward policymaking rather than constituent relations. Since senior members of Congress have cultivated their districts over the years, they are in a stronger position to bear the opportunity costs of less emphasis on constituent services and communications (Ashworth 2005).

Junior members of Congress, however, have yet to forge connections in the district and are still familiarizing themselves with their constituencies. In these early years of their legislative careers, members of Congress are in an "expansionist" stage, "still building a reliable reelection constituency" (Fenno 1978, 172). Earlier research has suggested that new members of Congress do tend to dedicate more effort to activities that help them learn about their districts and the needs of their constituents. Less senior congressmen take more trips to the district than their more senior colleagues (Fenno 1978). Junior representatives also tend to demonstrate a "greater casework orientation," devoting more of their own time to casework services, allocating more staffers to casework and having more devices in place to solicit cases from constituents than senior members of the House (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987, 96; Johannes 1983). This emphasis on constituent relations is inherently valuable to new Representatives as they get to know their districts, but it also allows constituents to get to know them. District residents are trying to ascertain the ability of their newly elected legislator and, "because the voters can more easily observe [constituent services] tasks" including casework and communications with the

district, these tasks will serve as clearer signals of legislator ability than policy accomplishments would (Ashworth 2005, 443; see also Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita 2006).[77]

In their effort to understand their districts, junior members of Congress stand to gain a great deal through close attention to constituent correspondence. Communications that the office receives will afford a junior member an opportunity to determine what the shape of opinion is like on a range of policy issues, what issues his district residents prioritize and, to some extent, which interest groups have strong ties to his district. In order to facilitate learning about their districts, offices that serve legislators with less seniority should adopt correspondence management systems that allow them to maximize the information that they can gain from constituent contacts.

> ***Seniority hypothesis:*** Representatives with less seniority will have inclusive correspondence management systems, with comprehensive correspondence databases and practices that enable widespread staff awareness of the content of correspondence from the district.

Redistricting

Redistricting "changes the face of the district to which the congressman must appeal for reelection," (Glazer and Robbins 1985, 261). To assess the impact that redistricting has on Representatives, scholars have examined whether or not individual Representatives adjust their behavior to account for the preferences of the new districts that they serve following a redistricting. These studies have focused on how Representatives' roll-call voting behaviors change after district boundaries have been shifted (Glazer and Robbins 1985, Stratmann 2000,

[77] Though they may be valued by constituents, policy accomplishments are more difficult for voters to observe and, even when voters are made aware of a policy change, it is not necessarily clear which legislators should receive credit for the outcome (Arnold 1990). Additionally, newer members of Congress have less success advancing their proposals through Congress than more senior members (Volden and Wiseman 2014); without the skills and expertise necessary to navigate the lawmaking process, junior members can expect to see more return on their investment of time and energy in efforts focused cultivating the district.

Leveaux-Sharpe 2001, Leveaux and Garand 2003, Boatwright 2004, Hayes, Hibbing and Sulkin 2010, Crespin 2010). Generally, this research has shown that legislators respond to redistricting by adjusting their roll-call decisions to align with the opinions of their new constituencies so that "as a district becomes more liberal or conservative, so does the representative" (Crespin 2010, 851). Representatives also tend to shift their legislative agendas to reflect the policy priorities of their new constituencies, introducing and co-sponsoring more legislation related to the issues that are important in their new districts (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010).

The responsiveness to changing districts that these studies reveal corresponds with expectations. With any changes in the composition of their district, members of Congress face uncertainty about what the changes mean for their electoral security (Gelman and King 1994). When new constituents are introduced to the district, it could be "difficult for members to gauge the political makeup of the new geographic constituency" (Crespin 2010, 853). The observed responsiveness to new district preferences revealed in previous studies indicates that some learning does occur in the wake of redistricting. Close attention to district communications can be very valuable as offices adapt to new districts, facilitating the Representatives' learning about the new population that they now represent.

> ***Redistricting Hypothesis:*** Representatives serving districts that were redistricted following the 2010 Census are expected to operate more inclusive correspondence systems, with comprehensive correspondence databases and informative mail report practices.

Representational Role Orientation

In their work as legislators, Congressmen are thought to adopt representational styles or roles that guide their approaches to their legislative responsibilities. Initially articulated by Edmund Burke, the primary roles that Representatives assume were first conceptualized as a

dichotomy, with elected officials identifying as either trustees or delegates.[78] A Burkean trustee follows "his [own] unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience" in making legislative decisions (Burke 1774). Alternatively, an instructed delegate follows constituent opinion and acts as a spokesman for constituent interests in his decision-making. Since delegates see themselves as bound to act in line with constituent opinion, it is expected that the behavior of delegates will more closely reflect the opinions and interests of the districts that they represent. Indeed, studies focused on the impact that a Representative's role orientation has on his legislative behavior and his interactions with the constituency have generally found that "delegates act differently toward their constituents than trustees" (Cooper and Richardson 2006, 185). In comparison to trustees, Representatives who self-identify as delegates demonstrate higher policy responsiveness on issues that are salient among constituents (Kuklinski and Elling 1977), vote in line with their own perceptions of constituent opinion more often (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979), dedicate more time to constituency service (Studlar and McAllister 1996) and hold district office hours more frequently (Cooper and Richardson 2006).[79]

To facilitate the closer attention to district interests in their policy and constituency work that these prior studies have demonstrated, delegates rely on instruction from constituents to inform their behavior. In order for Representatives to act as delegates, the "constituency must…express its preferences in a way that allows the Representative to develop a reasonably accurate perception of district opinion" (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979, 280). It is anticipated that, relative to trustees, delegates would dedicate more time and more resources to discerning

[78] Work attempting to classify modern politicians into these two categories has found that a third role orientation exists, the politico, in which a legislator's role is essentially situational; acting as a politico, Representative's "follow constituency opinion [upon some issues], but not on others" (Hedlund and Friesma 1972, 742; see also Eulau, Wahlke, Buchanan and Ferguson 1959, Wahlke, Eulau, Buchanan and Ferguson 1962).
[79] Kuklinski and Elling (1977), McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) and Cooper and Richardson (2006) each study the observed behavior of state legislators and how it relates to state legislators' roles; Studlar and McAllister (1996) study the constituency service behavior of Representatives in Australia's national legislature.

constituent opinion. Development of a comprehensive and informative correspondence management system can assist delegates in their efforts to understand and act in accord with constituent interests.

> ***Representational Role Hypothesis:*** Representatives who identify with the delegate role orientation are expected to pay close attention to correspondence and establish inclusive correspondence systems, with comprehensive contact databases and practices that enable widespread staff awareness of the content of correspondence from the district.

Constituency Relations

As part of their continuing efforts to connect with their constituents, Representatives make frequent trips to the district, establish district offices, send out newsletters and franked mailings, issue press releases, create advertisements, and maintain websites and profiles on social media. Each of these activities can be considered part of Representatives' "home styles" or their broader approaches to building and maintaining relationships with their districts (Fenno 1978). In these interactions, Representatives engage in both one-way and two-way communication with constituents; some activities are intended purely to promote Representatives and raise their visibility, while others represent efforts to listen to constituents' views and open a dialogue with district residents. Representative-constituency relationships are necessarily a blend of both one- and two-way communication. While two-way communication may pose challenges given the size of congressional districts (in terms of both population and geography), "the greater the proportion of two-way communication, the more likely is there to be both electoral accountability and responsiveness on the part of the representative" (Fenno 1978, 238). Representatives can choose to use particular forums that better facilitate two-way communications; for example, presence in the district, through trips home and district office

locations, and presence online, on their own website and on social media sites, can both afford a meaningful starting point for two-way communication.[80]

The correspondence system that an office maintains may be seen as an extension of these two-way communication constituency relations efforts. By responding to correspondence that they receive from district residents, congressional offices are effectively engaging in two-way communication with constituents. The system that congressional offices establish to handle correspondence can improve the efficiency of the offices' response processes, allowing quicker turnaround times for responses. Additionally, well-maintained and informative records can provide offices with databases on constituent policy preferences and priorities that could be used to facilitate district outreach efforts; offices can send constituents updates on policy issues that they had previously reached out to the office about, opening an on-going dialogue with district residents.[81] Representatives who make greater efforts to maintain communication with their districts, and make two-way communication a priority, may also place more value on correspondence as another way to connect with constituents.

> ***Constituency Relations Hypothesis:*** Representatives who emphasize two-way, interactive communication with their districts are expected to establish inclusive correspondence systems, with comprehensive contact databases and practices that enable widespread staff awareness of the content of correspondence from the district.

[80] While other forms of communications, like newsletters or franked mailings, may include interactive components such as tear-out surveys or online polls (from e-newsletters), the potential for meaningful two-way interactions is still more limited.

[81] As discussed in Chapter 2, approximately 74% of offices surveyed indicated that they would use information from their contact databases to send updates to constituents about issues that they previously expressed interest in. For the most part, these updates were sent relatively infrequently.

Dependent Variables

To test these hypotheses, the numerous aspects of correspondence management that have been detailed to this point are broken down into six summary variables. Each of these summary variables, listed in Table 3.1, is an indicator variable, taking a value of 1 if an office's correspondence management system follows that practice and 0 if it does not. These summary measures focus on the content of office contact databases and office practices for sharing information from correspondence. Each of these summary variables measures an important attribute of a congressional office's approach to managing contacts from the district

Table 3.1. Description of Dependent Variables.

Summary Variables	Number of Offices that Follow this Practice
All traditional forms of communication (phone calls, emails, postal mail and faxes) are always logged into the correspondence system	46 offices
Information about the position that a constituent is advocating for is noted in the correspondence record	69 offices
Mail reports summarizing recent correspondence are compiled at regular intervals (daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly)	82 offices
Mail reports are shared with legislative staff and senior office leadership	33 offices
Mail reports contain information about the issues observed in incoming correspondence	70 offices
Development of responses to send to constituents involves legislative staff in the office	52 offices

and connects to the characteristics of correspondence systems that were detailed in Chapter 2.[82] Each practice individually contributes to the inclusiveness and informational potential of the office correspondence system. As a result, offices that align with all of these criteria are considered to have more inclusive correspondence management systems. Linear probability models are utilized to test explanations for the variation on each of these summary variables individually.[83]

Independent Variables[84]

Past research exploring the relationship between district competitiveness and legislative behavior has typically employed measures of a Representative's recent election returns to capture district competitiveness and electoral vulnerability: the closer the election, the more vulnerable the representative. In several studies, districts where the incumbent's most recent vote share falls below a certain threshold are identified as "marginal" or "competitive".[85] Such measures of electoral performance may, however, inadequately capture Representatives' perceptions of their safety, since "House members see electoral uncertainty where outsiders would fail to unearth a single objective indicator of it" (Fenno 1978, 11). Despite this potential problem of Representatives' overly cautious assessments of their own electoral prospects, the measurement of district competitiveness will follow previous scholarship, using the Representatives' ***vote share in the 2012 general election*** to capture electoral vulnerability. Since

[82] These six indicator variables will be used throughout the analyses presented in the dissertation. Each time, the variables will be included in models one at a time. Exploratory factor analysis revealed little correlation among these six correspondence system characteristics, so compilation of the variables into a summary index is not appropriate. This strategy also allows an opportunity to observe which particular traits of correspondence systems exert the greatest influence on legislative behavior in the analyses that will appear in later chapters of the dissertation.
[83] Probit models are statistically and substantively similar to the linear probability models presented in this chapter. Linear probability models were selected as they are easier to present and interpret and do not require other control variables to be set at specific values to determine predicted probabilities.
[84] Summary statistics for each independent variable can be found in Appendix C.
[85] Common thresholds used to determine district marginality are 55% (Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1989), 60% (MacRae 1952; Mayhew 1974; Freeman and Richardson 1996) and 65% (Hayes, Hibbing and Sulkin 2010).

some Representatives face their strongest competition in the primary election rather than in the general election, ***vote share in the 2012 primary election*** is interacted with whether the Representative faced a primary challenger in 2012 as an additional measure of electoral vulnerability.[86] [87]

Though previous work has employed thresholds to identify Representatives as junior or senior (Sullivan and Uslaner 1978; Johannes 1983; Hayes, Hibbing and Sulkin 2010), seniority is measured here by the ***number of full congressional terms served*** by each Representative in the sample. Additionally, each model will be estimated with another operationalization of seniority, an ***indicator for freshman status***. The freshman indicator variable accounts for the possibility that new congressional offices may approach correspondence management in a more inclusive way out of necessity, as they must quickly become familiar with the district that they represent.

Research assessing the effects of redistricting on legislator behavior has employed various measures to capture the district change that resulted from a redistricting effort, including changes in district demographics (Leveuax and Garand 2003, Hayes, Hibbing and Sulkin 2010) and changes in district boundaries themselves (Stratmann 2000, Crespin 2010). However, widely used measures of district change focus on the ideological change in a Representative's constituency following a redistricting (Glazer and Robbins 1985, Leveaux-Sharpe 2001, Boatwright 2004, Crespin 2010).[88] Following this conventional operationalization of district

[86] Estimated models do not include a separate control for whether or not the Representative faced a primary challenger in 2012; this variable is highly correlated with the interaction term described above, introducing a multicollinearity problem to the models. The interaction term was included in the models since it offers the opportunity to assess the effect that the primary vote share has on office correspondence practices.

[87] To account for the possibility that the effect of electoral margins on correspondence system characteristics may be non-linear, additional models including vote share in the general election squared and vote share in the primary election interaction term squared were estimated. These squared terms were never statistically significant, and, as a result, models presented here do not include them.

[88] For each of these studies, scholars subtract the Democratic presidential vote share for a congressional district in one election year (i.e. 2008) from the adjusted Democratic presidential vote share for that same election year (2008)

ideological change, ***change in district partisanship*** is measured as the absolute value of the difference between each Members' district's Democratic presidential vote share in 2008 and the 2008 Democratic presidential vote share recalculated to the new district boundaries that went into effect in 2012.[89]

Representatives' orientation to district interests has typically been measured by directly asking legislators whether they identify as delegates or trustees when making legislative decisions (Hedlund and Friesma 1972, Kuklinski and Elling 1977, McCrone and Kuklinski 1979, Cooper and Richardson 2006).[90] In the absence of such direct measures in the current study, ***representational role*** is measured by a policy responsiveness index, created from roll-call votes and district opinion information gathered in the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2012). The CCES asks respondents how they would have voted on pieces of legislation that Congress had recently voted on; the questions are designed to reflect the same choice their Representative faced on the House floor during the 112th Congress. To create the index, information about district preferences on five roll-call votes is matched with how Representatives actually voted on each of those roll-call votes; if a majority of the district agrees with the way the Representative cast his vote, it is coded as a one (zero otherwise). The policy responsiveness indicator for each of these roll-call votes is compiled into an additive index, with higher values indicating greater policy responsiveness and a stronger orientation to

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had the new district boundaries been in place (Glazer and Robbins 1985, Leveaux-Sharpe 2001, Boatwright 2004, Crespin 2010). In this project, the new district boundaries where those that went into effect in 2012.

[89] In contrast to previous studies that focused on how ideological change in the district influences the ideology expressed by the Representative in roll-call votes, in this case, direction of the change in district partisanship is not of interest. Instead, the variable of interest is the magnitude of the change the district experiences, capturing how much of the district is new to the Representative.

[90] Other work has determined representational role orientation by asking Representatives to identify what the most important influences on their legislative decisions are (Clarke and Price 1981, Studlar and McAllister 1996). Legislators who identify constituents as important influences are classified as delegates; legislators who indicate that their own judgment is important are considered trustees.

meet district needs.[91] Though this is only an indirect measure of the roles that Representatives adopt, use of demonstrated legislative behavior to capture role identification leverages the findings of earlier research; as McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) note "representatives who conceive themselves as fulfilling the will of their constituencies display behavior that reflects that role conception" (292).[92]

Though an extensive exploration of constituency relations and home style on the scale of Fenno (1978) falls well beyond the scope of this project, two measures are employed to capture the extent of two-way communication between congressional offices and constituents in each congressional office in the sample. ***Percent of staff located in district offices*** captures the commitment of congressional office resources to the district; in allocating more staff to the district, the office improves the chances for two-way interactions with constituents. ***Extent of interaction on Twitter*** is measured as the total number of replies, retweets and user mentions from each Representative's official Twitter account during the 113th Congress.[93] Each of these actions are ways that Twitter users can interact; the higher the number of replies, retweets and users mentions, the more the user interacts with others. While an imperfect measure of constituency relations, since the interactions counted here could be with constituents or non-constituents, the willingness to engage in Twitter interaction may reflect an underlying willingness to engage in two-way communications with the district.

[91] Since this operationalization of district orientation relies on CCES data and roll-call votes from the 112th Congress, this measure is only available for non-freshmen Representatives. Models that test this hypothesis are only estimated for non-freshmen Congressmen in the sample.

[92] Such an indirect measure could also classify as a delegate a Representative who is actually a trustee who is well matched with his district. This lessens the viability of this index as a proxy measure for delegate role orientation, making the index instead purely a measure of Representatives' demonstrated policy responsiveness. In this case, the results would show whether correspondence systems are different for Representatives who demonstrate greater levels of responsiveness, regardless of whether that responsiveness results from voting as a delegate or as a well-matched trustee.

[93] This data is collected from Twitonomy.com, a Twitter analytics website that compiles data on every Twitter users' activity.

Partisanship of the Representative is controlled for to account for possible differences in the way that members of each political party structure their systems. Differences may also be evident between members who are more ideologically distant from others in the House. ***Ideological extremity*** is measured as the absolute value of a Representative's distance from the 112th Congress chamber median on DW-Nominate.[94] [95]

Offices that belong to Representatives in ***committee or subcommittee leadership*** may structure their constituent communications practices differently. Committee and subcommittee leaders have access to staff on their committees; more reliance on committee staff for policy work could leave more personal office resources available for use in handling constituent contacts (Patterson 1970). Representatives are coded as committee or subcommittee leaders if they serve as Chairman of a congressional committee or subcommittee.[96]

As they often have access to additional staff resources as well, offices that belong to Representatives in ***party leadership*** may also approach constituent correspondence in a distinctive way. In a 2012 interview, a staffer for a Representative in party leadership indicated that all policy-related work was based in the party office. According to the staffer, this delegation of policy formulation and promotion to the leadership office staff freed up the personal office staff to concentrate on constituent services and communications. Party leadership is measured as an indicator variable according to the *Almanac of American Politics*' coding of party leaders.

District characteristics may also impact the correspondence management practices that offices establish, with offices that represent larger or more politically active districts

[94] This distance from chamber median measure is used in place of the continuous DW-Nominate score since DW-Nominate is highly correlated with partisanship, causing a multicollinearity problem in the model specifications.
[95] This measure is only available for non-freshmen Representatives, so models including this variable will be estimated for only the non-freshmen in the sample.
[96] Though all committees and subcommittees are guaranteed a certain minimum level of staff to be assigned to serve as minority party staff (under House Rule X), the access that ranking members of congressional committees or subcommittees have to exclusive staff varies across committees. For this reason, only committee and subcommittee chairmen are controlled for in these analyses.

experiencing higher demand from constituents for correspondence services. ***District population size*** is controlled for to account for the possibility that larger districts have a larger pool of potential contactors than less populated districts, possibly increasing the amount of contacts that the office can expect to receive.[97] [98] Highly educated constituents are more likely to write to Congress, likely increasing the volume of correspondence that offices representing districts with a more educated population handle (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). Similar trends are possible in districts with higher income residents since higher-earning citizens tend to participate in a variety of political activities at higher rates than low-income citizens (Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). As a result, highly educated and high income districts may communicate at higher rates with their elected officials, requiring the office to institute different correspondence systems than offices that represent less educated, lower-income districts. ***District education level***, measured as the percentage of the district holding a Bachelor's degree or higher, and ***district median income***, measured as the median income of district residents, are both controlled for.[99]

Not all Representatives have the same need to develop relationships with individual constituents. In particular, members of Congress who depend on campaign contributions from individuals are more likely to prioritize activities that will help them forge connections with district residents, in hopes of securing future donations. For Representatives who rely heavily on contributions from individuals to finance their bids for reelection, correspondence received from constituents can be an important opportunity to build relationships and cultivate potential donors.

[97] Recent research has found that constituents in heavily populated congressional districts are much less likely to initiate contact with their Congressmen than constituents in districts with lower populations (Frederick 2010). In light of this result, the level of correspondence that offices receive may not increase with district population as expected.

[98] Though the average congressional district has a population of 720,188 residents, there is substantial variation in average district population size across states. In Rhode Island, the average district has 525,146 residents while Montana's at-large district has a population of 1,005,141 (Crocker 2013). Among the congressional offices within the survey sample, district population size ranges from 662,550 to 917,092.

[99] District population size, district education level and district median income each come from the 2012 American Community Survey, an annual survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

With comprehensive correspondence systems, offices are better able to keep track of constituents and their views and potentially engage in outreach efforts that can help secure political support and campaign contributions. ***Percent of campaign contributions from individuals***, obtained from Federal Election Commission records for the 2012 election, reflects the demand that offices face to focus on nurturing relationships with individual constituents.

Results

Table 3.2 presents the analyses from linear probability models estimated for each dependent variable for the entire sample of congressional offices.[100] These models suggest that Representatives' seniority and the redistricting-induced changes to their district populations do not relate to their treatment of constituent correspondence. However, several attributes of offices correspondence management systems are related to Representatives' electoral conditions and to the constituency relations approaches that they adopt, suggesting some support for both the district competitiveness and constituency relations hypotheses.

As Representatives are more electorally insecure in their primaries, they are more likely to record all types of contacts that they receive. For Representatives who faced a primary opponent, a 20-point decrease in the vote share that they earn in the primary increases the probability that their office will maintain a complete correspondence database by 0.05, holding all else constant. Representatives' performance in the general election also impacts the correspondence practices that their offices adopt, particularly in how they involve other staff in the processing of constituents' contacts. Offices that faced close general election contests in 2012 are more likely to share mail reports with relevant staff and more likely to share

[100] As they include freshmen Representatives, these models exclude controls for district orientation and ideological extremity. Assessment of the representational role hypothesis will be discussed below, using estimates for non-freshmen Representatives only (presented in Table 3.3).

responsibility for drafting responses to constituents with legislative staffers. A 20-point decrease in the vote share that a Representative earned in the 2012 general election increases the probability that his office will circulate mail reports to key staffers, including office leadership and legislative staff, by 0.18. A similar decrease in general election vote share increases the probability that a Representative's office will include legislative staffers in the process of drafting responses to constituent correspondence by 0.2. These results together indicate that vulnerable representatives adopt systems that retain complete records of constituents contacts and make correspondence part of the work life of staff in the rest of the office, increasing the likelihood that information from correspondence will become part of the office dialogue and be incorporated decisions made by other staff.

The extent to which Representatives try to engage in two-way communication with constituents impacts their correspondence record-keeping practices, offering some limited support for the constituency relations hypothesis. Representatives that tend to interact with other users on Twitter more often are more likely to keep comprehensive databases that list all incoming letters, emails, phone calls, and faxes that they receive from constituents. Moving from the Representative who interacts with other Twitter users the least (with only 7 interactions) to the median Representative (with 684 interactions) increases the probability that an office will keep complete records by 0.13.

The commitment of staff and resources to the district, included as an additional measure of a Representative's propensity to seek out two-way communications with the district, is expected to demonstrate a positive relationship with office correspondence practices. However, the percentage of staff located in the district is a negative and significant predictor of whether offices will involve legislative staff in drafting responses to constituent contacts. The higher the

proportion of a Representative's total staff that he assigns to the district, the less likely that his legislative staff will be developing responses to correspondence. As the percentage of staff located in the district increases from the 25th percentile (with 42.9% of staff assigned to the district) to the 75th percentile (with 52.9% of staff working in the district), the probability that legislative staff will draft replies decreases by 0.21. Though this runs counter to initial expectations about constituency relations efforts and correspondence systems, it is not a surprising finding. As employees are shifted to district locations, staffers remaining in the Representative's Washington, D.C. office will likely be given larger workloads to compensate for the lower staff numbers in that office, leaving less opportunity to share responsibilities for correspondence.

These findings indicate that the electoral competition that Representatives face and the district interactions that they seek out do correspond to the way that they treat constituents' contacts. However, many of the expected relationships, particularly for seniority and redistricting, are not observed in these analyses. This may be a reflection of the sample being analyzed here; the models presented in Table 3.2 include freshmen Representatives, yet there are reasons to think that members of Congress in their first term may still be working to establish the correspondence systems that will best suit their needs. Freshman members of Congress face the substantial task of organizing their congressional offices while simultaneously learning about constituent opinion and adjusting to their legislative responsibilities (Loomis 1979). Though the freshman indicator variable included in each of these models is not statistically significant, it is possible that the inclusion of freshmen Representatives, who are unlikely to have firmly established their approach to correspondence, in these models has obscured trends in correspondence management in Congress. Table 3.3

presents analyses from models that are estimated without first-term Representatives; these non-freshman models also include additional controls to test the district orientation hypothesis as well as the effect of ideological extremity on contact management practices.

Similar to findings for the entire sample, models estimated for non-freshmen reveal that electoral conditions influence many aspects of the correspondence systems that Representatives establish. As Representatives are less electorally secure in their primaries, they are more likely to record all types of contacts that they receive. For Representatives who faced a primary opponent, a 20-point decrease in the vote share that they earn in the primary increases the probability that their office will maintain a complete correspondence database by 0.06, holding all else constant. For non-freshmen, general election performance affects the content that offices choose to record in their databases and the extent to which responsibility for correspondence will be shared with other staff. Representatives who faced closer general elections in 2012 were more likely to include information about the positions that constituents advocated for when entering a contact into their database. A 20-point decrease in the vote share an incumbent received in the 2012 general election increases the probability that the office will note constituent position in their contact records by 0.31. A similar decrease in an incumbent's 2012 vote share increases the probability that legislative staff will be involved in developing responses to constituent contacts by 0.2. These findings again lend support to the district competitiveness hypothesis – Representatives who have recently weathered close elections are more likely to keep complete and informative records about constituent opinion and to involve other staff in processing correspondence.

These models for non-freshmen members also reiterate the relationships between Representatives' home styles and their correspondence management systems revealed in the full

Table 3.2. Linear Probability Model Estimates, *Full Sample.*

	Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	**Office Records Constituent Position**	**Mail Reports Circulated Regularly**	**Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership**	**Mail Reports Contain Issue Content**	**Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development**
Vote Share, 2012 General Election	0.0001	- 0.0067	0.0020	- 0.0092*	0.0017	- 0.0099*
	(0.0048)	(0.0052)	(0.0041)	(0.0052)	(0.0050)	(0.0051)
Interaction: Primary Challenger x 2012 Primary Vote Share	- 0.0026*	- 0.0010	0.0006	0.0023	- 0.0003	- 0.0008
	(0.0014)	(0.0015)	(0.0012)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)	(0.0015)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	0.0126	0.0260	0.0084	0.0114	0.0186	0.0099
	(0.0172)	(0.0187)	(0.0147)	(0.0182)	(0.0177)	(0.0186)
Freshman Indicator	- 0.0636	- 0.0115	0.1013	0.1545	0.2669	0.0110
	(0.1541)	(0.1668)	(0.1345)	(0.1723)	(0.1655)	(0.1691)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0085	- 0.0136	- 0.0150	- 0.0108	- 0.0193	- 0.0202
	(0.0116)	(0.0125)	(0.0110)	(0.0136)	(0.0132)	(0.0137)
Percentage of Staff Located in District Offices	- 0.0024	- 0.0002	- 0.0009	0.0078	- 0.0001	- 0.0212**
	(0.0074)	(0.0080)	(0.0064)	(0.0078)	(0.0076)	(0.0080)
Extent of Interaction on Twitter	0.0002**	0.0000	0.0001	- 0.0001	- 0.0001	0.0001
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Partisanship of Member of Congress	- 0.1476	0.1929	0.1697	- 0.1227	- 0.0809	- 0.3833**
	(0.1559)	(0.1688)	(0.1419)	(0.1701)	(0.1747)	(0.1701)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	0.3960***	- 0.1434	- 0.0802	0.0110	0.1186	0.1911
	(0.1475)	(0.1597)	(0.1364)	(0.1651)	(0.1656)	(0.1651)
Party Leadership	0.2700	0.2186	0.2600	0.0166	0.0733	- 0.1498
	(0.2150)	(0.2328)	(0.1824)	(0.2229)	(0.2141)	(0.2278)
District Population Size	0.0033	- 0.0332*	0.0003	- 0.0132	- 0.0268*	0.0046
	(0.0156)	(0.0169)	(0.0132)	(0.0164)	(0.0159)	(0.0168)
District Education Level	- 0.0269***	- 0.0040	- 0.0145**	- 0.0014	- 0.0052	0.0116
	(0.0077)	(0.0083)	(0.0065)	(0.0083)	(0.0082)	(0.0085)
District Median Income	0.0191***	0.0003	0.0040	- 0.0001	0.0035	- 0.0177***
	(0.0054)	(0.0059)	(0.0046)	(0.0057)	(0.0056)	(0.0058)
Percent of Campaign Contributions Coming from Individuals	- 0.0032	0.0067*	0.0023	0.0093**	0.0022	0.0037
	(0.0037)	(0.0040)	(0.0032)	(0.0039)	(0.0040)	(0.0040)
Constant	0.0205	3.1851**	0.7106	1.1171	2.4931*	2.3831
	(1.3579)	(1.4701)	(1.1644)	(1.4245)	(1.3966)	(1.4574)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2100	0.0404	- 0.0061	0.0453	- 0.0591	0.1382
N	89	89	85	83	78	85

Full sample. (Standard Errors in parentheses) * $p < 0.10$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3.3. Linear Probability Model Estimates, *Non-freshmen Representatives only*.

	Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	**Office Records Constituent Position**	**Mail Reports Circulated Regularly**	**Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership**	**Mail Reports Contain Issue Content**	**Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development**
Vote Share, 2012 General Election	- 0.0022	- 0.0156**	0.0075	- 0.0024	0.0051	- 0.0098*
	(0.0055)	(0.0058)	(0.0047)	(0.0059)	(0.0060)	(0.0056)
Interaction: Primary Challenger x 2012 Primary Vote Share	- 0.0030**	- 0.0013	0.0008	0.0022	- 0.0012	0.0005
	(0.0014)	(0.0015)	(0.0012)	(0.0015)	(0.0016)	(0.0015)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	0.0229	0.0159	0.0194	0.0128	0.0217	0.0202
	(0.0177)	(0.0185)	(0.0149)	(0.0188)	(0.0189)	(0.0180)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0245	- 0.0307	0.0120	- 0.0027	0.0130	- 0.0582***
	(0.0202)	(0.0212)	(0.0171)	(0.0218)	(0.0220)	(0.0209)
Representational Role Orientation	0.0757	0.0716	0.1015*	- 0.1197	0.1099	0.0703
	(0.0673)	(0.0706)	(0.0567)	(0.0734)	(0.0749)	(0.0703)
Percentage of Staff Located in District Offices	0.0018	- 0.0102	- 0.0040	0.0019	- 0.0003	- 0.0216**
	(0.0081)	(0.0085)	(0.0069)	(0.0087)	(0.0085)	(0.0083)
Extent of Interaction on Twitter	0.0003***	0.0001	0.0001	- 0.0000	- 0.0001	0.0001
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Partisanship of Member of Congress	- 0.5142	0.4689	- 0.0361	- 0.4613	- 0.1341	- 0.2477
	(0.3654)	(0.3833)	(0.3103)	(0.3936)	(0.3791)	(0.3766)
Ideological Extremity of Member of Congress	- 0.8694	0.5544	- 0.7619*	- 0.5485	- 0.0350	- 0.3189
	(0.5336)	(0.5598)	(0.4510)	(0.5768)	(0.5523)	(0.5499)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	0.3230*	- 0.1194	- 0.2322	- 0.0755	0.1696	0.0367
	(0.1659)	(0.1741)	(0.1489)	(0.1832)	(0.1892)	(0.1703)
Party Leadership	0.2192	0.2375	0.2440	- 0.0690	0.0539	- 0.0862
	(0.2135)	(0.2239)	(0.1802)	(0.2265)	(0.2191)	(0.2163)
District Population Size	- 0.0003	- 0.0407**	0.0097	- 0.0158	- 0.0247	0.0123
	(0.0169)	(0.0177)	(0.0142)	(0.0179)	(0.0176)	(0.0171)
District Education Level	- 0.0222***	- 0.0029	- 0.0089	0.0000	- 0.0050	0.0137
	(0.0080)	(0.0084)	(0.0068)	(0.0089)	(0.0087)	(0.0085)
District Median Income	0.0157***	0.0014	0.0009	- 0.0028	0.0036	- 0.0174***
	(0.0055)	(0.0058)	(0.0046)	(0.0058)	(0.0058)	(0.0056)
Percent of Campaign Contributions Coming from Individuals	- 0.0055	0.0003	0.0078*	0.0116**	0.0059	- 0.0006
	(0.0046)	(0.0049)	(0.0040)	(0.0051)	(0.0055)	(0.0048)
Constant	0.7077	4.4262**	- 0.3329	1.9251	1.5922	1.8590
	(1.6851)	(1.7679)	(1.4225)	(1.7893)	(1.7772)	(1.7084)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2707	0.1442	0.0809	0.0386	- 0.0133	0.2651
N	74	74	72	71	66	72

Non-freshman Representatives Only. (Standard Errors in parentheses) * $p < 0.10$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

sample estimates above. A Representative's approach to other communications with constituents relates to her contact database content and to her decision to involve other staff in managing correspondence. Specifically, shifting from the Representative who interacts with other Twitter users the least to the median Representative (in terms of interaction on Twitter) increases the probability that an office will record all incoming contacts from constituents by 0.2. Additionally, as the percentage of staff located in the district increases from the 25th percentile (with 42.9% of staff assigned to the district) to the 75th percentile (with 52.9% of staff working in the district), the probability that legislative staff will draft replies decreases by 0.22.

When considering only non-freshmen, there is some indication that changes to district composition following a redistricting influence office approaches to correspondence, though not in the expected direction.[101] Representatives from districts that were redrawn following the 2010 Census tend not to involve legislative staff in drafting replies to constituent contacts. Representatives that experienced a shift in their districts' partisan composition after redistricting are less likely to include legislative staff in the development of responses to constituent contacts. With a 5-point change in district partisanship, the predicted probability that a congressional office will involve Legislative Assistants and Legislative Directors in drafting responses to correspondence decreases by 0.29. Though the involvement of legislative staff in writing responses can potentially help staff orient themselves to the altered congressional district they now serve, it is possible that changes to the district necessitate that legislative staff dedicate more attention to the policy priorities of their new district. In focusing more on their

[101] The effect of redistricting changes to a district is likely to be minimal for freshmen Congressmen as they did not represent the previous district and, therefore, are unlikely to need to adapt their correspondence practices to learn about district changes in the same way non-freshmen Representatives may need to. This likely contributes to the lack of relationship between the effects of redistricting and correspondence system traits in models for the full sample of congressional offices.

legislative work, Legislative Assistants and Legislative Directors would necessarily have less time assist with response development.

Among non-freshmen members, there is some indication Representatives with a demonstrated delegate orientation do structure their correspondence practices differently than those who are less delegate-oriented. In the congressional offices of these district-oriented, policy responsive Representatives, mail reports are more likely to be circulated on a regular basis. As district policy responsiveness increases from the minimum to the maximum possible congruence, the probability that a mail report will be shared routinely increases by 0.51.

Looking beyond the primary hypotheses explored in this chapter, several interesting relationships emerge among the control variables included in Tables 3.2 and 3.3. A Representative's involvement in committee leadership, his need for close relationships with constituents and the likelihood that his district will be politically active each relate to the way his office will treat constituent correspondence.

Committee and subcommittee chairs tend to keep more comprehensive contact databases, recording all letters, emails, phone calls and faxes that they receive from constituents. It is possible that the tendency for these committee leaders to maintain complete records is a function of their access to additional staff affiliated with their committees. Relying on committee staff for legislative work frees up personal office staff to focus on constituent concerns and correspondence. Representatives in these House leadership roles may also emphasize record-keeping in an effort to better discern district opinion; with a more complete database, these Representatives have access to valuable intelligence about public opinion that can be used to inform their committee work.

Representatives' need to develop relationships with constituents, as measured by their reliance on individual campaign contributions, impacts how they choose to keep records and share information from correspondence with others in the office. Representatives who rely more heavily on individual campaign contributions are more likely to record constituent position information in their contact databases. Representatives who receive a large proportion of their campaign funding from individuals are more likely to employ regular mail reports and to share those mail reports with the Chief of Staff, Legislative Director and other legislative staff in the office. Efforts to keep informative records and to raise awareness of constituent opinion for this broader audience within the office places the entire office in a better position to help foster relationships with district residents, hopefully ensuring continued support for the Representative's campaign from individual contributions.

For the most part, Representatives who may be expected to handle greater volumes of contacts from constituents tend to adopt less inclusive correspondence systems.[102] District population size, education level and income level each tap into the district's capacity to write to Congress and, in turn, the volume of contacts that offices can expect to field. Representatives serving larger, wealthier and more educated districts are adopting different practices, possibly in anticipation of the large numbers of contacts that they will receive. Representatives who serve larger populations are less likely to record constituent position information with each incoming contact and less likely to include issue information on their office mail reports. Representatives in more highly educated districts are less likely to maintain complete correspondence databases or share regular mail reports; Representatives serving higher income districts are less likely to involve legislative staff in drafting responses to constituents. These offices have chosen to

[102] In an exception to this pattern, Representatives in districts with higher median incomes tend to keep complete records, listing every letter, email, phone call and fax that they receive from the district.

institute less inclusive systems, possibly to limit the amount of time and office resources that large volumes of correspondence can consume.

Discussion and Conclusion

Drawing on the first systematic data set of congressional office practices for handling constituent communications, the preceding chapter detailed the substantial differences in how Representatives and their staffers approach the tasks involved in managing the thousands of letters, emails, phone calls and faxes that constituents send to Congress. Office decisions about the content of contact databases, and about whether responsibility for correspondence tasks should be shared with others in the office can be explained, at least in part, by Representatives' electoral circumstances and their approaches toward constituency relations. However, for other features of correspondence systems, the estimated models revealed largely null findings, indicating the difficulty in explaining many of the practices that congressional offices adopt for handling constituent contacts. In particular, the analyses reveal little about the determinants of the content of, and the audience for, office mail reports.

Additionally, several of the primary hypotheses explored here are not supported. Despite the strong foundation in the political science literature that demonstrates seniority's impact on a host of legislative behaviors, Representatives' seniority does *not* relate to their offices' correspondence practices. Recent redistricting also does not influence the way that offices will treat correspondence as hypothesized, even though past work has pointed to the effects of redistricting on Representatives' voting behavior and legislative agendas. Lastly, Representatives' perspective on their role as legislators does not tend to affect correspondence

management choices, though the lack of a relationship in this instance may result from reliance on a proxy measure of Representatives' delegate orientation.

Given the limited understanding of the factors affecting the way that offices treat correspondence, and, in particular, how they share information from correspondence, it is worth asking: what alternative explanations may account for the ways that offices decide to handle constituent contacts? It is possible that members of Congress who have served in the state legislature may be uniquely suited to transfer their experience with constituent correspondence at that level to their Washington office operations. However, models estimated with controls for state legislative experience (not presented here) reveal that there is no relationship between state legislative service and congressional correspondence practices; the null effect of state legislative experience holds even when the professionalism of the state legislature is accounted for. Looking more broadly, it is possible that members of Congress draw on their own past professional experience when they design correspondence systems for their offices. Each Representative "operate[s] as the head of an enterprise," and Representatives with backgrounds in executive or management positions may adapt to this role more easily (Salisbury and Shepsle 1981, 559). This background may influence the way they structure any number of operations within their office, including the system established to process constituent contacts.

Alternatively, the treatment of constituent correspondence may largely be determined by the senior staff that members of Congress hire. Senior staff can potentially draw on previous experience to inform decisions about correspondence management practices. Office leaders that have joined the staff without any prior experience in congressional offices may have limited insight into how to best approach constituents' communications; staff that have previously worked for other members of Congress may bring expertise from their past positions and help

build an effective correspondence system. Future work should incorporate measures of Representatives' and staffers' backgrounds to assess how much these personal experiences influence the office operations that they institute.

Though we still lack a full understanding of why these differences in correspondence systems exist, it is essential to consider what these different approaches to constituent contacts mean for the work of Congress. What implications do the correspondence systems that offices adopt have for: (1) how well for Representatives understand district opinion? (2) how well Representatives reflect constituency views in their roll-call voting behavior? (3) how successful Representatives are in ushering their legislative initiatives through Congress? To answer these questions, the following chapters will take what the survey has revealed about correspondence management in Congress and try to discern its impact on Representatives' behavior.

CHAPTER IV

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT AND PERCEPTUAL ACCURACY

Having identified correspondence as a potentially valuable resource for congressional offices seeking to understand district views, it is likely that an office's treatment of constituents' mail, email, phone calls and faxes should matter for its ability to translate correspondence into useful political information about district preferences. Indeed, the way that an office approaches correspondence could facilitate or impede the efforts made by the Representative and his staff to discern constituent opinion. Congressional offices with more comprehensive databases and inclusive information-sharing practices are in a strong position to use correspondence to obtain the district opinion information that they are seeking. Given this informational potential that inclusive contact management systems hold, do congressional offices that adopt these correspondence practices accurately perceive the policy preferences held by constituents? To engage this question, this chapter will assess how closely congressional office estimates of constituent opinion align with the actual policy preferences that constituents have expressed on three recent policy issues, controlling for office treatment of constituent correspondence.

Though "the leader's understanding of the constituents' attitudes, beliefs, and values…[is] perhaps the most important aspect of the leader-constituent relation," research that has focused on how well Representatives understand their districts has been limited (Clausen 1977, 363). The lack of attention can largely be attributed to the inherent difficulty in gathering the appropriate data; such research requires information about both district-level public opinion and Representatives' perceptions about district-level public opinion. The analyses presented here overcome the typical data limitations, using constituent opinion data drawn from the Cooperative

Congressional Election Study, and legislator perceptions data from the congressional staff survey. Earlier scholars have used similar approaches to these data challenges, typically by pairing data from legislator interviews with district survey data or referenda results to assess the perceptual accuracy of elected officials (Miller and Stokes 1963, Hedlund and Friesema 1972, Uslaner and Weber 1979, McCrone and Kuklinski 1979, Clausen, Holmberg and deHaven-Smith 1983). These studies consider different issues in different contexts and they indicate that the ability of legislators to correctly discern constituent opinion varies substantially.

How accurate are Representatives' perceptions?

In their seminal study, Miller and Stokes (1963) examine how closely members' perceptions match the reality of constituent opinion in their districts. The resulting correlation coefficients reveal that Representatives operate with "very imperfect information about the issue preferences of [their] constituency," (Miller and Stokes 1963, 56). In two of the three issue areas that Miller and Stokes consider, the correlation of actual district opinion with legislator perceptions of district opinion is quite low (for foreign affairs, r=0.19; for social welfare, r=0.17). For civil rights, the "charged and polarized" issue that they deal with, Representatives have a much more accurate perception of constituent opinion (r=0.63).

Other work evaluating the perceptual accuracy of elected officials suggests that state legislators have varying degrees of success in correctly determining constituency attitudes (Hedlund and Friesema 1972, Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway 1975, Uslaner and Weber 1979, McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). Hedlund and Friesma (1972) find that state legislators in Iowa were relatively accurate in predicting how the majority of their constituents would vote on four referenda, but their accuracy did vary across the four issues. Legislators were better able to

predict district outcomes for high profile referenda issues (Hedlund and Friesma 1972).[103] Looking at state Representatives in Florida, Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway (1975) find that correlations between a legislator's prediction for district vote and actual district vote on three referenda were reasonably high for two issues (for school busing, r=0.51; for school prayer, r=0.42). However, legislators tended to be much less accurate in their predictions for Florida's referendum on school integration (r=0.08). Uslaner and Weber (1979) compare simulated statewide public opinion with state legislators' views, revealing substantial gaps between estimates of statewide opinion and legislators' perceptions of opinion in their states. For Uslaner and Weber (1979), these gaps suggest that "legislators, particularly at the state level, are simply not in a good position to estimate public opinion" (Uslaner and Weber 1979, 564).

Though the limited research into legislative perceptions has typically focused on how well elected officials can identify district opinion, Miler (2010) departs from this approach by exploring how well congressional offices perceive constituents themselves, rather than their opinions. Miler (2010) asks congressional staffers to identify the relevant constituents within the district that would consider particular issues to be important; she then compares staffers' responses to a complete list of relevant constituencies, as identified by policy experts.[104] Miler's results reveal that "legislative perceptions of the district are limited" (70). For each issue considered, legislative offices perceived less than one-third of the relevant subconstituencies that

[103] 91.5% of legislators accurately predicted district voting returns for home rule, and 81.7% of legislators accurately predicted district results for reapportionment. Hedlund and Friesma identify these as higher profile issues that had received sustained attention in the state for many years. On the lower profile issues of annual sessions for the state legislature and line item veto power for the Governor, legislators tended to be less accurate; 58.9% of legislators correctly predicted the vote for annual sessions and 64.3% accurately predicted the district outcome for line item veto.

[104] Miler looks at four specific bills that were considered in the 107th Congress: the Patient's Bill of Rights, the Securing America's Future Energy Act, Medicare regulatory reform, and wetlands conservation. For each bill, Miler identified numerous relevant groups within congressional districts that were invested in the legislative battle over the legislation. For example, Miler identified six subconstituencies as relevant for Medicare regulatory reform: hospitals/hospices, physicians, Medicare patients, insurers, senior citizens, and the pharmaceutical industry.

Miler identified, suggesting that congressional perceptions of the districts that they serve are incomplete.

What influences Representatives' accuracy?

Taken together, this limited collection of research reveals significant variation in legislators' ability to accurately perceive the shape of opinion and the array of interested parties in their districts. In seeking explanations for the varying rates of success in assessing district preferences, scholars have identified several contextual and personal factors that can enhance legislators' perceptual accuracy. Attributes of policy areas, constituents, district opinion, and the lawmakers themselves can enable legislators to make more accurate observations about constituent attitudes.

Legislators' perceptions align most closely with actual constituent views for major, high profile issues (Miller and Stokes 1963, Hedlund and Friesma 1972, Clausen 1977). On the relatively low salience issues that legislators face on a daily basis, a legislator's capacity to accurately predict constituent opinions is limited (Hedlund and Friesma 1972). This relationship between issue salience and legislators' perceptual accuracy is likely a function of the heightened constituent activity and attention that is characteristic of salient issues. Frequent communications from constituents, typical for highly salient issues, can facilitate accurate legislative perceptions of district opinion and district interests, as "legislators are best able to pick up grass roots opinion when it is most vocally expressed" (Erikson, Luttbeg, and Holloway 1975, 237). Indeed, congressional staffers are more likely to identify relevant constituent groups in the district when they have been actively contacting the Representative's office (Miler 2010). An interested subconstituency that writes letters or emails to their member's office 'a lot' greatly improves the

likelihood that congressional staffers will recall them as a relevant group (Miler 2010). By enhancing their visibility in the congressional office, these contactors are more likely to garner the attention of key congressional staffers. A complementary finding from earlier research shows that in districts with high concentrations of poor households, where "poor constituents are less visible to legislators" and legislators are less likely to hear from constituents, legislators' perceptions of district sentiment tend to be less accurate (Hedlund and Friesma 1972, 749).

Legislators are also in a better position to identify constituency views on issues where the district has relatively homogenous preferences (Clausen, Holmberg and deHaven-Smith 1983). Related to district homogeneity, districts' consistency can also facilitate legislators' perceptual accuracy. Districts that react to related issues in a similar way send their elected officials consistent cues about their policy preferences, improving their Representatives' chances of correctly identifying district views (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). When districts have homogenous and consistent policy preferences, Representatives receive clearer information about district views. This places legislators in these districts in a strong position to assess constituent opinion accurately since "the clarity of a representative's perception is a function of the clarity of the district's cue," (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979, 282).

Perceptual accuracy also varies across personal characteristics of the legislators themselves, usually in unexpected ways. Counter to expectations, lawmakers with less experience in the legislature are found to have more accurate perceptions than their senior colleagues (Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway 1975). Perhaps new legislators devote more effort to learning about district views early on in their legislative careers out of necessity, placing them in a better position to predict constituent preferences.[105] This seniority finding aside, most research on legislators' personal traits and their perceptual accuracy has centered on how representatives'

[105] This follows the same logic that was presented in the Chapter 3 discussion of the seniority hypothesis.

role orientations influence their ability to understand district preferences. As discussed in Chapter 3, Representatives can identify as either delegates, trustees or politicos in their work as legislators. In two studies using self-identified role orientations, legislators who think of themselves as instructed delegates, bound to follow constituent opinion, are, in fact, *less* successful in correctly predicting constituent views than their trustee or politico colleagues (Hedlund and Friesema 1972, Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway 1975).

However, this result is challenged in McCrone and Kuklinski (1979), who criticize the previous studies for not articulating any theory that specifies the conditions where delegate identification can be expected to influence legislators' perceptions. They contend that two conditions must be satisfied in order for delegates to perceive district views accurately: (1) Representatives must identify as delegates; and (2) districts must communicate consistent cues about their policy preferences to their Representatives. McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) demonstrate that, when both conditions are met, delegates are better able to discern constituent opinion than either trustees or politicos.[106] Together, these studies offer mixed conclusions about the impact that representational roles have on legislators' perceptions.

How are Representatives' perceptions formed?

Research on legislative perceptions has shown how accurately elected officials across levels of government perceive constituent opinion, often revealing deficiencies in legislators' understanding of their districts' policy preferences. These studies have identified several policy, constituency, and legislator characteristics that may help Representatives more accurately assess the distribution of policy preferences and the configuration of interested constituent groups

[106] However, McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) acknowledge that these two conditions rarely co-exist so "the delegate theory of representation…may have limited applicability in the real world of American politics" (298).

within their districts. Such studies are useful in identifying what Representatives know (and what they don't know) about their districts, and what conditions will help them get to know the district better. For the most part, however, these studies leave a central question unanswered: how do Representatives form their perceptions of constituent opinion and district interests?

Scholars in this field have noted the strong potential that Representatives have to develop biased perceptions of district opinion. Miller and Stokes (1963) caution that legislators will likely have biased assessments of constituency views since their interactions with constituents will occur mostly with more organized, more well-informed voters. As a result, a lawmaker's contacts are likely to "grossly over-represent the degree of political information and interest in the constituency as a whole" (Miller and Stokes 1963, 55). Similarly, Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway (1975) admit that "many of the legislator's available cues for deciphering constituency opinion can be biased – for example, the content of his mail, or the advice of the constituents he selectively talks to" (244). In each of these warnings, the authors hint at some sources that might inform legislative perceptions; they suggest that direct contacts with district residents and correspondence from constituents may be important factors that influence how legislators come to see their districts.

Miler (2010) presents extensive analyses that seek explanations for what Representatives see when they look at their districts. Her research demonstrates that Representatives are more likely to perceive constituents' interests when constituents are vocal and politically involved. Constituent groups that frequently contact congressional offices or that make campaign contributions to their Representative are more likely to be recognized by congressional staff as important and relevant subconstituencies on their issues of interest (Miler 2010). Essentially, Miler's findings support the claims from earlier research; constituents' actions that afford them

visibility in a congressional office – such as sending correspondence or making political contributions – inform the opinions that Representatives attribute to their constituents and the interests that Representatives see in their districts. Correspondence from constituents clearly contributes to the perceptions of their districts that members of Congress develop.

As detailed in the preceding chapters, congressional offices adopt different correspondence management systems to handle the large volumes of constituent contacts that they receive. As a result, the utility of correspondence in informing legislative perceptions of the district is likely to depend on how the office has decided to handle constituents' letters, emails, phone calls and faxes. How much the office is able to learn from correspondence may be greatly influenced by the way that they keep records and, in particular, the way that they share information about constituent contacts. In the absence of complete records or informative mail reports, correspondence may not be able to meet its potential as a resource that congressional offices can rely on to develop their perceptions of the district and accurately assess the preferences held by their constituents.

> ***Correspondence Management and Perceptual Accuracy Hypothesis:*** Representatives whose offices operate more inclusive correspondence systems, with comprehensive correspondence databases and informative mail report practices, should more accurately perceive constituent opinion.

Examining Perceptual Accuracy in the 113th Congress

Dependent Variables

To capture how well Representatives' understand the preferences of their constituents, measures of alignment between Representatives' perceptions and their constituents' opinions were created using responses from the congressional staff survey and from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). In the congressional staff survey, respondents were asked

to identify what percentage of district residents would support (1) adoption of the Ryan budget plan, (2) approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline, and (3) passage of stricter federal regulations of firearms and ammunition.[107] [108] The CCES asked respondents for their opinions on the same three policies, and organizing the CCES data by congressional districts reveals what percentage of constituents in each district would support each policy. To measure congressional office understanding of district preferences, CCES results for each district were matched with legislative perceptions for each issue and indicator variables were generated to measure perceptual accuracy. A Representative is coded as 1 if his office correctly identified the preferences expressed by a majority of his constituents or coded as 0 if his office did not accurately identify what the majority within the district prefers. This dichotomous dependent variable captures whether congressional perceptions of district opinion align with actual district opinion.[109] As Table 4.1 summarizes, the extent to which congressional offices are able to assess the views held by their constituents accurately varies across issues; a slight majority of offices misjudged district opinion on the Ryan budget, while a majority of offices were able to correctly identify district preferences on the Keystone XL pipeline and on gun control.

[107] Full text of the questions can be found in Appendix A, which includes the complete congressional staff survey.
[108] Policy background information and legislative histories for each of these three policies are briefly outlined in Appendix D.
[109] While it may be more appropriate to utilize some measure of the distance between congressional perceptions and district reality (as in Uslaner and Weber 1979, Clausen, Holmberg and deHaven-Smith 1983), the congressional staff survey data do not allow for this approach. Many offices were unable or unwilling to give percentage estimates for district opinion; in these cases, they either skipped the questions entirely or, in interviews, they responded with more general terms (i.e. “a majority”, “very few”, “a lot”). [Note: Offices that completed the survey online were only given the option to select from a numerical sliding scale, so these general terms were not a problem for online respondents.]

Table 4.1. Representatives' Perceptual Accuracy, *for each policy*

	Number of Congressional Offices where Perceptions Align with District Preferences
Ryan Budget Plan	31 *(48.4%)*
Approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline	47 *(70.2%)*
Stricter Federal Regulations on Firearms and Ammunition	59 *(80.8%)*

Percent of offices in sample that fit with district preferences can be found in parentheses. Not all offices answered these questions, so the percentages shown are out of the offices that did respond.[110]

Independent Variables[111]

The six summary variables for the record-keeping and information-sharing practices used in congressional offices, as employed in the analyses from the previous chapter, constitute the primary independent variables of interest in these models. These ***correspondence system characteristics*** are used to test the central hypothesis of this chapter – that the way offices treat constituent correspondence impacts their ability to understand district policy preferences. An office that has adopted these practices is considered to have a more inclusive and informative correspondence system, which should enable the Representative and her staff to perceive constituent opinion more accurately.

Partisanship of the Representative is controlled for to account for possible differences in perceptual accuracy for members of each political party. Representatives' ***vote share in the 2012 general election*** is included in the estimates, introducing a test of the marginality hypothesis into the models. Representatives who have just survived a close contest may be more attuned to district preferences than their safer colleagues. To account for the effects that longevity of the

[110] 73 offices gave estimates of constituent opinion on gun control, 67 offices answered for the Keystone XL pipeline, and 64 offices indicated where they thought constituent opinion stood on the Ryan budget.
[111] Summary statistics for each independent variable can be found in Appendix C.

relationship with the district might have on perceptual accuracy, models include the ***number of full congressional terms served*** by each Representative. Though Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway (1975) found otherwise, a Representative's seniority in Congress is likely to enhance her understanding of the district, allowing her to more accurately identify constituent opinion.

Serving congressional districts that are politically active also increases the likelihood that congressional staff would correctly identify district preferences. Recognizing that it is easier to determine constituent opinion "when it is most vocally expressed," districts whose constituents are more likely to communicate with their Representatives may be in a stronger position to perceive district preferences correctly (Erikson, Luttbeg, and Holloway 1975, 237; see also Hedlund and Friesma 1972). Since highly educated and high-earning constituents are likely to contact their elected officials, ***district education level*** and ***district median income*** are each included in the models (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).[112] Hearing more from their constituents, Representatives in highly educated and wealthy districts should be able to assess district opinion more accurately. Additionally, districts with high voter turnout rates may demonstrate higher levels of other kinds of political activity; ***presidential election turnout in the 2012 election*** is included as an additional control for the district's underlying propensity to be politically involved.

Representatives may rely on district partisanship trends to inform their understanding of district opinion on specific policies. Past district voting behavior may serve as a useful cue for Representatives in the absence of more direct information about policy preferences.[113] However,

[112] Following from the models presented in chapter 3, district education level is measured as the percentage of the district holding a Bachelor's degree or higher.

[113] See discussion in Chapter 1 (pgs. 11-12) about problems with trying to project constituent preferences on specific policies from broader political opinions like partisanship. In studies of perceptual accuracy in particular, previous election returns are useful cues for constituent opinion on some issues, but not others (Erikson, Luttbeg, and Holloway (1975).

the usefulness of district partisanship may depend on the Representative's own preferences and how they relate to views in the district. Since "members' perceptions of public opinion would be to some extent shaped by their own predispositions," districts that align closely with the Representative's political preferences will tend to produce more accurate legislative perceptions about district opinion (Uslaner and Weber 1979, 570). The extent to which legislators and districts have similar preferences is measured as the percent of the 2012 presidential vote received by the presidential candidate of the Representatives' own party. Higher values of this ***district co-partisanship*** measure indicate that a Representative's own party has stronger support in the district, suggesting that the Representative and his constituents share similar policy preferences. These shared preferences should enable the congressional office to determine constituent opinion more accurately.

Changes to the district following redistricting may introduce uncertainty into Representatives' calculations about district preferences, likely impacting congressional offices' ability to discern constituent opinion. Districts that experience large shifts in their populations are likely to have a more difficult time ascertaining what policies constituents prefer. However, if a redrawn district results in greater support for the Representative's own party, then the new congressional district may be easier for the Representative and his staff to understand. To account for these potential effects of redistricting, ***change in district partisanship*** is controlled for. Change in district partisanship is measured as the difference between the district's Democratic presidential vote share in 2008 and the 2008 Democratic presidential vote share recalculated to the new district boundaries that went into effect in 2012; this difference takes on a

positive value if the district added supporters of the Representative's own party and a negative value if the redistricting resulted in the addition of opposition party constituents to the district.[114]

Lastly, the models in this chapter will include a control for ***representational role*** in an attempt to adjudicate between the competing findings of Hedlund and Friesma (1972) and Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway (1975), who find delegates are less able to discern constituent opinion, and McCrone and Kuklinski (1979), who find that delegates perform perceptual tasks well (when the right conditions are present). As in Chapter 3, Representative's role orientation is approximated with a policy responsiveness index created from roll-call votes and district opinion information from the CCES. Higher values on this index indicate greater policy responsiveness and a stronger orientation to meet district needs and act as a delegate.[115]

Results

Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 present the results from linear probability models estimated for each of the three policies. The first conclusion that can be drawn from these results is that Representatives' abilities to identify constituent opinion accurately are not related to the ways that they structure their correspondence systems. Despite expectations that correspondence system characteristics would be positively related to Representatives' perceptual accuracy, office practices for keeping records and for sharing correspondence information are never statistically significant in the estimated models. Though the primary hypothesis of interest is not supported in these analyses, other interesting relationships emerge from the control variables in each model.

[114] In these models, the measurement of redistricting is slightly different from the specification used in Chapter 3, which uses the absolute value of the change in district partisanship that resulted from redistricting. Since the partisan alignment of new district residents is likely to impact perceptual accuracy, this reformulated measure that captures the direction of the partisan change in district composition is more appropriate in these analyses.

[115] Since this representational role variable is only available for non-freshmen Representatives, further restricting the already limited sample size, models will first be presented without this control included. See Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 for tests for the effect of delegate role orientation on legislative perceptions.

A Representative's partisanship is a significant influence on his accuracy in predicting where constituents stand on the Ryan budget, and on the Keystone XL pipeline. Republican Representatives are much less likely to identify district opinion correctly on the Ryan budget. Of the 34 Republican Representatives whose offices responded to this question about Ryan budget preferences in the district, 30 of those offices had inaccurate perceptions about district support for Paul Ryan's plan. On the other hand, Republicans are much more likely to perceive constituent support accurately for the Keystone XL pipeline. On this issue, Democratic offices tend to hold misperceptions about district views on the project; of the 30 Democratic offices that answered this question, 19 of those offices were wrong about whether the majority of their constituents wanted to see the proposed pipeline move forward. In contrast, only one Republican incorrectly identified district opinion on the Keystone project. Though findings of partisanship influencing perceptual accuracy have not been common, one previous study (see Hedlund and Friesma 1972) did reveal partisan differences in legislators' abilities to identify constituent attitudes correctly. However, the differences observed in this earlier research were substantively small, and nowhere near the scale of the partisan differences that are evident for the Ryan budget and Keystone pipeline.

More senior Representatives tend to assess constituent opinion more accurately on the Ryan budget. Shifting from a sophomore Representative, who has only served one full term in Congress, to a veteran Congressman with six full terms in the House increases the probability that the Representative's office will correctly identify district preferences on the Ryan budget by anywhere from 0.11 to 0.16. Though a previous study found junior Representatives perceived constituent opinion correctly more often than their senior colleagues, the improved accuracy demonstrated by senior members of Congress in these findings is in line with expectations, since

Table 4.2. Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion? *Ryan Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0517 (0.0889)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.0246 (0.0792)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.1071 (0.1012)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	0.0243 (0.0841)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.1327 (0.0976)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0132 (0.0853)
Representative's Partisanship	- 0.7231*** (0.0859)	- 0.7159*** (0.0850)	- 0.7177*** (0.0842)	- 0.7108*** (0.0860)	- 0.7208*** (0.0899)	- 0.7187*** (0.0887)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	0.0001 (0.0054)	- 0.0001 (0.0054)	0.0003 (0.0054)	0.0001 (0.0055)	0.0010 (0.0054)	- 0.0001 (0.0054)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	0.0301*** (0.0101)	0.0312*** (0.0099)	0.0325*** (0.0098)	0.0313*** (0.0099)	0.0218* (0.0121)	0.0315*** (0.0100)
District Education Level	- 0.0031 (0.0080)	- 0.0053 (0.0070)	- 0.0028 (0.0074)	- 0.0052 (0.0071)	- 0.0036 (0.0070)	- 0.0053 (0.0071)
District Median Income	0.0011 (0.0052)	0.0025 (0.0046)	0.0011 (0.0047)	0.0024 (0.0046)	0.0026 (0.0047)	0.0024 (0.0046)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	0.0027 (0.0053)	0.0034 (0.0052)	0.0031 (0.0051)	0.0033 (0.0052)	0.0015 (0.0052)	0.0034 (0.0052)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	0.0030 (0.0072)	0.0039 (0.0071)	0.0017 (0.0072)	0.0036 (0.0071)	0.0034 (0.0072)	0.0035 (0.0073)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0168** (0.0073)	0.0174** (0.0073)	0.0191** (0.0075)	0.0172** (0.0073)	0.0168** (0.0075)	0.0173** (0.0074)
Constant	0.4107 (0.5230)	0.3204 (0.5200)	0.3680 (0.5083)	0.3323 (0.5154)	0.2554 (0.5223)	0.3689 (0.5314)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.6372	0.6356	0.6424	0.6355	0.6392	0.6351
N	64	64	64	64	60	64

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4.3. Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion? *Keystone XL Pipeline*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0585 (0.0949)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.1004 (0.0883)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0342 (0.1133)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0693 (0.0898)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0221 (0.1126)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0702 (0.0887)
Representative's Partisanship	0.4632*** (0.0947)	0.4783*** (0.0934)	0.4698*** (0.0955)	0.4590*** (0.0950)	0.4785*** (0.1022)	0.4872*** (0.0959)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	0.0014 (0.0059)	0.0007 (0.0058)	0.0012 (0.0061)	0.0004 (0.0059)	0.0013 (0.0063)	0.0010 (0.0059)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	- 0.0163 (0.0113)	- 0.0142 (0.0110)	- 0.0147 (0.0113)	- 0.0150 (0.0111)	- 0.0186 (0.0141)	- 0.0162 (0.0112)
District Education Level	0.0002 (0.0085)	- 0.0028 (0.0077)	- 0.0012 (0.0083)	- 0.0028 (0.0078)	- 0.0020 (0.0081)	- 0.0021 (0.0077)
District Median Income	- 0.0039 (0.0056)	- 0.0019 (0.0050)	- 0.0029 (0.0053)	- 0.0018 (0.0050)	- 0.0010 (0.0053)	- 0.0018 (0.0050)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	- 0.0078 (0.0058)	- 0.0073 (0.0056)	- 0.0069 (0.0057)	- 0.0069 (0.0057)	- 0.0075 (0.0059)	- 0.0071 (0.0057)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	- 0.0150* (0.0078)	- 0.0144* (0.0076)	- 0.0148* (0.0082)	- 0.0139* (0.0077)	- 0.0128 (0.0084)	- 0.0132* (0.0078)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	- 0.0036 (0.0081)	- 0.0044 (0.0081)	- 0.0026 (0.0085)	- 0.0034 (0.0081)	- 0.0045 (0.0087)	- 0.0036 (0.0081)
Constant	1.9930*** (0.5748)	2.0229*** (0.5634)	1.9173*** (0.5660)	1.9598*** (0.5617)	1.7886*** (0.5883)	1.7958*** (0.5766)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.4643	0.4727	0.4568	0.4663	0.4465	0.4666
N	67	67	66	67	62	67

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table 4.4. Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion? *Stricter Gun Control Measures*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0914 (0.1057)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.0249 (0.0987)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.0745 (0.1288)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1536 (0.1013)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1549 (0.1207)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0118 (0.0991)
Representative's Partisanship	0.0836 (0.1050)	0.0982 (0.1041)	0.1025 (0.1050)	0.0745 (0.1034)	0.1224 (0.1055)	0.0979 (0.1058)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	0.0001 (0.0067)	- 0.0001 (0.0067)	- 0.0003 (0.0070)	- 0.0016 (0.0067)	- 0.0009 (0.0067)	- 0.0001 (0.0067)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	- 0.0036 (0.0124)	- 0.0021 (0.0124)	- 0.0024 (0.0125)	- 0.0020 (0.0121)	0.0113 (0.0143)	- 0.0017 (0.0124)
District Education Level	0.0046 (0.0095)	0.0012 (0.0086)	- 0.0004 (0.0092)	- 0.0002 (0.0085)	- 0.0019 (0.0084)	0.0012 (0.0087)
District Median Income	- 0.0067 (0.0063)	- 0.0043 (0.0057)	- 0.0033 (0.0060)	- 0.0030 (0.0057)	- 0.0050 (0.0056)	- 0.0044 (0.0058)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	0.0003 (0.0065)	0.0015 (0.0065)	0.0015 (0.0065)	0.0011 (0.0063)	0.0048 (0.0062)	0.0013 (0.0064)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	0.0128 (0.0088)	0.0141 (0.0088)	0.0151 (0.0094)	0.0146 (0.0086)	0.0131 (0.0089)	0.0138 (0.0090)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0002 (0.0091)	0.0008 (0.0092)	- 0.0006 (0.0095)	0.0001 (0.0090)	0.0015 (0.0091)	0.0006 (0.0092)
Constant	0.1263 (0.6583)	- 0.0216 (0.6560)	- 0.0085 (0.6510)	0.1155 (0.6397)	0.1400 (0.6323)	0.0276 (0.6726)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.0367	0.0261	0.0255	0.0599	0.0735	0.0253
N	72	72	71	72	66	72

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

"the more senior that members become…the more likely they will know what constituent sentiment actually is" (Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, 548; Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway 1975).

The analyses also reveal that redistricting-induced change to a Representative's district can impact his ability to understand constituent opinion. As a congressional district's population shifts in the Representative's favor, gaining constituents that support his party, his congressional office is more likely to accurately perceive opinion on the Ryan budget. And when a redistricting makes the district less hospitable to the Representative, introducing more residents that tend to support the opposing party, his congressional office is less likely to correctly identify district views about the Ryan plan. Where redistricting significantly alters the political landscape of a district, such changes may enhance or impede Representative's ability to discern constituent opinion, depending on how the new district residents affect the partisan leaning of the district.

Counter to expectations, stronger co-partisan support in the district leads to less accurate perceptions of constituent views on the Keystone XL pipeline. As district support for the Representatives' party increases, the probability that the congressional office will correctly identify district preferences on the Keystone XL pipeline declines. A shift from the median Representative, where 62% of the district voted for the presidential candidate from the Representative's own party, to the Representative at the 75th percentile, where 68.5% of the district voted for the same party presidential contender, decreases the probability that a congressional office can correctly account for constituents' Keystone opinion by 0.09 to 0.1.

In order to speak to one of the longstanding hypotheses in the perceptual accuracy literature, an additional set of linear probability models were estimated that include a control for Representatives' role orientations. Given that the policy responsiveness index is available only for non-freshmen Representatives, estimates presented in Tables 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7 come from this

restricted sample. These models for non-freshmen assess how delegates perform relative to trustees or politicos, and they also serve as an opportunity to see if different factors affect the perceptual accuracy of a more experienced group of legislators.

Taken together, these estimates reflect many of the same trends shown in the earlier models. Republican offices are less likely to identify correctly where constituents stand on the Ryan budget; Democratic offices are less likely to assess opinion on the Keystone XL pipeline accurately. Seniority in the House improves the chances that Representatives will be able to discern constituent preferences on the Ryan budget. District co-partisanship maintains a negative relationship with perceptual accuracy for the Keystone XL pipeline; as support for the Representative's party increases, Representatives are less likely to have accurate perceptions of constituent preferences on this issue. When redistricting introduces new constituents sympathetic to the Representative's party to the district, congressional staffers can more accurately identify constituency preferences on the Keystone XL pipeline. However, redistricting that dilutes the strength of the Representative's party in the district by bringing in more opposition party constituents reduces the likelihood that the office will correctly assess the district's Keystone XL preferences.

A few additional findings emerge from the estimates presented in Tables 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. First, office mail report practices influence the accuracy of congressional perceptions on gun control, but not in the expected way. In offices that raise staffers' awareness about the issues that constituents cover in their correspondence, it is expected that staffers should be developing a better sense of constituent policy preferences. However, the results suggest that offices that include issues in their mail reports are *less* likely to correctly identify constituent views on gun

Table 4.5. ***Non-Freshmen Only.*** **Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion?** *Ryan Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0693 (0.0985)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0534 (0.0898)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0847 (0.1090)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	0.0879 (0.0959)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.1227 (0.1031)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0181 (0.0929)
Representative's Partisanship	- 0.7350*** (0.1081)	- 0.7168*** (0.1053)	- 0.7264*** (0.1056)	- 0.6948*** (0.1074)	- 0.7411*** (0.1087)	- 0.7145*** (0.1065)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	- 0.0012 (0.0057)	- 0.0017 (0.0057)	- 0.0016 (0.0056)	- 0.0009 (0.0057)	- 0.0014 (0.0056)	- 0.0017 (0.0057)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	0.0292** (0.0108)	0.0307*** (0.0106)	0.0312*** (0.0106)	0.0304*** (0.0105)	0.0158 (0.0132)	0.0304*** (0.0108)
District Education Level	- 0.0025 (0.0081)	- 0.0049 (0.0072)	- 0.0033 (0.0076)	- 0.0045 (0.0072)	- 0.0033 (0.0071)	- 0.0053 (0.0073)
District Median Income	0.0016 (0.0053)	0.0035 (0.0047)	0.0021 (0.0049)	0.0029 (0.0046)	0.0036 (0.0049)	0.0035 (0.0047)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	0.0038 (0.0055)	0.0046 (0.0055)	0.0043 (0.0055)	0.0038 (0.0055)	0.0034 (0.0055)	0.0043 (0.0055)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	0.0034 (0.0075)	0.0039 (0.0074)	0.0031 (0.0075)	0.0037 (0.0074)	0.0047 (0.0074)	0.0047 (0.0077)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0110 (0.0117)	0.0107 (0.0119)	0.0140 (0.0119)	0.0108 (0.0117)	0.0075 (0.0117)	0.0118 (0.0118)
Representational Role Orientation	0.0106 (0.0513)	0.0201 (0.0497)	0.0123 (0.0505)	0.0302 (0.0506)	0.0146 (0.0550)	0.0188 (0.0502)
Constant	0.3273 (0.5557)	0.2748 (0.5452)	0.2895 (0.5440)	0.1994 (0.5396)	0.1694 (0.5593)	0.2152 (0.5538)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.6527	0.6515	0.6536	0.6556	0.6650	0.6489
N	52	52	52	52	49	52

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4.6. ***Non-Freshmen Only.*** **Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion?** *Keystone XL Pipeline*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.0357 (0.0948)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0393 (0.0916)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0301 (0.1123)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0455 (0.0926)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0677 (0.1090)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0101 (0.0883)
Representative's Partisanship	0.5374*** (0.1083)	0.5348*** (0.1070)	0.5288*** (0.1097)	0.5199*** (0.1083)	0.5728*** (0.1170)	0.5306*** (0.1068)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	0.0007 (0.0057)	0.0007 (0.0057)	0.0006 (0.0060)	0.0005 (0.0057)	0.0009 (0.0061)	0.0009 (0.0057)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	- 0.0066 (0.0111)	- 0.0072 (0.0109)	- 0.0072 (0.0111)	- 0.0071 (0.0109)	- 0.0047 (0.0143)	- 0.0075 (0.0111)
District Education Level	- 0.0024 (0.0079)	- 0.0014 (0.0073)	- 0.0007 (0.0078)	- 0.0017 (0.0073)	- 0.0022 (0.0076)	- 0.0013 (0.0073)
District Median Income	- 0.0036 (0.0052)	- 0.0041 (0.0048)	- 0.0048 (0.0051)	- 0.0040 (0.0048)	- 0.0019 (0.0052)	- 0.0043 (0.0048)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	- 0.0097* (0.0057)	- 0.0101* (0.0055)	- 0.0102* (0.0056)	- 0.0100* (0.0055)	- 0.0109* (0.0058)	- 0.0102* (0.0056)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	- 0.0130* (0.0075)	- 0.0135* (0.0074)	- 0.0135* (0.0079)	- 0.0131* (0.0074)	- 0.0113 (0.0081)	- 0.0133* (0.0075)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.0240* (0.0121)	0.0223* (0.0123)	0.0239* (0.0124)	0.0240* (0.0121)	0.0211 (0.0126)	0.0233* (0.0120)
Representational Role Orientation	0.0835 (0.0522)	0.0813 (0.0514)	0.0773 (0.0530)	0.0760 (0.0518)	0.0996 (0.0592)	0.0790 (0.0519)
Constant	1.7985*** (0.5661)	1.8766*** (0.5509)	1.8706*** (0.5588)	1.8738*** (0.5493)	1.6096*** (0.5920)	1.8401*** (0.5583)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.5761	0.5765	0.5702	0.5770	0.5649	0.5749
N	56	56	55	56	51	56

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4.7. ***Non-Freshmen Only.*** **Does the Representative Accurately Perceive Constituent Opinion?** *Stricter Gun Control Measures*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0346 (0.1088)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0004 (0.1049)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.1105 (0.1303)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0981 (0.1086)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.2120* (0.1223)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0355 (0.1013)
Representative's Partisanship	0.1414 (0.1207)	0.1504 (0.1179)	0.1637 (0.1199)	0.1291 (0.1189)	0.2038* (0.1203)	0.1501 (0.1174)
Representative's Vote Share, 2012 General Election	- 0.0001 (0.0067)	- 0.0002 (0.0067)	- 0.0002 (0.0070)	- 0.0010 (0.0067)	- 0.0001 (0.0068)	- 0.0001 (0.0067)
Number of Congressional Terms Served	- 0.0016 (0.0128)	- 0.0011 (0.0127)	- 0.0013 (0.0127)	- 0.0008 (0.0125)	0.0207 (0.0152)	- 0.0004 (0.0128)
District Education Level	- 0.0013 (0.0091)	- 0.0024 (0.0084)	- 0.0046 (0.0088)	- 0.0032 (0.0084)	- 0.0056 (0.0083)	- 0.0021 (0.0084)
District Median Income	- 0.0027 (0.0061)	- 0.0019 (0.0056)	- 0.0003 (0.0059)	- 0.0010 (0.0056)	- 0.0009 (0.0057)	- 0.0022 (0.0056)
District Presidential Turnout, 2012 election	0.0004 (0.0066)	0.0007 (0.0065)	0.0008 (0.0065)	0.0009 (0.0064)	0.0019 (0.0064)	0.0007 (0.0065)
Co-partisan Support in the District, 2012 election	0.0113 (0.0088)	0.0117 (0.0088)	0.0132 (0.0092)	0.0122 (0.0087)	0.0121 (0.0090)	0.0111 (0.0089)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	- 0.0050 (0.0131)	- 0.0047 (0.0134)	- 0.0065 (0.0133)	- 0.0037 (0.0130)	- 0.0003 (0.0130)	- 0.0047 (0.0131)
Representational Role Orientation	0.1344** (0.0612)	0.1384** (0.0600)	0.1490** (0.0614)	0.1305** (0.0601)	0.1450** (0.0648)	0.1421 (0.0608)
Constant	- 0.2033 (0.6691)	- 0.2533 (0.6544)	- 0.3204 (0.6574)	- 0.2048 (0.6477)	- 0.2765 (0.6633)	- 0.2091 (0.6623)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.1167	0.1148	0.1215	0.1293	0.1619	0.1171
N	60	60	59	60	55	60

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

control. If offices include issue-specific information in their mail reports, it decreases the probability that staff will accurately perceive constituents' gun control preferences by 0.212.[116]

Additionally, these models also reveal that higher voter turnout in the 2012 presidential election decreases the probability that the office will correctly perceive district views of the Keystone XL pipeline. As noted above, voter turnout was incorporated into these models to capture district activism and the likelihood that constituents would make their views known to their Representatives. When constituents are more vocal about their issue preferences, it is expected that the perceptual task for congressional offices should be made easier, and offices should more accurately identify constituent opinion. Here, the negative relationship between perceptual accuracy and presidential turnout is unexpected.[117] It might be argued that presidential election turnout is a poor proxy for the likelihood that district residents would connect with their Representatives about specific policies, which might account for the negative relationship that emerges in the Keystone XL pipeline models.

Finally, there is evidence that the Representatives' role orientation relates to their abilities to perceive constituent opinion correctly. Representatives with a demonstrated delegate orientation tend to perceive constituent opinion on gun control more accurately. As a Representative's policy responsiveness increases from the minimum to the maximum possible congruence, signifying a delegate role identification, the probability that a congressional office will correctly place constituents on gun control increases greatly, by 0.65 to 0.75. Given the shortcomings inherent in this proxy measure of delegate role orientation, however, this finding is only suggestive that Representatives who see themselves as delegates can more accurately determine constituent opinion, and it only holds for one of the issues considered here. That said,

[116] This result is not very robust, as it is only narrowly statistically significant at $p < 0.1$ ($p=0.09$).
[117] However, this effect is substantively small and only statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level.

these results are consistent with McCrone and Kuklinski (1979) which shows that delegates are more likely to perceive constituent opinion accurately than trustees or politicos.[118]

Discussion and Conclusion

Even though Representatives' understanding of their districts is fundamental to their abilities to represent constituent preferences, little research has explored the efficacy of congressional offices in discerning district opinion. Looking at three recent policy issues, this chapter corroborates earlier findings that the perceptual accuracy of congressional offices varies across policies. The analyses also demonstrate that characteristics of Representatives themselves and the districts that they represent influence an office's capacity to identify constituent opinion correctly. Representatives who adopt a delegate orientation can more accurately place constituents' views on gun control. Senior Representatives are better able to discern district attitudes on the Ryan budget plan. Shifts in district population brought about by redistricting also influence Representatives' perceptual accuracy on the Ryan budget and, for non-freshmen, on the Keystone XL pipeline.

Two additional results from the models – for Representatives' partisanship and district co-partisanship – revealed unexpected relationships. Representatives' partisanship was not anticipated to display such substantively large effects on congressional perceptions. Most previous studies had not explored the effects of partisanship on Representatives' perceptual accuracy at all; and where it was considered, differences in perceptual accuracy between the parties were relatively small (Hedlund and Friesma 1972). District co-partisanship was expected

[118] This finding, however, does not speak to the broader theory of delegate representation that is articulated by McCrone and Kuklinski (1979). From the data used in this project, it is not possible to determine whether gun control meets the two conditions that they indicate are required for the delegate theory to work: (1) Representatives' identification as a delegate, and (2) constituents' communication of clear and consistent information about their preferences.

to have a positive effect on offices' understanding of district preferences; and while it was not significantly related to perceptual accuracy on the Ryan budget or gun control, district support for the Representatives' own party actually demonstrated a negative relationship with office accuracy on the Keystone XL pipeline. Each of these unexpected findings is briefly considered here, before turning to a discussion of the null findings for the primary hypothesis in this chapter.

The misperceptions observed for Republicans on the Ryan budget and for Democrats on the Keystone XL pipeline are substantial; and they seem to be the result of Republicans systematically overestimating support for Paul Ryan's proposal and Democrats systematically underestimating support for the Keystone XL pipeline. In each case where Republicans' perceptions were out-of-step with district preferences on the Ryan budget, Republican offices had responded that the majority of their constituents supported the Ryan budget. In fact, there was not one district in the sample where a majority of constituents favored adoption of the Ryan budget plan. Each Democratic office that incorrectly identified constituent views on the Keystone XL pipeline had indicated that the majority of their constituents opposed the project. However, there was not one district in the sample where a majority of constituents opposed the Keystone pipeline.

For both of these issues, it is very likely that members of Congress are projecting their own predispositions onto their districts. Republican Representatives were strong supporters of the Ryan budget plan, voting nearly unanimously to approve it in 2011. Though the Keystone XL pipeline has been divisive among Democrats, the large majority of Democrats in Congress do oppose construction of the pipeline extension.[119] In the case of the Keystone pipeline and the

[119] Since 2011, each time standalone legislation to approve the Keystone XL pipeline has been voted on in the House, the majority of Democratic Representatives have voted against it. (74.6% of Democrats voted against H.R. 1938 (2011); 86.4% of Democrats voted against H.R. 3408 (2012); 87.1% of Democrats voted against H.R. 3 (2013); 80.1% of Democrats voted against H.R. 5682 (2014), 81.8% of Democrats voted against H.R. 3 (2015)).

Ryan budget, Representatives perceive constituent opinion to be closer to their own views than is actually the case, which is consistent with Uslaner and Weber's (1979) claim that "members' perceptions of public opinion [are] to some extent shaped by their own predispositions" (570).

It is normally expected that partisanship within the district, which is likely to serve as a cue about district preferences on a wide array of issues, should help facilitate congressional office understanding of constituent opinion. District co-partisan support however, is negatively related to offices' perceptual accuracy on the Keystone XL pipeline, suggesting that shared partisanship decreases offices' understanding of constituent opinion on this issue. The ideological nature of the issue may explain this negative relationship. Conservative Democrats tend to defect from the party's stance and support the project's approval.[120] On issues like this, which are largely driven by ideology rather than party, district partisanship may not provide a relevant cue for congressional offices to rely on.[121]

The analyses in this chapter have demonstrated that characteristics of Representatives themselves, and the districts that they represent, are related to offices' ability to determine constituent opinion; however, characteristics of office correspondence systems are not significant factors in helping offices accurately assess district policy preferences. Why doesn't office treatment of correspondence influence congressional staffers' capacity to identify district opinion correctly?

Perhaps the issues used here to assess perceptual accuracy are not the right place to look for the effects of correspondence practices on offices' perceptual accuracy. The three policies

[120] 16 Democrats in the sample (and, taking the Congress as a whole, 69 Democratic Representatives) voted for the Keystone XL pipeline. In looking at the sample, Democrats who voted for Keystone XL tended to be more conservative (with an average DW-Nominate score of – 0.341 for these 16 Democrats) than Democrats who voted against it (with an average DW-Nominate score of – 0.416 for these 25 Democrats).

[121] This contention, that general district preferences don't provide the relevant information to congressional offices for some issues, reinforces the argument made in Chapter 1 that translation of broad district preferences into preferences on more specific issues is fraught with difficulty.

considered within this chapter – the Ryan budget, the Keystone XL pipeline, and federal regulations on guns – all represent relatively high-profile issues that have been the subject of extensive debate in Washington in recent years. While correspondence does play a central role in informing legislators' perceptions about their districts, offices may be able determine constituent opinion on such timely and prominent political issues without referring to constituents' contacts (Miler 2010; see also Miller and Stokes 1963, Erikson, Luttbeg and Holloway 1975). High-profile issues like these are likely to come up at district events and be frequently included on national polls, allowing offices to pull from other sources when trying to understand constituent preferences. Additionally, these issues have long occupied the national agenda, making it possible that congressional perceptions formed earlier on the issues' political life cycles.[122]

As a result of the long lifespan of these issues and the numerous other resources that offices can rely on when discerning constituent attitudes on such issues, current correspondence on these topics is likely to be less relevant to offices' perceptual accuracy. This, in turn, makes correspondence system characteristics less relevant to offices' perceptual accuracy. A clearer examination of the relationship between correspondence treatment and legislative perceptions would consider how well congressional office perceptions align with district preferences on lower-profile political issues, particularly those that are relatively new to the political agenda. Such issues should still be important enough, of course, to generate correspondence from interested parties, and should require that the office rely heavily on the mail to understand district preferences. Though countless issues fit this description, the data requirements inherent in such

[122] When the survey was conducted (2013-2014), each of these issues had been debated in Washington for at least two years. The Ryan budget was first introduced in April 2011. The Keystone XL pipeline route was first proposed by TransCanada, the owner of the pipeline, in June 2008; their application to the U.S. State department to approve the extension to the pipeline was submitted in September 2008. Gun control has been the subject of numerous laws and numerous debates over the years, though it did take on renewed significance in December 2012, following the fatal shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT.

research will likely pose a significant challenge to conducting analyses on Congress' perceptual accuracy for lower-profile issues.

Alternatively, the null findings on correspondence practices could be the result of poor specification of the dependent variable. If correspondence does, indeed, serve as the basis for most legislative perceptions, then the current measure of alignment between legislative perceptions and opinion from the entire district may not be appropriate. Since some segments of the district are systematically more likely to write to their Representatives (i.e. highly educated, higher-income, etc.), district-wide opinion may not align with the opinions that offices actually hear expressed from constituents. Hence, it is possible that congressional offices have developed accurate perceptions *based on what they've actually been hearing from constituents*. To address this disconnect, one might want to introduce a reformulated dependent variable that captures how well Representatives can identify the opinion of those constituents who have contacted the congressional office; correspondence system attributes should be significant in models with this redefined dependent variable.

Though these analyses could be informative, perceptual accuracy measured by this reconceived dependent variable may not differ significantly from Representatives' accuracy tapped in the current dependent variable specification. Looking at the opinions of all CCES respondents, the opinions of likely contactors on these three issues do not diverge dramatically from opinions expressed by those who are unlikely to contact Congress.[123] The relatively

[123] The CCES does not include a question about whether respondents have contacted their Representatives; in the absence of this direct measure of contact with Congress, respondents' level of education is used to identify opinions of *likely* contactors (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). More highly educated constituents tend to be more supportive of the Ryan budget plan; 22% of constituents with a 4-year college degree support the Ryan plan, compared to 13% of constituents with a high school degree or less. Still, the majority of constituents at all education levels oppose the Ryan budget plan. More highly educated do tend to be more favorable toward stricter gun control regulation; 49% of constituents with a 4-year college degree want to see stricter gun control and 58% of those with a post-graduate degree favor stricter gun laws. About 46% of constituents with a high school degree or less favor stricter gun control measures. On the Keystone pipeline, there are no significant opinion differences across constituent groups. Across

minimal differences between likely contactors and likely non-contactors suggest that Representatives' may perform no better in estimating contactors' opinion.

these three issues, even where there are differences in opinion between likely contactors and likely non-contactors, these differences are not substantively large.

CHAPTER V

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY RESPONSIVENESS

An extensive literature in political science has focused on the policy responsiveness of members of Congress to their constituents, looking at how closely Representatives' legislative behavior aligns with constituent attitudes. While this research has suggested that Representatives and Senators consistently demonstrate responsiveness to the policy preferences of their constituents, these studies have not considered how members of Congress actually *learn* about district views. Learning about constituent policy preferences is, after all, a prerequisite to policy responsiveness and to the effective representation of constituent interests. By considering how congressional offices discern district opinion, this chapter presents an opportunity to extend the focus of representation research, from estimating policy responsiveness to understanding how policy responsiveness can be achieved. This chapter introduces measures of congressional office learning processes into models of policy responsiveness and assesses whether these processes do, in fact, facilitate policy responsiveness.

How responsive are Representatives to constituent opinion?[124]

Policy responsiveness research seeks to identify the influence that constituents have over the decisions of their elected representatives, typically by estimating the extent of agreement between a representative's roll-call voting and the policy preferences of her constituents. In this research, scholars consider the influence that constituents have over their representatives' ideology and general legislative record (Erikson 1971, Kuklinski 1977, Elling 1982, Bullock and

[124] These findings were introduced and summarized in Chapter 1. See pages 1-7 for a fuller discussion of the policy responsiveness tradition in political science.

Brady 1983, Hood, Kidd and Morris 2001, Bishin 2000, Griffin and Newman 2005, Clinton 2006) or over their representatives' vote choice on a specific issue (Jackson and King 1989, Barrett and Cook 1991, Bartels 1991, Overby, Henschen, Walsh and Strauss 1992, McDonagh 1993, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Holian, Krebs and Walsh 1997). The general consensus across these studies is that "constituency opinion affects congressional behavior," a result that holds "across a number of different policies and time periods" (Jacobs and Shapiro 1994, 9). However, these studies show little consensus about how much public opinion impacts policymaking decisions (Burstein 2003).

As Burstein (2003) notes in his meta-analysis of the policy responsiveness literature, "predictions about the impact of opinion on policy range from its having a very substantial influence…to its keeping policy, rather vaguely, 'in bounds' in its distance from public opinion" (30). While much research shows that elected officials consistently respond to public opinion, other studies have identified the public's limited capacity to observe and understand politics as a substantial barrier to realizing policy responsiveness (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995; Arnold 1990, Zaller 1992, among others). Burstein (2003) also attributes part of the difficulty in assessing the impact that public opinion has on policy to scholars' tendency to use vague terms to describe their results, and to omit explanation of the substantive significance of their results. In his effort to systematically gauge the impact of opinion on policymaking found in previous research, Burstein's (2003) meta-analysis shows that when public opinion influences policy-making, its effect really matters substantively much of the time.[125]

[125] In 75% of the studies that Burstein (2003) analyzes, public opinion has a statistically significant effect on policy. In many of these studies (35%), scholars did not discuss their results in substantive terms. Where scholars did explain the substantive implications of their findings, the results nearly always showed a substantial impact of opinion on policy; 35% of studies demonstrated statistically and substantively large effects of public opinion on policy making (Burstein 2003).

What influences Representatives' responsiveness to district opinion?

In addition to identifying a statistically and substantively meaningful trend of policy responsiveness, extant research has also identified several characteristics of elections, the political environment, and policy issues themselves that impact how closely Representatives' actions reflect the preferences held by their constituents.

Both the timing and the competitiveness of elections may influence Representatives' policy responsiveness. The proximity of their next election tends to increase Senators' responsiveness to constituent opinion (Kuklinski 1978, Elling 1982, Overby, Henschen, Walsh and Strauss 1992, Levitt 1996). District competitiveness produces decidedly mixed results on Representatives' responsiveness, as discussed in Chapter 3. Some studies link electoral vulnerability to higher levels of policy responsiveness (MacRae 1952, Froman 1963, Kuklinski 1977, Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Holian, Krebs and Walsh 1997, Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2001, Griffin 2006), while others find only minimal differences in policy responsiveness between safe and unsafe Representatives (Powell 1982, Bartels 1991).

Representatives have also been shown to adapt as their political circumstances change. As detailed in Chapter 3, Representatives tend to alter their voting behavior to align with the views of their new constituencies following a redistricting (Glazer and Robbins 1985, Stratmann 2000, Leveaux-Sharpe 2001, Leveaux and Garand 2003, Boatwright 2004, Crespin 2010). Broader changes to the electoral bases of the political parties also bring about changes in elected officials' behavior; Hood, Kidd and Quentin (2001) show that the liberalization of southern Democratic Senators' voting records can be attributed to the growing presence of African Americans in the Democratic electoral coalition.

Qualities of the issue under consideration are also consequential for the extent of Representatives' policy responsiveness. Representatives tend to be highly responsive to constituency opinion on salient political issues (Page and Shapiro 1983, Bartels 1991, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Burstein 2003, Bovitz and Carson 2006, Griffin and Flavin 2007, Canes-Wrone, Minozzi and Reveley 2011). Additionally, when constituents demonstrate clear and stable preferences for policy change, elected officials are likely to align with constituent views (Cavanaugh 1983, Page and Shapiro 1983, Bartels 1991, Theriault 2005).

What facilitates Representatives' responsiveness to constituent opinion?

While policy responsiveness research has focused on assessing the extent to which legislators' actions align with district preferences and identifying conditions that enhance responsiveness, the literature has largely failed to explore the explicit link between constituent preferences and congressional actions. For Representatives to be responsive to constituent opinion, they need to be informed about what that opinion looks like. Indeed, the effective representation of constituent interests depends on the ability of Representatives and their staffers to know what policy actions their constituents prefer. The efficacy of offices' information-gathering processes and the quality of information that Representatives have about their constituents' policy preferences should influence their levels of policy responsiveness.[126]

Since constituent correspondence is an important resource that congressional offices rely on for information about district preferences, office correspondence systems take on a central role in the policy responsiveness process. The record-keeping and information-sharing practices that a congressional office adopts determine its capacity to utilize correspondence as an

[126] To date, no research has explored how the efforts that congressional offices make to learn about district preferences may improve policy responsiveness.

information resource. And the way that an office treats this resource should affect the capacity of a member of Congress to act as a responsive representative. Comprehensive records and inclusive and informative mail reports facilitate congressional office learning, placing the entire office in a better position to learn about, and react to, constituent views. In contrast, in choosing to omit certain types of contacts from their records or limit the information shared through mail reports, many congressional offices fail to capitalize on the valuable information that constituent correspondence can provide. As a result, these offices may not be able to discern and respond to constituent views.

> ***Correspondence Management and Policy Responsiveness Hypothesis:*** Representatives whose offices adopt more comprehensive record-keeping systems and more informative mail report practices are expected to be more responsive to district policy preferences.

Examining Policy Responsiveness in the 112th Congress

Dependent Variables

To measure how well Representatives' reflect the preferences of their constituents, measures of alignment between Representatives and their constituents were created using congressional roll-call votes and survey data from the 2012 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES). The CCES asks respondents how they would vote on a given bill, a bill that their member of Congress had actually cast a vote on during the preceding legislative session (the 112th Congress). By posing the survey questions as an up-or-down vote on a piece of legislation, respondents face a choice similar to the decision encountered by their Representatives. This question structure ameliorates concerns about the equivalence between measures of

Representatives' actions and measures of constituents' preferences that often emerge in critiques of policy responsiveness research (Stone 1979, Powell 1982, Eulau 1987).[127]

In 2012, the CCES asked respondents how they would have voted on five policies that their Representatives had recently voted on: the Ryan budget, the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline, the Simpson-Bowles budget, and the Korea Free Trade Agreement.[128] Organizing the CCES data by congressional districts reveals the percentage of constituents in each district that would have voted for, or against, each policy. To measure Representatives' responsiveness to district preferences, CCES results for each district were matched with Representatives' vote choices for each issue, and indicator variables were generated to measure a Representative's alignment with her district's views. A Representative is coded as 1 if she voted in line with the preferences expressed by a majority of her constituents or coded as 0 if her vote was out-of-step with the position held by a majority of her constituents.[129] This dependent variable captures whether the Representatives' actions on a particular policy fit with the preferences expressed by the majority of the district on that same policy.[130] As Table 5.1 summarizes, the extent to which Representatives' votes reflect the views of their constituents varies across issues; however, more than half of the Representatives in the sample voted in line with the preferences of their constituents on four of the issues under consideration here.

[127] Some previous research has resolved the equivalence problem with results of referenda as metrics of constituent opinion (Kuklinski 1977, McDonagh 1993).

[128] Policy background information and legislative histories for each of these five policies are briefly outlined in Appendix D.

[129] More specifically, a Representative is coded as 1 if a majority of her constituents support the policy and she voted for it or if a majority of her constituents oppose the policy and she voted against it. A Representative is coded as 0 if a majority of her constituents oppose the policy and she voted for it or if a majority of her constituents support it and she voted against it.

[130] This measurement represents a departure from the common approach taken in policy responsiveness research, where the dependent variable is legislator vote choice and the scope of policy responsiveness is captured by the coefficient on the independent variable measuring constituent opinion. Models following this more conventional approach can be found in Appendix E; they show substantively similar conclusions on the primary hypothesis of interest here – the effects that office correspondence have on Representatives' responsiveness to district views.

Table 5.1. Representatives' Fit with District Preferences, *for each policy*

	Number of Representatives whose Votes Align with District Preferences
Ryan Budget Plan	41 *(47.7%)*
Repeal of the Affordable Care Act	59 *(68.6%)*
Approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline	58 *(66.7%)*
Simpson-Bowles Budget Plan	49 *(56.3%)*
Korea Free Trade Agreement	49 *(56.3%)*

Percent of offices in sample that fit with district preferences can be found in parentheses. Since only Representatives who were serving in the 112th House took votes on these five issues, the percentages are out of the 87 offices of non-freshmen Representatives from the sample.

Independent Variables[131]

The six summary variables for the record-keeping and information-sharing practices used in congressional offices, as employed in analyses from the preceding chapters, constitute the primary independent variables of interest in the analyses. Offices that have adopted these ***correspondence system characteristics*** are considered to have more inclusive and informative practices for processing constituent contacts. These practices should facilitate learning about district opinions and lead to better alignment between Representatives' actions and constituent preferences.

Alignment between Representatives' vote choices and district preferences may also be higher in districts where Representatives and constituents largely share policy preferences. For a Representative that shares the same political views as much of his constituency, fit with the district should be easy to achieve for "in following his own convictions he does his constituents'

[131] Summary statistics for each independent variable can be found in Appendix C.

will" (Miller and Stokes 1963, 50). The extent to which Representatives and districts have similar preferences is measured as the percent of the 2008 presidential vote received by the presidential candidate of the Representatives' own party. Higher values of this ***district co-partisanship*** variable indicate that the Representatives' party has stronger support in the district, suggesting that the Representative and his constituents are likely to hold many of the same policy preferences.

Facing a close election should "sensitize [the Congressman] to the wishes of constituents in his quest for support at the next election" (MacRae 1952). As summarized earlier, numerous studies have indeed found greater correspondence between constituency opinion and legislator behavior in competitive districts (MacRae 1952, Froman 1963, Sullivan and Uslaner 1978, Ansolabehere, Snyder and Stewart 2001, Griffin 2006).[132] The Representatives' ***vote share in the 2010 general election*** is controlled for to account for the potentially higher levels of district fit that electorally vulnerable Representatives may demonstrate.

Committee and subcommittee chairmen must balance the competing demands of their institutional and party leadership roles with their responsibilities to represent their constituents. As the choice of committee chairs is now influenced more heavily by party unity and contributions to party fundraising efforts than by seniority considerations, committee leaders may prioritize party loyalty as they make their legislative decisions (Deering and Wahlbeck 2006). As a result, committee and subcommittee chairs may demonstrate lower levels of fit with district preferences.[133]

[132] However, this finding is not universal; other studies have found minimal responsiveness differences between congressmen from competitive and from non-competitive districts (Powell 1982, Bartels 1991).
[133] Only committee and subcommittee chairmen are controlled for in this analysis.

Results

Linear probability models were estimated for each policy; the results can be found below, in Tables 5.2 – 5.6.[134] Looking across the analyses for each of these policies, the primary conclusion that emerges is that offices' constituent correspondence management practices are not clearly related to how well Representatives will align with district preferences. More specifically, correspondence practices achieve statistical significance in only three models; and, in two of these instances, the coefficients are not in the expected direction.

Contrary to expectations, comprehensive record-keeping practices tend to decrease Representatives' fit with their districts' preferences for repeal of the Affordable Care Act. For Representatives' whose offices keep records of all emails, letters, phone calls and faxes that they receive from constituents, the probability that their vote on ACA repeal will align with the preferences of the majority of the district decreases by 0.15. Additionally, in another finding that runs counter to expectations, sharing mail reports with key advisors on the office staff tends to decrease Representatives' fit with the district on the Simpson-Bowles budget plan. The results imply that the probability that a Representatives' vote on the Simpson-Bowles budget will match the district's preferences decreases by 0.24 for offices that circulate mail reports to office leadership and legislative staff.

Circulating mail reports as a regular part of office operations does, however, increase the likelihood that Representatives will reflect their constituency's preferences on the Keystone XL pipeline. The probability that a Representative's vote on the Keystone legislation will correspond to the views of the majority of his constituents increases by 0.31 if his office shares mail reports on a regular basis. Despite these statistically significant relationships, however, the models

[134] These models are estimated only for non-freshmen Representatives in the survey sample. Freshmen Representatives did not cast votes in the 112th Congress, so their alignment with district preferences on these roll-call votes cannot be assessed.

Table 5.2. Does the Representative's Action Fit with District Preferences? *Ryan Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0607 (0.0733)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0188 (0.0792)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.1030 (0.0870)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0396 (0.0795)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0498 (0.0856)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0915 (0.0742)
District Co-Partisanship	0.0260*** (0.0045)	0.0254*** (0.0048)	0.0262*** (0.0043)	0.0258*** (0.0048)	0.0251*** (0.0047)	0.0284*** (0.0048)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	- 0.0139*** (0.0040)	- 0.0137*** (0.0041)	- 0.0141*** (0.0038)	- 0.0149*** (0.0043)	- 0.0144*** (0.0043)	- 0.0161*** (0.0043)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	- 0.5374*** (0.0821)	- 0.5322*** (0.0833)	- 0.5560*** (0.0768)	- 0.5678*** (0.0830)	- 0.5794*** (0.0816)	- 0.5310*** (0.0818)
Constant	- 0.0746 (0.2336)	- 0.0145 (0.2455)	0.0557 (0.2208)	0.0523 (0.2424)	0.1040 (0.2355)	- 0.1101 (0.2430)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.5663	0.5629	0.6190	0.5762	0.6028	0.5688
N	85	85	83	81	76	83

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5.3. Does the Representative's Action Fit with District Preferences? *Repeal of the Affordable Care Act*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.1528* (0.0847)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.0157 (0.0930)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0579 (0.1101)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0042 (0.0950)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0689 (0.1053)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0665 (0.0869)
District Co-Partisanship	0.0295*** (0.0052)	0.0303*** (0.0056)	0.0300*** (0.0054)	0.0307*** (0.0057)	0.0296*** (0.0058)	0.0320*** (0.0056)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	- 0.0108** (0.0046)	- 0.0109** (0.0048)	- 0.0110** (0.0048)	- 0.0131** (0.0051)	- 0.0140** (0.0053)	- 0.0135** (0.0050)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	0.0131 (0.0949)	- 0.0064 (0.0977)	0.0009 (0.0971)	- 0.0118 (0.0992)	- 0.0449 (0.1003)	- 0.0066 (0.0959)
Constant	- 0.3727 (0.2700)	- 0.4893* (0.2882)	- 0.5136* (0.2793)	- 0.3653 (0.2896)	- 0.2780 (0.2896)	- 0.4540 (0.2846)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.3188	0.2914	0.2917	0.2747	0.2886	0.2975
N	85	85	83	81	76	83

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table 5.4. Does the Representative's Action Fit with District Preferences? *Approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.0194 (0.0842)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0333 (0.0909)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.3064*** (0.1001)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0358 (0.0935)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.1306 (0.0999)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0504 (0.0854)
District Co-Partisanship	- 0.0269*** (0.0052)	- 0.0274*** (0.0054)	- 0.0269*** (0.0049)	- 0.0278*** (0.0056)	- 0.0281*** (0.0056)	- 0.0284*** (0.0055)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0108** (0.0046)	0.0112** (0.0047)	0.0099** (0.0043)	0.0114** (0.0050)	0.0110** (0.0051)	0.0120** (0.0050)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	0.2523*** (0.0943)	0.2424** (0.0951)	0.2783*** (0.0880)	0.2590*** (0.0973)	0.2927*** (0.0960)	0.2538*** (0.0947)
Constant	1.5660*** (0.2665)	1.5912*** (0.2802)	1.3486*** (0.2526)	1.5847*** (0.2828)	1.4824*** (0.2760)	1.6019*** (0.2789)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.3440	0.3446	0.4316	0.3422	0.3836	0.3430
N	86	86	84	82	77	84

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5.5. Does the Representative's Action Fit with District Preferences? *Simpson-Bowles Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.1184 (0.1116)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0071 (0.1214)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.1484 (0.1422)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.2417** (0.1188)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0017 (0.1359)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0542 (0.1123)
District Co-Partisanship	- 0.0014 (0.0069)	- 0.0018 (0.0073)	- 0.0018 (0.0069)	- 0.0074 (0.0071)	- 0.0045 (0.0076)	- 0.0042 (0.0072)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0019 (0.0061)	0.0018 (0.0063)	0.0014 (0.0062)	0.0055 (0.0064)	0.0050 (0.0070)	0.0052 (0.0065)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	- 0.0592 (0.1251)	- 0.0418 (0.1271)	- 0.0199 (0.1250)	- 0.0665 (0.1236)	- 0.0137 (0.1306)	- 0.0152 (0.1244)
Constant	0.5004 (0.3534)	0.5808 (0.3743)	0.4672 (0.3589)	0.7945 (0.3594)	0.5115 (0.3755)	0.4862 (0.3666)
Adjusted R-Squared	- 0.0332	- 0.0475	- 0.0347	0.0160	- 0.0477	- 0.0376
N	86	86	84	82	77	84

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5.6. Does the Representative's Action Fit with District Preferences? *Korea Free Trade Agreement*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.1062 (0.1112)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0511 (0.1206)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0167 (0.1416)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1486 (0.1214)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0878 (0.1336)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0887 (0.1124)
District Co-Partisanship	- 0.0009 (0.0069)	- 0.0021 (0.0072)	- 0.0009 (0.0069)	- 0.0010 (0.0073)	- 0.0028 (0.0074)	- 0.0010 (0.0072)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0040 (0.0061)	0.0045 (0.0062)	0.0035 (0.0061)	0.0027 (0.0065)	0.0061 (0.0069)	0.0031 (0.0065)
Committee and Subcommittee Chairman	0.0396 (0.1246)	0.0461 (0.1263)	0.0401 (0.1245)	0.0517 (0.1264)	0.0366 (0.1283)	0.0740 (0.1245)
Constant	0.3071 (0.3520)	0.4289 (0.3720)	0.3804 (0.3575)	0.4894 (0.3674)	0.4168 (0.3690)	0.3613 (0.3669)
Adjusted R-Squared	- 0.0255	- 0.0347	- 0.0410	- 0.0206	- 0.0326	- 0.0313
N	86	86	84	82	77	84

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

indicate that office practices for handling constituent contacts do not substantially affect Representatives' responsiveness to district preferences.

Though the models reveal little impact of correspondence management on Representatives' capacity to align with their districts, other interesting relationships emerge from the analyses. For example, the results suggest that the strength of district partisanship influences Representatives' fit with their constituents. The extent of support for their own party in the district demonstrates a positive and significant effect on Representatives' fit with district preferences for both the Ryan budget and the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. On these policies, the stronger the support in the district for the Representative's party, the more likely the Representative will cast the vote that his constituents would prefer. The opposite relationship emerges for the Keystone XL pipeline; here, it appears that district co-partisanship has a negative and significant effect on Representative fit. The stronger the district's support for the Representative's party, the more likely the Representative will vote against the majority of his constituents on the Keystone XL pipeline. District co-partisanship was not a significant predictor of Representative fit for the two remaining issues – the Simpson-Bowles budget or the Korea Free Trade Agreement.

The electoral conditions that Representatives face also influence the extent to which Representatives cast votes that align with constituency preferences. For two policies, the longstanding marginality hypothesis is supported; as a Representative's vote share received in her most recent election increases, the likelihood that she will fit well with district preferences on the Ryan budget and ACA repeal declines. In other words, Representatives who recently faced competitive elections are casting votes on these two issues that more closely align with district views. However, votes on the Keystone XL pipeline demonstrate the opposite trend, with more

electorally secure Representatives more likely to vote with constituent preferences than their more vulnerable colleagues. Taken together, these mixed findings correspond to many previous conclusions about the impacts of election returns on legislator behavior. As noted earlier, close elections are linked to more responsive behavior from Representatives in some studies, but not in others.

A Representative's position within the institutional leadership also contributes to his fit with constituents' preferences. Representatives who serve as committee or subcommittee chairs are less likely to cast Ryan budget votes that align with district preferences. On this issue, committee leaders have a much lower probability of fitting with the preferences of their districts. However, when voting on the Keystone XL pipeline, committee leaders demonstrated a much better alignment with district preferences. On the vote to approve the pipeline, committee and subcommittee chairs were more likely to vote as their constituents wanted them to. Since this indicator variable controls for whether the Representative is a committee or subcommittee *chair*, it essentially captures whether the position taken by leaders in the majority party aligns well with the positions held by constituents. On Keystone XL, constituents in every district supported approval of the pipeline, matching the stance taken by Republicans and their committee leaders in the House.[135] In contrast, House Republicans and their committee leaders supported the Ryan budget, even though constituents largely opposed the plan.[136]

[135] A majority of constituents in each of the congressional districts included in the sample back the pipeline; drawing from CCES data, percentages in the district expressing their support range from a minimum of 51.9% to a maximum of 83.5%.

[136] A majority of constituents in each of the congressional districts included in the sample oppose the Ryan budget plan; drawing from CCES data, percentages in the district expressing their opposition to the proposal range from a minimum of 65.8% to a maximum of 92.2%.

Discussion and Conclusion

Correspondence from constituents is an informative resource that congressional offices can rely on to learn about district policy preferences. Offices that adopt more comprehensive and more informative routines for handling constituents' contacts should, therefore, be in a better position to understand and respond to constituent opinion. However, the ways that congressional offices treat constituent correspondence don't appear to measurably impact Representatives' capacity to vote in line with constituent opinion. The correspondence system characteristics in each model of Representatives' alignment with district views are rarely statistically significant; and in two of the three instances where they are significant, the coefficients are not in the expected direction. What do these largely null findings indicate for how congressional offices' efforts to learn about district opinion impact their policymaking behaviors?

Similar to the discussion in the preceding chapter, perhaps the issues considered here are not the right place to look for the effects of correspondence practices on Representatives' policy responsiveness. During the 112th Congress, the Ryan budget plan, the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the Keystone XL pipeline were all high profile political issues where district opinion could be ascertained relatively easily, even without turning to constituent correspondence.[137] Correspondence, and therefore correspondence system characteristics, would be more likely to be influential for Representatives' votes on lower-profile political issues. While votes on the Korea Free Trade agreement and the Simpson-Bowles budget plan represent such issues that received lower levels of attention, it appears that correspondence system characteristics were still not significantly related to how well the office aligned with district preferences.

[137] Also, the party-driven nature of the Ryan budget and ACA repeal in particular leave relatively little room for responsiveness to constituent opinion on these issues. Republicans and Democrats voted with their parties on these two issues, even when this vote was out-of-step with district preferences.

One possibility is that congressional offices may use broader cues from the constituency to guide their legislative behaviors, and that they choose not to rely on issue-specific information conveyed in correspondence. By looking at their districts' partisanship or ideological tendencies, Representatives have "preference information about broad issue areas that [they] can then translate into positions on specific policies" (Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995, 545; Jackson and King 1989, 1160).[138] District partisan leanings may indeed signal to Representatives the position that their constituents would prefer on a variety of issues. Focusing on the findings in this chapter, for the Ryan budget and the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, the demonstrated level of support within the district for the Representatives' own party may be sending just that type of signal. On these two issues, Representatives tend to align with their districts' partisan cues, particularly as their district more strongly favors their own political party.

While the partisan preferences of constituents may provide an important cue for some issues, they may not serve that purpose for others; the results of this study suggest that the impact that district partisan tendencies have on Representatives' fit with constituent views varies across issues. This different effect of district partisanship across issues may be a function of the extent to which partisanship defines the debate surrounding each issue. Both the Ryan budget and the ACA repeal votes are party line votes in this sample; every Republican voted for each proposal while every Democrat opposed each bill.[139] In contrast, the vote to approve the Keystone XL pipeline was largely driven by ideological considerations; conservative Democrats tended to

[138] In fact, as summarized in Chapter 1, many scholars have argued that representatives need only know the "general disposition" or have "a sense of the general preferences of the district" in order to represent district opinion effectively (Kuklinski 1978, 168; Bishin 2000, 397; see also Jackson and King 1989, Stimson, MacKuen and Erikson 1995).

[139] In looking at the votes for each of these in the House as a whole, they were each nearly straight party-line votes. All Democrats, joined by 4 Republicans, voted against the Ryan budget. Similarly, all Republicans and 3 Democrats supported the 2011 repeal of the ACA vote.

defect from the party's apparent position and vote for approval.[140] The Korea Free Trade Agreement and the Simpson-Bowles budget were relatively lower-profile issues and party positions on each were less clear, making partisan preferences of constituents less relevant. All this suggests that where parties haven't clearly taken a stand, or where ideological divisions in the party are evident, district partisanship tendencies may be less informative for members of Congress.

Additionally, the findings in this chapter have implications for the marginality hypothesis – that electorally vulnerable Representatives should prioritize activities that would bolster their electoral prospects – which has had notable staying power in political science, largely owing to its intuitive appeal. The effect that Representatives' electoral conditions have on their policymaking activity varies across the five issues being considered here. For two issues in this study – the Ryan budget and the repeal of the ACA – Representatives' past electoral margins demonstrate the expected negative relationship with Representatives' district fit; where Representatives recently faced close contests, they are more likely to align with constituents' views on these two policies. The opposite relationship is evident for Representatives' behavior on the Keystone XL pipeline; Representatives' recent election results are positively associated with their alignment with district views on this vote. The differing impact of electoral considerations across these issues is likely a function of the salience of each issue for voters. Representatives are more likely to be responsive to constituents on salient issues and, indeed, Representatives demonstrate better fit with their districts on the more salient policies studied here.[141]

[140] See Chapter 4, footnote 120.
[141] For research on the relationship between issue salience and policy responsiveness, see Kingdon 1989, Page and Shapiro 1983, Bartels 1991, Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson 1996, Bovitz and Carson 2006, Griffin and Flavin 2007, Canes-Wrone, Minozzi and Reveley 2011.

The Ryan budget taps into an issue that has increasingly captured the attention of the public in recent years: deficit reduction. Pew Research Center polls indicate that "the budget deficit stands out as one of the fastest growing priorities for Americans" (Kohut 2012). In January 2011, just before Ryan released his budget plan, 64% of the public considered the budget deficit to be a "top priority" for legislators (Pew 2011).[142] Similarly, a majority of the public is concerned over rising healthcare costs and the Affordable Care Act. In early 2011, as the new Republican House was voting the repeal the ACA, 56% of the public considered revising the 2010 healthcare law to be a top priority for Congress (Pew 2011). The Affordable Care Act still remains electorally relevant, with voters (Republicans in particular) indicating that the position candidates have taken on the health care law would be 'very important' to their vote as recently as the 2014 midterm elections (Pew 2014). Despite the controversy surrounding the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, the "issue has not resonated widely with the public" (Pew 2012).[143] Even though environmental and energy policy are identified as top priorities for roughly half of the electorate, the public profile of the Keystone pipeline project has remained relatively low.

On the issues that the public expressed the most concern about, electorally vulnerable Representatives were more likely to align their votes with district preferences. Heightened public awareness about deficit reduction and the ACA enhances the electorate's potential to hold their Representatives accountable on these issues, likely resulting in responsive behavior from Representatives. On less salient issues, the electorate is in a weaker position to hold its Representatives accountable. And, on these less salient issues, Representatives' electoral

[142] Public concern with deficit reduction has remained high over the last several years. Additional polls from Pew Research Center find that more than 60% of Americans identify reducing the budget deficit as a "top priority" in each of the last four years (Pew 2015a).
[143] Only 24% report that they have heard a lot about the project, 39% say that they have heard a little and the remaining 37% have heard nothing at all (Pew 2012).

conditions are either unrelated to their policy behavior (as in the case of the Korea Free Trade Agreement) or related in unexpected ways (as in the case of the Keystone XL pipeline).[144]

[144] For the Simpson-Bowles vote, electoral conditions were not related to Representatives' alignment with district preferences. Although, like the Ryan budget, this proposal focuses on the high-profile issue of deficit reduction, the Simpson-Bowles vote in the House was in the form of an amendment to budget bill. By voting on this plan as an amendment, the roll-call was lower profile than each of the other votes considered here. As a result, the proposal was less likely to receive much public attention, lowering the likelihood that any potential public retribution for the vote would be realized.

CHAPTER VI

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTIVITY

To this point, the dissertation has explored how correspondence management impacts a rather limited set of congressional behaviors, focusing on congressional office understanding of district preferences and on Representatives' policy responsiveness to constituent opinion. This chapter will expand the scope of legislative activity considered, looking at how office choices about the treatment of constituent correspondence relate to Representatives' other work in Congress. In particular, analyses presented here will assess the relationships between office correspondence practices and Representatives' abilities to effectively advance their legislative agendas in Congress.

Looking beyond Roll-Call Voting to Legislative Effectiveness

Much of the literature on representation and responsiveness in Congress has considered only a narrow range of congressional activity, with scholars typically looking for the effects of constituent opinion on members' roll-call voting decisions. However, roll-call voting represents only a small part of Representatives' work as lawmakers and "it is agreed to be a poor indicator of political life in Congress" (Eulau and Abramowitz 1978, 263). Members of Congress engage in numerous other legislative activities, including sponsoring and co-sponsoring legislation, offering amendments to others' proposals, and participating in the work of their committees and subcommittees. When it comes to these other activities, "House members enjoy considerable latitude in what they do on the job," (Hall 1996, 55). Representatives have substantial leeway when deciding how to allocate office time and resources to their legislative efforts. And as "any

participation beyond the simple act of voting requires considerably more effort," the decision to draft amendments or to participate meaningfully in committee or floor deliberations represents a significant investment for a Representative and her staffers (Hall 1996, 177). In particular, drafting legislation and working to secure its passage is a significant undertaking for House offices, and this intensive effort is rarely rewarded with legislative success. Given the high number of bills introduced and the low number of laws enacted in every Congress, only a few Representatives will succeed in having their initiatives become law.[145]

In their recent exploration of legislative effectiveness, Volden and Wiseman (2014) develop a systematic measure of Representatives' ability to advance legislation in Congress. They demonstrate that Representatives who effectively move their proposals through the legislative process can largely attribute their success to the institutional positions that they hold and the legislative skills that they have obtained over time (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Committee and subcommittee chairmen are more effective in shepherding their proposals through Congress. Majority party members demonstrate higher levels of legislative effectiveness. Effectiveness in earlier Congresses strongly relates to Representatives' present effectiveness, indicating that legislators develop a skill set that consistently assists them in advancing their policy proposals. Representatives also see their effectiveness improve over their time in Congress; more senior members of Congress tend to be more effective.

Though it goes beyond the scope of Volden and Wiseman's (2014) analyses, Representatives' effectiveness as lawmakers may be a function of the information that they have

[145] Out of the more than 10,000 bills introduced in the 113th Congress, only 296 bills (2.8%) passed both chambers and were enacted into law.

access to.[146] Representatives operate with a great deal of uncertainty, but in drafting legislation, Representatives and their staffers must draw on technical information about the policy proposal itself and its likely effects and political information about the likely electoral implications of the policy proposal (Krehbiel 1991). With information about the logistics and technical aspects as well as the political consequences of their policy, Representatives will be in a better position to defend their proposal's merits as it advances through the political process.

Though there are other sources that offices can rely on, particularly for technical information, correspondence can provide Representatives with valuable intelligence about public opinion. Observing constituent reactions expressed in correspondence can help the office to project the likely political consequences that would follow from a policy's adoption. And to the extent that constituents would be impacted directly by the proposed policy, constituent feedback that the office receives about the proposal could serve as important technical information about how the policy would work in practice. Essentially, offices that use constituent correspondence effectively to understand constituent opinions and district issue priorities are taking advantage of useful information that should help them in formulating legislation and advancing it through Congress.

> ***Correspondence Management and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis:***
> Representatives whose offices adopt more comprehensive record-keeping systems and more informative mail report practices are expected to be more effective in advancing their legislative agendas through Congress.

[146] Indeed, access to information may contribute to the high legislative effectiveness observed for committee and subcommittee chairmen. Representatives in these leadership positions have access to committee and subcommittee staff who specialize in the issues under the committees' jurisdiction.

Examining Legislative Effectiveness in the 112th Congress

Dependent Variable

This study will use Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES), developed by Volden and Wiseman (2014), to capture "the proven ability to advance a member's agenda items through the legislative process and into law" (Volden and Wiseman 2014, 18). To calculate Legislative Effectiveness Scores for each Representative, Volden and Wiseman (2014) trace each Representative's sponsored bills through the legislative process. They also account for the legislative significance of each Representative's proposals, identifying bills as commemorative, substantive or substantive and significant.[147] Fifteen indicators of effectiveness result from this effort to follow each Representative's bills as they proceed through the legislative process; Volden and Wiseman (2014) translate these indicators into a single composite measure, producing a Legislative Effectiveness Score for each Representative.[148] [149] For each Congress, the LESs are normalized to an average value of one, and higher scores indicate higher effectiveness in advancing legislative proposals through Congress.[150]

[147] Bills were identified as substantively significant if they were featured in the annual *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*. Bills were identified as commemorative if they included a renaming, a commemoration, or private relief for an individual. All other bills were classified as substantive. In 112th Congress, Representatives introduced 102 substantive and significant bills, 6,452 substantive bills, and 175 commemorative bills.

[148] The indicators include: counts of the number of bills that each Representative introduced, the number of her bills that received action in committee, the number of her bills that received action beyond committee, the number of her bills that passed the House, and the number of her bills that became law, for each of the three categories of bills (substantive and significant, substantive, and commemorative). Volden and Wiseman's (2014) data covers the 93rd Congress (1973-1975) through the 110th Congress (2007-2009). The same data is available for more recent congresses from their website, http://www.thelawmakers.org.

[149] For more details about coding and calculation of Legislative Effectiveness Scores, refer to Volden and Wiseman (2014), chapter 2.

[150] Previous measures of effectiveness include reputation surveys to identify those deemed effective by colleagues and other legislative observers and "hit rates," which consider the number or percentage of bills that were introduced by a Representative that pass the chamber, or become law. Volden and Wiseman (2014) argue that each of these measures is inadequate since neither one captures a legislator's ability to maneuver through earlier stages of the legislative process.

Independent Variables

The six summary variables for the record-keeping and information-sharing practices used in congressional offices, as employed in the analyses in earlier chapters, constitute the primary independent variables of interest in these models. These ***correspondence system characteristics*** are used to assess how a Representative's legislative effectiveness relates to his office's treatment of constituent contacts. An office with a more inclusive and comprehensive correspondence system should have more information about constituent policy preferences and, therefore, have more information about the likely political consequences of policy activity. By ensuring that the Representative and his staff have access to this information, correspondence systems with these features may improve office prospects for advancing legislation in Congress.

Several additional controls that may influence legislative effectiveness are also included in the models.[151] Representatives' development of lawmaking skills over time contributes to their ability to advance their legislative priorities in Congress. Models include the ***number of full congressional terms served*** by each Representative to account for the impact that experience in the chamber has on Representatives' ability to maneuver through the legislative process. ***Experience as a state legislator*** may also equip Representatives' with lawmaking skills and expertise that can enhance their effectiveness. This may be particularly true for Representatives that served in professionalized state legislatures; an ***interaction of state legislative experience and state legislative professionalism*** is included to account for this possibility.

Effectiveness in Congress is also a function of Representatives' institutional position. ***Majority party leaders*** may be expected to demonstrate more effectiveness, given their control of the legislative process in the House. ***Minority party leaders*** are likely to be less effective

[151] With the exception of the correspondence system characteristics, these independent variables reflect the same controls that Volden and Wiseman (2014) include in their models that explain variation in LES across members of Congress. See Appendix C for descriptive statistics on each independent variable.

lawmakers, as their legislative efforts may be suppressed by the majority party. The central role of committees to policymaking in Congress places both ***committee chairmen*** and ***subcommittee chairmen*** in a stronger position to advance their legislative proposals.

Representatives' personal characteristics may also influence their capacity to usher their bills through Congress. ***Partisanship*** of the Representative is controlled for to account for possible differences in effectiveness between the two parties. Given the institutional advantages that come with majority status in the House, majority party Republicans should be more effective in the 112th Congress.[152] ***Ideological distance from chamber median*** may influence Representatives' legislative effectiveness, as more centrist legislators may be better able to move their proposals forward. Controls for ***Female Representatives*** and ***African-American Representatives*** are also included to account for potentially different effectiveness trends for these congressional minorities. Models also include ***vote share in the 2010 election***. The priority that Representatives assign to their legislative work may vary depending on their electoral security, resulting in lower effectiveness for Representatives that do not emphasize lawmaking activities.

Results

Table 6.1 presents ordinary least squares regression estimates for the non-freshmen offices in the sample.[153] Two of the control variables in these models demonstrate significant relationships with legislators' lawmaking ability. Legislative effectiveness scores are strongly

[152] Volden and Wiseman (2014) do not find differences in effectiveness across political parties, but their results do demonstrate that a Representative is likely to see her effectiveness improve when her party holds the majority in the House.

[153] Legislative Effectiveness Scores for the 113th Congress have yet to be released; since the currently available scores come from the 112th Congress, only non-freshmen Representatives are included in these analyses.

related to Representatives' seniority and to their status as committee leaders. Representatives with more experience are more effective at pushing their initiatives through the legislative

Table 6.1. Legislative Effectiveness Score as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.5283 (0.3992)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.5648 (0.4151)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.1473 (0.5676)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.2927 (0.4697)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.5504 (0.4854)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.3966 (0.3832)
Seniority	0.1937*** (0.0685)	0.1840*** (0.0685)	0.1891*** (0.0702)	0.1707** (0.0758)	0.1357* (0.0749)	0.1503** (0.0737)
State Legislative Experience	- 0.0410 (0.5724)	0.0364 (0.5749)	- 0.0926 (0.5972)	0.0069 (0.5762)	0.0758 (0.6192)	0.0085 (0.5644)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	1.1568 (1.6559)	1.1539 (1.6547)	1.4403 (1.7281)	1.1895 (1.6635)	0.9914 (1.7217)	1.0282 (1.6231)
Partisanship	0.1487 (1.2627)	0.2118 (1.2536)	0.4511 (1.2931)	0.3583 (1.2840)	0.5747 (1.3140)	0.6316 (1.2409)
Majority-Party Leadership	0.0946 (1.4483)	- 0.1193 (1.4446)	- 0.0191 (1.4947)	- 0.2149 (1.5135)	- 0.5889 (1.5279)	- 0.3857 (1.4218)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.4311 (0.9805)	- 0.5375 (0.9815)	- 0.4432 (1.0139)	- 0.4711 (1.0137)	- 0.1947 (1.0161)	- 0.3253 (0.9639)
Committee Chair	4.1757*** (0.9912)	4.1462*** (0.9877)	4.1028*** (1.0532)	4.5379*** (1.0900)	4.8002*** (1.1138)	4.6923*** (1.0283)
Subcommittee Chair	0.4084 (0.6393)	0.4588 (0.6443)	0.3535 (0.7025)	0.1572 (0.6611)	0.2318 (0.7063)	0.1883 (0.6297)
Distance from Median	- 2.0092 (1.8806)	- 1.5418 (1.8389)	- 1.3613 (1.9144)	- 1.5353 (2.0499)	- 0.7758 (1.9339)	- 0.9391 (1.9343)
Female	- 0.0133 (0.5508)	- 0.1204 (0.5547)	- 0.0916 (0.5822)	- 0.1851 (0.6072)	- 0.4300 (0.6221)	- 0.2120 (0.5602)
African-American	0.9477 (0.7146)	0.8936 (0.7116)	0.8736 (0.7306)	0.5851 (0.7397)	0.3732 (0.8084)	0.5549 (0.7247)
Vote Share	- 0.0334 (0.0200)	- 0.0313 (0.0199)	- 0.0331 (0.0209)	- 0.0184 (0.0218)	- 0.0112 (0.0237)	- 0.0142 (0.0210)
Constant	2.9706 (1.7972)	1.9792 (1.7238)	2.1445 (1.8210)	1.7868 (1.9966)	0.4767 (1.9254)	0.8521 (1.8419)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.3621	0.3629	0.3449	0.4011	0.3944	0.4035
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

process. Each additional term of service in the House improves a Representative's LES by 0.14 to 0.19 points. Committee chairmen are also highly effective in their efforts to advance their own policy proposals; committee chairs see an approximately 4-point increase in their LES. In line with the findings in Volden and Wiseman (2014), the time to cultivate legislative skills and service in an institutional leadership role both enhance Representatives' effectiveness.[154]

Turning to the primary focus of the chapter, it appears that the kind of correspondence systems that Representatives adopt do not matter for their abilities to move their bills through Congress. The record-keeping and information-sharing practices that guide office treatment of constituent contacts are not statistically significant influences on Representatives' composite effectiveness scores.

While the Legislative Effectiveness Score serves as a concise summary measure for legislators' abilities as lawmakers, decomposing legislative effectiveness scores into their constituent parts may be useful. In an analysis that focuses on some of the indicators that comprise legislative effectiveness scores, Volden and Wiseman (2014) find that different variables matter for success at different stages of the legislative process. Qualities of the Representative, or her institutional position, that help a bill advance through one stage of the legislative process may not be influential for later stages. For example, a Representative's membership in the majority party improves the chances that his proposals will receive action in committee and action beyond committee, but majority party membership is actually negatively

[154] In their results, Volden and Wiseman (2014) also find that majority party members, majority party leaders, subcommittee chairmen, and women are each more effective, while minority party leaders and African-Americans are each less effective. These other trends are not observed in the present analyses. While none of these control variables attain statistical significance, relationships observed for several of these control variables run counter to Volden and Wiseman's (2014) findings. In the current sample of congressional offices, majority party leaders and women are less effective and African-Americans are more effective; each of these relationship stands in contrast to what Volden and Wiseman's (2014) analyses demonstrate. However, these unexpected relationships are not statistically significant, and they are likely attributable to the restricted sample of only 84 offices being analyzed here.

related to the probability that a member's bills pass the House, after moving out of committee (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Likewise, analyses that use components of legislative effectiveness scores, rather than the composite measure itself, may reveal that correspondence practices matter for advancing bills at particular stages in the legislative process, but are less influential at other stages.

Tables 6.2 – 6.6 present estimates from ordinary least squares regression analyses with dependent variables that capture the progression of each Representative's bills through the legislative process. In Table 6.2, the dependent variable is the total number of substantive and significant bills introduced by each Representative in the 112th Congress. Table 6.3 shows estimates with the dependent variable measured as the percent of each Representative's substantive and significant bills receiving action in committee. In Table 6.4, the dependent variable is the percent of each Representative's substantive and significant bills receiving action beyond committee. Table 6.5 includes results from a model where the dependent variable is the percent of each Representative's substantive and significant bills that received action beyond committee that go on to pass the House. Finally, Table 6.6 displays estimates for OLS models where the dependent variable is the percent of each Representative's substantive and significant bills that passed the House that go to become law.[155] As each are plausibly related to success at each stage in the legislative process, all independent variables specified above are included in these models.

Indeed, the results demonstrate that the determinants of bill progression through Congress are different, depending on the stage in the legislative process. And, importantly, the

[155] Each of these dependent variables looks at only Representatives' substantive and significant bills; similar analyses for substantive and for commemorative legislation do not demonstrate any relationships between office correspondence practices and substantive bill progression or commemorative bill progression. See further discussion of this at the close of chapter, in the *Discussion and Conclusion* section.

Table 6.2. Number of Representative's Substantive and Significant Bill Introductions as Dependent Variable.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.1022 (0.1884)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.3512* (0.1919)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.2626 (0.2616)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1108 (0.2206)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2215 (0.2268)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2664 (0.1795)
Seniority	0.0879*** (0.0323)	0.0836** (0.0317)	0.0853** (0.0323)	0.0700* (0.0356)	0.0659* (0.0350)	0.0604* (0.0345)
State Legislative Experience	0.1813 (0.2701)	0.2296 (0.2658)	0.1603 (0.2752)	0.2014 (0.2707)	0.1911 (0.2893)	0.2187 (0.2644)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 0.1219 (0.7815)	- 0.1753 (0.7650)	- 0.1162 (0.7964)	- 0.0324 (0.7814)	- 0.1241 (0.8045)	- 0.1601 (0.7605)
Partisanship	0.2540 (0.5959)	0.1654 (0.5796)	0.2592 (0.5959)	0.3271 (0.6031)	0.2513 (0.6140)	0.4815 (0.5815)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 0.2508 (0.6835)	- 0.3246 (0.6679)	- 0.2533 (0.6888)	- 0.3324 (0.7109)	- 0.4185 (0.7139)	- 0.4305 (0.6662)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.1593 (0.4627)	- 0.2149 (0.4538)	- 0.0755 (0.4673)	- 0.1163 (0.4761)	- 0.0325 (0.4748)	- 0.0896 (0.4517)
Committee Chair	1.1631*** (0.4678)	1.2149** (0.4567)	1.1311** (0.4854)	1.4652*** (0.5120)	1.5481*** (0.5204)	1.4674*** (0.4818)
Subcommittee Chair	0.1138 (0.3017)	0.1924 (0.2979)	0.0711 (0.3238)	0.0415 (0.3105)	0.1645 (0.3300)	0.0160 (0.2950)
Distance from Median	- 0.6169 (0.8875)	- 0.5469 (0.8502)	- 0.6092 (0.8823)	- 0.2684 (0.9628)	- 0.2606 (0.9036)	- 0.0453 (0.9064)
Female	- 0.0144 (0.2600)	- 0.0756 (0.2565)	- 0.0800 (0.2683)	- 0.1636 (0.2852)	- 0.1949 (0.2907)	- 0.1129 (0.2625)
African-American	0.3414 (0.3372)	0.3433 (0.3290)	0.3281 (0.3367)	0.1800 (0.3474)	0.1160 (0.3778)	0.1658 (0.3396)
Vote Share	- 0.0064 (0.0094)	- 0.0058 (0.0092)	- 0.0048 (0.0096)	- 0.0006 (0.0102)	0.0024 (0.0111)	0.0015 (0.0098)
Constant	0.3061 (0.8482)	- 0.0026 (0.7970)	0.4107 (0.8392)	- 0.1751 (0.9378)	- 0.5330 (0.8997)	- 0.6273 (0.8630)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2142	0.2469	0.2252	0.2577	0.2608	0.2703
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Standard errors in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$ ** $p < 0.05$ *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6.3. Percent of Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills Receiving Action in Committee, out of All His Substantive and Significant Bills, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 8.9248 (6.8447)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	13.0855* (7.0363)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	6.1513 (9.3241)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	1.2214 (7.7555)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	5.3693 (7.7489)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	10.9040* (6.5204)
Seniority	2.7460** (1.1743)	2.5465** (1.1612)	2.6076** (1.1531)	1.6861 (1.2516)	2.3399* (1.1963)	1.3697 (1.2539)
State Legislative Experience	17.1707* (9.8141)	18.9689* (9.7445)	13.8053 (9.8095)	17.0858* (9.5150)	11.8707 (9.8832)	19.3499** (9.6038)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 55.7727* (28.3898)	- 56.5951** (28.0477)	- 42.4240 (28.3869)	- 41.7712 (27.4681)	- 45.7105 (27.4820)	- 50.9764* (27.6201)
Partisanship	0.0249 (21.6495)	- 0.3851 (21.2481)	2.7795 (21.2403)	10.3353 (21.2018)	- 7.6457 (20.9749)	15.8923 (21.1162)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 26.7441 (24.8317)	- 30.8319 (24.4870)	- 25.4973 (24.5519)	- 31.5718 (24.9920)	- 26.2364 (24.3892)	- 32.3294 (24.1948)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 11.6623 (16.8109)	- 13.9734 (16.6367)	- 9.8428 (16.6546)	- 5.5516 (16.7380)	- 7.0037 (16.2198)	- 9.0550 (16.4027)
Committee Chair	- 31.9320* (16.9945)	- 31.5885* (16.7424)	- 26.7515 (17.3001)	- 20.8981 (17.9979)	- 21.0264 (17.7783)	- 24.7626 (17.4978)
Subcommittee Chair	- 4.6463 (10.9607)	- 2.7857 (10.9214)	- 1.3844 (11.5395)	- 7.6341 (10.9171)	3.9931 (11.2739)	- 10.5131 (10.7149)
Distance from Median	- 55.5653* (32.2425)	- 47.9706 (31.1701)	- 39.1934 (31.4462)	- 21.5562 (33.8484)	- 48.6936 (30.869)	- 17.9680 (32.9157)
Female	3.1915 (9.4438)	0.7890 (9.4027)	- 2.8108 (9.5639)	- 7.2744 (10.0259)	- 1.6227 (9.9300)	- 0.4628 (9.5321)
African-American	1.8258 (12.2511)	1.0931 (12.0624)	1.3208 (12.0017)	- 3.5112 (12.2138)	- 5.5952 (12.9045)	- 4.9460 (12.3316)
Vote Share	0.4589 (0.3430)	0.4952 (0.3382)	0.4025 (0.3430)	0.5678 (0.3594)	0.7176* (0.3788)	0.6269* (0.3567)
Constant	4.9189 (30.8135)	- 13.5422 (29.2196)	- 10.7210 (29.9121)	- 25.2951 (32.9686)	- 18.2461 (30.7343)	- 37.1397 (31.3419)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.1161	0.1373	0.0801	0.0473	0.1026	0.1007
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.4. Percent of Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills Receiving Action Beyond Committee, out of All His Substantive and Significant Bills, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 9.0491 (7.7898)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	13.5366* (8.0216)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	6.3627 (10.6390)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.8643 (8.7090)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	3.2425 (8.8099)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	12.5032* (7.2614)
Seniority	2.8505** (1.3364)	2.6455** (1.3238)	2.7048** (1.3157)	1.2473 (1.4054)	1.9628 (1.3602)	0.9297 (1.3964)
State Legislative Experience	13.4140 (11.1692)	15.2744 (11.1091)	9.7542 (11.1929)	14.4617 (10.6846)	8.3284 (11.2365)	16.6455 (10.6952)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 45.8944 (32.3098)	- 46.7868 (31.9755)	- 31.7924 (32.3902)	- 33.7402 (30.8448)	- 36.8763 (31.2452)	- 43.1462 (30.7589)
Partisanship	14.9102 (24.6388)	14.3825 (24.2237)	17.7151 (24.2357)	27.3219 (23.8082)	10.3734 (23.8470)	34.2170 (23.5159)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 27.1120 (28.2604)	- 31.2927 (27.9162)	- 25.7875 (28.0144)	- 33.0182 (28.0644)	- 30.1888 (27.7289)	- 36.5091 (26.9444)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 8.5082 (19.1321)	- 10.8905 (18.9666)	- 6.4736 (19.0034)	- 1.2645 (18.7956)	- 1.6290 (18.4408)	- 4.0171 (18.2667)
Committee Chair	3.2614 (19.3411)	3.6736 (19.0870)	8.7743 (19.7399)	23.5995 (20.2104)	22.4244 (20.2127)	18.6918 (19.4863)
Subcommittee Chair	- 2.1084 (12.4741)	- 0.1453 (12.4508)	1.2959 (13.1669)	- 6.1244 (12.2592)	4.7996 (12.8177)	- 9.8349 (11.9326)
Distance from Median	- 32.5315 (36.6944)	- 24.8538 (35.5352)	- 15.5802 (35.8810)	11.8213 (38.0094)	- 16.1302 (35.0959)	15.4294 (36.6563)
Female	- 0.6120 (10.7478)	- 3.0930 (10.7195)	- 7.0326 (10.9127)	- 13.9352 (11.2584)	- 9.2180 (11.2898)	- 7.1735 (10.6154)
African-American	2.1683 (13.9427)	1.4391 (13.7517)	1.6818 (13.6942)	- 7.8136 (13.7152)	- 8.9556 (14.6715)	- 8.8462 (13.7330)
Vote Share	0.3389 (0.3904)	0.3759 (0.3855)	0.2788 (0.3914)	0.6145 (0.4036)	0.7926* (0.4307)	0.6938* (0.3972)
Constant	- 5.5912 (35.0681)	- 24.4395 (33.3115)	- 21.4671 (34.1305)	- 49.2719 (37.0215)	- 42.4591 (34.9428)	- 64.0816 (34.9037)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.1304	0.1483	0.1174	0.1472	0.1747	0.1781
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.5. Percent of Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Passed the House, out of All His Substantive and Significant that Received Action Beyond Committee, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 12.1605* (6.5846)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	7.9360 (6.9519)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	4.4175 (9.0277)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	4.2854 (7.1524)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	5.5203 (7.2214)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	15.0723** (5.9340)
Seniority	2.8062** (1.1296)	2.6346** (1.1473)	2.6341** (1.1164)	1.0783 (1.1542)	1.9264 (1.1149)	0.7747 (1.1411)
State Legislative Experience	12.96 (9.4412)	14.0440 (9.6277)	9.4997 (9.4977)	13.8315 (8.7749)	8.3748 (9.2104)	16.1986* (8.7401)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 43.3117 (27.3110)	- 42.2748 (27.7114)	- 29.6354 (27.4846)	- 30.5979 (25.3317)	- 33.6541 (25.6114)	- 39.1112 (25.1361)
Partisanship	18.5302 (20.8268)	22.0930 (20.9934)	23.0183 (20.5651)	35.8958* (19.5528)	15.3638 (19.5471)	40.4193** (19.2171)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 26.9741 (23.8881)	- 31.2184 (24.1934)	- 26.6586 (23.7715)	- 37.8480 (23.0483)	- 31.0207 (22.7291)	- 36.9582* (22.0189)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 6.9479 (16.1721)	- 8.6647 (16.4373)	- 4.7999 (16.1253)	2.9227 (15.4362)	- 0.1713 (15.1158)	- 2.6043 (14.9275)
Committee Chair	- 0.1998 (16.3488)	- 2.0807 (16.5417)	3.6239 (16.7503)	19.7869 (16.5981)	17.0943 (16.5682)	14.0277 (15.9241)
Subcommittee Chair	- 5.0521 (10.5442)	- 5.3325 (10.7905)	- 2.8739 (11.1727)	- 10.0588 (10.0680)	1.5313 (10.5065)	- 13.5624 (9.7513)
Distance from Median	- 31.4881 (31.0173)	- 20.3031 (30.7964)	- 12.6937 (30.4467)	21.5133 (31.2158)	- 13.4082 (28.7678)	21.2519 (29.9554)
Female	1.8379 (9.0849)	0.2204 (9.2900)	- 4.4561 (9.2599)	- 13.2955 (9.2461)	- 6.3810 (9.2541)	- 4.5202 (8.6749)
African-American	4.2976 (11.7856)	2.7954 (11.9178)	3.2566 (11.6202)	- 6.0144 (11.2638)	- 7.1754 (12.0261)	- 7.0111 (11.2225)
Vote Share	0.3685 (0.3300)	0.4131 (0.3341)	0.3332 (0.3321)	0.6900** (0.3315)	0.8072** (0.3531)	0.7205** (0.3246)
Constant	- 10.9895 (29.6426)	- 31.3601 (28.8693)	- 29.4931 (28.9613)	- 66.6397** (30.4045)	- 52.0307* (28.6423)	- 75.4117** (28.5232)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2101	0.1868	0.1717	0.2271	0.2559	0.2846
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.6. Percent of Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Became Law, out of All His Substantive and Significant that Passed the House, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	1.3199 (3.8976)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	3.1297 (4.0416)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 1.7465 (5.4823)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 2.7714 (4.5155)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	1.0645 (4.7518)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	2.4302 (3.6946)
Seniority	2.1248*** (0.6687)	2.1030*** (0.6670)	2.1320*** (0.6780)	2.1010*** (0.7287)	1.7218** (0.7336)	1.9286*** (0.7105)
State Legislative Experience	7.8410 (5.5885)	8.2745 (5.5971)	8.1569 (5.7677)	8.1935 (5.5399)	8.9375 (6.0605)	8.0237 (5.4417)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 10.8968 (16.1661)	- 11.8797 (16.1103)	- 12.0809 (16.6908)	- 13.3579 (15.9927)	- 14.1308 (16.8525)	- 14.1478 (15.6500)
Partisanship	- 2.1528 (12.3279)	- 4.2025 (12.2047)	- 3.5053 (12.4888)	- 4.6566 (12.3443)	- 0.9048 (12.8622)	- 2.6377 (11.9648)
Majority-Party Leadership	1.2719 (14.1400)	1.1978 (14.0651)	1.9119 (14.4359)	- 0.1624 (14.5511)	- 2.5682 (14.9560)	- 1.3844 (13.7092)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 5.1305 (9.5727)	- 5.5220 (9.5560)	- 4.8174 (9.7925)	- 5.8981 (9.7453)	- 3.3542 (9.9463)	- 4.1928 (9.2940)
Committee Chair	33.1346*** (9.6773)	34.2864*** (9.6167)	33.4256*** (10.1721)	36.8651*** (10.4789)	40.3431*** (10.9020)	38.9900*** (9.9145)
Subcommittee Chair	5.6430 (6.2414)	6.8093 (6.2731)	5.9052 (6.7849)	4.6706 (6.3563)	4.6299 (6.9134)	5.4001 (6.0713)
Distance from Median	- 19.2632 (18.3599)	- 20.8148 (17.9038)	- 21.625 (18.4896)	- 24.9457 (19.7075)	- 13.7121 (18.9295)	- 19.2206 (18.6506)
Female	- 0.0590 (5.3776)	- 0.5515 (5.4008)	0.0404 (5.6234)	- 0.4597 (5.8374)	- 2.5961 (6.0893)	- 1.4066 (5.4011)
African-American	9.8416 (6.9762)	10.2079 (6.9285)	10.0667 (7.0567)	7.9614 (7.1112)	5.7021 (7.9133)	7.6947 (6.9873)
Vote Share	- 0.1689 (0.1953)	- 0.1717 (0.1942)	- 0.1627 (0.2017)	- 0.0507 (0.2093)	0.0221 (0.2323)	- 0.0163 (0.2021)
Constant	8.6946 (17.5462)	8.9760 (16.7834)	11.9973 (17.5876)	8.4557 (19.1953)	- 4.3123 (18.8469)	0.6862 (17.7589)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.3141	0.3188	0.3107	0.3745	0.3483	0.3742
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

correspondence practices that congressional offices adopt are related to how much of their substantive and significant legislative agenda advances through Congress. Offices that keep informative records of constituent contacts, listing the position that constituents are advocating for when they contact their Representative, tend to introduce more substantive and significant bills, and to see a greater percentage of those bills go further in the legislative process. A Representative whose office records constituent position information within its contact database introduces, on average, 0.35 more substantive and significant bills than a Representative whose office lacks such records.[156] An office with constituent stance recorded sees a 13.1-point increase in the percentage of its Representative's substantive and significant bills that receive action in committee, and a 13.5-point increase in the percentage of its Representative's important bills that receive action beyond committee. The magnitude of these effects is substantial considering that, within the sample of Representatives who participated in this project's survey, the average percentage of a Representative's substantive and significant bills that receive action in committee is 13.7 and the average percentage that receive action beyond committee is 17.2.

Offices that include legislative staffers in drafting responses to constituents' contacts are also likely to see more of their important initiatives progress through the legislative process. A Representative whose office requires legislative staff to write responses to district correspondence see a 10.9-point increase in the percentage of his substantive and significant bills that receive action in committee, and 12.5-point increase in the percentage of his important bills that receive action beyond committee. Offices with these inclusive response drafting practices also have a higher percentage of their significant legislation that received action beyond

[156] Given that most legislators within the sample (83%) did not introduce any substantive and significant bills, such an increase is substantial. It rivals the effect observed on Representatives' seniority in the same model; a Representative would need to have four full terms in Congress to realize roughly the same magnitude increase in substantive and significant bill introductions that having constituent position information in contact records achieves.

committee actually go on to pass the House; these offices see a 15.1-point increase in the percentage of their substantive and significant bills that moved out of committee that passed the House. On average, Representatives in the sample have 14.6% of their important bills that moved beyond the committee go on to pass the House, indicating the effect of legislative staff involvement on success at this stage is substantively quite large.

Tables 6.2 - 6.6 focus on legislative effectiveness at each step in the process, revealing that offices that choose to keep informative records and share responsibility for correspondence with others in the office are advantaged in the legislative process. In offices that have adopted these practices, Representatives see more of their legislation receive action in committee and beyond. These analyses have shown how well legislators' advance their own priorities through Congress, in that each dependent variable captures how their substantive and significant bills are faring in the legislative process, out of all the important legislation that they sponsored. But how does their legislative success compare to the rest of the House? Do offices that account for more of the significant lawmaking achieved by the House have correspondence systems that are helping them contribute to the chamber's lawmaking output?

Tables 6.7 – 6.10 present estimates from ordinary least squares regression models with dependent variables that account for the relative effectiveness of each lawmaker (in comparison to the rest of the House) during the 112th Congress. In Table 6.7, the dependent variable is the number of each Representative's substantive and significant bills that received action in committee, as a percentage of the total number of substantively significant bills that received action in committee for the chamber. Table 6.8 displays models where the dependent variable is the number of each Representative's significant bills that received action beyond committee, as a percentage of the total number of all such bills that moved beyond committee for the chamber. In

Table 6.9, the dependent variable is the number of each Representative's important bills that passed the House, as a percentage of the total number of all significant bills that passed the House. Lastly, Table 6.10 presents OLS estimates for models where the dependent variable is the number of each Representative's substantive and significant bills that became law, as a percentage of the total number of all such bills that became law.[157]

These analyses demonstrate that a Representative's contributions to House legislative productivity are related to the correspondence practices that her office chooses to adopt. Offices that account for a larger share of the substantive legislation that moves through the House tend to keep more complete records that note the positions that their constituents are advocating for in their contacts to Congress. Offices with these more informative records see an average of a 0.33-point increase in the percent of the chamber's substantive and significant legislation that receives action in committee that they are responsible for. Within the sample, the average Representative accounts for 0.28% of the chamber's significant legislation acted on in committee, indicating that the effect of office record-keeping observed here is substantial.[158]

Offices that include constituent position information in their records also tend to account for a larger share of the House's important bills that receive action beyond committee and that pass the House. Offices that have adopted this practice see an average of a 0.35-point increase in the percent of the chamber's important bills that receive action beyond committee that they are responsible for. Here again the effect is notable, as the average Representative in the sample has

[157] To provide some perspective on the amount of substantive and significant bills that made it through each stage of the legislative process in this Congress, 78 received action in committee, 99 moved beyond the committee, 75 passed the House, and 34 substantive and significant bills became law.

[158] In the 112th Congress, the largest individual Representative's contribution to the House's substantive and significant legislation receiving action in committee comes from Doc Hastings (R, WA-4), who accounted for 6.4% of all important legislation receiving action in committee; with this as the maximum observed contribution from an individual member, the 0.33-point increase that office record-keeping practices provide is significant.

Table 6.7. Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Received Action in Committee, as a Percentage of All Substantive and Significant Bills that Received Action in Committee for the Entire Chamber, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.1829 (0.1405)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.3328** (0.1425)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.0273 (0.1971)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0149 (0.1674)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2334 (0.1680)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2180 (0.1370)
Seniority	0.0784*** (0.0241)	0.0737*** (0.0235)	0.0760*** (0.0244)	0.0668** (0.0270)	0.0656** (0.0259)	0.0588** (0.0264)
State Legislative Experience	0.3530* (0.2015)	0.3988** (0.1974)	0.3168 (0.2073)	0.3502 (0.2053)	0.3276 (0.2143)	0.3764* (0.2019)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 0.8553 (0.5828)	- 0.8863 (0.5681)	- 0.6945 (0.6000)	- 0.6917 (0.5928)	- 0.7964 (0.5958)	- 0.8213 (0.5806)
Partisanship	0.0107 (0.4445)	- 0.0246 (0.4304)	0.0732 (0.4490)	0.1382 (0.4576)	- 0.0393 (0.4547)	0.2411 (0.4438)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 0.3267 (0.5098)	- 0.4192 (0.4960)	- 0.3253 (0.5190)	- 0.4413 (0.5394)	- 0.4510 (0.5287)	- 0.4527 (0.5086)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.2341 (0.3451)	- 0.2909 (0.3370)	- 0.2061 (0.3520)	- 0.1749 (0.3612)	- 0.1446 (0.3516)	- 0.1991 (0.3448)
Committee Chair	0.0358 (0.3489)	0.0582 (0.3391)	0.0720 (0.3657)	0.1714 (0.3884)	0.2240 (0.3854)	0.1626 (0.3678)
Subcommittee Chair	0.0959 (0.2250)	0.1524 (0.2212)	0.1173 (0.2439)	0.0281 (0.2356)	0.1815 (0.2444)	0.0079 (0.2252)
Distance from Median	- 1.0304 (0.6619)	- 0.8802 (0.6314)	- 0.7844 (0.6647)	- 0.6639 (0.7305)	- 0.8197 (0.6692)	- 0.5144 (0.6919)
Female	0.0471 (0.1939)	- 0.0130 (0.1905)	- 0.0293 (0.2021)	- 0.0858 (0.2164)	- 0.0571 (0.2153)	- 0.0059 (0.2004)
African-American	0.2152 (0.2515)	0.2035 (0.2443)	0.1977 (0.2537)	0.1233 (0.2636)	0.0200 (0.2798)	0.1000 (0.2592)
Vote Share	0.0026 (0.0070)	0.0033 (0.0068)	0.0024 (0.0072)	0.0057 (0.0078)	0.0092 (0.0082)	0.0069 (0.0075)
Constant	0.2084 (0.6326)	- 0.2012 (0.5919)	- 0.0412 (0.6322)	- 0.2491 (0.7115)	- 0.4893 (0.6663)	- 0.5417 (0.6588)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.1758	0.2169	0.1519	0.1562	0.1981	0.1801
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.8. Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Received Action Beyond Committee, as a Percentage of All Substantive and Significant Bills that Received Action Beyond Committee for the Entire Chamber, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.1032 (0.1903)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.3547* (0.1939)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.2652 (0.2642)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1119 (0.2228)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2238 (0.2291)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2691 (0.1814)
Seniority	0.0888*** (0.0326)	0.0844** (0.0320)	0.0862** (0.0327)	0.0707* (0.0360)	0.0666* (0.0354)	0.0610* (0.0349)
State Legislative Experience	0.1831 (0.2729)	0.2320 (0.2685)	0.1619 (0.2780)	0.2035 (0.2734)	0.1930 (0.2922)	0.2209 (0.2671)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 0.1232 (0.7894)	- 0.1770 (0.7728)	- 0.1174 (0.8045)	- 0.0327 (0.7892)	- 0.1253 (0.8126)	- 0.1618 (0.7682)
Partisanship	0.2566 (0.6020)	0.1671 (0.5854)	0.2618 (0.6020)	0.3304 (0.6092)	0.2539 (0.6202)	0.4863 (0.5873)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 0.2533 (0.6904)	- 0.3279 (0.6747)	- 0.2559 (0.6958)	- 0.3358 (0.7181)	- 0.4228 (0.7211)	- 0.4348 (0.6730)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.1609 (0.4674)	- 0.2171 (0.4584)	- 0.0763 (0.4720)	- 0.1174 (0.4809)	- 0.0329 (0.4796)	- 0.0905 (0.4562)
Committee Chair	1.1749** (0.4725)	1.2272** (0.4613)	1.1425** (0.4903)	1.4800*** (0.5171)	1.5637*** (0.5257)	1.4823*** (0.4867)
Subcommittee Chair	0.1150 (0.3048)	0.1944 (0.3009)	0.0718 (0.3270)	0.0419 (0.3137)	0.1662 (0.3333)	0.0161 (0.2980)
Distance from Median	- 0.6231 (0.8965)	- 0.5524 (0.8588)	- 0.6154 (0.8912)	- 0.2712 (0.9726)	- 0.2633 (0.9127)	- 0.0458 (0.9155)
Female	- 0.0146 (0.2626)	- 0.0764 (0.2591)	- 0.0808 (0.2710)	- 0.1652 (0.2881)	- 0.1968 (0.2936)	- 0.1140 (0.2651)
African-American	0.3449 (0.3406)	0.3467 (0.3323)	0.3314 (0.3401)	0.1818 (0.3509)	0.1172 (0.3816)	0.1675 (0.3430)
Vote Share	- 0.0064 (0.0095)	- 0.0059 (0.0093)	- 0.0048 (0.0097)	- 0.0006 (0.0103)	0.0025 (0.0112)	0.0015 (0.0099)
Constant	0.3092 (0.8568)	- 0.0027 (0.8050)	0.4148 (0.8477)	- 0.1768 (0.9473)	- 0.5383 (0.9088)	- 0.6337 (0.8718)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2142	0.2469	0.2252	0.2577	0.2608	0.2703
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.9. Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Passed the House, as a Percentage of All Substantive and Significant Bills that Passed the House for the Entire Chamber, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.2179 (0.1858)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.3211* (0.1914)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.2472 (0.2589)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0231 (0.2158)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2602 (0.2199)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.3560** (0.1741)
Seniority	0.0998*** (0.0319)	0.0949*** (0.0316)	0.0961*** (0.0320)	0.0746** (0.0348)	0.0744** (0.0339)	0.0638* (0.0335)
State Legislative Experience	0.2224 (0.2664)	0.2665 (0.2651)	0.1912 (0.2724)	0.2419 (0.2648)	0.2214 (0.2805)	0.2700 (0.2564)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	- 0.2773 (0.7707)	- 0.2977 (0.7631)	- 0.2114 (0.7882)	- 0.1343 (0.7645)	- 0.2343 (0.7800)	- 0.2805 (0.7375)
Partisanship	0.2494 (0.5878)	0.2387 (0.5781)	0.3118 (0.5897)	0.4630 (0.5901)	0.2769 (0.5953)	0.6003 (0.5639)
Majority-Party Leadership	- 0.3294 (0.6741)	- 0.4294 (0.6662)	- 0.3506 (0.6817)	- 0.5346 (0.6956)	- 0.5360 (0.6922)	- 0.5633 (0.6461)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.1757 (0.4564)	- 0.2324 (0.4526)	- 0.0896 (0.4624)	- 0.0641 (0.4658)	- 0.0283 (0.4603)	- 0.0947 (0.4380)
Committee Chair	1.1860** (0.4614)	1.1948** (0.4555)	1.1425** (0.4803)	1.5411*** (0.5009)	1.6034*** (0.5046)	1.5175*** (0.4672)
Subcommittee Chair	0.0659 (0.2976)	0.1118 (0.2971)	0.0147 (0.3204)	- 0.0457 (0.3038)	0.1243 (0.3200)	- 0.0772 (0.2861)
Distance from Median	- 0.9052 (0.8753)	- 0.7200 (0.8480)	- 0.7630 (0.8731)	- 0.2472 (0.9420)	- 0.4233 (0.8761)	- 0.0690 (0.8789)
Female	0.0243 (0.2564)	- 0.0346 (0.2558)	- 0.0623 (0.2655)	- 0.2025 (0.2790)	- 0.1810 (0.2818)	- 0.0942 (0.2545)
African-American	0.3975 (0.3326)	0.3797 (0.3282)	0.3689 (0.3332)	0.1917 (0.3399)	0.1175 (0.3662)	0.1731 (0.3293)
Vote Share	- 0.0047 (0.0093)	- 0.0038 (0.0092)	- 0.0030 (0.0095)	0.0031 (0.0100)	0.0059 (0.0107)	0.0047 (0.0095)
Constant	0.3635 (0.8365)	- 0.0880 (0.7950)	0.3032 (0.8305)	- 0.5142 (0.9176)	- 0.7302 (0.8723)	- 0.9192 (0.8369)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2837	0.2979	0.2839	0.3245	0.3394	0.3524
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

Table 6.10. Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Became Law, as a Percentage of All Substantive and Significant Bills that Became Law for the Entire Chamber, as Dependent Variable. *(Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01)*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0.0215 (0.3452)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.4069 (0.3559)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.7850 (0.4761)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.2497 (0.4043)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.2745 (0.4221)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.3516 (0.3290)
Seniority	0.1583*** (0.0592)	0.1543** (0.0587)	0.1559** (0.0589)	0.1494** (0.0652)	0.1224* (0.0652)	0.1326** (0.0633)
State Legislative Experience	0.1606 (0.4950)	0.2168 (0.4929)	0.1992 (0.5009)	0.1944 (0.4960)	0.2862 (0.5384)	0.1844 (0.4845)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism	0.6914 (1.4320)	0.5977 (1.4188)	0.3565 (1.4496)	0.5698 (1.4320)	0.4731 (1.4970)	0.4791 (1.3935)
Partisanship	- 0.0239 (1.0920)	- 0.2056 (1.0749)	- 0.1121 (1.0847)	- 0.1535 (1.1053)	0.1058 (1.1425)	0.0600 (1.0653)
Majority-Party Leadership	0.0800 (1.2525)	0.0311 (1.2387)	0.0596 (1.2538)	- 0.0248 (1.3029)	- 0.2274 (1.3285)	- 0.1697 (1.2206)
Minority-Party Leadership	- 0.2353 (0.8480)	- 0.2932 (0.8416)	- 0.0798 (0.8505)	- 0.2834 (0.8726)	- 0.0786 (0.8835)	- 0.1495 (0.8275)
Committee Chair	3.3556*** (0.8572)	3.4588*** (0.8469)	3.1664*** (0.8835)	3.7089*** (0.9383)	3.9826*** (0.9684)	3.8475*** (0.8828)
Subcommittee Chair	0.2844 (0.5529)	0.4047 (0.5525)	0.1148 (0.5893)	0.1904 (0.5691)	0.2222 (0.6141)	0.2250 (0.5406)
Distance from Median	- 1.2581 (1.6263)	- 1.3135 (1.5768)	- 1.6958 (1.6059)	- 1.4734 (1.7646)	- 0.6820 (1.6815)	- 0.9883 (1.6606)
Female	- 0.0161 (0.4763)	- 0.0837 (0.4757)	- 0.0199 (0.4884)	- 0.0913 (0.5227)	- 0.2749 (0.5409)	- 0.1328 (0.4809)
African-American	0.8732 (0.6180)	0.8973 (0.6102)	0.8615 (0.6129)	0.6804 (0.6367)	0.5762 (0.7029)	0.6666 (0.6221)
Vote Share	- 0.0248 (0.0173)	- 0.0246 (0.0171)	- 0.0197 (0.0175)	- 0.0150 (0.0187)	- 0.0121 (0.0206)	- 0.0117 (0.0180)
Constant	1.2781 (1.5543)	1.1105 (1.4781)	1.9802 (1.5275)	1.0687 (1.7187)	0.1139 (1.6742)	0.3008 (1.5812)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.2957	0.3086	0.3199	0.3444	0.3285	0.3510
N	84	84	82	80	76	82

introduced 0.31% of the chamber's important legislation that makes it beyond the committee.[159] Offices with informative records see an average of a 0.32-point increase in the percent of the House's significant legislation that passes the chamber that they are responsible for. To again provide some perspective on the size of this effect, the average Representative surveyed accounted for only 0.34% of the chamber's substantively significant bills that passed the House.[160]

Offices that choose to involve other staff in the processing of correspondence also contribute more to the House's output of significant legislation. An office that includes legislative staff in developing responses to constituent contacts see an average of a 0.36-point increase in the percent of substantive and significant legislation that passes the House that their Representative is responsible for. This 0.36-point increase is substantial, given that, as noted above, the average Representative only accounts for 0.34% of the House's total important legislation that advances this far.

Discussion and Conclusion

Drafting legislation and working to advance it through Congress are central responsibilities for Representatives. However, successful efforts to shepherd proposals through the legislative process are rare and Representatives' effectiveness as lawmakers varies significantly. Using their new systematic measure of legislative effectiveness, Volden and

[159] The largest individual Representative's contribution to the House's substantive and significant legislation receiving action beyond committee comes from Dave Camp (R, MI-4), who accounted for 6.4% of all important legislation receiving action beyond committee in the 112th Congress. Again, this maximum contribution reiterates the sizable effect that office record-keeping choices have on Representatives' contributions to House productivity on important legislation.

[160] The largest individual Representative's contribution to the House's substantive and significant legislation that passed the House comes from Eric Cantor (R, VA-7), who accounted for 8% of all important legislation that passed the House in the 112th Congress, again suggesting the relatively substantial impact that records with constituent position information can have on the productivity of the chamber as a whole.

Wiseman (2014) demonstrate that Representatives' accumulated skills and their institutional positions are powerful determinants of their abilities as lawmakers. The analyses in this chapter suggest that Representatives' decisions about how to treat constituent correspondence also contribute to their effectiveness in advancing their legislative agendas through Congress. Congressional offices that keep informative records about constituent contacts have more of their important legislative initiatives receive action in committee, and action beyond committee. Offices with such records also account for a greater proportion of the House's overall number of substantive and significant bills at later stages of the policymaking process. Sharing responsibility for correspondence with others in the office also enhances Representatives' effectiveness, particularly at later stages in the legislative process. Offices see more of their significant proposals receive action in committee, action beyond committee, and, ultimately, pass the House when they involve legislative staff in drafting responses to constituent contacts. And offices with these practices are responsible for more of the chamber's substantive and significant legislation as it progresses through Congress.

The impact of these correspondence system characteristics on Representatives' legislative success suggests that offices with these practices are utilizing correspondence as a means to help them advance their policy proposals. Correspondence can provide important insight into the practical implications of policy as well as the political consequences that would likely follow policy action. By maintaining detailed records and involving other staff in the process, Representatives and their staffers are in a position to take advantage of the information that is conveyed through correspondence. They can use that information to strengthen the case for their proposals as they progress through Congress.

Indeed, the two particular attributes of correspondence systems that emerge as significant in the estimates are ideally suited to helping the office use information gained from correspondence in just this way. Records that include constituent policy preferences allow an office to gauge the direction and intensity of constituent reactions and, therefore, the direction and intensity of potential political implications associated with a policy. By actively engaging with correspondence as they draft constituents' responses, legislative staffers can develop a better sense of constituent opinion than they would likely cultivate otherwise. As staffers who are central to the office's efforts to draft and promote legislation, this heightened awareness of public views that legislative staffers gain from correspondence can translate into more informed, and, ultimately, more effective lawmaking.[161]

These relationships between office correspondence systems and legislative effectiveness are only evident for Representative's substantive and significant legislation; the advancement of bills classified by Volden and Wiseman (2014) as substantive or commemorative is not related to how offices choose to keep records or share information about correspondence. Given the public's limited political awareness, it is unlikely that the lower profile policy issues captured in these two categories would attract much attention or generate much correspondence from constituents (Zaller 1992).[162] As a result, correspondence and, in turn, office treatment of correspondence will have little bearing on how the congressional office proceeds on these issues. Correspondence and correspondence system attributes will be more important on the topics that

[161] Even though assigning correspondence responsibilities to legislative staff may be seen as detracting from their legislative duties, the activity is likely useful for the office as it corresponds with more of their important policy ideas moving further in the legislative process.

[162] It is possible that commemorative issues might inspire some correspondence to Congress, from individuals seeking relief or assistance. Such requests would likely be treated as casework, which is handled separately from issue-related correspondence.

are likely to preoccupy constituents and inspire contacts to Congress – the substantive and significant issues.

The chapter has demonstrated that Representatives who have established more inclusive correspondence systems are able to use correspondence and the information that it provides to help them be more effective lawmakers on significant policy issues. Offices that include constituent position information in their records, and that involve other staff in developing responses to constituents see more of their important legislation move through Congress. This result suggests that offices may be harming the chances that their legislative initiatives will advance if they exclude valuable information from their records, or if they centralize response-drafting responsibilities in the office. It is not uncommon for congressional offices to adopt systems with these traits; recall from Chapter 2 that 35.5% of congressional offices surveyed do not record constituent position information and 47% of offices do not have legislative staff drafting responses. In these offices, Representatives may be at a disadvantage when working to pass their legislative agendas.

CHAPTER VII

CORRESPONDENCE AND CONSTITUENT INFLUENCE IN CONGRESS

A representation must be extremely imperfect where the representatives are not circumstanced to make the proper communications to their constituents, and where the constituents in turn can not, with tolerable convenience make known their wants, circumstances and opinions, to their representatives.

- Federal Farmer, Letter VII, December 1787

Though an extensive literature in political science has considered the responsiveness of Representatives to constituent interests, there has been little attention directed to how responsiveness can actually be achieved. This dissertation has explored how Representatives obtain the information about constituent opinion that makes responsiveness possible. In order for Representatives to react to constituent opinion, they need to be informed about what that opinion looks like. In fact, the effective representation of constituent interests depends on the ability of Representatives and their congressional staffs to know what policy actions their constituents prefer.

Representatives develop "estimate[s] of the sentiment of the constituency…from the flow of communications from constituency to legislator,"; constituent correspondence plays an integral role in informing these estimates (Key 1964, 421). In their letters, emails, phone calls, faxes and contacts through Facebook and Twitter, constituents can convey their policy preferences and issue priorities to their Representatives. This information can prove valuable for Representatives and their staffers as they seek to understand the districts that they serve. However, the potential of correspondence as an information resource depends largely on the correspondence management systems that offices adopt. Choices about how records of constituent contacts will be kept and how information from constituent contacts will be shared

determine the ability of congressional offices to translate correspondence into useful information that can be used to guide legislative decision-making.

This project introduces the first systematic data about these crucial organizational choices made by congressional offices. Surveys and interviews with 107 House offices reveal substantial variation in the way that congressional offices treat constituent correspondence. Not all offices record every contact that they receive from their constituents, with many offices choosing to exclude phone calls, faxes, or social media contacts from their correspondence databases. The level of detail contained in each contact record varies, with many offices omitting information about constituents' policy positions. For most offices, the substantial knowledge about constituent opinion that is contained in the correspondence database is not conveyed to other staff in the office. Though the large majority of offices circulate regular mail reports that provide an overview of recent correspondence trends, not all offices share their mail reports with the relevant staffers who develop legislative strategy for the Congressman. Additionally, the mail reports assembled in most offices provide only a partial picture of what incoming correspondence looks like, listing only the top issues that constituents wrote in about most frequently.

Efforts to explain the various approaches that congressional offices take to managing constituent contacts, presented in Chapter 3, provide a relatively limited understanding of why offices establish the systems that they do. Office decisions about the content of correspondence records and about whether responsibility for correspondence should be shared with others in the office can be explained, at least in part, by Representatives' electoral conditions, by their approaches toward constituency relations, and by characteristics of the districts that they serve. However, models seeking to explain office mail report practices reveal largely null findings,

indicating the difficulty in predicting the information-sharing practices that congressional offices will adopt. Even as the analyses in Chapter 3 fail to provide a full explanation for many aspects of office correspondence practices, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 move on to the important task of assessing what these different approaches to constituent correspondence mean for Representatives' work in Congress.

Office treatment of constituent correspondence is likely to impact a Representative's capacity to act "in the interest of the represented" (Pitkin 1967, 209). Comprehensive records and informative mail reports should facilitate congressional office learning, positioning the office to learn about and respond to constituent views. However, by omitting certain types of contacts from their records or limiting the information shared through mail reports, many congressional offices fail to take advantage of the valuable information that constituent correspondence can provide. As a result, these offices may not be able to understand and react to district opinion.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 explore these possibilities systematically, finding little evidence that office correspondence practices impact how accurately offices perceive constituent opinion or how closely Representatives' roll-call votes align with constituent preferences.[163] The lack of significant relationships in these analyses, particularly between policy responsiveness and correspondence system characteristics, is not entirely unsurprising. In their roll-call voting, Representatives are relatively constrained by the need to cast an up-or-down vote and by various, and at times conflicting, influences on their decisions (Kingdon 1989). However, in looking at legislative behavior beyond roll-call votes – legislative behavior where Representatives have a good deal more leeway in deciding how to proceed – office treatment of correspondence is more influential. As analyses in Chapter 6 reveal, office choices about how to treat constituent contacts

[163] As noted in each chapter's discussion section, the limited set of policy issues considered in both Chapters 4 and 5 may not represent the ideal tests for the effects of correspondence system characteristics on perceptual accuracy or policy responsiveness.

relate to Representatives' legislative effectiveness. Representatives with informative mail reports and shared responsibility for correspondence tasks are likely to see more of their substantive and significant policy proposals advance further in the legislative process.

Congressional Learning: A Research Agenda

In focusing on the information-gathering processes inside congressional offices, this research has explored a crucial step in the process of representation that has largely been relegated into a black box. Drawing on original data from surveys and interviews with congressional staff, the results presented in this project offer new insight into how representation functions in the American political system. Indeed, the project has revealed a great deal about the efforts that congressional offices engage in to understand the districts that they serve and how these efforts impact the behavior that Representatives engage in. However, this study represents only a first step in a broader research agenda about representation and the role that learning plays in facilitating Representatives' responsiveness to constituents' interests. Several future directions for this research agenda are outlined here, each promising to further our understanding of members of Congress and their work as representatives.

Correspondence and Congressional Activity

Widening the search for the effects of correspondence management to other forms of congressional activity represents a promising next step in this research agenda. Existing scholarship has shown that constituent opinion influences Representatives' co-sponsorship of legislation (Highton and Rocca 2005, Rocca and Sanchez 2008), the content of their legislative agendas (Hayes, Hibbing and Sulkin 2010) and their participation in committee and subcommittee work (Hall 1996, Miler 2010). Indeed, this previous research that looks beyond

roll-call votes tends to support Hall's (1996) contention that "constituency influence…should operate…on the intensities that [legislators] reveal in their decisions about when and to what extent they will participate in particular matters before their chamber" (Hall 1996, 58).

Similar to the impact that effective correspondence systems may have on legislative productivity, as explored in Chapter 6, Representatives whose offices adopt more comprehensive and informative correspondence practices may be better suited to co-sponsor bills or assemble legislative portfolios that align well with constituent preferences and issue priorities. Additionally, they may be in a stronger position to advocate on behalf of constituent interests in their committee work. Congressional offices that use correspondence as a tool to develop their understanding of district attitudes may be better able to allocate their scarce legislative resources to advancing the congressional actions that their constituents most prefer. Explorations of these other forms of legislative activity are particularly worthwhile since the analyses in this project revealed that correspondence system characteristics are related to Representatives' legislative work, but not to their roll-call voting.

Office Reliance on Other Resources

This dissertation has focused exclusively on constituent correspondence as an informative resource for congressional offices seeking to understand district policy preferences. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are clear reasons to expect that correspondence should play a prominent role in congressional office learning, given that it is well suited to provide information about both the direction and the intensity of constituent opinion (Kingdon 1989). However, congressional offices may rely on additional sources of information to discern constituent attitudes. Indeed, in order to assess how congressional office learning affects Representatives and their behavior in

Congress, the wide range of resources beyond correspondence that offices can employ to determine constituent opinion also need to be considered.

Correspondence may still be central to office efforts to determine district preferences, but efforts to share information from constituent contacts in particular may be more informal. Representatives and staff may seek out information directly from Legislative Correspondents or others involved in sorting correspondence as it arrives in the office. When this more informal conversation happens, the opinions that constituents convey in their correspondence would still be shared and potentially used to inform office decision-making, even in the absence of more institutionalized information sharing through regular mail reports. Indeed, in interviews, several staffers indicated that this kind of inquiry from Representatives or other staff can be relatively commonplace in the office.[164]

Additionally, offices may conduct surveys or polls of constituents,[165] host town hall meetings in the district or hold telephone town hall meetings,[166] all in an effort to connect with constituents and solicit their policy opinions. Responses to the congressional staff survey indicate that many offices do utilize these other tools. Of offices that participated in the survey, 66% report that they conduct surveys or polls of district residents, 84% indicate that they employ town hall meetings, and 78% report that they host telephone town hall meetings. This widespread

[164] Though this practice is not uncommon, information from correspondence shared informally is not a substitute for more routinized information-sharing practices. It is likely that these informal inquiries are less frequent and more selective than institutionalized information sharing would be; these conversations would likely fail to convey the breadth of issues that constituents have been reaching out about.

[165] It is possible that polls conducted by members of Congress may not meet scientific standards; congressional offices may draft poor questions designed to produce certain results and may receive responses from a skewed sample of constituents. See Key (1964) for a discussion of these inadequacies in the early polling conducted by members of Congress.

[166] Telephone town halls operate essentially as large conference calls, where constituents join in on calls with their Representatives.

use of these other tools suggests that they may serve an important function in offices' overall efforts to understand constituent opinion.[167]

Information gained through these other sources, and through informal information sharing in offices, contributes to the perceptions of constituent attitudes and priorities that Representatives and staffers develop. An analysis that fully accounts for the impact of congressional office learning on legislative behavior should incorporate the extent to which offices rely on these other important information resources.

Correspondence Management in the Senate

This project has concentrated exclusively on how House offices treat constituent contacts; a similar exploration of correspondence management in the Senate would provide a significant contribution to this research. Due, in large part, to the greater staff resources available to Senate offices, correspondence management is expected to operate differently in the Senate. In contrast to House offices, Senate offices do not have a defined limit on the number of staff that can be hired.[168] [169] With the capacity to hire more staff and, potentially, commit more staff effort to correspondence, Senate offices may establish systems for processing constituent contacts that are systematically different from those observed in House offices.

[167] While a large proportion of offices are using these other resources, in many offices polls and town halls are used relatively infrequently. Of offices surveyed that report polling constituents, 12% conduct polls weekly, 23% on a monthly basis, 32% once a quarter, and 15% once a year. Of offices surveyed that report hosting in-person town hall meetings, 1% host town halls weekly, 18% on a monthly basis, 39% once a quarter, and 23% once a year. Of offices surveyed that report holding telephone town hall meetings, 1% hold such calls weekly, 21% on a monthly basis, 51% once a quarter, and 9% once a year.

[168] As noted in Chapter 2, Representatives can only use their Members' Representational Allowance to hire up to 18 permanent employees and up to four additional employees (part-time employees, temporary employees, shared employees or paid interns).

[169] As long as Senators stay within the bounds of their Official Personnel and Office Expense Account allotment, they can hire as many district and D.C. staff as they see fit. Senate office budgets are determined by state population size and distance between district and Washington, D.C.; in the 114th Congress, Senate budgets range from $2,984,433 to $4,722,299 (Brudnick 2014).

In fact, in several interviews, House staffers drew distinctions between their own correspondence responsibilities and those of their counterparts in Senate offices. As discussed in Chapter 2, House staffers indicate that Senate offices tend to employ multiple Legislative Correspondents, each of whom handles correspondence for a specific subset of issues to which they are assigned. With these set portfolios that they are responsible for, Senate Legislative Correspondents are able to specialize and develop expertise on certain issues, presumably helping them in their work researching and drafting responses. In contrast, House offices typically have limited staff resources to dedicate to correspondence. As a result, Legislative Correspondents in the House are unable to specialize in particular issues, requiring them to be generalists who need to be able to research and draft responses about anything that comes up in correspondence.[170] These brief descriptions provided by House staffers reiterate the value in extending the present study to the Senate. There are cross-chamber differences to explore, and these differences have implications for the quality of learning that takes place in the House and Senate.

Social Media in Congress

As members of Congress have become active users of popular social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, a limited body of political science research has begun to explore how Representatives and Senators use these sites. Data from the congressional staff survey can contribute to this burgeoning literature, introducing new evidence about social media use in Congress that reinforces some earlier findings.

As indicated in Chapter 2, contacts from constituents sent through social media are, for the most part, excluded from office contact databases; only 10 offices surveyed enter Facebook

[170] This is especially true in congressional offices that have centralized responsibility for developing responses with the Legislative Correspondent, excluding legislative staff from response drafting duties.

messages into their records, and only 6 offices surveyed log tweets in the office database. Though constituents can (and do) use social media to communicate their policy preferences to their Representatives, the large majority of offices are not treating these contacts as they would other correspondence (Rainie and Smith 2012). This failure of congressional offices to recognize social media contacts as correspondence tends to align with findings about how members of Congress typically engage with social media.

Scholars argue that the fundamental appeal of social media for members of Congress lies in its potential as a way for Representatives to promote themselves directly to their constituents, allowing them to control their message more effectively (Straus, Glassman, Shogan and Smelcer 2013). Seen primarily as a tool for self-promotion, any additional functions that social media may offer – as a resource for understanding constituent opinion, for example – are secondary to its utility as "an extension of existing outreach efforts" (Straus, Glassman, Shogan and Smelcer 2013, 64). Assessments of the content of tweets sent by Representatives and Senators corroborate this finding that social media is a "rather static push tactic" that Representatives use to promote themselves (Mergel 2012, 113). These content analyses of members' social media activity consistently find that "Twitter largely facilitates a one-way transmission of information from Members to the public" where members of Congress "communicate the same type of information their offices would share in other media" (Glassman, Straus and Shogan 2010, 12; Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers 2010, 1612; see also Williams and Gulati 2010, Mergel 2012, Hemphill, Otterbacher and Shapiro 2013). These studies also suggest that "in general, [Members of Congress] do not engage in an interactive dialogue over issues on Twitter" (Straus, Williams,

Shogan and Glassman 2014, 4; see also Mergel 2012, Hemphill, Otterbacher and Shapiro 2013).[171]

As Representatives' engagement with social media is typically directed toward raising their own profile, the lack of attention to social media contacts as a potentially valuable information source for congressional offices or as a way to start a dialogue with constituents is rather unsurprising. Perhaps social media will gain acceptance as an informative form of correspondence as Representatives' views of social media evolve. However, it is important to note that the acceptance of social media as a tool for learning about constituent opinion faces obstacles beyond Representatives' focus on the sites as forums for self-promotion.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the inability to accurately identify social media contactors as constituents poses a substantial problem, since neither Facebook nor Twitter require users to share their full addresses. Additionally, offices that already feel short-staffed and overburdened may lack the time or resources necessary to treat social media contacts as they would traditional correspondence. If correspondence management software can be adapted to automate the processing of Facebook posts and tweets, it may help alleviate the burden that treating social media contacts as correspondence would cause.[172] However, until Representatives' views shift, technology improves, and social media platforms provide the address verification information that congressional offices need, social media contacts are likely to remain peripheral in congressional correspondence management systems.

[171] In contrast, Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers (2010) contend that "there is also a significant amount of direct communication taking place between Congresspeople and users who send them questions or comments" (1612). However, their data classifying the content of tweets shows that only 7% of the more than 6,000 tweets they analyzed were direct communications with individuals outside Congress, suggesting that there is actually relatively little interaction occurring on Twitter.

[172] Such advances in correspondence software are being developed; see Chapter 2, footnote 50, page 42 for more information.

Given that the current status quo for the treatment of social media in Congress is unlikely to change, future research should explore the implications of the systematic exclusion of social media contacts from congressional correspondence systems. The demographics of social media users are a relevant starting point for understanding these implications; the people who rely on social media to reach out to politicians may be demographically different from those contactors using more traditional forms of correspondence. Young people, especially those between 18-29, are more likely than other age groups to utilize social media in the first place, and they are more likely to see the political value in using social media (Rainie and Smith 2012). Young people are also more likely than other age groups to use social media to engage in civic activities such as posting their thoughts about a political issue, sharing links to political stories and following elected officials on Facebook or Twitter (Rainie and Smith 2012).

The demographic trend highlighted by Rainie and Smith (2012) suggests that contacts to Congress that come through social media outlets should be expected to come, disproportionately, from younger generations. If offices are not incorporating these contacts into their correspondence management systems, it could mean that opinions of young contactors are not being accounted for adequately and, as a result, offices could develop incomplete or inaccurate perceptions of what constituent opinion looks like.

Interest Groups and Congressional Correspondence

As outlined in Chapter 1, much of the foundation for our understanding of correspondence in Congress comes from anecdotal evidence presented in studies about interest groups and the grassroots campaigns that they coordinate. As a result, it is worth placing the results of the current study in the context of the earlier interest group-centered research. The consensus view found in many of these previous studies is that "communications inspired by

organizations usually betray their origins and that elected officials ignore or discount constituent communications bearing the scent of having been orchestrated" (Schlozman and Tierney 1986, 195). Do findings from the congressional staff survey corroborate these claims?

On the one hand, interviews with congressional staffers confirm that correspondence generated as part of an interest group campaign is easily detected. Hill staffers are "really savvy at determining when it's grassroots or when it's unique" (interview with congressional staffer, August 2012). Staffers noted that the professional language found in interest group campaigns stands in stark contrast to the language people use when they personally draft correspondence; interest groups often use phrases like "reported out of committee" or other legislative jargon that average contactors would not likely be familiar with. Additionally, correspondence management software enables offices to sort incoming contacts by the percentage of shared text, allowing interest group contacts to be quickly identified.

On the other hand, while congressional staffers can easily recognize such campaigns, these interest group grassroots initiatives are not ignored or discounted. Instead, the practices that many congressional offices adopt to share information about correspondence tend to enhance the visibility of interest group campaigns in Congress. By listing the top issues based on the volume of contacts that each issue generates, mail reports in most congressional offices are likely to place emphasis on issues that have been the focus of large-scale interest group campaigns. Contrary to political science conventional wisdom, mail reports in many congressional offices tend to reward successful interest group initiatives with a prominent place in their summary of the office's recently received correspondence.

Congressional offices also value interest group inspired correspondence more highly than political science conventional wisdom suggests. Though many staffers do express frustration

with campaign contacts and the additional workload that they create, several staffers indicate that they appreciate the information that such contacts can provide. This fundamental tension in office views of interest group campaigns comes through clearly in an exchange from an interview: a Legislative Correspondent remarked that she'd "love it if campaigns disappeared"; her Chief of Staff chimed in from the other room with "I wouldn't!," explaining that the campaigns allow the office to capture a lot of data about district residents.[173]

Additionally, several staffers noted that the formulaic nature of interest group campaigns makes it easier to process correspondence. In contrast to most personally composed correspondence that tends to be vague or address multiple separate policy issues, interest group campaigns are "very focused" and present "clear, specific information"; this clarity "makes turning around responses easy".[174]

These findings from the current study clarify our understanding of how congressional offices perceive the correspondence that interest groups inspire. Taken together, conclusions drawn from interviews with congressional staff stand in contrast to previous claims that such campaign correspondence is ignored. Instead, the congressional staff survey results suggest that interest group generated contacts are given significant attention on the mail reports in many offices and are valued by many staffers as sources of information about constituents and their policy preferences.

Further work on interest group grassroots efforts in Congress is needed, particularly since staffers estimate that interest group campaigns are responsible for a significant majority of the correspondence that offices receive.[175] Some research suggests conditions when interest groups

[173] Interview with congressional staffer, March 2014.
[174] Interviews with congressional staff, May 2014.
[175] In the exploratory interviews conducted in summer 2012, congressional staffers were asked to estimate what proportion of the correspondence that they receive is part of an interest group campaign. Of the 23 offices that gave

may be expected to tap into the grassroots, indicating that grassroots campaigns are more likely to be used: (1) by interest groups that are challenging the policy status quo (Baumgartner et al 2009), (2) when a policy issue is salient (Kollman 1998), (3) when a policy position the group is taking is popular (Kollman 1998), and (4) when a legislator is undecided (Goldstein 1998). There are other factors that likely contribute to groups' decisions to engage in outside lobbying that were not considered in these previous studies (i.e. the size and geographical distribution of their membership base, the ease with which they can connect with their membership, etc.). Given that interest groups generate much of the correspondence that offices handle, research that fully accounts for interest groups' decisions to pursue grassroots mobilization strategies in their lobbying efforts would contribute substantially both to the study of interest groups and to the study of Congress. Such work exploring this prominent source of congressional correspondence would be an important complement to the current research on correspondence management in Congress.

Correspondence Management in Congress: Implications for Constituents and Representatives

As V.O. Key (1964) notes, "the notion of the letter or the telegram to Congressmen as a way of influencing governmental action has found fairly wide acceptance within the American population" (418). However, the variation in office treatment of constituent contacts identified in this project suggests that correspondence may be influential for the decisions made in some offices, but not in others. The potential for meaningful influence depends largely on how offices choose to handle constituent correspondence. For Congressmen to effectively represent their

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estimates, only two indicated that less than 50% of the correspondence came as a result of interest group grassroots efforts. The remaining 21 offices all suggested that a "large majority" of their correspondence was part of a coordinated campaign, with 13 stating that more than 70% of their mail was coming to them as a result of interest group efforts.

districts' interests, they need to establish practices that enable their congressional staff to discern constituent opinion on legislative issues. The observed variation in office approaches to handling contacts from the district indicates that not all offices adopt systems that position them to understand district views, revealing potential limitations to Representatives' ability to recognize and respond to the policy preferences of their districts.

The findings in this project also suggest that there may be limits to the kinds of "governmental action" that constituents can expect to influence through their correspondence (Key 1964, 418). As analyses in this project have demonstrated, the routines that offices adopt to process and gather information from constituent correspondence do not relate to Representatives' policy responsiveness in floor votes, but they are related to Representatives' abilities to advance important legislative initiatives through Congress. With numerous other actors vying to influence Representatives' decisions on the House floor, constituent opinion – as communicated through their letters, emails, phone calls, faxes or social media contacts – may be a relatively less important factor in Representatives' roll-call voting. The decisions that Representatives make about their legislative activities may present a greater opportunity for constituent correspondence to influence the Representatives' behavior.

The results of this project also have important implications for constituents' ability to connect with their elected officials. Without knowing the policies that govern correspondence management for their own congressional office, constituents may have limited ability to communicate effectively with their Congressmen. If a contactor calls an office that doesn't log phone calls into their contact database, then their message will not become part of the office's record and, as a result, is unlikely to impact legislative decisions made in the office. Even when a constituent chooses an appropriate form of communication that her Representative's office

will record, differences in how offices share information from correspondence imply that a contact may be listed on a mail report and become part of the office dialogue in some offices, yet not others. These differences mean that "constituents' experience[s] in one district might be very different from constituents' experience[s] in another district."[176] As a result, constituents in some districts are likely subject to the "imperfect" representation that anti-Federalist advocate Federal Farmer warned about, "where the constituents…can not, with tolerable convenience make known their wants, circumstances and opinions, to their representatives" (Letter VII, 1787).

[176] Interview with congressional staff, March 2014.

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Appendix A. *Congressional Staff Survey Instrument.*

Section 1. Correspondence Management System.
I'd like to start out by asking you several questions that focus on the volume of contacts your office receives and how these contacts are processed.

1. Including in-person visits, emails, letters, phone calls or faxes, about how many contacts from the constituency does the office receive in an average week while Congress is in session?

_____

How about during a quiet, low-volume week? _____
How about during a busy, high-volume week? _____

2. In an average week, how many different issues are you likely to hear about in contacts from constituents? _____

3. In an average week, what percentage of contacts the office receives are:
_____ In-person visits?
_____ Emails?
_____ Letters?
_____ Phone calls?
_____ Faxes?

4. Now think about the correspondence your office receives over the course of a congressional session. Can you estimate roughly what percentage of overall contacts are generated by organized interests?

_____

Please briefly describe how you came to this estimate (i.e. what information did you rely on).
_____
_____
_____

5. What software system does your office use to manage constituent communications?
- ○ Intranet Quorum (IQ)
- ○ iConstituent
- ○ Fireside 21
- ○ Other _____

6. What forms of communication are included in your office's contact management system? *Check all that apply.*

- ○ in-person contacts with the Washington office
- ○ in-person contacts with the district office
- ○ in-person contacts at district events (town hall meetings, etc.)
- ○ phone calls
- ○ personalized letters
- ○ personalized emails
- ○ personalized faxes
- ○ form letters
- ○ form emails
- ○ form faxes
- ○ form postcards
- ○ messages from Facebook
- ○ messages from Twitter
- ○ Other _____

7. Do you include communications that come from outside the district in your office's contact management system?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

8. Do you forward out-of-district contacts to the correct congressional office?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

9. What information is recorded for each contact that the office receives? *Check all that apply.*

- ○ Contactor's name
- ○ Contactor's address
- ○ Contactor's email
- ○ Contactor's phone number
- ○ Contactor's history of interactions with the office
- ○ Information to identify the response the contactor should receive from the office
- ○ General issue area the contact deals with
- ○ Position the constituent takes on the issue
- ○ Details of the message contact; please specify: _____

10. Does the contact record include a note about the form of communication (in-person visit, phone call, letter, email, or fax)?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

11. Is there any note made in your records to identify a contact as unique or high quality?
- Yes
- No

12. Is there any other information recorded with the contacts that the office receives?
- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify what other information is recorded with the contacts that your office receives.
_____

13. Does your office have any process in place to summarize and report on the content of correspondence to others in the office (i.e. mail report, mail briefing)?
- Yes
- No

If no, proceed to question 17.

14. If yes, how frequently are these correspondence briefings circulated?
- Weekly
- Bi-Weekly
- Monthly
- As needed
- At another interval: _____

If your office circulates briefings "as needed", under what conditions are you likely to compile and circulate a briefing? _____

15. Please describe the information that appears on these correspondence briefings. Be as specific as possible here.
_____
_____
_____

16. Is there any way individual contacts are included in these briefings? (Are there excerpts and/or copies of letters or emails circulated with the briefing?)
- Yes
- No

If yes, what criteria do you use to select the specific contacts to include?
_____

17. In your office, which staff members are involved in the following constituent mail tasks? *Check all that apply.*

	Member of Congress	CoS	D. CoS	LD	Communications Director	LA	LC	Sys Admin	Staff Asst	Intern	Don't Know/Does not apply
Sorting/batching incoming mail											
Choosing text from letter library											
Reviewing/editing responses from letter library											
Approving responses from letter library											
Researching new responses											
Drafting new responses											
Reviewing/editing new responses											
Approving new responses											
Sending outgoing correspondence											
Producing mail reports											
Reviewing/Reading final mail reports											

Thinking about all of the information you receive and process each day (constituent mail, email, phone calls, news, issue information, official announcements, etc.), please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

18. My office has sufficient resources to manage our constituent communications.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly agree

19. I can effectively manage all of the information I receive.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly agree

20. I receive more information in a day than I can adequately process.

Strongly disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly agree

Section 2. Constituent Contacts and Legislative Decision-making.

21. In your experience, how often does your Representative seek information about constituency contacts before casting a roll call vote or before making other important policy decisions?

- ○ Frequently
- ○ Occasionally
- ○ Rarely
- ○ Never

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

	A Lot of Influence	Some Influence	No Influence at All
Individualized postal letters			
Individualized email messages			
Individualized faxes			
Postcards			
Form postal letters			
Form email messages			
Form faxes			
Phone calls			
In-person issue visits from constituents			
Visit from a lobbyist			
Comments during a telephone town hall meeting			
Contact from a person who represents many constituents (e.g. organization leader, elected official, large business owner)			
News editorial endorsement of an issue			
Comments of social media sites (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blog. etc.)			

*In interviews, this question was open-ended:" If your Representative has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, what forms of communication from constituents (i.e. individualized letters, form emails, etc.) are likely to have **a lot of influence** on his/her decision? What forms of communication are likely to have **some influence**? What forms of communication are likely to have **no influence at all**?"*

Section 3. Office Response Practices.

23. Please estimate the average turnaround time (from receipt to sending response) in your office for:

	Less than 1 week	1-3 weeks	3-6 weeks	6-9 weeks	More than 9 weeks
Existing form text responses to postal letters					
Existing form text responses to email messages					
New text responses to postal letters					
New text responses to email messages					

24. In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge your office faces in getting responses out more quickly?

- ○ The amount of mail we need to respond to
- ○ Sorting, batching and assigning mail
- ○ Technical limitations of our software
- ○ The review and approval process
- ○ Ensuring consistency with the legislative record
- ○ Trying to reply substantively to each response
- ○ Other _____

In interviews, this same question was open-ended.

25. What is your office's preferred format to use in responding to constituent contacts?

- ○ Phone calls
- ○ Postal mail
- ○ Email
- ○ Faxes

26. In thinking about the content of responses your office sends to constituents, what kind of information is included in the typical response? *Check all that apply.*

- ○ a statement thanking the constituent for sharing their opinion
- ○ a statement of the Representative's position on the issue of interest
- ○ a summary of past actions the Representative has taken in the issue area of interest (e.g. roll call votes, bill sponsorships, etc.)
- ○ the status of the issue of interest in this legislative session
- ○ other: _____

27. Approximately how often does your office send updates to constituents based on their demographics or issues of interest (e.g. an update on healthcare to constituents who have written about healthcare or an update to seniors on issues that pertain to them)?

- ○ Weekly
- ○ Monthly
- ○ Quarterly
- ○ Annually
- ○ Never

28. Would you be willing to share the text of responses that your office has sent out about a recent policy issue?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Section 4. Other Tools Useful for Determining Constituent Opinion.
There are many other tools beyond correspondence from the district that can indicate where district opinion stands. I'd like to ask about whether you employ some of these other tools.

29. Does your office maintain a Facebook page?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

30. Does your office maintain a Twitter account?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

31. If yes to 29 and/or 30, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Social media provides a good sense of constituent views on certain issues.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

This question was not included in interviews.

32. Does your office conduct surveys or polls of constituents?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

If yes, how frequently?

_____

33. Does your office host in-person town hall meetings?
- o Yes
- o No

If yes, how frequently?

_____

34. Does your office host telephone town hall meetings?
- o Yes
- o No

If yes, how frequently?

_____

35. Does your office host online town hall meetings?
- o Yes
- o No

If yes, how frequently?

_____

36. If your office does conduct town halls in any of these formats, describe any protocols you may use to summarize these town hall meetings (e.g. attendance records, memos about issues that came up, etc.).

_____

_____

37. In your opinion, how important are the following for gauging the direction of the opinions held by constituents in your district? *Direction of opinion refers to whether constituents favor or oppose a given policy.*

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not all Important	Does not apply
Facebook				
Paper surveys/polls				
Telephone town hall meetings				
Twitter				
District/state office hours				
Members' blog				
Personalized messages from constituents (email, mail, faxes, phone calls)				
Online surveys/polls				
In person town hall meetings				
Identical form communications from constituents				
YouTube				
Attending events in the district/state				
Online town hall meetings				

*In interviews, this question was open-ended: "In your opinion, what forms of communication are **very important** for gauging the direction of the opinions held by constituents in your district? What forms of communication are **somewhat important**? What forms of communication are **not at all important**?*

38. In your opinion, how important are the following for gauging the intensity of the opinions held by constituents in your district? *Intensity refers to how strongly constituents feel about a given policy.*

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not all Important	Does not apply
Facebook				
Paper surveys/polls				
Telephone town hall meetings				
Twitter				
District/state office hours				
Members' blog				
Personalized messages from constituents (email, mail, faxes, phone calls)				
Online surveys/polls				
In person town hall meetings				
Identical form communications from constituents				
YouTube				
Attending events in the district/state				
Online town hall meetings				

*In interviews, this question was open-ended: "In your opinion, what forms of communication are **very important** for gauging the intensity of the opinions held by constituents in your district? What forms of communication are **somewhat important**? What forms of communication are **not at all important**?*

Section 5. Constituent Correspondence on Particular Issues.

39. I'd like to get your sense of what issues your district cares about. In your opinion, what are the top three most important political issues to residents of your district?
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now, I'd like to focus on a few specific issues and what your office heard about from constituents on these issues. These issues are all high-profile and have been on the legislative agenda recently, so you should not have any difficulty recalling this information. You can feel free to reference past records of constituent correspondence to help you answer these questions if it would be useful

Keystone XL pipeline

40. Please provide your best estimate of the percentage of constituents in your district who would support *the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline*.

The proposed Keystone XL Pipeline route extends from Montana to Texas. Legislation that has been introduced to advance the pipeline construction has also provided for environmental protection and government oversight of the project.

_____ % of district support for *approval of the Keystone XL pipeline*

Gun Control

41. Several gun control proposals have been discussed during this legislative session. Please provide your best estimate of the percentage of constituents in your district who would support passage of stricter federal regulations of firearms and ammunition.

These proposals have included the institution of universal background checks, the imposition of harsher penalties for gun trafficking and a reinstatement of the Assault Weapons Ban.

_____ % of district support of *stricter gun control laws*

2013 House Farm Bill Proposal

42. Please provide your best estimate of the percentage of constituents in your district who would support the most recent House version of the 2013 Farm Bill.

The current farm bill proposals in the House and Senate shape the direction of agricultural policy for the next 5 years and include restructuring of farm commodity supports and expansion of federal crop insurance program coverage. The current House proposal does not include a nutrition title, the section of the legislation that would address the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), making it the first farm bill to exclude food stamps since the 1970s.

_____ % of district support for *the 2013 farm bill proposal*

Ryan Budget Proposal

43. Please provide your best estimate of the percentage of constituents in your district who would support *the Ryan budget proposal*.

House budget plan first introduced by Paul Ryan (R-WI) in 2011. The budget plan would cut Medicare and Medicaid by 42% and would reduce the debt by 16% by 2020.

_____ % of district in support of *the Ryan budget proposal*

Section 6. Staffer Demographics

I'd like to end with a few questions about you and your service in Congress. This information is used only to identify offices that have participated in order to keep a record of offices that have already completed the survey. After you complete the survey, your name and your Representative's name will be replaced with identification numbers and then removed from the system. Neither your name nor the name of the Representative you work for will be released in publications resulting from this research.

1. Name

_____

2. Job Title

_____

3. Representative _____

4. How long have you worked in your current office?

_____

5. Please describe any training you had before assuming responsibilities for managing constituent correspondence in your office. Include any training within your office as well as House-wide training sessions or training coordinated by outside organizations.

_____
_____

6. Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the constituent communications process – either how offices process communications or how grassroots groups and constituents send communications?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Is there anything else you think we should know about constituent communications on Capitol Hill?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Would you be willing to answer further questions on this topic?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Appendix B. *Protocol for Exploratory Interviews.*

Descriptive Information About Contacts to the Office

How many contacts from the constituency (including in-person visits, phone calls, letters or emails) does the office receive:

In an average week? _____

In a busy week?_____

Data Management System

Describe the system you have for recording communications that come into the office.

Follow-up Clarification Questions:
What information is recorded for each communication that comes in?

Is there any note made about the form of communication – whether it was an email, phone call, letter, etc. – when it is entered into this database?

Is there any note made about the quality of the communication when it is entered into this database?

What forms of communication get included in your office's contact management system?

- in-person visits
- phone calls
- personalized letters
- personalized emails
- patch-through phone calls
- form letters
- form emails
- social media contacts:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter

Are there any types of contacts that are set aside and not included in this counting system?

- communications from outside the district
- low quality contacts
- form letters
- form emails
- form postcards
- social media contacts:
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
- other: _____

Does your office employ a contact screening system, like requiring people to enter their zip code before sending an email? *How do you identify communications that come from outside the district?*

How are these contacts summarized and reported to the rest of the office or to the member? (i.e. mail report)

> How is a high quality communication brought to the Congressman's attention in this briefing process?

How often are these contact briefings provided?

<u>Weighting of Contacts</u>

What makes a contact from a constituent stand out?

What types of constituent communications are most influential for your member?

I'm going to read a list of different forms of communication. For each one, please indicate whether it has (1) a lot of influence (2) some influence or (3) no influence on decisions your member makes.

- in-person visits: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- phone calls: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- personal letters: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- personal emails: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- form letters: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- form emails: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- large quantity of form contacts: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- patch-through phone calls: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
- social media contacts:
  - Facebook: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence
  - Twitter: _____ a lot _____ some _____ no influence

Of the forms of communication I just listed, are there any that may cause your member to reevaluate their position on an issue even though they have already made a decision?

Does the time that you receive a contact have an impact on whether it will influence the member's decisions?

> *For example, if you receive a phone call earlier on, when the member has not yet taken a position or when the legislation is still being drafted, is it more likely to influence compared to a flood of phone calls the day before the floor vote?*

<u>On Recognizing Grassroots Campaigns</u>

How easy is it to detect form communications that are inspired by an interest group?

When it is clear that a grassroots mobilization effort by an interest group is driving a particular surge in constituent contacts, how does the office respond?

> *Do you recognize the contacts and record them like any other?*
> *Do you reply to them?*

How often do you find yourself faced with a surge of contacts from a grassroots campaign?

Can you estimate how many clearly interest group inspired form contacts do you receive in an average week?

In your view, do these contacts represent genuine opinion from constituents or do you think that these grassroots contacts are sent without constituent's knowledge?

Are contacts that come from a grassroots campaign legitimate?

Any other comments?

Appendix C. *Descriptive Statistics on all Dependent and Independent Variables.*[177]

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent Variables			
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	0	0 (57% of offices)	1 (43% of offices)
Office Records Constituent Position	1	0 (36% of offices)	1 (64% of offices)
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	1	0 (20% of offices)	1 (80% of offices)
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	0	0 (66% of offices)	1 (34% of offices)
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	1	0 (24% of offices)	1 (76% of offices)
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	1	0 (48% of offices)	1 (52% of offices)
Accurate Perception of Constituent Opinion on the Ryan Budget	0	0 (52% of offices)	1 (48% of offices)
Accurate Perception of Constituent Opinion on the Keystone XL Pipeline	1	0 (30% of offices)	1 (70% of offices)
Accurate Perception of Constituent Opinion on Gun Control	1	0 (19% of offices)	1 (81% of offices)
Representative's Vote on the Ryan Budget Aligns with Constituent Opinion[178]	0	0 (52% of offices)	1 (48% of offices)
Representative's Vote on the Repeal of the ACA Aligns with Constituent Opinion[178]	1	0 (31% of offices)	1 (69% of offices)
Representative's Vote on the Keystone XL Pipeline Aligns with Constituent Opinion[178]	1	0 (33% of offices)	1 (67% of offices)
Representative's Vote on the Simpson-Bowles Budget Aligns with Constituent Opinion[178]	1	0 (44% of offices)	1 (56% of offices)
Representative's Vote on the Korea Free Trade Agreement Aligns with Constituent Opinion[178]	1	0 (44% of offices)	1 (56% of offices)
Legislative Effectiveness Scores, 112th Congress[178]	1.1696	0.0081	16.3142
Number of Substantive and Significant Bills that a Representative Introduced, 112th Congress[178]	0.3103 bills	0 bills	7 bills
Percent of Substantive and Significant Bills that a Representative Introduced that Receive Action in Committee, 112th Congress[178]	13.74%	0%	100%
Percent of Substantive and Significant Bills that a Representative Introduced that Receive Action Beyond Committee, 112th Congress[178]	17.24%	0%	100%
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Receive Action Beyond Committee that Pass the House, 112th Congress[178]	14.61%	0%	100%
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Pass the House that Become Law, 112th Congress[178]	4.79%	0%	100%
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Receive Action in	0.28%	0%	2.56%

[177] For indicator variables, the modal category is listed instead of the mean value. For indicator variables, the percentage of offices that fall into each category are listed with the minimum and maximum values for the variable.
[178] This variable is only measured for non-freshmen Representatives.

Committee out of all Receiving Action in Committee for the Chamber, 112th Congress[178]			
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Receive Action Beyond Committee out of all Receiving Action Beyond Committee for the Chamber, 112th Congress[178]	0.31%	0%	7.07%
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Passed the House out of all that Passed the House for the Chamber, 112th Congress[178]	0.34%	0%	6.67%
Percent of a Representative's Substantive and Significant Bills that Became Law out of all that Became Law for the Chamber, 112th Congress[178]	0.34%	0%	14.71%

Independent Variables

Vote Share, 2012 General Election	65.30%	46.55%	100%
Vote Share, 2012 Primary Election	61.94%	17.79%	100%
Challenger, 2012 Primary Election	1	0 (46% of offices)	1 (54% of offices)
Interaction: Primary Challenger x 2012 Primary Vote Share	34.58%	0%	92.21%
Vote Share, 2010 General Election[178]	64.74%	48%	100%
Number of Congressional Terms Served	3.80 terms	0 terms	21 terms
Freshman	0	0 (81% of offices)	1 (19% of offices)
State Legislative Experience	1	0 (43% of offices)	1 (57% of offices)
Female	0	0 (79% of offices)	1 (21% of offices)
African-American	0	0 (87% of offices)	1 (13% of offices)
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting (Absolute Value)	3.57	0	29
Change in District Partisanship following 2012 Redistricting	0.5673	-11	29
Roll-Call Voting Fit with District Preferences[178]	2.94	0	5
Percentage of Staff Located in District Offices	47.40%	18.18%	66.67%
Extent of Interaction on Twitter, 113th Congress	808 interactions	7 interactions	3947 interactions
Total Tweets, 113th Congress	1187.43 tweets	108 tweets	3190 tweets
Total Months on Twitter	48.43 months	18 months	91 months
Percent of Campaign Contributions Coming from Individuals	48.61%	18.2%	82.78%
DW-Nominate, Distance from Chamber Median [178]	0.5259	0.028	1.032
Committee and Subcommittee Chairmen	0	0 (67% of offices)	1 (33% of offices)
Party Leadership	0	0 (94% of offices)	1 (6% of offices)
District Population Size, *in 10,000s*	72.47	66.25	91.71
District Education Level	30.86%	8.7%	70.3%
District Median Income, *in 1,000s*	55.35	31.08	100.92
District Presidential Turnout, 2012	54.91%	24.11%	78.23%
District Co-Partisan Support, 2012	62.70%	48%	90%
District Co-Partisan Support, 2008	62.01%	42%	91%

Appendix D. *Policy Descriptions, for issues considered in Chapters 4 and 5.*

Ryan Budget Proposal. Introduced by Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI, 1st), Chairman of the House Budget Committee, this legislation outlined the budget for Fiscal Year 2012 and established a budgetary framework for the next ten years. The plan would have achieved substantial reductions in government spending between 2013 and 2021 through a significant restructuring of Medicare for future beneficiaries and steep cuts to social welfare programs, in Medicaid and the Supplement Nutritional Assistance Program. Ryan's budget plan passed the House in April 2011, without support from any Democratic Representatives.[179] There was little public support for Ryan's proposal; Representatives returned to their districts on recess after taking the vote only to face "worried and angry questions from voters" concerned about the fate of Medicare (Steinhauer and Hulse 2011). Indeed, polls taken in mid-2011 showed only 35% of the public supporting the Republican Medicare reform plan as detailed in Ryan's budget (CNN 2011).

Keystone XL Pipeline. The proposed Keystone XL pipeline would carry oil from Alberta, Canada's tar sands to refineries on the Gulf Coast. Portions of the pipeline in the southern U.S. have already been constructed; however, since the pipeline's route crosses the U.S.-Canadian border, the project requires a presidential permit before construction on the northern portion of the pipeline can proceed. Democrats have largely been opposed to the pipeline, citing the potential risks the pipeline poses to a large freshwater aquifer in the Midwest and the high levels of carbon emissions that drilling in Canadian tar sands produces (Brady and Horsley 2014; Mufson 2012). Despite these environmental concerns, polls over the last several years consistently find that a majority of the public supports the pipeline's construction (Mendes 2012, Pew 2015b). Republicans have pushed for the pipeline's approval, arguing that the project will create jobs (Brady and Horsley 2014).[180] In 2012, House Republicans drafted a transportation funding bill which included language that would require the issuance of construction and operation permits for the Keystone XL pipeline. The House overwhelmingly approved this legislation, but the Keystone XL provisions were removed in the Senate; the final transportation bill that passed both chambers later than year did not address Keystone XL at all.

Gun Control. Past gun controls laws at the federal level have included stricter licensing requirements for gun dealers (National Firearms Act of 1938, Gun Control Act of 1968), limitations on gun sales to convicted felons, drug users and the mentally ill (Gun Control Act of 1968), mandated background checks of gun buyers[181] (Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993), and bans on the manufacture of semi-automatic assault rifles and large-capacity ammunition magazines (Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994). Despite an increasing number of high-profile cases of gun violence, including tragic mass shootings at

[179] In the House, the vote total was 235-193-4, with no Democrats voting for the measure and all but 4 Republicans backing the Ryan budget. In May 2011, the Ryan budget failed in the Senate, by a vote of 40-57, with 5 Republicans defecting and voting against the plan.

[180] Both Republican arguments for and Democratic arguments against the pipeline are undermined by U.S. State Department reports on the project. First, the jobs created for the pipeline will largely be temporary, only for several months during construction; the State Department estimates that the pipeline will result in the creation of less than 50 permanent jobs. Second, the pipeline is unlikely to impact carbon emissions since the oil will still be produced, whether or not the pipeline is constructed (Brady and Horsley 2014).

[181] Private sellers are exempt from background check requirements (Washington Post 2012).

Columbine in 1999, Virginia Tech in 2007, Aurora, CO in 2012, and Newtown, CT in 2012, no federal action has been taken to increase restrictions on gun ownership or gun sales since 1994. Several members of Congress have called for a reconsideration of bans on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines; such bans were first instituted in 1994 but expired in 2004 (Krouse 2012, Krouse 2014). Other gun control proposals that have gained attention in recent years include mandated universal background checks for all firearm sales, increased penalties for gun trafficking and prohibitions on straw purchases of firearms (Krouse 2012, Krouse 2014). However, none of these proposals has passed Congress.

The Affordable Care Act and Efforts to Repeal. President Obama's signature healthcare law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), passed a Democrat-controlled Congress in 2010. The law requires individuals to have health insurance or pay a fine. Under the ACA, federal and state governments are directed to create exchanges where individuals can purchase health insurance; based on their income level, individuals may qualify for subsidies to cover costs and premiums. The ACA also included provisions to expand Medicaid in each state to cover lower-income families that don't earn enough to qualify for subsidies. However, the Supreme Court ruling in *National Federation of Independent Businesses v. Sebelius* allowed states to opt out of Medicaid expansion, so many states chose not to expand their Medicaid programs. The Supreme Court has upheld other provisions of the ACA, including the individual mandate to have health insurance, keeping much of the law intact. At the time of its passage, debates in Congress were characterized by strong Republican opposition. Public opinion on the law still remains fairly evenly split and tends to divide along party lines, much as it did when the legislation was first being debated (Gross et al 2012, Kaiser Family Foundation 2015).

Following Republicans sweeping victories in the 2010 elections, the new Republican majority in the House moved quickly to repeal the ACA. Republicans introduced and voted unanimously to repeal the ACA in January 2011, within two weeks of taking control of the chamber. The Democrat-controlled Senate did not take action to repeal the ACA, though Republican Senators did introduce repeal legislation at the time.[182] Republicans in both chambers have repeatedly pressed for repeal without success.[183]

Simpson-Bowles Proposal. In February 2010, President Obama convened the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility which came to be known as the Simpson-Bowles Commission after its co-chairs, former White House Chief of Staff Erksine Bowles and former Republican Senator Alan Simpson. The 18-member commission was charged with developing a deficit reduction plan, and, after months of deliberation, the Simpson-Bowles Commission produced a proposal with a balanced approach to deficit reduction. The plan involved both increased revenues and spending. Through caps on discretionary spending, reductions in popular tax breaks and reforms to Social Security, the Simpson-Bowles proposal was projected to cut the deficit by nearly $4 trillion by 2020. At the time the Commission's report was released, there was widespread public concern about the budget deficit, but only 30% approved of the Simpson-

[182] S. 192, 112th Congress, introduced by Senator Jim DeMint (R-SC).

[183] In the House, Republicans have voted to repeal all or part of the ACA 67 times since January 2011. In the Senate, Republicans continue to introduce repeal legislation, though to date none of these repeal efforts have passed the Senate (S. 177, 113th Congress, S. 336, S. 339, 114th Congress). Following victories in the 2014 elections, Republicans gained control of the Senate with 54 seats. However, they still lack support for repeal legislation. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) is trying to secure a simple-majority vote on repeal, but parliamentary rules seem to prevent it (Bolton 2015).

Bowles plan as a way to address the deficit. Congress did not vote on the Commission's report until several months after their recommendations had been released, when Representative Jim Cooper (D-TN, 5th) introduced the Simpson-Bowles plan as an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2013 budget. The amendment failed, with only 38 Representatives voting for the Simpson-Bowles proposal.

U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement. Initially negotiated in 2007 by President Bush, the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement sought to solidify an already-strong economic relationship between the United States and South Korea, the U.S.'s 6th largest trading partner. After years of further negotiations, the finalized plan lowered or eliminated tariffs on U.S. agricultural imports to South Korea and on automobile trade between the two countries. The Free Trade Agreement would afford the U.S. increased access to South Korean markets for manufactured goods, agricultural products and foreign investment and allowed the U.S. to remain competitive in the South Korean market. President Obama had negotiated amendments to the agreement under trade promotion authority, but the agreement still required congressional approval. President Obama sent implementing legislation to Congress in October 2011. Many Democrats opposed the agreement, arguing that the increased foreign competition under the agreement would potentially result in job losses in the U.S.. However, overwhelming Republican support ensured the passage of the legislation and the implementation of the U.S.'s second largest Free Trade Agreement.

Appendix E. *Supplemental Analyses for Chapter 5.*

These linear probability models follow the more conventional approach to policy responsiveness studies, using Representative's vote as dependent variable. For the correspondence system characteristics that constitute the primary independent variables of interest in these models, the results do not deviate from those shared in Chapter 5 analyses (which use a dichotomous dependent variable that captures Representative's fit with district preferences).

Table E.1. Policy Responsiveness, Legislator Vote Choice as Dependent Variable. *Ryan Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.0560 (0.0921)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Traditional Communications Recorded x Ryan Budget Opinion	0.0033 (0.0049)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.0360 (0.0926)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Constituent Position Recorded x Ryan Budget Opinion	_____	0.0022 (0.0050)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.0801 (0.1263)	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Regular Mail Reports x Ryan Budget Opinion	_____	_____	0.0008 (0.0065)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1105 (0.1056)	_____	_____
Interaction: Mail Reports to Legislative Staff and Leaders x Ryan Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	0.0075 (0.0053)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0766 (0.1229)	_____
Interaction: Issue Content in Mail Report x Ryan Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0029 (0.0065)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0335 (0.0878)
Interaction: Staff Develop Responses x Ryan Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0015 (0.0046)
Constituent Opinion on Ryan Budget Bill	- 0.0070** (0.0030)	- 0.0075* (0.0042)	- 0.0072 (0.0061)	- 0.0079*** (0.0028)	- 0.0034 (0.0060)	- 0.0047 (0.0032)
Legislator Ideology	0.9438*** (0.0434)	0.9435*** (0.0436)	0.9380*** (0.0436)	0.9292*** (0.0440)	0.9397*** (0.0477)	0.9355*** (0.0442)
District Partisanship	0.0012 (0.0016)	0.0013 (0.0016)	0.0008 (0.0016)	0.0004 (0.0016)	0.0012 (0.0017)	0.0010 (0.0016)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0007 (0.0011)	0.0006 (0.0011)	0.0010 (0.0011)	0.0015 (0.0011)	0.001 (0.0013)	0.0011 (0.0011)
Constant	0.3805*** (0.1198)	0.3883*** (0.1290)	0.4456*** (0.1571)	0.3831*** (0.1218)	0.2851 (0.1623)	0.3294 (0.1230)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.9474	0.9472	0.9484	0.9503	0.9432	0.9477
N	84	84	82	80	75	82

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table E.2. Policy Responsiveness, Legislator Vote Choice as Dependent Variable. *Repeal of Affordable Care Act*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.1854 (0.1243)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Traditional Communications Recorded x ACA Repeal Opinion	0.0047* (0.0028)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.1904 (0.1273)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Constituent Position Recorded x ACA Repeal Opinion	_____	- 0.0044 (0.0029)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.1563 (0.1580)	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Regular Mail Reports x ACA Repeal Opinion	_____	_____	0.0027 (0.0039)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1331 (0.1387)	_____	_____
Interaction: Mail Reports to Legislative Staff and Leaders x ACA Repeal Opinion	_____	_____	_____	0.0035 (0.0031)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.1164 (0.1703)	_____
Interaction: Issue Content in Mail Report x ACA Repeal Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0022 (0.0038)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.1298 (0.1320)
Interaction: Staff Develop Responses x ACA Repeal Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0028 (0.0030)
Constituent Opinion on ACA Repeal	- 0.0050** (0.0024)	- 0.0001 (0.0027)	- 0.0043 (0.0038)	- 0.0039 (0.0024)	- 0.0016 (0.0037)	- 0.0016 (0.0024)
Legislator Ideology	0.9326*** (0.0430)	0.9293*** (0.0432)	0.9277*** (0.0444)	0.9107*** (0.0442)	0.9247*** (0.0484)	0.9211*** (0.0442)
District Partisanship	0.0000 (0.0017)	0.0003 (0.0018)	0.0003 (0.0018)	- 0.0008 (0.0018)	- 0.0003 (0.0019)	- 0.0003 (0.0018)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0004 (0.0011)	0.0010 (0.0011)	0.0006 (0.0011)	0.0014 (0.0012)	0.0007 (0.0013)	0.0012 (0.0012)
Constant	0.5542*** (0.1794)	0.3024 (0.1980)	0.5323 (0.2027)	0.4911 (0.1762)	0.3945* (0.2170)	0.3727* (0.1886)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.9466	0.9457	0.9447	0.9469	0.9405	0.9460
N	85	85	83	81	76	83

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table E.3. Policy Responsiveness, Legislator Vote Choice as Dependent Variable. *Keystone XL Pipeline*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.2779 (0.9844)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Traditional Communications Recorded x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	0.0044 (0.0134)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	0.0790 (0.9221)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Constituent Position Recorded x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	_____	- 0.0008 (0.0127)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.2455 (1.0472)	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Regular Mail Reports x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	_____	_____	0.0072 (0.0149)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	- 0.8617 (1.0303)	_____	_____
Interaction: Mail Reports to Legislative Staff and Leaders x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	_____	_____	_____	0.0114 (0.0142)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 1.8291 (1.1526)	_____
Interaction: Issue Content in Mail Report x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0260 (0.0156)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1400 (0.9044)
Interaction: Staff Develop Responses x Keystone Pipeline Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0013 (0.0124)
Constituent Opinion on Keystone Pipeline	- 0.0102 (0.0101)	- 0.0064 (0.0117)	- 0.0156 (0.0138)	- 0.0107 (0.0090)	- 0.0213 (0.0145)	- 0.0085 (0.0096)
Legislator Partisanship	0.4050 (0.3636)	0.4515 (0.3557)	0.5795 (0.3545)	0.3938 (0.3789)	0.4679 (0.3649)	0.4235 (0.3696)
Legislator Ideology	- 0.0628 (0.3762)	- 0.1250 (0.3623)	- 0.1983 (0.3597)	- 0.0953 (0.3767)	- 0.0982 (0.3740)	- 0.1151 (0.3727)
District Partisanship	- 0.0118** (0.0052)	- 0.0119** (0.0051)	- 0.0103** (0.0051)	- 0.0131** (0.0054)	- 0.0097* (0.0054)	- 0.0128** (0.0054)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	- 0.0018 (0.0035)	- 0.0017 (0.0035)	- 0.0035 (0.0035)	- 0.0017 (0.0038)	- 0.0020 (0.0040)	- 0.0017 (0.0038)
Constant	1.9690** (0.8860)	1.6888* (0.9773)	2.1066* (1.0716)	2.1066 (0.8638)	2.6177** (1.1605)	1.9356** (0.9121)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.3674	0.3647	0.4048	0.3562	0.3937	0.3596
N	85	85	83	81	76	83

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table E.4. Policy Responsiveness, Legislator Vote Choice as Dependent Variable. *Simpson-Bowles Budget Bill*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 0.8322 (0.6443)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Traditional Communications Recorded x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	0.0169 (0.0131)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.6588 (0.5098)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Constituent Position Recorded x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	_____	0.0122 (0.0103)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	- 0.2237 (0.6155)	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Regular Mail Reports x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	_____	_____	0.0041 (0.0120)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	0.7440 (0.5344)	_____	_____
Interaction: Mail Reports to Legislative Staff and Leaders x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0131 (0.0108)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.1859 (0.7233)	_____
Interaction: Issue Content in Mail Report x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0015 (0.0145)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.4481 (0.5391)
Interaction: Staff Develop Responses x Simpson-Bowles Budget Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0098 (0.0109)
Constituent Opinion on Simpson-Bowles Budget	- 0.0084 (0.0058)	- 0.0121 (0.0078)	- 0.0090 (0.0104)	- 0.0021 (0.0071)	- 0.0079 (0.0132)	- 0.0018 (0.0075)
Legislator Partisanship	- 0.3499 (0.2301)	- 0.3793 (0.2278)	- 0.3885 (0.2418)	- 0.4037 (0.2449)	- 0.3442 (0.2454)	- 0.3309 (0.2433)
Legislator Ideology	0.2580 (0.2359)	0.3275 (0.2328)	0.3178 (0.2442)	0.3631 (0.2467)	0.2424 (0.2499)	0.2594 (0.2448)
District Partisanship	0.0001 (0.0035)	0.0019 (0.0034)	0.0010 (0.0035)	0.0024 (0.0035)	0.0006 (0.0038)	0.0010 (0.0035)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	- 0.0024 (0.0022)	- 0.0023 (0.0022)	- 0.0026 (0.0023)	- 0.0026 (0.0025)	- 0.0028 (0.0027)	- 0.0032 (0.0025)
Constant	0.7654** (0.3480)	0.8828** (0.4002)	0.7880 (0.5788)	0.3235 (0.3949)	0.8307 (0.6930)	0.4473 (0.4232)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.0096	0.0195	- 0.0125	0.0360	0.0287	0.0025
N	84	84	82	80	75	82

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01

Table E.5. Policy Responsiveness, Legislator Vote Choice as Dependent Variable. *Korea Free Trade Agreement*

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Office Records All Traditional Forms of Communication	- 1.5593** (0.6397)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Traditional Communications Recorded x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	0.0300** (0.0124)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Office Records Constituent Position	_____	- 0.4558 (0.6766)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Constituent Position Recorded x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	_____	0.0090 (0.0132)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated Regularly	_____	_____	0.3711 (0.7911)	_____	_____	_____
Interaction: Regular Mail Reports x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	_____	_____	- 0.0072 (0.0156)	_____	_____	_____
Mail Reports Circulated to Legislative Staff and Office Leadership	_____	_____	_____	0.6353 (0.7506)	_____	_____
Interaction: Mail Reports to Legislative Staff and Leaders x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0116 (0.0144)	_____	_____
Mail Reports Contain Issue Content	_____	_____	_____	_____	1.5764** (0.7630)	_____
Interaction: Issue Content in Mail Report x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 0.0307** (0.0149)	_____
Legislative Staff Involvement in Response Development	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	- 1.2560* (0.6599)
Interaction: Staff Develop Responses x Korea Free Trade Agreement Opinion	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	0.0243 (0.0128)
Constituent Opinion on Korea Free Trade Agreement	- 0.0092 (0.0080)	- 0.0025 (0.0107)	0.0094 (0.0139)	0.0078 (0.0086)	0.0259 (0.0125)	- 0.0078 (0.0089)
Legislator Partisanship	- 0.1019 (0.3213)	- 0.1616 (0.3306)	- 0.1543 (0.3408)	- 0.1356 (0.3633)	- 0.0912 (0.3409)	- 0.2793 (0.3384)
Legislator Ideology	0.9064*** (0.3218)	0.9699*** (0.3320)	0.9460*** (0.3411)	0.9381** (0.3577)	0.8619** (0.3437)	1.0428*** (0.3367)
District Partisanship	0.0103** (0.0045)	0.0114** (0.0046)	0.0112** (0.0048)	0.0116** (0.0049)	0.0100* (0.0050)	0.0106** (0.0048)
Vote Share, 2010 General Election	0.0010 (0.0032)	- 0.0003 (0.0033)	- 0.0001 (0.0033)	0.0002 (0.0036)	- 0.0019 (0.0038)	0.0003 (0.0035)
Constant	0.4654 (0.5257)	0.1405 (0.6391)	- 0.4628 (0.7592)	- 0.4383 (0.5982)	- 1.1461 (0.7092)	0.4760 (0.5902)
Adjusted R-Squared	0.4731	0.4359	0.4285	0.4251	0.4418	0.4526
N	85	85	83	81	76	83

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.1 ** p < 0.05 *** p < 0.01