

## EFFECTIVE ONLINE ADVOCACY

The Internet holds great promise for enhancing citizen involvement in the political process. This is because the Internet gives interested people the ability to learn about issues, form an opinion, communicate with other like-minded individuals to strengthen the message, and, ultimately communicate with elected officials – either individually, or as part of a coordinated effort. However, as with all methods of communication and information gathering, there is a right way and a wrong way to use the Internet in efforts to influence policy. The rules for effective communication still apply – content still matters, messages must still be timely and relevant to the elected official, and knowing what you are talking about is still crucial.

And remember the most important rule of all in online advocacy: Include your snail mail address on every e-mail. It's the only way your representative will know that you live in his or her district!

Check out the following resources to learn both about Congress, as well as the impact of the Internet on policy-making. Then, use that information to communicate effectively with members of Congress and their staff. Pretty soon, you'll be a truly effective digital lobbyist.

### LEARN ABOUT CONGRESS

Check out these online courses and tutorials about legislative process, web activism, and effective advocacy techniques!

Web Activism (<http://www.netaction.org/training>). This short course on web activism outlines a few good tips and techniques for researching your issues on the Internet as well as using web-based technologies to identify and motivate your network. This site also provides good information on mailing lists and e-mail based advocacy.

Government: [How a Bill Becomes a Law](#) from Learn.com (). An outstanding course that quickly explains the legislative process and offers "self-tests" at various steps along the way. If you want to understand how bills wend their way through the legislative process, this is the place to go.

Advocacy Tutorial at AdVanced Consulting ([www.advocacyguru.com/demo\\_page.htm](http://www.advocacyguru.com/demo_page.htm)). Use this page to walk through the steps of effective advocacy, including the top ten steps for ensuring a well-developed, well-delivered message.

## LEARN ABOUT HOW THE INTERNET IS CHANGING DEMOCRACY

A number of important books offer insights into how the Internet is changing democracy.

Steven Clift, a well-known name in the "e-democracy" world, recently released a new online book, "E-Democracy E-Book: Democracy is Online 2.0". Check it out at <http://www.publicus.net/ebook/>

"The Net Effect" by Pam Fielding and Daniel Bennett. This book outlines the impact of the Internet on Congress and provides a simple framework for understanding how to use the Internet for activism. Authors Daniel Bennett and Pam Fielding weave together stories from across the Internet and the political spectrum, showcasing some of the top strategies being used today to deliver results online.

"Electronic Democracy : Using the Internet to Influence American Politics" by Graeme Browning and, Daniel J. Weitzner. This book teaches explains how to use the Internet to: organize e-mail campaigns within congressional districts; access a wealth of information that will impact politicians at the local, state and federal levels; monitor lawmakers' voting records; and track campaign financing and contributions.

"Cyber-Citizen", by Christopher Kush. This latest entrant to the cyber-advocacy game offers users readers an extensive range of resources, as well as tips and techniques on how to apply those resources effectively.

## USE THE WEB TO COMMUNICATE WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

Finally, use the web to identify and communicate with elected officials. Some of the most effective sites include:

Politics Online ([www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com)). Includes up-to-date information and news on use of the Internet in politics, from online contribution totals to the latest in online voting. Offers two free e-newsletters for those interested in keeping informed. Also has a helpful "toolbox" of free and not-so-free tools for managing Internet campaigns. Although these tools are more oriented toward candidate campaigns, they can be easily adapted to use for issue campaigns as well.

Congress.Org ([www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org)). Like many sites, Congress.org allows you to identify your representatives, send them an e-mail, and learn more about their positions on the issues. What sets Congress.org apart is the in-depth information on Congressional staff, who are the people who REALLY get things done on the hill. Once you've looked up your Representative, you are linked to an information sheet with biographical information, addresses, and the names and responsibilities of the Congressional staff.

Best of all, this information is updated monthly! In addition, there are helpful tips for writing, e-mailing, and calling your representatives. This is a very useful site for anyone seeking to be a truly effective advocate.