Representation in State Legislatures

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Suggested Citation:

Purpose of Survey

- To determine how legislators feel about the use of technology
  - Does email have a positive effect on communication?
  - What is the impact of the internet on the legislature?
Survey Sample

- Eight states
  - Arizona
  - New Jersey
  - North Dakota
  - South Dakota
  - Colorado
  - Missouri
  - Pennsylvania
  - South Carolina

Survey Design

- Conducted Summer 2003
- Dillman’s Tailored Design Method
  - 3 waves
- Sixteen legislative chambers
  - 1,176 legislators
  - 42% response rate
Response Rate

Survey Response Rate by State

Characteristics of Respondents

- Average age: 54 years old
- First time legislators: 36%
- Female legislators: 19%
- Legislators describe their views as
  - 16% liberal (extremely liberal, liberal or slightly liberal)
  - 23% moderate
  - 54% conservative (extremely conservative, conservative, or slightly conservative)
Research Questions

- E-gov touted by many, but how do American state legislators feel about it?
- Does email have a positive effect?
  - Who do they contact?
  - Are there differences in which legislators use it?
- Do legislators have fears about using email?
- Does the Internet have positive effects on the legislature and how it works?

Email Usage

Email has a Positive or Extremely Positive Effect on a Legislative Office Maintaining Contact with:

- Constituents: 65%
- Staff Members: 51%
- Interest Groups: 53%
- Officials in Governor's Office: 34%
- Other Legislators: 55%
- Journalists: 25%

Institute of Public Policy
## Email – Extremely Positive Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>First Time</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constituents</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Groups</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor's Office</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislators</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Significant Factors for Email Usage with Constituents

- Ordinal Logistic Analysis

- Negative Effects
  - Age of legislator
  - Minority legislator
  - Professional legislature

- Positive Effects
  - Multimember district
  - Female legislator
  - First time legislator
  - Legislator attitude that service builds trust
  - More time staying in touch with district
Attitude Toward Email - percent who agree or strongly agree

- 1 - Volume places an undue burden on staff
- 2 - Biased representation
- 3 - Unrealistic expectations for immediate response
- 4 - Not certain if email sender is constituent
- 5 - Not certain if it is confidential
- 6 - Easier for single issue campaigns

Email Concerns – Percent Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>First Time</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burden on staff</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bias</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidential</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Issue</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significant Factors for Concern that Email is not Confidential

- Ordinal Logistic Analysis

- Negative Effects
  - Multimember district

- Positive Effects (more concerned)
  - Conservatives
  - Older legislators
  - Females
  - First time legislators

Attitudes about Internet Impact

- 1 – Decreased demands on legislative staff to get current information
- 2 – Increased the pace of the legislative process
- 3 – Improved your ability to consider policy actions in other states
- 4 – Increased deliberation about legislative issues
- 5 – Caused staff to worry more about information being leaked prematurely or taken out of context

Legislature Attitudes Toward Internet Usage
(Agree or Strongly Agree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Percent of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Internet Effects – Percent Agree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>First Time</th>
<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Info</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other States</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberation</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaks</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significant Factors for Internet Effect on Increased Deliberation

- Ordinal Logistic Analysis
- Negative Effects
  - Senate
  - Professional legislature
- Positive Effects
  - First time legislator
  - Distance from home district
  - Females