

Conservatives take on liberals in blogosphere

August 15 2009, By DAN NEPHIN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Call this city blogger central. Two grassroots groups - one left leaning, the other right leaning - are holding their annual conferences here and teaching members how to wield clout online.

On the left is Netroots Nation, which has been credited in part with helping usher President [Barack Obama](#) into office. On the right is RightOnline, a project of the conservative Americans for Prosperity Foundation.

The Netroots Nation conference is much larger, at about 1,800 people, and lasts four days. RightOnline has about 700 people and lasts two days.

Erik Telford, executive director of RightOnline, concedes the left has been better about using blogging and social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

"I think for the past few years, they (the left) have had an advantage, but the tables are turning and rapidly so," he said. "The Internet is a great place for people to turn when they want to get involved. And people really want to get involved when they're locked out of power."

Telford pointed to the right's activism on "Tea Party" demonstrations across the country against stimulus spending and town hall meetings on health care as examples.

Conservative leaders were slow to embrace online activism, he said.

"But the fact of the matter is, the paradigm has flipped completely upside down. And we can either embrace it and succeed, or we can remain in denial about it at our own peril," Telford said.

"At Americans for Prosperity, we realize we can't just give marching orders to our activists. They have access to these tools. We want them to self-organize. We want to rebuild the movement from the bottom up," he said.

Erick Erickson, managing editor of the conservative blog RedState.com and one of RightOnline's speakers, said the right had been successful with talk radio while the left made its gains using the Internet.

"Just as the left is playing catch-up on the radio, the right is doing the same on the Internet," he said. "Unlike talk radio though, I think the Internet is more democratic, egalitarian. So I don't think the right will have the struggles the left has had trying to become competitive."

The right turned to blogging because they felt their voice wasn't being heard in the media, he said, while the left used it as a rallying point to regain the White House and Congress.

"The right is now starting to have to do that," he said.

Telford said RightOnline chose Pittsburgh because Netroots Nation would be here and the organization wanted to serve as a counterbalance. Last year, both groups held their conferences in Austin, Texas.

On The Net:

RightOnline: <http://www.RightOnline.com>

Netroots Nation: <http://www.netrootsnation.org>

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