

Study of Congress: To tweet, or not to tweet, is unrelated to being in the hot seat

September 26 2011

Chock-full of questions about Twitter and Congress, political science major David Lassen found a mentor in Professor Adam Brown (@utahdatapoints) willing to guide him through the process of answering one significant question.

Are [members of Congress](#) more likely to use [Twitter](#) if they are vulnerable to losing their seat in the next election?

Surprisingly, the duo from BYU found that electoral vulnerability has nothing to do with whether these elected officials exercise their right to tweet.

In fact, the main things that influenced whether a member of Congress got on Twitter were their age and whether their party leadership encouraged tweeting.

Lassen and Brown will publish their research in a forthcoming issue of *Social Science Computer Review*.

During the early days of Twitter, Republican leaders invited youngsters like Rep. Jason Chaffetz of Utah (@jasoninthehouse) to speak before House Republicans about using the technology. Today [Republicans](#) continue to have a larger majority on Twitter than they do on [Capitol Hill](#).

Though fewer in number, the Democrats do have some shining Twitter

stars. Prof. Brown names Sen. Claire McCaskill of Missouri (@clairecmc) as one of the best at interacting with constituents through Twitter.

Lassen recently graduated from BYU, and the mentored research experience helped him launch into a Ph.D. program at the University of Wisconsin.

"What we measured was an exploratory period where members of Congress were taking a look and dabbling with the technology," Lassen said. "Now the bigger question is how they are using it instead of if they are using it."

Currently about three-fourths of all members of Congress use Twitter, but many of those accounts have been delegated to staff members to run. Prof. Brown provides a rule of thumb for how 'we the tweeples' can tell the difference.

"The actual members of [Congress](#) tweet about things like hamburgers and football games," Brown said. "When it's staff, the messages are all links to speeches and interviews. The strategy is to simply help the local press stay on top of the schedule."

Provided by Brigham Young University

Citation: Study of Congress: To tweet, or not to tweet, is unrelated to being in the hot seat (2011, September 26) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-09-congress-tweet-unrelated-hot-seat.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--