Conservative Texas Republicans most likely to use electronic technology in voter outreach, according to new study

May 15 2012

Conservative Texas Republicans are most likely to use electronic technology in voter outreach, according to a new study from researchers at Rice and the Universidad de Monterrey.

The study, "The Use of Electronic Technology and Legislative Representation in the Mexican and U.S. States: Nuevo León and Texas," examines how the advent of new electronic media has provided legislative representatives with a plethora of potential tools with which to strengthen their connection with their constituents. The research also examines the forms of electronic technology — websites, email and social networks such as Facebook and Twitter — used by members of the Texas House of Representatives and the Nuevo León Legislature.

The researchers evaluated the extent and nature of the use of these technologies across the two legislative bodies as well as within each legislature. They found few differences in social media use between Democrats and Republicans; however, the study did reveal that within the GOP, the more conservative wing of the party uses social networks more frequently than the more moderate party establishment.

"Electronic technology, ranging from websites to social networks, plays an increasingly important role in politics today, particularly in election campaigns," said Mark Jones, Rice's Joseph D. Jamail Chair in Latin American Studies, professor and chair of political science and fellow in

political science at Rice's Baker Institute for Public Policy. "And for nonestablishment candidates with limited financial resources, it's a great way to expand and mobilize their base of support inexpensively. We've seen this pattern on the national level with candidates like Michele Bachmann and Ron Paul, and our research shows that similar things are happening here in Texas."

While the study found that more conservative [Republicans](#) are more likely to be active on social networks than their moderate brethren, no differences were found in usage between liberal and conservative Democrats. The study also found that younger representatives are more likely to use social networks such as Twitter and Facebook to reach out to their constituents and supporters than are older representatives.

"Electronic technology offers representatives a plethora of tools with which to inform and interact with their constituents and improve the degree and quality of legislative representation," Jones said.

 More information: [www.puentesconsortium.org/pape … d-us-states-nuevo-le](#)%C3%B3n-and

Provided by Rice University