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TELE-TOWN HALL  
REFERENCE  
GUIDE

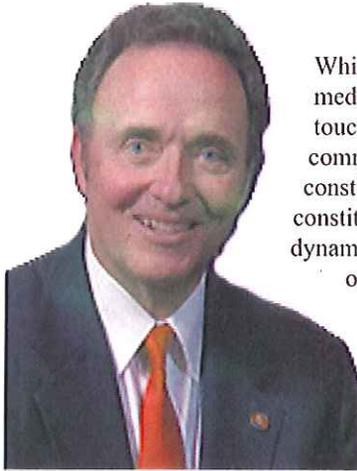


COMMITTEE ON  
HOUSE ADMINISTRATION  
Republican Office, 111<sup>th</sup> Congress

A handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Dan Lungren".

Daniel E. Lungren, Ranking Republican Member

# A MESSAGE FROM COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER DAN LUNGREN



While there are many exciting communications opportunities presented by new media and social networking, as Members we must never lose the personal touch that resonates with our constituents. One method of interactive, individual communication that has proven to be very popular among, and useful for, our constituents is the "tele-townhall" format, in which Members are able to invite constituents in their districts to join in to a live question-and-answer forum. This dynamic communications medium enables Members to engage their constituents in one-on-one conversation, even when they are located hundreds or thousands of miles away. I personally worked with tele-townhall vendor Rodney Smith to help pioneer the tele-townhall meeting format, and have been a strong advocate of the technology ever since.

The enclosed materials are designed to help offices as they plan and execute their own tele-townhall events. The information provided has been culled from a number of sources, including reference materials from vendors who typically facilitate these events, as well as Republican offices who are frequent users of the medium. I would like to thank each of those individuals who contributed their time and input to this guide, for the benefit of all Republican House offices.

I hope you find the information contained in these pages useful, and I encourage you to contact our Committee staff with any additional questions you may have. While we've included many of the basics on conducting tele-townhalls in this reference guide, the Republican staff of the Franking Commission is always available to provide customized guidance and counsel on any administrative issue facing your office.

Our Franking and Member Services staff members are available in person in Room 1216-A of the Longworth House Office Building, by phone at (202) 226-0647, or by fax at (202) 226-0047. You can also find a wealth of information on our web site at <http://gop.cha.house.gov>.

Thank you for your commitment to adhering to Franking rules and regulations, and we look forward to assisting you with all of your tele-townhalls or any other administrative needs you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel E. Lungren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Daniel E. Lungren  
Ranking Republican Member  
Committee on House Administration

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## PLANNING YOUR TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

### WHAT IS A TELE-TOWNHALL?

A tele-townhall meeting is a live event during which an office is able to contact thousands of constituents simultaneously by phone to request that they join a live question-and-answer session with the Member. The content of the event is similar to an in-person townhall event in which the Member may choose to focus on a specific topic, and segment their invitees by geography or other factors. Offices who are interested in holding a tele-townhall meeting typically select one of several vendors who use slightly different formats, features and fee structures.

During a typical tele-townhall event, the Member may be located in their office in Washington in front of a computer, or elsewhere inside or outside of the district. The vendor calls thousands of households in the Member's district and asks the caller whether or not they would like to be connected with the Member of Congress on a live tele-townhall. In some cases, constituents will press a number to enter the call, or in some cases they will automatically join the call if they do not hang up the phone. Once callers are on the line, they will be able to listen to other constituents ask questions, and will be asked to press a pre-determined number if they have a question (i.e. "press #3 to ask a question"). An office may have one or more screeners who filter and/or select questions to be answered, or the Member may choose to run the call by themselves. The Member may also choose to invite a guest(s) to join the call via a separate connection.



A SAMPLE TELE-TOWNHALL SCREEN APPEARS ABOVE.

The format, number of callers contacted, duration, and vendor administering the event all vary based on the needs of the Member office. Information included in this guide is intended to assist Members in sorting through the various options available in conducting a tele-townhall event.

Created in 2005 by Committee on House Administration Ranking Republican Member Dan Lungren, R-Calif., and tele-townhall vendor Rodney Smith, the tele-townhall meeting format was established to enable Members of Congress to communicate with their constituents in a live, personalized format, regardless of the Member's location. Tele-townhall meetings have been held with Members in a variety of locations around the world, including Iraq.

### WHY CONDUCT A TELE-TOWNHALL?

An **October 2007 study conducted by the Congressional Institute**, found that a "higher frequency of Member contact (of any type) correlates with multiple measures of higher job approval." The study also found that 23% of constituents who hear from their Congressman at least quarterly say their satisfaction with their Congressman's job performance is higher now than four years ago. Of those who said they had a "high level of satisfaction with their Congressman's job performance," 47% have "been invited to a local town hall meeting with their Congressman in the past three months."

# SELECTING A TELE-TOWNHALL VENDOR

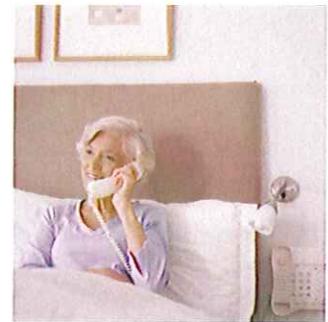
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In preparing to conduct a tele-townhall, one of the first tasks on your office's checklist will be selecting a vendor. It is important to line up your vendor as soon as possible as any vendor will have a limited number of time slots available on any given date.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VENDOR:

In selecting a vendor, consider the following determining factors:

- ❖ **Cost.** Different vendors offer different cost structures, typically ranging anywhere from \$2,500 to \$3,000 per event. Some of the determining factors on cost include the number of constituents dialed by the vendor, the length of the call, and any "overage" charges that result in the event that your call stretches past the allotted time. Be sure to get all associated costs and fees from each vendor you are considering, and make sure that your Members' Representational Allowance (MRA) has sufficient funds to cover these costs in light of your office's other expenditures.
- ❖ **Integration with other Communications Services.** Some vendors who offer tele-townhalls also offer e-mail or print newsletter services. In some cases, offices that have an existing relationship with a vendor may choose to broaden that relationship by adding tele-townhall services, though there is no requirement to use the same vendor. Offices may discuss any package or volume discounts available with their vendor, in the event that they offer other communications services, which may factor into the vendor selection process.
- ❖ **Software features.** Some vendors may offer a lower price, but not all of the features of a competitor, based on the type of software they use. Determine how important those added features are to you or your Member before making your vendor selection. Examples of optional features are: the ability to have multiple "screeners" who filter calls, software that produces a list of callers/questions following the event, and software that allows callers to automatically join the call without pressing a button.
- ❖ **Capacity.** An increase in the number of Members and other users doing tele-townhall events has created capacity issues in some cases where one vendor may not have a specific date available, but another vendor will be able to accommodate the Member. The best way to avoid limiting yourself due to the vendor's lack of capacity is to book your event early, in some cases reserving an entire series of dates at one time also helps avoid this issue. Please note, however, that local phone grids may also present capacity issues, regardless of the vendor selected. Local phone company capacity issues may only be determined by conducting a tele-townhall event. However, once the threshold is established, a tele-townhall vendor should then be able to adjust their dialing speed to accommodate a Member's dialing needs while, at the same time, optimizing the results of each call. If a vendor cannot increase and decrease the speed of their dialing capability, then a Member will not be able to increase the number of households to be dialed without also increasing the length of their call.



## LIST OF TELE-TOWNHALL VENDORS

The following three vendors carry-out the majority of the tele-townhalls within the GOP Conference:

**iConstituent**  
Jeremy Jadczyk  
Senior Account Executive  
Phone (202) 421-6166  
[jeremy@constituentsdirect.com](mailto:jeremy@constituentsdirect.com)

**The Franking Group**  
499 S. Capitol St. SW #420  
Washington, D.C. 20003  
Phone: 888-624-5902

**Tele-Town Hall LLC**  
5101 MacArthur Blvd, NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, D.C. 20016  
Phone: 202-237-8571

## TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPT CREATION & APPROVAL

### SAMPLE TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPT

In order to conduct a tele-townhall meeting, your office will need to create a tele-townhall script, and have that script approved by the Franking Commission staff.

There are three scripts that offices will need:

- ❖ **Live-answer message:** This is the message you will need in the event that someone answers the phone.
- ❖ **Answering machine message:** The message played when a call is intercepted by a voicemail system or answering machine.
- ❖ **Post-call voicemail message:** This is the message for participants who remain on the call after it has concluded, and provides details on how to leave a message for the Member, or questions that were unanswered during the call.

A sample of each tele-townhall script appears below:

**Introductory Message:** Hello, this is Congressman *[Member Name here]*. I am currently conducting a live, toll-free town hall meeting over the phone to give my constituents an opportunity to ask me questions about issues in Congress and the federal government. I would be grateful if you would please press “[number]” on your phone to connect to my live, toll-free town hall meeting. Thank you! Now welcome to my meeting in progress.

**Answering Machine Message:** Hello, this is Congressman *[Member Name here]*. Tonight, I was calling constituents in the *[District Number]* Congressional District to invite them to participate in a live town hall meeting conducted over the phone, and to give you an opportunity to ask me questions about what is going on in Congress. Sorry that I missed you. Since I am home in *[State name]* on weekends and breaks, if there is something you wish to share with me, you will have other opportunities in the near future. Should you have any questions, please contact my *[District Office name]* toll-free at *[toll-free office phone number]*. Thank you and have a good evening.

**Post-call voicemail message:** Thank you for participating in my telephone town hall meeting this evening. I am sorry I was unable to get to everyone’s question tonight. Please leave my staff a voicemail with any questions or comments you may have. If this is an emergency, please contact my district office tomorrow at *[District Office number]*. Thank you once again for the opportunity to serve the people of the *[District Number]* of the state of *[State name]*.

Additional examples of tele-townhall scripts are available in the back of this guide.

### APPROVAL OF TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPTS

Please be sure to submit your tele-townhall scripts to the Franking office no later than three days before your scheduled tele-townhall event to ensure timely approval. If you are submitting a tele-townhall script for the first time, please allow additional time for approval. For scripts that have been used previously, please see the following information on the one-time approval policy for communications that are identical in substance, which are used within a single session of Congress.

## ONE-TIME APPROVAL POLICY

In the previous Congress, the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (Franking Commission) approved a policy that instituted a one-time approval process for all communications that contain substantially identical content within a session of Congress. Under the policy, if a script has been approved through the franking process, it may be used again as a template within a session of Congress, provided that only the date, time, or location have changed. The office is only required to submit notice that the previous script was used within two days of the event.

To assist offices in submitting notice of the use of an approved template in accordance with the new policy, the Committee on House Administration has created the one-time approval form. Offices may access the form on the Committee's Republican web site at <http://gop.cha.house.gov/franking/onetimeapproval.pdf>. The completed notice will be included in the permanent records of the Franking Commission and a copy of the notice forwarded to the Legislative Resource Center for inclusion in the Member's public disclosure file.

### Examples of recurring official events include:

- ❖ Town hall meetings (actual, virtual, telephone, etc.); and,
- ❖ Community/neighborhood office hours.

### Examples of communications eligible for one-time approval include:

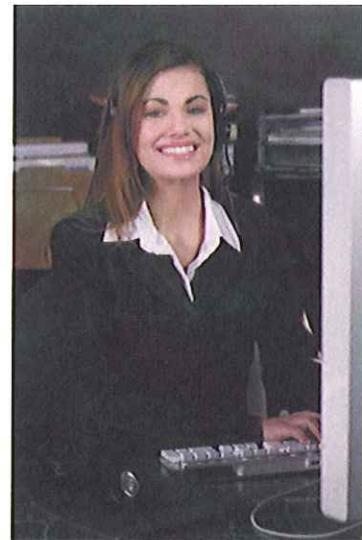
- ❖ E-mail;
- ❖ Scripts for automated telephone calls and public service announcements;
- ❖ Advertisements (newspaper, periodical, radio/TV, web banner, post-it ads, etc.); and,
- ❖ Posters and flyers, and newspaper inserts.

The content of template must comply with applicable federal law and House Rules and regulations and clearly identify the Member as the exclusive host/ sponsor of the official event.

### The primary purpose of the template must be to give notice of the:

- ❖ Event itself;
- ❖ Date, time, and location of the event; or,
- ❖ The availability of ADA accommodations at the event.

Expenses incurred in support of the printing, production, and/or distribution of a notice prepared using an approved template should be submitted to the Finance Office for payment on a completed voucher, accompanied by the vendor's original receipt or invoice, a copy of the Advisory Opinion deeming the corresponding template frankable (Advisory Opinion Certificate with copy of the original notice), and a copy of the notice for which payment is being requested.



## TIMING & FREQUENCY OF TELE-TOWNHALL EVENTS

### SCHEDULING A TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

In selecting a date for your tele-townhall event, consider the following:

- ❖ **Local/National events.** Avoid scheduling events during times when many constituents are likely to be unavailable, due to local or national events. Examples include prominent sporting events (e.g., Super Bowl, local team in NCAA playoffs, etc.) or a notable event during which many people are not home (e.g., a local parade or county fair which a large population from the district attends each year).
- ❖ **Prime time slot.** According to offices experienced in conducting tele-townhall events, the optimal timing for these calls tends to be between the hour of 7:00-8:00 p.m., local time. It is suggested that Members target this time slot, or one close to it, for best results. **For calls targeted at senior citizens, some Members also find 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. an effective time slot.**
- ❖ **Election blackout periods.** Be sure that your event does not occur during an election blackout period for your state (defined as the 90-day period preceding any election in which the Member's name appears on the ballot).
- ❖ **Proximity to last event.** Be sure that you do not contact the same geographic area more than once every few months. Many Members will divide their District by geography or other factors when scheduling calls (see section on "Frequency" below for more information).
- ❖ **Vendor availability.** Some vendors have limited availability on short notice, particularly during peak times. Schedule your event early to avoid a lack of available time slots.
- ❖ **Member schedule.** To ensure that your Member will be in town and available for a tele-townhall conducted from Washington, D.C., schedule your event at a time when the House is in session, but votes are not currently in process. Keep in mind that vendors will likely charge a sizeable fee if the event is not cancelled within a 48-hour time period preceding the scheduled event. To avoid fines, offices are advised to only schedule events when they are confident that the House schedule will permit the Member to participate. In some cases, the Member may choose to hold the tele-townhall from their district (although some offices felt that an in-person townhall format is best when Members are in the district to convey a more personal touch). In the event that the tele-townhall is conducted from the district, be sure to check the Member's district and personal schedule to ensure that the event may be accommodated.
- ❖ **Member preference.** Some Members avoid doing tele-townhalls on days they travel, as they are not as fresh. Others may prefer to conduct the events during certain days of the week when their schedules are more likely to permit the time. Be sure to gauge not only the Member's availability on their schedule, but when they feel they that they will be able to contribute best to a tele-townhall event.

### FREQUENCY OF TELE-TOWNHALL EVENTS

When determining the Member's tele-townhall schedule, be sure to consider the overall frequency of events (e.g. weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, etc.), and allowance in the office's budget for conducting tele-townhall events. Once these and all of the factors have been considered, it is best to schedule the events as far in advance as possible to ensure availability.

However, also be aware that the further in advance the event is scheduled, the greater the chance that the event may be cancelled due to a change in the House schedule or Member's itinerary. Be sure to confirm your tele-townhall vendor's cancellation policy, and cancel any unused time slots before any cancellation fees are incurred.



# PREPARING FOR YOUR TELE-TOWNHALL

## TARGETING YOUR AUDIENCE

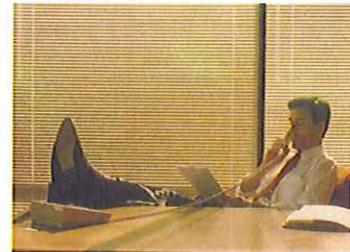
When scheduling your tele-townhall event, it is important to consider the audience since reaching everyone at once is not cost effective for most offices, and would likely not be possible due to the strain on local phone systems. Tele-townhall audiences may be segmented several ways:

- ❖ **Geography.** A large number of offices choose to segment their audience by geographical boundaries. Doing so enables the Member to reference local information in the call (e.g., “When I went to [*street in geographic area*] to fill up on gas at [*station name in local area*] it cost \$3.97 a gallon.”).
- ❖ **Demographics.** Targeting calls by demographic is an effective way to discuss issues of interest to a particular population. For instance, Members may schedule a tele-townhall on Medicare or Social Security targeting senior citizens.
- ❖ **Topic.** Occupation or interest area may also be an effective method of segmenting the audience of a tele-townhall if there is considerable interest in a particular subject. For example, in a district with a large population interested in agriculture issues, hosting a call on the Farm Bill may be beneficial.

The vendor you select for your tele-townhall event may be able to provide you a list of participants for your desired audience, or alternatively, you may purchase a list from a third party. Any list obtained, however, must adhere to Franking rules and regulations, including that the list be scrubbed of party affiliation and must be available to anyone regardless of party (for more information, contact the Republican Office of the Franking Commission at 6-0647).

## PREPARATION & TRAINING

Before holding your first tele-townhall event, it is strongly suggested that all participating parties attend at least one session with the vendor to fully understand how the tele-townhall will be administered. All individuals participating in the tele-townhall meeting, including the Member of Congress, screener(s) and moderator should attend such an event at least one day prior to the first tele-townhall. Any additional equipment that may be needed, such as a telephone headset for the screener(s), moderator and Member, should be available, and tested. Be sure to charge all equipment, and have extra batteries on hand.



## LOCATION OF MEMBER AND STAFF

As part of the planning process, the Member and staff will need to consider how many screeners, if any, will be present during the event, and whether or not the Member will personally select the question asked, or whether they will have a staff member act as a moderator. The Member will also need to determine whether or not any “special guests” will be invited on the call (for example, a senior member of the military to discuss the war in Iraq). In order for the tele-townhall to run smoothly, these decisions should be made prior to the event.

It is also strongly suggested that the Member and staff decide where they will be located during the tele-townhall before the event occurs, and ensure that the appropriate equipment (e.g. telephones, computers) are available and functioning properly in advance of the tele-townhall.

## PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

To raise awareness of a tele-townhall event, some offices choose to send media advisories to the press, or purchase advertising in local media such as a newspaper advertisement. Examples of both methods of promotion appear in the back of this guide.

## PRE-EVENT CHECKLIST

Before conducting your tele-townhall event, be sure to do the following:

- SELECT A VENDOR** after thoroughly researching price, availability and features. Contact information for several GOP tele-townhall vendors appears in the “Selecting a Tele-Townhall Vendor” section of this guide.
- DETERMINE THE AUDIENCE** for the event and obtain the appropriate list from the tele-townhall vendor or a third party. Among other requirements, remember that the list must be scrubbed of any political affiliation, and must be available to anyone regardless of party.
- SELECT A DATE AND LOCATION FOR THE EVENT** making sure to consult the House schedule, Member’s preference, availability of staff, and vendor capacity.
- CREATE THE APPROPRIATE TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPTS** including live answer, answering machine and post-call voicemail messages. Sample scripts are included in the back of this guide for your reference.
- SUBMIT THOSE SCRIPTS TO THE GOP FRANKING OFFICE FOR APPROVAL.** The GOP Franking office is available in person in Room 1216A of the Longworth House Office Building, by e-mail at [gopfranking@mail.house.gov](mailto:gopfranking@mail.house.gov), or by fax at 6-0047.
- DETERMINE THE NUMBER, ROLES AND LOCATION OF STAFF** who will be involved in the tele-townhall event, and whether or not any “special guests” will be present (*hold the time on the Member and participating staffs’ calendars with a meeting request*). Also ensure that the staff member(s) chosen to moderate or screen calls are comfortable with their respective roles, and clearly understand what their participation will entail.
- PREPARE AND TRAIN THE MEMBER AND HIS OR HER STAFF ON WHAT TO EXPECT DURING THE EVENT, AND OBTAIN THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT** including chargers and batteries for equipment that is battery operated.
- PROMOTE YOUR TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT**, if desired. An example of positive media coverage following press outreach is available in the back of this guide.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CONDUCTING A TELE-TOWNHALL, CONTACT THE REPUBLICAN FRANKING OFFICE AT 6-0647.

IN ADDITION TO OFFERING TIPS ON CONDUCTING EVENTS, STAFF MEMBERS CAN PUT YOU IN CONTACT WITH OTHER MEMBER OFFICES WHO ARE VETERAN TELE-TOWNHALL USERS.

# CONDUCTING A TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

## WHAT TO EXPECT

The format of the tele-townhall event will vary widely depending on the location and number of staff involved in the event. In the first several calls, a member of the vendor's company is usually in attendance, however as offices become more comfortable with the format, the vendor's presence is no longer needed.

Here are several common formats used:

### ❖ SCENARIO #1: A MODERATOR, SCREENER(S) AND THE MEMBER ARE PRESENT

In this format, the moderator (a member of the Member's staff) will introduce the call, and will inform callers that the Member will join the call shortly. The moderator can set the tone of the call, explaining why the Member is communicating via a tele-townhall (e.g. "greater reach," "ability to communicate while the Member is in Washington," etc.) and explain the mechanics of the call, including that participants will need to press "#\_" to ask a question. The moderator will then hand the call off to the Member for his or her prepared remarks. The Member may discuss topics of local or national interest, and reiterate how callers may ask a question. As calls come in, the screener(s) (some offices have more than one screener) will ensure there is the appropriate diversity of topics, and that the caller is not disruptive or unintelligible. The Member and/or moderator will have the opportunity to see only the calls that have passed the screener(s), and may then choose which of those pre-screened calls the Member wishes to answer. At the conclusion of the call, which typically lasts one hour, the callers that remain on the line will hear a recording instructing them to leave a question for future follow-up or to contact the District office with an urgent question.

### ❖ SCENARIO #2: A SCREENER AND THE MEMBER ARE PRESENT

This format is similar to the one above, except that instead of a moderator, the Member or screener(s) acts as the "host" of the call, performing the functions of the moderator.

### ❖ SCENARIO #3: ONLY THE MEMBER IS PRESENT

In this format, the Member answers all calls without screening them for topic or tone, and no other staff members participate.

## CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Depending on the time and date of the event, as well as factors beyond the office's control, it is important to plan for the unexpected during a tele-townhall event. For example, if the House is in session, a sample script in the event that a vote is called may be helpful. Also, an established protocol in the event of technical difficulties is helpful (e.g. if the call suddenly drops or the batteries die in a headset). It may be helpful to select a specific individual, such as the moderator, to have a script ready in case of emergency (e.g., if the Member's headset suddenly stops working and there is silence on the call, the emergency script may contain a message about "experiencing technical difficulties" and ask callers to stay on the line briefly until the issue is resolved, or if the issue is not solvable, that the call will need to be rescheduled "due to unforeseen technical issues").



## DURATION OF THE EVENT

Most tele-townhalls last an hour, due to cost and availability. Many vendors charge significant fees for overages, so it is imperative that the screener(s) or moderator are keeping a close eye on the time elapsed since the start of the call, and provide the Member with guidance on when to ask the last question and begin to wrap up the call, or the Member. Sample signs are included in this guide to assist offices in communicating with Members during their tele-townhall events.

## TELE-TOWNHALL DO'S & DON'TS

The following “do’s and don’ts” were provided by Member offices experienced in conducting tele-townhall events:

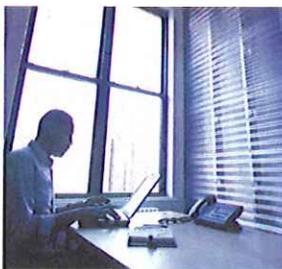
- ❖ **DO** keep the pace of the call moving; research shows that most people will leave the call after the first five minutes, but are more likely to stay on the line if questions are taken in quick succession, as they believe their question may eventually be answered.
- ❖ **DO** prepare talking points on subjects you know are “hot topics” in your office’s district and have those available for the Member’s use.
- ❖ **DO** consider sending “thank you” notes following the call to all of those who participated, if their names and addresses are available.
- ❖ **DO** respond to voicemails left by participants who were unable to ask their question within 48 hours, whenever possible.
- ❖ **DO** remember to drive participants to your web site repeatedly during your tele-townhall, and encourage sign-ups for your e-newsletter or other communications.
- ❖ **DO** ask participants in your voicemail message following the call to leave their e-mail addresses after the tone if they would like to receive future communications from the Member. Doing so builds your subscribed communications e-mail list, which is not subject to many restrictions that apply to “unsolicited mass communications” (consult the Republican Franking office for more information).
- ❖ **DO** mention topics of interest in the district, such as major construction areas or road closures, that are likely to be on the minds of residents.
- ❖ **DO** create a “do not call” list for those who say they do not wish to be contacted for future tele-townhall events.
- ❖ **DO** mention that the Member is in Washington, D.C., as some participants will confuse the Member with their state representative.
- ❖ **DO** mention D.C./District office constituent services that may be of interest to callers, such as arranging Capitol or White House tours.
- ❖ **DO** reference at least one legislative objective in the message left for those who were not available for the call so that constituents gets an abbreviated update on what their Member of Congress is working on.
- ❖ **DON'T** mention the number of participants on the call; the calls tend to be more effective if the audience believes it is an “intimate” conversation with their Member of Congress.
- ❖ **DON'T** schedule your tele-townhall too late or early in the evening for best results. The 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. (local time) slot has proven to be most effective. Some Members also find 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. a successful time to reach senior citizens.



## TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT CHECKLIST

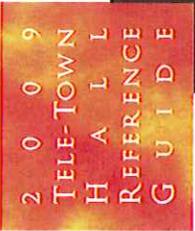
On the day of your tele-townhall event, be sure to do the following:

- PERFORM AN EQUIPMENT CHECK** to ensure that phones, computers, headsets and any other equipment needed are available, and that batteries and other back-up materials are on-hand.
- GATHER TALKING POINTS** on issues of importance to the district, and have those at an easy reach from the Member during the event (if a moderator is present, he or she may want to assume custody of any background materials, and locate the appropriate handout for each question during the time the Member answers the preceding question).
- PRINT OUT THE FRANKING-APPROVED LIVE CALL SCRIPT FOR THE MEMBER** and place it in easy reach for his or her use during the call.
- ASSEMBLE VENDOR-PROVIDED MATERIALS AND CONTACT INFORMATION** and keep them nearby in case questions arise, or help is needed.
- CONVENE PARTICIPATING STAFF** several minutes before the scheduled start of the tele-townhall event to ensure everyone is available and prepared.
- PRINT OUT & USE SIGNS** to remind the Member to repeatedly ask participants to press “# \_” to ask a question, notify participants of the time remaining, and announce when last question will be answered. Signs have been included on the next several pages to assist offices with this step.
- WATCH THE TIME DURING THE EVENT.** As part of the pre-event planning, it should be determined whether the moderator, screener or Member will be in charge of watching time. It is important not to exceed the allotted time frame, as large fines may be assessed by the vendor due to overages.



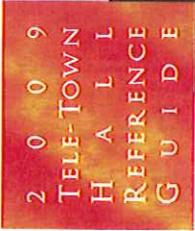
IN CHOOSING THE APPROPRIATE LOCATION FOR THE TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT, BE SURE TO SELECT A QUIET AREA FREE FROM DISTRACTION.

STAFF MAY ALSO WISH TO POST A “TELE-TOWNHALL IN PROGRESS” NOTICE TO ALERT STAFF AND VISITORS TO REMAIN AS QUIET AS POSSIBLE.



# LAST QUESTION





# 10-MINUTES LEFT



2 0 0 9  
TELE-TOWN  
H A L L  
REFERENCE  
G U I D E



# PRESS # TO ASK A QUESTION



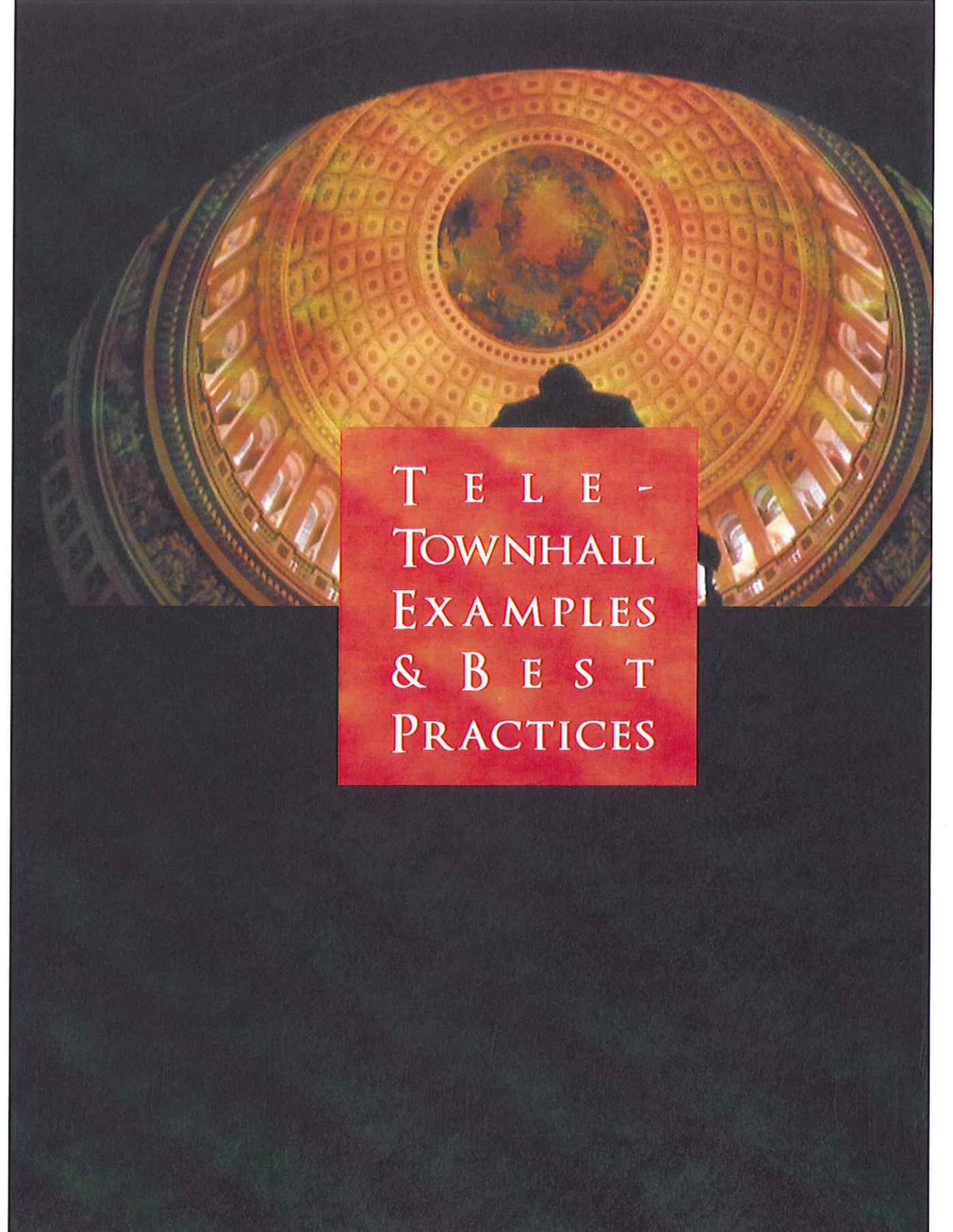
## AFTER YOUR TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

- ❑ **REQUEST A COPY OF THE QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE TELE-TOWNHALL** from the vendor, and keep track of the topics most frequently asked during the call.
- ❑ **RETURN ALL VOICEMAILS LEFT FOLLOWING THE EVENT** within a few days after the event. The optimal timeframe to return messages is within 48 hours.
- ❑ **CONSIDER SENDING "THANK YOU" CARDS** to all participants who dialed into the call. A sample thank you note appears in the back of this guide.
- ❑ **POST INFORMATION ON THE TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT TO THE MEMBER'S WEB SITE** within a few days after the event. Information posted may include the issues covered during the call, specific questions asked, or in some cases even an audio feed of the call. However, Members are advised to think carefully before posting audio, as snippets of the calls may be used by unauthorized parties, and because it may take away from the small-group "feel" of the event.
- ❑ **MEET WITH THE MEMBER, MODERATOR, SCREENER AND ALL OTHER STAFF INVOLVED IN THE FIRST TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT** to create a list of what worked well, and what could be improved before the next event.
- ❑ **SCHEDULE THE NEXT TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT** consulting the pre-event and event checklists to ensure all of the necessary steps have been taken to conduct subsequent events successfully.



SENDING TELE-TOWNHALL PARTICIPANTS A THANK YOU NOTE SIGNED BY THE MEMBER IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO ENSURE THAT THE POSITIVE INTERACTION THAT CONSTITUENTS EXPERIENCE ON A CALL CONTINUES EVEN AFTER THE EVENT HAS CONCLUDED.

A THANK YOU NOTE IS ALSO AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO DIRECT CONSTITUENTS TO THE MEMBER'S WEB SITE, DISTRICT OFFICE FOR HELP WITH LOCAL ISSUES, OR TO SIGN UP FOR THE MEMBER'S E-NEWSLETTER.



TELE-  
TOWNHALL  
EXAMPLES  
& BEST  
PRACTICES

## EXAMPLE #1: TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPT # 1

The following script was submitted by Rep. Kevin Brady (R-Texas) for a tele-townhall in which participants may join the call simply by staying on the line. The answering machine message also directs constituents back to Rep. Brady's web site, and provides a toll-free number for his district office.

### **Introductory Message**

Hello this is Congressman Kevin Brady; I am currently conducting a live toll free town hall meeting over the telephone, to give constituents an opportunity to ask me questions on what's happening here in Washington, DC. Please stay on the line while asked to automatically connect you to my live town hall meeting. Again this is Congressman Kevin Brady and welcome to my telephone town hall meeting which is now in progress. If you prefer not to receive this type of call in the future, please press number 2 on your phone keypad now, thank you.

### **Answering Machine Message**

Hi this is Congressman Kevin Brady, tonight I've been calling constituents in the 8th district to invite you to participate in a live town hall meeting, conducted over the telephone, and to give you an opportunity to ask questions about what's going on here in Washington, sorry I missed you . Should you have any questions please contact my district office toll free at 1.877.441.5700. Also, if you would like to receive some important updates I encourage you to visit my website at <http://www.house.gov/brady>. Thank you, and have a good evening.



## EXAMPLE #2: TELE-TOWNHALL SCRIPT #2

The following script is an example of an introductory message, answering machine message, and message for callers who remain on the line after the call has ended, which were submitted by Rep. Vern Ehlers' (R-Mich.) office.

### **Introductory Message:**

“Hi, this is Congressman Vern Ehlers. I am about to join you **LIVE** for a town hall meeting on the telephone. Please **stay on the line** if you would like to ask me a question or talk with me! You may have to wait several minutes while I continue to call others in your area asking them to participate. When I join you on the line, you may have the opportunity to ask me a question and will hear me answer questions from your neighbors in the community. Again, if you'd like to join the conversation, please stay on the line and we'll have a chance to talk person to person.”

### **Answering Machine Message:**

“Hi, this is Congressman Vern Ehlers. I'm sorry I missed you today. I was calling to invite you to join a telephone town hall meeting I'm holding this evening. I hold these frequently and there is a good chance I will contact you again. In the meantime, if you have any immediate concerns for me, please call my local office at 616-451-8383.”

### **Message for callers who stay on the line after the call has ended:**

“This is Congressman Vern Ehlers. Thank you for participating in my telephone town hall meeting today! I apologize if I couldn't get to your question this evening, but, if you still want to talk, after the tone leave a message with your name, address and telephone number, and either I or my staff will get back to you. Thanks again for your participation.”



## EXAMPLE #3: TELE-TOWNHALL THANK YOU NOTE

Representative Brian Bilbray (R-Calif.) recently sent this follow up note to participants of a tele-townhall event. In addition to thanking participants, Rep. Bilbray is also able to tie the concerns heard on the call to legislation he introduced, and provide contact information for future questions or issues that arise.



Thank you for taking time out of your evening to participate in last Thursday night's telephone townhall meeting. These forums have become a great way for me to interact with you and ask your advice about issues such as illegal immigration, alternative energy and budget reform.

The dialogue that we have shared has also become a great sounding board for ideas that I can carry back to Washington D.C. It was clear from our discussion that the issue of illegal immigration is of paramount importance to our community. That's why I recently partnered with Rep. Heath Shuler (D-NC) to introduce the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act of 2007. The SAVE Act has broad bi-partisan support and would implement measures to secure America's borders, create mandatory work authorization verification and reduce illegal immigration through interior enforcement. For a copy of the SAVE Act, please visit [www.house.gov/bilbray](http://www.house.gov/bilbray).

One of the key elements of these telephone townhalls is your ability to directly interact with me about your experiences and beliefs concerning the major issues facing our neighborhoods, state and country. During our discussion, budget reform was one such major issue that came up repeatedly. As a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am fighting to end backroom deals and bring increased transparency to the budget process so that you know exactly where your tax dollars are being spent.

Again, thank you for taking part. In the coming months, I plan on conducting additional telephone townhalls and I hope you will participate and share your thoughts and feelings about the issues you care about. If you have any questions, please feel free to call my district office at (858) 350-1150.

Sincerely,

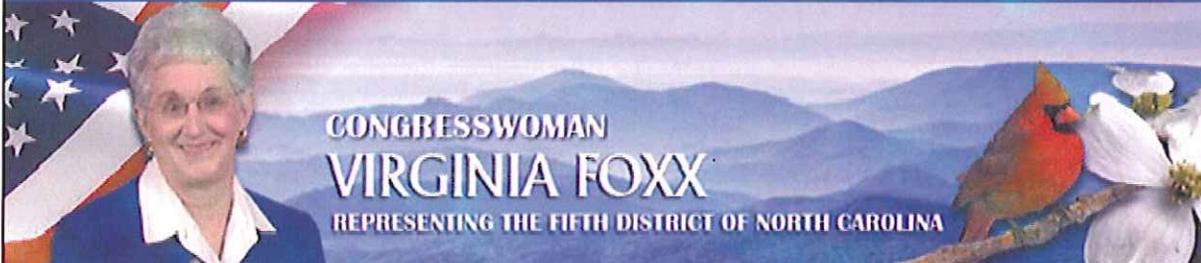
Brian P. Bilbray  
Member of Congress

*This mailing was prepared, published and mailed at taxpayer expense*

## EXAMPLE #4: E-NEWSLETTER PROMOTING TELE-TOWNHALL

Representative Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) created the e-newsletter below to publicize an upcoming tele-townhall event, and invite constituents to dial-in if they wish to participate in the event. The e-newsletter also provides the opportunity for Rep. Foxx to focus on specific issues by allowing constituents to select the topics of interest to them.

October 24, 2007
Unsubscribe
Update My Profile



**CONGRESSWOMAN  
VIRGINIA FOXX**  
REPRESENTING THE FIFTH DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

**Congresswoman Virginia Foxx, Representing the 5th District of North Carolina**

[Home](#) | [Search for Legislation](#) | [Search the U.S. House](#) | [Contact Rep. Foxx](#)

**Do you plan to participate in Congresswoman Foxx's Telephone Town Hall on Tuesday, October 30th?**

Yes.

No.

Unsure.

**What topics do you plan to discuss with Congresswoman Foxx during the Telephone Town Hall?**

Education

Agriculture

Defense

Environment

Healthcare

Taxes

**Foxx invites you to participate in a Telephone Town Hall on October 30**

**Constituents can call into the telephone town hall from anywhere in the Fifth District**

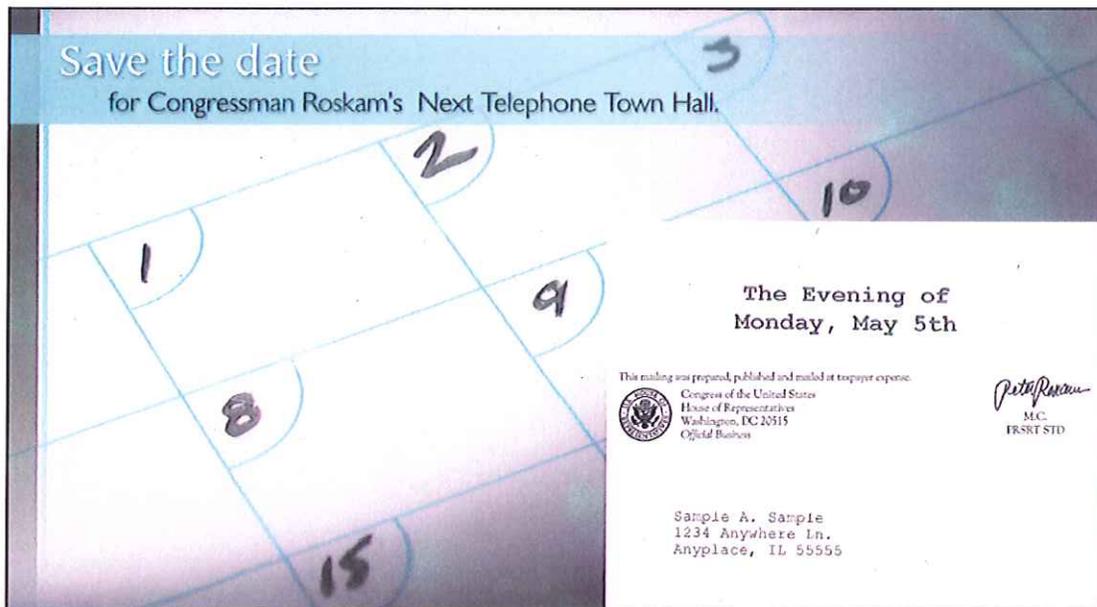
WASHINGTON, D.C.—As a constituent in North Carolina's Fifth Congressional District, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx invites you to participate in a telephone town hall that she will be hosting on Tuesday, October 30. Constituents can call into the town hall meeting by dialing 1-877-850-4133.

"As your member of Congress, it's important to hear directly the issues that are important to you," Foxx said. "On Tuesday, October 30 from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm, I am hosting a "Telephone Town Hall Meeting." It's easy to participate – just call the toll free number 1-877-850-4133. You can listen in or ask questions at our telephone town hall meeting by calling 1-877-850-4133. The password for the call is F-O-X-X."

Constituents will be connected to a live conference call with

## EXAMPLE #5: MAILER ANNOUNCING TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

Rep. Peter Roskam (R-Ill.) sent out the mailer below promoting his upcoming tele-townhall event. The mailer helps constituents understand how to participate in the call, and lists a telephone number for Rep. Roskam's office, as well as his official web site, for more information.



### Your opinion is important to Congressman Peter Roskam

“Gas prices keep going up, healthcare costs are increasing and it is getting harder to stretch a dollar at the grocery store — Your opinion is important to me. I want to hear what you think we should be doing in Washington to give your family relief.”

— Congressman Peter Roskam

[www.roskam.house.gov](http://www.roskam.house.gov)

Congressman Peter Roskam is holding a “telephone town hall” meeting to personally discuss issues that affect you and your family.

A “telephone town hall” is just like a traditional town hall meeting where you and your neighbors can voice concerns directly to the Congressman—but without ever needing to leave your home.

Congressman Roskam will be calling you directly at the time and date listed on the front of this mailing. If you want to participate in the telephone town hall all you need to do is answer your phone and listen to the instructions. **It's that easy.**

This is your opportunity to voice your concerns and let Peter Roskam know how he can best represent you and your family in Congress.

Be sure to save the date on the other side of this card to participate in Congressman Roskam's next telephone town hall.

**Busy that night?**  
Congressman Roskam still wants to hear from you. Call his office at 630-893-9698 or visit his website.



## EXAMPLE #6: TELE-TOWNHALL NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

The clipping below advertises a tele-townhall meeting for the office of Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.) via a newspaper advertisement.



## EXAMPLE #7: MEDIA COVERAGE FROM TELE-TOWNHALL EVENT

Rep. Pete Hoekstra's (R-Mich.) office sent an advisory promoting their tele-townhall meeting, resulting in several positive media placements including the article below, which appeared on the front page of *The Detroit News*. One constituent who has multiple sclerosis noted that the tele-townhall format was valuable to him because he would not have been able to attend a traditional townhall event.



On Hoekstra's tele-hall, constituents repeatedly said how much they liked the format. "I like your little forum," said caller Tracy, who followed Hoekstra's instruction to press \*3 to get in line to go live and ask his question about why politicians always seem to favor big business over the little guy. "It's so nice to talk to you," said Brian from Cadillac, before launching into his concern about the nation's leaky borders. By the end of the hour, 27 constituents had asked questions. Others, like Bellinger, who didn't ask a question, could record a question or comment. **Larry Dews, a Hoekstra constituent in Spring Lake who has multiple sclerosis, said he wouldn't have been able to get to a traditional town hall.** "It's a good idea. I want to be involved," Dews said.

on the telephone.  
Holland said in a  
her constituents  
ion and got to  
worry busy

# EXAMPLE #8: CONSTITUENT GUIDE REFERENCING TELE-TOWNHALL

Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) included tele-townhalls in the “district information” section of a constituent guide pictured below. The mailer reinforces that tele-townhall events are a service to constituents, while also promoting upcoming tele-townhall events. It also offers constituents the opportunity to sign-up for events ahead of time.

## Congressman Kevin McCarthy: 2008 Constituent Guide

### HOT TOPICS

**Housing Market**  
 My website offers advice and guidance from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to help you cope with the current market. Additionally, my district offices are available to help resolve any problems you may have with the federal government on housing issues. If you are worried about home foreclosures, please visit my website to access more information regarding HUD and other non profit programs like the HopeNow alliance.

**Changes for Television**  
 By February 17, 2009, all TV stations will be required to switch from analog to digital broadcasting. If you receive your TV signal from an antenna, you should consult your TV user's guide to see if it is digitally equipped. If not, you will only have to purchase a converter box. To ease the process, the federal government is providing coupons to help you purchase these converters. For more information on these changes or to receive a coupon, please contact my district offices.

### CONSTITUENT SERVICES

**Veterans' Assistance**  
 My offices are here to help you get the care you deserve. Please call my local office for assistance with veterans' benefits, eligibility determinations, Veterans' Affairs home loans, and replacements of medals earned.

**Medicare and Social Security**  
 My offices are here to assist you receive the care and benefits you deserve. We can obtain the status of pending cases, expedite answers to questions and trace missing checks. For questions or assistance, please call my district offices.

**Passports**  
 General passport applications can be found on the U.S. Department of State's website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). If you have difficulty obtaining your passport, contact my offices and we will do all we can to help.

### DISTRICT INFORMATION

**Tele-townhall Meetings**  
 Last year, we conducted several tele-townhall meetings. They have been very informative and a great way for me to hear your concerns and ideas. We will continue to utilize these meetings in 2008. Tele-townhall meetings allow you the opportunity to voice your concerns and listen to your neighbors and me about key issues in the district and pending legislation, all in the comfort of your home. If you haven't participated in a tele-townhall meeting, call my district offices to sign up.

**Mobile Office Schedule**  
 If you wish to voice your concerns but do not live near one of our district offices, meet with one of my staff members in your own community. There are eleven different locations across our district to make ourselves more accessible to your needs. Please visit my website to get the full schedule of our mobile offices and find out when we are available in your neighborhood.

For a complete list of services or to sign up for email updates, visit my website <http://kevinmcCarthy.house.gov> and click on constituent services.



**Atascadero District Office**  
5805 Capistrano Avenue, Suite C  
Atascadero, CA 93422  
(805) 461-1034

**Bakersfield District Office**  
4100 Empire Drive, Suite 150  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
(661) 327-3611

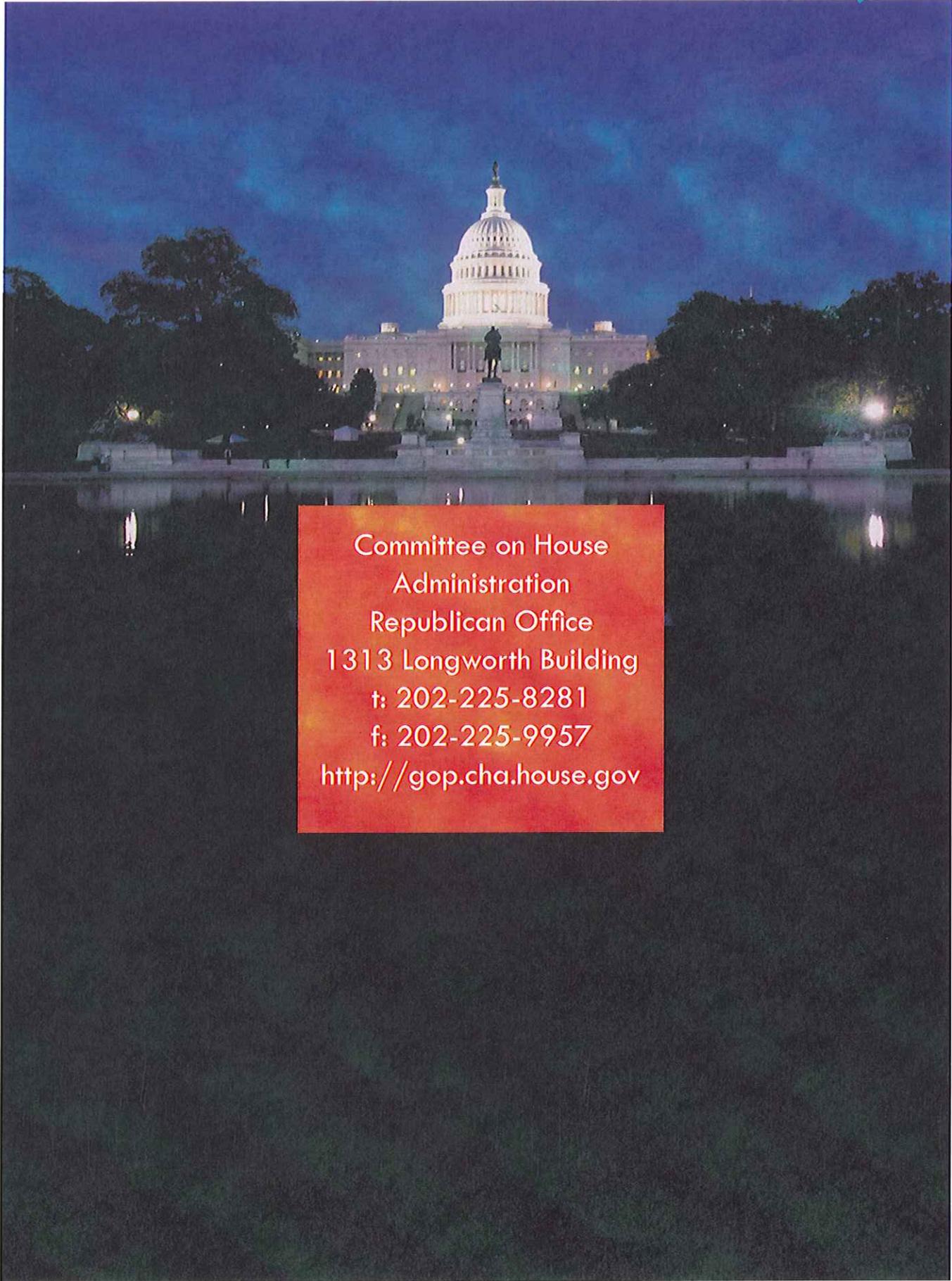
[KEVINMCCARTHY.HOUSE.GOV](http://KEVINMCCARTHY.HOUSE.GOV)

Washington Office  
1523 Longworth Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
PUBLIC DOCUMENT  
OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
This mailing was prepared,  
published and mailed at  
 taxpayer expense.  
Printed on recycled paper.

# EXAMPLE #9: E-NEWSLETTER REFERENCING TELE-TOWNHALL

Committee on House Administration Ranking Republican Member Dan Lungren (R-Calif.) featured tele-townhalls in an e-newsletter sent to constituents, with options to forward the newsletter to a friend, sign up for updates, and other interactive features. By providing constituents an opportunity to “opt-in,” the Member is able to grow his subscribed communications list.

The screenshot shows the website for Congressman Dan Lungren, dated November 27, 2007. The page features a navigation menu with links for Home, Issues, Contact Us, News, Services, Biography, 3rd District, and Committees. The main content area is titled "TELE-TOWN HALL MEETINGS" and includes a "Dear Friend," salutation. The text describes the Tele-Town Halls as a new technology for connecting constituents with their Members of Congress. It includes sections for "How it Works," "Pioneer" (where Lungren shares his experience), "Empowered" (discussing constituent concerns), and "Impact" (highlighting healthcare issues). A prominent "Town Hall in Folsom Tomorrow!" announcement is scheduled for Wednesday, November 28, 2007, from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at Folsom City Hall. Below the announcement is a form for "Please Feel Free to Tell a Friend" with three rows of "E-mail:" labels and input fields. At the bottom, there is an "E-MAIL UPDATES" section with a "Click Here" button and a note: "\*By subscribing to my e-mail updates, you are authorizing me to send you e-mail updates from my personal e-mail account to your e-mail account." A computer mouse is visible in the foreground, pointing towards the "Click Here" button.



Committee on House  
Administration  
Republican Office  
1313 Longworth Building  
t: 202-225-8281  
f: 202-225-9957  
<http://gop.cha.house.gov>