



# BEST PRACTICES

## *A GUIDE TO WHAT'S WORKING*

CHAIRMAN DEBORAH PRYCE    SECRETARY JOHN T. DOOLITTLE

## CONGRESSIONAL BLOG



## CONGRESSMAN MIKE CONAWAY

### Enclosures:

- Dear Colleague
- Blog FAQ's
- Best Practices document providing additional information

### Staff Contact:

- Anna Koch with Congressman Mike Conaway, 202-225-3605
- Alisha Perkins with Congressman Doolittle, 202-225-2511

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

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COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE  
THROUGH EVERY NEWS OUTLET

MAXIMIZE THE POWER OF THE INTERNET BY STARTING  
YOUR OWN CONGRESSIONAL BLOG

Dear Colleague,

Over the past several months, my office has experimented with different ways to better communicate our Republican message to our constituents back home. With the growing number of media news outlets, voters now have the option of seeking out alternative sources of news. With all these new choices available, I have found that it is important not to forget the rapidly increasing role of the internet.

The power of the internet is significantly impacting the way people all over country receive their news. Last November, my staff talked me into starting our own BLOG linked directly to my Congressional website. It has been a huge success. Posting a daily blog entry communicates my message to thousands of constituents and news outlets immediately in an unfiltered and unbiased manner.

My staff and I share the responsibility of posting daily commentary; providing my constituents with an open door to the inner workings of the congressional office. We have received nothing but positive feedback from constituents and it has been shared, featured and posted on various other websites both locally and nationally and has been read by thousands of people.

I encourage you to visit my BLOG by logging on to my congressional website at [www.conaway.house.gov](http://www.conaway.house.gov) and clicking on the word "BLOG" on the top menu. Below, I have pasted an example of a recent blog posting:



- Free Speech for Everyone - Not Just the Media Elites - The Future Is Clean  
A Great Hypocrisy in Our National Energy Policy - Building Local -



There is a Great Hypocrisy in Our National Energy Policy. That is precisely why I introduced an amendment to the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill that would link funding for LIHEAP to domestic exploration for natural gas and oil in ANWR and OCS.

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is important for poor families all over this country. The purpose of the program is to provide assistance to low income families to pay their heating and cooling bills. Since the 1980s when this program was created, its purchasing power has diminished annually as a result of rising energy prices.

Many policy makers have argued that we need to keep up with higher prices by raising the amount of money we spend on the LIHEAP Program. However, the answer to the problem of soaring home energy bills is NOT to throw billions of

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Internet

BLOGGING is cheap, easy and a great way to communicate a positive message. For more information on how to start a BLOG please contact Ken Spain in my office at (202) 225-3605. I hope that you will find this helpful as you continue to communicate with your constituents via the internet.

Sincerely,

K. Michael Conaway  
Member of Congress

## Congressional Blog

### 5 reasons to start a blog

- Sends your message to the media and your constituents unfiltered
- Organizes information cleanly and efficiently
- Brands your member
- Targets your most influential constituents
- Opens the door to the *New Media*

### Some FAQ's on starting a blog

#### 1. How difficult is it to start a blog?

The setup and design is easy because the software has already been written for you. The most difficult part is designing the template you want to use.

#### 2. How much time does it take to update the blog?

This varies. A good blog will update at least once a day. Once you have the content you can update the blog in less than 5 minutes and you can teach anyone how to update the blog. It is very easy. The great thing about it is that everyone in your DC office, as well as your District offices, can be involved with blogging on different issues.

#### 3. Do you recommend opening comments to your blog?

It depends. Some will argue that a blog must allow comments to remain effective. Blog software such as WordPress offers a lot of functionality to control comments. You can also put 'rules' on your blog, which allows you to control which comments are posted and which aren't.

#### 4. What can I do to make my Blog popular?

Good content is key. Blog entries need to be more than a press release. It should be more casual, with links to other sources. It should act as an un-filtered way to reach out to constituents. It is a great way to reach down to a personal level.

#### 5. How do you reach out to the blogging community?

You should treat bloggers in the same way that you treat a member of the press. The press secretary should obtain a blogger media list from conference and begin to include them in your press release or any blog entries that you feel are newsworthy for the bloggers.



## CONGRESSIONAL BLOG

MEMBER: REP. MIKE CONAWAY

STAFF CONTACT: ANNA KOCH, PRESS SECRETARY

### ABOUT THIS EVENT:

Congressman Conaway's Congressional blog allows him to deliver an unfiltered message to targeted constituents and the media.

### PREPARATION

#### **Who is involved?**

The entire Conaway staff is involved in our blog. There are only two people that administer the blog, but almost everyone in the office (including interns and our District staff) have blogged at least once on issues that are pertinent to their job.

#### **Are any outside groups involved?**

Outside individuals are allowed to make comments on the blog. However, the comments are not automatically posted – it goes through the blog administrator in our office first, and then is posted (just to make sure there is nothing explicit, etc.). All comments are posted, good and bad, as long as they are clean. The particular software that we use, WordPress, offers a lot of functionality that allows you to control comments. You can also put 'rules' on your blog, which allows you to control which comments are posted.

#### **Timeframe for preparation:**

Developing the blog is very easy, quick, simple and self-explanatory once it is set up with the systems administrator's help. The longest process is the template design. However, one may shorten this process by using the general website banner.

### PRESS COMPONENT

#### **What press did you invite?**

Once the blog is established, and the is word out to the bloggers, depending on the issue, the bloggers will frequent the site. When you have an entry written by your boss that you feel is blogworthy to the national blogs, send it to your blog list in an "In Case You Missed It"-type format.

#### **What went into your press plan for the event?**

There is really no plan or agenda that comes with a blog. Having a blog is very low-maintenance, as long as the office updates it on a daily basis.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### **Structure of the Blog:**

Our blog has the basic day-to-day structure. We blog almost daily (depending on how busy the week is), and it is very easy to navigate. It is a little harder to keep up the blog during long recesses, so looking to your district office for blog entries during those times is a good idea. We have all of our postings categorized (energy, immigration, etc.), so that people can search by topic. We also have entries archived by month/year if you want to search that way. In order for someone to leave a comment, they must have a username and password, which is easy to set up. The writing style needs to be casual, unlike your official website, letters, and other correspondence with constituents. It is an informal, unfiltered way for your boss to instantly communicate.