

# The Power of Advocacy

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# Session Agenda

1. Hunger in Ohio
2. Ohio Anti-Hunger Advocacy Priorities
3. What is Advocacy and Why Engage in it
4. Key Steps to Being Successful
5. Tools Available



# Hunger in Ohio

## Current Situation

- More than a third of the people in our state are living in households with incomes that make them eligible for help from a foodbank.
- 1 in 6 of our neighbors and 1 in 4 of our children struggle to access enough food for an active and healthy lifestyle.

## How come?

- Many factors contribute to food insecurity and the increasing demand for emergency food, including:
  - home utilities
  - health care
  - higher education
  - housing and transportation
  - rising food costs
  - wage stagnation

# More Than Just Feeding Our Hungry Neighbor



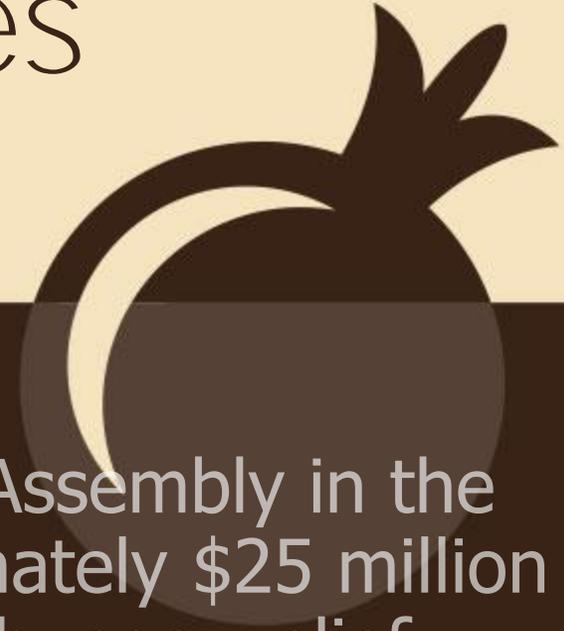
- Food insecurity and hunger are major public health crises and directly contribute to the rapidly rising cost of health care.
- The connection between hunger and negative healthcare outcomes drives up costs for the state and for all Ohioans. Hunger costs Ohio more than \$6.97 billion in direct costs related to health care, lost educational attainment and diminished productivity.

# MOF Federal Policy Priorities

- Ensure the Federal Budget Protects a Strong Safety Net
- Ensure the Next Farm Bill Reduces Hunger in America
- Reduce Hunger Through Federal Spending Legislation



# MOF State Policy Priorities



## **State Budget Request:**

Mid-Ohio Foodbank is asking the Ohio General Assembly in the upcoming 2018-2019 budget to invest approximately \$25 million per fiscal year in a comprehensive approach to hunger relief.

The people we serve would be the direct beneficiaries of more fresh produce, protein items, and wholesome, nutritious food that we all need to thrive.

# MOF State Policy Priorities

## **State Budget Request:**

- The Annual \$25 Million Request Will Fund Proven Initiatives, the Ohio Food Program and the Ohio Agricultural Clearance Program



# What is Advocacy?

Advocacy (n.) *The American Heritage Dictionary*:

1. The act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, an idea, or policy

Advocate (n.) *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*:

1. One who argues or pleads for a cause or proposal

Advocacy encompasses the actions we take to effect change, usually aimed toward influencing policy, practice or attitudes.

Advocacy can take many forms but will always involve action:

- Educating
- Participating
- Contacting
- Encouraging

# Are you an Advocate?

- By a show of hands, who has advocated on behalf of our hungry neighbors?

# Mid-Ohio Foodbank Advocacy

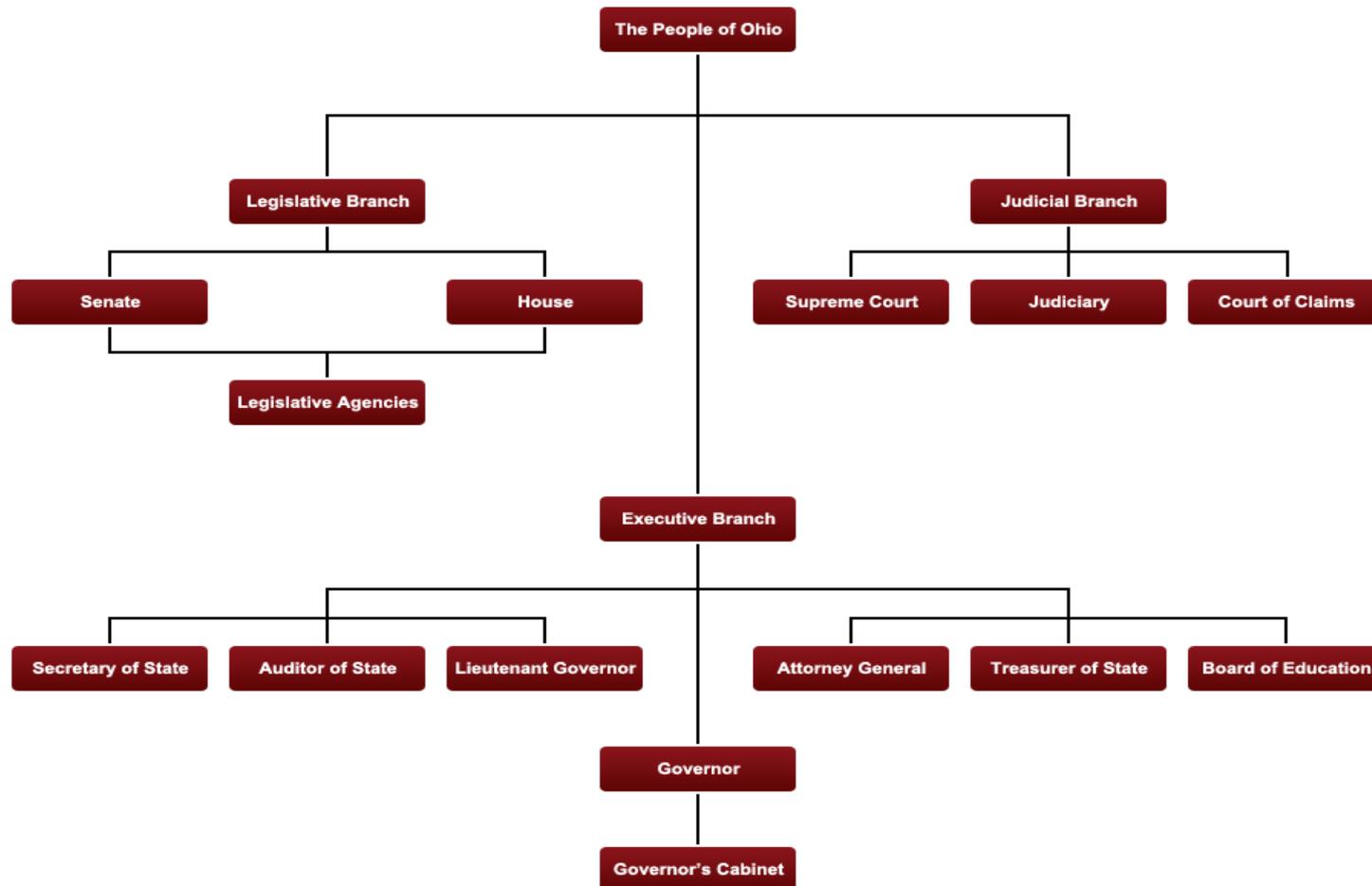
- Target elected officials through grassroots and grassstop campaigns
- Maintain communications with elected officials surrounding hunger and policy issues

# Mid-Ohio Foodbank Advocacy

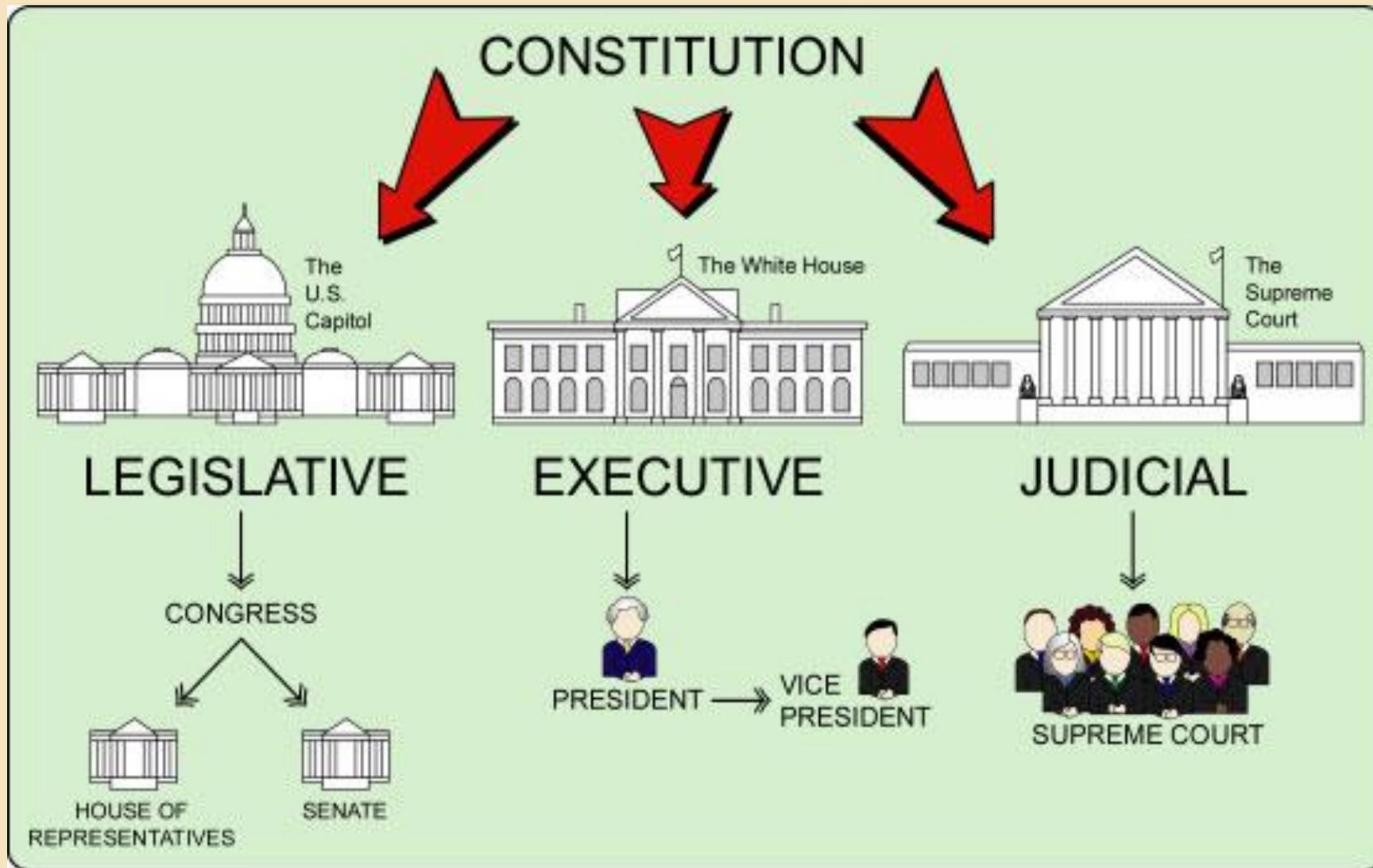
- Mid-Ohio Foodbank works with our elected officials to create programs that help do the following:
  - Increase opportunity among the people we serve
  - Maintain longstanding bipartisan commitments to protect anti-hunger programs from budget cuts and harmful policy changes

# State Government

State of Ohio Organizational Chart



# Federal Government



# Why Engage Your Legislator?

- Legislative action can be most effective
- **Sometimes it's the only effective action**
- Helps you to define your issue
- Creates positive publicity
- Gains you powerful allies

# You're The Expert!

- Most legislators are generalists
- You work directly with constituents and know the impacts of policy on constituents
- You see changes and trends in communities first

# Know Your Legislator!

- Find out history, areas of interest, past involvement
- **Tell legislators what you're doing for their community**
- Know the issues and share your knowledge
- Ask for what you want
- **It's all about the personal touch**
- Call and find out who your primary contact for your issue will be. Staff are very important.
- **You don't have to do it by yourself**

# Tools for Success

- Constituent call
- Site visit
- District office visit
- DC visit
- Call-in days
- Petitions
- Letters of support
- Resolutions, proclamations
- Traditional and social media
- Client Stories

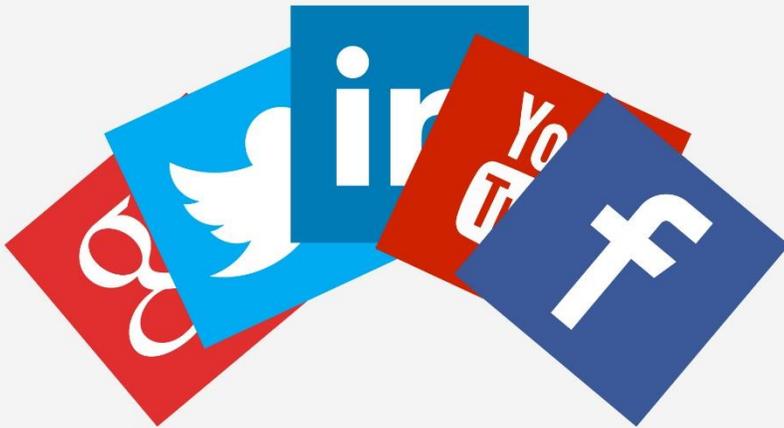


# Model Invitation Letter



Please reference your  
packet for a sample letter

# Social Media



Facebook:

- It's National Nutrition Month in March! At our foodbank, we see a direct connection between hunger and negative healthcare outcomes and it is costly to our state. In fact, hunger currently costs Ohio nearly \$7 billion in direct costs related to health care, lost educational attainment, and diminished productivity. #EndHungerOhio

Twitter:

- Have you signed our petition yet to ensure farmers can keep providing extra food to the hungry? Sign on today!  
<http://bit.ly/2kqk52s> #EndHungerOhio
- Hunger is completely preventable. Join us to ensure that OH families know where their next meal will come from:  
<http://bit.ly/2kqk52s>

# Ideas for Successful Site Visits

- Basic tour
- Community Meeting
- Activity Based
- Client and Program Interaction



# How to Get Their Attention?

- Persuasive data
- Impactful stories
- Clear information – your ask!
- Outcomes and other data demonstrating past successes
- Secondary positive/negative outcomes of the issue/need

# Compelling Stories

Data is always more compelling when paired with stories to put **a “face” to the bigger picture** and personalize the issue

# Success Stories

**If possible, it's great to get success stories or testimonies of gratitude in front of legislators to provide examples (beyond the data) of the justification for your "ask."**

# Your “Ask”

Never assume that any legislator or legislative aide is familiar with all of the details of your program or **“ask”**— not even your champions.

# Basic Messages for Lawmakers

- Access to food can stabilize struggling families, make Ohioans healthier, support Ohio workers **and stimulate Ohio's** economy.
- **Hungry children can't learn, hungry adults can't compete for** jobs and hungry seniors are less independent.

# Things to Remember When Contacting Your Legislator

- It matters how we contact legislators
- Be specific in your ask
- Be personal
- Remember human nature
- **Don't underestimate your influence**

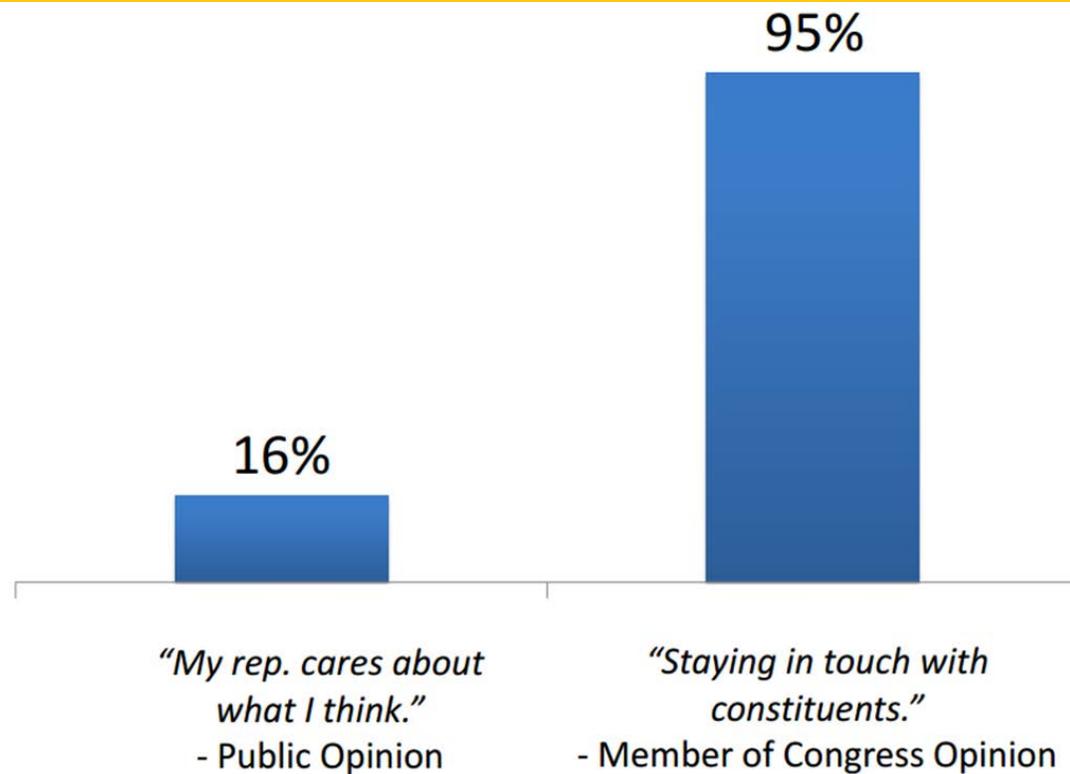


# Advocacy Roadblocks

What is currently preventing you from engaging in advocacy?

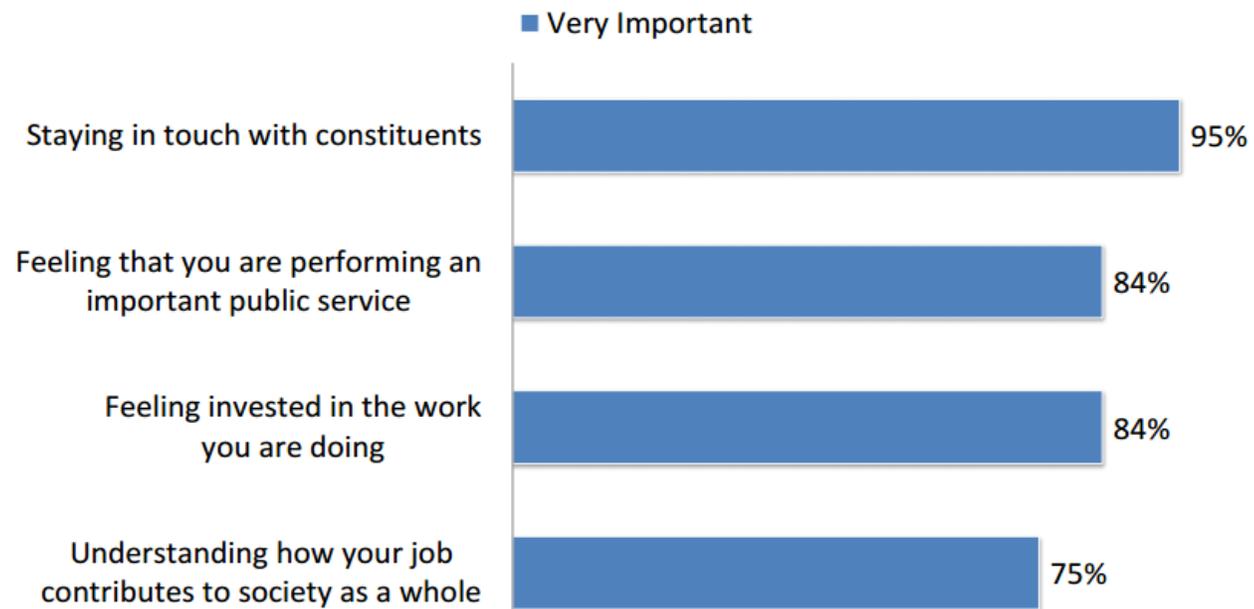
- Lack of comfort with advocacy process
- Lack of knowledge with the issue(s)
- Lack of time/staff
- **It doesn't make a difference, so why bother?**

# Do Constituents Really Matter?



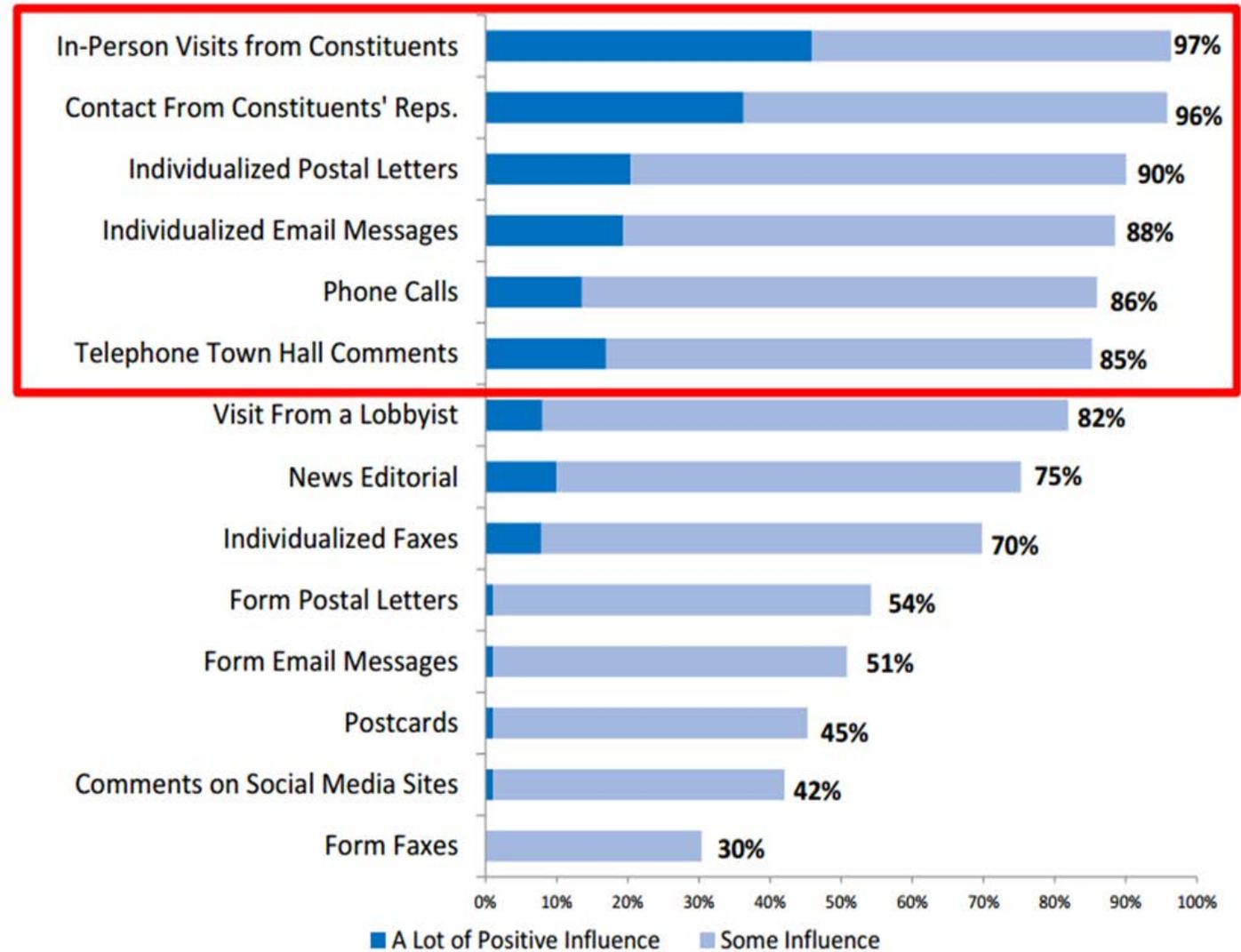
# Do Constituents Really Matter?

## Members' Responses to Aspects of Job They Consider Most Important



“If your elected official has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to their office have on his/her decision.”

- *Congressional Management Foundation*





# Thank You!

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