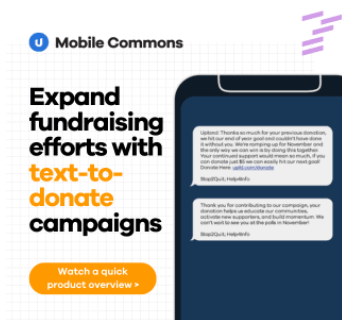
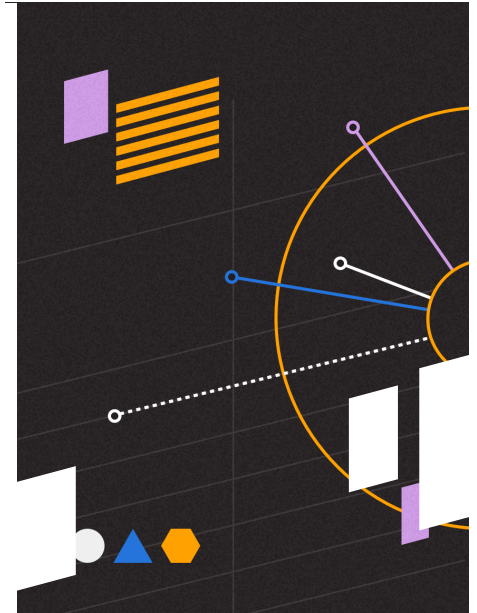


# Wired Explains What Happens in Congressional Offices When You Call – And Why A Phone Call is So Effective

3 minute read



We've heard again and again (for example, [on this blog!](#)) that phone calls are the best way to influence legislators. But when you call Congress, what exactly is happening at the other end of the line?

An article in Wired walks through the process from the Congressional office's perspective. First and foremost, Wired notes, phone calls really are the most effective way to influence legislators:

Even in 2017, in the age of Twitter and Facebook and WhatsApp and email and chatbots and internet-enabled fax machines, a phone call is the best way to not just reach your representative, but affect them. "It's just a matter of how people process information," says Kris Miler, who



## Topline

researches politics and government at the University of Maryland.”

But what exactly is it about a phone call that makes it so effective? Well here’s how the process works.

## **1. “The phone rings, and someone picks it up.”**

That’s pretty intuitive, but in the byzantine pathways of legislation, sometimes it can be helpful to remember that there are ordinary people on the other end of the line. Usually it’s an intern who answers the phone, but depending on call volume, it might be a low-level staffer or even a legislative aid.

## **2. The phone tech is out of the ‘50s.**

Offices don’t have the resources to upgrade to state of the art phone systems, so they’re stuck with the ancient landlines they inherited. Most offices have between 4-7 phone lines.

## **3. You may have more talking points on hand than the Congressional office you’re calling!**

“[Congressional staffers] often don’t have a script, just basic instructions on how to be decent, plus a healthy fear of saying the wrong thing. ”

## **4. You need to show that you’re really a constituent**

“At some point during your call, the staffer will ask for your address and ZIP code, to verify that you live in the representative’s district.”

Representatives do listen to their constituents, but they want to make sure that the people who are calling are actually their voters!

## **5. Your opinions are recorded in a database**

“Most offices use resource-management software called Intranet Quorum, which helps them send automated email and letters, and track their constituents’ correspondence.” Some offices use other methods, like Google Docs or a sheet of paper.

## 6. Phone calls really are the best way to influence opinions

Emails, faxes, and are simply easy to ignore. It's because of that human connection – person to person on a phone line – that phone calls still matter.

"Ultimately, everyone agrees that for all the chaos it causes, there's real power in a phone call—in the people's ability to burst into the day of their elected representatives. 'If your phone's ringing off the hook all day long, that's pretty memorable,' Miler says."

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