Supporting Information for
Constituent Communication through Telephone Town Halls
A Field Experiment Involving Members of Congress

Claire Abernathy
Stockton University

Kevin M. Esterling
University of California, Riverside

Justin Freebourn
University of California, Riverside

Ryan Kennedy
University of Houston

William Minozzi
The Ohio State University

Michael A. Neblo
The Ohio State University

Jonathan A. Solis
College of William and Mary

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Table A1: Multilevel Model of Attrition

	DV = Attrition
Party ID	−0.02
	(0.05)
Political Interest	−0.09
	(0.61)
TTHs Good to Hear Views	0.93
	(0.59)
TTHs Good to Communicate Positions	−1.20
	(0.85)
TTHs Good to Explain Actions	−0.30
	(0.82)
Approve of MC	−1.08[*]
	(0.52)
Trust MC	0.30
	(0.50)
MC Compassionate	0.04
	(0.27)
MC Dishonest (rev.)	−0.04
	(0.25)
MC Fair	0.22
	(0.29)
MC Knowledgeable	−0.39
	(0.35)
MC Weak (rev.)	−0.39
	(0.27)
MC Accessible	−0.27
	(0.22)
MC Qualified	−0.10
	(0.33)
MC Understand People Like Me	0.55[*]
	(0.25)
Intercept	0.05
	(0.29)
Error terms	
MCs	0.69

The table presents a multilevel model of attrition (i.e., enrollment in, but non-completion of the study). The model also included indicators for missingness on each variable; missing values are imputed to medians. Cells report posterior sampling means and standard deviations. [*] = 95% interval excludes zero. n_{obs} = 1005, n_{MC} = 4.

Table A2: Descriptive Statistics and Balance

Pretest Variable	Control Mean	Treatment Mean	p	SD	N Missing
Party ID	0.74	0.75	0.97	0.32	1
Political Interest	0.89	0.92	0.22	0.15	5
Telephone Town Halls are Good to…					
Hear Views	0.75	0.77	0.38	0.21	1
Communicate Positions	0.78	0.80	0.42	0.19	1
Explain Actions	0.78	0.79	0.74	0.19	1
Summary Evaluations					
Approve of MC	0.83	0.77	0.61	0.27	35
Trust MC	0.67	0.63	0.27	0.24	39
MC's Presentation of Self					
Compassionate	0.57	0.60	0.71	0.49	0
Dishonest (rev.)	0.60	0.57	0.66	0.49	0
Fair	0.60	0.58	0.75	0.49	0
Knowledgeable	0.72	0.65	0.26	0.47	0
Weak (rev.)	0.65	0.57	0.22	0.49	0
Accessible	0.56	0.54	0.76	0.50	0
Qualified	0.74	0.67	0.22	0.46	0
Understand People Like Me	0.45	0.43	0.75	0.50	0

n = 222. For the purpose of balance tests, missing values are imputed to the median of the group. The original Presentation of Self items were on a four-point scale; they have been recoded to be 0 for missing, Don't Know, or negative evaluations; 1 for positive evaluations.

Table A3: Multilevel Models of Outcomes

	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Treatment	−0.02	0.01	0.03
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Post	0.06[*]	0.04[*]	0.23[*]
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Treatment × Post	0.05[*]	−0.02	−0.04
	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Intercept	0.79[*]	0.70[*]	0.59[*]
	(0.03)	(0.13)	(0.08)
n Observations	1323	807	3552
n Respondents	222	220	222
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8
Error terms			
Respondents	0.14	0.24	0.29
MCs	0.03	0.06	0.12
Questions	0.04	0.18	0.10
Residual	0.13	0.14	0.34

The table presents three multilevel models of survey responses, separately by question group, with random intercepts for respondents, MCs, and questions. Cells report posterior sampling means and standard deviations. [*]= 95% interval excludes zero. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A4: Fixed Effects Models

	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Post	0.062[*]	0.037	0.229[*]
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.052)
Treatment × Post	0.049[*]	−0.022	−0.041
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.041)
n Observations	1308	688	3552
n Respondents	218	172	222
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8

The table presents three fixed effects regression models of survey responses, separately by question group, with fixed effects for respondents and questions (we omit the treatment indicator and member fixed effects because of collinearity). The samples are limited to respondents without missingness. Cells report coefficients and two-way cluster-robust standard errors for MCs and questions. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A5: Multilevel Models for Low Pretest Respondents

	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Treatment	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.04)
Post	0.31[*]	0.08[*]	0.61[*]
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.02)
Treatment × Post	0.03	0.02	–0.04
	(0.03)	(0.06)	(0.03)
Intercept	0.44[*]	0.32[*]	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.09)	(0.05)
n Observations	238	162	1446
n Respondents	57	55	160
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8
Error terms			
Respondents	0.11	0.18	0.15
MCs	0.05	0.07	0.08
Questions	0.04	0.13	0.07
Residual	0.13	0.17	0.31

The table presents three multilevel models of survey responses, separately by question group, with random intercepts for respondents, MCs, and questions. Samples are limited to just those respondent-question pairs in which the response on the pre-test were in the lower half of the scale. Cells report posterior sampling means and standard deviations. [*] 95% interval excludes zero. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A6: Question-by-Question Fixed Effects Models

Outcome Variable	Post	Treatment × Post
Telephone Town Halls are Good to…		
Hear Views	0.079	0.043
	(0.041)	(0.018)
Communicate Positions	0.050	0.055
	(0.026)	(0.034)
Explain Actions	0.058	0.049
	(0.031)	(0.030)
Summary Evaluations		
Approve of MC	0.018	−0.001
	(0.014)	(0.019)
Trust MC	0.055	−0.042
	(0.027)	(0.046)
MC's Presentation of Self		
Compassionate	0.274	0.032
	(0.109)	(0.133)
Dishonest (rev.)	0.210	−0.087
	(0.047)	(0.011)
Fair	0.218	−0.075
	(0.103)	(0.075)
Knowledgeable	0.250	−0.066
	(0.042)	(0.021)
Weak (rev.)	0.266	−0.123
	(0.092)	(0.047)
Accessible	0.234	0.001
	(0.074)	(0.137)
Qualified	0.185	−0.073
	(0.080)	(0.075)
Understand People Like Me	0.194	0.062
	(0.077)	(0.092)

The table presents fixed effects regression models of survey responses separately by question, with fixed effects for respondents. The samples are limited to respondents without missingness. Cells report coefficients and cluster-robust standard errors for MCs. Sample sizes appear in Table A5. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A7: Multilevel Models
(Democratic Party Identifiers)

	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Treatment	−0.02	0.02	0.00
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Post	0.08[*]	0.06[*]	0.24[*]
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Treatment × Post	0.06[*]	−0.02	−0.01
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Intercept	0.78[*]	0.77[*]	0.65[*]
	(0.04)	(0.13)	(0.07)
n Observations	963	591	2592
n Respondents	162	160	162
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8
Error terms			
Respondents	0.13	0.14	0.25
MCs	0.03	0.05	0.10
Questions	0.05	0.18	0.08
Residual	0.13	0.12	0.32

The table presents three multilevel models of survey responses, separately by question group, with random intercepts for respondents, MCs, and questions. Cells report posterior sampling means and standard deviations. [*]= 95% interval excludes zero. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A8: Multilevel Models
(Republican Party Identifiers)

	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Treatment	0.06	–0.03	0.06
	(0.06)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Post	0.08[*]	–0.06	0.23[*]
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Treatment × Post	–0.04	0.05	–0.12
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Intercept	0.74[*]	0.44[*]	0.38[*]
	(0.06)	(0.13)	(0.13)
n Observations	210	125	560
n Respondents	35	35	35
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8
Error terms			
Respondents	0.18	0.31	0.31
MCs	0.07	0.11	0.15
Questions	0.04	0.12	0.14
Residual	0.13	0.16	0.38

The table presents three multilevel models of survey responses, separately by question group, with random intercepts for respondents, MCs, and questions. Cells report posterior sampling means and standard deviations. [*] = 95% interval excludes zero. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A9: Fixed Effects Models
(Democratic Party Identifiers)

|	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Post	0.081	0.053	0.241
	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.074)
Treatment × Post	0.065	−0.015	−0.010
	(0.037)	(0.023)	(0.053)
n Observations	948	516	2592
n Respondents	158	129	162
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8

The table presents three fixed effects regression models of survey responses, separately by question group, with fixed effects for respondents and questions. The samples are limited to respondents without missingness. Cells report coefficients and two-way cluster-robust standard errors for MCs and questions. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Table A10: Fixed Effects Models
(Republican Party Identifiers)

|	Telephone Town Halls	Trust & Approval	Presentation of Self
Post	0.077	−0.054	0.229
	(0.089)	(0.010)	(0.025)
Treatment × Post	−0.041	0.023	−0.119
	(0.107)	(0.050)	(0.064)
n Observations	210	100	560
n Respondents	35	25	35
n MCs	4	4	4
n Questions	3	2	8

The table presents three fixed effects regression models of survey responses, separately by question group, with fixed effects for respondents and questions. The samples are limited to respondents without missingness. Cells report coefficients and two-way cluster-robust standard errors for MCs and questions. The coefficient for the *Treatment × Post* term is the difference in average responses among participants who attended an experimental town hall versus a standard town hall. As we describe in the text, the overall evaluation of participants in the treatment group is given by the sum of coefficients for the *Post* and *Treatment × Post* terms.

Figure A1: Distribution of Days Between Pre-Test and Post-Test for all Participants

Distribution of Participant Time Between Pre−Test and Post−Test
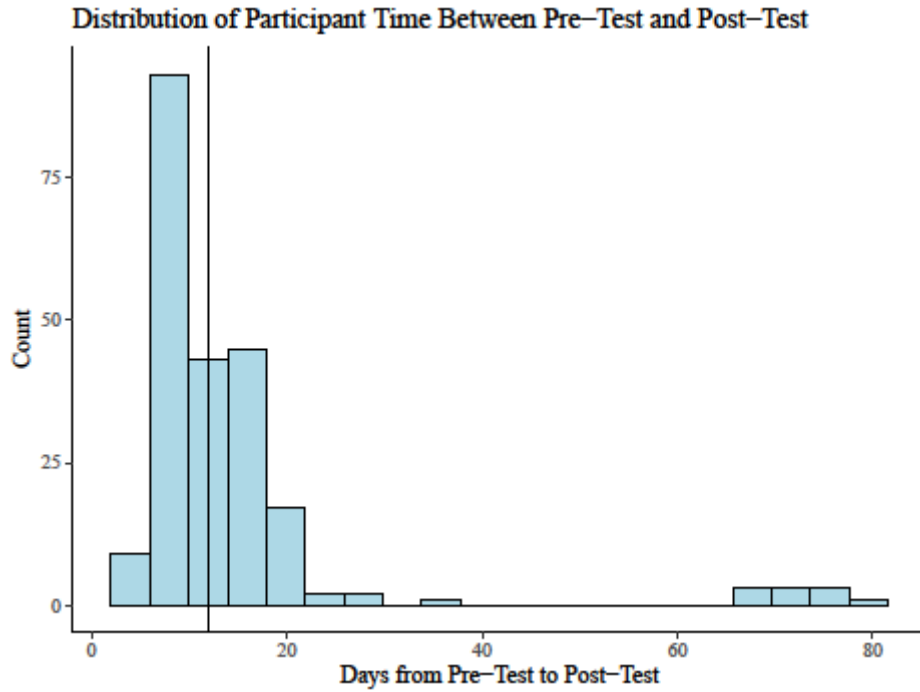
The median number of days (marked by the vertical line) is 12 days, with 9 days for the control group and 14 days for the treatment group. The right-skew is primarily due to a technical glitch that moved some participants in the Takano session to a later time than originally scheduled (see fn. 15 in main paper). The median number of days for the Takano participants was, however, similar to that for other groups (15 for Takano, compared to 10 for Moulton, 13 for Larsen, and 9 for DeSaulnier).

Figure A2: Google Search Volume for Participating Representatives, 2014-2019
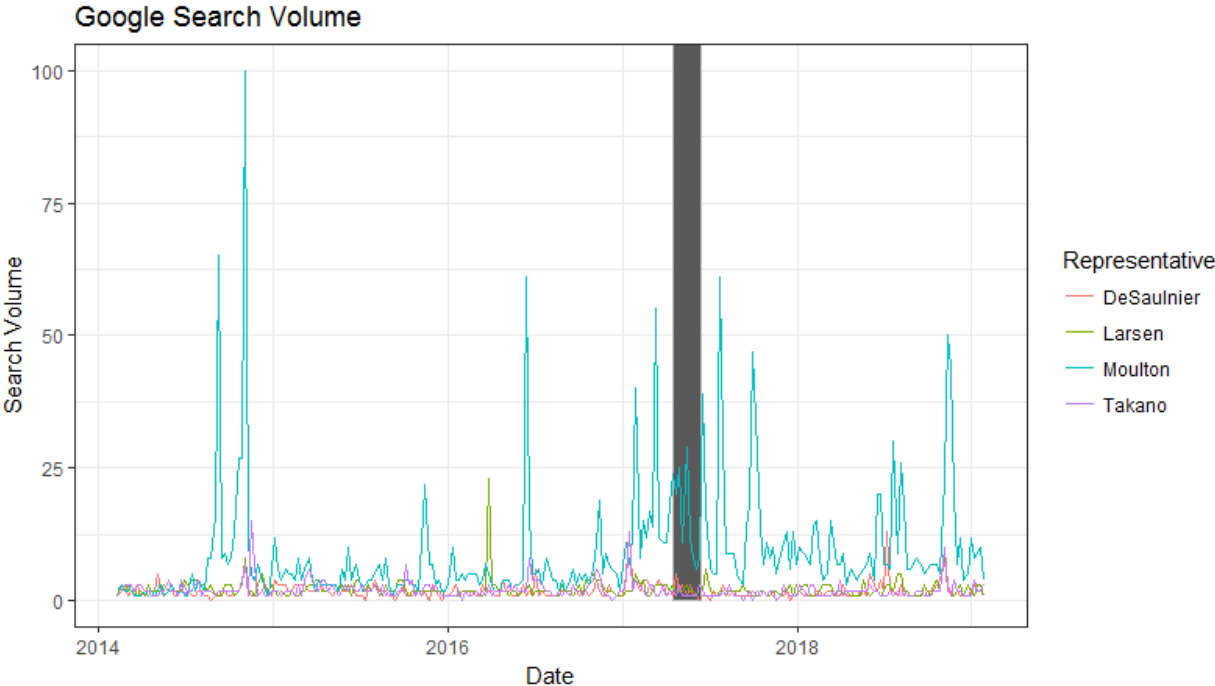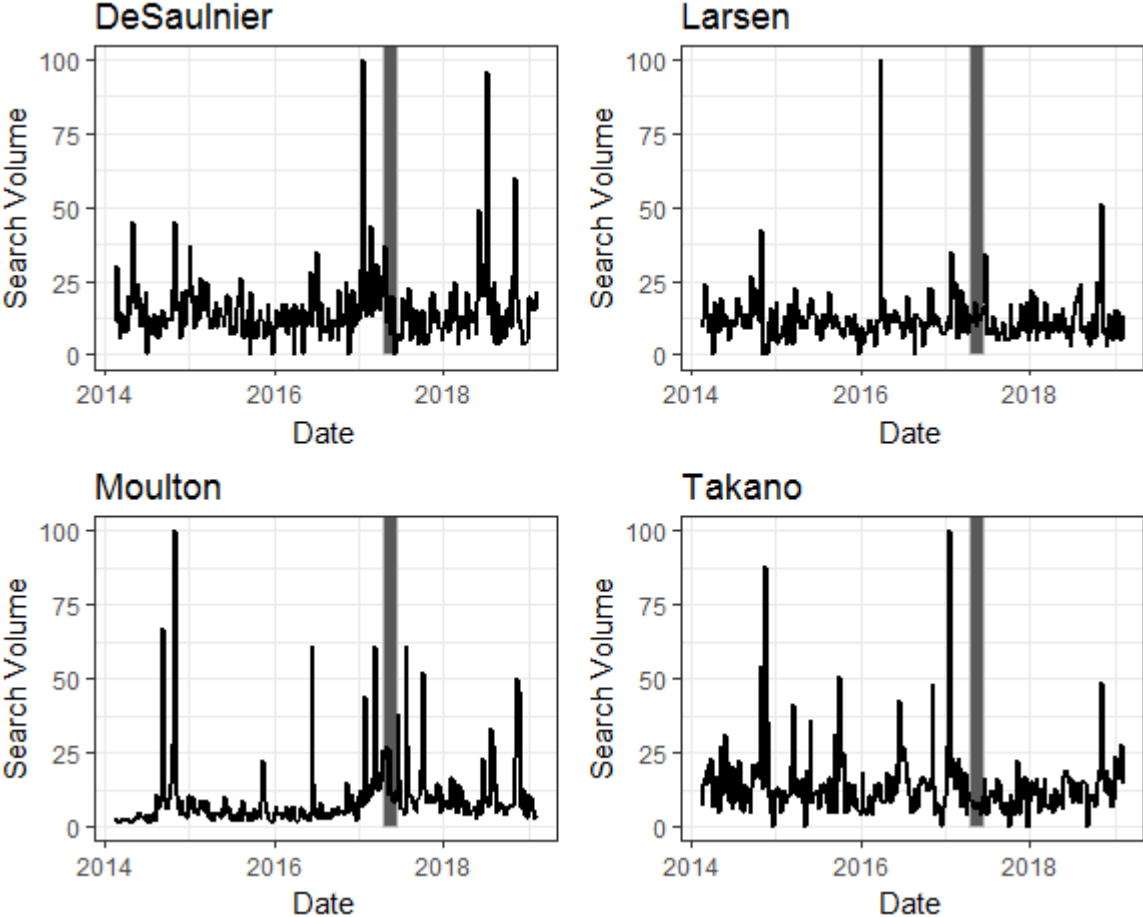

The time period of our study is shaded in gray. Data gathered from Google Trends (trends.google.com). Several important notes can be taken from this figure. (1) Of the four participating MCs, Moulton has, by far, the most attention over the past five years. (2) Even for Moulton, the level of attention during this period is relatively low compared to his peak. (3) Similarly, for the other three MCs, the levels observed are well below their peaks over this five year period.

Table A11: Google Search Volumes for Representatives

|	2014-2019 Average	2014-2019 SD	2017 Average	2017 SD	Study Period Average	Study Period SD
DeSaulnier	1.94	1.49	2.04	1.96	1.89	1.54
Larsen	2.28	1.71	2.13	1.00	2.22	0.667
Moulton	9.16	11.5	15.4	12.7	15.9	8.65
Takano	2.15	1.67	1.83	1.83	1.56	0.882

The table shows compares the average search volume during our study period to the five year period from 2014-2019 and during 2017. For DeSaulnier and Takano, the volume during this period was lower than both the five year and 2017 average. For Larsen, it was slightly lower than the five year average, but slightly higher than the 2017 average, though these are very close. For Moulton, the search volume is larger than the five year average, but very close to his 2017 average.

Figure A3: Google Search Volume Normalized by Representative

The timeperiod studied is shaded in gray. Data gathered from Google Trends (trends.google.com). The graphs show the proportion of the MC's peak search level. Average search volume for 14.4% of his five year peak for DeSaulnier, 13.2% for Larsen, 17.1% for Moulton, and 7.22% for Takano.

Figure A4: Google Search Volume for "Telephone Town Halls", 2014-2019
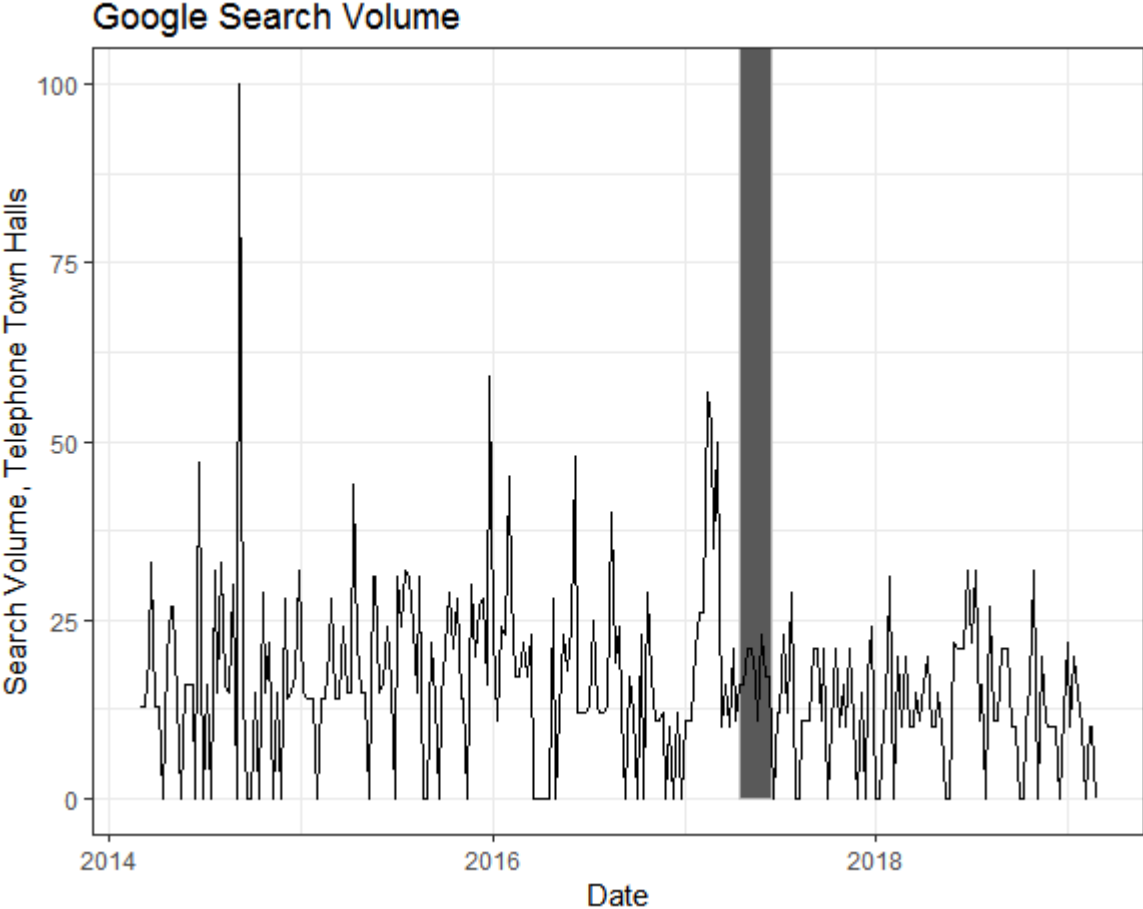
The time period of our study is shaded in gray. Data gathered from Google Trends (trends.google.com). We notice no aberrant spikes in searches for telephone town halls during the period of the study. The highest search volumes reach during this period is 23% of its peak in September 2014.

Figure A5: News Articles from Lexis-Nexis Between Pre-Test and Post-Test
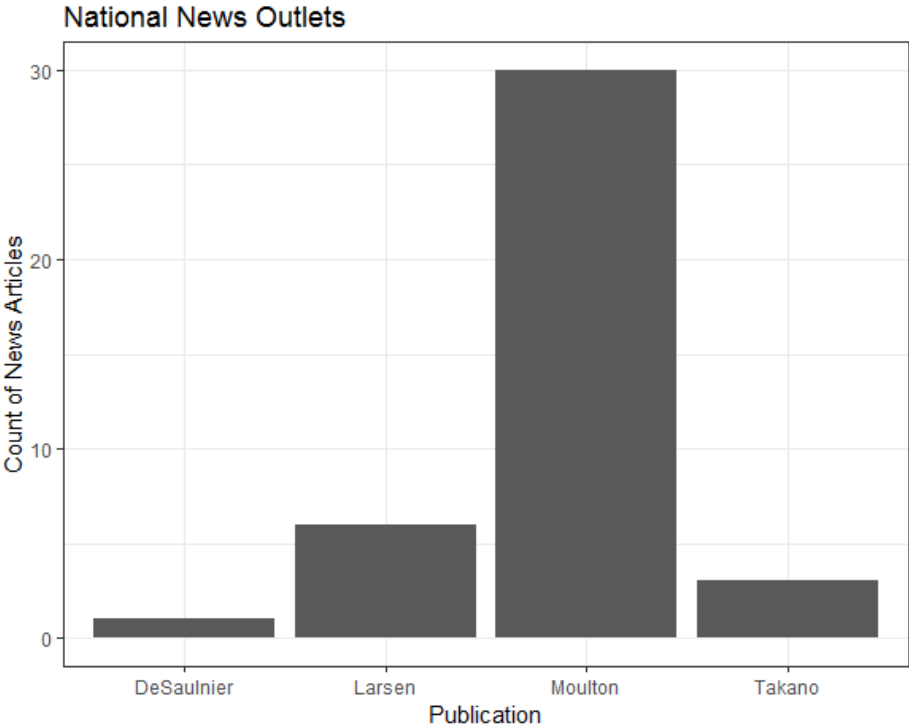
Search results from national news outlets (e.g. CNN, NBC, The New York Times, and their online counterparts, e.g. CNN.com) for articles containing the MC's full name. Our initial search included all news outlets and produced 829 articles. For all of the MCs except Takano, we searched for headlines in the period between when the pre-test started to when the last session finished. For Takano, who, for reasons discussed above, had a longer period between some of his pre-test and post-test participants, we searched for a month prior to his final session. Of those headlines we found, most were from government news services and office press releases (e.g. *Congressional Documents and Publications*, *Federal NewsFeed*). When filtered to only include national news services with a broad audience, there were 37 articles, mostly about Moulton. Most articles quoted the MCs in the context of larger stories (e.g. "Democrats look for silver lining after narrowly losing Georgia election"). There were some articles that discussed Moulton within the context of 2020 potential presidential candidates (e.g. "The Trump effect: Everyone's thinking of running for president" or "Democratic 2020 contenders? Voters haven't heard of them.").

Table A12: National News Headlines for MCs

MC	Headline	Publication	Date
Larsen	It seems hardly a week goes by without another viral video reminding us of what an emotional pressure cooker airplane cabins have become lately.	NBC News	5/2/2017
Larsen	G.O.P. Cheers a Big Victory. But Has It Stirred a Hornet's Nest; On Washington	The New York Times	5/5/2017
Larsen	G.O.P. Cheers a Big Victory. Has It Stirred a 'Hornet's Nest'?	The New York Times	5/6/2017
Larsen	How Lawmakers Have Reacted So Far To Trump's Firing Of The F.B.I. Director	The New York Times	5/11/2017
Larsen	Congress again weighs spinoff of 30,000 FAA workers	The Washington Post	5/18/2017
Larsen	Congress again weighs spinoff of 30,000 FAA workers	Washingtonpost.com	5/18/2017
Moulton	Donald Trump is the best 2020 recruiter Democrats could hope for	CNN.com	6/6/2017
Moulton	Aid Coordinator in Yemen Had Secret Job Overseeing U.S. Commando Shipments	The New York Times	6/6/2017
Moulton	Kidnapped Aid Worker Had Secret Military Role	The New York Times	6/7/2017
Moulton	Presidential buzz is building for Democratic field	The Washington Post	6/7/2017
Moulton	Presidential buzz is building for Democratic field	Washingtonpost.com	6/7/2017
Moulton	2020 Vision: Biden's family is serious; Harris stays focused on Trump; Franken cancels on Maher	CNN.com	6/9/2017
Moulton	Exclusive: House Dems to launch new national security task force	CNN.com	6/12/2017
Moulton	Democratic 2020 contenders? Voters haven't heard of them	Politico.com	6/17/2017
Moulton	Democratic 2020 contenders? Voters haven't heard of them	Politico.com	6/19/2017
Moulton	A Sigh of Relief for Republicans; A Big Win for Republicans in Georgia. Aired 10-11p ET	CNN	6/20/2017
Moulton	Coup Under Way Against Trump; Interview With Radio talk Show Host Mark Levin; Location of Documents Related to Unmasking by Obama Administration Examined; Republican Karen Handel Wins Georgia Special Election	Fox News Network	6/20/2017

Moulton	Republicans Continue Crafting Secret Health Care Bill; Interview With Massachusetts Congressman Seth Moulton. Aired 4:30-5p ET	CNN	6/21/2017
Moulton	Democrats Search For Silver Lining After Narrowly Losing Georgia Election	NPR All Things Considered	6/21/2017
Moulton	House Democrat: 'We need new leadership'	CNN.com	6/21/2017
Moulton	Trump Speaking at Iowa Rally; Dems Demand Info on Flynn, Kushner Security Clearances; Ex-DHS Chief: Putin Orchestrated U.S. Cyberattacks. Aired 8-9p ET	CNN	6/21/2017
Moulton	Democratic Chatter Grows About Ousting Nancy Pelosi	The Huffington Post	6/21/2017
Moulton	Republican Karen Handel Wins Georgia Special Election; Press Secretary Does Not Answer Question Regarding President Trump's Belief about Involvement of Russia in Presidential Election; Interview with Republican Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin. Aired 8-8:30a ET	CNN	6/21/2017
Moulton	Trump and Republicans don't want Nancy Pelosi to go	CNN.com	6/21/2017
Moulton	What The Democratic Loss in Georgia Means For The Midterms	NPR All Things Considered	6/21/2017
Moulton	Handel Thanks Trump for Georgia House Win; Ossoff Concedes: "Beginning of Something Much Bigger"; Handel Wins in Georgia After Linking Ossoff to Pelosi; Spicer Unsure if Trump Thinks Russia Meddled. Aired 12:30-1p ET	CNN	6/21/2017
Moulton	Democrats just went 0-4. When will they win?	CNN.com	6/21/2017
Moulton	Democrats Seethe After Georgia Loss: â€˜Our Brand Is Worse Than Trumpâ€™	The New York Times	6/21/2017
Moulton	Georgia And How Voters Are Responding To Trump	NPR Morning Edition	6/21/2017
Moulton	HARDBALL WITH CHRIS MATTHEWS for June 21, 2017	MSNBC	6/21/2017
Moulton	Now to the special election in Georgia to fill the House seat vacated by Tom Price when he joined the Trump cabinet.	CBS News Transcripts	6/21/2017

Moulton	Republican Handel Wins in Georgia; U.S. Weighs Options of Retaliation against North Korea; Uber Founder Kalanick Resigns as CEO; Many Senators frustrated with Closed Door Process; New Dashcam Video of Philando Castile Shooting; Queen Will Officially Open U.K. Parliament Wednesday. Aired 2-3a ET	CNN	6/21/2017
Moulton	Some House Democrats say it's time for Pelosi to go	CNN.com	6/21/2017
Moulton	Terror in the Homeland; GOP Winning Streak; Healthcare Replacement; Democrats Adrift; Russian Election Interference; China under Pressure; Saudi Shake-up; First Day of Summer; Fighting the Opioid Epidemic; Republican Karen Handel Wins Georgia Special Election; President Trump to Hold Rally in Iowa; President Trump's Tweet about China and North Korea Examined	Fox News Network	6/21/2017
Takano	Dems Raise Alarm About What Trumpcare Could Cost 7 Million Vets	The Huffington Post	5/4/2017
Takano	How Lawmakers Have Reacted So Far To Trump's Firing Of The F.B.I. Director	The New York Times	5/11/2017
Takano	In Congress, the Fight for Asian American and Pacific Islander Voices Hasn't Slowed	NBCNEWS.com	5/15/2017
DeSaulnier	UC Berkeley Cites Security Concerns For Cancelling Ann Coulter Appearance; President Obama Blames Social Media Cable News For Partisan Climate; Federal Courts Blocks President Trump's Order That Would Defund Sanctuary Cities; Obama's Iran Deal Deception; Ivanka Trump Jeered and Hissed in Germany; Nordstrom's Dirty Denim; Obama's Executive Orders Criticized by Trump	Fox News Network	4/25/2017

Non-Partisan Policy Overview
Energy & the Environment

This backgrounder was prepared by the Congressional Management Foundation, a non-partisan non-profit organization. Every attempt was made to create a fact-based document to provide participants of this telephone town hall meeting with a non-partisan overview of this issue.

Humans have relied primarily on fossil fuels for energy production for the past 200 years. Fossil fuels are created from natural resources like coal, petroleum, and natural gas, and we rely on them for the energy we need to sustain our modern way of living. When fossil fuels are used for energy, they emit soot and smog and other pollutants that are referred to as greenhouse gases. Greenhouse gases act like a blanket around earth, trapping heat which, over time, can negatively impact agriculture, power, transportation systems, water supplies, the natural environment, and human health and safety, all of which have long-term economic impacts.[1]

Since the oil crisis in the 1970s, energy policy in the United States has focused on three primary goals: maintaining a secure supply of energy, keeping costs low, and protecting the environment. To accomplish these goals, public policy has focused on improving energy efficiency, promoting the production of sources of energy within the U.S., and developing new energy sources.[2] In order to develop effective public policy, Congress must consider both our need for energy to sustain our way of life and the economic, social and health impacts associated both with continuing to create and use energy as we now do and of changing our ways.

Climate Change

Climate change refers to any significant change lasting for an extended period of time. While there is not complete consensus, many scientists believe rising greenhouse gas concentration is contributing to global warming. As temperatures have risen, more extreme weather events have occurred throughout the world, such as floods, droughts, and more frequent and intense heat waves. All of these are projected to occur more frequently in the coming decades, which will present challenges to our society and economy. More greenhouse gases in the atmosphere could mean there is also more making its way into the oceans, causing ocean acidification and glacier melt which are impacting ocean life and human life in coastal areas.

Energy

Fossil fuels provide us with easy, inexpensive sources for the energy on which our economy and way of life depend, but they are nonrenewable resources. Once they are gone, we cannot create more. Renewable resources can be replaced as we use them. Some examples of renewable resources are sunlight, water, wind, biomass (organic matter used as fuel), and geothermal heat (heat from deep in the earth). Many renewable energy sources release less pollution and greenhouse gases into the air

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[1] Energy and Environment Policymaking Simulation, Voice of the People, 2016. (http://research.cfrinc.net/vop16128pub/)

[2] *Energy Policy: 114th Congress Issues*, Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2016. (https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R42756.html)

than fossil fuels. However, at present, it costs more to get energy from renewable resources than nonrenewable ones. As technologies for renewable energy improve, the costs for them will go down. At the same time, as we use up nonrenewable resources, the costs for them will go up. Some argue that investing in research and development of renewable energy now could help to conserve conventional energy sources and promote sustainable development in the future.

Environmental protection and economic growth are often considered conflicting goals. The increasing scarcity of nonrenewable energy sources has raised concerns for environmental policy. As it becomes more difficult to extract nonrenewable resources from the earth there will be greater impact on the environment. However, environmental protection comes at a cost. Moving forward, policy-makers will need to routinely assess the short-term and long-term economic, environmental, and other impacts of renewable and nonrenewable energy sources as supply and demand for each change.[3]

Government Action

Prior to 2017, the Federal government—during both the Bush and Obama administrations—made it an objective to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases the U.S. produces. Over the past 10 years, the Federal government provided financial support for the development, production, and use of new fuels and energy technologies. In recent years Congress considered legislation focused on comprehensive energy policy reform; pollution emissions by power plants; tax incentives for renewable energy production and use; hydraulic fracturing (fracking) to extract natural gas; and other ways of balancing energy production and use against greenhouse gas emissions and environmental concerns.[4]

However, with a new administration comes new objectives and policy priorities. While it is still early into a new administration, and it is unclear what the impacts of early policies might be, President Trump has been adamant in his objective to focus on American jobs and stimulate an "American-focused" economy. The Trump Administration has also stated that it wants to reassess various environmental protections and their costs. Proposed earlier this year, President Trump's "A New Foundation for American Greatness" budget would cut the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) budget by 31% to reprioritize spending.[5] In June, President Trump pulled out of the Paris Accord, which focuses on reducing greenhouse gases internationally. The U.S. will be able to fully remove itself from the agreement in 2020.[6]

Congressional committees are now holding legislative and oversight hearings on the President's budget request and are examining a range of issues related to energy and the environment. Among the topics discussed this year in committee include the American energy infrastructure, offshore drilling, surface mining, federal land management, and emerging energy technologies.

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[3] Energy and Environment Policymaking Simulation, Voice of the People, 2016.
(http://research.cfrinc.net/vop16128pub/)

[4] *Energy Policy: 114th Congress Issues*, Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2016.
(https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R42756.html)

[5] Ibid.

[6] *A Running List of How Trump is Changing the Environment*, National Geographic, June 16, 2017.
(http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/03/how-trump-is-changing-science-environment/)

Non-Partisan Policy Overview
Health Care

This backgrounder was prepared by the Congressional Management Foundation, a non-partisan non-profit organization. Every attempt was made to create a fact-based document to provide participants of this telephone town hall meeting with a non-partisan overview of this issue.

The American Health Care Act (AHCA) was designed to repeal and replace parts of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) by means of the 2017 budget reconciliation process. After a series of hearings in which the bill was considered and amended, the House subsequently passed AHCA on May 4, 2017, by a vote of 217 to 213.

AHCA includes a number of provisions that would repeal or modify aspects of the ACA, but also includes provisions that are not entirely related to parts of the ACA. A comparison between the ACA and AHCA is discussed below.

Individual Mandate
The ACA requires that, with few exceptions, U.S. residents and legal citizens obtain a minimum of health insurance coverage. To make coverage more affordable to those with lower incomes, tax credits are offered based on earnings. Those who do not qualify for an exemption and who choose not to purchase health insurance coverage must pay a tax penalty of 2.5% of their annual household income depending on how much they earn.

The AHCA repeals these mandates so individuals are no longer penalized for not obtaining coverage. This is controversial because of the impact it will have on insurers. Individuals who are sick will enroll in insurance plans, but healthy individuals will not. By not requiring healthy individuals to buy insurance, insurers will be forced to raise rates to stay in business. However, a new provision of the bill would permit insurance companies to charge a one-year 30 percent premium fee for individuals who failed to buy insurance when they could have.

Employer Mandate
The "employer shared responsibility" requirement (often called the employer mandate) does not require a large employer to offer employees health insurance, but it can penalize those that do not or that provide plans that are not affordable or do not provide adequate coverage.[1] Employers with 50 or more full-time employees may be required to make an employer shared responsibility payment to the IRS if even one of their full time employees qualifies for a tax credit under the ACA. Employers with fewer than 50 full-time employees are exempt from the payment and any penalties.[2]

AHCA eliminates this ACA provision so large businesses are no longer required to provide health insurance to employees working 30 hours or more a week. Under the AHCA, states can apply to the federal government for waivers to alter or completely eliminate their definitions of essential benefits.

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[1] *Overview of Private Health Insurance Provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA)*, Congressional Research Service, April 5, 2016. (https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R43854.html)
[2] *Employer Shared Responsibility Provisions*, Internal Revenue Service, August 5, 2016. (https://www.irs.gov/affordable-care-act/employers/employer-shared-responsibility-provisions)

Therefore, if any one state is able to eliminate its definitions of essential benefits and declare that no benefits are essential, then any large company could use that state's definition and no longer have any cap on what employees pay out-of-pocket for "essential" benefits.[3]

The Insurance Market

The ACA made significant changes to how insurance companies must provide coverage and the AHCA is keeping many of these provisions in place. Insurance companies are still prohibited from increasing premiums based on a person's health. Kids can continue to stay on their parents' health insurance until they turn 26. Insurance marketplaces where people browse for coverage will also remain. Both the ACA and AHCA prohibit insurance companies from denying coverage for a pre-existing health problem. However, AHCA weakens protections for those with pre-existing health conditions which could potentially exclude them from the market or place them in a high-risk pool due to cost.

Changes to Medicaid

The ACA made changes to Medicaid to make it easier to provide health insurance and care to low income Americans. As of January 2017, 19 states have opted against expansion, largely because Medicaid expansion comes with more stringent requirements for how the dollars are used than Medicaid typically imposes and due to sentiment that taxpayer dollars should not be used to support this provision of the ACA.[4]

Most Medicaid disability-related coverage pathways and community-based long-term care services are provided at state option, thus subjecting them to cuts as states adjust to significant federal funding reductions under a per capita cap. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the AHCA will reduce Medicaid spending by $880 billion from 2017 to 2026.[5] The AHCA also would end enhanced federal funding for the ACA's Medicaid expansion. States would also have the option to impose a Medicaid work requirement for anyone who isn't pregnant, disabled or elderly.

Tax Changes

By taxing wealthier Americans, insurance companies and medical device makers, ACA helped poorer Americans pay for health care coverage. However, AHCA eliminates all those taxes. These tax cuts are of the greatest benefit to individual taxpayers making over $200,000 and couples making over $250,000 who have been paying more in Medicare taxes and another charge called the net-investment tax.[6]

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[3] *Here is how the House GOP Health Care Bill would Affect Employer-Based Insurance*, CBS News, May 9, 2017. (http://www.cbsnews.com/news/here-is-how-the-american-health-care-act-would-affect-employer-based-insurance/)

[4] *Affordable Care Act Medicaid Expansion*, National Conference of State Legislatures, February 14, 2017. (http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/affordable-care-act-expansion.aspx)

[5] *Medicaid Restructuring Under the American Health Care Act and Nonelderly Adults with Disabilities*, Kaiser Family Foundation, March 16, 2017. (http://kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/medicaid-restructuring-under-the-american-health-care-act-and-nonelderly-adults-with-disabilities/)

[6] *PolitiFact's Guide to the Republican Health Care Bill*, Politifact, March 22, 2017. (http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2017/mar/22/republican-health-care-bill-cheat-sheet/)

Both ACA and AHCA include tax credits in their approach to help more Americans buy insurance, but the credit amounts are calculated differently. ACA considers family income, local cost of insurance, and age whereas AHCA bases tax credits solely on age, with a phase out for individuals with incomes above $75,000.[7] The AHCA also offers more tax incentives for Health Savings Accounts and makes more health care expenses tax deductible.

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[7] *Premiums and Tax Credits Under the Affordable Care Act vs. the American Health Care Act: Interactive Maps*, Kaiser Family Foundation, April 27, 2017. (http://kff.org/interactive/tax-credits-under-the-affordable-care-act-vs-replacement-proposal-interactive-map/)