New Media

After gaining prominence in the media and the political arena, blogs are becoming a force within policy-making circles.

The Rise Of Blogs

By K. Daniel Glover

When President Bush campaigned for re-election in 2004, he vowed to "save Social Security." Bush touted the notion of voluntary personal retirement accounts in his 2005 State of the Union address, promoted the idea just after the speech, and then, along with top administration officials, barnstormed the nation in a "60 Stops in 60 Days" Social Security tour.

This strategy might have worked brilliantly in another era, when presidents dominated the news from their bully pulpits, and critics—especially those outside officialdom—fought for a few paragraphs or minutes of airtime for rebuttal. But in the Information Age, Bush's foes had a powerful new tool known as the Web log at their disposal, and they seized it to great effect.

One blog, *There Is No Crisis,* focused solely on challenging the president's argument that the Social Security system must be overhauled soon or face dire circumstances. Bob Brigham, a central contributor to the now-defunct site, said that the slogan helped reframe the discus-

"The blogosphere is crawling with certified, **grade-A opinion makers.**"

Berating Bush



JON ROEMER

Joshua Micah Marshall made opposition to President Bush's Social Security plans a staple of his blog.



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- Think tanks, trade associations, special interests—and even lawmakers—are starting blogs.
- Bloggers have made their influence felt on debates over Supreme Court nominations, federal spending, and campaign finance rules.
- Interest groups and advocacy groups are advertising on blogs as a way to reach target audiences.

sion and embolden congressional Democrats to oppose Bush. Many of them adopted the blog's theme, he said. "By removing the urgency," Brigham continued, "it allowed Democrats to win the debate."

Joshua Micah Marshall of *Talking Points Memo* (*www.talkingpointsmemo.com*) also made opposition to Bush's plans for Social Security a staple of his blog. He berated the Bush administration at every stage of its "Bamboozlepalooza Tour"; he chastised the "Fainthearted Faction" of congressional Democrats who sided with Bush on Social Security; and he lauded the "Conscience Caucus" of Republicans who dared to disagree with Bush.

"We probably heard from most of [the Democrats] that they didn't belong in the Fainthearted Faction," Marshall said. And by the end of April, Marshall had removed more than half of the original 13 from the list because they had come around to his way of thinking.

These days, there is little serious talk in Washington about immediately reforming Social Security, but there is plenty of chatter about blogs—and with good reason. The technology has taken firm root in the capital. Since summer, bloggers have testified before Congress and the Federal Election Commission; have been invited to Capitol Hill for exclusive interviews with lawmakers and to participate in conference calls with administration officials; and have spurred heated debates on everything from Supreme Court nominees to pork-barrel spending.

Earlier this month, the Republican National Committee and the Senate Republican Conference co-hosted a handful of like-minded bloggers in Washington during the Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Judge Samuel Alito. A stream of senators and top officials, including White House adviser Karl Rove, spoke to the group.

Today, far more blogs are focused on Washington than was the case a year ago, when the Social Security debate was at its height. Think tanks and their wonks have them. So do trade associations, watchdog groups, and other special interests. The Family Research Council started a blog this month and will co-host the first annual Blogs4Life event (*www.blogs4life.com*) on January 23, the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. So far, 30 blogs are set to participate.

Some blogs target specific topics such as counter-terrorism, immigration, education, health care, and the death penalty. Others, such as *Dump Mike* (*www.dumpmike.com*), aim to unseat lawmakers (in this case, Rep. Michael Ferguson, R-N.J.).

Only one congressional blog existed before January 2005, but in the year since then, 17 lawmakers, the Republican Study Committee, and Democrats on the House Agriculture Committee have started blogs. Several more members of Congress regularly or occasionally make guest appearances at group blogs such as Marshall's *TPMCafe* (*www.tpmcafe.com*) and *The Huffington Post* (*www.huffingtonpost.com/theblog*) on the left, and *RedState* (*www.redstate.com*) on the right.

"Blogs are becoming more respectable," said Henry Farrell, a professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University and a blogger at *Crooked Timber* (*crookedtimber.com*). Citing the debate over Social Security as an example, he added, "People are beginning to figure out that blogs do have real impact."

Becoming a Force

Blogs have had a noticeable impact on American society since at least 2001. The September 11 attacks that year motivated many people to start online diaries and many more to start reading them. The attacks and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Afghanistan also sparked the first "warblogs," a trend later fueled by the war in Iraq.

But only recently have blogs become a force within policymaking circles. First, the blogs rose to prominence in the media and then in the political arena.

Bloggers pride themselves on being a check against the mainstream media, or "MSM" in blog shorthand. Their greatest impact came three years ago, when they publicized comments by then-Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi that some interpreted as pro-segregationist. Top media outlets buried Lott's remarks or ignored them altogether. But bloggers criticized Lott's comments so vigorously that public officials and the mainstream media eventually took notice. Lott resigned as majority leader, and last year he told *The Christian Science Monitor* that he was the "first pelt" of bloggers.

Almost two years later, at the height of the 2004 presidential campaign, bloggers targeted a CBS News report on Bush's National Guard record and provided evidence that the network based the story on phony military memorandums. Although CBS was reluctant to acknowledge the controversy, Dan Rather ultimately resigned as the evening news anchor.

"For a long time," said George Washington University law professor Daniel J. Solove, a blogger at *Concurring Opinions* (*www.concurringopinions.com*), "it seemed that if the mainstream media didn't cover [a story], that was it.... What we're seeing now is, it's possible for the blogs to put an issue out before the public, and the mainstream media are not the only gatekeeper."

Blogs also soared in popularity as a political tool during the 2004 campaign. The "netroots" of the Left—bloggers and other grassroots activists who rely on the Internet to advance their causes—rallied around Howard Dean and unexpectedly pushed him to early front-runner status in the Democratic presidential race. Then, last year, they helped Dean win the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee.

The netroots have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for Democrats in some congressional districts, and although none of their favored candidates have won, some of the contests have been far more competitive than expected. In Ohio, Paul Hackett just barely lost an August special election to Republican Jean Schmidt in a heavily GOP congressional district. Hackett is now a Senate candidate and is actively soliciting bloggers' help.

Republican bloggers also proved their political value in 2004. At *South Dakota Politics* (*southdakotapolitics.blogs.com*), Jon Lauck and Jason Van Beek were credited with aiding John Thune's victory over Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D. Thune's campaign reportedly paid both bloggers, and Thune later hired Van Beek as a Senate aide.

By gaining footholds in both the media and politics, the blogosphere quickly built a loyal and important following. One journalist—now-CNN/U.S. President Jonathan Klein—infamously dismissed bloggers as pajama-clad hacks typing away at home, unchecked by any editors. But people who matter read the bloggers' musings.

In a February 2004 study, George Washington University's Institute for Politics, Democracy, and the Internet found that 69 percent of blog readers are "influentials, or opinion leaders and trendsetters with their friends and neighbors." Institute Director Carol Darr said in a recent interview that the news and political junkies who frequent blogs are like "honeybees, kind of feeding the culture" with the information they gather and with their comments and diaries at the sites.

Blogads, the company that pioneered low-cost, targeted advertising on blogs, confirmed the institute's findings in a 2005 report. Its survey of 30,000-plus blog readers found that many of them write to government officials, attend political rallies, sign petitions, and work actively with groups that try to influence policy. "Clearly, the blogosphere is crawling with certified, grade-A opinion makers," Blogads founder Henry Copeland wrote in introducing the results.

The commentary on blogs is not always productive, however. Darr said that the technological architecture of blogs allows anonymity and the culture encourages inflammatory speech. Blogs, she added, tend to attract like-minded people—and ones who are "slightly more ideologically extreme than the general population." The end result: "The Internet is exacerbating political polarization."

Staking a Claim in Washington

With such active readers, it made sense for bloggers to turn their attention to Washington—and for more people inside the Beltway to awaken both to the influence of bloggers and the potential of blogging technology. That is exactly what happened after the 2004 election.

Issues such as Social Security reform drove the interest in blogging and demonstrated the technology's power. George Washington University's Farrell said that blogs were very effective at "creating outrage and creating a groundswell" against Bush's plans for Social Security. Experts—such as economics professor Brad DeLong (*www.j-bradford-delong.net/movable_type*) of the University of California (Berkeley) and Max Sawicky (*www.maxspeak.org/mt*), an economist at the Economic Policy Institute—used their blogs to create a "testing bed for interesting arguments," Farrell said.

"We began to see those arguments being taken up by op-ed people ... and change the conventional wisdom in the media" about the Bush plan, Farrell said. Although the blogosphere alone did not push Social Security off the short-term agenda, it was a factor, he contended.

Andrew Roth, the government-affairs director at the conservative Club for Growth and the group's blogger (*www.clubforgrowth.org/blog*), agreed—to an extent. He said that Social Security reform is dead in Bush's second term not because of opposition from liberal bloggers but because Republican leaders lack the will to "force moderates to vote on it." Yet he also said that liberal bloggers "were far better organized and ready to fight than conservatives were."

The Club for Growth launched a group blog called *Social Security Choice* (*www.socialsecuritychoice.org*), and Roth expected more like it. "In fact, I was worried that somebody else was going to beat us to the punch. But that never happened, and the other blogs never materialized. I don't know why it didn't happen, but it was frustrating."

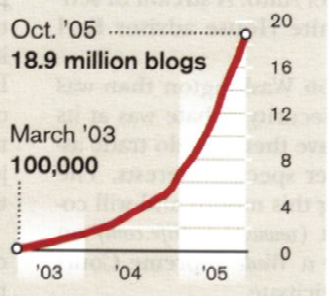
The recent vacancies on the Supreme Court have sparked another burst of blogging. The Goldstein & Howe law firm, which specializes in litigation before the high court, launched *The Supreme Court Nomination Blog* (*www.sctnomination.com/blog*), a sister site to the firm's *SCOTUS Blog*. Interest groups such as the American Progress Action Fund, the Committee for Justice, and the National Women's Law Center also created court-focused blogs. And the established law blogs, or "blawgs," offered expert analysis of the nominees' legal backgrounds.

One milestone came during the confirmation hearings of Chief Justice John Roberts. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, acknowledged having read blogs the night before and then asked Roberts a question based on a post at *The Volokh Conspiracy* (*volokh.com*).

A bigger breakthrough for the blogosphere came with the nomination of Harriet Miers to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. The nomination sparked a "blog

Catching On

A new blog is created about every second, and some 70,000 blogs are created daily, according to a report by Technorati, a firm that tracks blogs. An increase in Chinese blogs has helped fuel the trend.



SOURCE: Technorati

Blogging Lingo

Just like the wonky world of Washington, the blogosphere has a language all its own. The uninitiated may encounter some of these terms.

blawg–a blog written by lawyers. *Concurring Opinions* (*www.concurringopinions.com*) keeps a running census of blawgs within academia.

cross-post–a blog entry, or some version of it, that is posted at more than one blog. Some lawmakers post content on their own blogs and at group blogs with wider audiences.

flame war–a bitter exchange of opinions, often marked by vulgar language and aimed at an individual. Flame wars can involve multiple blogs or be fought within a blog.

group blog–a blog with several contributors. Leading examples include *Daily Kos, GOP Bloggers, The Huffington Post, MyDD, PoliPundit, Power Line, RedState,* and *TPMCafe.*

meme–an idea that quickly spreads through the blogosphere.

moonbat–a term for extremists on any issue, but commonly used to describe liberal protesters. Some bloggers dubbed anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan "Mama Moonbat."

MSM–abbreviation for "mainstream media." It describes traditional news outlets like newspapers, television, and radio. The term is losing favor among some bloggers, who see themselves as more representative of mainstream thinking than the traditional media.

netroots–short for "Internet grassroots." Democratic bloggers, especially those who rallied around Howard Dean in the 2004 presidential race, use the term to describe themselves.

swarm" against Miers for her purported lack of credentials. The Bush administration hosted its first-ever conference calls with conservative bloggers to try to gain support for Miers, but she eventually withdrew her name from consideration.

At about the same time, Hurricane Katrina battered the Gulf Coast region and, in the process, the federal budget. The government's spend, spend, spend response to the storm agitated many bloggers, so they started pushing another idea: Cut the pork-barrel spending from the transportation bill enacted over the summer and redirect the money to hurricane recovery.

Glenn Reynolds of *Instapundit* (*www.instapundit.com*) and N.Z. Bear of *The Truth Laid Bear* (*www.truthlaidbear.com*) spearheaded the effort, named it PorkBusters, and produced a logo that participating bloggers could put on their Web sites. The bloggers hounded members of Congress for funneling money to projects back home, and they found an ally in Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., who forced floor votes on pork-barrel spending last fall. Coburn now has a PorkBusters page, and the logo, on his congressional Web site.

"I don't want to engage in blog triumphalism," Reynolds said in an e-mail interview, "but [the PorkBusters campaign] seems to have done some good. They seem embarrassed about pork rather than proud of it, which is progress." Reynolds said that blogs could change Washington attitudes about pork. "Most people in a congressional district don't benefit from pork in that district. The whole approach depends on the beneficiaries being grateful while everyone else is oblivious. Blogs, and the transparency they create, call that approach into question, at least so long as some people care. At the moment, a lot of people do."

Those people include House Republicans, according to Kevin Madden, a spokesman for Rep. Tom DeLay of Texas. Conservative bloggers chastised DeLay for arguing in September that the budget had no more wasteful spending to cut. Madden, a regular reader of *Instapundit, Power Line* (*www.powerlineblog.com*), *RedState,* and other right-leaning blogs, said the entire GOP Conference got the message. Bloggers did "a very good job at focusing the conference on spending and taxes," Madden said.

Bloggers across the political spectrum did an equally good job of focusing both Congress and the Federal Election Commission on an issue of self-interest to them: the application of campaign finance law to blogs. When former Commissioner Brad Smith warned of that possibility last March, bloggers quickly formed the Online Coalition to lobby against blog regulation and flooded the FEC with comments. Leading bloggers later testified before both the agency and a House committee as they sought exemptions from campaign finance law.

Amid the months-long debate, Sen. Russell Feingold, D-Wis., posted commentary on the issue at a couple of blogs and engaged readers of those blogs in debate. The FEC chairman and a member of the commission wrote blog entries at *RedState.* In November, the FEC granted certain political blogs a media exemption from campaign finance law.

"Never before have we seen so many people engaged" about campaign finance, said *RedState* co-founder Mike Krempasky, who testified before the FEC and Congress. "All of a sudden, once bloggers started covering this, it became an issue people cared about."

If You Can't Beat 'Em, Blog With 'Em

Bloggers have not had that kind of success on every issue. Their outcry against creditor-friendly bankruptcy legislation, for instance, fell flat twice last year—once before Congress cleared the legislation in the spring and then again before Congress implemented it in the fall. Michael Cornfield, a senior research consultant for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, said that blogs are "only as powerful as decision makers allow them to be.... If they ignore [an issue], there's really nothing that a constant buzzing and commentary can do to you."

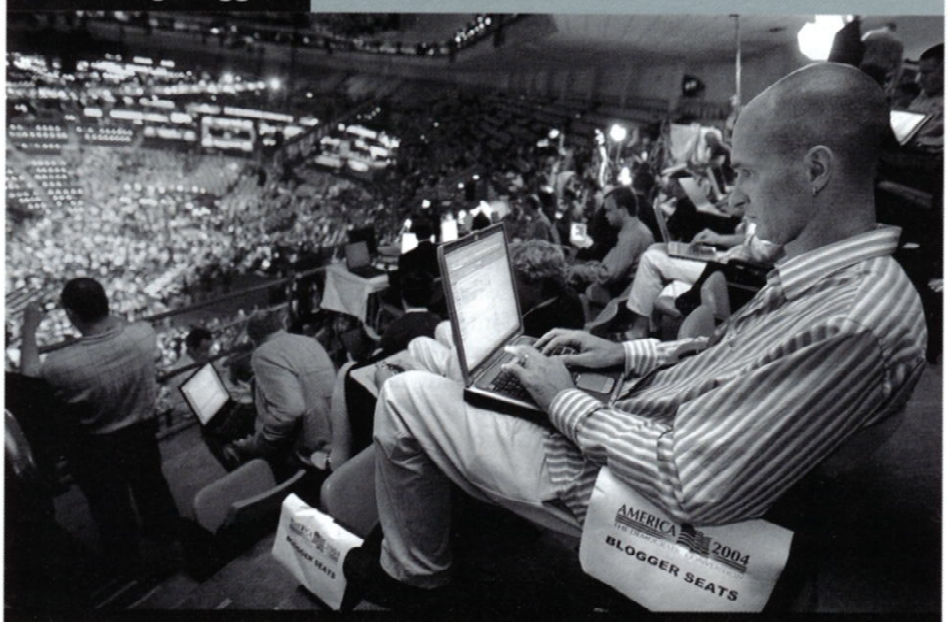
But many decision makers are not ignoring blogs. Instead, they are working hard to woo bloggers and to learn how to best use the technology for their own purposes. At the start of 2005, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., opened a communications center aimed at outreach to the online community, including bloggers. And earlier this month, he agreed

to speak at YearlyKos, a gathering of people in the online community built around *Daily Kos (www.dailykos.com)*, the most popular blog on the left. The convention is scheduled for June in Las Vegas.

In 2005, House and Senate Republicans invited bloggers to Capitol Hill so they could grill lawmakers about their pet issues. The House Republican Conference has tentatively scheduled a similar "radio and blog row" for late January to start the second session of the 109th Congress.

The Republican National Committee, meanwhile, has continued the conference calls it started during the controversy over the Miers nomination. "They are a new form of media," RNC E-Campaign Director and blogger Patrick Ruffini (*www.patrickruffini.com*) said of blogs and why the RNC is interested in them. "They're gaining prominence.... There is explosive growth, and we only expect that to continue."

Courting Bloggers



GETTY/MARIO TAMA

Both Democrats and Republicans made room for bloggers at their 2004 conventions, and both parties have political organizations that have blogs and pursue relationships with key bloggers.

Most of the major party political organizations—the RNC, the DNC, the National Republican Senatorial Committee, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee—have blogs and pursue relationships with key bloggers. The campaign committees also monitor blogs. NRSC Communications Director Brian Nick said that his group has an internal roundup of blogs called "The Blog Chaser" that is updated at least daily. "It is vital to give information to, and get information from, them," he said.

The National Republican Congressional Committee is the only campaign committee that mostly ignores blogs, and Communications Director Carl Forti said it has no plans to change that. "A lot of times," he said, "you just don't know how reliable the information on these things is.... Ninety percent of the time, we know more than they do."

Such skepticism may explain why only a few lawmakers have tried blogging, but the concept is gaining favor even with them. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., was one of the first lawmakers to start blogging, and he explained why in an October entry at *ConyersBlog.us*. "The MSM simply will not report on the actions of a party that lacks the White House or majority control of either house of Congress," he wrote. "Indeed, the same reporters who write that Democrats lack an agenda refuse to write about our legislative proposals no matter the number of press conferences, calls, and press releases. Blogging lets me bypass that filter and take my message directly to many voters."

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., launched *SchaBLOGsky* in October for another reason: to motivate Democratic activists on behalf of candidates. "I think this whole medium has proven to be something not just for people who sit at a computer but who want to get involved," she said.

GOP Rep. Jack Kingston of Georgia discovered another benefit of blogging after his recent foray into that world. While he has his own blog on his congressional site, he also posts entries at *RedState* to gain exposure to its much larger audience. When Kingston recently introduced an energy bill, he broke the news on *RedState* first and had 40 to 50 responses, including advice on how to change the legislation, within two hours. Although Kingston said he would not necessarily alter the bill based on blog comments, "we would be at least aware of it and sensitive to it."

Freshman Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas, said it took some persistent lobbying by one staffer before he took the plunge. "You'll see more and more members who will start these and take advantage of them," he predicted.

Trade groups and other advocacy organizations are also venturing into the blogosphere, with the National Association of Manufacturers and the Nuclear Energy Institute leading the pack. NAM "blogger-in-chief" Pat Cleary has been a blog evangelist within his industry and to lobbyists in Washington. He was one of the speakers at a summer event dubbed "Blogging 101 for K Street." Issue Dynamics, a public-affairs and Internet consulting firm that opened a "blogger relations" unit, co-hosted the event. "It's smart. It's free publicity," Cleary said of blogging by trade groups. "Why not do it?"

He noted, for instance, a new feature attached to some articles at *washingtonpost.com:* links generated automatically via the blog search engine Technorati. The newspaper's ombudsman said recently that some reporters hate the feature, but Cleary loves it because NAM can get its unfiltered views embedded within a well-read and respected media site.

"In real time ... we'll see the link to our blog in that story," he said. And although Cleary acknowledged that readers might not click on the link to read his commentary, he said, "My odds are as good as [publishing] a letter to the editor ... and *The Post* is doing it for me."

Eric McErlain, a speechwriter for the Nuclear Energy Institute, said that his group's blog has become a "tactical component" to counter misleading media "spin." He cited a *Time* mag-

azine story on security at nuclear power plants and a similar ABC News investigation dubbed "Loose Nukes," both of which ran last summer, as examples. Both reports prompted heavy blogging, not just by NEI but also by the community of like-minded allies who frequent the NEI blog. "They're carrying our water without being told," McErlain said. He added that other trade groups would do well to start blogging. "There's a conversation that's going on about your industry. And the question is whether you want to be involved."

Blogs can also serve as portals to keep activists informed about their favorite topics. That's the goal of the three blogs created last year by the human-rights group Amnesty International. The blogs focus on violence against women, the death penalty, and torture—a hot topic in Congress last year as lawmakers debated where to draw lines in the war on terrorism.

Kevin Reid, Amnesty International's director of Internet communications, said blogs offer a new way "to build communities of interest" now that e-mail newsletters are being opened less frequently. The group first used blogging as an organizing tool for its National Week of Student Action in the spring, with the focus being the anti-terrorism law known as the USA PATRIOT Act. "It allowed us to bring in additional information … to keep everyone up to date," Reid said.

Blog or Perish

Amnesty International has taken its message on torture into the blogosphere by advertising there. Its ads, which ran on 12 to 15 of the bigger political blogs, including *Americablog* (*www.americablog.blogspot.com*), *Andrew Sullivan* (*www.andrewsullivan.com*), and *Talking Points Memo,* invited readers to "tell the Bush administration that you find torture reprehensible."

"The response has been good enough that we plan on continuing to do them," Reid said of the group's advocacy ads on blogs.

Other organizations apparently share that view. Blogads founder Copeland said that business has been booming because political campaigns, interest groups, and others are beginning to understand the market. "I think we're going to see a lot more D.C.-to-D.C. advertising in '06," Copeland said. "People sat up and took notice when they heard Senator Cornyn, a 50-something Republican from Texas who is not your stereotypical hipster geek, begin his questioning of John Roberts by saying that Cornyn had stayed up the night before reading the blogs to see what they were saying about him. Then Cornyn proceeded to ask Roberts a question that a blogger had [raised]."

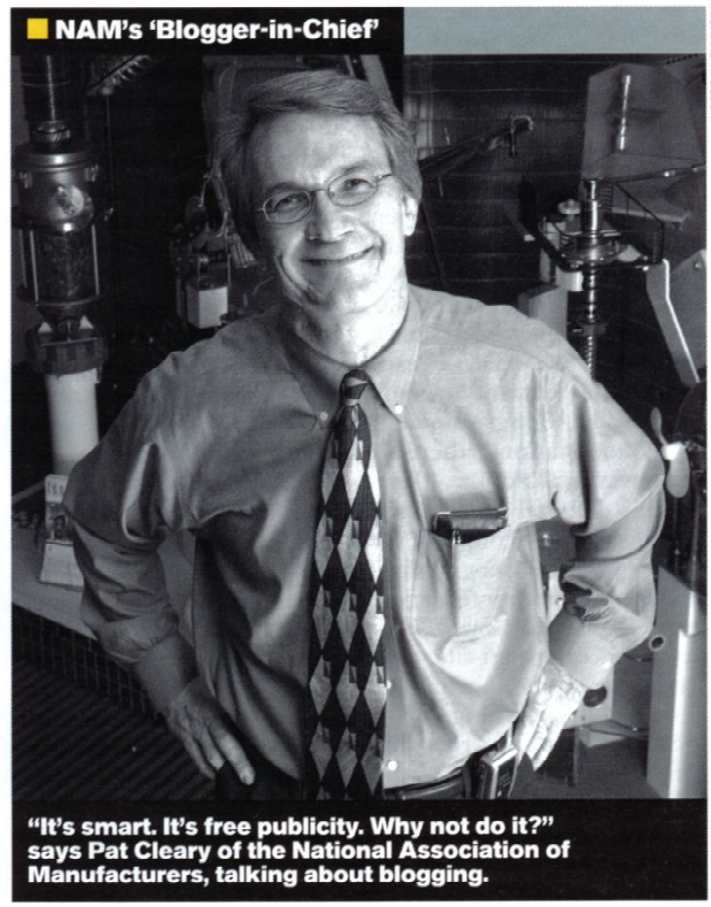
Defenders of Wildlife used blog ads to promote *Pombo InTheirPocket* (*www.pombointheirpocket.org*), a Web site that tries to link Rep. Richard Pombo, R-Calif., to land developers, oil companies, and lobbyists who want to amend the Endangered Species Act. The two-week ad buy ran mostly on California blogs, said Mark Longabaugh, the consultant who helped the group put it together. It included three "action items": telling a friend about the site, e-mailing Pombo's office, and making a contribution.

The ad raised about $50,000, Longabaugh said. "That would have more than covered the ad buy." He added that it generated thousands of impressions more than Defenders of Wildlife could have expected from a television or newspaper ad—and it reached the right people. "The blogs tend to be where a lot of conversation is going on these days in terms of politics," he said.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America was equally pleased with its blog ads to enhance awareness of the group's *BuySafeDrugs* site (*buysafedrugs.info*). The ads were placed periodically on an array of blogs, generally for about a month at a time, according to Ken Johnson, PhRMA's senior vice president of communications. "It's an effective, cost-efficient way to reach select, targeted demographics," he said. It also gives drugmakers direct access to patients without their message being filtered by the media. PhRMA plans to develop more ads this month focused on topical news events, Johnson said. And the group plans to have a blog of its own at some point. "We're trying to make it where it's not a dartboard," he said. "It's one thing to hear what other people have to say. It's another to put a bull's-eye on your forehead."

Although NAM's Cleary said that most trade groups remain cautious about starting their own blogs, he expects more of them to do so as they begin to understand the technology and not to fear it. But if some of them don't embrace the technology, that is fine with him. "To the extent that people disagree with us," he said, "I hope they stay on the sidelines. For people who agree with us, I hope they jump in."

As for folks on Capitol Hill, DeLay spokesman Kevin Madden said that the time to start blogging is now. "Anybody who hesitates does so at their own peril." ■



NAM's 'Blogger-in-Chief'

RICHARD A. BLOOM

"It's smart. It's free publicity. Why not do it?" says Pat Cleary of the National Association of Manufacturers, talking about blogging.

The author monitors the policy and political impact of blogs daily at NationalJournal.com's Beltway Blogroll (beltwayblogroll.nationaljournal.com), and he is the managing editor of National Journal's Technology Daily. Links to policy-related blogs can be found with this article on nationaljournal.com. Glover can be reached at dglover@nationaljournal.com.

New Media

CONGRESS

Members Who Blog

Seventeen House and Senate members created blogs in 2005. More lawmakers are sure to follow this year.

Politicians are rarely on the cutting edge of technology, and that is as true with blogs as it has been with Web sites, e-mail newsletters, and other recent online innovations. Three years after blogs helped force Mississippi Republican Trent Lott out of the Senate majority leader's office, fewer than 1 percent of his colleagues in Congress have created blogs.

But last year may have been a turning point. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., and Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., were among the 17 lawmakers who created blogs in 2005.

"It seems like every time I go online, or get an e-mail, or read a story," said Nicole Folk, the technology analyst for the Congressional Management Foundation, "there's another [congressional blog].... It's spreading, and it's definitely becoming more of an option than a couple of years ago."

Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., is easily the most prolific blogger in Congress. He started *ConyersBlog* in February at his campaign site, a move that freed the online journal from some restrictions governing congressional Web sites. Conyers writes the content himself and regularly "cross-posts" at other blogs, including *Daily Kos* and *The Huffington Post*.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., has had a blog longer than any other lawmaker, since October 2003. He is also the only lawmaker with two blogs on his congressional site: *More from the Floor*, which recaps Senate floor action, and *Heard at the Hearing*, a topical blog focused on Supreme Court confirmation hearings.

Leahy's staff writes the content for his blogs, which is a fairly common practice. Other lawmakers give aides the task of maintaining their blogs, but also contribute some copy themselves.

Although blogging has soared in popularity because of its use of feedback and other interactive features, few lawmakers enable those features. Those who do, including Conyers and Frist, have received hundreds to thousands of comments on some entries.

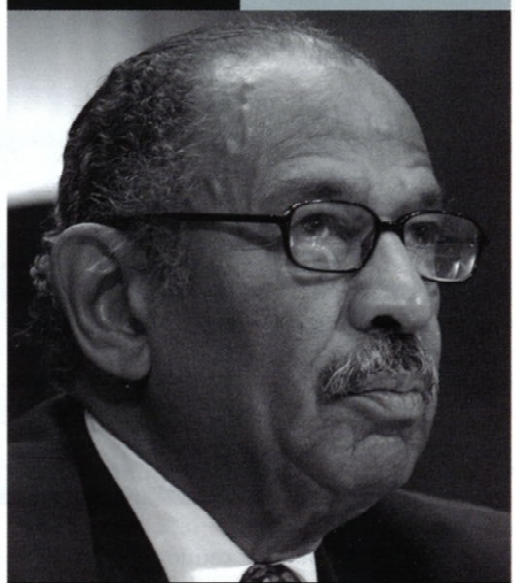
Folk said that one obstacle to congressional blogging is the amount of time required of lawmakers or their aides to do the job right. "Their budget and staffing levels have remained relatively stationary for a very long time," she said, "yet their incoming communications have increased four times."

Lawmakers who want to blog but who cannot dedicate enough time or staff to the task have tried two other options: temporary blogs that focus on the lawmakers' travels, and guest posts at group blogs. The latter practice is "a great way to get involved and get a feel for the blogs," Folk said, and it "really shows the power of the blog."

Here is a list of congressional blogs as of the first of the year:

Rep. John Boozman, D-Ark. *www.boozman.house.gov/Blog*
Rep. Mike Conaway, R-Texas *www.conawayblog.com*
Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich. *www.conyersblog.us*
Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas *majorityleader.gov/majoritymatters.asp*
Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn. *www.volpac.org/index.cfm?FuseAction=Blogs.Home*
Rep. Katherine Harris, R-Fla. *harris.house.gov/Blog*
House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill. *www.speaker.gov/journal/index.shtml*
Rep. Jack Kingston, R-Ga. *kingston.house.gov/blog*
Rep. Mark Kirk, R-Ill. *www.house.gov/kirk/blog*
Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt. *leahy.senate.gov/MFTF/2005/06/15.html; leahy.senate.gov/issues/Supreme Court/SCHeardattheHearing091505.html*
Rep. John Linder, R-Ga. *linder.house.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=Resources.Home&Resource_id=116*
Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill. *obama.senate.gov/blog*
Rep. Frank Pallone, D-N.J. *www.house.gov/pallone/blog*
Rep. Mike Pence, R-Ind. *mikepence.house.gov/blog*
Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. *www.giveemhellharry.com/blog*
Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill. *www.janschakowsky.org/SchaBLOGsky/tabid/36/Default.aspx*
Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y. *www.votelouise.com/blog*
Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo. *www.myownjournal.com/journal.php?u_mem=tancredoblog*
Republican Study Committee *www.house.gov/pence/rsc/blog.shtml*
House Agriculture Committee Democrats *www.house.gov/agriculture/democrats/blog.shtml*

Most Prolific



LIZ LYNCH

Rep. John Conyers of Michigan not only has his own blog, *ConyersBlog*, he regularly "cross-posts" at other blogs.

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