

Ripon

Profile

Name: Cathy McMorris Rodgers Washington's 5th District

As the new Chairman of the House Republican Conference, you have been a strong proponent of new media. In 140 characters or less, explain why Twitter is so important in American politics today? Twitter allows us to engage, innovate and transform the way Americans interact with Congress by directly connecting us to those we represent.

How many members of the GOP Conference are on Facebook, and how has that helped House Republicans get their message out? Upwards of 90% of Republican Members are on Facebook. The network enables Members of Congress to stay connected with the people we represent on a scale never before possible. Whether it's an important vote coming up on Capitol Hill, or a significant event happening back home, Members can utilize Facebook to engage with constituents in real-time. That feedback and conversation is incredibly valuable, and helps House Republicans be better representatives of the people.

Looking back on the past few years, can you point to any one issue or vote where new media made the difference in the debate? Health care. New media not only dominated the healthcare debate; it transformed it. Never have I received so much online feedback from my constituents as I did during the initial health care votes in Congress and in response to the Supreme Court's decision this summer to uphold the Affordable Care Act. I heard from patients, seniors, physicians, nurses and health care providers who wanted their voices to be heard on this landmark legislation. The overwhelming feedback I received only reaffirmed my opposition to a government takeover of health care and strengthened my resolve to fight against its implementation. New media was an instrumental part of this very contentious debate.

Looking ahead to 2013, what role will new media play in setting the agenda and in reaching out to the American people to find out what they think? There's no doubt in my mind that new media will play a pivotal role in the 113th Congress. Regardless of the issue – health care, energy, tax reform, debt reductions, entitlement reform – it will continue to shape the debate in ways we've never seen before. New media usage is no longer limited to a single demographic; its presence is widespread and its influence is immeasurable. As we look ahead, we will rely heavily on new media to take the country's "pulse" on the most pressing issue of all: jobs and the economy. We want to hear how current policies are affecting everyday Americans and what they want Congress to do to help them create jobs. Getting Americans back to work is our top priority, and we'll use every new media tool we can to get their feedback about how best to achieve it.

Finally, a question related to the season -- with the holidays approaching and as the mother of two young children, what do you believe is the best way for parents and children to communicate with Santa in this new digital age? As the mother of two small children – one of whom has special needs – I've discovered that nothing excites them more than the iPad! Not only do they find it entertaining and user-friendly, but it's been an educational tool as well. And especially now that Cole knows his ABCs, I think my kids will use a new handwriting app – like Penultimate or Notesshelf – to send their digital (handwritten) letters straight to the North Pole!

