



#WIGWednesdays

March 25, 2020

“COVID-19 Virus and How Legislators Can Stay Connected to their Constituents”

Featuring:

Lucy Gettman, Executive Director, Women In Government

Dr. Debra Houry, MD, MPH, Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC

Rob Brockhaus, Vice President, Sales and Marketing at Campaign Marketing Strategies

Lindsey Eggsware, Communications Coordinator, Women In Government

Lucy Gettman: Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to WIG Wednesday! This is Lucy Gettman, Executive Director of Women In Government, or WIG as we have come to call it. We're delighted that you're here for our inaugural WIG Wednesday, which is a new weekly series of policy roundtables that we're very proud to offer you on timely topics with excellent resources and content.

We're especially excited because I'm here with my WIG colleagues Maura LaGue, Managing Director; Laura Blake, Outreach & Development Manager; and Lindsey Eggsware, Communications Coordinator. We're thrilled because not only is this our first virtual policy roundtable - we're going to cover two topics today, and we have three outstanding presenters.

Our first topic is what we need to know about the COVID-19 virus, and we're going to get a real-time update from Dr. Debra Houry, MD, MPH, Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC. She was recently elected as a member to the National Academy of Medicine, which is considered one of the highest honors in the field of health and medicine. She's a former faculty member of the Emory School of Medicine, a former faculty member at the Rawlins School of Public Health, and she's the Past President of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine.

We've had the honor of having Dr. Houry present at a Women In Government conference, and without further ado, Dr. Houry, I'll turn it over to you.

Dr. Houry: Thank you, and as mentioned in my introduction, my full-time job has been the Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control, where I oversee topics like suicide and drug overdoses, which is what I spoke with you all about before at your conference. I've been an ER doctor for over 15 years, and coronavirus has really become a huge priority for CDC. I was asked to go on detail for a few months to really focus on the coronavirus, and it's really an all-in approach at CDC right now. I'm Deputy Incident Manager on the response and delighted to speak with you today to just talk with you a bit about what we know and answer any questions you have.

First of all, I'll give a brief overview of it and then really take a step back and see what questions you might have. CDC is really aggressively responding to this global outbreak COVID-19, and now that we have sustained community transmission in the U.S., we're shifting from containment with things like airport screening to more community mitigation strategies as seen by some of the school closures and the physical distancing that we have been talking about. As of our website update today, there are currently 54,453 cases across all 50 states and 737 deaths. New York, California, and Washington currently have the most cases, many due to long-term home facilities, but other communities are certainly dealing with cases. In Georgia we've been seeing an increase here as well.



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The virus is capable of spreading easily from person to person, and we’re seeing the number of cases being reported in the U.S. is rising quickly. This increase was expected, given the increase in testing and the ongoing rapid spread of the disease across communities in the U.S. As the trajectory continues, many people in the U.S. will be exposed to this virus. We had a recent publication really looking at some of the serious health conditions, and those that have serious health conditions or older adults are the ones that are more likely to develop serious outcomes. The intensity of the outbreak can differ by geographic location, and the state and local health officials issue guidance specific to their communities. Some local communities might be having things like shelter in place, and other places might not have experienced much COVID-19 yet, where businesses are still open and schools are open.

On March 16, President Trump and the White House Task Force issued new guidelines to help protect Americans during this pandemic called 15 Days to Slow the Spread, and this lays out implementation measures to increase physical distancing between people at all levels of society. This really helps to aim to slow the spread as well as blunt the impact of the disease in the U.S. Everyone has a role to play at the time. When possible, stay at home as much as possible, and practice a physical distancing.

Just to reiterate, there’s no vaccine at this time to protect against COVID-19, and there’s no medications approved to treat it. There is a body of evidence, though, based on about 200 journal articles that support the effectiveness of physical distancing or social distancing measures, both when used alone or in combination with other measures such as hand washing, hand sanitizer, not going to work when you’re sick. All those things can really help with decreasing transmission.

We currently have, as of March 22nd, 91 state and local public health labs in 50 states, DC, Guam, and Puerto Rico that are able to do COVID-19 diagnostic tests. We’ve adapted some of our existing surveillance systems to better track the COVID-19 virus. The federal government, along with states and the private sector, are all working to increase access to PPE (personal protective equipment). Given the current situation, we did recently post guidance on how to optimize PPE – if you’re having more of a shortage of PPE, we advise doing things like decreasing elective surgeries so that PPE can be shifted to acute care facilities.

CDC also drafted several pieces of guidance that we hope will be helpful to your state and constituents – things like information for children, tips for parents during school dismissal, and it gives a lot of guidance for schools and childcare programs. We also have things like guidance for retirement communities and independent living to help them prepare and respond to COVID-19. We have guidance for cleaning and disinfecting your home when someone is sick and how long the virus can live on different surfaces. I know when I’m out walking, my neighbors always ask me a lot of these questions, so we really try to put all of these frequently asked questions on our website.

I’d like to end with what you and your constituents can do. Everyone can really do their part by starting with physical distancing. I’m recommending that people stay 6 feet apart. We have some exposure guidance on our website for if you’re within 6 feet of someone - how long you can be safely - and the answer is a very short period of time. We also recommend that older people and people with severe chronic conditions should take special precautions because they’re at a higher risk of developing serious



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COVID-19 illness. If you're sick with COVID-19 but not sick enough to be hospitalized, follow our guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others. People who are mildly ill with COVID-19 are able to isolate at home during their illness. Again we recommend things like cleaning your hands, avoiding close contact with people who are sick, staying home if you're sick, covering coughs and sneezes where you do it into your elbow, and then clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

I really want to thank you for your time today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you have.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you so much, Dr. Houry. We do have quite a few legislators and other folks from New York on the phone in addition to California and Washington. Do you have any special guidance, advice, or reassurance for state leaders and decision makers? Also, building off of that, is there anything that you can recommend to the rest of states that don't have quite the same incident of COVID-19, and have there been any lessons learned from New York, California, and Washington for policymakers?

Dr. Houry: I'd say that each state is unique with some of the spread. One of the things we're seeing is that in some of the long-term care facilities there's been spread there. If you have a worker at one long-term care facility, you should make sure that they're not going to multiple sites and transmitting the infection that way. With these older adults who are at risk, it's really a time to restrict visitors to help decrease the transmission as well.

I think the states have really been out in front of trying to have social distancing, closing down businesses or at least altering the times they're open to decrease the frequency, and really messaging that it's a critical public health issue and how everybody has a role to play. I think the more visible the state leaders can be – that's always of utmost importance to constituents that they're really transparent, sharing the numbers and giving hope that by measures like physical distancing, tracking this epidemic, trying to find out where hotspots are, and following CDC guidance on things around PPE or hospital systems, it can really help with that.

Lucy Gettman: We do have two questions from attendees. First, if someone in your family is suspected of having coronavirus, what should the other family members do? Second, the Kentucky state legislature is scheduled to go back in session tomorrow. Can you offer your perspective on the decision which will have legislators sitting and working in very close quarters with one another?

Dr. Houry: At CDC, we've actually moved to having most of our own staff telework, and those of us on the response have been really cognizant of being at least 6 feet apart, where have two or more chairs between us at meetings. I would really advise the Kentucky legislature to find ways to do that – remote if possible, and if you do need to be in the same room, make sure it's big enough to have that physical distancing. If anybody is sick – cough, fever, anything like that – they really need to stay home so they don't transmit this to others.

With regards to someone sick in your home, part of it depends on who else is in the home. What we're telling people now is that if you're mildly sick, the best thing to do is try to isolate yourself in the household a bit – so maybe a separate bedroom, separate bathroom – and avoiding contact with other



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family members as much as possible. I realize that’s certainly difficult if you don’t have multiple rooms or if you have active children. If you’re an older adult, I’d say that’s when you really want to be especially careful because you’re at risk for additional complications. I view it as just really good infection control - that you’re really trying to reduce your risk of transmission to others - so minimizing the amount of surfaces that you touch, making sure that you’re cleaning up after yourself with some good cleaning supplies and equipment.

Lucy Gettman: We have another question from the audience for you. There are comparisons of how South Korea responded vs. how the U.S. and individual states have responded. What are your hopes for lessons learned so that the CDC is better prepared and more resilient for the next pandemic?

Dr. Houry: With this pandemic, being able to really track and monitor and respond effectively is really critical. When we start to see a surge in cases, it’s being able to focus on containing the virus before there’s community spread and once there’s community spread being able to really focus on how to then lessen the spread and make that those who are most at risk of having severe illness are protected.

Lucy Gettman: What is being done to address immigrants detained in ISIS detention facilities who have been exposed to COVID-19. In New York, we just had a transfer from a center in New Jersey to Batavia where officers have been exposed – an officer and an immigrant confirmed positive for the virus.

Dr. Houry: We did release just yesterday some updated guidance around correctional facilities as well as prisons, so all of that is now on our website. It talks about how you minimize things around crowding when possible, infection control, good principles, and then in some cases there have been releases of nonviolent offenders to reduce populations of the incarcerated and reduce the chance of spread.

Lucy Gettman: We have a question from the state of Georgia regarding legislative sessions. In the interest of transparency she’s disclosing that she’s from Georgia, and they have six Senators and two House members who have tested positive. What do you think of the balance of encouraging folks to not get together but making sure that decision makers and leaders can get together and make decisions to help people to get past this?

Dr. Houry: I think it’s something we’re all wrestling with in all of our workplaces – that you want everybody to literally be at the table, and I think we’ve learned that we can’t all physically be seated closely around the table. It’s very important when there’s community transmission to have that physical distancing, and that’s something that we’re practicing on the response at CDC. When there’s the critical incident people that are in the room we are very much spread out, and anybody that is sick or has a cough, even if it’s due to allergies, are staying home so we’re not at risk of transmitting to others. We’re using more technology like Skype and Adobe and Zoom to really have some of those connections and remote meetings when possible.

Lucy Gettman: Dr. Houry, are you aware of any resources that are available for undocumented immigrants?



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Dr. Houry: I’m not, but we can get back to you on that. I’m still relatively new to the response. We may have some information, and our policy folks can get back to you on that.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you. We have a question from Washington State. India ordered a countrywide lockdown. Do you think that United States might or should go in that direction?

Dr. Houry: I don’t have a crystal ball, so I don’t know what we’ll do as a country. That’s up to the leaders of our country, but what I would say is that we have very varied geographic needs in the U.S. We’ve got some very rural areas that may not be experiencing some transmission and some highly populated cities that are, so I think it’s really important to look at each geographic community and really rely on our local and state leaders to make a lot of these decisions to help with the community transmission and to decrease it.

Lucy Gettman: We have a forward-thinking question. In addition to eventual treatment and a vaccine, will survivors of the infection offer enough herd immunity for possible second and third rounds of infections?

Dr. Houry: That’s a great question, and that’s one of the questions that we’re still studying. If you’re infected with COVID-19 and you recover from it, are you then immune to it? With many other diseases that is the case, but it’s one of those things that this virus has only been circulating since I believe December, and so we just don’t have enough data on that yet.

Lucy Gettman: Dr. Houry, I know there are a few more questions out there, but I did want to give you the opportunity to speak to some of the resources that are available from the CDC. For example, I know that the Women In Government website has a direct link to the CDC COVID-19 website. Can you describe some of the other resources that the CDC has the Women In Government can in turn make available to legislators and other policymakers?

Dr. Houry: Absolutely. I’d say one of the things is we even have a symptom checker now where people can go in and see if they do need to go and seek medical care or not based on the symptoms they put in there. We’ve had over 2 million people just in the past two days do that Coronavirus Self Checker.

There’s also questions on there about healthcare professionals and healthcare facilities which documents how to check to make sure that your facility is prepared. There are also things on what does an exposed healthcare worker do, how to protect yourself – that information is there. I think what might be of particular interest to this group is we have a tab on schools, workplaces, and community locations that we really give guidance on – how each of these different types of settings can prepare for coronavirus and then if there is community transmission, really how to help mitigate it.

Lucy Gettman: I want to mention to folks that we are recording this virtual policy roundtable, so if you entered late into the conversation, you can still hear everything from the beginning. Women In Government will be following up to make as many resources as possible available on our website and through social media.



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Dr. Houry, any final thoughts or advice for decision makers who are exhibiting incredible leadership during this difficult time?

Dr. Houry: I would just say reach out with any specific questions or resources that you need or that you can't find on our website. I greatly appreciate Women In Government linking to our website where you can see that we're updating our numbers daily and that breaks it down by state as well so you can see the impact in your specific community. Anything that we can do to collaborate with you, please let us know.

Lucy Gettman: Dr. Houry, thank you very much for your availability and for your resources. I know that you have to leave the call right now, and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

So related to this topic, now that we've gotten a real-time update on the status of COVID-19 in our nation, that puts a lot of pressure on and creates challenges and opportunities for women legislators and others to stay connected, to be of service, and to be making a difference in their communities even during a period of social distancing.

I'm delighted to introduce Rob Brockhaus, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Campaign Marketing Strategies. He brings nearly two decades of experience to the table as an entrepreneur, in executive and financial service, nonprofit and trade association industries. He has expertise in sales, project management, volunteer management, and coalition building. He has had a leadership role in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as an international bond trader, was formerly affiliated with the Heritage Foundation, and he's active in the Boy Scouts of America Washington, DC community.

Rob, welcome to this virtual policy roundtable!

Rob Brockhaus: Lucy, it's great to be with you today during this global historic event. Like many of you, we are sheltering here in place in Arlington, Virginia.

Lucy Gettman: Rob, what do we need to know about staying in touch with our constituents and our districts during social distancing?

Rob Brockhaus: To say it's a unique time is kind of an understatement. What we have experienced in our business over the last two weeks – the number of telephone town halls that we are doing is 300% greater than this time last year. People are definitely thinking about ways to reach out to their constituents in new ways and thinking more creatively about what it means to stay connected when everybody is indoors. We are now helping out even small cities with their zoning meetings.

Government still needs to take action and make things happen, but how do you get your constituents to participate, and how can they feel that they are being listened to? Telephone town halls, phone connections – is one way that people are doing that, and we're happy to help out with that. Leaders, both public policy and elected officials, are wanting to stay safe. As we heard from Dr. Houry previously, she and her team are taking actions to stay safe and are encouraging us to do the same. We have to



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think about ways to do that not only for our constituents and ourselves but for our staff as well. Phone technology is a tool that people can use to do that.

Also what we're seeing is that not only the number of phone-related projects increase, the participation of people at their homes is increasing. People are not at work, and they are not running errands – they are at home, and they are hungry for information from their elected officials. We do believe now is a good time to connect with individuals.

For those who aren't familiar with telephone town halls, a telephone town hall is nothing more than a radio show on your phone. Unlike an in-person town hall, no one can throw tomatoes at you, there are no hecklers, there are no microphone monopolizers, and there's no COVID-19. Telephone town halls are a great way to connect with constituents in a safe and fun way.

How are telephone town halls effective? They're efficient, there's no rental to have, there are no chairs to set up, there are no logistical headaches, and you don't have to worry about bad weather keeping people at home. The technology of telephone town halls is very simple. It's just a computer, an internet connection, and a phone line, so even people who are working from home – maybe their legislative assistants are working from home – it's all remote, and everyone can work together as a team on the computer and on the phone together. It's a very useful technology in a time of social distancing.

You might be interested to know that for telephone town halls, you're pushing content out to people. You're not hoping that they turn on the news and see you on the news or hope that they're following you on Facebook or Twitter. By having their phone number, which is available in consumer databases, we can push your telephone town hall out to those people so that they stay informed or at least have the opportunity to be informed. We think that's a really good tool in these days where everybody is stuck at home. Everybody has a phone line, and with this type of technology we can make those phones rings so that they can hear the valuable information that you have to give to them.

You can also be very targeted. You can say “Let's do a telephone town hall for women,” or “Let's do a telephone town hall to seniors.” You can do data modeling with your phone list and have topics related to that targeted demographic. Also, doing an outbound call vs. hoping that people will dial into your conference call is just another way to have good participation. You and your team are putting together valuable information, and people need to hear about it, so this is a way by using outbound phone calls to make sure that information is getting out in a timely way.

With a telephone town hall, the best thing about it is that you get to hear directly from your constituents. They can ask you a question, and you can respond to that question in real time. It allows for a two-way, real time conversation. Sometimes with Facebook posts and Twitter and things online, at times the tone can get lost. With telephone town halls, the human voice is very powerful. When I would call my grandmother, she would always say, “It's so nice to hear your voice.” I'm hearing that over and over again with our different clients where donors and constituents are telling their leaders that it's so nice to hear their voices. People are social, and in this time of social distancing, that's getting kind of lost. Telephone town halls are a way to fill that gap.



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Don't forget the human voice is powerful. People do want to hear from you. This is a time for elected officials, especially at the state level – we do lots of telephone town halls for State Representatives and State Senators across the country – and this is a great way to have them hear from you directly. They don't see you at the grocery store anymore, they don't see you at the barbershop or at the kids' baseball game. This is a very important time to stay connected and to think of ways that we can do that. The human voice is the next best thing instead of in-person meetings. This is a time for all of us to shine and to engage with people, to not lose our humanity during this crisis.

I'd be happy to help out if anybody would like to brainstorm questions of how they can engage their constituents. You folks are on the front lines, and we're just here to help.

Lucy Gettman: We had an interesting observation that the chat box in Zoom is able to be used to have legislators ask each other questions and get answers. Rob, are there other technologies that folks might use whether it's a Zoom platform or texting or automated telephone calls that could be useful for informing the needs of districts and constituents?

Rob Brockhaus: I think it all depends on who your constituents are and the type of communication you want to have with them. Zoom is a great tool, and it allows people to view things on the computer, but it requires people to dial in. You don't have that push communication that you have with outbound telephone town halls. It is a great way to have something on the computer, and video is very powerful in a great way. My church group met for the first time last night on Zoom, and it's a great way to see people's facial expressions, so I think there's always a room for video where that applies.

Robocalls or automated calls are a great way to have important information that you want to share put out there. Facebook and Twitter are not going anywhere, and I know that Lindsey's going to be talking a little bit about that – they're very popular. You're able to share videos, and you're able to have group discussions. I think in this time all communication channels should be used. It just depends on what the presenter feels comfortable with, the content being shared, and what's the best communication channel to get that information out.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you, Rob. Now that face-to-face meetings really aren't an option and going door-to-door really is not an option right now, some folks have been speculating about going old school and actually putting things in the mail. Are there any old school communications tools that could enhance or illuminate some of the technology options to help stay in contact with constituents?

Rob Brockhaus: Mail is always helpful. It's a nice visual, and mail is not going away. There's a lot of times when you don't have the email address for a constituent, so what do you have? You could probably get a phone number if you have one and their mailing address. Some think mail is going away, but I would use it. It's a combination of things – send out an automated call after you've done a mailer to follow up and see if they have any questions. I think they work hand in hand with each other.



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Lucy Gettman: Rob, our audience has several questions for you. The first is about using long-distance call-in numbers that may charge a fee to participate. Is there such a thing as a free conference call service, or could the fee be waived during the COVID-19 crisis so that legislators and constituents could connect with one another?

Rob Brockhaus: Great question! When we do a telephone town hall, we will ask our clients what’s the local area code so that if, for example, someone in St. Louis, Missouri wanted to do a telephone town hall, we would ask if they wanted to use a 314 number or a 636 number – whatever is best for their constituents. With some platforms, they’ll say that this is a number you have to use, but for us we can assign a local area code based upon the clients’ needs.

Lucy Gettman: We have several more questions from the audience for you. Can you very briefly parse out what’s the difference between a conference call and a telephone town hall? Also, for senior citizens and others who are particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, what has been your experience with this demographic and their limited access and technology knowledge?

Rob Brockhaus: The way I would define a conference call is that a) it’s everybody in one meeting all at once with no muting where it’s kind of a free-for-all, and b) it’s one person sharing information where the communications are one-way. There’s no question and answer function.

A telephone town call is just like an in-person town hall where the elected official gives an update and then asks, “Who has questions for me?” People then line up at a microphone and ask their questions. The same thing happens at a telephone town hall where people can press * on the phone, get their question in a queue, and then the elected official and their team will answer the questions as they come in. It’s very much a live exchange like a talk radio show. The DJ says, “Our next call is Sally from St. Louis. Sally, what’s your question for the elected official?” Then they get to have that conversation in a very controlled manner. If you’re like my house where you have kids running around, you want to have that mute function. The town hall system does allow the callers’ line to be muted so that they’re not interrupted in giving their answer.

For the senior citizen question, we do a lot of work with nonprofits, and the demographic always skews older. Telephone town halls – they love it. They like getting the phone call. Most senior citizens know how to pick up the phone and answer it. It’s not complicated with internet, or a web browser, or your cookies are not enabled, or whatever issue. It’s simple technology, and in this time when we’re trying to reach a broad demographic, picking up a phone is about as easy as it gets.

Lucy Gettman: Has the trend of folks giving up their landlines made it more challenging to conduct telephone town halls? Perhaps cell phone numbers aren’t as readily available.

Rob Brockhaus: When it comes to political calls or franked calls, they have to be to a landline, per the FCC. If it’s a membership phone list or if the constituent has given their permission to call their cell phone, then by all means you can call a cell phone. As people have transitioned from traditional lines to cell phones, broadly speaking in some ways the universe of landlines has decreased.



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However, with that said, for all the phone numbers that we do have, we know more about those constituents than what we did previously. For example, if you want to have a telephone town hall that targets seniors, we can have a phone list and zero in on people who fit that age demographic. Although landlines are slowly going away, they're not going away. It's still an inexpensive way to reach out to people, and it's worth the return on the investment.

Lucy Gettman: We have a couple more questions from the audience for you, Rob. I do want to preface this first question by saying that Women In Government is completely nonpartisan and works with all elected women state legislators across the country. Women In Government does not support any particular political campaigns and is a 501 (c)(3) organization. The question is that we are in campaign season, and unfortunately due to circumstances, it's effectively on ice. So do campaign telephone town halls work, and what might the range of financial investment be to conduct them?

Rob Brockhaus: I think given that we are in the middle of the primary season, and we're in the middle of a COVID-19 crisis, right now we're seeing a lot of constituent outreach. We're seeing franked telephone town halls and people engaging with elected officials. I anticipate as we get closer to the summer, campaign activities will pick up, and hopefully things will get better, but I think people will still be nervous. Even in times when this type of global phenomenon is not happening, campaign telephone town halls work because people don't always want to go out to a campaign rally. Telephone town halls allow candidates and elected officials to meet constituents where the constituent is most comfortable. Telephone town halls are not going away, and they are as effective as campaign outreach telephone town halls.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you, Rob. I do want to relay a comment that was made that it is possible to enable to raise your hand option during a telephone town hall and disable the mute function so that everyone has the opportunity to hear your voice.

Rob, do you have any final parting thoughts that you have for us? I know you're going to provide us with some resources that we can share and make available after this wraps up.

Rob Brockhaus: Thank you, Lucy, and thank you to Women In Government for all that you do. It's our pleasure to be of help to everybody on this call on both sides of the aisle. If you want to brainstorm ideas, my phone line and email box are open to talk you through different scenarios.

It's really heartening. I am moved by our collectiveness right now. People are reaching out and saying, "I want to hear from you," and people are responding to that, so I think that is great both at the federal and at the state level. State Representatives, State Senators, you folks are on the front lines of talking with your constituents, and it's not an easy time – but being out there, being in front of your constituents is valuable. If there's anything I can do to be helpful, please let me know. This is your time – our time – as a country to shine during the crisis.

Lucy Gettman: Thank you, Rob. We agree! Thank you for offering your current and ongoing assistance.



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I am very, very proud to bring in Lindsey Eggsware. She is Communications Coordinator for Women In Government, and we just were able to snag her from the Sunshine State in Florida, where she worked for the North Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce. She majored in Editing, Writing, and Media when she was in college and was responsible while she was in the Chamber for assembling a package of materials that resulted in the North Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce being named the #1 Chamber in the entire state of Florida.

Lindsey, among her many gifts and talents, excels in the strategic use of social media. Without further ado, Lindsey, what do we need to know about social media to stay in touch with districts and constituents?

Lindsey Eggsware: Thank you so much, Lucy, for the warm introduction! I’m so excited to be here. Florida is my home state, and I’m a big Seminole fan. I’m excited to be up in DC where there’s a bunch of Seminoles, and it’s a great environment and community to be in up here.

I really appreciated Rob’s point about telephone town halls enabling you to have your target audience and your target market. That’s the one great thing about telephone town halls is that you can really verse it to one specific group instead of it just being an open floor. I’ve worked a lot with target audiences and target demographics and how to convey a message effectively to different demographics because I know that very well.

I’d like to dive into ways that you can use social media. I know it may seem like an obvious source to use because it is online. Most people are teleworking, working from home or working remotely, and there’s a way to interact on a different level than just what we typically do on social media. I would encourage people to think about ways in which they can implement their own kind of WIG Wednesday for themselves – for legislators to reach out to constituents and the private sector to reach out to their clients – ways that they can interact with them on a regular basis whether it’s on video via Facebook Live Stream or a Twitter chat where there’s no video all.

At least set aside 30 minutes to 1 hour every week where people have that to look forward to in order to receive information from you. If you’re a legislator this could be named “Chatting with your Constituents” or “Constituent Chats on Thursday at 4:00 pm.” These types of resources can be really helpful to constituents during this time. You can pick the topic, and you can be the speaker. It doesn’t have to be an elaborate plan where you need to find speakers. I think constituents just really want to hear from their legislator.

Facebook has a great availability to do Live Streaming as well as just uploading videos. I’m not sure what the current time limit is, but you can do a Live Stream at least up to two hours. That’s plenty of time to interact with your constituents. When you’re considering this as an option to do to serve your constituents, strongly consider the time frame. The statistics have shown for in my past position at the North Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce that days when people are online and really interacting are Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. The time frame for that is usually 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm. I would



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suggest finding some time in there when people can log on, be actively involved, and interact with you. It's a great opportunity to retain and be in contact with your constituents or your clients and members if you're on the private sector side.

We've implemented WIG Wednesdays here in the hopes that we can better serve those near and far as we practice social distancing due to COVID-19. Another thing we have learned recently that has given some great intelligence for us is polling and surveying. This may be something you do regularly, it may be something you do monthly, maybe something you only do around campaign season, but for everybody at all times it's great to include a “yes or no” poll within your mass communications pieces.

There are so many different platforms that you can use: ConstantContact, Mail Chimp, Google forms – those options can provide you the ability to receive insight and intelligence to let you know what your constituents are needing and wanting. Who do you need to be retaining – and I call it “touches” – but you try to have touches at least four or five “touches” a year with certain people. It can be considered a touch when you're receiving a response back from a poll question.

There are so many great mass communications platforms like the ones I mentioned earlier. You can send out regular emails and receive responses that way, but it can be kind of daunting to go through all those, but that's another option as well.

Please stay social with us here at Women In Government. All of our social media platforms are listed on the next slide. We have Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and SoundCloud where we put all of our public service announcements. It's definitely a great avenue to interact with us. We will be sure to follow you and share your items if they're applicable to our vision and our mission. We look forward to meeting with you all in the future! I know this has been a challenging time as we deal with social distancing, but we will all get through this together. We're so grateful to have social media during this time because it is a way to stay connected.

I'm happy to take any questions!

Lucy Gettman: I also want to mention that on Lindsey's very first day, she created Women In Government's Instagram account and then in her second week on the job she had Women In Government participate in our first Twitter chat for Women's History Month.

Lindsey, do you have any tips for using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, or SoundCloud?

Lindsey Eggsware: What I have learned when it comes to social media and making the most use out of each platform that's available to us is to have a plan. Schedule out your posts so that as things come up - and you can always cancel a scheduled post – develop the posts and have them produce content that is going to contribute to a discussion where people can share or comment. I know, for example, we had a Rare Disease Day post where people were really intrigued and wanted to know how Women In Government can have an impact in this area and how we communicate that. We had an overarching plan to execute our messaging for each platform. I really recommend doing that, and it doesn't have to



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be elaborate. I've done a three year communications strategic plan before, and your social media plan doesn't have to be that extensive. Having a plan is always helpful.

I did want to make a point about the weekly chat with your constituents that I mentioned earlier. We've seen a real life example of how this has been very productive with a lot of Governors. They have received a lot of increased engagement by doing their daily briefings in relation to COVID-19. This is a great way to remain in contact with your constituents and let them know that you can hear them and that they can hear you. It's a good way to interact.

Lucy Gettman: Lindsey, thank you very much. We have two questions from the audience. One is a request to get a list of the platforms that we've been discussing during the call today. We will make sure that the slides, a recording, and a transcript of this presentation is made available later to all participants and to all of our members.

The second question is what are the most effective formats for sharing information? The questioner right now relies heavily on Facebook and Twitter posts so that they can share PDFs of content which are usually in a bullet point format. Can you give some advice on what's the most effective way to use the various formats available?

Lindsey Eggsware: Absolutely! A couple of years ago, I came across a platform called Canva, which is not a social media account but it's a formatting account where you can create PNGs and JPEGs based off of things that are in PDF formats. You can't necessarily convert it directly – you'd have to go to another website to do this – but Canva allows you to create a graphic with information that is either in a Word or PDF format to make it more enticing for social media users. This tool isn't just taking an email you would send to a colleague and making that messaging aesthetically pleasing but it makes it grander and more vibrant. Canva does have a free option for users and a paid option as well.

Lucy Gettman: I know that there are many more questions that we could ask you, Lindsey, but as we prepare to wrap up, I want to share that this is the first of our WIG Wednesdays and that there are many more to come! On April 1st at 3:00 pm Eastern Time, Haley Ashcom of the U.S. Census Bureau will demonstrate the tools and information available to ensure that a full and complete census is conducted in spite of COVID-19. In addition, on April 8th at 3:00 pm Eastern Time we will have Bob Blancato, Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, talking to us about providing adequate nutrition to vulnerable populations during COVID-19. Following that, on April 15th at 3:00 pm Eastern Time we will have Mary Kosinski, Deputy Vice President of Science and Regulatory Advocacy at PhRMA who will talk about development of medicines.

Stay tuned for communications from us as we confirm more speakers for this series, and we'll be with you as long as you need us to provide relevant and timely information that will help you in your work as you provide leadership in your districts and your state.

With that in mind, I want to thank once again the incredible crew at Women In Government. We are here for you. I know most of you know us because you've come to our state-based roundtables and our



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national conferences, and we look forward to continuing to work with you! We are all in this together, so please call us, email us, and check out resources on our website. We want to be here for you this week, next week, until this is all over, and beyond.

Thank you for being here, and please join us for our next WIG Wednesday!