Political Realities of Digital Communication: The Limits of Value from Digital Messages to Members of the US Congress *

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ABSTRACT

Digital activism tools are intended to give voice to grassroots movements. However, a recent proliferation in one type of these tools -- activist-focused digital messaging tools (DMTs) -- have depreciated the value of citizen communication to policymakers. Although DMTs are popular among digital activists, previous research has found DMT messages provide little to no value to policymakers. This paper analyzes DMTs role in political activism in the U.S., and describes how DMTs are paradoxically widening the communication gap between citizens and their policymakers. We discuss this gap created by DMTs in terms of a diffusion of unsuccessful innovation. We use DMTs as a case study to encourage the LIMITS community to support and engage in effective forms of political activism. Technology has widened a gap between policymakers and citizens. The LIMITS community can help bridge this gap and support policies for adapting to global limits.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing → Empirical studies in HCI**
• **Applied computing → Computers in other domains → Computing in government**

KEYWORDS

Activism; Digital Messaging Tools; Diffusion of Innovations; Political Communication

1 INTRODUCTION

The digitization of grassroots movements has afforded communication on a large scale at marginally low cost [12, 30]. To increase participation, many US activist organizations are promoting digital messaging tools (DMTs) to encourage communication between citizens and policymakers. DMTs are form-based messaging tools that send messages to policymakers on behalf of the user.

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In many cases, the content of the messages sent to policymakers is automated content pre-written by the DMT's organization. Due to the automation of DMTs, they require minimal effort to the user. This has led to a large number of users sending DMT-based messages to policymakers [23]. It seems that, when policymakers receive a large number of messages about a specific policy, they would assume a large number of citizens are interested in that policy. However, this is not the case. In reality, these DMT-based messages do not indicate citizen interest because they use automated content [16, 22, 23]. Policymakers do not value similar (if not identical), content in messages because they cannot assess the legitimacy of each message [23]. In many cases, policymakers believe the messages are a form of "astroturfing", (i.e., an attempt to create an impression of widespread grassroots support for a policy [2]). Most crucially, policymakers value personal forms of engagement such as in-person meetings, phone calls, and personal stories [1, 7, 13, 14]. Not all constituents can provide such personal contact of course, and the number of DMT users continues to grow. As many as 5,000-10,000 associations, non-profits, and corporations have sections of their websites devoted to DMTs to contact policymakers [16]. As a result, a large influx of politically-engaged users are sending digital messages to policymakers with little understanding of the messages' actual value in the policymaking process. In return policymakers are ignoring these low-value messages sent by citizens. The result is a widening communication gap where both parties are not addressing the needs of the other.

To explain this situation, we will first provide an overview of policy and HCI and previous LIMTIS discussion on policy engagement. We will then offer a brief explanation of low-cost forms of activism engagement. After providing this explanation, we will overview both sides of the communication flow (i.e., activist organizations and policymakers). We will describe the activist-side of the communication flow by discussing current developments in digital messaging tools. We will also provide three diverse examples of DMTs. Then, we will describe the policymaker-side of the communication flow, and provide a brief overview of the policymaker communication infrastructure for the US Congress. We will then discuss how this situation represents a diffusion of unsuccessful innovation [34]. Using this situation as a case study, we reflect on the broader issues of DMTs and activism that the LIMITS community should address. Lastly, we will propose a future study to further investigate the proliferation of DMTs.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Public Policy and HCI

Working with policy and policymakers is not new to the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) community [8], [9]. Recently, HCI researchers have increased efforts to highlight public policy as a natural extension of pre-existing HCI focuses [26]. Lazar et al. separate engagement with the policy community into two forms: (1) policy influencing science and technology, and (2) science and technology informing policy. Public policy has influenced how HCI researchers work through areas such as human subjects research, laws for interface design, and research funding. In return, HCI has informed public policy in areas like accessibility laws, website development standards, ergonomic standards, and digital agendas. The HCI community has also made great strides in the usability, accessibility, and design of government websites, election ballots, and e-government systems [4, 5, 9, 11, 39].

Lazar et al.'s two main forms of policy engagement embody direct relationships between policy and HCI. In addition to these forms of engagement, we also need to engage in peripheral developments in the digitization of government systems. These peripheral developments include technology used by citizens (e.g., DMTs) and policymakers communication systems. In these cases, the use of technology does not necessarily inform policy, but can greatly affect how citizens and policymakers communicate about policy.

2.2 Time Horizons for Limits Engagement

Daniel Pargman frames limits engagement into time horizons of long, medium, and short, based on a person's perceived urgency of limits challenges. Political engagement, whether national or international, is considered a long-time horizon engagement with limits challenges [31]. A person who chooses to take political action "…must by necessity think that change will happen only slowly" [31]. We agree that political change can take time to develop [37]. However, there are several stages in the policymaking process. Each stage can exhibit different time horizons dependent upon the perceived urgency by different stakeholders in that stage. For example, when activists first recognize a need for policy change, a sense of urgency can be critical to the initial stages of policymaking. To persuade policymakers to begin the policymaking process, activists will create a sense of urgency to catalyze and sustain political mobilization [32]. In return, this mobilization can increase citizen participation, donations, and media attention. Without a sense of urgency in activism, there may be limited mobilization of participants. As a result, there may be little incentive for policymakers to pay attention to activism efforts. When the LIMITS community views political engagements on slower time horizons, a sense of urgency is taken away from these important initial stages of activism in the policymaking process.

2.3 Low Cost Activism

DMTs can provide low-cost opportunities for involvement in political activism. We define low-cost participation as activities with little to no financial and personal risk, and low confrontation with socially entrenched norms [18]. By reducing the cost and time to participate, more users can participate. However, reducing the cost of participation can change the motives for activists' participation. Low-cost participation can emphasize feel-good behaviors over actual political impact. For example, a person may sign an online petition (a low-cost activity with almost no barriers to participation) because the action makes them feel good about their contributions to a social movement.

There are numerous debates on whether low-cost "slacktivism" behaviors actually affect activism [3, 6, 25, 27]. Most of these studies find that low-cost activism, while having no impact on policy change, creates no harm. However, Hyson found that writing digital messages to US policymakers has increasingly counterproductive impacts [23]. Use of DMTs continues to widen the communication gap between activists and policymakers who are unable to handle such volumes of communication. The combination of 'feel-good' engagement with digital grassroots DMTs can give users a false sense of political engagement and create unintended consequences for the relationships between citizens and their policymakers [23].

3 DMT OVERVIEW

In this section, we provide three examples of DMTs. These tools have been created by activist groups, nonprofits, for-profits, and other organizations. The DMTs are diverse in affordances, but have the same goal of providing users an easy way to communicate with members of the US Congress. However, as we will describe, although DMTs make contacting policymakers easier, they do not make the process effective. Each system has issues that render citizen-policymaker communication ineffective. The issues represent a common set of issues which span across many DMTs available. Screenshots of each DMT are available in the appendix.

3.1 Democracy.io

Democracy.io is an open source DMT that provides an easy way for citizens to contact members of Congress, centralizing the process of identifying contact information for each member of Congress by automatically identifying each user's district. Democracy.io was created by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a US-based non-profit dedicated to civil rights on the internet. Given the user's address, the tool identifies the user's Senators and Representatives. It then gives the user the option to direct messages to any of them. Democracy.io allows the user to write about anything they would like to discuss with their members of Congress.

We contacted the managers of this service and learned that Democracy.io does not reach all members of Congress. The system is essentially a user-friendly wrapper that takes information from the user and inputs it into pre-existing contact forms on the member's website. The availability of contact forms varies by Congressional office. Some members of Congress do not have a contact form on their website. Therefore, the system

does not guarantee each member is contacted. Unfortunately, this information is not mentioned to the user.

3.2 Sierra Club

The Sierra Club is the largest and arguably one of most influential environmental organizations in the United States. A recent House bill introduced to the Committees on Energy and Commerce; Agriculture; Transportation and Infrastructure; Science, Space, and Technology proposed to eliminate the Environmental Protection Agency [42]. The Sierra Club created a DMT to respond to this bill proposal. The DMT encourages citizens to contact Congress to oppose the bill. Like Democracy.io, the form requires input of basic personal information such as the user's address. It provides a pre-written letter to urge Congressional opposition to the bill. Users have the option to edit the pre-written content, and/or provide a personal message below the form. The system uses a third-party vendor to maintain an up-to-date Congressional directory. This is one of many DMTs the Sierra Club uses for legislative activism.

The system does not allow users to choose who the message is sent to. In fact, it never explicitly states who the message is sent to; it only states that the message will be sent to the user's Representatives and Senators. This lack of clarity causes two potential problems. First, at the time this DMT was active, the bill was being considered in committees. Only members of Congress who sit on these committees have a vote on the bill before it moves forward. If this DMT only sent messages to the participants' representatives, then the messages are sent to the wrong members of Congress. Second, members of Congress are only responsible for communicating with their own constituents. If all messages were sent to committee members, only constituent messages will be read.

3.3 Countable.us

Countable.us is the most automated of the digital messaging tools we examined. Countable Corp., a for-profit technology start-up, created Countable as a civic engagement platform [8]. It provides information on upcoming legislation being considered in the US Congress. Users can use buttons to vote 'Yay' or 'Nay' for each piece of legislation being considered. Every time a user votes, an automated message is sent to the user's representatives to indicate constituent interest in legislation. Users have the option to include additional content to the messages before they are sent. If users do not add additional content, the message will resemble the following example:

"I am a voter in your district. I support the legislation H.R. 1446. I encourage you to vote for it. Thanks to Countable.us, I will be receiving updates on how you vote on this and future legislation." [41]

It is important to emphasize the content automation in both the Sierra Club and Countable.io examples. If a thousand different citizens used these DMTs to send messages to their policymakers, the content of such messages would be redundant. Although DMTs like the Sierra Club and Countable DMTs allow users to edit the redundant messages, some users might be reluctant to edit the messages due to the required increase effort or fear of altering the original message. This high volume of redundancy can be bothersome to staff [10, 23]. Rather than informing policymakers about citizen's' interests, redundant messages dissuade policymakers from reading such messages [23]. The more messages are received, the less likely it is that some policymakers will read them [7]. Given the lack of content automation in Democracy.io, it seems that members of Congress might be more inclined to respond to these messages. However, given the lack of reliability in reaching desired members of Congress, Democracy.io is still considered ineffective.

This next section will discuss how offices handle information obtained from these messaging tools.

4 CITIZEN COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

It is critical to identify how citizen messages are handled to understand the consequences of DMTs. This section provides a brief overview of the technological infrastructure of citizen communication systems.

The digital infrastructure for citizen communication in the US Congress is decentralized. Each representative's office functions like an independent business [23]. All 535 members of Congress independently choose how to establish social media accounts, websites, and constituent email systems. Although they are free to choose, constituent communication systems are limited to five approved vendors in the House and three approved vendors in the Senate that comply with functionality and security standards [23]. Over the past decade, Congressional offices received between 200 to 1,000 percent more constituent communication in emails [16]. Even though technology has improved, a massive workload is still required for citizen correspondence. Some Congressional offices reported allocating up to 50% of their staff to constituent correspondence [23]. Congressional staffers are the first set of readers in email correspondence. Many staffers assigned to email correspondence are younger staff and interns [10, 23]. Database tools such as the House's corresponding management systems (CMS) or the Senate's constituent services system (CSS) have been created to help assist staff in organizing these emails. However due to the high turnover of interns, limited technical expertise of staff, under-staffing, and under-budgeting, Congressional offices are limited in their ability to provide quality attention to an ever-increasing mass of email [10, 23, 33].

Constituency is a critical factor in email communication. members of Congress are responsible for their constituents and will rarely read emails from out-of-district or out-of-state citizens. In most cases, the Congressional systems will automatically detect constituency information. Any message that does not come from a constituent will be ignored [23, 40]. This is a problem for non-constituent citizens. These citizens may want to contact members of Congress because of their affiliations to certain issues, position on committees, or ability to sway votes. For example, the Sierra Foundation example addresses a bill that is being introduced in Committees. If messages sent to members of Congress sitting on these committees were not sent by constituents, the Sierra Club messages will be ignored.

Addressing citizen communication is a challenge in Congressional offices, but this issue stems from external factors such as the use of DMTs. The automated emails are of little to no value to members of Congress due to the automated content in messages [7, 23]. This content redundancy leads to skepticism and perceived astroturfing. As we see in the example of Countable, sometimes these emails contain only a few sentences with no valuable content whatsoever. Yet DMTs continue to draw citizen engagement due to the low-cost of participation. Solutions to Congressional office challenges have already been proposed [23]. However, these proposals have yet to be developed and the challenges continue. Both grassroots activist groups and policymakers want to have effective and efficient dialogue, but the continuing use of DMTs has only created tension between the two parties.

Clay Johnson, the former Director of the Sunlight Foundation, an open government advocate organization, and Presidential Innovation Fellow, summarized the situation well when he responded to the creation of Countable.io:

"Yet another tool that makes it easy to write your representative. As though this is an actual problem. It isn't. The Market is saturated with so many tools to send messages to Congress…. In fact, it's solved too well. According to the Congressional Management Foundation, Congress receives millions of messages a day, and it doesn't have the manpower to actually read the messages because their systems are so antiquated and underfunded. It's as though the market goes 'Congress isn't listening to us, we need to make a tool to make our voices louder' when in fact, Congress isn't listening to us because we're deafeningly loud "[24].

Some grassroots organizations defend this communication, and insist it is a form of free speech that should be recognized as a legitimate form of communication by citizens [23]. However, there is a big difference between speaking and being heard through digital forms of political communication [21]. Users can continue to use these platforms to express their concerns, but if the user's intention is to be heard by Congress members, they should use alternative forms of communication.

5 DIFFUSION OF UNSUCCESSFUL INNOVATION

In 1995, the first public email system for members of Congress was created for citizens to send direct emails to them [23]. However, the use of these publicly available email systems did not last long. Once members of Congress found they were unable to handle the influx of emails, they invented new ways for citizens to contact their offices (i.e., forms on Congressional websites) [23]. This led activist to create easier methods for citizens to fill out these forms (i.e., DMTs). This tactic successfully gained participation from a massive number of citizens. However, a successful diffusion of activist participation does not guarantee a successful outcome [17, 34]. In the case of DMTs, a negative feedback loop emerged as a result of increasing use, and DMTs have now proliferated to a point where they are counterproductive to the original goals of the activist groups. Thus, we have a diffusion of unsuccessful innovation. The development and diffusion of activist-focused DMTs may be driven by forces beyond the efficacy that enable communication with policymakers. For example, many of these tools are managed by third party vendors, which may develop these tools for profit. In addition, activist groups may use the information collected from DMTs to track their participation and membership [7]. Therefore, it may be the appearance of efficacy, rather than actual efficacy, that incentivizes the spread of these tools.

DMTs' lack of success in reaching policymakers may be attributed to at least two factors. First, these form letters are typically easily recognizable. As such, DMTs are largely discounted by policymakers. Second, the ease with which DMTs send messages take up whatever attention the policymakers may be able to offer. Therefore, the easier DMTs are to use, the more letters will be sent. As a result, the prescribed use of DMTs create the potential for their own inefficacy. Users of these messaging tools may not be aware of the negative effects of participation. Without understanding the full context of the situation between policymakers and citizens, it is hard to identify why these messages are not considered effective forms of political activism. DMTs will continue to proliferate unless one of two situations occur. The situation may change if participants become aware of the problems associated with automated messages. Or, the situation may change if organizations develop alternative forms of communication. Rather than letting DMT development continue to grow, future work might discuss how to enable DMTs that are trusted and valued by policymakers. If we focus on the relationship between policymakers and citizens, the cost of such retreat is very little. If anything, the abandonment of these messaging tools would improve that relationship, but only if citizens shifted to more meaningful forms of communication.

6 DISCUSSION

Numerous policies and other approaches have been proposed to support adaptation to global limits. These approaches vary from constraints on existing policies (e.g., the Paris Agreement, carbon taxes [36]) to bold reconfigurations of the core foundations of industrialized societies (e.g., de-growth [28]). These policies are frequently at odds with the capitalist contexts in which they are proposed (and which they seek to influence). To be enacted, they will require a significant amount of political will and influence through social movements. However, current methods for activist mobilization and policy communication are often ineffective. As our DMTs examples show, there are critical technology issues that inhibit democratic dialogue between citizens and policymakers. Although this paper focuses on national policymaking, it is not the only level of government facing constituent communication issues. State-level policymakers can also fail to properly communicate with constituents [7]. They have similar issues with respect to the influx of email communication from DMTs

[7]. To effect policy change, these fundamental tools for communication must be fixed.

Policymakers do care about citizen issues [23], and constituent preferences matter in shaping legislative behavior. Many political science studies show that policymakers are highly accountable to their citizens when they are aware of their constituents' preferences [20]. However, technology has wedged a gap between policymakers and citizens. Citizens expect their governments to be more digitally connected and able to handle new forms of communication such as DMTs and social media [14, 19]. Policymakers expect citizens to accept their current (and fairly outdated) standards of communication [10, 16, 23]. Neither situation is feasible.

We understand citizen preferences are not the primary reason why policymakers make policy decisions. An amalgam of other components such as lobbying, personal preference, constituent interest, and party preferences go into the policymaking process. However, communication is a fundamental right for citizens, and their views can sway policymaker decisions [23, 29, 35]. Citizens should be able to speak their minds and have their voices heard by their policymakers. When their voices are not heard, citizens lose faith in the political system. They become skeptical of the opportunities for participation and may limit their efforts to make changes to policy. It could be that citizens, especially U.S. citizens, are skeptical of government due to this gap in communication. So much so, that citizens no longer understand how communication with policymakers can affect policy decisions. As a result, citizens may even lack the knowledge or will to effectively contact their policymakers without these systems.

When citizens contact policymakers through email, the general advice given to citizens is to send personalized messages [1, 13–16]. This includes personal stories [1, 13, 15].These stories not only provide more meaningful context, but also provide a sense of legitimacy and trust [7] that is hard to replicate through astroturfing. Stories imply that citizens have some personal connection to the issue. Citizens who want to express their opinion, but have little to no personal experience with a particular issue, are unable to provide personal stories. For example, a person who cares deeply about the funding of Planned Parenthood, but has no experience using their services, will have no personal stories to share. This is an especially huge problem for citizens sharing their thoughts related to sustainability. Climate change is a well-known and exceedingly important topic to discuss in policy. However, climate change is a slow and ever-evolving process. The stories of climate change are not always exciting or personal. Sometimes the stories of climate change are too hard for humans to understand given the time, space, and complexity of the issues [37]. Therefore, it is especially difficult for citizens concerned about climate change to communicate their thoughts to policymakers, let alone themselves.

Although literature directed towards citizens emphasizes the use of personal stories for persuasive communication, the phrase 'personal stories' may be misconstrued. A recent discussion that the first author had with an employee at CMF indicates that the phrase 'personal stories' may have a different meaning. "A 'story' about why something matters to you IS a personal story, just not a story about your direct experience with the issue" (K. Goldschmidt, personal communication, April 6, 2017). If a citizen cares about an issue and states why they care, even if they do not have personal experience with that issue, their message may still be persuasive to policymakers. This potential misrepresentation in the literature is in need of further investigation.

Using technology to effectively provide policymakers with a robust understanding of citizen preferences can influence their policy decisions. Because the HCI community focuses on the human side of technological systems, the field is particularly well suited to addressing technology issues with participation. Historically, the HCI community has not been a major contributor to the realm of public policy [26]. As a result, the community is not well known and has not advised policymakers on crucial issues related to human-computer interaction [26]. However, a recent boost in interest from the HCI community can bring new opportunities for engagement. In some cases, like these DMTs, this engagement may be desperately needed. For the LIMITS community, it may be critical to make tech effective to have any impact on challenges in policy.

Some researchers in the LIMITS community may argue that it is too late to engage with policy change. Although some stages in the policymaking process have shorter time-horizons, the overall process is still a long-time horizon engagement. However, as Pargman explains, the LIMITS community bounces between short, medium, and long-time horizons [31]. The community may plan for shorter term events in collapse, but continue to work in longer-term engagements such as plans in academia [31]. Can we continue to work on longer-term engagements, in the hope that there is time to change? The benefit of engaging in political issues such as use of DMTs is that the community could change the typical policy timeline. The result could not only be more immediate responses to policy change that adapt to limits, but larger impact due to the inherently larger influence of national and international policy change. The LIMITS community can and should continue to work on long, medium, and short-time horizon engagements. However, given the current nature of US politics, we find it more crucial than ever to be involved in political action.

7 FUTURE WORK

Extensive work has already been done to understand the implications of DMTs on Congressional workflow [23]. However, little work has explored how and why DMTs continue to develop. One of the goals of this paper is to elicit feedback and advice from the LIMITS community to further investigate these systems. We intend to explore DMTs further by holistically evaluating the citizen, activist, and political side of the communication flow. We will conduct qualitative interviews with all involved parties (i.e., members of Congress, Congressional citizen communication vendors, DMT users, and DMT developer organizations). We will analyze different DMTs,

websites provided by members of Congress, and Congressional social media use. By analyzing these different systems, we will identify what information is made available to citizens and how this information affects their understanding of and motivations for activist participation. Ideally, we would like to work with DMT developers to integrate surveys into DMTs. This would allow us to collect information on different types of users and their reasons for participation. If this research is successful, we would like to branch out further to perform a comparative analysis of other countries policymaker-citizen communication systems. By conducting further investigations, we seek to develop better ways for activism movements to mobilize communication with governments.

8 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have analyzed the role of digital messaging technologies in political activism in the U.S. We identified three diverse DMTs and described how they are used as a form of citizen communication to policymakers. We placed DMTs within the context of policymaker communication systems to explain why DMTs are ineffective forms of citizen communication. We discussed how this situation represents a diffusion of unsuccessful innovation. We reflected on broader issues in this communication system that the LIMITS community should address. And lastly, we proposed a future study to further investigate the proliferation in grassroots messaging tools.

We are facing long-term challenges that need to be addressed by long-term political action. To begin tackling such long-term political challenges, we need to support and engage in effective forms of political activism now. Although the entire process of political change may take time to develop, looking at political engagement solely from a long-time horizon ignores the urgency necessary in the initial stages of policymaking. Understanding the ways that the LIMITS community may intervene productively in this space, across multiple time horizons, could help shape future governmental policy in ways that are aware of and responsive to global limits

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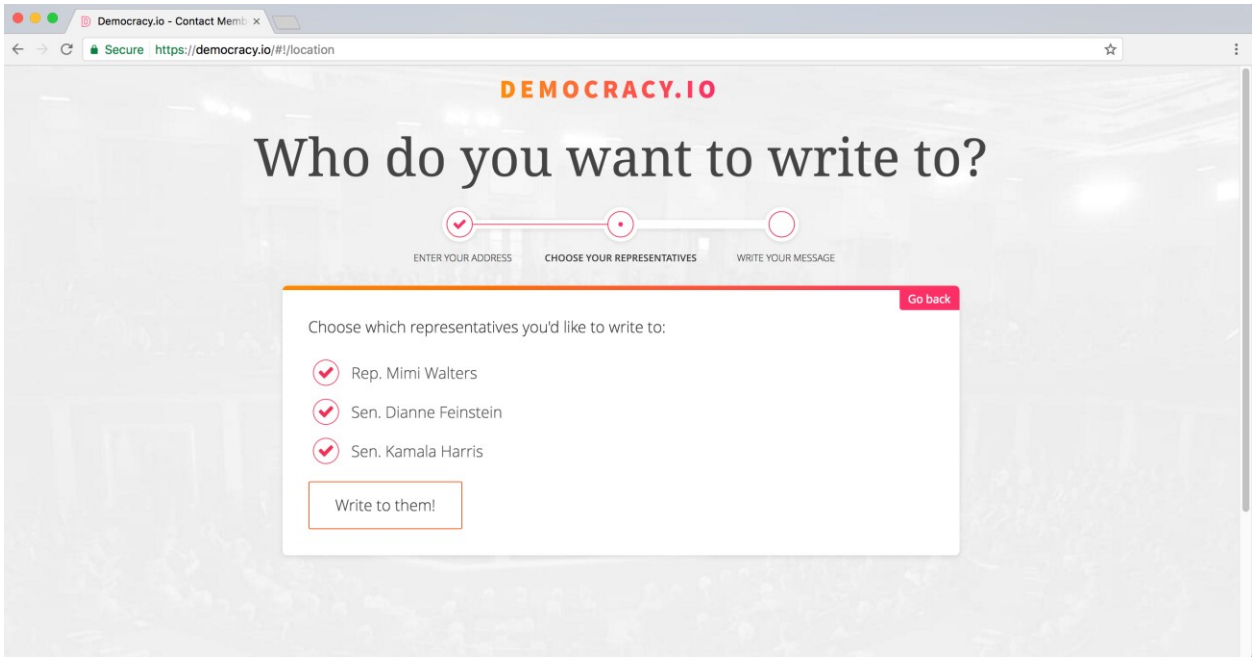
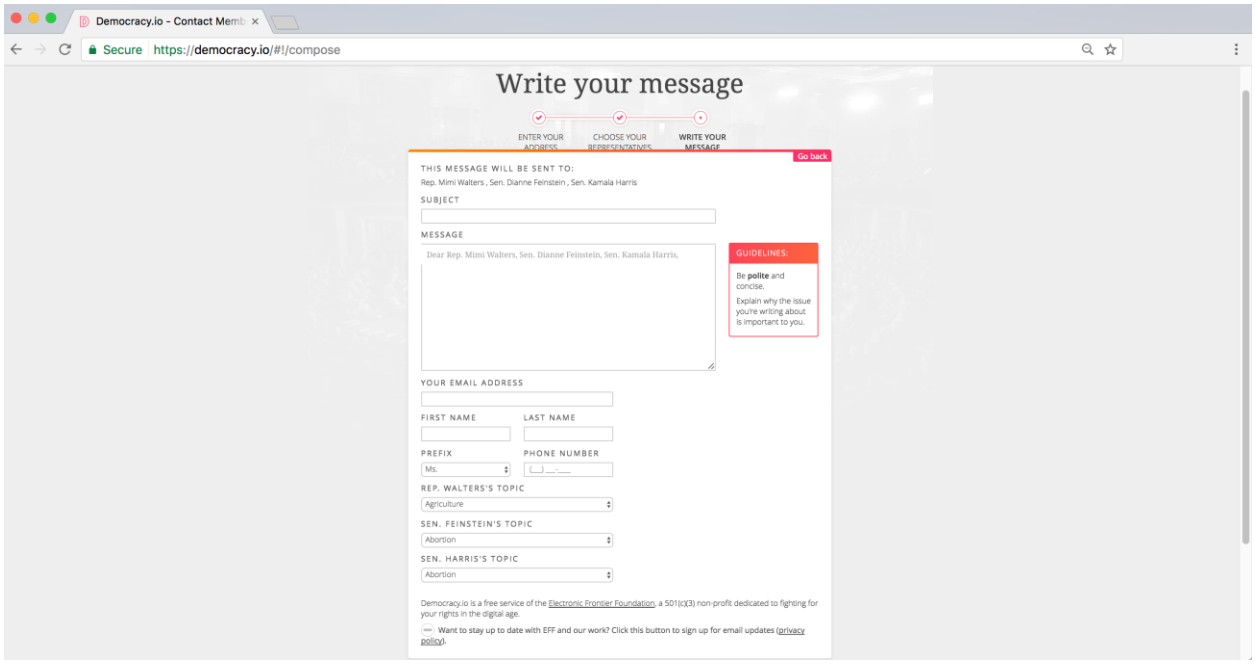
A APPENDIX

The rules about hierarchical headings discussed above for the body of the article are di.erent in the appendices. In the appendix environment, the command section is used to indicate the start of each Appendix, with alphabetic order designation (i.e., the first is A, the second B, etc.) and a title (if you include one). So, if you need hierarchical structure within an Appendix, start with subsection as the highest level. Here is an outline of the body of this document in Appendix-appropriate form:

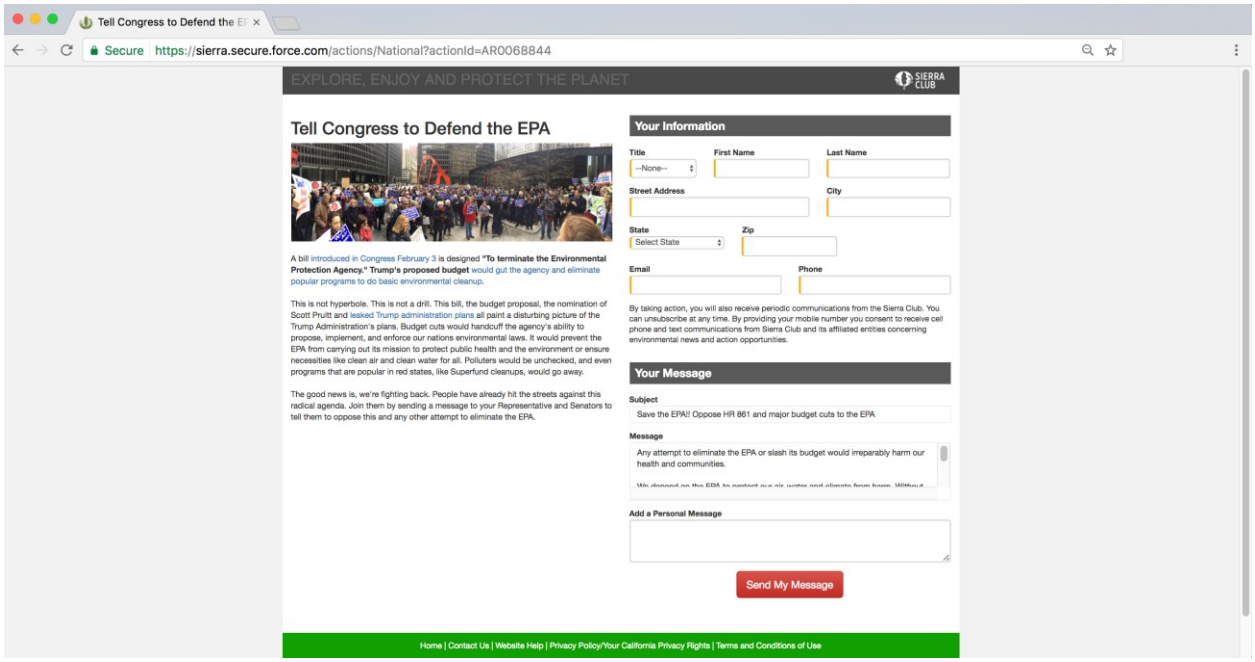
A.1 Screenshots of DMTs

A.2.1 Deomcracy.io





A.2.2 Sierra Club

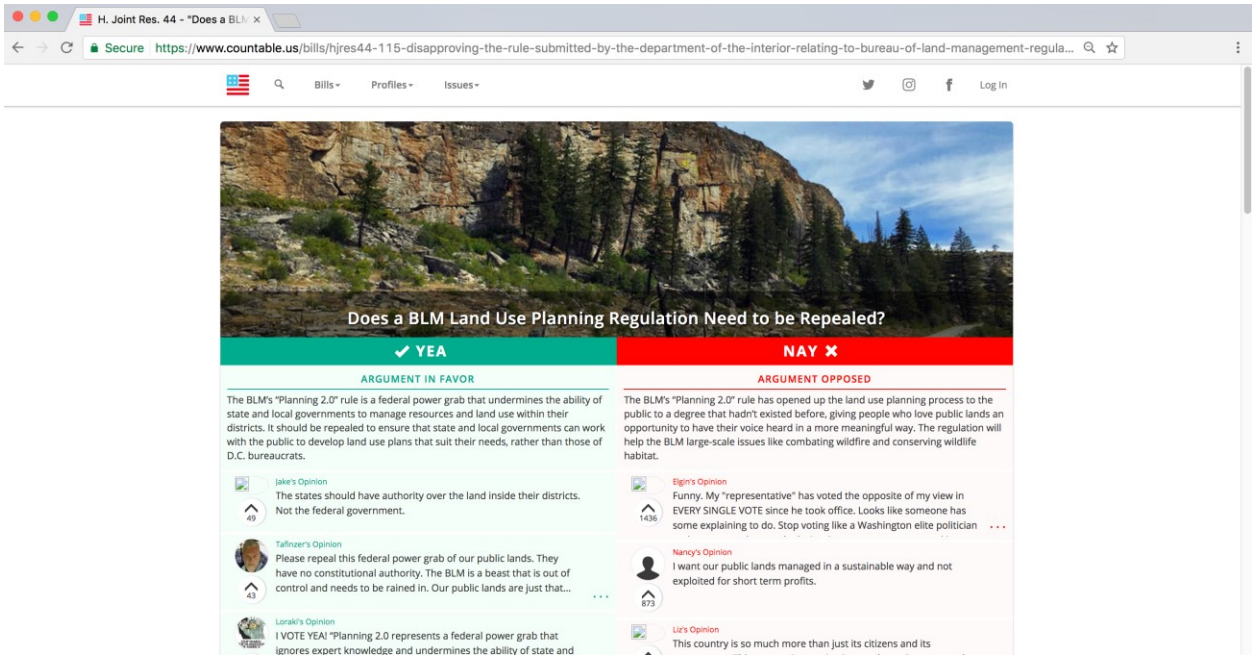


A.2.2.1 Content of Message in Form

"Any attempt to eliminate the EPA or slash its budget would irreparably harm our health and communities.
We depend on the EPA to protect our air, water and climate from harm. Without them, not only would it become open season on the environment for big polluters, but you would eliminate even the most basic of programs like grants to clean up brownfields and Superfund sites.
The EPA also performs the most basic of functions like monitoring air quality in our communities, ensuring our water is safe to drink, and enforcing protections from industrial discharge of toxic water pollution. They protect our air from increased emissions of mercury, arsenic, lead, soot, and the pollution that causes smog.

When EPA oversight is lax, or eliminated, we can expect more incidents like the Flint water crisis or disputes between states when fugitive emissions cross state lines. The EPA is an essential part of our government that was founded with bipartisan support and remains popular across the country. Oppose this and any other action which undermines EPA's ability to protect public health."

A.2.3 Countable.us



A.2.3.1 Official Bill Title

Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of the Interior relating to Bureau of Land Management regulations that establish the procedures used to prepare, revise, or amend land use plans pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976.

A.2.3.2 Countable's Description of the Bill

This resolution would reject a regulation issued by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) known as "Planning 2.0" which changed the way that land use plans are developed under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). The rule took effect during the final days of the Obama administration on January 11, 2017.

The "Planning 2.0" rule was intended to open up the land use planning process to a variety of stakeholders, including states, local governments, groups with an interest in outdoor recreation or environmental protection, and the public at large. It also directs the BLM to do landscape scale planning, meaning that a land use plan could include areas across state lines or BLM districts. Critics say that these components of the rule undercut the voice of local and state interests in the land use planning process, because decisions in those cases would move decision making away from local BLM offices to the agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C.

Under the Congressional Review Act, Congress is able to overturn regulations finalized within the last 60 legislative days with simple majority votes on a joint resolution of disapproval in both chambers and the president's signature. CRA resolutions also prevent the federal agency that created the regulation from issuing a similar rule without being directed to do so by Congress.