



GOP outpaces Dems on Twitter

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Republican lawmakers are far ahead of Democrats when it comes to spreading their message in 140 characters or less.

Eight of the 10 most-followed Twitter accounts on Capitol Hill belong to Republicans, according to a report released Thursday by public relations firm Burson-Marsteller.

The study found 67 percent of Republicans on Twitter are directly engaging other users, compared with just 41 percent of the Democrats who utilize the platform.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) were listed as the top three most-followed members. The only Democrats to make the Top 10 were Sens. Claire McCaskill of Missouri (No. 4) and Barbara Boxer of California (No. 7).

“The fact that neither Speaker [Nancy] Pelosi nor Majority Leader [Harry] Reid rank amongst even the Top 10 overall congressional users on Twitter speaks volumes as summer in Washington comes to an end and members of both parties return to our nation’s capital,” said Dallas Lawrence, managing director for digital public affairs at Burson-Marsteller. “With two months before the general election, Republicans in Congress hold a clear advantage in the Twittersphere.”

Twitter became widely-used campaign tool after President Barack Obama’s campaign used it and other social media platforms to engage with voters in 2008. Republicans were largely seen as less savvy in the social media arena and spent 2009 playing catch-up.

Now it seems members of the minority party — especially those up for reelection — have soundly surpassed Democrats in using the tools to hold conversations with voters.

The Burson-Marsteller study found that 68 percent of House Republican Twitter accounts are using the “@” function to directly communicate with other users. Meanwhile, 46 percent of Democratic accounts were using the “@” function. About half of all accounts were re-tweeting content, but Republicans tend to be more prolific at “re-tweeting,” or forwarding messages on to their followers.

Republicans are almost twice as likely to maintain two Twitter accounts — one for their offices and one for their campaigns — than Democrats, the study found. Thirty-nine percent of GOP members have campaign-focused accounts, compared with 31 percent of Democrats.

Campaign accounts are used to broadcast messages on fundraising, rallies or to respond to opponents. Republicans have more people following campaign-focused accounts, with an average of 4,820 following Republicans versus 2,972 following Democrats.

The Burson-Marsteller study follows one from George Washington University and New York University that found Republican senators [outpaced](#) Democrats in terms of absolute online growth in July, accruing more than 3,000 more Twitter followers and 20,000 more Facebook “likes.” GOP senators have experienced a 6.7 percent month-to-month growth on Facebook, compared with 3.6 percent for Democrats.

The other members in the Top 10 Twitter users are: Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.), House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.), Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-Minn.), Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.).