The Nature of Local News Media Issue Coverage of U.S. House Members

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Accepted for publication at the Social Science Journal

Abstract

In this paper, I examine local newspaper issue coverage of House members after the campaign season has ended. While research on news coverage of campaign issues has been thorough, considerably less attention has been placed on issue coverage outside of campaigns. This is particularly the case for the local news media. Using an extensive content analysis of House member local newspaper coverage over a one-year period, I examine the nature of local and national issue coverage. I find that local issues are covered slightly more than national issues in reporting on House members. Further, members’ strategic use of press releases and the presence of newspapers’ Washington bureaus help explain whether a story will cover a local or national political issue.

Keywords: U.S. Congress, House members, issue coverage, local news media
Introduction

Recently, scholars in political science and political communication have begun to turn their attention to local news coverage of government in general and Congress in particular. This shift in attention comes after years of neglect by researchers. Current research has illustrated that coverage of House members on the local-level appears much different than the national-level (Arnold 2004; Dunaway 2008; Schaffner 2006; Schaffner and Sellers 2003; Vinson 2003). Members do receive local coverage, particularly print, and the coverage can be in-depth, informative, and critical (Fogarty 2008).

While this research has provided understanding and explanations for the amount, length, and tone of local coverage of House members, less effort has been expended on what issues are being discussed by the local media. Most attention on congressional issue coverage deals exclusively with the campaign season (e.g., Abbe et al. 2003; Kahn 1991; Kahn and Kenney 1999; Kaplan, Park, and Ridout 2006; Simon 2002). Less concern has been placed on understanding House member issue coverage outside of campaigns. Even though issue environments are richest during campaigns, citizens continue to desire and process political issue information between elections.

Revealing the picture of local media issue coverage is significant in itself. More importantly, we are interested in understanding and explaining the simple breakdown between local and national issue coverage concerning House members. Congress is a national office but members represent specific local geographic communities and constituencies. We expect local newspapers will cover Congress and its members within a local issue framework in order to satisfy the local audience (Vinson 2003). Local papers’ economic and informational incentives
to provide local issue coverage of House members are bolstered by readers’ ability to attain national issue news from cable news television and the Internet. Local journalists also prefer reporting on local issues as they are familiar to them and are easier to attain source information (Pauly and Eckert 2002). Since little attention has been placed on understanding congressional issue coverage outside of campaigns, we do not know whether this is in fact the case.

House members are also interested in what issues local media cover. Research has established that a strong majority of members are ignored by the national media and, thus, members exert little effort on catering to the national media (Cook 1988; Cook 1989; Cook 1998). Instead, members focus their attention on shaping local news media content. This is done through issuing press releases, sponsoring bills in the House, staging events in the district, and mailing out constituency newsletters. Particularly through press releases, House members are believed to both focus the attention of local media to certain issues and frame the positions to the benefit of members (Bovitz and Carson 2006; Cook 1989; Hill and Hurley 2002; Little 1995). Yet, little scholarship has been done on whether members are effective in driving coverage towards local or national political issues.

In this paper, I examine the shape and composition of issue coverage after congressional campaigns are over. Using an extensive content analysis of House member local newspaper coverage over a one-year period, I consider member-related and news outlet-related factors for why certain issues are covered by the media. Is it the case that local media focus attention on local issues over national issues when covering members of Congress? What role does institutional features of news outlets have on issue coverage? Are members successful in steering coverage towards certain issues? I answer these questions using both descriptive and multivariate analysis.
Background

During the Campaign

The ways campaigns are covered in the news affect how voters make decisions. The literature on media coverage of campaigns has long lamented the dominance of horse race coverage (Graber 2002; Patterson 1980). Yet, compared to presidential races, research has found less horse race coverage of House and Senate elections, with some of the coverage shifted to substantive policy (Kahn 1991; Tidmarch et al. 1984). Still, horserace coverage is expected to marginalize the relevance of policy and turn elections into popularity contests (Simon 2002).

We also know House elections that are competitive or controversial are heavily covered by the local media (Clarke and Evans 1983; Goldenberg and Traugott 1987; Herrnson 1998). Richly covered races allow voters to utilize information on issue positions and ideology to inform their vote, instead of simply relying on partisan identification as the default cue (Gronke 2000; Westlye 1991).

Research has made it clear that media exposure through advertising, television, and print greatly increases voters’ recognition of and affect towards House candidates, which subsequently helps (re)election chances (Goidel and Shields 1994; Goldenberg and Traugott 1987; Schaffner 2006). As a result, congressional candidates have incentives to adopt media strategies to promote both more plentiful and more favorable media coverage. Since local media cover campaign events and often the coverage is valuable for candidates, candidates stage events and speeches with the hope of receiving beneficial free local media coverage. To insulate themselves from unfavorable national tides, incumbents try to focus their campaigns on beneficial activities
for the district, like funding for local projects, and de-emphasize issue positions and certain actions in office, like roll-call votes (Abbe et al. 2003; Petrocik 1996).

After the Campaign

Little research has examined local news coverage of House members outside of the campaign season, and more particularly issue coverage outside of campaigns. Two exceptions are Danielle Vinson’s 2003 book *Local Media Coverage of Congress and Its Members: Through Local Eyes* and Douglas Arnold’s 2004 book *Congress, the Press, and Political Accountability*.

Vinson (2003) examines all the issues related to Congress covered in eight media markets over several weeks in 1993 and 1994. She finds that local daily newspapers overwhelmingly cover national news stories (66 percent of total coverage) and pay scant attention to purely local stories (16 percent). Substantively, Vinson finds that foreign policy was the most covered issue, followed by crime, health care, and congressional scandals during her time span. A complicating factor of Vinson’s study for understanding local newspaper coverage of specific House members is that she examines all coverage of Congress in her analysis of issue coverage. Hence, her data may bias towards national issue coverage since the media focus is on institution of Congress.

Examining local issue coverage during both election and non-election seasons from 1993 to 1994, Arnold finds that local newspapers focus on general policy (50 percent of total coverage), elections (20 percent), and constituency service (14 percent). Clearly, during election seasons coverage of the elections and campaigns dominant the news. Arnold’s findings on the shape of issue coverage outside of the campaign season are particularly informative and valuable. Constituency benefits, for instance, attaining funds for local projects, receive a considerable amount of coverage, particularly when there was the possibility of a district losing federal money (p. 150). Yet, Arnold finds actions in Congress, like roll-call votes, committee
work, and congressional party politics, receive little attention by the local media (pp. 112, 133, 138). The implication from these findings is that House members are electorally better off acting as agents for the district, attaining and securing funding, than working to create and foster good public policy. On substantive policy areas, Arnold examines the number of articles on specific bills before Congress. He finds that a few bills dominated issue coverage during the study’s time span including NAFTA, Bill Clinton’s Comprehensive Health Care Reform, and the Omnibus Crime Act (p. 108).

This present study adds to Arnold’s (2004) and Vinson’s (2003) research by isolating local and national issue coverage of House members by local newspapers, and providing an explanatory model for understanding what factors can effect variation in issue coverage.

**Expectations and Hypotheses**

There are a number of reasons to expect that when local newspapers report on members of Congress, certain types of issues will receive more coverage than others. We can break our expectations and hypotheses about issue coverage into two groups - member-centered and newspaper-centered. For member-centered hypotheses, I consider press releases, bill sponsorship, and seniority. For newspaper-centered hypotheses, I consider circulation, whether a paper has a Washington correspondent or bureau, is located in a state capital, and whether the paper is part of a chain.

As mentioned previously, press releases are the dominant means through which House members attempt to control the news surrounding them (Cook 1989). Through press releases members try to control the issue agenda as well as how the issues are framed (Bovitz and Carson 2006; Shea 1996). Since members often represent disparate districts, press releases can serve as
a way for members to target specific local audiences – whether the target audiences are socio-
economic-related, business-related, or issue niche-related (Hill and Hurley 2002). In this paper, 
the interest lies in whether press releases can drive local news to cover local or national political 
issues. As Yiannakis (1981, 1982) notes, when examining members’ relationships with their 
constituencies it is important to distinguish between the local and national issues discussed in 
press releases. Often, the breakdown of local and national issues in press releases is a function 
of the characteristics of the district. With this in mind, it is hypothesized:

H1: Increasing the number of press releases targeting local political issues will increase 
the probability of local issues being covered by local newspapers.

Members sponsor and introduce bills for numerous reasons, including to effect policy and 
show they are working hard in office. Bills that are directed towards local interests should 
generate local coverage. It is then hypothesized:

H2: Increasing the number of bills sponsored regarding local interests will increase the 
probability of local issues being covered by local newspapers.

One significant caveat to this hypothesis is that it is widely known that very few bills actually 
become laws and have an actually impact. Therefore, it is possible that local papers are more 
interested with policy outcomes and not initiative.

New House members work hard to cultivate a re-election constituency and thus work 
hard to develop accommodating relationships with the local news media (Cook 1998; Cover 
1980; Fenno 1978). More senior members often have attained electoral security and institutional 
power, and so are able to focus attention on creating national public policy (Mayhew 1974). We 
can then conjecture:
H3: Increasing seniority of members will increase the probability of national issues being covered by local newspapers.

Research in political communication, mass communication, journalism, and sociology has outlined the norms and routines of journalism from which we generally know what types of issues are considered politically newsworthy by the media (e.g., Fishman 1980; Gans 1980; Sigal 1973; Tuchman 1978). The nature of the media as a commercial enterprise makes journalists concerned with public attention, which motivates simplified story lines and accessible news stories on issues the district is concerned with (Hamilton 2004; Tuchman 1978). Newspapers must appeal to their readers; in essence, an economic motivation for coverage. Namely, papers should cover issues that their readers are interested in. As Vinson (2003) notes, media outlets’ number one client is their audience. Another way newspapers appeal to their readers is to cover the important national issues of the day and discuss their local significance. Local news often covers Congress and its members with a local bent and frame in mind (Vinson 2003).

Research has shown that large papers have the resources to cover politics with a greater degree of flexibility than small papers. For instance, large papers tend to use more sources in stories and sources from a wider range of the populace (Freedman and Fico 2004). Large papers also are inclined to focus on national politics instead of local politics (Arnold 2004). Therefore:

H4: National political issues related to House members are more likely to be covered by large papers than small papers.

Papers that incur the cost of stationing reporters in Washington will typically want stories on what those inside the beltway find important and interesting. Attaching local significance to national issues and providing information on local House members’ actions is easier for papers with Washington bureaus. Hence,
H5: Papers with reporters in Washington are more likely to cover national political issues.

Local newspapers situated in state capitals may rely on state officials to signal what local issues are important with regard to local House members. Since people in state capitals often take a myopic view towards issue importance, not unlike those in Washington, papers located there may be more inclined to report on local issues. Therefore:

H6: Papers located in state capitals are more likely to cover local political issues.

Finally, local newspapers that are elements of chains may be more likely to cover national issues and provide a local angle than taking the expense and resources to cover purely local issues. It is relatively easy for paper chains to cover a national issue and note what the local House member did and said with regard to the issue for each media market.

H7: Papers that are part of chains are more likely to cover national political issues.

Using this understanding of the newsmaking process, and past research on news coverage of House members and campaign coverage, I consider the nature of local issue coverage of members of Congress outside of campaigns in three parts. First, I examine what share of local news coverage on House members cover local and national political issues. Second, I briefly look at what substantive local issue areas receive coverage. Finally, I explain how we might understand the factors effecting local issue coverage.

**Data and Methods**

The data come from a content analysis of local newspaper coverage of 24 House members from December 2000 to November 2001 (see Fogarty 2008 for more information). Studying local newspaper coverage of House members is preferable to national newspapers as
most members are rarely covered by papers such as *The News York Times* and *Washington Post* (Arnold 2004; Cook 1989; Schaffner and Sellers 2003; Vinson 2003). Local papers are also preferable to local television that tends to focus on crime, weather, sports, and local human-interest stories (Gilliam and Iyengar 2000).

Table 1 identifies the 24 representatives and the specific local newspapers coded. Of note, the newspapers included in the study were the most proximate to the members’ districts.¹

[Table 1 about here]

**Coding Scheme**

Using *Lexis-Nexis* or the local paper’s own search engine, 1938 news stories were coded and used in the analysis.² For each of the stories, coders initially recorded what issues were tied to the House member in the story. Often stories involved a number of different issues and all issues pertinent to the member were recorded. For example, a story might discuss a member’s vote to increase military spending and the implications for the district’s military base. This story would be coded as including both “votes” and “military.” If a story reported the member as taking a more hands-on role in attaining funding for specific bases in his or her district, the story would also be recorded as “constituency service.” All issues were initially summarized into general areas such as “votes,” “military,” “education,” etc., instead of specific bills.

Clarification may be needed on the composition of the general issue areas in the second section of the analysis. “Election - own” refers to any coverage concerning members’ election, re-election, and campaigns. “Election – other” refers to any coverage of other elections where the article references the member or quotes him or her. “Constituency service” refers to helping specific constituents, activities in the district such as appearances at local events, and attaining
funding for local projects. “Congressional Activities” refers to members’ actions in the daily workings of Congress, including committee work and congressional party politics. “Votes” refers to all mentions of how a member voted in office. By definition, if a story contained a mention of a vote it would also contain the policy area voted on. Thus, a story would be recorded as both a “vote” and a given policy area. “Policy Issues” constitutes all individual policy areas that received coverage. Of the roughly sixty policy issues mentioned in the coverage between December 2000 and November 2001 less than half received more than a fraction of a percent of total issue coverage. Eighteen policy issues received more than 1 percent of total coverage – including education, environment, taxes, and health care.

Next, coders took all the specific issues and recoded them into a simple dichotomy – local or national issue. Many issues were easily classified into local issues – such as district funding – and national issues – such as the war against terrorism. Other issues were more difficult. In order to understand whether an issue could be considered local, the varying district constituencies were taken into account. For example, Clay Shaw’s (R-FL) district includes a significant senior citizen population and thus Social Security was considered a strong local issue compared to other districts where it might take on a more national scope.

**Member Characteristics**

In the analysis, I consider a number of individual-level factors that could explain news coverage of House members. Some factors could not be included since either none or one or two of the members had the characteristic, for instance, committee chair or party leader. Predictors of issue coverage include members’ press releases and bills sponsored dealing with local issues, and seniority.
Members’ press releases cover numerous events, awards, issues, and actions from the local, state, national, and international levels. Since, I am interested in the effect of press releases on local issue coverage, I only consider press releases that deal with local issues and subjects. The median number of local press releases for the year was 37, ranging from Jim McDermott’s (D-WA) 4 local press releases to Shelley Moore Capito’s (R-WV) 119 press releases.3

Members also sponsor bills on a variety of local, national, and international issues. For that reason, I only consider bills that dealt with local issues. The median number of local bills sponsored for the year was 3, ranging from none by John Culberson (D-TX), Anne Northup (R-KY), Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), and Jim Turner (R-TX) to 9 by Robert Simmons (R-CT).4

For the seniority variable, the median number of terms was two. Several members in the data were in their first term, while Nick Rahall (D-WV) was the most senior with thirteen terms.

Newspaper Characteristics

For the 19 newspapers used in the analysis, I consider several factors that could affect the sources used in news coverage. These include circulation, whether the newspaper has a Washington correspondent, is located in a state capital, and whether the paper is part of a chain.

Daily circulation is the most direct measure of a newspaper’s resources.5 One expects papers with high circulation levels to cover more national issues than small papers. The *Huntsville Item* had the lowest daily circulation in the data at 6,940, while the *Los Angeles Times* had the largest daily circulation at 1.08 million.

Some newspapers such as the *Los Angeles Times* have large, fully staffed Washington news bureaus. Other papers, like the *Huntsville Item*, have no reporters in Washington. Papers
with journalists covering Washington politics are in a better position of relaying information back home about members’ activities. Using the House Press Gallery in the Congressional Directory, information was collected on the status of each newspaper’s Washington bureau. Fourteen of the 19 papers, or 74 percent, had at least one Washington correspondent listed in the Directory. This accounts for coverage of 19 of the House members in the analysis. A dummy variable is used in the analysis for whether a paper had a Washington correspondent (1 = Paper has Washington correspondent).

By being located in the state capital, newspapers have a greater opportunity to use the governor, state legislators, and state agencies as sources in stories about House members. Seven of the 19 newspapers are located in state capitals, accounting for coverage of ten House members in the analysis. A dummy variable is used in the analysis for whether a paper is located in the state capital (1 = Paper located in state capital).

I use a dummy variable to denote whether a paper is part of a major chain or not (1 = Paper part of chain). Fourteen of the 19 papers were part of a chain, accounting for coverage of 17 of the House members.

Analysis

The analysis proceeds in three parts. First, I describe local and national issue coverage among local newspapers. Next, I take a closer look at the specific local issue areas covered. Finally, I use a multivariate analysis to explain local and national issue coverage for House members by local newspapers.

Local versus Nonlocal Coverage
In Table 2, local issue coverage is simply split into local and national issues.

[Table 2 about here]

Out of the 1938 stories coded, 56 percent of the issues discussed involve local issues to the district and area. While, local newspapers do cover national issues – 44 percent of total coverage – when reporting on local House members, the emphasis appears slightly weighted towards local issues. This finding starkly contrasts Vinson’s (2003) and again suggests that her focus on coding all mentions of Congress, and not individual members, might bias her findings towards more national issue coverage.

When reporting on local House members, local newspapers appear to understand that their audience has a preference for local issue coverage. Readers of local papers are not expecting to find the same issues covered in their local paper as in a national paper such as The New York Times or Washington Post, nor the same coverage as they would find on cable news networks like CNN. National issues do receive coverage but as previous literature suggests this coverage will often include mentions of how the local congressional delegation thinks of the issues and how they are acting (Vinson 2003). By giving more attention to local issues that involve local House members, local newspapers can appear as a viable alternative outlet to national conglomerate news information.

A Picture of Local Issue Coverage

In Table 3, issues are broken down into six broad categories, with the number of articles where the topic was mentioned along with the percentage of the total it entails. 8

[Table 3 about here]
In several respects, the broad local issue breakdowns reflect what Arnold (2004) finds in his analysis. Policy issues dominate coverage with 60 percent of the articles containing mentions of policy. Members most desirable issue coverage, constituency service, had the second most coverage with roughly 26 percent. Election coverage drops precipitously after campaigns end, with only 13 percent of the articles containing mentions. Research has already established the surge of election coverage during campaigns, but here we see that after the campaign much of the coverage clearly shifts to policy coverage. As expected, congressional activities make up the least amount of coverage, but coverage of roll call votes is more extensive than previously shown (see Arnold 2004). Twelve percent of articles included a mention of how members voted in office, roughly the same percentage that included election coverage.

If members had complete control over the issue agenda, we would expect coverage to be overwhelmingly focused on constituency service and positive lawmaking activities in Washington. Yet, this is not the case. Members want certain policies and votes to be covered, but likely not to the extent seen in Table 3. Papers seem to fulfill part of a civic responsibility to the public with higher than expected coverage of votes, but coverage of congressional activities is lacking.

**Predicting Local Issue Coverage**

In Table 4, a set of variables are used to explain local issue coverage. These include members’ press releases and bills sponsored, seniority, newspaper circulation, whether a paper has a Washington correspondent or bureau, is located in a state capital, and whether the paper is part of a chain. The dependent variable is binary (1 = local issue and 0 = national issue) and the unit of analysis is the story. Therefore, logit regression is used to examine what is the
probability of a local newspaper story on a local House member containing a local political issue (Long 1997).

I find that members’ local press releases and whether a paper has a Washington correspondent (at the .10-level) are the only statistically significant predictors of whether a story will cover a local political issue or not.9 Therefore, I only find support for H1 and H5, while members’ bill sponsorship and seniority along with papers’ circulation, papers in state capitals, and papers that are part of chains have no effect on the probability of local political issues appearing in a local paper.

Contrary to some claims that members’ press releases are treated as devoid of information and useless by the local media (McManus 1994) and in line with work illustrating the wide use of press releases by the local media (Flowers et al. 2003), members are successful at pushing local newspapers to report on local political issues (Cook 1998). Intuitively, this makes sense – through members’ press releases local papers are being provided story content and quotable information on local topics their readers will respond to. Journalists are not necessarily acting too cozy with members, but instead are involved in negotiating news content with House members (Cook 1998; McManus 1994; Fogarty 2008). The effect is albeit small – a single press release is expected to increase the probability of a local issue being coverage of roughly less than 1 percent – but members’ median number of press releases during the year coded was 37.10 Hence, the effect can be cumulative. If a member were to release 10 press releases on a local issue, we would expect to find the probability of the local issue being covered to increase 7 percent.
Local papers who expend the resources to station reporter(s) in Washington appear to have a stronger inclination towards national political issue coverage involving local House members.\textsuperscript{11} When local papers have correspondents in Washington it decreases the probability of local political issues appearing in print by 23 percent.\textsuperscript{12} Reporters stationed in Washington are immediately privy to activities on the Hill and are often assigned to cover national political issues and stories, along with events such as committee hearings and members’ press conferences. Reporters stationed in Washington need not cover national political issues, but it is only natural given the information environment they are working in. This finding presents an interesting dilemma for local papers – should they use resources to cover local political issues or national political issues when covering their local members of Congress? The answer is not clear and may be a function of economic, professional, and civic considerations for each individual news outlet.

**Conclusion**

Examining and understanding local newspaper issue coverage of House members outside of campaigns serves several important purposes. First and most obviously, we know very little about the shape and composition of this coverage. Examining issue coverage gives us a richer understanding of press and government relationships, as well as citizens’ information environments. Further, this work helps inform the vast research on campaigns and campaign coverage. Knowing the issues discussed and reported on before campaigns commence allows researchers to contrast and compare members’ actions on Capitol Hill, at home, and later on the campaign trail.
Local newspapers have competing interests and motivations for reporting on certain issues and policies outside of campaigns. Foremost are economic motivations. Without readers a newspaper could not exist. Therefore, newspapers play to the interests of their audience in how they cover House members. The findings here suggest that local papers pay more attention to local than national political issues regarding local House members. To be sure, national political issues are covered, particularly for papers with Washington correspondents. Local papers know they are not the main source of national, breaking political news, and they appear to respond by covering local issues. Local citizenry, then, have a means of gathering local political news about their House members that is not election-driven and about events and issues that have impact on their day-to-day lives.

For politicians, specifically House members, success in shaping local news content appears gained by issuing press releases. Previous research has not shown support for members’ ability to shape the volume and tone of local coverage through actions such as press releases and bills sponsored (Fogarty 2008). But, House members appear able to affect the type of issues covered by the local media. This agenda-setting ability can go a long way towards managing member’s re-election constituencies.

A limitation of the study is the generalizability to the current media environment given the age of the data. The past decade has seen substantial changes in the news industry, including the consolidation of outlets and the reduction of positions in the traditional news business. This shift in the business has come about in part from the emergence of new media outlets. As noted, many of the papers used in the analysis had their Washington bureaus reduced in size or eliminated over the past decade. Clearly, reduced newspaper staffs hurt the quality and depth of political reporting. What is less obvious is whether the pattern and shape of issue coverage
would change. Given journalistic norms of newsworthiness (Bennett 2007), newspapers should cover similar political topics now that they did in 2000. Therefore, I would expect, for instance, that newspapers with Washington correspondents would still have more reporting on national stories than papers without such resources.

1 The data used in this paper come from a separate project examining the differences in volume, tone, and length of local news coverage between in-step and out-of-step House members. This precludes a true random sample of House members, but the members included in the study represent a wide variation in terms of party, term, committee assignments, geography, and demographics (see Fogarty (2008) for more information).

2 Content analysis was performed by five independent coders. Using a random sample of stories, intercoder reliability score on what issues were covered in the story was 96%.

3 Press releases were attained from archives of members’ congressional websites.

4 Bill sponsorship data were attained from the House of Representatives website.

5 Circulation information comes from SRDS Circulation 2001.


7 Chain newspaper data were attained from individual newspaper and chain paper websites (e.g., McClatchy and the Tribune Company).

8 Since any one article might mention more than one issue, the sum is greater than the 1938 total articles in the analysis. The percentage is also out of the 1938 articles and not total mentions.

9 Diagnostic testing of the model suggested no problems with the functional form of the model or influential data points.

10 $[\exp(.007)-1] \times 100 = .7$ percent.
The past decade has seen, at times, drastic changes in news outlets’ resources and corporate structure. This is true for the newspapers examined in this study. Between 2000 and 2010, three newspapers (*Hartford Courant, Huntsville Item, Palm Beach Post*) eliminated their Washington bureaus. One paper, *The Bergen Record*, actually added a bureau. Of the remaining papers with Washington bureaus, six papers have cut their staffs. Most dramatically, *Houston Chronicle* has gone from seven reporters to one; *Los Angeles Times* has gone from fifty-three reporters to twenty-one; *Newsday* has gone from sixteen reporters to one; and *San Francisco Chronicle* has gone from six reporters to two. Information from *Congressional Directory*, 2009.

[exp(-.26)-1]*100 = 23 percent.

The same is not necessarily true for new media outlets. Baum and Groeling (2008) find that Internet-only news sites tend to filter stories through a partisan framework, thus covering some issues while ignoring others.
References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>House Member</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gary Ackerman (D-NY 5th)</td>
<td><em>Newsday</em></td>
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<td>Tammy Baldwin (D-WI 2nd)</td>
<td><em>Capital Times</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tom Barrett (D-WI 5th)</td>
<td><em>Milwaukee Sentinel Journal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>John Culberson (R-TX 7th)</td>
<td><em>Houston Chronicle</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam Farr (D-CA 17th)</td>
<td><em>Santa Cruz Sentinel</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Ferguson (R-NJ 7th)</td>
<td><em>The Record</em></td>
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<td>Ernest Fletcher (R-KY 6th)</td>
<td><em>Lexington Herald-Leader</em></td>
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<td>Steve Horn (R-CA 38th)</td>
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<td><em>Louisville Courier-Journal</em></td>
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<td>Donald Payne (D-NJ 10th)</td>
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<td>Clay Shaw (R-FL 2nd)</td>
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<td>Ellen Tauscher (D-CA 10th)</td>
<td><em>San Francisco Chronicle</em></td>
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Note: Coding data from December 2000 to November 2001

Table 2. General Local Newspaper Issue Coverage of House Members

<table>
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<th>Issue</th>
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<td>1083</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Issues</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage of total is out of 1938 articles.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of Articles Mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Issues</td>
<td>1163</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency Service</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election – Own</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Election – Other</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Activities</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage of total is out of 1938 articles.
Table 4. Predicting Local Issue Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Logit Model</th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Press Releases</td>
<td>.007**</td>
<td>1.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Bills Sponsored</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.022)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.020)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington Correspondent</td>
<td>-.265*</td>
<td>0.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.156)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Capital</td>
<td>-.223</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.146)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain Paper</td>
<td>-.174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.119)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.404*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.245)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-Squared</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Likelihood</td>
<td>-1315.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The dependent variable is binary: 1 = local issue and 0 = national issue. The unit of analysis is the story. In the second column, cells are logit regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. In the third column, cells are odds ratio values from the regression coefficients only for statistically significant variables. * p < .10, ** p < .05. N = 1938.