

By Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15) and Rep. Chellie Pingree (ME-1)

Democrats have been at the forefront of using new media in politics for more than a decade and we intend to stay on the cutting edge. That's why **we've created the Democratic Caucus New Media Working Group** to give all of our colleagues the tools they need to reach out to their constituents through the many avenues that new media offers. President Obama has set a great example for how useful the Internet can be in energizing supporters, informing the public and creating an open dialogue with the American people. Now, the American public expects (and deserves!) a government that uses these tools to give them opportunities to participate in all levels of the political process.

The Working Group continues the proud Democratic tradition of using the Internet to include the voices of working and middle class Americans. In ensuring that Democrats are being innovative with their websites and with tools like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, we hope to reach out to Americans who might not otherwise be heard. In particular, there are three critical reasons why we are launching the Working Group now.

First, **we believe in the importance of an informed and engaged electorate**. Under Democratic leadership, the 111th Congress has already been one of the most productive in recent memory. The passage of the health care reform law will bring millions of Americans lower costs and security in their health care; the Recovery Act has already brought our economy back from near disaster; and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act is one of the most important civil rights bills passed in recent memory. But just as important as passing these accomplishments, is making sure the American people are aware of them. The Internet has become a vital tool for leaders in Washington to use to tell the American people about our accomplishments. The American people are our nation's greatest resource and empowering them with information can lead to better public policy.

Second, **we strongly believe that the history of Democratic New Media engagement deserves a platform to share best practices**. Inspired by progressive bloggers and Democratic leaders like Howard Dean and President Barack Obama, Democrats are continuing to explore the best ways to communicate with Americans. As elected officials, we are engaging with the public in online chats, dialogues on blogs, and growing the use of social networks and other online channels. With the New Media Working Group, we remain actively committed to ensuring that Representatives have access to cutting edge tools for communicating with their constituents with Democrats leading the way.

Third, **the Working Group provides opportunity for innovation through partnership building**. Under the leadership of our Democratic Caucus Chairman, John Larson, we are actively encouraging Members to take advantage of the opportunities offered by new media. With this support, the New Media Working Group has already firmly established its role as a leader in online communication. We have held briefings with industry leaders like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Google to ensure that our members know the best ways to use these tools and the latest features they can take advantage of. Fostering partnerships with these companies will mean our members have a greater sayare having a more substantive and important dialogue online with their constituents and , and will open doors to innovation and creativity as new media evolves and changes.

Democrats are dedicated to serving the American public, and we are excited about the possibilities that this initiative will bring about in constituent communication. We hope you will be too.