

3 Strategies to Stay on Top of Your District's Biggest Policy Issues



One of the most challenging aspects of working as a Congressional staffer is keeping an eye on local government discussions within your member's district to stay informed about priorities and ahead of emerging issues.

Meeting minutes and agendas can be hard to find, buried in outdated websites, and uploaded in inconsistent formats. Manually visiting each website to download and scan documents can take up an entire workday each week. Some districts include more than 100 individual governing bodies between each county, city, town, village, and school board, making it impossible to monitor every community by hand.

Local government monitoring software can streamline this process and expand your reach. Curate, part of FiscalNote, provides automated tracking for the meeting minutes and agendas of more than 12,000 cities, counties, and school boards across the United States.

Here are three ways Curate can help you stay on top of local issues and effectively execute community relations strategies throughout your district.



1. Monitor More Issues & Governments in Less Time

Curate tracks more than 600 topics, using deep learning and natural language processing technologies to identify relevant mentions of keywords and phrases related to each topic.

Each user can create custom alerts to track as many issues as they want. Each time one of your tracked issues is mentioned in a government document within your coverage area, it will show up in your dashboard with the topic highlighted.

With Curate, you can set up alerts for each Congress member's priorities. Instead of having to comb through hundreds of documents that may not include any mentions of your key issues, you can dedicate a few hours a week to reviewing your Curate dashboard to stay on top of the conversations happening in your community.

In addition to tracking mentions of key issues, you can follow mentions of the Congress member's name. If constituents are praising or criticizing their U.S. representative to local officials, it may indicate they've already contacted the representative but feel their concerns haven't been addressed. Tracking mentions of the member's name helps you protect them from reputational damage and provide better service to constituents.



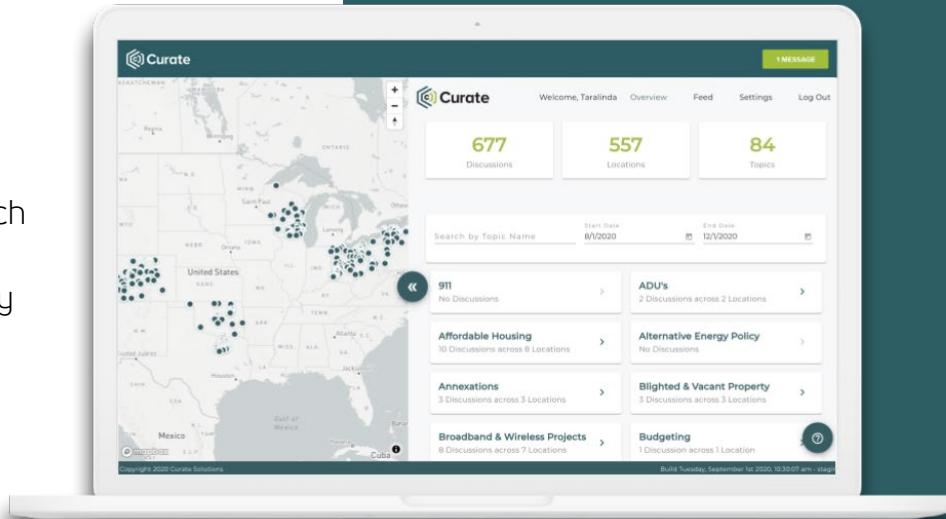
2. Spot Trends & Research Emerging Issues

Local governments are often the first to deal with unforeseen negative impacts of new technologies, from ridesharing apps to drones to facial recognition software.

When new issues bubble to the surface in the district — such as an economic or humanitarian crisis — it's your job to find out about those issues and inform your Congressperson so they can consider these challenges when working on federal legislation.

Curate has two features that can help you spot trends and research emerging issues. Trends plots all mentions of an issue over time and on a heatmap, helping you visualize where and how frequently the issue is being discussed. The Research area functions like a search engine of all the local government meeting minutes and agenda documents in the districts you monitor.

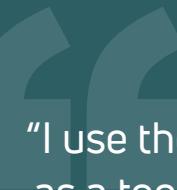
With both features, you can search any of the 600+ topics to discover any relevant mentions within any government in the region over the specified time period. For example, if you want to see what community members in a specific town think about wind farms, you could search for any mentions of wind policy, wind opposition, or wind projects within the last 12 months. Searches for controversial issues often return snippets from meeting minutes where passionate community members share their honest opinions — a goldmine for determining constituents' sentiments about a particular issue.



3. Improve Collaboration with Local Elected Officials

When you expand your monitoring capacity, you also grow your relationship-building capacity. Instead of tracking only the biggest communities in your district, you can track every town, school board, and county with a population larger than 2,000 people, as long as they post their documents online.

Knowing when your key issues are on the agenda in any community in your district means you can make strategic choices about which meetings to attend. Whenever issues you care about are on the agenda, you can make sure you're in the audience. Instead of relying on spotty news coverage, you can be confident you're staying on top of all the conversations in your district, even in the communities that often get overlooked by the media.



"I use the daily alerts as a tool to find out what an economic development organization might be doing. For example, if they are approving an application, an upgrade — anything going on with a business — that might indicate they are trying to land in that area."

Dawn Moffit,
Analyst, Corporate
Economic Development,
Xcel Energy

Level Up Your Community Relations Strategy with Curate

Stay informed about what's happening in your district with less legwork. Curate's automated alerts help you monitor more issues in less time, ensuring your Congress member's legislative priorities align with their constituents.

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