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Council on
Foundations

Social Listening Analysis

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Introduction

We conducted a social listening analysis of U.S. Congressmembers' social media accounts to better understand how they referenced philanthropy in their online discourse. Nathan Carpenter, Ph.D., at the UF Atlas Lab used CrowdTangle to identify trends on Congressmembers' public Facebook and Instagram posts. Additionally, Dr. Carpenter used Netbase Quid to identify trends on X/Twitter, online news, blogs, forums, YouTube, Tumblr, and other online media. For most of these searches, Dr. Carpenter looked specifically at conversations between January 2020 and September 2023 to get a sense of current public conversations and statements about philanthropy. These methods gave us insight into how Congressmembers represent their relationships with foundations to the public, including their constituents, and whether their public posts about the role of philanthropy tended to be positive or negative. This report identifies the overarching insights among these analyses as well as the methods and results for each method.

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Overarching Insights

1. US policymakers barely mention foundations—nationally or in their own communities. The number of posts they've made on their social media accounts referencing foundations represent less than one percent of their public-facing discourse. Specifically, 0.6% of both their Facebook and Instagram posts.
2. Follower interaction with posts about foundations was also minor, making up 0.2% of earned impressions on Facebook and 0.1% on Instagram.
3. When US policymakers comment publicly about foundations, they are almost entirely positive.
4. Many of these posts reflected these Congressmembers' partnerships with foundations, representing a collaborative public-facing lean.
5. Reviewing the list of US policymakers commenting frequently about philanthropy might suggest where to focus relationship-building efforts.
6. The majority of content about foundations and policymakers together on X/Twitter was overwhelmingly driven by retweets from 8 posts—all of which contained references to either conspiracy theories or corruption among specific donors and elected officials.

U.S. Lawmakers' Mentions of Foundations on Facebook

(January 1, 2020 – September 15, 2023)

Overview of Methods

Using CrowdTangle, the Atlas Lab identified 437,541 Facebook page posts created by lawmakers from either the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate from January 1, 2020 – September 15, 2023. Collectively, these posts generated 307 million interactions from other Facebook users (likes, comments, shares, and other reactions), with an average of 702 interactions earned per post. Using an updated keyword filter, we identified 2,698 posts (0.6%) that mentioned the word “foundation” as used in the context of a corporate, private interest, charitable, or political organization. These posts generated a total of 617,083 Facebook interactions (0.2% of the total earned impressions for all policymaker’s posts), with an average of 228 interactions earned per post.

The companion dataset contains the posts and post metadata that were collected; a list of Facebook pages that created posts, the respective number of foundation-related posts they created, and their mean sentiment scores; a list of the foundations that were mentioned, the number of times they were mentioned, and the mean sentiment scores of the posts in which they were mentioned; lists of keywords, keyword pairs (bigrams), and keyword triplets (trigrams) to help infer context to the posts; and a list of topics as summarized by TF-IDF Latent Dirichlet Allocation topic modeling.

Analysis

1. Text analysis revealed names of more than 1,300 unique organizations mentioned by U.S. policymakers. These range from small community foundations to large, internationally-recognized charitable foundations.
2. Sentiment analysis was applied to each Facebook post, which assessed each sentence according to the range of positively- and negatively-coded keywords. Each post was then given an overall positive or negative score based on the average score of all the sentences within each post. 275 (10.2%) of these posts express potentially negative opinions, 2416 (89.5%) potentially express positive emotions, and 7 (0.02%) contained undetermined opinions. Scores increase in positivity and intensity as they approach a score of 1; scores increase in negativity and intensity as they approach a score of -1. Scores closer to 0 indicate either more objectivity or a “canceling out” of conflicting positive and negative words.
3. Keyword trigram analysis revealed word combinations used in conjunction with “foundation,” revealing a pattern of the top 25 foundations mentioned. This table displays the number of times each foundation was mentioned and the average sentiment score of posts that mentioned the foundation.

foundation	mean sentiment	count
the heritage foundation	0.051180819	63
black caucus foundation	0.323559112	42
prevent cancer foundation	0.061074113	35
chesapeake bay foundation	0.341597761	23
kaiser family foundation	0.117101617	22
shooting sports foundation	0.217324952	22
elizabeth dole foundation	0.272350588	21
ohio's future foundation	0.074907476	19
public policy foundation	0.152512285	18
the tax foundation	0.001757509	16
the sanneh foundation	0.376508126	15
arbor day foundation	0.268393278	14
diabetes research foundation	0.278517211	14
young america's foundation	0.352991871	14
county community foundation	0.350845561	12
fisher house foundation	0.366682054	12
tyler clementi foundation	-0.040309816	12
make a wish foundation	0.485604372	11
close up foundation	0.318843659	11
conservative union foundation	0.115348827	11

americans for prosperity foundation	0.234783406	11
james beard foundation	0.383874823	10
national kidney foundation	0.26585663	10
the century foundation	0.259855736	10
tunnels to towers foundation	0.233489721	10

4. We tallied the total number of times each Facebook page posted about a named foundation and averaged the sentiment scores. The top 25 policymaker pages by number of posts include the following:

Congressmember Name	mean sentiment	count
Rep. Mike Thompson (D. Cal.-4)	0.392640667	37
Fmr Rep. Mike Coffman (R. Col.-6)	0.240252437	32
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D. Tex.-37)	0.299586977	32
Fmr. Rep. Jim Renacci (R. Ohio-16)	0.061301598	30
Rep. Betty McCollum (D. Minn.-4)	0.319980157	29
Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D. Cal.-19)	0.377215227	29
Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL)	0.380281791	29
Rep. French Hill (R. Ark.-2)	0.284582521	28
Rep. Raul Ruiz, MD, (D. Cal.-25)	0.258774381	28
Rep. Jimmy Gomez (D. Cal.-34)	0.191169262	28
Sen. Jerry Moran (R.-Kan)	0.323157604	28
Rep. John Garamendi (D. Cal.-3)	0.098919233	27
Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (I-AZ)	0.349709115	27
Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)	0.380270862	26
Rep. Nikema Williams (D. GA-5)	0.239723667	24
Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón (R-PR)	0.237158761	24
Rep. Young Kim (R. Cal.-40)	0.314912626	24
Rep. Frederica Wilson (D. FL-24)	0.242367826	23
Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D. NJ-5)	0.031178618	22
Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Cal.)	0.258954792	21
Rep. Jim Costa (D.Cal.-21)	0.247525228	21
Rep. Debbie Lesko (R. AZ-8)	0.282334941	20
Rep. Greg Murphy, MD (R. NC-3)	0.154139639	18
Rep. Brad Sherman (D. Cal.-32)	0.268594421	17
Sen. John Boozman (R. Ark.)	0.332432627	17

5. We used Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to infer probable topics expressed by the aggregate group of posts based on the statistical probability that these keywords were used together to form coherent topic categories. The topics include the following

categories: community/education, cancer/health, community/families, conservative organizations, national security, law enforcement, tax foundation studies, military/service, conservation/nature, violence/crime, first responders, Spanish-language, city/urban, youth/anti-violence, healthcare, agriculture/labor, higher education, the congressional black caucus foundation, parks, and COVID-19 relief.

U.S. Lawmakers' Mentions of Foundations on Instagram

(January 1, 2020 – September 15, 2023)

Overview of Methods

Using CrowdTangle, the Atlas Lab identified 93,899 Instagram page posts created by lawmakers from either the U.S. House of Representatives or the U.S. Senate from January 1, 2020 – September 15, 2023. Collectively, these posts generated 250 million interactions from other Instagram users (likes, comments), with an average of 2662 interactions earned per post.

Using an updated keyword filter, we identified 562 posts (0.6%) that mentioned the word “foundation” as used in the context of a corporate, private interest, charitable, or political organization. These posts generated a total of 370,760 Instagram interactions (0.1% of the total earned impressions for all policymaker’s posts), with an average of 657 interactions earned per post.

The companion dataset contains the posts and post metadata that were collected; a list of Instagram pages that created posts, the respective number of foundation-related posts they created, and their mean sentiment scores; a list of the foundations that were mentioned, the number of times they were mentioned, and the mean sentiment scores of the posts in which they were mentioned; lists of keywords, keyword pairs (bigrams), and keyword triplets (trigrams) to help infer context to the posts; and a list of topics as summarized by TF-IDF Latent Dirichlet Allocation topic modeling.

Analysis

1. Text analysis revealed names of more than **450 unique organizations** mentioned by U.S. policymakers. These range from small community foundations to large, internationally-recognized charitable foundations.
2. Sentiment analysis was applied to each Instagram post, which assessed each sentence according to the range of positively- and negatively-coded keywords. Each post was then given an overall positive or negative score based on the average score of all the sentences within each post. 529 (93.8%) of these posts express potentially positive opinions, and 34 (6.2%) potentially express negative emotions. Scores increase in positivity and intensity as they approach a score of 1; scores increase in negativity and intensity as they approach a score of -1. Scores closer to 0 indicate either more objectivity or a “canceling out” of conflicting positive and negative words.
3. Keyword trigram analysis revealed word combinations used in conjunction with “foundation,” revealing a pattern of the top 25 foundations mentioned. This table displays the number of times each foundation was mentioned and the average sentiment score of posts that mentioned the foundation.

foundation	mean sentiment	count
black caucus foundation	0.38049816	18
conservative union foundation	-0.0224959	9
the heritage foundation	0.20964002	8

prevent cancer foundation	-0.0926664	7
close up foundation	0.397486	6
diabetes research foundation	0.29438308	6
farm journal foundation	0.26152442	6
kaiser family foundation	0.01871301	6
medical research foundation	0.21921145	6
congressional management foundation	0.57020306	5
fresno area hispanic foundation	0.59096694	4
cystic fibrosis foundation	0.20785652	4
national hemophilia foundation	0.35085091	4
the safer foundation	0.29329842	4
travis manion foundation	0.16345634	4
american conservative foundation	0.01464871	3
community and parks foundation	0.44037817	3
freedom mobility foundation	0.50664099	3
motorcycle riders foundation	0.23987717	3
mountain elk foundation	0.33684257	3
5000 role models of excellence foundation	0.30133611	3
teaching heart foundation	0.15393995	3
the just1mike foundation	0.23593637	3
the surfrider foundation	0.65679161	3
I have a dream foundation	0.4521613	2

4. We tallied the total number of times each Instagram page posted about a named foundation and averaged the sentiment scores. The top 25 policymaker pages by number of posts includes the following:

Congressmember Name	Mean sentiment	count
Rep. Jenniffer González-Colón (R.-PR)	0.409579422	12
Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D. Tex.-37)	0.293822349	12
Rep. Mike Thompson (D. Cal.-4)	0.377484485	11
Sen. Chuck Grassley (R.Iowa)	0.216737132	11
Rep. French Hill (R. Ark-2)	0.191541989	11
Rep. Jahana Hayes (D. Conn.-5)	0.524612509	10
Rep. Henry "Hank" Johnson (D. GA-4)*	0.398452741	10
Rep. Donald Payne, Jr. (D. NJ-10)	0.29716864	10
Rep. Stephanie Bice (R. OK-5)	0.249363063	10
Rep. Jim Costa (D. Cal-21)	0.31389519	9

Rep. Beth Van Duyne (R. TX-24)	0.384461601	8
Rep. Tracey Mann (R. KS-1)	0.22256943	8
Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY)	0.338483564	7
Rep. Frederica Wilson (D. FL-24)	0.204657128	7
Rep. Dan Crenshaw (R. TX-2)	0.107364228	7
Rep. Ed Case (D. HI-1)	0.422973215	6
Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine)	0.357151896	6
Rep. Steven Horsford (D. Nev.-4)	0.607656869	5
Rep. Michelle Steel (R. Cal.-45)	0.373802364	5
Rep. Kat Cammack (R. FL-3)	0.367825548	5
Rep. Nancy Mace (R. SC-1)	0.326949354	5
Rep. Hank Johnson (D. GA-4)**	0.254022441	5
Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R. NY-11)	0.252455482	5
Rep. Andy Biggs (R. AZ-5)	0.22405644	5
Rep. Tom Suozzi (D. NY-3)	0.146683932	5

*This is Rep. Johnson's personal account.

**This is Rep. Johnson's Congressional account.

5. We used Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to infer probable topics expressed by the aggregate group of posts, based on the statistical probability that these keywords were used together to form coherent topic categories. The topics include the following categories: drug treatment centers, diabetes, cancer, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, general medical, community scholarships, schools and safety, general community organizations, general health, head start and early education, women, civil rights, Christmas, parks, and veterans.

U.S. Lawmaker’s Facebook and Instagram Posts by Topic Issue

(January 1, 2020 – September 15, 2023)

Search Topics	Facebook Posts (% of total)	Earned Facebook Interactions (% of total)	Instagram Posts (% of total)	Earned Instagram Interactions (% of total)
<i>All posts</i>	437,541 (100%)	307,197,732 (100%)	93,899 (100%)	250,175,849 (100%)
Foundations / Charitable Organizations	2,698 (0.6%)	617,083 (0.2%)	562 (0.6%)	370,760 (0.1%)
The Border	22,922 (5.2%)	23,492,607 (7.6%)	2,795 (2.9%)	10,803,735 (4.3%)
Roe v. Wade / Abortion/ Reproductive Rights	11,942 (2.7%)	7,189,245 (2.3%)	2,448 (2.6%)	7,845,159 (3.1%)
Tax, Taxes	27,858 (6.4%)	23,593,477 (7.7%)	3,490 (3.7%)	22,254,933 (8.9%)
Democracy	14,681 (3.4%)	17,532,824 (5.7%)	3,551 (3.8%)	16,971,029 (6.8%)
The Budget	9,129 (2.1%)	6,708,979 (2.2%)	1,147 (1.2%)	3,111,652 (1.2%)
China, Chinese	16,775 (3.8%)	13,735,955 (4.5%)	1,491 (1.6%)	5,223,549 (2.1%)
Ukraine, Russia	15,948 (3.6%)	12,182,731 (3.9%)	2,568 (2.7%)	7,904,320 (3.2%)

Data were obtained from CrowdTangle using lists of pages curated by CrowdTangle, including “US House of Representatives” and “US Senate.”

Social Web Mentions About Major Foundations and U.S. Lawmakers

(October 2021 – September 2023)

Overview of Methods

Using the Netbase Quid social media listening platform, the Atlas Lab identified approximately 45,000 posts across X/Twitter, online news, blogs, forums, YouTube, Tumblr, and other online media that contained references to major philanthropic organizations and the United States House of Representatives or Senate. Keywords for this search included names or phrases associated with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the Koch Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Gates Foundation; keywords associated with U.S. lawmakers included representative, congress, congressman, congresswoman, congressional, senate, and senator.

This search was intended to find major themes of user-generated media discussing these foundations in association with U.S. lawmakers. Posts from U.S. lawmakers are not included in this analysis.

Search Results

The results of this search were predominately X/Twitter-based (44,700 posts), followed by online news (940), blogs (167), and online forums (45). X/Twitter content was overwhelmingly driven by retweets from 8 posts, illustrated in the following table:

Text	Author Handle	Date	Reposts	Potential Impressions
<p>⚠️ Holy shit ⚠️ US Congressman @RonJohnsonWI alleges that covid was “pre-planned by an elite group of people. Event 201”. In reference to the John’s Hopkins Center tabletop exercise with the WEF and the Gates Foundation. Pretty substantial allegations! pic.twitter.com/lfziWIE3SB</p>	WarClandestine	Aug 11, 2023 11:38:44 AM	21640	26004510
<p>🔥 Gates Foundation Is Working On Engineering Flying Vaccines via Mosquitoes “It’s not just the food” we have to be worried about, testified attorney @RenzTom to the Pennsylvania State Senate. “Gates Foundation has been funding all sorts of genetic</p>	VigilantFox	Jun 29, 2023 4:54:05 PM	15310	20477120

engineering of mosquitoes, and... pic.twitter.com/HSQ9AaKmVI				
Remember when a sitting senator confirmed for you that the COVID pandemic was planned by an elite group of Democrats working with the Gates Foundation at Johns Hopkins University?	EmeraldRobinson	Oct 16, 2023 3:04:51 PM	3710	5042660
"Ten million dollars came from the Charles Koch Foundation." Used to pay for luxury travel for Gorsuch and his "friends and colleagues." This is bribery by billionaires. Senate hearings now, on Koch and Crow and the corrupt courts.	protecttruth_	Apr 30, 2023 10:30:40 AM	1770	17313060
US Congressman @RonJohnsonWI alleges that covid was "pre-planned by an elite group of people. Event 201". In reference to the John's Hopkins Center tabletop exercise with the WEF and the Gates Foundation. pic.twitter.com/6XlbyjwcB2	iluminatibot	Sep 25, 2023 4:43:30 PM	1320	2350940
EMAILS: Gates Foundation worked hand in glove with Chinese government: "helps raise China's voice of governance by placing representatives from China on important international counsels as high level commitment from China." judicialwatch.org/new-fauci-e mai... pic.twitter.com/1soRwDvWIA	TomFitton	Dec 21, 2021 10:58:45 PM	1300	1634820
Finally A Politician Calls Out Event 201 A Simulation of A Global Coronavirus Pandemic Right Before The Global Coronavirus 'Pandemic' Occurred Run By The Gates Foundation, WEF, UN, CDC From US & China, The Media, Central Banks & More... "IT WAS PRE PLANNED" Senator Johnson	Spiro_Ghost	Aug 12, 2023 4:22:16 PM	460	607230

Judicial Watch: New Fauci Agency COVID Emails Detail Discussions about Wuhan Institute; Describe Gates Foundation Placement of Chinese Representatives on 'Important International Counsels' - judicialwatch.org/new-fauci-e mai...	JudicialWatch	Jan 6, 2023 2:00:00 PM	330	153380
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Analysis

Several themes emerge from these posts:

1. Suggestions that the Gates Foundation is responsible for orchestrating the COVID-19 pandemic along with the Chinese government and the Democratic Party.
2. A theory that the Gates Foundation is releasing genetically modified mosquitoes.
3. The Koch Foundation bribed Supreme Court justices.
4. Senator Ron Johnson of Wisconsin is featured dominantly in COVID-19 related posts, Pennsylvania State Senator Tom Renz accuses the Gates Foundation of genetically modifying mosquitoes, and Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch is accused of taking bribes from the Koch Foundation.