

Numbers show Christie is a master of the media

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It may just seem that New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is all over the place. In addition to dominating the state's political news in print and in online news outlets, Gov. Christie's YouTube channel has more than 570 videos with 4.9 million combined views, according to Melissa Hayes of NorthJersey.com in a recent news article.

Hayes points out that only President Barack Obama has used YouTube videos as effectively. The president has more than 3,000 YouTube videos that have been viewed 83 million times.

The media gap between a president and a governor is always going to be large. Any New Jersey governor faces a dwindling newspaper industry and television market that remains dominated by the large New York and Philadelphia media markets.

What about the social media gap between Gov. Christie and our local state senators who represent parts of Cape May, Atlantic and Ocean counties?

We took a look at Sen. Jeff Van Drew, the first district Democrat who represents parts of Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland counties; Sen. Jim Whelan, the 2nd District Democrat who represents most of Atlantic County; and Sen. Chris Connors, the 9th District Republican who represents parts of Atlantic, Ocean and Burlington counties.

Of the three state senators, Van Drew has 15 video uploads and 1,000 video views; Whelan has 10 videos uploaded and 723 video views, and Connors has no presence on YouTube. We only counted those videos uploaded by the senators themselves, or in Van Drew's case "The Van Drew Team." We did not count videos uploaded by others.

Looking at Facebook, Gov. Christie has nearly 59,000 likes. By comparison, Van Drew has 1,265 friends, Connors has 1,222 friends and Whelan has 716 likes. In the Facebook world, likes and friends are technically different, but for this purpose they are essentially the same.

Gov. Christie also leads the three state senators in tweets. Christie has over 2,700 tweets, Connors and Whelan in the 130 range and Van Drew with only 62.

Another measure of Twitter effectiveness is the number of followers. As expected, Christie dominates with more than 117,000 followers, with Connors next at 802, Whelan with 171 and Van Drew with 133.

In fairness our state senators, Gov. Christie's constituency is the entire state of New Jersey, while legislative districts are approximately 1/40th the size. Taking the size difference into consideration, our legislators are much closer to the governor, with Christie and all the legislators having less than 1 percent of their constituency as their Facebook friends.

Let's put the 117,000 Twitter followers Gov. Christie has in context. If Christie's Twitter followers were a county, it would have more inhabitants than Cape May (population 97,265), Salem (population 66, 083) and Warren (population 108,692).

Looking at these 117,000 Twitter followers another way: Christie has more Twitter followers than there are registered Republicans in any of the 21 counties. In fact, Christie's "Twitter county" has more members than the registered Democratic voters in all but six of the counties.

No matter how you look at the ChristieTweets, ChrisTwits or ChristieTweets – with 117,000 strong, they certainly need a name – the governor has the ability to communicate directly with a significant portion of the population. Add 4.9 million YouTube video views and the 59,000 Facebook friends, and it is no wonder that Gov. Chris Christie is master of the media.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since this column was filed, Whelan announced plans for a Twitter Town Hall on July 9. See <http://www.facebook.com/senjimwhelan> for details. Daniel J. Douglas is the director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey.

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