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**Presidential Correspondence during the Clinton Administration:
Staying in Touch with the American People**

In this paper I will give an overview of the history and function of the various departments within Presidential Correspondence, including Agency Liaison, the Gift Unit, Presidential Letters & Messages, Mail Analysis, Presidential Messages & Proclamations, the Volunteer Office, Student Correspondence, E-Mail, the Comment Line, and the Greetings Office.

The Congressional Studies literature emphasizes the importance of “constituent service,” but this is too often overlooked in our study of the American presidency. In fact, the Office of Presidential Correspondence provides a direct connection between the White House and the American people. There is much to be learned by analyzing trends in presidential correspondence and the treatment of that correspondence by the Administration.

In particular, I will give a behind-the-scenes look at the White House Office from the perspective of the Comment Line.¹ Each day, we would receive thousands of calls directed to the President, and each evening we would prepare reports for the President and senior staff about the number of calls that came in, what the dominant issues were, and include sample comments. On occasion, I would plot graphs that tracked Comment Line data with Gallup and other publicly available poll data. It was remarkable how similar the presidential approval ratings according to pollsters and according to the Comment Line were. In fact, I was Director of the Comment Line during the impeachment, and this held true during that difficult time as well. Serving as the “ear” of President Clinton as constituents called in to share with him their problems and hopes and fears provided a unique vantage point from which to gauge the connection that ordinary people felt with the White House.

By learning more about the Office of Presidential Correspondence during the Clinton Administration (and how the volume and treatment of mail differed from other Administrations), we can get a glimpse into how the White House stays in touch with the American people.

¹ During the Clinton Administration, I served as the Director of the Comment Line, Greetings Office and Volunteer Program, as well as the Director of the Correspondence Department Internship Program.