Policy Brief – Paper Advocacy – June 2018

*Congress should ensure constituent choice of and access to paper-based delivery of essential government, financial and medical information.*

**Background**
Several Federal agencies are attempting to save money by forcing Americans to access information electronically as a default method. However, according to the Pew Research Center and the U.S. Department of Commerce, more than 30 percent of Americans don’t have high-speed Internet at home, 45 percent don’t own a computer and nearly half of all African-American and Hispanic households and six out of 10 low-income households do not have home-based Internet access.

Directives from various Federal agencies have attempted to flip the delivery default of paper-based information to automatic e-delivery. Recent examples include:

- Food and Drug Administration rulemaking seeking to eliminate printed pharmaceutical labeling/prescriber information in favor of digital-only access to prescription drug information.
- Securities and Exchange Commission rulemaking that would eliminate the current requirement for mutual fund companies to transmit financial information to investors in paper format. More than 90 percent of the 965 public comments to the SEC were opposed to this change.
- In January, 2017, the Social Security Administration suspended mailing paper statements to citizens under the age of 60 without any public input. This effectively defaults all citizens under 60 to digital-only access of information.

**Industry Position**
Paper-based communications are critically important for millions of Americans—especially for seniors and the more than 30 percent of citizens without online access. We can go digital without discriminating against Americans who may not, or cannot, use technology, or do not wish to because of security concerns. By getting this right, we will bridge the digital divide and achieve significant efficiency gains—without shifting costs to consumers who can least afford them. Additionally, a rush to e-delivery can inadvertently cause job losses in the printing and paper industry. The common practice of government and private businesses offering “opt out” of paper-based communications allows consumer choice on how to receive communications. It is ill-advised for the government to change this commonly accepted communications practice—especially without a cost-benefit analysis or public input.

**115th Congress**
Congress should ensure constituent choice in receiving paper-based information is preserved through a combination of *regulatory oversight* and *appropriate legislative responses when such choice is threatened.*