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A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF CONGRESSIONAL MEMBER OFFICE OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This report presents a general analysis of personal staff functions in a congressional office. Because there is little specific information from Congress and other sources regarding staff job descriptions and because congressional office organization patterns vary significantly, this report focuses on the staff functions that are common to all offices regardless of organizational structure or job title: office management; mail; projects; casework; legislation; scheduling and personal services; press and public relations; and political functions.

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the growing body of literature on congressional staff focuses on committee rather than personal staff personnel. The literature provides little that is systematic or specific about the role, purpose, and function of these personal staff members.

Yet, in 1979, there were over three (3.5) times more personal staff than committee staff (10,679 to 3,290); the ratio on the House side was (3.3 to 1; 7,06/ personal staff aides compared to 2,073 committee staffers). The ratio on the Senate side was about 3 to 1. (3,612 personal staff persons to 1,217 committee staffers). 1/

The few students of political science and public administration who have attempted to study congressional staff organization have been hampered by the lack of specific information from Congress and from other sources. 2/ The lack of job descriptions, the lack of job uniformity, and the variation among offices in the duties of the persons having the same job title contribute to the difficulty in studying the personal staffs of Congress.

A review of certain common job titles within the House and Senate illustrates this problem. Most Members have Administrative Assistants who

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1/ Malbin, Michael J. Unelected Representatives. New York, Basic Books, 1980. p. 252.

2/ Fox, Harrison W., Jr. and Susan Webb Hammond. Congressional Staffs: the Invisible Force in Lawmaking. New York, The Free Press, 1980. p. 5-6.

are usually the most important and influential staff persons. Their duties may include those of staff director, political advisor, and speech writer. Some also play an active role in press relations and project work. But they may share all these duties with other staffers titled Executive Assistant, Personal Secretary, Legislative Aide, and Press Secretary; or they may not. The absence of centralized job descriptions and the autonomy of each Member in structuring, titling, and assigning duties to his or her staff assures this variation in the Congress.

This variation is more of an obstacle to the student of Congress than it is the operation of each Senate or House office where it is consistent with the general minimization of institutional guidelines, standards, and regulations.

One way to avoid the analytical problem resulting from title variation is to focus on the functions each staff performs rather than the structure (titling) utilized. A difficulty with this approach is the overlap and interrelationship among these functions. Although Congressional office operations do not neatly separate, this report has divided these functions into the following eight categories:

— office management

— mail

— projects

— casework

— legislation

— scheduling and personal services

— press and public relations

— political functions

OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Office management consists of a number of smaller functions which contribute to the operation and administration of each Congressional office. Among the major items within the general category of office management to be discussed in this paper are staff recruitment, coordination with District and State offices, the work flow, equipment and space, allowances, and efficiency and innovation.

As the Congress has increased its staffing resources, greater emphasis has had to be placed on staff organization and management functions. Personal staffs of Representatives, paid from clerk-hire funds, are limited to 18 permanent staff and as many as four part-time or temporary employees. On the average, personal staff of Senators number between 20 and 40 persons. There is no limit on the number of staff a Senator may hire, but the amount of staffing funds available to Senators varies with State population. 3/ Staffs are organized differently according to the individual Member's legislative, representative, and political goals, and his or her personal preferences.

3/ In the House of Representatives, Members are authorized a sum of money (an annual clerk-hire allow allowance of $336,384 with no month-to-month carry over) with which they are permitted to employ no more than 18 permanent persons at any one time. They are additionally authorized $1,620 per year to employ an LBJ intern for a two-month period, in addition to the above named employees. In the Senate, on the other hand, a Member is authorized a staff allowance according to the size of his State's population. Currently these allowances range from $592,608 to $1,190,724 per year. There are no restrictions on the number of staff which a Senator may hire, and there are no restrictions on the carryover of unused funds from one month to the next. Senators also receive a legislative assistance allowance of $183,801 per fiscal year. In the case of a committee chairman or ranking minority member of a Committee the allowance is automatically reduced by $61,267 for each such leadership position. Other Senators authorized to appoint committee staff receive reduced legislative assistance funds as well.

Staff Recruitment

A major office management function is recruitment of staff. This assignment usually falls to the Administrative Assistant, though others may also play a role.

Recruitment for professional staff positions, according to one observer, is "based primarily on informal, non-routinized contacts and 'who knows whom.'" 4/ Immediately following an election, the newly elected Members are deluged with applications for employment. And throughout one's congressional career, there is hardly a week that will go by without at least one person dropping off a resume. However, few of these persons are hired.

Assuming his or her predecessor was of the same party, an incoming Member may hire (retain) much of the former's staff. An incoming Member may also consult with other Members from his or her State on staffing. Incoming Members who have served in another elective office (e.g., state legislator) may well bring some of their staff to Washington with them.

Some Members make an effort to hire staffers from their home State or District; others do not. It seems generally agreed that the need and opportunity for State people on a Member's staff decreases as seniority increases. Hiring people from the State may create at least three problems: (1) it may prove difficult to fire someone with ties to the constituency; (2) it may not be advantageous for a home State person with ties to the constituency to be privy to all that transpires in the Member's office; and (3) occasionally staff persons from the home State have their own political ambitions which may at least partially influence their efforts in the

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4/ Fox and Hammond, p. 49.

Congressional office. On the other hand, home State staffers may be especially attuned to the problems of the congressional constituency.

Sometimes staffers are hired to fill specific roles, and in these cases Congressional offices seek out persons having the appropriate qualifications, skills, and experience. In other instances, persons are hired for their general capabilities; and duties may be assigned as they arise.

Duties may seem to be randomly assigned, but many congressional staffers now considered experts in their field can point out that their expertise began just because someone was needed to cover a certain subject area. Expertise grew post facto.

Coordination with District and State Offices

Another office management function is coordination with the Congressman's District office(s) or the Senator's State office(s). Representatives are authorized and charged for rental space for District offices in post offices and Federal buildings on a square footage basis (or funds to pay for equivalent private office space). Senators are authorized rental space in post offices and Federal buildings (or funds to pay for equivalent private office space by square footage, according to state population, not exceeding the highest rate per square foot charged Federal Agencies by GSA). In addition, each Senator or Representative is authorized to lease a mobile office.

Although State or District offices may perform varying functions, all of these functions must be coordinated with those done in Washington. A current trend seems to be the assignment of most casework (with the usual exception of military cases) to these offices. Certain form letters (congratulatory, new resident, and sometimes legislative) are also done in State or District offices.

These offices are often involved in scheduling the Member's time when he or she is back home, and, of course, Congressional offices are normally involved in local political affairs, and in project work.

Work Flow: Production, Filing, and Retrieving

Other office management functions include the physical production and filing of the large quantity of work produced by office staffers. Congressional office deadlines are perhaps more important than deadlines in any comparable office in the private sector. Letters, press releases, speeches, position papers and other documents often need to be produced by a certain time. Successfully coordinating these events is no small achievement. Similarly, the ability to retrieve materials previously produced and filed is equally important. The press releases, speeches, and position papers of a few years previous may prove very important to ensure that Members' positions are consistent over time--and if they are not, to explain why a change in position was necessary and proper. Accordingly, retrieval of information is especially important; a consistent and efficient filing system is a must.

Office Equipment and Space

Lastly, an important part of office management deals with equipment and space. A variety of office machines, with differing applications and capabilities, are available to Members. It is a function of office management to be aware of the office's specific needs, and to make sure that the office equipment meets those needs.

With regard to space, often--but especially at the beginning and end of each Congress--various offices suitable for "annex space" become available (this also occurs as the Senate and House Office Buildings increase in number and new offices are created); those charged with office management need to be aware of these so as to place applications. Personal staff in the House and Senate has increased by more than 50 percent in the last 10 years, 5/ and additional office space has been needed and acquired to house these persons. A Congressional office that does not acquire conveniently located space as it acquires staff might well find itself severely cramped and operating inefficiently.

Efficiency and Innovation

Efficiency in office operations is always desirable, but often difficult to achieve. The quality level of each staff person's work--as well as that of the office as a whole--varies according to a number of different factors.

Each of the components discussed above contributes to the work level of each employee. It is not always possible in the context of each Congressional office to supply each staff with optimal working conditions. Space limitations may force many staffers to work in an environment they consider--and perhaps rightly so--less than satisfactory. This may well impinge upon productivity.

In an attempt to overcome the problem of space limitation, a small number of offices have experimented with innovative space-efficient furniture. A component of office management is to be aware of such opportunities when they arise, and also to be able to evaluate how well such options will fare in the

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5/ Fox and Hammond, p. 24-25.

particular office. There may well be resistance among tradition-oriented staffers to substantial innovation. And innovation in office operations is not necessarily going to be beneficial in every case.

A final note about many of these office management operations--the responsible personnel in each Congressional office must keep abreast of the ever-changing allowances that pertain to staff, equipment, stationery, travel, etc. These are compiled in the Congressional Handbook (prepared and regularly updated by the Committee on House Administration, in the House, and the Committee on Rules and Administration in the Senate), but the responsible staff persons may need to track changes in office allowances on a more immediate basis.

MAIL

An element of office management is the function of receiving, routing, and responding to congressional mail. Members often feel that responding to mail promptly and expeditiously is as important a function as any. 6/

The volume of mail varies from office to office and from week to week, but responding to the flood of correspondence can require large amounts of time and effort. Even though "the huge volume of mail today is impossible to handle in any way other than mechanization," 7/ the simple tasks of opening and categorizing incoming correspondence can consume significant staff time. Each letter must be routed to the appropriate staff person, and legislative mail on new issues must be researched and the Member's position must be established and confirmed.

It is an axiom in Congress that the importance of each constituent letter should not be underrated. A Member of the House once stated why he believed that each letter must be written as if it were for publication. "One . . . thing I think applies to every new member [is] to realize that you are now big news in your home district; and don't ever write anything to a constituent that you wouldn't be willing to see on Page One of the local newspaper. If you can

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6/ Consider this advice given freshman Representative Estes Kefauver (Tenn.) by Speaker Bankhead in 1939: "Give close and prompt attention to your mail. Your votes and speeches may make you well known and give you a reputation, but it is the way you handle your mail that determines your reelection." Quoted in Kefauver, Estes, and Jack Levin. A Twentieth-Century Congress. New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947. p. 171.

7/ Stuart, Peter C. Write a Congressman--and Get a Machine Reply. Christian Science Monitor, June 2, 1975. p. 2.

remember that as rule number one, it will keep you out of an awful lot of trouble." 8/ Such a warning is probably doubly true for Senators, whose views appear to receive more media attention in both their home States and Washington, D.C., than those of most Representatives.

The incoming mail represents much of the total office operation in microcosm. There are letters dealing with legislation, casework, scheduling of the Member's time, State, District, and national politics, and visitors coming to Washington. In addition are the printed or automatically typed ("Dear Colleague") letters circulated by other Members soliciting cosponsorship of legislation, regarding the introduction of amendments, or concerning other House or Senate matters.

It appears virtually impossible to keep track of all incoming correspondence. Although some, though probably not most, House offices use tracking systems by which each incoming letter is assigned a number and systematically processed through the congressional office, such systems can become overloaded in "high mail" offices. More time and effort would be expended in tracking the lett .an can be afforded. In the Senate, some Members are using the correspondence management system in which most inquiries requiring a written response are tracked and categorized by subject.

8/ Tacheron, Donald G., and Morris K. Udall. The Job of the Congressman. Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., New York, 1970. p. 76.

Each office, however, does have a system by which mail is distributed and assigned to office personnel for a response. The actual method of receiving and routing constituent correspondence varies from office to office and depends on the amount of mail received, the size of the staff, the structure and orientation of the staff, and the inclinations of the Member as to how much detail he or she prefers in his or her responses.

Generally, incoming mail can be categorized into three main groupings: legislative, requests, and special.

Legislative Mail

Legislative mail deals with substantive issues. Much of this mail can be processed by automatic typewriters which provide responses with an appearance of having been personally prepared. There are a number of types of automatic typewriters, and the more sophisticated models allow for the splicing of selected issue components into one letter if, for example, a constituent comments on the economy and the environment.

Letters requiring a more detailed response, or dealing with a subject not covered by a form response, need to be answered on an individual basis. The assignment of such letters varies from office to office. In some offices, only the most sensitive letters will reach the Administrative Assistant or the Member (see Special Mail, below). Other Members take a more active role with regard to the mail. In all cases, Members are kept apprised of general trends in the mail (for more detail, see section on Legislation).

Request Mail

Request mail covers all correspondence in which a constitutent is requesting a favor--which can range from a public works project in the State to a military case to a free copy of a Department of Agriculture or Department of Human Resources pamphlet. Virtually every office responds to these letters personally, although mechanized typewriters can be utilized at certain stages.

Different staffers handle different aspects of this job; the exact distribution of duties will vary from office to office. The receptionist may handle simple document requests while caseworkers handle the routine problems or "cases" with other staffers' assistance, depending on the expertise needed (covered in more detail on "Casework" section).

Special Mail

Special mail includes those letters that reach the desk of the Member, personal secretary, or Administrative Assistant directly. Although in a typical office these are relatively few in number, they are quite important.

Those items included in this category will vary from office to office. Some Members may want to see most letters from other Members. Most Members also want to see politically sensitive correspondence, relating to the home State and national politics; others prefer that these matters be handled by the Administrative Assistant or another politically expert staff person.

In most offices, Members and staffers would agree that due to the Member's extensive time demands, the mail categorized as special and channelled to the Senator or Representative should be kept at an absolute minimum. However, equally compelling, no correspondence that needs to be brought to the Member's attention should be handled by staff instead.

Review and Response

As important as receiving, routing, and responding to mail, is the final function of review and sending the mail out. Those letters sent to the Member or the Administrative Assistant for review will vary, not only from office to office, but also from staffer to staffer within each office. Some staffers may want a more comprehensive review of their work, others may not. Any sensitive letter may require the approval of the A.A. or a senior legislative assistant before being mailed.

Although some offices attempt to keep within three days of the incoming mail (that is, each letter must be responded to within three days), other offices find that a full week or two is often a more realistic time frame. Correspondents expect a prompt response, and incoming letters that consistently go unanswered for several weeks can adversely affect constituent relations.

PROJECTS

The project function of a Congressional office is probably one of the least understood and one of the easiest to overlook. Basically, it is the steering of Federal funds to those persons, organizations, and communities seeking to participate in a federally sponsored program.

There are an estimated 1,600 9/ different types of grant available from the various Federal departments and agencies. In fiscal year 1981 Federal grant-in-aid outlays totaled $95.3 billion 10/—funds that will be available to State and local governments. An additional $34 billion was made available for research and development, 11/ funds that will include those made available mainly to university and private research groups.

In addition, there are those Federal funds, not dispensed through grants but nevertheless much sought after, that are used for defense procurement and construction of Federal installations, e.g., military bases, Federal office buildings and Federal projects (such as flood control and highway construction).

9/ A Congressional Research Service budget analyst explains that it is difficult to provide an exact number, since there is wide disagreement about the definition of "grant programs".

10/ U.S. Executive Office of the President. Office of Management and Budget. Budget of the United States Government Fiscal Year 1982. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1981. p. 239.

11/ Ibid. p. 306.

Because the State, local, or private unit is frequently either unaware of available moneys or uncertain of how to go about obtaining them, a Congressional office can be of assistance in these endeavors.

Staff members seek to monitor department and agency activities in the field of grant disbursements, and, when possible, notify the appropriate persons in the State of what funds are available. Staffers can contact agency personnel to determine their interest in certain projects, and relay their findings to the local authorities. Once a grant application is filed, office staffs—and the Senator or Representative, at times—can keep in touch with agency people and indicate their support for the project. This is especially effective if the Member is of the same party as the Administration or serves on a committee with jurisdiction over the specific department. Contact can be maintained by letter, phone, or in person; the approach will most likely vary according to the situation and the persons involved. But concerted action on the part of the staff can result in more Federal funds being spent in the State or district, and provide greater services to the constituency (for example, a Veterans' hospital, Social Security office, or a better funded and more fully equipped medical school).

CASEWORK

Lesser projects are, of course, not neglected. The importance of the communication task called casework is reflected in a 1977 questionnaire survey, by Robert Klonoff, whose results are given in the table below.

Percentage of Time Spent On Casework
(Percent of Responding Offices a/)

Percentage of time spent on casework	By staff assistants b/	By Members
0-4	0.0 %	45.6 %
5-15	8.9 %	36.0 %
16-25	19.5 %	13.6 %
26-50	38.2 %	4.0 %
51-100	33.3 %	0.8 %
	100.0 %	100.0 %
	123 responses	125 responses

a/ Figures do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

b/ Includes district staff.

Klonoff's findings show that while most Members devote little of their own time to casework, 33.3 percent of the offices responding to the 1977 questionnaire

devote at least 50 percent of all staff hours to casework, and 71.5 percent of the offices spend in excess of 25 percent of their time on casework. 12/

Casework is rarely self-initiated; it most often stems from a constituent letter. The definition of casework varies. Some use the term to apply to the whole range of constituent problems and inquiries, others restrict it to areas such as social security and veterans' benefits, housing and military problems, immigration and unemployment, and the like. 13/ One Senator explained that he viewed casework as "requests for a wide variety of services requiring me to go to bat for citizens with the administrative agencies of the Federal Government." 14/

Casework is handled rather routinely. The incoming constituent letter is judged for validity (there are a few, usually easy-to-spot, crank letters), and then assigned to a caseworker. Caseworkers are generally assigned certain subject areas and receive all letters within their specific areas. In this way, they gain expertise and develop contacts with agency personnel.

Upon receiving a new case, the caseworker decides which Federal department or agency has jurisdiction and makes a determination as to whether the case can best be handled by telephone or letter. In some cases referral to State or municipal government, or to the Member's State or District office is appropriate.

If the case lends itself to being handled on the phone, the agency is contacted, usually via the Congressional Liaison Office.

12/ Klonoff, Robert. The Congressman as Mediator Between Citizens and Government Agencies: Problems and Prospects. Harvard Journal on Legislation, v. 16, Summer 1979. p. 708.

13/ Butler, Warren H. Administering Congress: the Role of the Staff. Public Administration Review, v. 26, March 1966. p. 6.

14/ Clark, Joseph S. Congress: the Sapless Branch. Harper & Row, New York, 1964. p. 63.

If the case is to be handled by letter, the caseworker makes a photocopy of the constituent letter and forwards it to the appropriate agency, sometimes with a personally written letter, but more often with an appropriate inquiring "buck slip." A letter is sent to the constituent over the Member's signature assuring the correspondent that the Member is looking into the matter.

The executive branch department or agency can normally be counted on to respond to the "case" within a week or two, and a copy of that response is forwarded to the constituent with observations, suggestions, or sentiments as fit the circumstances.

Few empirical data exist on the number of times a constituent's complaint and the accompanying congressional inquiry actually effect a change in case status. More often than not, the agency in question will simply include in its letter a recitation of the facts and the applicable regulations as a means of explaining why the constituent's problem cannot be favorably resolved.

One study, in which 198 Members and staff participated, estimated that congressional casework resulted in favorable determinations by the agencies in approximately 37 percent of the cases. 15/ It should be noted, however, that seventeen years ago, some Members claimed a success rate of one-fifth to one-third. 16/ Greater congressional attention to casework may contribute to a higher current success rate. But, one reason for the disparity may also be the measurement of success. In some cases, the Federal agency, upon a Member's request, will grant the complainant an additional interview and explain in greater detail why the particular claim must be disallowed. Although not a

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15/ Johannes, John R. Congressional Caseworkers: Attitudes, Orientations, and Operations. Prepared for delivery at the 1978 meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, April 20-27. p. 26.

16/ Clapp, Charles L. The Congressman; His Work as He Sees It. Brookings Institution, Washington, 1963. p. 78.

total success, it is a plus for the Member and often the constitutent is satisfied.

In certain instances, a Member may do more for constituents and may, on rare occasions, intervene personally. However, in general, Members and their staffs are reluctant to become heavily involved especially in those cases in which potential conflict of interest questions could arise.

One common, though not frequent, practice in casework dealing primarily with immigration cases is the introduction of a private bill. Although private bills have dealt with claims against Government, patents, military affairs, and other items, most have concerned one aspect or another of immigration. The major categories within the broad heading of immigration are: 1) permitting aliens residing abroad to immigrate to the United States although otherwise they may not legally be able to do so; 2) permitting aliens in the United States to remain in the U.S. despite legal requirements to the contrary; and 3) granting citizenship to aliens who would not otherwise be eligible. Private bills can be enacted for the benefit of one person or for a number of persons.

Members should be aware of the difference in House and Senate consideration of the second category given above. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has different agreements with the House and Senate Judiciary Committees involving stays of deportation for persons not legally in the United States. In the House, deportation proceedings will "not be stayed upon the introduction of a private bill . . . unless the House Committee on the Judiciary addresses some formal communications to the service to stay proceedings."

In the Senate, however, deportation will "be stayed in the case of any alien concerning whom a private immigration bill is pending in the Senate

on which no unfavorable action has been taken by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary by the end of the current session of Congress." 17/

Casework is undoubtedly an important Congressional function. In encouraging constituents to take advantage of their service, many Members are acting on the supposition that a satisfied constituent is a vote gained in the next election; the corollary is that a dissatisfied constituent may well be a vote irretrievably lost.

17/ Congressional Quarterly's Guide to the Congress of the United States. Washington, Congressional Quarterly Services, 1971. p. 338.

LEGISLATION

Perhaps the key word in a discussion of a Senator's or Representative's legislative function is "coordination." The legislative function encompasses various activities in different arenas: the House floor, the Senate floor, the House committees, the Senate committees, and each Member's personal office (where he or she formulates position papers and often researches issues on which he/she will later introduce legislation). All staff members, both in the personal office and on the various committee and subcommittee staffs, who are responsible to the Member, are best served by maximum possible awareness of the Member's position--and other staff members' activities--on all related issues.

All actions, from answering the simplest constituent letter to casting an important vote on the floor, need to be coordinated.

The most time-consuming legislative task for staff is responding to constituent correspondence (see p. 10 for additional information on how a staff responds to legislative mail). Constituent mail is not necessarily important as a determinant of how a Representative or Senator will vote, but it can be used as a means for measuring constituents' views on legislation the Member must vote upon. 18/ Legislative mail is treated with respect.

18/ Kingdon, John W. Congressmen's Voting Decisions. New York, Harper and Row, 1973. p. 57.

In addition, it is often in response to constituent letters that Members, with the assistance of their staffs, first research various issues and draw up position papers, which are then used as the basis for form letters.

In addition to responding to correspondence, the basic staff legislative function can be summed up in one word: preparation. A Member of Congress needs to be prepared for the numerous legislative forums in which he operates, and it is the staff role to ensure that such preparation is adequate.

In the 96th Congress, for example, there were 1,276 roll call votes in the House and 1,055 roll call votes in the Senate; and Members needed to be prepared for each. It is a staff function to be familiar with the content and committee report of each bill, to be aware of major lobbying efforts for and against the legislation, to know which colleagues might be offering amendments and the merits of these amendments, and to keep abreast of possible parliamentary maneuvers by other Members (staff expertise in parliamentary procedure can be very helpful). A Member may also want to be apprised of the party leadership, administration positions, constituent opinion, and any press reaction--thus necessitating coordination with those who perform the press, mail, and political functions.

Senators and Representatives generally develop a degree of expertise in those subjects with which they deal on a continuing basis as a result of committee membership. Accordingly, Members need a more comprehensive preparation for committee hearings and meetings. It is a staff function to ensure that Members have an in-depth familiarity with subjects to be covered in upcoming committee and subcommittee hearings. This will include not only the relative pros and cons on each issue, but each committee (or subcommittee) colleague's point of view, the position of related interest groups, and generally the specific impact a certain position might have on the Member's constituency.

Staff must be sure that the Member has not enunciated a position on a particular issue in the past (or if he has, that the two positions are consistent or can be justified), and that no other person on the same staff is working on the same issue toward an opposite conclusion. Again, coordination is paramount.

Coordination with those who track State interests must also be considered. This staff work might be done in either the Washington, District or State office; but, wherever it is performed, such input is often needed.

In researching legislation, drafting bills, writing speeches, etc., the staff role is considerable, always keeping in mind the Member's political philosophy and personal inclinations (for example, some Members introduce much legislation, others little—there is no best way of operating). Different aspects of these tasks can be fulfilled by personal staff (in Washington, District or State), committee staff, other House or Senate staff (e.g., Legislative Counsel), other Government staff (an executive department, the Congressional Research Service), outside organizations (interest groups, consulting firms), or any other available resource. Coordination between staff working on similar subjects—coupled with effective office management—contributes to efficient legislative operation.

The staff legislative function is closely tied to all other functions. The Member is first and foremost a legislator. Other staff activities need to be carried out in that context.

SCHEDULING AND PERSONAL SERVICES

Another item that also needs to be coordinated with the components of the legislative function is the scheduling function. A Congressman or Senator may often be called upon to be in more than one place at the same time. The staff personnel must perform a two-fold function with regard to the Member's schedule: one, the staff must assist in the evaluation of simultaneous events to determine their importance and worth; and two, the staff must see to it that the logistics of the Member's day are well enough planned to enable him to move easily from one scheduled event to the next.

In the 96th Congress, a Member of the House usually belonged to at least two committees (standing, joint, and select) and five or more subcommittees. A Senator usually served on three or more committees (standing, joint and select) and eight subcommittees. When some of these meet simultaneously, it is the Senator or Representative, with the advice of his staff, who must weigh the pros and cons of each meeting. Staff can evaluate the relative importance of each hearing, but the Member also considers other commitments, such as those made to interest group representatives or colleagues in the House or Senate with regard to the attendance at committee meetings. Often staff people keep abreast on a nearly minute-by-minute basis of activities in those meetings not attended by the Member, so that should an especially important vote or other matter arise, the Member's proxy can be voted or his attendance effected.

There are other obligations to constituents and interest groups. Members can leave committee meetings or the floor of the House or the Senate at slow moments to greet constituents. Members also schedule meetings throughout the day with constituents and lobbyists, knowing that many will be delayed and others may never occur (generally staff aides fill in at these times). Those charged with scheduling duties (generally an appointments secretary, sometimes a personal secretary or an executive assistant) must judge the relative importance of constituents, lobbyists, and so forth.

Scheduling also entails initiative on the part of staffers so that good relations are fostered with those interest groups active in the Member's fields of interest. Invitations to workshops and conferences that generate national attention are highly sought after; oftentimes organizations may make final decisions on keynote speakers and such on a more or less arbitrary basis—and personal contacts cannot be overrated.

With regard to logistics, each Member has a different idea of what sort of support services his staff ought to supply. Members may use the staff for total transportation having one or several staffers pick the Member up in the morning, provide transport to any functions that occur during the day, and, finally, ensure that the Member arrives at whatever evening activity is scheduled. Transportation home is provided as well.

Although the foregoing situation does not occur in every office, staff in many House and Senate offices do perform transportation duties for their Member. At the very least, in a typical office the staffers in charge must be sure that transportation is available for the Member throughout the day, and occasionally on weekends.

In some offices, transportation and scheduling are also provided the Member's husband or wife. The role of the congressional spouse varies--some play an active role in the office and in the congressional District or State office; others concentrate on family and careers and do little related to the political world. Whatever the situation, the office staff needs to be able to provide services needed by the spouse as the Member desires.

A last, but certainly not least, personal aide is the Member's Personal Secretary. In many offices, this position entails significant duties and responsibilities. The Personal Secretary has perhaps the most frequent personal contact with the Member. Her or his duties often include all or most of the following: scheduling, transportation logistics, screening phone calls, personal dictation, especially sensitive correspondence, and whatever else the Member decides ought to be done in a hurry. The Personal Secretary often has administrative responsibilities over other secretaries and the final mailing activities.

PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

As a practical matter, many Members employ a person for press responsibilities, though that staff person may handle other duties as well. In a Senator's office it is important for her or him to communicate effectively to the newspapers and other media outlets with circulation in the home State, or nationally. Often this will include a few newspapers and radio and television stations from adjoining States which serve "media markets" in the Senator's State. The emphasis in a Representative's office is usually on "local" press; it appears that few Representatives have found pursuit of national media coverage fruitful. It is very important for a Member to communicate effectively to the daily and weekly newspapers and other media outlets with circulation in his congressional district. Often this will include at least a few newspapers and radio and television stations from adjoining districts. These are the sources from which constituents get their news and formulate their views. Press aides often cultivate personal relationships with newspaper and electronic media personnel. Some deliver press releases personally if the newspaper has a Washington correspondent or bureau. Press aides are mindful of the deadlines for the various media outlets and take care to see that access to material is easy and prompt. The House and Senate maintain studios for the production of radio and television material, and press aides need to know what the electronic media can best use.

Media outlets in different areas have different capabilities and different emphases. Accordingly, efforts to utilize these different media outlets will vary. Some outlets may be prone to cover national news; others focus more on

local. On important matters, a Member may tailor his activities to coincide with the needs of the media outlet in which he desires coverage.

Attention to the national media is a different task. The national electronic networks, the "national newspapers" (e.g. the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal among others, and the wire services are important to those Members of the House and Senate wishing to build a national reputation. Not all Members have such desires. For those who do, events can be organized in such a way as to maximize media exposure. For example, afternoon hearings have virtually no chance of being included on the early evening news shows; important events are therefore scheduled in the morning. At all times, advance copies of press releases and text of speeches should be handled in such a way as to achieve maximum coverage and foster good working relationships with the press.

Some offices reserve an hour or two a week when any interested journalist (almost always from the "local" or home State press) can come and talk with the Member, either on or off the record. Such sessions can produce an increased rapport with the press and can provide insights for the press into the Member's accomplishments.

Other offices provide the press with many of the small but helpful perquisites that are part of a Congressional office operation. Each House office is allocated eight indexed copies and twenty-five plain copies of the Congressional Directory. Senate offices are provided with fifty plain copies. Some can be distributed to press personnel.

Different executive branch departments have information programs that can be staged throughout the country in cooperation with a Member. These programs are aimed at different groups. For example, the Department of Commerce wil.

hold workshops for local Chambers of Commerce on how to compete for Federal contracts; the Department of the Interior will present programs for school children on pollution and outdoor safety; the Social Security Administration will produce brochures--with room for adding the Member's name--for distribution to recipients.

Almost all Members send out newsletters. Many offices maintain more than one list, using a different newsletter for respective sectors of the constituency. Up to six times a year, Members of the House can also utilize a postal patron system to ensure that newsletters reach every household in the Congressional District. Senators do not have this system available to them. It should be noted that all Members of Congress are forbidden from sending mass mailings during the 28-day period before the day of any election in which the Member is a candidate for public office (39 U.S.C. 3210(a)(5)(D)). In addition, the House Commission on Mailing Standards has issued a number of guidelines regarding what is and is not permissible material in House newsletters. 19/ Furthermore, regulations promulgated by the Select Senate Committee on Ethics state that newsletters may contain only five references to the Senator, including use of the pronoun "I", on any one page.

19/ These are listed in the Publication, "Regulations on the Use of the Congressional Frank By Members of the House of Representatives and Rules of Practice in Proceedings Before the House Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards," prepared by the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, House of Representatives. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1979.

POLITICAL

One area of public relations that no Member can afford to neglect is that dealing with his political party. Although most Members have only limited dealings with their State and national party apparatus, almost every Member is careful not to alienate party personnel--especially those party officials who are responsible for the Member's nomination or renomination, and for marshaling party forces to work for his reelection.

Most Members pay a minimal amount of attention to the national party committee. Aside from occasional speaking engagements, there is little need for contact. The party's Congressional Campaign Committee, which supplies funds to House candidates, and the party's Senate Campaign Committee, which supplies funds to Senatorial candidates, is not active except at election time; there is little need for contact with this body at other times.

A major political consideration in the House and Senate is a Member's relationship with his colleagues. Great pains are often taken, especially in the Senate, to ensure that political differences do not affect long term working relations.

A Member's political function, perhaps more than any other duty, is truly a matter of style. Some Members are naturally extroverted in all surroundings from a neighborhood party to a White House dinner; others are reserved and aloof. The staff must take into account the Member's strengths, desires and moods in scheduling political events.

In essence, the political function is an amalgam of all other functions in that each has a political aspect. Each Member of Congress must operate within his or her individual political philosophy, his/her party, his/her State or Congressional District, and within the confines of Congress as well. In the introduction to Congressional Behavior, Nelson Polsby wrote:

> The puzzles of the election are nothing compared to the mysteries of the congressional community. Congressional behavior is determined more by the contours of this community, and by where congressmen and senators locate themselves and are located with respect to it, than by any other single thing. Who the congressman or senator is, where he comes from, what he stands for, his party, his prior life experiences, his ambitions and hopes, his alliances and enemies, all play a part in locating him, and of course, his location determines what and how much he can do. 20/

20/ Polsby, Nelson W., ed. Congressional Behavior. New York, Random House, 1971. p. xii.

JC/eg