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Congressional Member Office Operations

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Congressional Member Office Operations

Summary

Although Member personal congressional offices vary in structure, they all share seven common functions: office management, legislation, projects, casework, mail, press and public relations, and scheduling and reception.

The office management function comprises staff recruitment and pay, coordination between district and state offices and the Member's Washington, DC, office, the assignment and flow of work through the office, and the efficient and innovative use of space and equipment. By and large these responsibilities fall upon the administrative assistant (AA), frequently now called chief of staff, and the office manager or titular equivalent. The key ingredients of effective management are preparation, flexibility, communication, and coordination.

Legislative staff perform numerous tasks associated with preparing Members to fulfill their legislative duties. These involve finding and providing information, research, and analysis, and assisting in devising strategies for accomplishing legislative goals.

Projects and casework, which flow from request mail or visits, require substantial staff time, and consist primarily of assisting local governments, public or private organizations, and individuals in their transactions with federal agencies.

Mail — its receipt, processing, and responses — is a major draw on staff time. It is also a task that Members value highly in their representational role as intervener between constituents and the national government. There are basically three types of mail: legislative mail, which seeks Members' views and standing on proposals and issues facing the nation; request mail, which calls upon Members for assistance in dealing with the federal government; and special mail, which is judged of the utmost importance and usually commands the attention of the Member or the AA.

Members employ staff knowledgeable about the press, and skilled in dealing with it and with the public relations aspects of serving in the national legislature. Press staff help to inform both Members and the representatives of the media.

Scheduling and reception duties encompass methods and techniques for juggling competing demands for the Member's time and the courteous reception of visitors to Member offices.

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Office Functions and Work Environment

Congressional staff perform a variety of functions to assist Members of Congress in their representational and legislative duties.[1] Some perform administrative tasks only: organizing and supervising the work of other staff, coordinating the Member's schedule, and acting as liaisons between the staff in the Washington office and those in the Member's district/state offices. Other staff may work exclusively on constituent services, answering correspondence, responding to requests for assistance in dealing with federal agencies, or coordinating project efforts with state and local governments. Still others may work exclusively on legislative matters — assisting in developing legislative proposals supported by the Member, monitoring legislative activity in the chamber and in committees, paying particular attention to the work in progress in the committees and subcommittees on which the Member serves, and responding to correspondence dealing with legislative matters. A few work primarily with the media, handling press inquiries, scheduling interviews, drafting press releases and newsletters, organizing press conferences, and reviewing media coverage of the Member's activities. Finally, some staff work in supporting roles, either in clerical capacities or, more likely, computer operations that reflect the increasing technological sophistication of Congress and its link with the Internet.

Congressional offices have a distinctive environment which has been likened to a "family" or "small" business. David Brady has identified five factors that define the work environment in Member offices:

- Member independence, autonomy, and discretion in determining office structure, staff recruitment, and staff pay;
- Member freedom to define his/her job as (s)he chooses and a concomitant organization of the office to correspond to these choices;
- Diversified working environments among offices stemming from the combined effects of points one and two;
- Loyalty to the Member as a key expectation, if not a requisite; and

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[1]Newly elected or appointed Members of Congress have only a short time to hire staff, equip their offices, and begin operations. For full-length treatment of organizing and staffing an office as a new Member, see Congressional Management Foundation, *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide for the 108th Congress* (Washington: 2002).; and Congressional Management Foundation, *Frontline Management: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices* (Washington: 1998).

- Heavy and unpredictable demands on staff and the expectation that staff will be available as necessary to perform them.[2]

Despite the independence of each congressional office, there is much commonality of functions. All offices must answer the phone, respond to written and electronic mail, assist constituents, and work on legislative tasks. Offices variously divide and assign responsibilities and duties. Some employ a stratified system, while others require most staff to perform some or all of routine daily chores; in some, every employee has legislative responsibilities. Emergencies or unexpected events — which can occur frequently — may require all staff to pitch in and help someone in an assignment area outside of their own. The following functions are common to all Member offices:

- office management
- mail
- projects
- casework
- legislation
- scheduling and reception
- press and public relations.

Appendices B-H list the job titles, duties, and tasks frequently associated with these office functions.[3] Appendix A provides a comparison of House and Senate staff positions, average salary, tenure and age of staff. Appendix I contains a job description of congressional staff. There is no "one right way" to define the functions of a congressional office because events and circumstances require periodic, even daily, adjustment in the operations of a congressional office. Appendix J has a sample Privacy Act release form.

These lists were compiled through informal collaboration with numerous congressional offices and through a review of the congressional literature on this issue. Variation is common. For example, while most surveyed offices associated projects and grants with the casework function (as reflected in the lists), some offices associated them with the legislative function. Until recently, the study of congressional staff organization was hampered by the lack of information from Congress and elsewhere. The continuing lack of official job descriptions and job uniformity, and the variation among offices in structure and the duties of the persons having the same job title, further complicate generalizing about staff operations in Members' offices.

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[2]David W. Brady, "Personnel Management in the House," in Joseph Cooper and G. Calvin Mackenzie, eds., *The House at Work* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 153-154.

[3]U.S. Congress, House Commission on Administrative Review, Administrative Reorganization and Legislative Management, vol. 2: *Work Management*, Sept. 28, 1977, p. 95.

Office Administration and Management

> You've never been told you have to operate a fair sized business ... And the Member has to be able to fire members of his staff. Nobody tells you about that either.
>
> — A Member of Congress

> A Member's first years in office are a kind of "on-the-job training" experience, in which the Member comes to grips with the dimensions of his role and develops a personal approach to tasks. Given the many challenges, the overall conclusion is readily apparent; the key to effectiveness in Congress is the ability to organize well within a framework of carefully selected priorities. It is not possible, however, to construct a grand master plan such that priorities and the time devoted to each will neatly mesh, for legislative life is subject to sudden and numerous complications.[4]

The administration of a congressional office is a blend of Member preferences and House or Senate rules concerning employees, financial transactions, accounting, space, furnishings, and equipment. Office management entails staff recruitment, coordination between the Washington office and district or state offices, assignment of duties to staff, contending with the work flow, seeing to equipment and space needs, monitoring and expenditure of official allowances, and office and staff efficiency and innovation. Most offices have a procedures manual to serve as a source of instruction and reference for the staff. This usually includes personnel policies, general office procedures, and information regarding the processing of mail. Management must ensure their congressional office is in compliance with the Congressional Accountability Act regarding overtime, employment discrimination, and family and medical leave.[5]

In the House of Representatives, Members are authorized an annual clerk-hire allowance with which they are permitted to employ no more than 18 permanent persons and up to 4 part-time staff at any one time. In the Senate, a Member is authorized a staff allowance according to the size of the state's population. There are no restrictions on the number of staff a Senator may hire. The average House staff size is 14. The average Senate staff size is 35, although the range in the Senate is from around 32 to as many as 45. These figures exclude voluntary interns and congressional fellows.[6]

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[4]Sven Groennings, *To Be a Congressman* (Washington: Acropolis Books, 1973), p. 182.

[5]The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the administrative staff in a congressional office are listed in Appendix C.

[6]Congressional Management Foundation, *2002 House Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 2002); and Congressional Management Foundation, *1999 Senate Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 1999). Data for Senate staff for 2001 is not available. See *Appendix A: Comparison of House and Senate Staff Positions* by CMF. Also see *Appendix I: Job Descriptions of Congressional Staff* in this report.

Staff Recruitment

> She has a masters in government, (he) thinks his writing sample is the definitive work on the committee system, has letters of recommendation from two professors, a clergyman, and the Congressman's brother's next door neighbors. How do I find out if she can do her job? If I do decide to hire him, how do I use the hiring to set the stage for future evaluation?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

The hiring of staff usually is done by the administrative assistant/chief of staff, though others may also play a role, including the Member.[7] Recruitment for professional positions is still often "based primarily on informal, non-routinized contacts and who knows whom".[8] Immediately following an election, newly elected Members are deluged with applications for employment. Moreover, throughout a Member's congressional career, hardly a week goes by without at least someone dropping off a resume, some of whom may get hired.

If a Member's predecessor was of the same party, an incoming Member may keep some of the former staff, but there are no guarantees this will be done. An incoming Member may also consult with other Members from his state on staffing. Incoming Members who have served in another elective office (e.g., state legislator) sometimes bring some of their staff to Washington with them. Often Members make an effort to hire staffers from their home state or district. A number of offices prefer that at least one or more staffers, often the receptionist, be from the home state so that constituents feel more welcome when they visit their Member's Washington, D.C. office.

Most staffers are hired to perform specific duties. In these cases, congressional offices frequently seek out persons having the needed qualifications, skills, and experience. Some persons are hired for their general capabilities. Duties may be flexibly assigned on an ad hoc basis, a practice that has been the starting point for distinguished staff careers. Many congressional staffers now considered authoritative experts in various fields point out that their expertise began just because someone was needed to cover a certain subject area. Expertise thus often grows from on-the-job experience.

Coordination with District and State Offices

> Don't those unreasonable people in (the district/state or Washington) have anything better to do than to bother us with these senseless (requests/questions)? Don't they realize that the heart of this operation is right here in (the district/state

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[7] CRS Report 98-340, *Congressional Staff: Duties and Functions*, by John Pontius and Faye Bullock; and for congressional office allowances, see CRS Report RL30064, *Salaries and Allowances: The Congress*, by Paul Dwyer. For overall staffing trends throughout the legislative branch, see CRS Report RL30996, *Legislative Branch Employment: Trends in Staffing, 1960-2000*, by Paul Dwyer and Eric Petersen.

[8] Harrison W. Fox, Jr. and Susan Webb Hammond, *Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in Lawmaking* (New York: The Free Press, 1980), pp. 5-6.

> or Washington) and that our (reputation for service/legislative profile/political progress/re-election) depends on us and not them?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

Representatives and Senators are authorized space for district/state offices in federal buildings on a square footage basis or provided public funds to pay for private office space if suitable federal space is unavailable. There are currently 990 such field offices for House Members (or an average of 2.2 district offices per Member) and 450 state offices for Senators (or an average of 4.5 state offices per Senator). Approximately 44% of House personal staff (or 6 employees per Member) are located in district offices, and more than 36% of Senate personal staff (or 12 employees per Senator) work in offices in the Senator's state.[9]

Table 1. Average Number of Staff in Washington, D.C. and District/State Offices and Average Number of District/State Offices

	Washington D.C. Staff	District/State Staff	Total Personal Staff	Average Number of District/State Offices for a Member
House	8.2	6.3	14.5	2.2
Senate	22.4	12.2	34.6	4.5

Source: Congressional Management Foundation, *2002 House Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 2002), p. 43; and Congressional Management Foundation, *2001 Senate Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 2001), p. 66-67.

One requirement of maintaining offices both in Washington and at home is the need to coordinate between them. While staff in state and district offices may perform varying functions, their work should be coordinated with tasks performed in Washington. District/state staff monitor the "pulse of the district" on certain legislative and press issues for the Member of Congress and Washington office staff. A current trend seems to be the assignment of most casework to these field offices. Moreover, these offices are often involved in scheduling the Members' time when they are at home, planning town meetings for the Member, and, of course, all congressional offices are engaged locally in casework and projects and grants work. With electronic mail, fax machines, cell phones, and BlackBerries, offices in Washington, D.C. and in the district/state can communicate quickly and possibly more effectively with each other.

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[9]Congressional Management Foundation, *2002 House Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 2002), p. 43; and Congressional Management Foundation, *1999 Senate Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 1999), p. 66.

Employment Recommendation Restrictions[10]

Members of Congress are often asked by constituents to provide a reference, referral, or recommendation for employment in the Federal Government. There is no current statutory prohibition on Members of Congress providing a recommendation or referral letter for an applicant for a federal position; however, hiring officials in the Federal Government are expressly instructed by law only to receive and consider such "recommendations" from a Member as to the "character or residence" of the applicant. Additionally, hiring officials may consider and receive "statements" based on a Member's *personal* knowledge or records, which evaluate such things as an applicant's work performance, ability, aptitude, qualifications and suitability.

Work Flow

> Most of the office staff claim to be "computer whizzes", who can handle the large workload, but too often it is the large workload that overwhelms the entire congressional office both in Washington, D.C. and the field offices.
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

Work flow includes the processing and filing of a large quantity of paperwork. In congressional offices, deadlines drive almost everything that is or needs to be done. Letters, press releases, speeches, position papers, and other documents often need to be prepared in short order. Successfully and efficiently coordinating their preparation is no small achievement. The ability to retrieve materials previously produced and filed is also important. Voting records, press releases, speeches, and position papers of prior years may prove important to ensure that Members' positions are consistent over time — or, if they are not, to help explain why a change occurred. These may be electronically stored and indexed.

The filing system is typically automated rather than manual. But since many offices find it difficult to find the space or time to file paper copies of all documents, computer files are rapidly replacing the retention of paper copies of incoming and outgoing letters. Because of the large volume of paper received and generated in a congressional office, processing information includes filing standards and guidelines. An organized correspondence filing system, understood and adhered to by all staff members, ensures quick location and retrieval of information. Many congressional offices develop a central filing system which includes all issue-related incoming letters and outgoing responses, VIP mail, and other information.

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[10]This section is drawn from CRS Report RL32113, *Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process: Legal and Ethical Considerations*, by Morton Rosenberg and Jack H. Maskell, p. 77. See also U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, [http://www.house.gov/ethics]; *House Ethics Manual*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., (Washington: GPO, 1992); CRS Congressional Distribution Memorandum, *Advisory Memoranda: Employment Recommendations*, by Jack H. Maskell; U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*, S. Pub. 108-1, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 2003), pp. 185-191; and *Senate Ethics Manual*, 108th Cong.,1st sess. [http://ethics.senate.gov].

A number of separate filing systems may also be used: administrative (personnel and allowances), legislation, press, mail, scheduling, casework, grants and projects. Some offices prefer to maintain casework, projects, and invitations separately. If the office chooses to keep separate files for some documents, but central files for others, staff members in the Washington, D.C., and district/state offices need to know the location and contents of each type of file. Some offices develop a "tickler," or pending, file for business awaiting further action. When all action is completed, the contents of this file are transferred to closed-case files. Due to the large volume of casework, congressional staff must strive to organize these files so they can be retrieved quickly.

A filing vocabulary is a list of subject terms established by each office. These terms identify the subject matter of information for filing purposes. An orderly way of maintaining the system is for each staff member to assign the terms approved by the office, not terms assigned at random by different staff members.[11]

Office Space, Equipment, Efficiency, and Innovation

> Input. Output. Off-line. On-line. Few codes. Many codes. File storage. How do you select from among the various computer companies? With a limited

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[11]For further assistance in developing and maintaining a file system, congressional offices may wish to consult the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress' Records Management Unit (202-707-5592) has prepared two documents in this area: U.S. Library of Congress, *A Guide for the Creation, Organization and Maintenance of Records in Congressional Offices* (Washington: 1991), 76 p.; and *Congressional Subject Classification Outline* [Coded for computer input] (Washington: 1991), 103 p.

The House Office of History and Preservation, Legislative Resource Center, Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives (202-226-5200), and the Senate Historical Office, Secretary of the Senate (202-224-3351) provide assistance and guidelines to Members on records management issues, particularly for those who are leaving Congress. See their documents: U. S. Congress, House, Office of the Clerk, *Closing a Congressional Office: A Guide to the Disposition of Official Papers and Records* (Washington: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, Sept. 2000), and U.S. Congress, Senate, *Records Management Handbook for U.S. Senators and Their Archival Repositories,* 108th Cong. 1st *sess.,* S. Pub. 108-10 and *Senators' Papers: Management and Preservation Guidelines,* both by Karen Dawley Paul (Washington: Secretary of the Senate, Senate Historical Office, 2003).

Courtesy storage facilities are available to Members of Congress at the Washington National Records Center of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Suitland, Maryland (Phone (301) 778-1650). Many Member offices store closed case files in courtesy storage. If an office uses courtesy storage, they must keep on file Standard Form 135 (*Guide to Courtesy Storage of Official Papers of Members of Congress at the Washington National Records Center*, National Archives and Records Administration, Suitland, Md: April, 2002) to allow staff to keep track of these files. When a Member is aware that he or she will not be returning to Congress, staff should consult their SF 135 to determine whether courtesy storage files should be returned to the office, sent to the repository, or destroyed by the records center.

> number of congressional staff, how can our office become more productive with a growing workload, and limited space?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

Office management also encompasses furnishing, equipping and utilizing the limited office space provided each Member, and to possibly do it an innovative and effective manner. A variety of office machines are available to expedite work, including copiers, fax machines, scanners, laptops, computers with access to Internet, and laser printers. To these elements should be added the desks, chairs, and phones which must fit into the limited office space provided.[12]

A variety of office machines, with differing applications and capabilities, are available to Members. Systems administrators and office managers must stay aware of the office's needs and assure that the equipment meets those needs.[13] Choosing the most cost-effective equipment for an office's needs can make a significant difference in its efficiency and operating costs.

Efficiency in office operations can be difficult to achieve. The quality and speed of each staff person's work — as well as that of the office as a whole — will vary depending on the temperament, experience, skill, ability, and knowledge of each staff member and how they mesh together as a team.

While the size of congressional staff in the personal office of Members of Congress has remained relatively constant during the last few years, office workload has increased. Accordingly, office productivity depends on the efficient and effective use of computer and office equipment. With laptops, computers, electronic mail, fax machines, cell phones, Palm Pilots, pagers, BlackBerries, and other wireless technology, offices in Washington and in the field can communicate quickly and effectively with each other.[14] The Internet makes available to field staff much of the same information that is available to their Washington counterparts. "Members," one author has observed, "say they are more effective and more harried in the information age:"

> For members of Congress, who always have one foot in their districts and one in the nation's capital, advances in communications and information technology have become a virtual necessity. Cell phones allow members to consult with

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[12]Staff in the Office of the Architect of the Capitol are available to provide consultations on office space.

[13]For a description of technology in a congressional office, see the following three documents by Congressional Management Foundation: *Survey of Information Technology Practices in House Offices*, (Washington: January, 2000), 33 p.; *Survey of Information Technology Practices in Senate Offices* (Washington: January, 2000), 34 p.; and Chapter 6 "Selecting and Utilizing Technology" in *Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide for the 108th Congress* (Washington, 2000).

[14]See also CRS Report RL31103, *House of Representatives Information Technology Management Issues: An Overview of the Effects on Institutional Operations, the Legislative Process, and Future Planning*, by Jeffery W. Seifert and R. Eric Petersen; and CRS Report RL30863, *Telework in the Federal Government: Background, Policy, and Oversight*, by Lorraine H. Tong and Barbara L. Schwemle.

> their staffs from the road, faxes and the internet provide an onslaught of information, and e-mail allows constituents to tell members what is on their minds easily.[15]

While staff in state and district offices may perform varying functions, their work needs to be coordinated with tasks performed in Washington. Coordination of congressional office activities between the Washington and field offices is critical to office efficiency, so the Member can move effectively between the offices to perform the Member's legislative and representation functions. District and state staff monitor the "pulse of the constituency" on certain legislative and press issues for the Member of Congress and Washington office staff. Unless DC and field offices coordinate congressional activities, to achieve effectiveness and efficiency, they may be working at cross purposes.

Each of the components discussed above affects the efficiency of each employee. It is not always possible, in the context of each congressional office, to supply each staffer with optimal working conditions. Space limitations, for example, may force staff to work in an environment they may consider impinges on their productivity.

In an attempt to overcome the problem of space limitation, a few offices have experimented with innovative, space-efficient furniture. Office managers need to be aware of such opportunities when they arise, and should be able to evaluate how well such options will fare in a particular office. However, there may be resistance among staffers to innovations and changes in office operations may not prove beneficial in every case. As Members of Congress gain seniority, they consider relocating to larger space offices when they become available.

The personnel responsible in each congressional office for office management operations are well served by keeping abreast of the ever-changing allowances that pertain to staff, equipment, field offices, stationery, and travel. These are compiled in the *Congressional Handbook* (prepared and available electronically on line and regularly updated by the Committee on House Administration in the House and the Committee on Rules and Administration in the Senate).[16]

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[15]Lindsay Sobel, "Technology changes the Hill, for better and worse," *The Hill*, Jan. 28, 1998, p. 6.

[16]U.S. Congress, Committee on Rules and Administration, *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., available at [http://www.webster.senate.gov/rules/handbook/toc.htm], visited Nov. 12, 2003. U.S. Congress, Committee on House Administration, *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., available at [http://www.house.gov/cha/nhandbookbody1.htm], visited Nov.12, 2003.

Legislation

> I can't believe it! The boss has just come up with three new projects for us to complete by tomorrow and I still don't have the floor statements written. I'm four weeks behind on my mail and my Member's subcommittee is meeting in thirty minutes.
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

The staff legislative function is closely tied to all other functions. Although some Members of Congress view the representative role as equal to or more important than the legislative function, most consider themselves first and foremost legislators, and so other staff activities need to be correlated to this function.

Legislative operations include policy analysis research and devising and implementing strategies, tactics, and actions for different arenas of decision making. Staff members assigned these duties must be cognizant of the Member's position on issues, informed in the policy areas assigned to them, and aware of the key political actors and activities in their areas of responsibility.

Preparation and organization are fundamental to effective legislative operations. Members of Congress need to be quickly and continuously assisted in the numerous legislative forums in which they operate; the Member's legislative staff ensure that this assistance is forthcoming. Legislative assistance often depends on the Member's committee assignments and floor schedule. The Member's goal of being a "national legislator" or a provider of "constituent services" is also a factor.

Senators and Representatives develop expertise in subjects they deal with on a continuing basis as committee members. As a consequence, they need comprehensive preparation for committee hearings and meetings. Staff help ensure that Members attain and maintain familiarity with matters covered in committee and subcommittee hearings, including not only the pros and cons of each issue, but each committee (or subcommittee) colleague's point of view, the position of relevant interest groups, and the impact a certain position might have on the Member's constituency.

Staff research legislation, draft bills, and prepare floor statements. Legislative work is performed by personal staff, committee and associate staff, ancillary House or Senate staff (e.g., legislative counsels), government agencies (e.g., an executive department, the Congressional Research Service), organizations and associations (e.g., interest groups, researchers, et al.), and other sources. Coordination among staff working on similar subjects is essential to efficient and coherent legislative operations.

The legislative director coordinates and oversees legislative activities on behalf of the Member in many congressional offices. Legislative assistants work on various legislative issues of interest to the Member, and legislative correspondents may be assigned to work with one or more legislative assistants. In many offices legislative

correspondents research and prepare responses for new issues, in addition to answering constituent mail.[17]

Offices track the Member's legislative interests of the district/state; for many the district/state coordinator or the projects director performs this tracking task. Coordination with the Washington, DC, office is imperative to ensure that all staff members are enunciating the same position on behalf of the Member, and to prevent duplication of effort.

All actions, from answering the simplest constituent letter to casting an important vote on the floor, need to be coordinated. The legislative function encompasses various activities in different arenas: the House or Senate floor, House and Senate committees, conference committees, strategy sessions with other Members and staff, and each Member's personal office. All staff, whether in the personal office or in the various committees and subcommittees on which the Member serves, and who are responsible to the Member, must be aware of the Member's position — and other staff member's activities — on all relevant issues.

Frequently, a time-consuming correlative task for these staff is responding to legislative mail from constituents. This mail provides a gauge of constituents' views on issues and legislation and provides the opportunity for the Member to convey his views, beliefs, and positions to them.[18]

While constituent mail is not necessarily important as a major determinant of how a Representative or Senator will vote, it does measure constituent views on legislation.[19] 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 letters or legislative activity.

Only Members of Congress, may introduce bills and submit resolutions; the ideas for legislation, however, can come from many different sources, ranging from a constituent letter to an extended series of oversight or investigative hearings. The personal experiences and observations of Members or their staff may identify problems that Congress should address. Casework, too, can suggest the need for legislative action when a number of constituents encounter similar problems with a federal agency or program. In addition, groups and organizations, many of which are represented in Washington, frequently develop legislative proposals on matters of special interest to them. Whatever the source of a legislative idea, Members and their

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[17]The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the legislative staff in a congressional office are listed in Appendix D. For additional information from CRS on legislative research in a congressional office, see CRS Report RL30796, *Legislative Research In Congressional Offices: A Primer,* by Clay Wellborn and Michael Kolakowski; and CRS Report RS20991, *Legislative Planning: Considerations for Congressional Staff,* by Judy Schneider.

[18]John W. Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), p. 57.

[19]Ibid.

staffs evaluate the idea and decide if it should be translated into legislation and, if so, how.

Members must be prepared to vote on a large number of complex public policy issues. In the 108th Congress, first session, for example, there were 675 recorded floor votes in the House, 459 recorded floor votes in the Senate, and countless voice votes.[20] It is a staff function to be familiar with the content of, and committee report on, 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. A Member also needs to be apprised of the party leadership and administration positions, constituent opinion, and any press reaction — thus, necessitating coordination with those who perform press, mail, and management functions.

Projects, Grants and Casework

> We feel overwhelmed by the many requests for assistance by constituents. The casework requests are as diverse as the federal government: a lost Social Security check; a veteran's widow requesting burial assistance for her deceased spouse; black lung benefits; immigration; farmers' loans; Medicare claims; railroad retirement; and federal rental housing. Why doesn't the federal government process these claims more efficiently and humanely, so congressional caseworkers aren't so overburdened? How can we process hundreds, even thousands of cases, individually so that each constituent is guaranteed fair treatment? Why do we feel overworked, underpaid, and burned out?
>
> — A Congressional Caseworker

Projects and Grants Work

While casework tends to relate to individuals, grants and projects work involves helping community or constituent groups identify and obtain assistance from federal aid programs for all types of local development. Congressional offices receive many requests from state and local governments, nonprofit social service and community action organizations, private research groups, small businesses, and individuals seeking funding. To help constituents, congressional staff can provide information about funding, both through federal programs and private foundations. For this purpose, it is also important that field staff maintain effective intergovernmental coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies as well as with other congressional staff in their field offices and Washington.

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[20]CRS Report RL30562, *Congressional Roll Call and Other Record Votes: First Congress Through 107th Congress, 1789 Through 2003*, by John Pontius.

For further information from CRS on grants and projects, congressional staff may access two CRS Web pages: the CRS Grants Information Webpage at [http://www.crs.gov/reference/general/grantsinfo.html]; and the CRS Grants and Federal Domestic Assistance Web page which Members may add to their Home Page [http://www.crs.gov/reference/general/member_grant.html] Both pages include audio/slide shows giving viewers an overview of grantswork, key sources, and doing a sample search for funding programs. The Information page covers CRS grants products for Congress; the Member page links to key federal and private sources of grants information for grantseekers in Districts and States. Congressional staff can order the Member Web page (CRS Product CA90001) or any CRS reports via the CRS Web site [www.crs.gov] or by calling 202-707-7132. Some reports of general interest include: CRS Report 97-220, *Grants Work in a Congressional Office*, by Merete F. Gerli; CRS Report RS20514 *Grants Information for Constituents*, by Merete F. Gerli; CRS Report RS32159 *How to Develop and Write a Grant Proposal*, by Merete F. Gerli; CRS Report RS21117, *Ethical Considerations in Assisting Constituents with Grant Requests before Federal Agencies*, by Jack Maskell.

The CRS Grants Information Web page hotlinks to other CRS reports on grants, including CRS Report RL30818, *Block Grants: An Overview*; CRS Report RS20124, *Community Services Block Grants: Background and Funding*; CRS Report 98-79, *Federal Funds: Tracking Their Geographic Distribution*; CRS Report; RS20669, *Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: Overview and Characteristics*; CRS Report RL30778, *Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: Concepts for Legislative Design and Oversight*; CRS Report RL31227, *Terrorism Preparedness: a Catalog of Federal Assistance Programs*; and CRS Report RL32036, *Homeland Security: Federal Assistance Funding and Business Opportunities*.

Frequently, the congressional office is seen by these groups as the best source for (1) obtaining facts about financial and nonfinancial assistance available through federal programs; (2) clarifying the intricacies of proposal development, application, and follow-up procedures; (3) resolving problems that occur when an applicant is unsuccessful in obtaining funds or other assistance; and (4) suggesting other sources for grant assistance in both the private and public sectors.

State, local, or private units unaware of available money or uncertain of how to go about obtaining it, frequently seek assistance from congressional offices. An office's effectiveness often depends on both an understanding of the grant process and on the relations it establishes with agency and other contacts.

Grants and projects provide an opportunity for assisting a Member's constituents by aiding a group or groups seeking help, and providing benefits and program assistance to a district, city, or the state. In recognition of the importance of this service, a Member's office may allocate considerable staff time, effort, and resources to grants and projects activities.

Several factors need to be considered in organizing the grants and projects function in an office. First, where does this type of constituent service fit within the

workload of the entire office? Decisions about the level of involvement will depend on the Member's philosophy about grants work. Once a decision has been made about the level of involvement, the office must address a second issue — where in its organization does this particular type of service belong? Some offices divide responsibility by function, that is, legislation is assigned to legislative assistants and correspondents, press and newsletters are under the purview of a press secretary, and caseworkers do casework. Other offices divide responsibilities by subject areas, that is, a specialist in social policy is involved with legislation, correspondence, casework, projects, speeches, and press in that policy area.

Depending on several factors (including workload), grants and projects activity may be the responsibility of the caseworker, administrative assistant, district/state representative, legislative aide, or even the press secretary. Some offices have a full-time staff member working solely in the area of grants and projects; others divide grants and projects activity between field offices and the Washington office, and have several staff members supervised by a grants coordinator. Regardless of how this responsibility is assigned, many offices have at least one person in a field office and one person in Washington familiar with the whole process. (Casework is closely related to, but different from, grants and project work. Some congressional offices, however, combine these functions and call them "constituent services.")

There are hundreds of grants or loans for various purposes available from federal and private entities. Every attempt should be made to identify only those funding sources whose stated purposes are consistent with those of the grantseeker. Some much sought after federal funds not dispensed through grants or loans are used for defense procurement, construction of federal installations, or infrastructure, for example, military bases, federal office buildings, and federal projects, such as flood control and highway construction. Congressional offices assist state and local governments and eligible private sector organizations in becoming aware of available money and how to go about obtaining it.

Staff members can identify federal funding programs through the grants database, *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* (in print), or via the Internet [http://www.cfda.gov]. Staff may (1) apprise home state governments, organizations, businesses, and individuals of what funds are available; (2) contact agency personnel to determine agency interest in certain projects; and (3) relay findings to those interested and qualified for assistance in their states and districts. Once a grant application is filed, offices frequently keep in touch with agencies. Contact can be maintained by letter, phone, e-mail, or in person as the situation dictates. Concerted action on the part of staff may result in more federal funds being spent in a state or district, thereby providing greater benefit to the constituency.

Since some constituents request the aid of the entire state delegation for a grant or project, cooperation among Members of the delegation can minimize duplication of effort and permit more effective use of staff time. In order to increase the chances of a project being funded, Members may solicit the support of other Members from the same geographic region of the country, or those key positions in the leadership or on the appropriate committees.

At least one state delegation has established a State Projects Office to provide this constituent service. The projects office does not write proposals, but does help constituents learn about the grant process, and follows through on all applications until agency decisions are made.

Casework

Casework generally consists of assistance provided by Members of Congress and their staff at the request of constituents in their transactions with federal agencies. Casework involves individuals or groups with a common concern, and typically includes a problem, grievance, question of eligibility, need, or other tangible interest or benefit.[21] Whether it is a delayed Social Security check, a denied veteran's claim, or Medicare reimbursement, the constituent's problem usually has to do with a federal program, rule, regulation, or administrative decision resulting from the implementation of a public law.

Casework involves "interpreting, interacting, explaining, distributing, and interceding on behalf of constituents toward relief of some problem between them and the bureaucracy."[22] In encouraging constituents to take advantage of their services, many Members believe that a satisfied constituent is a vote gained in the next election, while a dissatisfied constituent may well be a vote irretrievably lost.[23]

Casework can emanate from constituent letters, visits, phone calls, faxes e-mails, office hours, and town hall meetings. Members view casework as an important, necessary, and legitimate congressional function. Members put a premium on this service as part of their representational role, acting as facilitator and intervener between constituents and the federal government.

Casework differs from project work in that it refers to assistance to individuals.[24] A former Senator once defined 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."[25]

On rare occasion Members intervene personally, although Members and staff are generally reluctant to become involved in such a way as to raise questions of conflict of interest or impropriety. In 1992, the Senate adopted guidelines to be

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[21]Asher C. Hinds, *Hinds' Precedents of the House of Representatives of the United States*, vol. 4. (Washington: GPO, 1907), p. 247.

[22]Joseph William Westphal, *"The Congressional District Office: Representative-Constituency Linkages"* (Ph.D. diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 1980), p.71.

[23]For additional information on casework, see John R. Johannes, *To Serve the People* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984). Also see Congressional Management Foundation, *Frontline Management: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices* (Washington: 1998).

[24]Warren H. Butler, "Administering Congress: the Role of the Staff," *Public Administration Review*, vol. 26, Mar. 1966, p. 6.

[25]Joseph S. Clark, *Congress: The Sapless Branch* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 63.

followed by Members when intervening on behalf of constituents; the House has issued similar guidance.[26]

CRS has the following products relating to casework: CRS Report 98-878, *Casework in a Congressional Office*, by John Pontius. Also available is a one hour video: CRS MM70036, *Casework: How and Why*. For congressional staffers handling casework and needing to communicate with federal executive offices, request CRS Report 98-446, *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Federal Agencies*, by Suzy Platt, and CRS Report RL31731, *Federal Services for Constituents Available in Foreign Languages*, by Lenice Wu and Sherry Shapiro. The CRS Office of Special Programs presents a seminar on casework and grants as part of its three day District/State Staff Institute held periodically in Washington. Congressional staff should check the CRS Web site at [http://www.crs.gov] for dates and registration.

Assigning Casework Responsibilities. A Member of Congress usually allocates casework responsibilities to several staff members who review and respond to needs, complaints, or personal problems posed by constituents. The caseworker represents the Member, both to the constituents and to the agencies. The personal communication aspect is very important: every caseworker should be personable, helpful, and ready to assist an individual with his or her problem. A caseworker should also be compassionate, realizing that those in need may be desperate when they contact Members. Finally, the caseworker must be well organized and know how to follow through.

Casework is not an isolated operation in a congressional office: it can involve the administrative assistant, legislative assistants, grants and projects staff, the office manager, and the press secretary, as well as staff in the field offices. Caseworkers also contribute to other related functions of a congressional office, such as alerting the press secretary of a noteworthy case or identifying for the legislative staff a law that may need changing.

Responding to constituent needs, complaints, or problems gives a Member an opportunity to determine whether executive agencies' programs are functioning in accordance with legislative mandates. Thus, casework has the potential to contribute to legislative oversight of agencies; indeed, some offices make it a practice to bring casework observations to the attention of the pertinent authorizing committee(s), particularly if a pattern emerges. It may even lead to new legislation.

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[26]CRS Report 98-878, *Casework in a Congressional Office*, by John Pontius. See Appendix E, Legal and Ethical Consideration of Casework. For the ethical considerations of casework, see CRS Report RL32113, *Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process: Legal and Ethical Considerations*, by Morton Rosenberg and Jack H. Maskell. See also U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *House Ethics Manual*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., [http://www.house.gov/ethics], visited Dec. 5, 2003; (Washington: GPO, 1992); U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*, S. Pub. 108-1, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 2003), [http://ethics.senate.gov] visited Dec. 5, 2003.

Nearly every caseworker works in a congressional field office, with a few working in the Washington, DC office. The volume of casework continues to increase. The Congressional Management Foundation stated that its:

> ... 1997 survey of District and State Directors shows that 53% of House offices and 42% of Senate offices receive between 1,000 and 5,000 cases each year, and 32% of Senate offices report more than 7,500 cases annually. Moreover, 58% of House offices and 84% of Senate offices report an increase in casework in the past five years — with an average increase of 35%![27]

Most federal departments and agencies have regional or state offices. Members of Congress and federal officials often recommend that district and state congressional offices should first seek to resolve constituent problems through these units. These are listed in sources such as the *United States Government Manual* (in print) or the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance* (in print), or via the Internet [http://www.cfda.gov], and *Carroll's Federal Regional Directory* (in print) or via the Internet [http://www.carrollpub.com/whosnew/whosearch.html] or via the National Archives Internet site [http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/browse-gm-00.html].[28]

Analyzing the Constituent's Problem. Frequently, when constituents seek assistance they have done everything they know how to do and are coming to the Member's office as a last resort because they do not know where else to go for help. Often they feel caught in a bureaucratic labyrinth. Accordingly, they may see their Member as a last chance for relief.

Identifying all elements of the problem is the first step for the caseworker: sometimes individuals do not provide the whole story, and occasionally, they may forget or omit crucial information. When caseworkers read a letter, see a referral from the field office, or receive a phone call from a constituent, they should make certain that they have all relevant information needed to proceed. For example, a social security number and the age of the recipient, or time and length of military service may not only be useful, but necessary in processing a claim.

Upon receipt of the inquiry, most caseworkers feel it is advisable to send an acknowledgment letter to the constituent immediately to inform them that the Member is aware of the request and is inquiring into the matter, and that the constituent will be contacted again when some response is forthcoming. This method establishes a basic office file in the name of the constituent, and is also a means of requesting any additional information from the constituent, if needed.

Casework should be conducted with sensitivity to the constituent's personal privacy rights. Although the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act do not apply to Congress, they may be used by caseworkers to seek federal department and agency records on behalf of the constituents. The former law allows any person to

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[27]Richard H. Shapiro, *Frontier Management: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices* (Washington: Congressional Management Foundation, 1998), p. 89.

[28]Web sites visited on Dec. 5, 2003.

request certain otherwise unpublished documents or papers on any subject so long as the documents being sought are reasonably described and not otherwise restricted. The latter statute permits an American citizen or permanent resident alien to seek agency records or files pertaining exclusively to himself or herself.

General guidance on the Privacy Act is provided in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum of October 3, 1975, concerning "congressional inquiries which entail access to personal information subject to the Privacy Act." OMB recommends that, as a matter of policy, each agency, in administering the Privacy Act, should adhere to the position that disclosure may be made to a congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from the congressional office made at the request of that individual.

Since most agencies will not release personally identifiable information without written consent of the file subject, it is important to have either a letter from the constituent that will serve as a Privacy Act release or a separate form on file. The form may state, "I authorize Senator/Representative _____ to check into my case and receive information connected with it."[29] The form must be sent to the constituent for signature and return. When contacting an agency on behalf of a constituent, a caseworker may say, "This office has Mr./Mrs._____'s authorization to receive information about his/her case." Many agencies do not wish to see that form and will accept a verbal authorization, but only with the assurance that a Privacy Act authorization form will be forthcoming.

Every caseworker has to develop a method of analyzing the nature of the constituent's problem and how to conduct the most expeditious resolution of it. Knowing where to go first can save time; the caseworker, therefore, must have a working knowledge of federal agencies. This includes a knowledge of the relevant agency program, as well as keeping abreast of current legislation that might affect the constituent's case. Understanding the various sources of assistance, federal and non-federal, including welfare organizations and charities, can enable the caseworker to assist more fully and expeditiously. Effective caseworkers develop a telephone list of contacts in the various agencies and retain the numbers of other congressional caseworkers who might be able to assist with a lead, a number, or advice based on their own casework experience.

Members of Congress also receive inquiries from constituents dealing with subjects or programs within the jurisdiction of state or local governments. In such instances, the Member office must decide upon an appropriate response to the constituent inquiry. Most Member offices routinely respond to constituent inquiries about local government issues by referring the matter to local officials, and if the decision is to refer the case to local officials, the constituent must be notified that the congressional office has done so. However, some Members' field office staff work in conjunction with state legislative and local government staff as a means to more effectively serve the constituency at the federal, state and local levels.

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[29] An example of a Privacy Act form used by one Member's office is provided in Appendix J: Sample Privacy Act Release Form.

In communicating with an agency, the caseworker must convey concern and, if necessary, urgency, communicate clearly, and be reasonable, but persistent. The caseworker must also decide how best to transmit the case, either by phone, fax, letter, or buck-slip (an congressional form transmitting a case to an agency). The form of contact with the agency usually depends upon the degree of urgency: sometimes the problem requires an immediate response, but more often, it is not so urgent. All appeals for help, however, should be dealt with in a timely and personal way on behalf of the Member. Once an agency has been contacted, the case is tracked; if no response has been received after a reasonable amount of time, a follow-up is done. Sometimes an interim response is sent to the constituent advising that the Member is still working on the case. When the agency finally renders its determination, caseworkers have to read it as if they were the constituent and recast it, if necessary: rephrasing "bureaucratese" so that it is simple and direct is an essential task of casework.

An increasingly less frequent form of casework is the introduction of a private bill.[30] Private bills provide an exception from general laws for the benefit of named individuals. In recent years, they have dealt primarily with immigration, claims against the government, and vessel documentation, among other topics.

Handling Cases When Closing a Congressional Office. When a congressional office closes, it needs to make decisions relating to the disposition of cases, both open and closed. Some Members of Congress use a deed of gift to donate a portion of their office files to a college, university, library or other places.[31] Archivists recommend preserving case files that relate to particular issues (black lung disease and disaster relief in the district/state, for example), only if the office has maintained these files separately or can retrieve them easily. If one wishes a special restriction on personal information in case files, it should be written into the deed of the gift. Possible restrictions on case files include that the files be used for statistical purposes only or be closed for a longer time than other sections of the office records. Another alternative is that the depository or library require researchers to sign an agreement that they will not use names or quote from particular documents. The

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[30]A list of duties associated with projects and casework appears in Appendix E. For more information on private bills, see Rep. Howard Coble, "Private Calendar Agreement," Extension of Remarks, *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 147, July 24, 2001, pp. E1417-E1418; CRS Report 98-628, *Private Bills: Procedure in the House*, by Richard S. Beth; "Private Bills Serve as Court of Last Resort," *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to Congress*, 2 vols., 5th ed. (Washington: CQ Press, 2000), v. 1, pp. 526-527; Joe Morehead, "Private Bills and Private Laws: A Guide to the Legislative Process," *Technical Services Quarterly*, vol. 3, Spring-Summer 1986, pp. 173-184; Richard S. Beth, "Private bill," *Encyclopedia of the United States Congress*, vol. 3, Donald C. Bacon et al., eds. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp. 1626-1627; Archived CRS Report 87-408, *Private Immigration Measures in the House of Representatives: Contemporary Procedure and Its Historical Development*, by Richard S. Beth (no longer available); Archived CRS typed report, *Analysis and Examples of the Major Types of Private Laws*, by Jay Shampansky (no longer available).

[31] A deed of gift is a "deed executed and delivered without consideration." It is also termed gratuitous deed "done or performed without obligation to do so." Bryan A. Garner, ed., *Black's Law Dictionary* (St. Paul, Minnesota: West Group, 1999), pp. 423, 708.

requirement both allows researchers to use the case files and gain information from them but also discourages publication that would embarrass any specific individual.

Some casework files may be vital to understanding the activities of the Member. Such files may initiate ideas for legislation or policy advocacy. In other cases, these files may reflect the policy record or a particular interest of the Member. Such casework files should be maintained separately or filed among the Member's legislative or personal files. The House and Senate do not recommend keeping case files, but do suggest keeping samples of files. Such a strategy allows for redacting individual files. Case files should be kept if the case led to agency or legislative oversight investigation or if the case is of particular interest to a Member of Congress.

To reduce the number of open case files, it is advisable for departing Members to set a date beyond which they will not accept new case files. The constituent's request is returned with a letter recommending that the request be resubmitted to the Member's successor or a Senator whose term is not expiring.

Open cases are those that are unresolved or not concluded by the time the Member leaves office. Representatives have a number of options with regard to these cases. They may pass on open cases to their successor, assuming the successor is willing, and the constituent has granted approval. Sometimes, however, this is not politically desirable. A retiring Member of the House may transfer open cases to one of the state's Senators, assuming a Senator and the constituent are agreeable to this arrangement. If not, the active file is returned to the constituent.

When Senators leave office, active files are customarily transferred to the succeeding Senator, or to the other Senator representing the same state, so that work can continue on the problem. In some offices, however, Senators who are leaving will return the active file to the constituent, with a letter explaining that they are leaving office and are unable to follow the case to a conclusion.

Mail

> Ten invitations to speak, six requests for visas, twenty-five new cases, fifty-five legislative letters, and ten requests for White House passes. They all came to the office today, in addition to three bags full of questionnaire responses.
>
> You've got 250 pieces of mail separated into 19 categories? How do you respond/react/help/assess/find the door with all the mail piling up?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

A key task in every office is responding to mail. Each piece must be read, routed, researched, reviewed and signed. Nearly everyone in most congressional offices, including the Member, is involved with answering the mail. Some staff devote a considerable amount of their time and energy to this time consuming and

important task. Members often feel that responding to mail promptly and expeditiously is one of their most important duties.[32]

Some Members, especially party leaders and committee chairs, receive considerably more mail than others. Mail volume also varies from office to office and from week to week. Responding to the flood of correspondence on issue-related mail can require large amounts of staff time and effort. Each letter must be routed to the appropriate staff person; legislative mail on new issues must be researched; and the Member's position on issues must be ascertained and, often, recorded in a computer database.

It is an axiom in Congress that the importance of each constituent letter cannot be overestimated. 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 remember that as rule number one, it will keep you out of an awful lot of trouble.[33]

Incoming mail and its processing represents much of the total office operations in microcosm. External letters arrive dealing with legislation, grants and projects, casework, scheduling of the Members' time, visitors coming to Washington, and state, district or national politics. In addition, there are "Dear Colleague" internal letters from other Members which solicit cosponsorship of legislation, discuss the introduction of amendments, or address other legislative business.[34]

Incoming mail requiring response can be either legislative or political in character, it can request assistance, or it may be focused on a special need. Keeping track of incoming correspondence is a major, time consuming chore. Most offices use a computer tracking system to code some incoming letters and then schedule them for rapid response. Constituents and congressional staff increasingly communicate through electronic mail. However, some congressional offices, concerned with the security of e-mail, will only respond with a written letter, and not respond with an e-mail to a constituent's e-mail. Most offices get many unsolicited e-mail letters from non-constituents throughout the United States, and many offices

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[32]Freshman Representative Estes Kefauver (Tenn.) was told 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 Estes Kefauver and Jack Levin, *A Twentieth-Century Congress* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1947), p. 171. This advice is as trenchant today as it was six decades ago. The duties and tasks most commonly performed by staff in processing mail in a congressional office are listed in Appendix F.

[33]Donald G. Tacheron and Morris K. Udall, *The Job of the Congressman* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1970), p. 76.

[34]CRS Report RS21667, *"Dear Colleague" Letters: A Brief Overview*, by Colton Campbell.

set up an automatic computer response referring the writer to contact their own Member of Congress.

Members can select a computer system in which many inquiries requiring a written response are tracked and categorized by subject. Each office can choose one of the approved mail systems 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's preferences as to the level of detail he or she prefers in his or her responses, as well as the priority of deadlines for answering mail.

Legislative Mail

Legislative mail concerns inquiries about a Member's position in some policy area or areas, requesting that the Member vote a certain way or take a certain action; it may also include general inquiries about one or more legislative topics.

Computers enable staff to generate responses rapidly to much of this mail, thus freeing time for letters that require customizing and for other duties like legislative research and analysis. In some offices, only the most sensitive letters of response will be subject to review by the administrative assistant (AA) chief of staff or Member. In others, the AA or a designated staffer, or the Member of Congress, may prefer to see all outgoing mail.

Most congressional offices have a policy that when a certain number of letters comes in on any one subject, the staff drafts a standard letter or "form" paragraph and gives it to the computer systems operator who maintains a log of subject letters and paragraphs. Offices have a constituent correspondence management system (CMS) which can track incoming mail, provide form responses that can be personalized, track interest issues, and serve as a database of contacts.

A number of legislative assistants and legislative correspondents may also draft responses on their own. Many offices use standard opening and closing paragraphs, as well as several variations of paragraphs that can be used in answering the mail. Much care must be taken in preparing and using these computer replies to make certain the constituent receives a correctly prepared response on the issue raised.

Offices invest considerable time, effort, and funds in creating, purchasing, and maintaining lists that become the basis for individualized targeted mailings. Once an office establishes a computer database, position statements on various issues that would be of interest to people on a particular list are developed and mailings are periodically sent.

Letters requiring a more detailed response, or dealing with a subject not covered by a form response, are answered on an individual basis. Even when individualizing letters, staff can rely on personal computers that greatly facilitate response preparation. In most Senate offices, legislative correspondents answer the majority of, if not all, constituent legislative inquiries. By researching and answering all legislative correspondence, they free legislative assistants from this time-consuming

task. In most House offices, legislative correspondents, as well as some legislative assistants, generally respond to legislative mail.

The assignment of letters requiring a more detailed or personal response varies from office to office. In some offices, only the most sensitive letters will go to the AA or the Member (see Special Mail, below). In most offices, the Member signs and only sees a small portion of the total mail received and responded to by the office, but some Members take a more active role and are aware of general trends in the mail.

Request Mail

Request mail consists of constituent requests for assistance. Members place a premium on responding to such mail, considering casework assistance a vital part of representing their constituents.[35] Sometimes this assistance consists of information only. At other times, Members facilitate constituent-agency interaction or intervene on behalf of constituents. So-called project assistance is normally done at the behest of state and local government units, and consists of helping them successfully negotiate the process for securing available government grants or loans, or agency approval or some other federal action necessary to accomplishing a goal. Much of this request work in recent years has been decentralized to district and state offices, with a concomitant distribution of staff to these offices to perform the work.

Special Mail

Special mail consists of letters and requests that require the involvement of the Member and his closest staff (for example, administrative assistant/chief of staff, personal secretary). Although few in number, they are considered to be of utmost importance. Items in this category will vary from office to office. For example, some Members may want to see letters from other Members or from local elected officials. Most Members also want to see politically sensitive correspondence relating to home state or national politics. Staff must learn to balance demands on the Member's time with his or her need to see, or be aware of, sensitive items of special mail.

Review and Response

Review and delivery of mail is the final step. In many offices, letters are sent to the AA, Legislative Director, or another designated staffer for review. The purpose of review is to assure accuracy, consistency, and responsiveness. While systematic data is not available about the lapse time between the receipt of mail and the response to it, it is generally thought that the automation of response has enabled offices to respond more quickly than was true prior to the onset of the use of computers. At the same time that computer technology has helped offices respond more quickly to mail, it has also helped interest groups generate mass mail, correspondence, and e-mail.

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[35]CRS Report 98-878, *Casework in A Congressional Office*, by John Pontius; and Lee Hamilton, "Constituent Service and Representation," *The Public Manager*, vol. 21, summer 1992, pp. 12-15.

Usually one or more persons in a congressional office manages the mail flow into and out of the Washington office, assures that it is answered as thoroughly and promptly as possible. While placement of this responsibility varies from office to office, it is often assigned to the office manager or the administrative assistant; in some offices, it is the duty of the legislative director or the personal secretary.

Some offices attempt to respond to incoming mail within three days. Other offices find that sometimes a full week or two or more is a more realistic time frame. The amount of time allowed for a response depends on office policy, the number of people assigned to answer the mail, and mail volume. For high mail volume Senate offices, the response time may be longer.

Press and Public Relations

> In this age of instant mass communications and a growing reliance by voters upon television and radio news, the press secretary, many times, may be the most important staff member a Member of Congress can employ. Through daily contact with reporters and as liaison with the news media, the press secretary assists the Member in reaching more people in the Member's home district/state than any other staff member.
>
> A Member can toil diligently on behalf of constituents, but if the beneficiaries of these good works are unaware of these actions, they may just decide to support another, more visible candidate in the next election. Put plainly and simply, the role of the press secretary is to help get the Member's legislative and representative accomplishments known to his constituents.
>
> — A Press Gallery Correspondent

The effectiveness of the Member's press relations depends in large part on the staff person responsible for the press operations in the office. Many offices designate at least one person as a press secretary, communications director, press assistant, or press aide, though that person may handle other office duties as well. In most offices, the press person works closely with the Member, administrative assistant, and the legislative staff to ensure that newsworthy information is communicated to the media as expeditiously as possible before it loses its timeliness.[36]

In a Member's office, it is important to communicate with constituents through newspapers and other media outlets with circulation in the home state or nationally. The emphasis in an office is usually on "local" press in the district/state, although a number of Members seek and receive national press attention.

The job of the press secretary is to communicate effectively with daily and weekly newspapers and other media outlets with circulation in their congressional district/state. They cultivate personal relationships with local, state, and national newspaper and broadcast media personnel, and may deliver press releases if a newspaper has a Washington correspondent or bureau. One effective method for

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[36]The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the press staff in a congressional office are listed in Appendix G.

getting news releases out is when a press secretary hand delivers them to the press galleries. At the same time, they can make themselves available to the reporters working in the galleries. Frequently, Members coming to the chamber to vote also might make themselves available to the press.

Press aides are also mindful of the deadlines for the various media outlets and take care to see that access to information is easy and prompt, and provide guidance to the Member on use of the radio and television studios maintained by both the House and Senate.[37] In addition, congressional press aides communicate to constituents and the press via e-mail, the Member's Internet web site. It is important that the design and maintenance of the Member's home page is current and very accessible.

Media outlets in different areas have different capabilities and emphases, and efforts to utilize these different media outlets vary accordingly. For instance, some outlets cover national news, while others focus more on local matters. Members may tailor their activities to coincide with the needs of the media outlet from which they seek coverage.

Attention to the national media is a different task. The national television and radio networks, the "national newspapers," for example, *USA Today*, *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. For Members who choose to do this, events can be organized in such a way as to maximize media exposure. At all times, giving reporters advance copies of press releases and texts of speeches helps to achieve maximum coverage and foster good working relationships with the press.

There is no one right way to organize a press office. There are be as many different ways to run a press office as there are Members of Congress. Some press secretaries act strictly as media liaisons or formal spokespersons, while others write speeches and prepare floor statements. Still others write and produce radio, television, and local cable programming, or prepare op/eds for newspapers, or write news releases, weekly or monthly columns, and newsletters. Some do a combination of all of the above.

The press secretary may concentrate efforts towards gaining national exposure in the nation's major daily newspapers and on network television and radio, or may focus on getting good press back in the home district/state, or a combination of both. One veteran Senate press secretary sums up the dichotomy this way: "A Member of Congress has to court two constituencies, the constituency that sends him here and the constituency he has to work with. As a general rule, the home state press has got

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[37] U.S. Congress, Committee on House Administration, *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., available at [http://www.house.gov/cha/ nhandbookbody1.htm], visited Nov.12, 2003. U.S. Congress, Committee on Rules and Administration, *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., available at [http://www.webster.senate.gov/rules/handbook/toc.htm], visited Nov. 12, 2003.

to be any smart Member's priority."[38] Since Members' districts and states vary greatly, some Members may concentrate on major daily newspapers and news stations, while others have a small chance of television coverage.

In order for a reporter to have a thorough knowledge of the Member's positions on the issues confronting Congress, the press secretary frequently has ready and easy access to the Member. There is little disagreement that accessibility is the most important ingredient to a successful press operation. Obviously, the press secretary can only do what the Member wants, or what is comfortable for the Member: he or she presents various options for ways of publicizing the Member's activities.

Some press secretaries run "closed shops," with reporters strictly prohibited from obtaining information from anyone in the office except the press secretary or the Member (or in some cases, the administrative assistant). Others prefer an "open" office, where reporters are allowed to discuss legislative activities with the legislative assistant overseeing a particular issue. Some offices have a policy requiring the legislative assistant to check in with the press secretary after such media contacts so that the press secretary will be informed of what has been discussed.

Most press secretaries prefer to sit in on formal interviews their Members have with reporters or editorial boards to serve as a measure of insurance against misinterpretations. It is not possible, however, for the press secretary to be present every time the Member speaks with a reporter; therefore, the Member often tries to brief the press secretary as to what he has told the press when the press aide is not present.

With 2,000 print reporters, 1,750 periodical journalists and 3,200 broadcast personnel accredited to cover Congress, it is the rare Member who is not the subject of a press interview at least once. Whether Members get a second round with media may depend on how they do the first time. However, if they are committee chairs or party leaders, their performance may make no difference at all. Reporters will want to talk to them regardless of how articulate they are, or how they look on camera. What they have to say is important because of who they are, not how they say it.[39] Live television broadcasts from the House and Senate have broadened media coverage of Congress and the opportunity for it, as have 24-hour cable news channels.

The House and Senate each have a Press Gallery, Radio and Television Gallery, and Periodical Press Gallery and are the appropriate resources to reach the national media. The media gallery superintendents distribute congressional news releases to the congressional correspondents who frequent the galleries and make the gallery studios available for Member's news conferences.[40]

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[38]Nadine Cohodas, "Press Coverage: It's What You Do That Counts," in *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, v. 45, Jan. 3, 1987, p. 29.

[39]Ibid.

[40]The Press Gallery is reserved for credentialed and visiting daily print reporters. The Radio (continued...)

The congressional recording studios help Members prepare television and radio products such as video releases, satellite feeds, and interview programs. The studios can tape a program with the Member for distribution in the home state.

Using the press well is a special skill that can bring a variety of rewards. According to one Member of Congress:

> One of the ways you reach colleagues is through the media because they read the papers and watch the news at night. The media really helps you establish your position on an issue ... (However,) if you get the reputation for doing media for media's sake, I think it hurts your effectiveness on the Hill ... Members tend to lose respect for colleagues they consider grandstanders.[41]

What are some ways a congressional office can work 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 activities.

Other offices provide the press with small, but helpful, information sources that are allocated to them. For example, each House office is allocated 15 copies of the *Congressional Directory* and each Senate office 20 copies, some of which are distributed to press personnel as a courtesy.

Some Members subscribe to receive press materials from outside sources, such as news clipping services about the Member, numerous daily and weekly newspapers, and other publications. The information from a news clipping service usually includes articles about the Member and articles about issues of concern to the Member's constituents.

Much of the press material accumulated in a Member's office is generated by staff in the form of press releases, newsletters, targeted mailings, and speeches. Some offices generate a press release daily or weekly for immediate delivery to a news bureau or wire service. Press releases usually address a single issue, or a small number of issues, and ordinarily are most newsworthy when they contain fresh, timely information. They are sent by e-mail, fax, and frequently posted on the Member's Internet web site.

General newsletters are used by offices to communicate a broad range of issues to the Member's entire constituency. Some offices plan a quarterly newsletter to inform constituents of committee and floor proceedings for a particular period of time — usually two or three months. Many offices maintain more than one newsletter mailing list, using a different newsletter for respective sectors of their constituency. Targeted or specialized mass mailings are used by many offices to

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[40](...continued)
and Television Gallery is reserved for broadcast journalists. The Periodical Press Gallery is reserved for magazine, newsletter and Internet publications.

[41]Cohodas, "Press Coverage: It's What You Do That Counts," p. 29.

inform a particular group of constituents interested in a certain issue of the Member's position.[42]

Scheduling and Reception

> My boss races all across the district(state) — addressing town meetings, shaking hands, riding in parades, meeting politicians, and picking up unsolvable casework. How can the office staff (in Washington, D.C. and the district/state) create a more meaningful schedule for the Member that allows constituent access without overwhelming the Member?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

> The Member goes to the district(state) three weekends every month and still can't meet the avalanche of requests to see constituents. How can the district(state) staff take the major burden off the boss without upsetting the constituents?
>
> — A Congressional Staffer

Scheduling

Scheduling a Member's time is problematic as there is great competition for it. Scheduling personnel assist in evaluating competing events and insure that the Member's day is well enough planned to enable easy movement from one scheduled event to the next.

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[42]Congressional office personnel must be aware of the congressional rules and regulations regarding press and mass mailings when planning a press release, newsletter, or targeted mailing. Franking rules and regulations are discussed in the following documents: U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*, S. Pub. 108-1, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 2003) [http://ethics.senate.gov] visited on Nov. 5, 2003; U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Regulations Governing the Use of the Mailing Frank by Members and Officers of the United States Senate*, S. Pub. 107-12, 107th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, May 2001); U.S. Congress, Senate, *The Senate Code of Official Conduct*, S. Pub. 107-72, 107th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, July 2002); U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *House Ethics Manual*, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess., (Washington: GPO, 1992); available at [http://www.house.gov/ethics] visited on Nov. 5, 2003; "*House Rules*, Rule XXV, 4, Limitations on Use of the Frank," *Congressional Record*, vol. 145, Jan. 6, 1999, pp. H180-182; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on House Administration, *Members' Congressional Handbook*, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 2003) available at [http://www.house.gov/cha/nhandbookbody1.htm], visited Nov. 5, 2003.; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Commission on Mailing Standards, *Regulations of 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*, 105th Cong., 2nd sess., (Washington: GPO, June 1998). See also CRS Report RS20720, *Congressional Mail: History of the Franking Privilege and Options for Change*; CRS Report RS20700, *Congressional Franking Privilege*; and CRS Report RS20671, *Official Congressional Mail Costs*, by John Pontius.

An average Representative generally serves on two committees (standing, joint, and select) and four subcommittees, while a Senator serves on three committees (standing, joint, and select) and ten subcommittees. When any of these meet simultaneously, the Member, with help from the staff, decides which meetings to attend, and for how long. Members also make decisions about meeting with constituents, interest group representatives, colleagues, and others who want to meet with them.

A Member's entire schedule, whether in the office, in committee, on the floor, or in the district/state, can change quickly, due to the unpredictable nature of congressional business. A Member's typical day is not only long and fragmented in terms of having to be in different places, but also is filled with constant interruptions. Interruptions to a carefully planned schedule may come from any of the following: change in the time or length of committee or floor activities; an urgent political problem or meeting to attend in the district/state; unforeseen meetings with congressional colleagues and staff; an unanticipated visit by a key supporter or constituent group expecting to meet with the Member; various matters relating to the Member's personal life.

Members schedule meetings throughout the day knowing that some will be deferred and others may never occur. Sometimes staff aides fill in if the Member cannot make a meeting. Those charged with scheduling duties must judge the relative importance of competitive events. Scheduling also entails initiative on the part of staffers to foster, for example, good relations with those interest groups active in the Member's fields of interest.

Because Members each day face multiple and conflicting demands on their time, office structure is fashioned so as to operate within the constraints of the congressional schedule and the Hill environment.[43]

As a courtesy, some offices routinely inform the Member's spouse of the Member's schedule. The role of the congressional spouse varies — some play an active role in the office and in district or state offices; others concentrate on family and careers and do little related to the political world.[44]

The Member's personal secretary performs all or most of the following: scheduling, transportation logistics, screening phone calls, and the personal dictation of especially sensitive correspondence. The personal secretary may also have administrative responsibilities over other secretaries and may be in charge of mailing activities.

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[43]Susan Webb Hammond, "The Management of Legislative Offices," in Joseph Cooper and G. Calvin MacKenzie, eds., *The House at Work* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 205.

[44]Marc E. Miller, *Politicians and Their Spouses' Careers, A Congressional Management Foundation Guidebook* (Washington: Tilden Press Inc., 1985).

Reception

Approximately a million people visit the nation's capital annually. Many people also visit the office of their Representative or Senator. For most of these visitors, the only contact they will have with their Member is through the receptionist. Therefore, the position of receptionist is a crucial one in every Member's office.

One of the services a Member's office can provide is helping to ensure a meaningful and enjoyable Washington visit for constituents. Tours[45] and tourist information requests (flags flown over the Capitol, House and Senate gallery passes) are frequently received by mail as well as from visitors stopping by the office. In many offices, these requests will be handled by the receptionist, especially tours of the House and Senate.[46]

[45]Because of security concerns, White House, and FBI tours are not currently available.

[46]The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the reception and scheduling staff in a congressional office are listed in Appendix H.

Appendix A: Comparison of House and Senate Staff Positions

	Salary		Tenure in Position		Tenure in Congress		Average Age	
Washington, D. C. Office Positions	**Senate**	**House**	**Senate**	**House**	**Senate**	**House**	**Senate**	**House**
Chief of Staff/AA	$116,573	$108,065	4.1	4.5	9.4	10.7	44	41
Legislative Director	$91,438	$66,213	3.0	2.8	11.0	7.7	38	34
Communications Director	$65,362	$49,327	2.2	2.2	5.0	3.6	34	31
Office Manager	$57,330	$48,523	3.3	4.2	12.0	8.9	39	36
Legislative Assistant	$48,276	$45,733	2.2	2.4	4.4	4.4	32	31
Scheduler	$44,273	$43,443	3.0	3.0	6.1	5.6	32	34
Systems Administrator	$39,612	$35,297	3.2	3.9	10.0	6.1	33	30
Legislative Correspondent	$25,226	$27,992	1.0	1.0	1.6	1.3	25	24
Staff Assistant (Washington)	$22,504	$25,762	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.4	25	25
State/District Offices *State/ District Director*	$73,872	$70,207	3.9	4.2	8.1	8.1	45	43
Grants/Projects Coordinator	$44,148	$39,485	3.4	2.7	6.7	4.5	36	37
Field Rep. /Regional Manager	$40,504	$39,662	3.8	3.7	6.6	4.5	40	38
District /State Scheduler	$34,205	$38,411	3.4	4.1	4.9	5.5	36	37
Constituent Services Rep. (State/District)	$29,980	$35,305	3.6	4.5	5.5	6.5	36	41
Staff Assistant (State/District)	$24,454	$28,243	3.9	3.7	4.2	4.3	37	38

Source: Congressional Management Foundation (CMF), *2002 House Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 2002), pp. 8-9. Senate data is taken from CMF's *1999 Senate Staff Employment Study*, p. 113. Positions that typically reside in the district/state are in *italics*. This table is based on CMF staff pay surveys with a response rate of 54% in the Senate and 30.5% in the House. The author of this report wishes to thank CMF for use of information in this table and throughout the report.

Appendix B: Job Titles Most Frequently Associated with an Office Function

1. Office Administration and Management:

   - Chief of Staff
   - Administrative Assistant
   - Executive Assistant
   - Special Assistant
   - District Representative/State Director
   - Office Manager
   - System Administrator
   - Personal Secretary
   - Appointments or Scheduling Secretary
   - Special Projects Coordinator
   - Staff Assistant

2. Mail:

   - Office Systems Manager
   - Production Manager
   - Computer Systems Manager
   - Correspondent and Mail Clerk
   - Records Manager and File Clerk
   - Secretary

3. Projects and Casework:

   - Projects Director
   - Federal Grants Assistant
   - Field Representative
   - Casework Manager
   - Caseworker
   - Constituent Services Representative

4. Legislation:

   - Legislative Director
   - Policy Assistant
   - Legislative Assistant
   - Legislative Correspondent or Aide
   - Research Assistant
   - Project Director
   - Project Coordinator
   - Field Representative
   - Legislative Secretary

5. Scheduling and Reception:

- Receptionist
- Secretary
- Appointments or Scheduling Secretary
- Staff Assistant
- Executive Secretary

6. Press and Public Relations:

- Press Secretary
- Assistant Press Secretary; Press Aide
- Communications Director

Note: Appendices B-H were derived from official congressional sources.

Appendix C: Office Administration and Management Staff: Duties, Tasks, and Job Titles

Duties and tasks most commonly performed by the administrative staff in a congressional office include:

- Develop goals, missions, and operating plans for the year, Congress, and terms and resetting priorities as circumstances change.
- Determine office personnel policies for the Washington, D.C. and district/state offices in accordance with rules and regulations of the House of Representatives/Senate.
- Hire, appraise performance, and terminate staff in accordance with office and congressional policies and procedures.
- Coordinate and oversee all office operations.
- Prepare the overall office budget (both payroll and expenses).
- Manage the office finances and monitor obligations and payment of expenditures from office accounts.
- Monitor the staff's compliance with financial disclosure, ethics, and congressional rules and regulations that apply to staff.
- Schedule and/or chair staff meetings.
- Coordinate and supervise assigned interns and Congressional Fellows.
- Coordinate military academy appointments.
- Represent the Member of Congress at various meetings and events.
- Schedule the Member's meetings in Washington, D.C. and the home state/district.
- Return the Member's phone calls at his request.
- Monitor high priority (VIP) and legislative mail for accurate representation of the Member's positions on issues.
- Process administrative mail.
- Write and update office policies and procedures.
- Order supplies for Washington, D.C. and home state/district offices.
- Select office equipment and monitor its use.
- Maintain the official office records (personnel, financial, etc.).
- Maintain the Member's personal files.
- Assist constituents with unique and special needs.
- Manage the mail operation.
- Develop policy for e-mail, Internet resources (including Web page).

While most Members of Congress have an administrative assistant/chief of staff only in their Washington office, some Members have the chief of staff in the field, and a few have a chief of staff in both Washington and the field.

Job titles most frequently associated with the administrative function include:

- Chief of Staff, Administrative Assistant
- District Representative/State Director, Systems Administrator, Personal Secretary
- Staff Assistant Coordinator
- Special Assistant
- Appointments or Scheduling Secretary
- Office Manager
- Executive Secretary
- Special Projects

Appendix D: Legislative Staff: Duties, Tasks, and Job Titles

The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the legislative staff in a congressional office include:

- Assist in development of policy positions and legislative initiatives.
- Monitor legislative activities in committee and the House/Senate floor.
- If the legislative director, assign legislative staff areas of responsibility and supervise their activities.
- If the legislative director, schedule and chair legislative staff meetings.
- Answer legislative mail.
- Research and write committee and floor statements, speeches, staff position papers, briefing memoranda, and other materials.
- Assist in processing large volumes of single issue mail by preparing appropriate responses.
- If the AA or legislative director, utilize assigned interns and Congressional Fellows.
- As directed, respond to personal and telephone inquiries regarding the Member's legislative activities or current events.
- Occasionally assist communities and organizations in the home district/state in their efforts to secure federal grants and with other projects.

Job titles most frequently associated with the legislative function include:

- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistant
- Legislative Correspondent or Aide
- Research Assistant
- Project Director
- Project Coordinator
- Field Representative
- Legislative Secretary

Appendix E: Projects, Grants and Casework Staff: Duties, Tasks, and Job Titles

Duties and tasks most commonly associated with the grants and projects staff in a congressional office include:

- Assist communities and organizations in the district/home state in their efforts to secure federal grants and other projects.
- Prepare grants and projects reports for the Member and appropriate staff.

Job titles most frequently associated with the grants and projects function in a congressional office include:

- Federal Grants Assistant
- Projects Director
- Federal Grants Coordinator
- Projects Coordinator
- Field Representative
- District/State Representative

Duties and tasks most commonly performed by the casework staff in a congressional office include:

- Serve as Member's ombudsman for constituents with difficulties related to the federal government.
- Answer constituent correspondence and correspond with federal departments and agencies.
- Monitor casework for problems and trends which might be resolved by legislative action.
- Prepare casework reports for the Member and appropriate staff.

Job titles most frequently associated with the casework function include:

- Caseworker
- Constituent Services Representative

Appendix F: Mail Staff: Duties, Tasks, and Job Titles

The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the correspondence staff in a congressional office include:

- Develop a plan for managing the office mail.
- Establish mail management standards (e.g., letter format, turn around time, etc.).
- Train and supervise mail processing staff.
- Develop and maintain a collection of prepared texts for use in responding to mail.
- Develop routing and approval procedures for draft responses to constituent mail.
- Develop and maintain lists of constituents for outreach mailings.
- Produce (or arranging for production) of special mailings.
- Maintain proper mass mailings records for filing.
- Prepare reports on mail volume and content for the Member and appropriate staff.
- Establish the office filing system.
- Maintain office files including:
  (1) file correspondence and related materials.
  (2) computerized or manual indexes to files.
- Establish office requirements and standards for storage of files.
- Develop permanent disposition guidelines for office files.
- Develop and maintain occupational codes and issue codes for mass mailings and newsletters.
- Supervise assigned interns.
- Utilize computer resources, written and e-mail responses.

Job titles most frequently associated with the mail function include:

- Office Systems Manager
- Production Manager
- Legislative Correspondent or Aide
- Computer Systems Administrator
- Secretary
- Records Manager
- Mail Clerk
- File Clerk

Appendix G: Press and Public Relations Staff: Duties, Tasks, and Job Titles

The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the press staff in a congressional office include:

- Develop a media plan for the year and term of office.
- Coordinate media activities for Washington, D.C. and home district/state offices.
- Write and coordinate distribution of press releases, columns, newsletters, mass mailings.
- Plan and coordinate media activities for radio and TV.
- Schedule and arrange press conferences and press interviews.
- Write speeches.
- Develop press mailing lists.
- Prepare press reports for the Senator and appropriate staff.
- Monitor federal grant notifications and announce them when appropriate.
- Respond to requests for photographs and biographies of the Member.
- Supervise press interns.

Job titles most frequently associated with the press functions include:

- Press Secretary
- Assistant Press Secretary
- Communications Director
- Press Aide
- Secretary to the Press Secretary

Appendix H: Reception and Scheduling Staff: Duties Tasks, and Job Titles

The duties and tasks most commonly performed by the reception staff in a congressional office include:

- Answer telephones and manage the main office rotary phone lines.
- Greet walk-in visitors to the office and respond to their requests.
- Greet visitors with appointments with the Member or staff and notifying the Member or staffer of visitor arrival.
- Answer constituent requests for general information, tours, and other non-legislative requests.
- Distribute information about Washington, D.C. or the home district/state.
- Maintain the office guest book.
- Send, receive, and distribute materials via the fax telecopier.
- Perform general typing.
- Monitor delivery and pickup of materials.
- Operate office equipment, e.g., the photocopier.

Job titles most frequently associated with the reception function in a congressional office include:

- Receptionist
- Secretary
- Staff Assistant

The duties and tasks most frequently associated with the scheduling and personal services function in a congressional office include:

- Schedule the Member's meetings in Washington, D.C. and the home district/state.
- Assist the Member and constituents with special requests.
- Provide transportation.

Job titles most frequently associated with the scheduling and personal services function include:

- Appointments or Scheduling Secretary
- Executive Secretary
- Secretary
- Staff Assistant
- Clerk

Appendix I: Job Descriptions of Congressional Staff

Chief of Staff, Administrative Assistant — Top staff person responsible for overall office functions, supervision of staff and budget, advising Member on political matters.

Legislative Director — Directs the legislative staff as a resource person for legislative assistants. Responsible for briefing Member on votes and hearings, preparing legislation, speeches, and *Record* statements, and, often, supervising the answering of constituent mail.

Legislative Assistant — Works under the direction of the legislative director or administrative assistant and is usually responsible for handling specific issues and answering mail in those areas.

Legislative Correspondent/Research Assistant — Responsible for answering legislative correspondence from constituents. May also provide legislative research support for office.

Press Secretary/Communications Director — A Member's publicity director who is responsible for press releases, radio & T.V. spots, newsletters, newspapers columns, speeches, schedule announcements, etc.

Executive Assistant/Scheduler — Handles the individual needs of Member including scheduling, correspondence, travel arrangements, and bookkeeping.

Office Manager — Office administration which may include monitoring mail flow, office accounts, personnel administration, equipment, furniture, supplies, and the filing system(s).

Receptionist — Front desk assignment; answers phones and greets visitors. Performs wide variety of tasks with emphasis on constituent tours, general requests, opening and routing of mail, and some word processing duties.

Systems Administrator/Production Manager/Mail Manager — Manages all hardware and software used by the office. Serves as liaison with mail system and other vendors and is responsible for any in-house training. Often is also responsible for all administrative aspects of correspondence management system and other administrative systems.

Computer Operator — Responds, in a timely fashion, to letters requiring personalized "form letter" responses. Responsible for coordinating the input and output of names, codes, paragraphs, and letters.

Washington Caseworker — Handles constituent casework: initial problem identification, contacts with agencies, follow-up letters and case resolution.

District/State Director — In charge of all district/state offices. Directs overall district/state office operations and work flow. Represents the Member at district/state meetings and events.

District Aide/Field Representative — District work under the direction of the district/state director. Responsible for representing the Member at district/state meetings and events. Helps shape Members' district/state schedule and often accompanies Member to district/state events.

District/State Caseworker — Handles constituent casework: initial problem identification, contacts with agencies, follow-up letters and case resolution. Same as Washington caseworker except located in district/state.

District/State Office Secretary/Clerk — Handles clerical chores which may include typing, filing, proofreading.

District/State Appointments Secretary/Scheduler — Scheduling the Member, making appointments, and sifting through invitations.

Source: Congressional Management Foundation, *2000 House Staff Employment* (Washington: 2000); and Congressional Management Foundation, *1999 Senate Staff Employment Study* (Washington: 1999). The authors of this report wish to thank CMF for the use of the information in Appendices A and I.

Appendix J: Sample Privacy Act Release Form

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Senator/Representative _____
United States Senate (House of Representatives)
Washington, D.C. 20510 (20515)

_____(Date)_____

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am aware that the Privacy Act of 1974 prohibits the release of information in my file without my approval. I authorize the *(name of federal agency or Department)* to provide information on my claim/case to (Senator/Representative)_____.

_____(Signature)_____

_____(Address)_____

_____

___(Social Security or claim number)____

_____ (Telephone Number)_____

If you wish information to be provided to parent, child, attorney, or other interested party, please indicate below.

I authorize_____ to receive information from Senator/Representative_____ relative to my claim/case.

_____(Signature)_____

Note: To expedite delivery to congressional offices, constituents should use the Zip Code plus four digits in addressing correspondence.