At the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, staff assistants and legislative correspondents were suddenly dealing with double the constituent correspondence while transitioning to working from home and often losing their interns. Below is a guide of suggestions compiled from offices on both sides of the aisle on how to be most effective within this new reality.

MILESTONES

MARCH 4: CHA establishes House Telework Readiness Center

MARCH 12: Capitol Complex closed to visitors, remote operations encouraged

APRIL 6: Speaker announces “eHopper”

MAY 15: House changed rules to allow for remote committee proceedings and proxy voting

JUNE 29: Speaker extends “covered period” due to Coronavirus emergency to August 18, 2020

AUGUST 17: Speaker extends “covered period” due to Coronavirus emergency to October 2, 2020

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On August 3rd, the Modernization Staff Association and the Congressional Management Foundation closed a survey sent to junior Hill staffers on their experiences working from home. The survey was completed by the following groups:

- 125 Staff Assistants and Legislative Correspondents
- 102 House staffers and 23 Senate staffers
- 83 Democrats, 40 Republicans, and 2 Independents

The results from the survey are displayed throughout this guide through graphs of poll responses.

While many offices are still working from home for the foreseeable future, fewer junior staffers feel confident about their ability to work effectively. We hope the resources in this guide improve those levels of confidence.
When more constituents than ever were trying to reach their Representatives about the growing crises in their lives, many offices suddenly appeared not to be home. While WFH, a lot of offices are letting calls go to voicemail and backlogs are growing. However, there are options to answer calls live despite being out of the office.

We recommend picking an option that still allows a live person to answer the phone so that constituents feel heard. However, we do NOT recommend placing that entire burden on one person, such as a single intern or the Staff Assistant. We’ve heard from many overwhelmed SAs that this takes a toll on their mental health and essentially becomes their full-time job.

Options for managing phones remotely include:

**Option 1: Forwarding calls to all staffers using technology**

Offices that use PCs can download the One-X Communicator for free. This software takes a copy of your desk phone and puts it on your laptop. With this system, you don’t have to forward phone calls to cell phones, and multiple staff members or interns can be logged in at the same time. Just like in the office, an incoming call will go to everyone at once, so multiple people have the opportunity to answer, minimizing the burden on a single person and sending fewer calls to voicemail.

- Calls sent here will still go to the House voicemail if they are missed. Just like in person, you can also forward calls back to the House voicemail during all-staff meetings or at the end of each day and on the weekends.
- Works using your laptop’s microphone and speaker. You can also buy a USB headset.
- To download: go to HouseNet and fill out a My Service Request form under “virtual desktop” -> “template”. You can select individual staffers or the entire office.

**Option 2: Forwarding calls to interns or staffers in shifts**

Some offices have chosen to forward calls to a different staffer or intern’s cell phone each day. If many people participate, this usually isn’t as much of a burden since each individual only needs to be on the phone one day every couple of weeks. Some offices forward all of their DC calls to a DO line or vice versa and then forward those calls to a cell phone so that the staffer or intern gets both the DC and DO calls at once. You can also have them set up Google Voice accounts for free so they don’t have to change their personal voicemail or share their phone number.

**Option 3: Phone tree**

- Some offices have opted to create a “phone tree” system similar to many businesses where constituents receive an automated message when they call in directing them to press “one” for a personal issue, “two” to leave a message on policy for the Congressperson, “three” for tour and flag requests, etc.
- Setting up this system depends on your phone system. Contact your provider to ask for options.

**Option 4: Have all calls go to voicemail and have interns regularly check them**

- Many offices are letting all calls go to voicemail and having their interns go through and check the inbox, delete the messages, and log the calls into their CRM.
- You can have all voicemails transcribed and emailed to you, as well as upgrade your voicemail inbox to unlimited, for $4 a month. More information here.
Example Remote Phone System Standard Operating Procedure
(Developed by an office that uses Avaya/One-X Communicator and Fireside:)

Objective: To provide excellent service to constituents: to answer phones remotely in an effective, successful manner

Avaya instructions

Our remote platform is the Avaya Software (Please read the Avaya One-X User Guide instructions!). Here are the practices our office will be implementing in addition to the instructions from the user guide:

• We will not be adding/modifying existing contacts through the Avaya software
• Do not use the call forwarding option if you are trying to forward the call to someone else. Instead, you must answer the call, put the caller on hold, and dial the individual you are transferring to. If that person accepts the call, use the transfer option.
• We don’t want calls forwarded because there is a likely chance the person you are forwarding to might not pick up & the call gets dropped. However, if you put the call on hold, then dial the individual, you have a chance to ask “Can you take this call?” before transferring
• If you can, please use a headset (i.e. headphone with a microphone) when answering calls. If you find that talking through your laptop mic is an issue, let SA know

To log-in: Each of you will be assigned a permanent extension, one that is overtaking a physical office phone/ a staffer's extension. Please use these extensions consistently, as we don’t want to mix up anyone’s extensions. Here are the assignments:

[list assignments here]

During your regular shift, please stay logged in while you are working. Taking calls is a crucial part of your responsibility—balancing calls with other assignments and projects is a must. The office as a whole relies on your ability to answer calls regularly. Understandably, if the call load increases to be too much to handle, we will hash out a plan that works for everyone.

To log-off: Please log-off only if you are unable to take calls (i.e. at lunch, on a training call, ending your shift). You MUST follow these instructions every time you log off!! Failure to do so (i.e. ‘x’ing out of the window instead) will keep the program running in the background and will not stop you from receiving calls

Answering calls

Answering calls is a big part of your responsibility as interns. Providing constituent service with quality and positivity is a top priority for the office. You all are the ‘first’ in line when it comes to engaging with many constituents—it’s important to keep in mind why your role is so important!

General Instructions

• Please don’t let phones ring more than 2-3 times
• If you feel like you are the only person answering phones during your shift, ask other interns to help! We all have to hold each other accountable.
• When you answer the phones please use a clear, audible voice; say “Congressperson X's office, how can I help you?”
• Note the reason the individual is calling, as well as their name/organization. Jotting this down on a pad is often helpful. Do not be afraid to ask the caller to repeat anything if you missed it the first time, or to spell out unknown words
Constituent Contact (Opinions)

Constituents are the voters/citizens of the State and District X. Some may call to voice their opinion regarding certain issues/bills and/or to ask about the Congressperson’s opinion on these issues/bills.

• When on the phone with a constituent, listen to what they say and try to get as much contact information as you can (name, address, phone number or email). This will help when logging in Fireside. Sometimes some people don’t want to give their contact info. If that happens just listen to what they have to say and thank them for calling. No need to log their message.

• (During or after the call is complete): Record all phone calls in the Fireside by going to “+”, then “Log a message”. Every time you log a phone call, put it in the batch titled “Phone Calls - Routing.” The SA will then log the call into the appropriate batch and be able to track all logged calls. This helps to report to Congressperson at the end of the week what issues our district called about the most that week.

• Remember: Your job isn’t to argue with a constituent, but to receive messages to pass along to the Congressperson. Typically, just say “thank you for your call, I’ll pass this message along to the Congressperson”.

• However, although we do not like to argue with constituents, it is your responsibility to have a thorough understanding of Congressperson’s stance on all issues pending congressional consideration. Congressperson’s social media as well as her website are good reference points!

• If someone calls and they are not a constituent, redirect them to their representative’s office (use google). Do NOT log out-of-district messages!!

• Anything related to Congressperson’s campaign (i.e. donations, platform issues, events, etc) CANNOT be provided by us. We are the “official” office and can only answer questions/provide resources for her public office. Guide the caller to the campaign website, if necessary, but do not speak on behalf of the campaign/convey information related to the campaign.

Voicemails

Each time you start your shift, please check if there are any voicemails and appropriately log them into Fireside as if you would log a phone call. To check voicemails:

[voicemail instructions]

We can set up a schedule of alternating people to do check & empty the voicemail (i.e. X person on Mondays only, etc) or if one person wants to do this consistently. Let me know what you all decide!

Legislative/Staff Inquiry Call

Sometimes people from other offices will call asking for the name of the staffer covering a specific issue. If this is the case, refer to the DC Staff Issues sheet and pass along the email of that specific staffer. Feel comfortable sharing any of the staffer’s email over the phone.

“Standard House” email format: FirstName.LastName@mail.house.gov

“Standard Senate”: FirstName_LastName@SenatorsLastName.senate.gov

Staff Contact

If someone calls asking for another staff member, be sure to get: Name of caller, Organization, Staffer they are calling for, & Why they are calling (if they are following up with an email, etc.)

If this is their first time contacting the staffer, feel free to just give the caller the staffer’s email and suggest they email them first. If they are confirming that the staffer received an email, record their information and pass their message along yourself (via email)
**Event/Meeting Requests**

If someone calls with an event or meeting request, direct them to Scheduler.

*Don't guarantee anyone that they will get to meet / speak with the Congressperson! Instead, state that we will process your request, once you submit it, and get back to you.

**Casework Request**

If someone is calling about casework (i.e. help with services related to a federal agency), please have them fill out the “Help with a Federal Agency” form on the website. In this case, you do NOT need to take down their information, since they will be filling out the form, and do NOT log the call in Fireside.

If they are asking general questions about the services our office offers related to casework, you can refer them to contact the District Office, where the staff would be happy to answer their questions:

Phone: [phone number]

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM

**Instructions to transfer calls**

The only reason you would want to transfer a call is if you are unsure about the caller's request and need to transfer it to the SA. To do this, put the caller on hold, then dial the SA’s extension (see above). If she answers, state the caller’s info and reason for calling. If she takes the call, then complete the transfer steps. If she doesn’t answer, return to the caller and take a message to pass along via email to the SA.

Do NOT transfer calls to other staffers’ extensions, as almost all staffers are not using their desk phones currently. If someone wishes to speak to a staffer, follow steps above of giving their emails.

**CRM Tips**

**IQ**

[intranetquorum.com](http://intranetquorum.com)

- IQ eLearning has short walkthrough videos on managing flag and tour requests, casework, events, interns, and more.
  
  [https://iqtraining4congress.com/iq4-elearning](https://iqtraining4congress.com/iq4-elearning)

- IQ also offers more in-depth trainings on message management, flag and tour requests, etc. in the form of webinars and classroom training. [https://iqtraining4congress.com/](https://iqtraining4congress.com/)

- Finally, IQ has Quick Reference Guides for easily finding solutions to common problems and how-tos on most tasks. These can be accessed in IQ via Shortcut > Help > Contents > Quick Reference Guide

**iConstituent**

[iconstituent.com](http://iconstituent.com)

- iConstituent has a blog with articles including “How to Use Simple Automation to Streamline Constituent Communication” and “How Innovation Can Improve Your Communication With Constituents During COVID-19 Pandemic.” [iconstituent.com/blog](https://iconstituent.com/blog/)

- iConstituent also offers product trainings tailored to mail, communications, newsletters and general platform use. [iconstituent.com/training](https://iconstituent.com/training/)

**Fireside**

[fireside21.com](http://fireside21.com)

- Fireside has a blog with “thoughts, tips, and tricks to provide you with ways to work smarter, reach further, and discover more.” Entries include reducing backlog, casework messaging, and turning around your mail in less than two days. [https://www.fireside21.com/blog/tag/crm](https://www.fireside21.com/blog/tag/crm)

**Indigov**

[indigov.us](http://indigov.us)

- Indigov is a new CRM that boasts an average response time of only 8 hours. It houses all of your correspondence in one system for easy management: website, CWC, scanned mail, Facebook, Twitter and phone calls, and it auto-responds to campaign emails for you, meaning you never have to batch again. It also is Cloud-based, so staffers and interns don’t need to have a VPN or House device to access it. Finally, it has an easy-to-use cell phone app that makes responding to constituent mail possible when you’re on the go.
Common Constituent Questions and Answers

Q: “I’d like to tell the Congressperson about [x] issue”

A: “Great, if I could get your name and contact information, I’ll be happy to forward your request along to the Congressperson”

Record the caller’s information, and if the caller is a constituent (do a residential check), log into Fireside

Q: “Why did the Congressperson do [x]?! I am her constituent and she is not listening to my views!”

A: “I understand your frustration, and apologize that you feel that way. I would be more than happy to take down your concerns and pass them along to the Congressperson.”

Talk to the constituent politely and record their message as normal. If they start becoming rude or start harassing you, you are allowed to hang up immediately. If they refuse to give you their contact info, simply say you will pass it along, but no need to add to Fireside.

Q: “Where is my social security check?/ I need assistance with [x] service”

A: “I would be more than happy to assist you, and get you connected with the correct staff member in our office. For us to be able to process your request, please fill out the “Help with a Federal Agency” form on our website. From there, our casework team will be in touch about your issue.”

Guide them to the website if they are not familiar with it. If they have questions about specific casework, refer them to call the District Office. Do not log this call in Fireside.

Q: “What is the Congressperson’s stance on [x]? He/she’s never said anything about [x]”

A: “Sure, I can help convey that to you. Please give me one moment” (Feel free to put the constituent on a brief hold as you do a quick search, if necessary, on the topic)

If it’s a common issue that Congressperson has recently spoken about, you can give the caller a brief summary. Ex: “Congressperson recently spoke against police brutality, and condemned it during a town hall on ‘x’, he/she also is working with local leaders to resolve this issue in his/her community….”

If you can’t find anything on this issue / unsure about what the Congressperson’s stance is, that’s okay! Tell the caller: “The Congressperson wants constituents to bring issues to her attention, so thank you for doing so. If you’d like, I will pass this along to the staff members to look at. I feel this is something she would like to consider/thinks affects our community, etc.” Only log in Fireside if they want to pass the message along

Q: “How is Congressperson voting on [x] bill this Thursday?”

A: Be careful not to provide explicit information such as “The Congressperson is voting yes”. Instead, say “In the past, Congressperson has felt [x] about this issue. Although I can’t speak on his/her behalf, I know he/she will appreciate hearing your views. Please let me know if I can pass along your message to him/her regarding whether to support/vote against this bill” Only log in Fireside if they want to pass the message along

Q: “I want to meet the Congressperson / talk to him/her personally”

A: “The Congressperson enjoys meeting constituents and hearing their perspective. He/she would be thrilled to receive your request. To do this, please contact our scheduler X. He/she will help guide you on how to arrange a meeting. Although Congressperson spends a lot of time meeting constituents, it is not guaranteed you will be able to speak with them due to their busy schedule”

Q: “I want to arrange a tour / order a flag / receive a commendation, etc”

A: “I would be happy to assist you. You can complete this request by visiting our website, and under the “Services” tab, you will find the respective page to submit a form.”

If a constituent does not have access to the website/doesn’t know how to work it, you can take down their information and forward the request to the SA.

Q: “I want information about [x]”

At most, try to see if you can find this information for the caller, regardless of whether it’s within our purview. If you feel it is an unanswerable question/request, then try your best and guide them in the right direction (i.e. campaign-related info we cannot provide ourselves)

Possible topics:

- COVID-19 services→ our website has info they can read / you can convey to them
- The status of a bill: look it up on congress.gov
- Election day/mail-in-ballots: our website has resources about this + look up voter resources
- White House/other tours: refer to the most updated schedule of the tours (SA should be providing, as they are all different due to COVID)
Flag and Mail Procedures

Despite the shift to WFH, mail and flag deliveries continue to function in the Capitol complex, albeit differently. Daily mail/flag deliveries have been halted; however, almost 80% of offices are still processing flag requests. There are several ways to ensure flags and mail can be delivered and processed as needed. Below are the best ways to access both physical mail and ordered flags.

**Flags**

The flag office has shifted operations to Postal Operations. If you are expecting a flag order, you may physically pick up the flag, either flown or unflown, in B240 (next to the Dry Cleaners in the Longworth basement). Hours are M-F, 9:00 - 5:30. Alternatively, you may call Postal Operations at 63764 and schedule a delivery.

To mail completed flag orders, you have the option to schedule a pick-up by calling Postal Operations or hand deliver the shipment to them, in room B240.

**If your office still processes flag requests by mail or check:** You may drop off a flag form, with payment attached in the office supply store. Hours have changed due to COVID but should be open Tuesdays and Thursdays. The drop-off location is in the back of the office supply store, inside the back office door.

*Note: The flag office continues to give all the flags to the mail facility to deliver, but there is about a two to three week delay in delivery due to back up of mail being held at the mail facility with offices closed. After a flag is flown it used to take about 7-10 days for delivery, but it’s now sometimes three to four weeks for it to arrive at the office.*

**Mail**

Deliveries and pick-up may be requested easily by calling Postal Operations at 63764.

To ensure a smooth delivery, one person should plan to be in the office with the door unlocked. Mail personnel will be wearing gloves and masks when handling all mail.

**Batching, Electronic Mail and Physical Mail**

At the start of the pandemic, many offices suddenly began receiving double the amount of weekly constituent correspondence. Rather than policy opinions, the phone calls and mail that flooded in was overwhelmingly casework. Constituents were relying on the government more than ever, but at the same time, many offices were dealing with a plethora of problems of their own, and some are still trying to get through their backlog. Below are some small tips for easing the burden.
Faxing

Offices can send and receive “faxes” via email:

To send a fax via email:
1. Send the email to “faxnumber”@fax.house.gov. i.e. 000-000-0000@fax.house.gov
2. Attach the PDF to the email that you wish to fax
3. Make sure NOTHING is in the body of the email, including your email signature (delete it!)

To receive a fax via email:
Contact your office administrator or technology specialist. They should be routed to a separate inbox that you can add to your Outlook.

Scanning physical mail

Fill out the Digital Mail Authorization Form on Housenet in order to have all of your physical mail scanned and entered into Fireside or IQ for free. This works for both DC offices and district offices!

Sending and receiving physical mail

• Mail Services comes around to offices each day to knock on the door and see if you want your mail dropped off and picked up. If you aren’t there, they will hold your incoming letters in the mail room and will not pick up your outgoing mail.
• You can visit the mail room in B-240 Longworth to pick up or drop off mail every once in a while if your office isn’t working in person regularly. For faster service, call or email Jen Bell, Postal Operations Team Lead, ahead of time at contr.Jen.Bell@mail.house.gov or 202-226-3764.
• Many Staff Assistants and LCs are going into the office every one to four weeks in order to check and send mail and flags.
• Some LCs have at home printers (this can be purchased through your office). This allows the LC to fully work from home, print letters on letterhead and use the franked envelopes and send out from their own address. Note that if your office chooses to do this, you must fill out the District Mail Tally Form and mark how many letters you’ve sent out from a location other than the base office.
• The flag office is no longer delivering flags directly to your office. Instead, they are being held with the rest of your incoming mail.
• The new flag office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

CAPITOL HILL WORK FROM HOME GUIDE
MAIL TIPS

“There’s a point of diminishing returns: a window past which you are doing more harm than good by responding. Consider setting a 30-day threshold for mail.”
— Tim Hanscom, Chief of Staff for Rep. Alan Lowenthal
Mail Advice

The Congressional Management Foundation maintains a long list of resources to help offices manage their mail program. Especially during remote work, these resources can be a lifeline for offices dealing with increased volume and mail backlogs.

Mail Advice

Focus on connecting, not persuading. Instead of giving lengthy policy explanations or legislative status updates, write shorter responses that focus on your Representative’s/Senator’s views and actions. Link to existing content such as YouTube videos of him or her speaking; weekly explanation of votes on major bills on the webpage; or issue statements on Facebook. This will add a more personal touch to your replies and help constituents understand why your boss is voting a certain way.

Eliminate pro/con letters. Many offices write two separate letters for each issue: one for those who oppose and one for those who support his/her view. Doing so creates additional work for staff and risks sending someone the wrong letter. If your boss has taken a position, simply state it and his/her reasoning in a matter-of-fact tone. No need to persuade or be defensive. If your boss has not taken a position, simply connect to the issue and constituents in a different way.

Create higher value, but fewer, responses. Instead of creating a separate message for each individual campaign, group them together by broad policy areas (ex: changes to the tax code, protecting natural resources, regulatory reform). Then craft a high quality response on that topic with lots of links describing the Representative’s/Senator’s position and action taken to support it.

Involve the communications staff in constituent correspondence. In most offices, legislative staff oversee constituent correspondence and communications staff handle outreach. However, by coordinating, the office can develop common messages and talking points that, once approved can be repurposed for a variety of uses: responses to constituents, phone campaigns, Facebook, the website, and so on. This ensures consistency and reduces drafting and approval time. It can also help ensure responses to constituents are high-value and not too detailed. A few offices have even changed their organizational chart to make the Communications Director—instead of the Legislative Director—oversee all aspects of constituent correspondence.

Writing Tips

Check out these resources from CMF:

- 5 Core Elements of a Successful Mail Program
  "CMF has identified five core elements that are necessary for a successful mail program…"

- Dealing with Backlogged Mail
  "It happens sometimes to every office -- a backlog of old mail that seems insurmountable. Here are some recommendations from the CMF mail specialists that might help you get your office back on track…"

- Handling Mail Volume
  "Technology and advocacy organizations have made it extremely easy for the public to communicate with their Representatives and Senators. The record-breaking rise of civic engagement has increased mail volume to unprecedented levels. In the first six months of 2017, offices saw their mail increase threefold or more over 2016 levels . . . which were already so high offices were struggling to manage it. This is not business-as-usual, and offices don’t have the luxury of continuing the same practices…"

[Graph: HOW COVID-19 HAS AFFECTED CONSTITUENT ENGAGEMENT]

Example Form Letter Standard Operating Procedure
(Developed by a Democratic office)

As constituents frequently contact the office about a specific issue and the related batch grows, we will respond to these messages with a form letter. A form letter responds to a specific issue that constituents contact us about and explains the Congressperson’s stance on the issue. As an intern, you may be asked to draft and update a form letter. The details in every letter will vary in order to pertain to a specific issue, but there is a general structure for form letters.

1. Start with the general mail merge fields.

2. Thank the constituent for contacting the office.
   Acknowledge the issue they wrote about:
   
   Thank you for reaching out to me regarding your support for the United States Postal Service (USPS) amid the coronavirus pandemic. Like you, I believe Congress has the responsibility to support the USPS and the employees who provide essential services.

3. Include relevant context about the issue. This will probably be why the constituent is contacting the office:

As you may know, since the 1970s the USPS has operated as a self-funded organization. However, like many American businesses, the Postal Service is now suffering from a drop in revenue as the postcard and letter mail has declined due to the pandemic. In April 2020, Postmaster General Megan Brennan informed Congress that because of the global pandemic, the USPS expects to see a $13 billion drop in revenue this fiscal year. Additionally, Postmaster General Brennan reported that about 250,000 USPS employees will lose their state unemployment benefits by the end of September.

4. Define the solutions to the problem. This may include general proposed solutions, such as in the first paragraph. It will definitely include relevant legislation that the Congressperson sponsors or cosponsors, such as in the second paragraph. Include a brief summary on what the legislation does. Usually, you will write about legislation as concrete solutions rather than general proposals. You may also include information about a committee that the Congressperson sits on if it’s relevant to the subject of the issue.

As the public health emergency worsens, our front-line postal workers and post offices require immediate support to maintain or re-open services. Across the country, vulnerable populations, including our senior citizens, rely upon postal mail for delivery of medicine, food, and other supplies.

On May 4, 2020 I became a cosponsor of H.R. 6428, the Protect Our Post Offices Act, a bill to provide $2.5 billion in emergency appropriations to the United States Postal Service. These funds can be used by the USPS to make up for lost revenue, purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) for front-line postal workers, and other purposes necessary to continue USPS services. I will be advocating for the inclusion of this legislation in the next congressional relief bill.

5. Conclude the message by explaining that the Congressperson will continue to support the issue and end on a somewhat positive note.

As the nation continues to navigate the coronavirus, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to social distancing and protect ourselves and other vulnerable populations from this virus. Rest assured, additional funding packages are developed to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus. I will work with my colleagues to ensure the United States Postal Service and the agency’s front-line workers are given the relief needed to safely continue essential services.

6. End the letter with the general conclusion and signature regarding how to contact the office with any more questions or comments.

Again, thank you for contacting me. If you have further questions or comments, please give my office a call at [insert phone number]. To stay informed on the most recent coronavirus updates, please visit my [campaign resource page] and follow me on [Facebook] and [Twitter].

7. Send your draft to the Legislative Correspondent

Helpful tips:

- Write from the point of view of the Congressperson.
- Use Times New Roman font in size 12 to write the letter.
- If you draft a letter, it will probably be 1-1.5 pages long.
- If you need help with wording your letter, look at previous letters (in Common drive or on Fireside) or press releases from offices cosponsoring related legislation.
- Reach out to your fellow interns for edits before sending it to the LC.
- After you send your draft, expect edits, but don’t be discouraged if your letter looks different after it is edited. As you get used to writing letters, you will get used to the structure and messaging that should be present.
Commendations and Greetings

Requests for White House commendations and greetings are submitted through the form at https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

When filling out the form, use the following structure:
- **Message Type**: Leave Blank
- **Prefix**: Choose between Mr., Ms., Mrs., and Dr.
- **First Name**: First name of person receiving the greeting
- **Middle Name**: Leave blank unless constituent requests for middle name to be included
- **Last Name**: Last name of person receiving the greeting
- **Suffix**: Leave blank unless constituent requests for suffix to be included
- **Email**: Leave email of person logging in the greeting
- **Phone**: Leave phone number of person logging in the greeting
- **Country**: Leave as United States
- **Street**: Street address of person receiving the greeting
- **City**: City in which the person receiving the greeting resides
- **State**: State in which the person receiving the greeting resides
- **Zip/Postal Code**: Zip Code in which the person receiving the greeting resides
- **What Would You Like to Say?**: Leave the request here (ex: Request for a 100th Birthday Card)

Other tips:
- Make sure the box that says, “Keep Me Posted With Regular Updates From the White House” is unchecked.
- If it is a greeting request for a Wedding Anniversary, Birth of Baby, Wedding, etc. that requires a Mr. and Mrs., mark “Mr.” in the “Prefix” section and then make a note of it in the “What would you like to say?” section.
- OLA cannot give offices official updates
- Once OLA logs in greetings, Presidential Correspondence takes over the process and our office does not get updates from Correspondence on greetings
- Presidential Correspondence will send out the greeting on the day of the event or a few days after
- In order for your greeting request to be sent out on time, greeting requests MUST be sent out six weeks before the date of the event
- OLA cannot expedite requests

**Information Required for different types of Greetings**

**Birth of Baby (to be addressed to the parents)**
- Baby’s date of birth
- First and Last Name of both parents needed
- Home Address

**Welcome to the World (to be addressed to the baby)**
- Baby’s date of birth
- Name of the baby
- Home Address

**Birthdays**
- Age the person will be turning
- Prefix
- Date of birth of THIS year
- First and Last name
- Home address

**Condolences**
- Day the individual passed away
- Prefix of the person who is receiving the condolence, not the person who passed
- First and Last name of the person receiving the condolence
- First and Last name of the person who passed
- Specify the person receiving the greeting, we cannot address condolences to a family as a whole

**Eagle Scout**
- Date of the ceremony
- First and Last name of the recipient of the greeting
- Full address

**Graduation**
- Specify whether it is a High School or College Graduation (Medical, Graduate, Military, and Law School graduations are included)
- Date of the ceremony
- First and Last name
- Home address

**Retirement**
- Date of retirement
- Prefix
- First and Last name
- Home address

**Religious milestone**
- Date of milestone
- Specify milestone: baptism, ordained minister, preached a certain number of years, etc.
- Prefix of recognized individual: Dr., Reverend, Pastor, Mr., Mrs., etc.
- First and Last name
- Address of recognized individual

**Church Anniversary**
- Date of anniversary
- Specify the numbered year of anniversary (ex: 100th anniversary of Arlington Church)
- Address of the Church

**Wedding**
- Date of wedding
- First and Last Name of both partners needed
- Home address

**Wedding Anniversary**
- Year of anniversary (ex: 50th Wedding Anniversary)
- Date of the anniversary of THIS year
- First and Last Name of Husband AND Wife is needed
- Home Address
- Please Note: the White House only does wedding anniversaries based off numbers of five (ex: 25th Wedding Anniversary, 60th Wedding Anniversary, etc.)
Inauguration Tickets

Tips from Sophia Dycaico,
Office of Rep. Bobby Scott

The Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies usually reaches out shortly after the election to members offices with details about their allocation of tickets. The Joint Congressional committee is responsible for the planning and execution of the swearing-in ceremonies and the luncheon for the Inauguration of the President at the U.S. Capitol. After the election, they will announce events and distribute a limited number of tickets to Congressional offices. For all information on official guidance, make sure to check updates on their website.

Typically, offices receive around 50 tickets and can allocate these tickets as they please to guests or constituents. Some keep a running list and divide them on a first come, first serve basis, while others use a lottery system. The tickets are also separated into different viewing sections along the national mall. Those requests may change depending on the outcome of the election.

Staff Assistants often use their own spreadsheets to track all incoming requests for inauguration tickets. Rep. Matt Cartwright's website is a good example of having all the info on their website and allowing constituents to make requests from there. I started a form letter for Inauguration ticket requests telling constituents it’s too early and to check back later in the year then tagging it in IQ so we can follow up when there’s more official guidance.

Example Draft Email for Constituents
by Jared Wood, Office of Rep. Bill Huizenga

Good Morning/Afternoon,

Thank you for contacting Congressman XX office with your interest in the 2021 Presidential Inauguration Celebration. At this time, we have not been allotted tickets; however, I will add you to a first come, first serve list for tickets to Inauguration Day 2021. If you could please provide the following information, I will be able to place you on our list,

- Primary email account
- Phone number
- Home Address (including City and Zip Code)
- Number of tickets you would like to request
- Names of people in your party

Once this information has been provided you will be placed on our first come first serve list for Inauguration tickets. Please keep in mind that our office will only be given a small allotment of tickets, and therefore we cannot guarantee any tickets. Once we have an update, someone from our office will reach out to you. If you do not hear back after the Presidential Election, please contact our office at 202-XXX-XXXX

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.
Redesigning Internship Programs

When the pandemic hit, many offices had to abandon their internship programs because they didn’t know the rules governing remote work, struggled to secure compliant devices, and were not set up to engage with interns from home. But even now that staffers finally have internship guidance, many are still avoiding creating modified programs because they think they wouldn’t be as valuable to the interns or they simply don’t know where to start.

Without interns, all of that overwhelming and urgent constituent correspondence is landing exclusively on the plates of junior Hill staffers, roles with already overwhelming workloads. Instead, offices can think creatively about redesigning their internship programs in a way that is still beneficial for both the office and the interns.

“Instead of cancelling internship programs out of fear that working from home won’t be a meaningful experience, offices should think about what they can do to create substantive remote programs that will benefit both the interns and the office.”

— Modernization Staff Association Founder Ananda Bhatia, Office of Rep. Seth Moulton

One significant complication unique to remote work is the limitation on technology access for unpaid interns in the House. Paid interns can be provided with official devices and remote access to the office network. Unpaid interns, on the other hand, are not allowed to access personal constituent information — like correspondence or casework — while they are working from home.

Offices are getting inventive with intern assignments, however, including: compiling press clips, drafting responses to form letters (that are then sent through the office system by a staffer), drafting one minute speeches, suggesting social media posts, and taking meeting, hearing and briefing notes.

When in doubt, ask the experts! See the “Frequently Asked Questions” from the Congressional Research Service.
Dear Colleague:

The Committee on House Administration (Committee) has approved new regulations governing paid interns in the House. When the House Paid Internship Program (Program) was created in 2019, the Committee adopted interim regulations and said that it would review and assess the regulations after the Program’s first year. The House also recently approved new funds for the Program. In addition, the unique circumstances regarding the coronavirus pandemic have necessitated adoption of a maximum telework posture for most House offices.

In light of these considerations, the Committee adopted new regulations, effective immediately, that include the following changes:

• Each office has a Program allowance of $25,000 per calendar year.

• Program funds may be used to pay interns who work in district offices.

• Paid interns are eligible to telework in the event of a disaster, pandemic, or other emergency, as part of an office’s continuity of operations plan, provided the educational part of the internship is maintained, any work is incidental to said plan, and participation in the plan is certified by the office.

• House offices may issue paid interns House equipment (e.g. laptops, tablets, and mobile phones) which can be used to access the House network. This change is intended to permit paid interns to continue their internships even where their office may be using telework arrangements. This applies to all paid interns, whether they are paid from the Members’ Representational Allowance, Program funds, or committee funds.

In light of the unique and unusual circumstances presented by the coronavirus, as well as to promote House office emergency preparedness in general, the Committee previously determined and announced that it is appropriate to permit Member and Committee offices to be able to access any remaining unspent LY 2019 funds to purchase teleworking equipment and supplies (e.g. laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.). Offices may continue to use LY 2020 funds for this purpose, too. Paid interns may use such equipment for telework. Equipment is available for purchase from the House Office Supply Store, which you can reach at (202) 225-3321.

The core guiding principle of House internships remains the educational benefits for the intern. All interns, paid or unpaid, must perform services on a temporary basis as part of an educational plan. In prior Congresses, examples of an educational plan have included participation in the annual Intern Lecture Series, attendance at committee hearings, attendance at Congressional Research Service intern training programs, and other similar educational opportunities. Such in-person opportunities are limited at the present time. However, the Committee is working closely with its institutional partners and agencies to develop diverse and robust online educational programming. More information about that programming will be forthcoming.

The new regulations can be found on the Committee’s website here. Unless specifically noted, all other applicable rules and standards of conduct remain unchanged. As noted in the Members’ Congressional Handbook, the use of unpaid interns is subject to regulations established by the Committee on Ethics (Ethics).

Please contact the Committee at (202) 225-2061 (Majority) or (202) 225-8281 (Minority) with any questions. For questions regarding unpaid interns, please contact Ethics at (202) 225-7103.
**Options for paying interns:**

- Distribute the money evenly across all interns, even if it amounts to below the minimum wage. While some offices are choosing to forego the House intern pool money altogether, students would much prefer something rather than nothing.

- Prioritize need- or merit-based paid internships but pay everyone something so that everyone still qualifies to use government devices from home.

- Have some unpaid internships and one or two paid fellowships. Case study from Rep. Moulton’s office: We created a foreign policy fellowship aimed at recruiting diverse candidates who would not otherwise be able to intern on the Hill. We determine financial need by requiring that they be Pell-grant eligible, which we determine by asking them for a FAFSA form.

**NOTE:**
Given restrictions on network access and use of official devices by unpaid interns, consider a stipend — even a small one of $100 per month — to help remote interns be more effective.

**Example interview questions specific to working from home conditions:**

Suggestions from Ananda Bhatia, Office of Rep. Seth Moulton:

- **How do you prefer to be managed?**

- **How would you describe your communication style? How often are you in contact with your peers and supervisors?**

- **What challenges and advantages do you foresee for working from home?**

- **How do you keep yourself engaged in your work and manage your mental health?**

- **Do you have any experience coding? (backgrounds in computer science and experience with coding or even spreadsheet/data management can be great for revamping outdated office systems)**
Thank you for your interest in our internship program.

Throughout the public health crisis, the congressman’s office has based its policies on ensuring the health and safety of both our staff and the Capitol staff, while continuing to serve constituents of X district and provide educational experiences.

Internship duties in our office are part of the necessary work of the office, so we will certainly take on fall interns. Whether these will be in-person, remote, or some combination thereof depends upon the national and local health situation, which is continually developing. At the moment, our summer interns are working remotely.

Applications for fall internships are due July 31st. While we anticipate having a clearer picture of our fall program to convey during the interview process, we understand that the logistics of travel and lodging are more difficult during this time. As such, we anticipate varied internship plans according to students’ circumstances.

Note: It’s great to include as much information as possible even if you don’t have exact answers. This is a stressful time for everyone, including students with very limited information about their fall situations, so the more clarity they can get, the better. It is also important to post whether internships are unpaid, or exactly how much they are paid, online before students apply! This type of transparency is better for diversity recruiting.

### Hiring Interns During Remote Work
Sample language for your website:

> Thank you for your interest in our internship program.
> Throughout the public health crisis, the congressman's office has based its policies on ensuring the health and safety of both our staff and the Capitol staff, while continuing to serve constituents of X district and provide educational experiences.
> Internship duties in our office are part of the necessary work of the office, so we will certainly take on fall interns. Whether these will be in-person, remote, or some combination thereof depends upon the national and local health situation, which is continually developing. At the moment, our summer interns are working remotely.
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### General Interview Questions
Suggestions from Andrea Calderón, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would you describe your communication style? How often are you in contact with your peers and supervisors?
- What challenges and advantages do you foresee for working from home?
- How do you keep yourself engaged in your work and manage your mental health?
- How do you prefer to be managed?
- Why do you want to intern on the hill/for Congresswoman Blunt Rochester?
- What are some issue areas you care about?
- How is your coursework relevant to this internship?
- What kind of work environment do you thrive in?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- Give me an example of how you’ve dealt with a conflict with another person.
- What would you do if a constituent called and was upset?
- What is one word you would use to describe yourself and why?
- How would you handle a situation where you are balancing multiple responsibilities?
- Where do you see yourself in five years, and how do you hope this job will prepare you?
- What are the top three qualities you possess that will help you serve as a Congressional intern?
- You get a call where the constituent is very angry about Rep. Blunt Rochester’s stance on immigration, saying that he is upset that Rep. Blunt Rochester promotes open borders. He starts yelling at you. How do you respond?
- What do you like to do for fun?

“I typically choose 5 from this list. However, I provide the candidates with the full set of questions prior to their interview. I find this to be a good method because it gives the candidates an opportunity to prepare. I can see how this can have a downside, but I’ve been in several interviews where I look back and think “I have experience a, b., and c. that I could have mentioned, darn it!”. Also, sometimes the candidates aren’t prepared for the questions, and there’s no excuse for that seeing as they have access to the questions beforehand so it helps me narrow down the search.”

-Andrea Calderón

Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester
Internship Diversity Outreach

Victory Institute
https://victoryinstitute.org/
Mission: “LGBTQ Victory Institute works to increase the number of LGBTQ people in public office and to provide programming, service and other support to help ensure their success.”
LGBTQ undergraduate students; 8-10 week Congressional internship with a member of the LGBT Equality Caucus or an LGBTQ-friendly member of U.S. Congress to learn firsthand about the federal legislative process

American Association of People with Disabilities
https://www.aapd.com/summer-internship-program/
Mission: “a convener, connector, and catalyst for change, increasing the political and economic power of people with disabilities...As a national cross-disability rights organization, AAPD advocates for full civil rights for the over 60 million Americans with disabilities by promoting equal opportunity, economic power, independent living, and political participation.”
College students, graduate students, law students, and recent graduates with all types of disabilities

The Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies
https://apaics.org/
Mission: “A National non-partisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting Asian Pacific American participation and representation at all levels of the political process, from community service to elected office.”
Undergraduate students, summer program

Global Hispanic Leadership Institute
https://www.chli.org/
Mission: “the premier organization founded by Members of Congress to advance the Hispanic Community’s Economic Progress with a focus on Social Responsibility and Global Competitiveness; dedicated to fostering a broad awareness of the diversity of thought, heritage, interests and views of Americans of Hispanic and Portuguese descent.”
Only half a semester - switches to a corporate internship

SikhLEAD
http://www.sikhlead.org/Mission: “ to protect the civil rights of Sikh Americans and ensure a fostering environment in the United States for our future generations. We empower Sikh Americans through legal advocacy, education and media relations.”
An initiative of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

Islamic Scholarship Fund, Congressional Leadership Development Program
https://islamicscholarshipfund.org/internships/
Mission: “ISF increases American Muslim representation in media and politics in order to improve public opinion and policy.”

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute
http://www.ccainstitute.org/
Mission: “…dedicated to raising awareness about the millions of children around the world in need of permanent, safe, and loving families and to eliminating the barriers that hinder these children from realizing their basic right to a family.”
Congressional internship for young adults who spent time in the foster care system

Congressional Leadership Development Program, Muslim Public Affairs Council
https://cldp.org/about/
Mission: “MPAC improves public understanding and policies that impact American Muslims by engaging our government, media, and communities.”
“Fellows will work with MPAC staff to apply for and secure internships/fellowships on Capitol Hill

Washington Leadership Program
https://www.thewlp.com/the-wlp-program
Mission: “a nonprofit organization dedicated to building the next generation of leadership from within the South Asian American community through innovative programs.”
College students, summer internship

The Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian Americans, Capitol Hill Internship Program
https://paaia.org/lead/chip
Mission: Foster a greater understanding of Iranian Americans and their culture; Build an influential voice for the Iranian American community through networking, electioneering, and public advocacy; Position the next generation of Iranian Americans for success by supporting them with opportunities for advancement, mentorship, and continued learning; Give back to America as it has given to us.”
College students, graduate students, or recent graduates; spring, summer, and fall

The Washington Center, Cordova & Fernós Internship Program
https://twc.edu/
Mission: “…the bridge between higher education and professional careers—leveraging all of what Washington, D.C. has to offer to provide dynamic, experiential learning opportunities to empower and motivate young people to become engaged global citizens.” / “Helping young Puerto Rican leaders shape a stronger future for the Island.”
Undergraduate or postgraduate Puerto Rican college students

Udall Foundation, Native American Congressional Internship
https://www.udall.gov/
Mission: “…to provide programs to promote leadership, education, collaboration, and conflict resolution in the areas of environment, public lands, and natural resources in order to strengthen Native nations, assist federal agencies and others to resolve environmental conflicts, and to encourage the continued use and appreciation of our nation’s rich resources.”
American Indian and Alaska Native college, graduate, and law students who live and work in Washington, D.C., during the summer
Internship Diversity Outreach (continued)

Armenian Assembly of America, Terjenian-Thomas Assembly Internship Program
https://armenian-assembly.org/students/interndc/
Mission: “non-partisan Armenian-American advocacy organization, promotes public awareness of Armenian issues, encourages greater Armenian-American participation in the American democratic process, and assists in humanitarian and development programs in Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh, while strengthening the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.- Nagorno Karabakh relationships.”
College students, summer internships

Turkish Coalition of America
https://www.tc-america.org/internships/tca-internships-programs-38.htm
Mission: “Fostering understanding of Turkish American issues through public education”
College students and recent graduates, summer internships

National HEP/CAMP Association Internship
https://hepcampassociation.org/internship/
Mission: “to serve, educate, and empower farm workers”
HEP and CAMP are educational programs which serve students from migrant or seasonal farm-worker families

J Street Congressional Internship Program
https://jstreet.org/about-us/#X1zZhtNKg_ U
Mission: “J Street organizes pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans to promote US policies that embody our deeply held Jewish and democratic values and that help secure the State of Israel as a democratic homeland for the Jewish people.”
College students, summer program

**Both the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institution offer internships that are popular programs

Additional suggestions from offices:

- City University of New York (CUNY) network. CUNY continues to rank among the most diverse academic institutions in America.
- MPAC
- CBCF
- CHCI
- CHLI
- College 2 Congress
- UCDC program (Univ. of California)

Additional Resources


Helpful Links for Interns

(Compiled by Reecha Patel, Rep. Lori Trahan)

- **e-Dear Colleague System**: You can subscribe to receive specific issue-related “Dear Colleague” letters in your inbox. This is a great way to see the “inner-workings” of gaining support for a bill, letter, issue, etc.
- **Subscribe** to the weekly Capitol Hill Intern update email. You can also read the intern newsletter on Medium [here](#).
- **CRS has Amazing Webinars** that are detailed & comprehensive trainings. Anything from regulatory structure, policy issues, Supreme Court, etc. I’m upset I didn’t flag this earlier for you guys! Also definitely worth the time to go through their website and look at the resources tab, issue areas tab, etc.
- **C2C University**: The internship program I participated in last summer has created a [virtual course training module for prospective Hill interns](#). I’d highly recommend you enroll & try to complete a few sessions—although some sessions may be redundant/repetitive since you guys already have a Hill internship, there are definitely a few gold items such as “Media & Storytelling” and “Building a Career Map”. I learned a lot from their sessions!
- **House Floor-Cast**: the House has their own streaming service to watch floor proceedings. You can look at bills, votes, actions, etc. side-by-side of the streaming window—pretty neat!

**Floor and Hearings:**

- Upcoming House Committee hearings ([see here](#) for schedule). To access livestream link, look up the committee’s website & event
- Upcoming Senate Committee hearings ([see here](#) for schedule). To access livestream links, click on committee names as listed
- **House Floor livestream & calendar**
- **Senate Floor livestream & calendar**
- CRS has a list of [Congressional liaisons for federal agencies](#). We use liaisons mainly for casework—to bump a service or contact the status of a case—but sometimes for policy/leg as well. Thought it would be interesting for you all to read through the list; it also serves as a list of ALL federal agencies.

**Official Congressional:**

- Majority Leader’s newsletter: comprehensive newsletters that give updates from House Majority Leader’s office; [See here](#)
- House Employment Bulletin: Weekly bulletin with job vacancies (I’d recommend you do this on your personal account as well for future positions you may want to apply for); [See here](#) to subscribe
- **Dem Com**: Mentioned in the manual—all-in-one dashboard for “talking points”, Dear Colleague letters (written by members asking for sponsors & co-sponsors), House calendar, etc. [See here](#)
- Library of Congress newsletter: LOC shows most-viewed and most popular bills by day, week, and month in their newsletter. You can customize & subscribe, [see here](#)

**Non-profit/independent orgs:**

- **Free the Facts**: popular non-profit advocacy org that usually hosts amazing intern-oriented events; [See here](#) to subscribe to their newsletter
- **Hill Happenings**: Mentioned in the manual—a great resource to find virtual briefings & events. [See here](#) their website. They also have a weekly newsletter you can subscribe to
- **Women in Gov’t Relations (WGR)**: great non-profit org w/ events relating to the Hill. [See here](#) for their public calendar of events
- **Womens’ Congressional Policy Institute**: another amazing non-profit org, they have a Weekly Legislative newsletter you can subscribe to. [See here](#) to subscribe
Weekly Legislation Project
Suggestions from Andrea Calderón, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester

1. If it is a session week then pick a bill that will be discussed in the upcoming week. This information can be found on the House Majority Leader’s Weekly Schedule.

   If it is a non-session week then pick a bill that was voted on during the 116th Congress that interests you and rather than looking forward to the unfolding of the vote then you can research what happened and watch the old debates online.

2. Before they have debate on the bill of your choosing, write up a summary of the bill including:
   a. The sponsoring Member
   b. Members who have cosponsored the bill
   c. How you think the constituents of DE lean on the bill
   d. How you believe the Congresswoman will vote on this legislation and why
   e. How you would vote on the bill

3. During the week, watch the debate on the CSPAN website. If you cannot watch the debate live, read and review the transcript.

4. Take note of which Members get up to speak on the bill from both parties and a key argument for 3 Members.

5. Take note, how many amendments are introduced on each bill. Pick up to 5 amendments (if applicable) that you find most interesting or important to the legislation, note the Member who introduced that amendment, and provide a summary of the key points/impact to the overall legislation.

6. Mention the rule structure the vote is under. Different bills have different rules and procedures. You can find this information on the Rules Committee: rules.house.gov/.

7. After votes, note how Congresswoman Blunt Rochester voted. You can find this information at the clerk.house.gov/ or on congress.gov.

8. At the end of the week, summarize what you learned about this bill.
   a. Mention anything noteworthy that may have happened during the debate or vote.
   b. Talk about your views on the bill. Did your views change during the week as you studied it further?

Please keep the weekly reports to two pages maximum. We are working towards a clear and concise grasp of these important pieces of legislation. Deadline: Reports are due to Staff Assistant via email every week on Friday by COB.

“Our office does an Intern Legislative Project. Basically, the interns are tasked with coming up with a new idea for the Congressman to support, be it a bill idea, approps or other amendment, or letter/committee idea. They work with members of the Legislative staff to refine their ideas and it culminates in a presentation to the Congressman at the end of the interns' semester. The staff also gain their own assigned intern to help with research and administrative tasks. So it's a win-win.” Other offices also have their interns present a bill that they’d like your Rep. to cosponsor and see if he or she will sign on!”

— Andrea Valdes Valderrama
Rep. Darren Soto
**College to Congress** is a nonprofit aimed at supporting congressional interns. College to Congress recently launched C2C-U, a self-paced, online curriculum, mentorship program, and intern resource hub designed to help college students and recent graduates secure and succeed in internships on Capitol Hill. Lessons include Hill Etiquette, Roles & Responsibilities of a Hill Intern, Dressing for the Hill, and more. The course is free to all students and interns here.

Remote interns miss networking!

Readers of the new weekly [Capitol Hill Intern Update](http://eepurl.com/g35FT5) (over half of whom are remote) were asked: “what could offices provide to improve your internship experience?” Responses included:

- “An in-person experience so that I could hustle for more coffee dates, virtual has been hard and lacking to get staffers not in our office to reply!”
- “Being able to build in person connections and having more opportunities to network.”
- “I wish there was more opportunities to meet with other interns on the hill. I feel like I would have more interactions between the offices in I had been in-person and that would have been a great way to build networks.”

Make Internships Engaging

- Host regular intern meetings/check-ins
- Have interns present weekly fun powerpoints on topics of their choice, such as favorite movies
- Set up virtual team trivia or game nights between staff and interns
- Create an “intern and staff Facebook” document with pictures, backgrounds, and fun facts of team members to get to know one another
- Set up virtual coffees with other staffs or have remote meetings with other interns in your state
- Have both DC and DO staffers do “lunches” with interns and explain their roles
- Create more overlap between DC and DO responsibilities! This is a great opportunity to take advantage of the changing roles and greater collaboration between offices
- Allow interns to sit in on constituent meetings
- Encourage interns to visit Hill Happenings and attend briefings or hearings that interest them

Fun activities for interns and staff

- Speed networking (short, timed min-networking sessions...good to meet a large number of staffers although generally surface-level conversations)
- Kahoot, office-wide
- Trivia, office-wide
- Virtual happy hour
- Coffee chats/lunches virtual
- Intern talent show
- Bi-weekly in-person dinner with other interns (outdoors)
- Virtual MarioKart tournament (you can play Mario Kart Tour on your smartphone for free and create a bracket through Challonge)
- Quizbreaker (set up quizzes about your colleagues)
- Murder in Ancient Egypt (espace room style murder mystery event)
- [37 Best Virtual Team Building Activities](http://eepurl.com/q35FT5) in 2020

Help interns stay connected!

Encourage them to sign up for the weekly Capitol Hill Intern Update
Subscription link: [http://eepurl.com/g35FT5](http://eepurl.com/g35FT5)
**Onboarding Interns and Staff during WFH**

All trainings are still required for staff members while working from home. Below is a list of where to find the trainings and whether they are also required by interns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Required for</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020 Information Security Training</td>
<td>All staff and interns that have government devices</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cybertraining@mail.house.gov">cybertraining@mail.house.gov</a></td>
<td><a href="https://housenet.house.gov/for-staff/responsibilities/information-security-awareness-training">https://housenet.house.gov/for-staff/responsibilities/information-security-awareness-training</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If fellows or interns do not have House devices, they can still take the required trainings above as long as they have an account with the Staff Academy. First, create House email address/AD credentials for them (which they can have even if they never actually use the email account). Then, create an account on her behalf as follows:

Select the appropriate link

- If you are a contractor, unpaid intern, or detaillee, please create an account before accessing the Staff Academy website. (Accounts can only be created with a "@mail.house.gov" email address.)

- If you are a full-time employee of the House, but were hired less than a month ago, please create an account before accessing the Staff Academy website.

- If you are a full- or part-time employee of the House hired more than two weeks ago and you are not able to access your Congressional Staff Academy account, please confirm your account.

If the links above don’t work, you can find them on the [Staff Academy page on HouseNet](https://www.house.gov/staff-academy). It can take up to three days for your account to be approved.

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**Congressional IDs**

- Scan your form
- Have a staffer escort the person to the ID office so they can still enter the House building
- New ID office hours: Thursdays 9 AM - 1 PM, Cannon 122
- Contact information: idservices.inboundfax@mail.house.gov or 202-225-0239

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**Equipment Loan Contract example** (not legally enforceable)

This contract is in reference to the loan of __a desktop computer__. The rental period for my Equipment is from __April 15, 2020__ to _______. I understand that it is my responsibility to pick up or receive the Equipment, and to return it to the same location at the end of my rental period unless otherwise agreed by both parties. I agree to return the Equipment in the same condition that it was in on the day I rented it, normal wear and tear excepted.

I understand that there is no charge for the rental of the Equipment. However, in the event that the Equipment is lost or destroyed during my rental period, I agree to replace the Equipment at my own expense. Also, if the Equipment is damaged during my rental period, I agree to have the Equipment fixed or replaced.
Advice on VPNs and physical equipment

“You can request a hard token on Housenet to avoid issuing phones. Hard tokens are free from OIT. Hard token are the analog version of the code generator app we use to access the House servers. It’s a physical keychain that has a screen on it that displays numbers that switch. All 5 of my remote interns use them. You can request them for your interns on Housenet, they are free for offices use.”

— Max Coker, Rep. Joe Neguse

“We have a hard token for both my intern and my boss, and they work great, plus once they are done with their internship you can get them back (so much better than having phones flying around everywhere). It basically looks like a flash drive and works as a VPN. Once they get it, just call tech services and they can help set it up.

I also send the interns the shipping labels – though I’ve only had laptops sent within DC – to avoid the interns fronting the cost. We have an account with UPS so it makes things a lot easier.”

— Tammy Zapata, Rep. Cheri Bustos

“The onboarding packets that staff/interns sign includes a tech form about taking care of the server /equipment, but if you want to be extra sure have them sign an office specific form about their responsibility to care for the equipment. The intern that just sent their tech back sent it to our tech administrator’s home address to avoid it having to go through the house mail processing facility, which I would recommend especially if you’re trying to turn computers around quickly for the next intern class. We then reimbursed them for the shipping costs.

We sent them a computer, headsets for calls, and phones for an RSA token.”

Tours

While the majority of offices are not booking tours during the pandemic, offices are still receiving tour requests from constituents. Since tour sites will likely remain closed for at least several more months, it is worth considering developing a new policy for how to manage incoming requests.

Some examples of messages letting constituents know that tours are not currently available:

**Requesting a new tour:**

Unfortunately, at this time, we are unable to offer tours, as the Capitol, White House, FBI, Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and US Treasury are all closed for tours. If you have any questions regarding your itinerary, please contact our office at ________. We encourage you to schedule a tour next time you visit Washington. If the tour sites are open at that time, we would be more than happy to schedule those for you.

**Update on previously booked tour:**

We know that you had tours that were originally scheduled for the next few days but, unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, all tours have been cancelled. Hopefully, once we are able to provide tours again, we can reschedule for a time that works for you. If you have any questions regarding your itinerary, please contact our office at ________.

**Current status of reopenings:**

- **Open** - White House
- **Open** - Smithsonians (National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall; the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, both located at Eighth and G Streets N.W.; and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum)
- **Open** - (Oct. 1) Washington Monument
- **Closed** - U.S. Capitol
- **Closed** - Treasury
- **Closed** - FBI
- **Closed** - BEP
- **Closed** - Supreme Court

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**Scheduling resource:**

TourTrackr is a digital tool that makes the tour management process easy. You can easily track each request and send automated itineraries. No more Excel or manual copy/paste itineraries emails!

A great system compatible with IQ and Fireside21 for booking and tracking tours and conducting all related correspondence.
# Tour Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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</table>
| White House                                       | Phone: 202-456-2322  
Email: VisitorsOffice@who.eop.gov |
| **US Capitol (USC)/ Dome tours**                  | (202) 593-1762 (Capitol Tour Questions and Reservations)  
Accessibility Services: 202-224-4048  
Congressional Liaisons:  
Beverly Ward – bward@aoc.gov  
202-593-1782  
Lee Ann Brackett (training) — lbracket@aoc.gov  
202-593-0048          |
| FBI                                               | 202-323-0367  
FBITOURS@FBI.gov                                      |
| BEP - Bureau of Engraving and Printing            | Tour Office Phone: 202-874-2330  
Toll free: 1-866-874-2330  
Email: TourScheduler@bep.gov |
| US Treasury                                       | 202-622-0146  
Monique Nelson Monique.Nelson@treasury.gov            |
| Library of Congress                               | 202-707-4683 (Constituent tours)  
cogntours@loc.gov  
Congressional Liaison:  
Kathy Ott – kott@loc.gov  202-707-6577 |
| Supreme Court                                     | (202) 479-3499                                                   |
| State Department                                   | (202)-647-3241 [Voice Mail]                                       |
| The Pentagon                                       | (703) 697-1776                                                   |
| Kennedy Center                                     | 202-416-8341                                                   |
| National Cathedral                                | (202) 537-5700  
tours@cathedral.org                                  |
| Smithsonian                                        | 202-633-5125                                                   |
| U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG)                         | Group Tours: 202-226-2055                                       |
| National Archives                                  | Chrissa Rich (202)-357-6816                                     |
| National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) | Kathleen Mead, meadk@si.edu  
yocomj@si.edu                                      |
| Washington Monument                                | (202) 426-6841                                                   |
Managing and Being Managed

One recurring theme in the survey released with Version 1 of this guide was the need for managers to better communicate better and implement processes to help these staffers succeed professionally and personally while working remotely. Here are some management ideas from staffers for staffers:

Lisa Sherman, Chief of Staff for Rep. Susan Davis:

- The key is to think beyond yourself: What does it look like from your boss’s side of the table? (How many staff is he/she supervising and what are their abilities and needs? What does the long-term big picture for the office look like and how do you fit in? How tight is the office budget? What jobs might come open?) Too many junior staff don’t realize that personnel decisions are about a lot more than themselves. Once there is more work to be done, supervisors will be looking for people to do it. Promotions don’t come out of thin air.

- Then look in the mirror: How is my performance? What does my boss care about and am I doing that well? How is my communication with my supervisor? Where else can I help? What should I ask for that makes sense given what I’ve done so far and what the office needs?

- Think about supervisor/your office: How and when have other people gotten more responsibility? How does my supervisor like to communicated with?

- It’s often the last thing people think of but the best idea to just ask your supervisor directly and early how people move up. Too many people ask everyone (friends, people in other offices, their parents) rather than just asking the person making the decision.

- Show your skills and motivation but don’t be annoyingly pushy and never act like you don’t like your current job.

Christy Wagner, Legislative Director for Rep. Seth Moulton:

- Most supervisors will want to reward good work and teamwork—be sure you’re doing well at these every day. If you are not working well with others it will be hard to move up even if your individual work is good.

- Ask for feedback regularly.

- Ask in the context of wanting to do more to help the office—never, never, never say you need more money/title for your lifestyle—always make it about the team and doing more and better work.

- Be patient. People move up on different timelines depending on what’s happening around them and their own performance. Offices have different turnover rates and you can’t really compare them and people shouldn’t be comparing how long it’s taking them to move up vs. their counterparts or friends. Good workers always move up though sooner or later because bosses need good people to get the job done.

- If your office has regular performance reviews that can be good time to check in and get a sense of whether you’re in line for the next bump.

- You never know when the people ahead of you are going to leave. Life happens. Don’t game it out. Just work hard and you will move up quite possibly when you don’t expect it.

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Tim Hysom, Chief of Staff for Rep. Alan Lowenthal:

• “The days where LCs can do it all themselves are gone. It takes issue area experts to write or review drafts. If you don’t have a culture where the LD cares, it is an uphill battle. I wouldn’t suggest undermining them to go to the member. I would say come armed with data, examples and information that make the case for you, because people respond to data. Come with a mail report that shows the average turnaround time, how many messages are over a certain late threshold, how many letters you’re writing on average per week as the LC, and how much staff time it takes. Ask to virtually sit down with the LD or chief and remind them that we’re in an election year and this is really important—we need to be as responsive as possible, especially if constituents are saying they are unhappy. Propose mild changes at first, and always put it in terms of the boss’ responsiveness to constituents, not in terms of your work as an LC.”

• “Propose ideas that other offices are doing and that are working for them, like weekly meetings. Some sort of group interaction, no matter what form it takes, is helpful since we aren’t constantly talking around the office anymore. Don’t just say there are problems; come armed with potential solutions.”

• “Always show that you learn from edits and mistakes. If you correct something once, make sure you fix it moving forward.”

Staying Healthy

Mental Health Resources

Office of Employee Assistance: Free, confidential counseling is available for both House staff and interns through the Office of Employee Assistance, which is offering appointments over the phone during the pandemic. Schedule appointments by calling 202-225-2400 or by emailing employee.assistance@mail.house.gov.

Other Resources

- Mental Health Screening Tool
- LifeCare
- Self-Care Tips During Times of Heightened Uncertainty
- Healthy Teleworking as an Employee
- TIPS FOR TELEWORKING while Caring for Kids
- Reaction to Action: Resilience through COVID-19
- Compounded Stress Infographic

Tips on Work-Life Balance

- 6 Tips For Better Work-Life Balance - Forbes
- Work-life balance: Tips to reclaim control - Mayo Clinic
- Work Life Balance I Mental Health America
- The Best Way to Achieve Work-Life Balance - The Atlantic

The House Wellness Center is available online at wellnesscenter.house.gov. Under “Services” you can access the following sections:

- LifeCare
- Financial Wellness
- General Health
- Healthy Nutrition
- Quiet Rooms
- Physical Fitness
- Support for Stress
- District Support
- Nutrition Solutions
- StressStop

Nutrition Solutions has access to Diet ID and Zipongo, “digital nutrition solutions for House staff to help address one of the most difficult aspects of well-being: healthy eating.” Zipongo offers access and discounts to Sun Basket, Plantable, Instacart, Amazon Fresh, and Grubhub!
Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman

Congress plays a critical role in both learning from, and protecting, whistleblowers. Additionally, Congress’ constitutionally mandated oversight work very often relies on vital disclosures from Federal workers and employees within the private sector. The House of Representatives took an important step at the start of the 116th session of Congress on January 9th, 2019, to support House offices as they work with whistleblowers by establishing a new independent, nonpartisan House Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman in the Rules Package. In accordance with the House Rules, Sec. 104 (e)(3), the Office has two main responsibilities:

1. Promulgate best practices for whistleblower intake for offices of the House.
2. Provide training for offices of the House on whistleblower intake, including establishing an effective reporting system for whistleblowers, maintaining whistleblower confidentiality, advising staff of relevant laws and policies, and protecting information provided by whistleblowers.
   - Virtual trainings for your staff on best practices for working with whistleblowers
   - You can also reach out directly to schedule personal trainings for you and your interns on what to do on the phones or when dealings: WhistleblowerOffice@mail.house.gov or 202-226-6638

Insight on Congressional collaboration tools

![Collaboration tools chart]

- Slack: 12.2%
- Microsoft Teams: 52.2%
- E-mail: 87.0%
- Text: 63.5%
- Phone calls: 56.5%
- Video conferencing: 42.6%
- Other (please specify): 2.6%
Dear Colleague,

As you know, last month the President issued a Presidential Memorandum directing the Secretary of the Treasury to use his authority pursuant to section 7508A of the Internal Revenue Code to defer the withholding and deposit of employee payroll taxes. On August 28, the Secretary of Treasury issued guidance to employers to defer withholding if an employee's bi-weekly paychecks are less than $4,000, the equivalent of approximately $104,000 a year. The guidance would defer collection of the payroll tax starting September 1, 2020, through the end of the 2020 calendar year.

The taxes are deferred, and absent subsequent action by Congress, employees still owe, and employers are still required to collect the taxes. Starting in January of 2021, employers would be required to begin withholding taxes from paychecks at higher rates to fully collect the tax owed by April 30, 2021.

The guidance does not require employers to defer this withholding. Like all pay disbursing officials, the CAO must weigh the benefit of the deferral against the challenges of implementing this change and the practical impacts to the House workforce.

After reviewing the guidance and considering the unique structure of the House, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, with the concurrence of the Committee on House Administration, has determined that implementing the deferral would not be in the best interests of the House or our employees. As a result, we will not implement the payroll tax deferral.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits at 202-225-1435 if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Philip G. Kiko
Chief Administrative Officer
Submit Feedback

If you would like to submit feedback on information listed in this guide, share resources or ideas that you would like included in future updates, or if you have problems or questions you would love addressed in future guides, please submit it here.

MODERNIZATION
STAFF ASSOCIATION

The Modernization Staff Association (MSA) is a bipartisan group that focuses on internal reform issues that primarily affect junior Hill staffers. Our mission is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Congressional staff by modernizing systems that affect their day-to-day operations. For more information or to join, please contact Ananda Bhatia at ananda.bhatia@mail.house.gov or 703-728-4293.

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