

MODERNIZATION
STAFF
ASSOCIATION

118th Congress — HOUSE

Staff Assistant/Legislative Correspondent

Best Practices Guide



Staff Assistant/ Legislative Correspondent Best Practices Guide

Modernization Staff Association

Staff Assistants (SAs) and Legislative Correspondents (LCs) have some of the most difficult and undervalued jobs on the Hill. They are responsible for the majority of a Congressional office's constituent correspondence, or making sure that constituents are represented, which is the primary job of any member of Congress. Unfortunately, both jobs can be incredibly daunting because there isn't one comprehensive place to go to learn the responsibilities of the job. Instead, staffers are often expected to learn on the job by figuring out the right people to ask. **The purpose of this guide is to alleviate some of that burden by compiling the wisdom and expertise of current junior staffers and including all of the best practices in one place.**

In July of 2022, the Modernization Staff Association closed a survey sent to junior Hill staffers on their experiences. The survey was completed by the following groups, 160 people in total:

- 64 Staff Assistants, 64 Legislative Correspondents, 26 SA/LCs, and 6 others
- 101 House staffers and 59 Senate staffers
- 110 Democrats, 48 Republicans, and 2 Independents

The results from the survey are displayed throughout this guide through graphs of poll response. All of the graphs and statistics show the results from House staffers only, while some of the anecdotal answers are pulled from both House and Senate staffers when applicable.

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 one of our Executive Board Members:

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NAVIGATING CAPITOL HILL

Senate Office Buildings

For Senate office buildings, you will need to know the building as well as the room number. In all buildings, the first digit indicates the floor

Russell (RSOB)

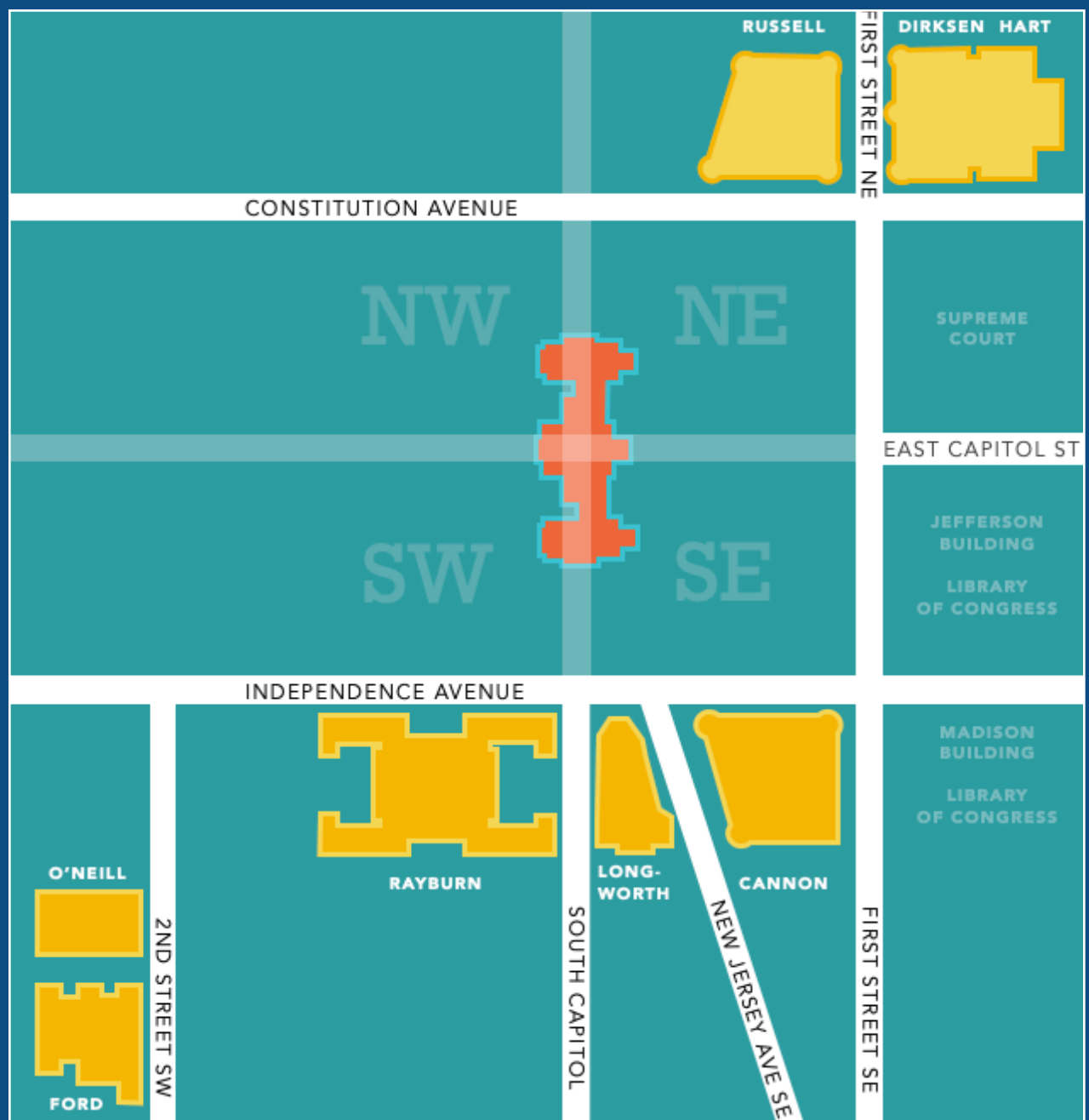
- Three digit room numbers preceded by "SR"
- Example: SR 216 is on the second floor of Russell

Dirksen (DSOB)

- Three digit room numbers preceded by "SD"
- Example: SD 145 is on the first floor of Dirksen

Hart (HSOB)

- Three digit room numbers preceded by "SH"
- Example: SH 320 is on the third floor of Hart



House Office Buildings

For House offices, you can tell the building and floor by the room number.

O'Neill (OHOB)

- O'Neill and Ford are located on Second St. SW

Ford (FHOB)

- O'Neill and Ford are located on Second St. SW

Rayburn (RHOB)

- Four digit rooms beginning with "2"
- The second digit indicates the floor
- Example: 2449 RHOB is on the fourth floor of Rayburn

Longworth (LHOB)

- Four digit rooms beginning with "1"
- The second digit indicates the floor
- Example: 1223 LHOB is on the second floor of Longworth

Cannon (CHOB)

- Any three-digit room number
- The first digit indicates the floor
- Example: 327 CHOB is on the third floor of Cannon

Basement room numbers in Longworth and Rayburn begin with "B." No House Members have offices on those floors, but committee staff do.

GETTING STARTED

Onboarding and Offboarding

Staff Assistants are often responsible for onboarding both new staffers and new interns. We recommend developing a formal onboarding process with your leadership team, and creating your own version of an onboarding and offboarding checklist:

ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

Before you start:

- ☐ Read, sign, and return your offer letter to _____.
- ☐ Complete the onboarding forms and send the completed and signed PDF with a color scan of your passport to the Chief of Staff.
- ☐ Review the payroll and benefits memo. Contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits or the Chief of Staff if you have any questions.
- ☐ Read the employee handbook and fill out the acknowledgment form on the last page.

Your First Week:

Contact the Staff Assistant for:

- ☐ Office key
- ☐ House ID
- ☐ Business cards
- ☐ Desk and computer
- ☐ House email
- ☐ Access to CRM, the Common Drive, Slack, Trello, BGOV, text chains, Google calendar (including vacation calendar) and tutorials on how to use them
- ☐ Parking or Transit Benefits
- ☐ Schedule a welcome lunch/drinks

Contact House Call or technology office for:

- ☐ Official cell phone and/or laptop
- ☐ Setting up your official email on your phone

Contact your manager to review

- ☐ Standing meetings
- ☐ Performance review structure
- ☐ Org chart
- ☐ Standard practices under your role (briefings, scheduling requests, etc.)

Other:

- ☐ Work with your manager to schedule one-on-ones with everyone in your office and dial into the district office's weekly meeting
- ☐ Schedule and complete required trainings
- ☐ Update tech inventory spreadsheet
- ☐ Complete the emergency contact information form
- ☐ Add yourself to the staff Facebook
- ☐ Update the vacation tracker
- ☐ Talk to the Chief of Staff (COS) or district director (DD) about benefits (transportation, health care, etc.)
- ☐ Review TSP benefits with COS or DD
- ☐ Talk to SA about signing up for basic CRS courses
- ☐ Review and adhere to the office cyber security policy
- ☐ Download DomeWatch to keep track of the House calendar and Dome Directory to learn the names and committees of House members
- ☐ Take the [New Staff Orientation](#) course through Staff Academy

OFFBOARDING CHECKLIST

Before you leave:

- ☐ Change your address with the House Finance Office
- ☐ Change your address with the Congressional Federal Credit Union
- ☐ Submit a Withdrawal Application to the House Transit Benefits Program, if applicable
- ☐ End your participation in the Student Loan Repayment Program, if applicable
- ☐ Cancel your membership to the House Fitness Center, if applicable
- ☐ Close Library of Congress borrower account, if applicable
- ☐ Contact the Ethics Committee to determine if you are required to submit a Financial Disclosure Termination Report
- ☐ Submit all official expense reimbursement claims to the Financial Administrator
- ☐ Contact the Staff Assistant to remove your profiles from the Common Drive, text chains, Slack, and email (a month out)
- ☐ Thin out your files on the Common Drive and remove any unnecessary files
- ☐ Complete an exit memo and review it with your manager
- ☐ Schedule an exit interview with the Chief of Staff and the Congressperson
- ☐ Join the Alumni facebook group
- ☐ Leave your future contact information with the Chief of Staff
- ☐ Update Tech inventory

On your last day:

- ☐ Return office key
- ☐ Return House ID (if applicable)
- ☐ Return official cell phone and/or computer
- ☐ If the device requires a passcode, tape it to the screen of the device
- ☐ Go to the parking office if you have a parking sticker or plate
- ☐ Create an Out of Office reply on Outlook indicating you no longer work for the office and indicate who interested parties should contact
- ☐ Log out and remove your Apple ID/iCloud from all devices before returning them

Required Trainings

Training	Required for	Contact	Link
Ethics Training	All staff and interns	202-225-7103	https://house.csod.com/LMS/BrowseTraining/BrowseTraining.aspx?s=548#f=1&s=533,548&o=1
Workplace Rights and Responsibilities (covers previous sexual harassment training)	All staff and interns	202-225-9500	https://house.csod.com/catalog/CustomPage.aspx?id=221000337
Cybersecurity Training	All staff and interns that have government devices	cybertraining@mail.house.gov	https://house.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/curriculum/197c4d55-cca3-4e38-9028-402914bfa488

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 their behalf as follows:

- If you are a contractor, unpaid intern, or detailee, 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. It can take up to three days for your account to be approved.

- Send Interns to College to Congress classes
- How to get a badge from the ID office (112 Cannon)
 - Scan and send them your form
 - Have a staffer escort the person to the ID office so they can still enter the House building
 - Contact information: idservices.inboundfax@mail.house.gov or 202-225-0239

Office Support Requests


Once again, HouseNet has it all. Click on “My Service Requests” to submit requests for anything from carpet cleaning to updating your website to ordering furniture. There is a difference between Superintendent, CAO, and AOC requests, and you will be sent to the correct form. Here is a break down of these differences:


House Superintendent 202-225-4141	Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) 202-225-8000
<i>(If it's part of the building, it's AOC)</i>	<i>(If it's NOT part of the building, it's CAO)</i>
REPAIR WORK: Any item that is part of the building (office door, built-in safe, built-in cabinet, walls, TV cable, etc.)	REPAIR WORK: Freestanding furniture and equipment (computers, copiers, desks, file cabinets)
MOVE REQUESTS: Moving any item that is part of the building (wall-mounted TV), boxes, crates, artwork, and Member/staff personal items	MOVE REQUESTS: Moving freestanding furniture and equipment (computers, copiers, desks, safes, file cabinets, chairs, tables)
EVENT SUPPORT: Trash can delivery/pickup, power strips, vacuum carpet, room lighting, ice, thermostat, microphone and cable TV connections	EVENT SUPPORT: Room reservations, coordinate and schedule event set-up, projector, TV/DVD delivery
BUILDING SERVICES: Cleaning, trash removal.recycling, paint and glass work, heating/AC, pest control, plumbing, electrical	
CARPET SERVICES: Vacuuming	CARPET SERVICES: Carpet shampooing, repair and installation
KEYS: Lock/key services, doors, built-in cabinets in Rayburn)	KEYS: Keys to filing cabinets/desks
ART & FRAMING: Basic black/brown framing with no matting (no cost) and hanging all frames	ART & FRAMING: Walnut framing, matting (MRA cost), Framing Dropoff counter
ENGRAVING: Engraving name plates for room doors/walls and informational signage for building	ENGRAVING: Nameplates for committee dais (only)
TELEVISIONS: TV installation/mounting on wall	TELEVISIONS: TV purchase and delivery
SAFES: Built-in safes (Rayburn and Longworth)	SAFES: Standalone safes
BOXES: Move boxes (reusable boxes available in various recycle locations)	BOXES: Order boxes
Power cords/strips	Computer technical assistance 202-225-6002 (option 2)
Mount and build shelves (box unit, TV shelf)	Provide standalone furniture
Ice	Cafeterias/catering
Light bulbs	Lamps (delivery/pickup)
Clocks	Drapes

COMMENDATIONS & GREETINGS

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

WH.GOV





CONTACT US

MESSAGE TYPE*

-select an item-

PREFIX*

-select an item-

FIRST NAME*

MIDDLE NAME

LAST NAME*

SUFFIX

-select an item-

PRONOUNS

-select an item-

EMAIL*

email@example.com

PHONE*

(123) 456-7890

COUNTRY*

United States

STREET*

CITY*

STATE*

-select an item-

ZIP/POSTAL CODE*

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY?

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.
- The Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) cannot give offices official updates.
- Once OLA logs in greetings, Presidential Correspondence takes over the process and your 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.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 4, 2017

As Commander in Chief of our Armed Forces, it is an honor to celebrate the 227th birthday of the United States Coast Guard.

Since 1790, the Coast Guard has served on the front lines of defense of our Nation, patrolled our waters, and provided search and rescue. Today, in the Gulf of Mexico, the Coast Guard intercepts dangerous drug cartels and human traffickers from entering our country illegally. In the Middle East, the Coast Guard participates in key operations to eliminate terrorist threats. And in the freezing Arctic, Coast Guard Cutters break through solid ice, enabling American ships to navigate safely through the harshest conditions.

No matter the mission, the brave men and women of our Coast Guard proudly answer the call to serve, and they remain *Semper Paratus*—Always Ready. As our Nation celebrates this special occasion, we honor the incredible courage and dedication of all our coastguardsmen and women, and particularly those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. We also thank our military families, whose steadfast resolve and patriotic devotion anchors our home front.

Congratulations to the United States Coast Guard on its 227th birthday. May God continue to bless the men and women of the Armed Forces and the United States of America.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 4, 2010

I send greetings to all those celebrating the 220th birthday of the United States Coast Guard.

From the earliest days of our Nation's history, America's livelihood has been inextricably linked to the seas. While the breadth of the Coast Guard's missions has changed since its founding in 1790, the commitment and honor of those who serve in this branch of our Armed Forces have not wavered.

As women and men of the Coast Guard, you belong to the greatest military force the world has ever known. In addition to defending our Nation at home and abroad, the United States Coast Guard protects America's maritime environment, safeguards commerce on our waters, and performs countless humanitarian and rescue operations.

This year, the United States Coast Guard has repeatedly exhibited its awesome capacity and might. When the tragic earthquake struck Haiti, the Coast Guard conducted critical operations to support relief efforts. The Coast Guard continues to play a central role in our Nation's efforts to contain and repair the oil spill's damage to the Gulf Coast. Wherever their exemplary efforts are required, Coast Guardsmen persistently personify their motto, remaining always ready.

On behalf of a grateful Nation, I thank you again for your service. As you celebrate this milestone, I hope you look back with pride on the tremendous accomplishments of the United States Coast Guard.



GEORGE W. BUSH

Congratulations on earning the rank of Eagle Scout.

Becoming an Eagle Scout is an outstanding achievement that reflects your hard work and dedication. Your accomplishment serves as an example of excellence and a source of pride for your community.

With best wishes for continued success,

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

Please Note: The White House does not do military retirements, please contact the military congressional liaison office for these requests

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 THIS year
- 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*

DRIVING THE MEMBER

For those who are tasked with driving, such as SAs, LCs, etc. there are several informal tips and tricks that are worth knowing well ahead of time.

The MOST important item to have in your vehicle is a dashboard phone mount to use to place your phone as a GPS. Unless you are driving your boss to or from the airport, we highly recommend you put the address in your GPS even if you know the route. Roads in DC are often closed and a GPS will direct you to the fastest route if there's a lot of traffic (there is always traffic). Below are several other things to note if this is your first time driving your member.

- Always know where you are driving and what event is taking place as your boss will often ask where they are going
- Always have ready in your car extra business cards for the boss, an umbrella, unused mask, and any other items he or she requests (often gum, etc.)
- Drive smoothly and avoid being overly chatty
- Use your radio for either music or news (NPR, etc.)
- Get to the plaza early when waiting for votes, you do not want to be at the end of the line out of view of the steps
- Try to know where the front door of a building is and learn to parallel park
- Become a pro at parallel parking!
- Leave a book in your car, waiting for an event to finish can be very boring
- Be flexible and know where your hazards are
- Ask to attend events if applicable, these are the perks of driving



PHONES

Staffers and interns answering the phones are first in line when it comes to engaging with many constituents, and it's important to keep in mind how important this role is. Providing constituent service with quality and positivity is a top priority for Congressional offices. Answering calls is typically a big part of most interns' responsibilities and one of the first things they should be trained on.

General tips for creating a phone protocol:

- Make sure to come up with clear guidance for when interns should and should not engage in policy discussions.
- Come up with a place they can find talking points, such as a shared Google doc or Slack/Teams channel. You can use approved form letter language to help craft talking points.
- If someone calls for another staffer, decide whether your protocol is to put the caller on hold and see if they are available, give out a staffer's contact info, or simply take a message.
- Train interns by remaining nearby when they are on the phones and giving them suggestions and corrections after their calls.
- Check voicemail at least once a week.

General guidance for interns:

- 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.



SAMPLE VOICEMAIL MESSAGE:

Hello, you have reached the office of _____. If you are receiving this message, either we are assisting another caller or we are currently closed. Please leave your name, number, e-mail, and a brief message and someone from our team will be sure to reach out to assist you as soon as possible. Thank you for your patience, and have a great day.

Phone Policy example

Below is a full guide on answering the phones for reference that another Congressional office developed:

General Instructions

- If you hear the phone ring, please don't let it ring for more than 2-3 times. Additionally, if you feel like you are the only person answering phones during your shift, please communicate with the 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 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 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 their website are good reference points!
- If someone calls and they are not a constituent, redirect them to their respective 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. We are the "official" office and can only answer questions/provide resources for their public office. Guide the caller to the campaign website, if necessary, but do not speak on behalf of the campaign/convey campaign information.

Phone Policy example (continued)

Voicemails

Each time you start your shift, check if there are any voicemails and appropriately log them into CRM as if you would log a phone call. You can also set up a schedule of alternating people to check and empty the voicemail.

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 the scheduler.

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

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 CRM.

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

Responses to Common Questions and Inquiries

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 a constituent and they are 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]? They have 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', they are also is working with local leaders to resolve this issue in the 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 their 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 they would like to consider/thinks affects our community, etc." Only log in CRM 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 their behalf, I know they will appreciate hearing your views. Please let me know if I can pass along your message regarding whether to support/vote against this bill" Only log in CRM if they want to pass the message along.

Q: "I want to meet the Congressperson / talk to them personally"

A: "The Congressperson enjoys meeting constituents and hearing their perspective. They 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).

FLAGS

Handling flag requests is a responsibility of the SA. Constituents order flags, usually by going to the representative's website and choosing flag requests. Constituents handle this part on their own. Payments are usually set up to be electronic.

1. You will create an account under the [Flag Website](#), where you will be prompted to approve flag requests every time they come in through an alert in your email.
2. After you approve requests, you can often also track their process through your CRM.
3. The Flag office delivers flags a few weeks after they are approved. When flags are delivered to the office, go into the flag portal to get the right shipping information, write that out on a sticker franking label or a franking stamp, stick it on a white flag shipping envelopes, seal it up and ship! The Office Supply Store sells the flag envelopes.
4. To ship, you can take your package first to USPS in Longworth Basement and ask them for tracking. This will help if a constituent comes back and says they didn't receive their package. Then, drop the package off at the Postal Operations office downstairs by the Dry Cleaners.
5. As a courtesy, you may email the constituent and let them know that their flag has been shipped!

A full explanation of the flag process can be found on [this page on Housenet](#). The most complicated situation is when a constituent sends a physical check. When this happens, you have to:

1. Fill out both the AOC Flag Request Form AND the Flag Payment Certificate of Deposit.
2. Purchase the flag yourself from the Office Supply Store. Ask them for a flag flying fee card and turn in your Flag Payment Certificate of Deposit and check while you are there.
3. Take the flag, the AOC Flag Request Form, AND the flag flying fee card to the Flag Office.

Flag Office

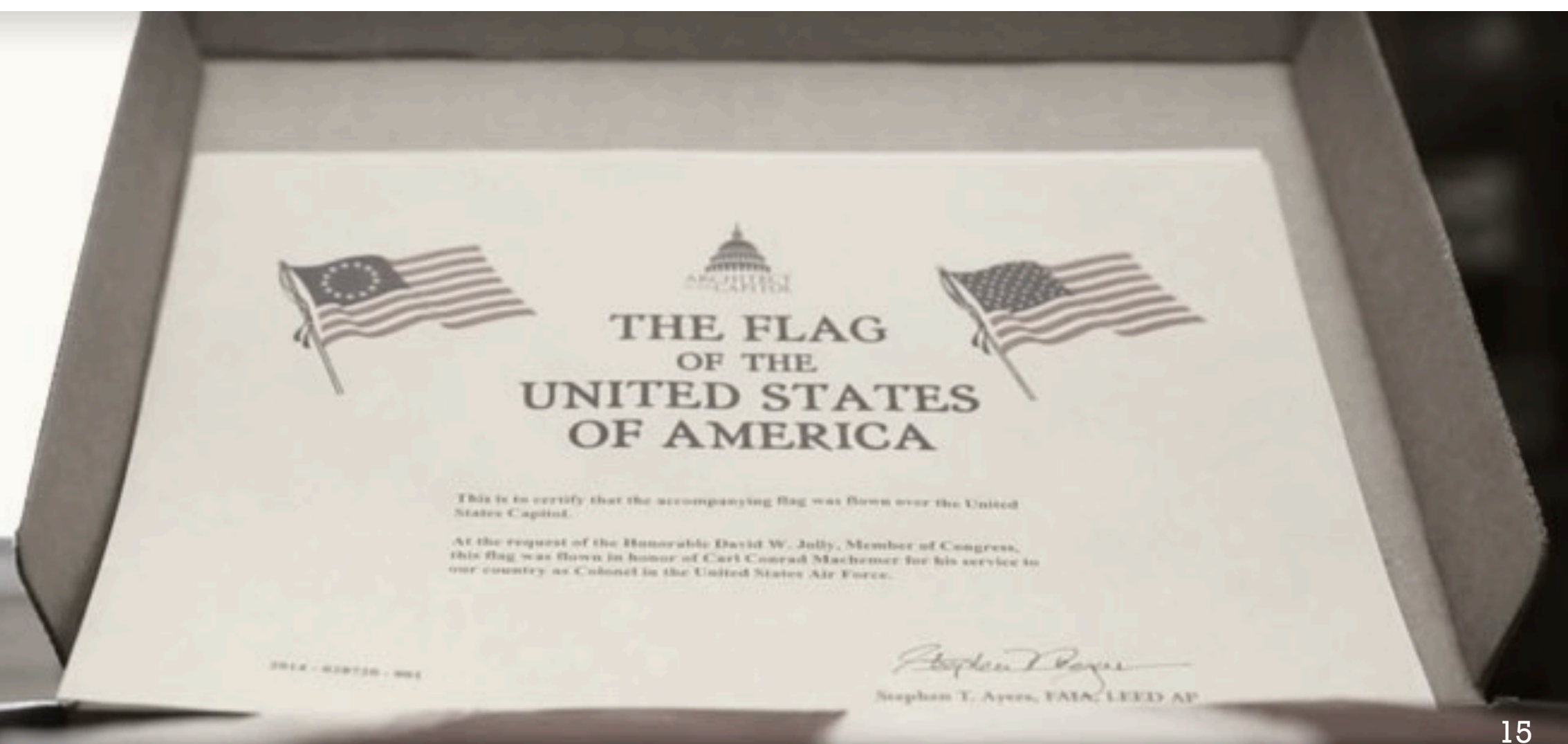
HT-12, The Capitol
202-228-4239

Office Supply Store

Longworth B217
202-225-3321

House Postal Operations

Longworth B240
202-226-3764



SURVEY INSIGHTS: FLAGS

Please describe any issues you have with the flag process, ways you'd like to see it improve, or aspects that are working well

(for a full list, see the appendix at the end of this guide)

- ✦ Wish the flag office would inform our office when flags we walk over are ready to be picked up, also that we wouldn't have to go pick those up
- ✦ Flags being shipped out from the flag office using the MRA of that office
- ✦ House mailroom should notify you by email if you have flags available for pickup that weren't delivered successfully
- ✦ Tell constituents that they can only order flags if they live in our district and have flags automatically sent out
- ✦ For the House side, I think having to physically turn in flag forms/checks was tough during the pandemic. I can see how that wouldn't really be an issue now but at the time that was super difficult to coordinate
- ✦ It's currently an ordeal to fix a typo made by the constituent when they submit their form. If there's a typo on the certificate text, the flag office requires a written letter signed by the Member fixing the typo to be faxed to them. If there was a way to just simply edit the certificate text before the flag is flown, that would be great
- ✦ Having an automated flag service that tracks the flag. So many of our flags have been lost because there's no way to track them
- ✦ People without internet have to send checks and if they write the incorrect amount they have to resend the checks. It is hard for constituents to remember to make the check for the supply account. It is hard to track the flags when they come through IQ and not the capitol flag portal
- ✦ Flag office's list outside of "completed flags" isn't updated a lot
- ✦ I shouldn't have to walk down to the office and look at a bulletin board to see if it's ready for pickup. The fact there's not an automated system or email courtesy existing in 2022 is ridiculous
- ✦ The boxes the flags are delivered to the office in are too small. Once the flag is folded, it no longer properly fits into the box
- ✦ I wish there was a way to see all flags that our office has processed, even ones that have been closed out. It's easy to accidentally close them out then lose them forever

What changes would you most like to see to the flag process?



Ananda Bhatia founded MSA in 2019, and one area she has worked to reform is the flag request process. Ananda teamed up with fellow staffer, Anna Whitney, to create a "Domino's Pizza tracker" for flags. After months of meetings, they brought a prototype created by Code for America programmers to House officials to demonstrate a potential solution. They're currently waiting on next steps. [Read more here.](#)

ROOM RESERVATIONS

When outside groups ask to reserve a room, run it by the appropriate supervisors. Once you get an approval:

Ask for as many details as possible to make your room search as easy as possible.

- How many people are you expecting?
- What is your main date and backup dates for the event?
- Will you be providing food, or will you be using House Catering?
- Will you need any special equipment?

Consult these resources to check on room availabilities:

- You can book self-schedule rooms yourself using this online portal
- If you have any trouble with the portal or these rooms, contact first call: x58000
- Reserve Speaker's rooms at RoomReservation@mail.house.gov
- Capitol Visitors Center
- If you have exhausted all formal reservation options, we recommend you reach out to Committees for use of their rooms (best to start with the committees your boss sits on).
- If you cannot find anything on the House side, the Senate side does have options for reserving Senate Rules Committee rooms and SVC rooms — MSA recommends reaching out to a Senate office you have a relationship with, and ask them for assistance as a last resort (if the group MUST have a room.)



TOURS

Most Congressional offices offer tours to their constituents. In addition to training their interns to give Capitol tours, it is up to each office to decide what other federal government sites in DC they want to offer. You can sign up your interns for mandatory Capitol tour training [here](#), but act quickly — spots often fill up fast!

Offices usually track tours through their CRM, a separate spreadsheet, or a separate email account. You can also subscribe to an add-on like [TourTrackr](#), a digital tool compatible with IQ and Fireside21 that helps track each request and sends automated itineraries.

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) congtours@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
Smithsonians	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

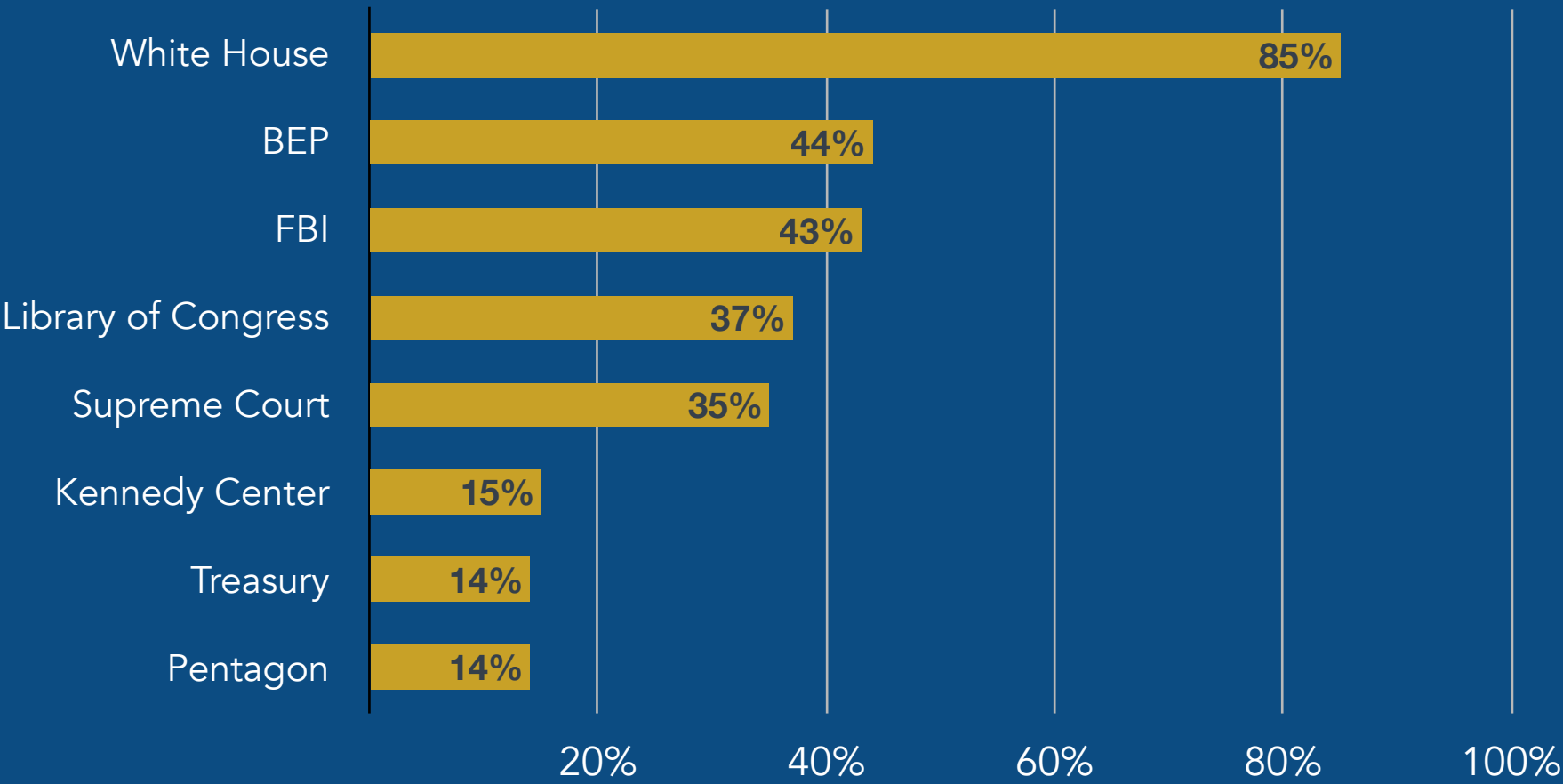
SURVEY INSIGHTS: TOURS

Please describe any issues you have with the tour request process, ways you'd like to see it improve, or aspects that are working well

(for a full list, see the appendix at the end of this guide)

- * Zero heads up from CVC that it was opening, no clear idea on phase 2. WH keeps changing their rules, HOB entrances keep changing due to tours
 - * There are 5 completely disparate systems. Booking tours takes up half of my days sometimes, meaning I lose an immense amount of productivity. CVC, CAO, and Capitol Security failed to give good guidelines, and most of their guidance contradicted itself. Staff were informed of tours starting at the same time constituents were, and tours AND trainings commenced in the middle of a session week. Most staffers and interns had never used the tour request system. Everyone feels like they're drowning
 - * Allow constituents to book more of their tours, I like what LOC and African American did with online booking
- * A centralized portal would be amazing. Would also like for information to be readily accessible, unlike current trends
 - * Just POC for these agencies
 - * Have a document with language for various situations (WH tour req, Cap tour sched, Cap tour denied, etc.) that you can copy-paste into emails
 - * The CVC should just give each office a certain amount of tickets per week or month, then we could distribute them how we want without any more restrictions for a Capitol tour
 - * I wish there was constantly an updated list that said what is open and if constituents can book tours themselves

For which agencies or organizations does your office book tours?



8 or fewer offices: Washington Monument, National Archives, NMAAHC, Botanic Garden, State Department

BUILDING A MAIL PROGRAM

Building a mail program is one of the most critical functions of a Congressional office. Constituent communications are the front line of the office. You are the primary people your constituents will interact with, and you represent the office and the Congressperson (MOC) to the public. You also carry out the most essential function of government: making sure the voices of the people are heard and represented. Most importantly, you are responsible for getting constituents in need of direct help to your casework team. This expertise is underutilized and undervalued, but this work is incredibly important, and it's great to innovate. Whether you are building a new program from scratch or looking to improve the program you have already, below are ideas taken from experts and fellow LCs on how to maximize your potential.

1. Choosing a Constituent Relations Manager (CRM)

All Hill offices use a CRM (constituent/customer relations manager) to handle their intake, management, and output of mail. The current approved CRMs for the House are:



While the LC usually doesn't have direct say over what CRM the office uses, it is important to know that you can do your own research on other products and suggest them to your leadership team. You will spend most of your time at work on your CRM, so choosing the best one makes a big difference on the quality of your work and saving you time.

2. Establishing a letter approval process

Most offices have some structure for reviewing form letters, or the messages they send to constituents in bulk on a single topic. Some offices require letters to be drafted by an intern and edited by the LC, legislative assistant (LA), legislative director (LD) chief and MOC.

We recommend having only one person above the LC make the final approval for form letters, whether that be a LA, LD or the COS. The MOC is often the hardest person to include in the process because they are the busiest.

If your office wants more people or the MOC involved, try creating a compromise where only some letters need to go through a lengthy approval while others are streamlined. For example, maybe letters that will go to less than 100 people or for temporary campaigns that won't be relevant in the future only need LD approval, but all larger letters go to the MOC.

Regardless of how many people are included in the letter approval process, it is important to establish clear turnaround times and a system to hold everyone accountable. You should have a deadline for letters at each stage of the process. For example, after an intern or the LC identifies that a new letter needs to be written, they have three days to write a first draft, then the LA has three days to make edits, then the COS has three days to make the final edits and approval.

Accountability aids:

- Use a system like Trello or the one built within Indigov that can send reminders when something is late
- Create a Slack or Microsoft Teams channel for mail where the LC sends updates to the entire team on what is late
- Have the LC check in one-on-one with the other staffers in the letter approval process when they are near or past the deadline



3. Campaign and non-campaign mail

Campaign messages are emails generated by outside organizations or lobbying groups. For example, constituents might see a Facebook post or email asking them to “click here to tell your Congressperson that you support this issue,” and then you will receive 60 identical messages from different people.

- Often 80% of incoming messages are campaign emails.
- Sometimes constituents aren’t even aware that they have sent these emails.

Non-campaign messages are personal messages written directly to you by your constituents. This includes casework.

One of the common problems in Congressional offices is that they treat all mail the same, when the difference between these two types of messages is substantial. Instead, it is better to develop separate goals, processes, and metrics for these different kinds of mail. **Keep in mind that only about half of constituents who receive a reply from your office will even open the message** and constituents are less likely to open a letter from you if they sent a campaign message (source: [CMF](#)). On the other hand, constituents who write personally include those that need direct help that need to get to your casework team quickly. Here are some tips for distinguishing processes between the two types of mail:

- **Set clear guidelines for what messages do not receive any response.** Aside from the constituents who indicate they do not want a response, this could include spam, links with little to no context, conspiracy theories, threats, messages containing profanity, responses to articles, etc.
- **Create a threshold for the number of messages necessary to draft a new form letter.** Offices often decide on a mandatory threshold of anywhere from 10 to 100 incoming messages on a given subject before they begin the process of writing a new form letter. Keep in mind that a higher threshold on form letters creates more time for responding to personal messages.
- **Consider writing a general response form letter.** A general response can be sent to any campaign messages that fall below the threshold you set for writing a new letter or to non-campaign messages that don’t warrant a full response for whatever reason. These messages usually begin with “Thank you for writing. Our team is taking your thoughts into consideration. In the meantime, here is what we’ve been up to over the last few weeks” and include an update of the team’s work in Congress and in the district. These letters are usually updated between once a week and once a month, and drafting them can be a great intern project.
- **Consider not responding** to campaign mail, sending all campaign mail a general response, or using a CRM that responds to campaign mail automatically.
- **Consider a separate system for responding to non-campaign messages.** This could include calling constituents over the phone, emailing everyone who writes in personally with a personal message back, or assigning non-campaign messages by issue area to your legislative team.

4. Creating goals and gauging effectiveness

Your average response time, or average turnaround time, is the average of how many days it takes to respond to an email after a constituent writes it. This is one of the most common metrics for gauging the effectiveness of a mail program because it is easily measurable and reflects what constituents typically care about most — getting an answer back quickly.

- **Have clear conversations with your leadership team** about what is possible and what the priority is for the office. A common challenge LCs face are unrealistic expectations from their leadership or MOC, especially around turnaround times for mail. Make sure you are able to manage their expectations and come prepared with numbers to show what is realistic for you. For instance, spend a week noting the average amount of time it takes for you to draft form letters, batch emails, etc. and compare that with the average number of messages you receive each week.
- **Set clear goals and create a system for tracking them.** During these talks, decide as a team what metrics make the most sense to track, what goals you want to meet and how often, and how you will track them and hold yourself accountable. The most common metric to measure is an average response time, which you can track through a mail report.
- **Be realistic about balancing the quality and quantity of letters and the turnaround time.** Constituents often care more about getting a fast response than a thorough one. It is often better to use a general response for campaign emails and short, to the point responses or voicemails to non-campaign emails than to slow down the process by sending specific form letters to small campaigns or unnecessarily lengthy direct messages to constituents.
- **Consider creating different goals for campaign and non-campaign mail response times.** Campaign messages are often faster to respond to, but non-campaign messages might be your office's priority. Separating the two gives a clearer picture of how quickly constituents are truly being reached.

5. Designing and utilize mail reports

In order to keep the MOC and staff informed about what constituents in the district are writing in about, it is recommended to create a weekly or biweekly mail report that includes information such as the following:

- Number of incoming calls, emails, and letters
- Number of outgoing calls, emails, and letters
- Top 3 to 10 issues in
- Top form letters sent out
- Average response time
- Number of messages waiting for a response/in a batch
- Number of form letters waiting to be written/approved

You can distinguish the average response time and messages in and out between campaign and non-campaign mail to give a better picture of what real people are directly writing about and what organizations are focusing on.

6. Managing a backlog

One of the biggest problems LCs face is managing a large backlog of emails. Backlogs are especially common right after a new MOC comes into office or when a new LC inherits one, but many offices struggle with a backlog that they never fully clear. Here are a few ideas to prevent it or get it under control:

- **Implement a Mail Zero Day where the entire staff works on clearing the backlog.** From the Congressional Management Foundation: "Some offices utilize a "Mail Zero Day," with the goal of having no pending mail at the end of the day. The Mail Zero Day approach can also be used on a regular basis to prevent backlogs and instill a sense of teamwork among the staff. It is important that everyone knows that mail is an office-wide responsibility, and backlogs are not just an individual's problem. It's not the staffer who will be voted out of office by dissatisfied constituents."
- **Set clear goals for yourself.** Set aside an hour each day on your calendar that is dedicated to responding to mail, and increase the number of letters you write per week.
- **Ask other staffers or interns to help.** Writing first drafts of letters is great experience for interns, but if this is not enough help, see if the office would consider asking LAs to pitch in a letter or two a week within their issue areas. For interns, you can assign goals for the week such as in this example:
- Example Intern Weekly Project (Source: Delaney Deskin, Rep. Ed Perlmutter)
Assign out in your CRM which response they are going to do:
 - Personal responses to draft:
 - ➡ Nicholas (1)
 - ➡ Grace (1)
 - ➡ Sydney (2)
 - ➡ Noah (1)
 - Form Letters to edit or draft:
 - ➡ Nicholas - School Meals
 - ➡ Grace - Gun Violence Prevention, Russia/Ukraine
 - ➡ Sydney - Protecting Transgender Youth
 - ➡ Noah - Student Letters -- Homework and School Uniforms
 - Petitions
 - ➡ One petition of about 150 signatures came in, everyone should take an equal number
- **Close out all messages from before a certain date or big event,** like the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some offices have mail waiting from months or even years ago. It is helpful to remember that most constituents care more about being responded to quickly than getting an in-depth response, and some people might be more upset to receive an answer six months later than to not receive one at all. If you are struggling with responding to 10,000 letters, it might make more sense to close out any extremely old messages and focus on the new ones coming in.

7. Maintaining form letters and overhauling old letters

It is common for offices to have hundreds of form letters in rotation at a given time, many of which cover issue areas that are constantly evolving. Keeping form letters up to date can be overwhelming, but there are some strategies that can make it easier:

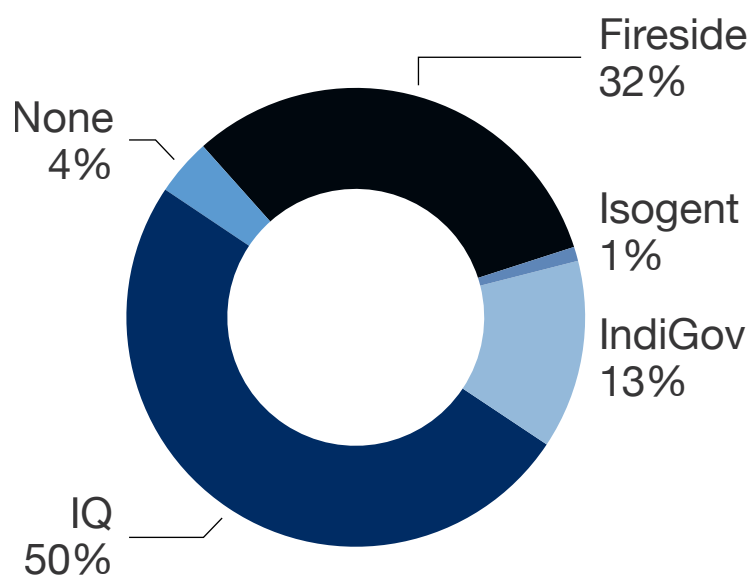
- Take a day, week, or month or do a full overhaul. Create a spreadsheet with your active form letters and have your interns help go through each letter and either approve, edit, or archive them. This can be done once a year during a downtime such as August recess or right after transitioning to a new Congress.
- Create a rotation system for old form letters. Regularly go through any form letter older than three to six months and edit or archive them. This is a great intern project!
- Close out form letters after the campaign is over. Get into the habit of only keeping your active form letters marked as active. Whenever a specific campaign about a particular issue ends, or after a bill is voted on or an issue leaves the news, mark that form letter as inactive or archive it. This will help you maintain your letters as you go instead of accumulating a mass of letters that will eventually need to be deleted.

Other best practices for Constituent Mail:

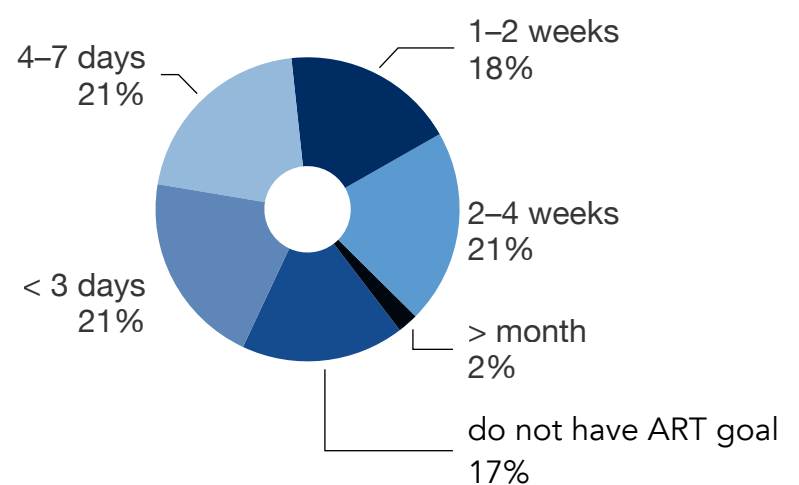
- Create the habit of checking mail the same time every week
- Use letter libraries such as DemCom and the LC listservs for example form letters
- Look into paying for additional tools different offices use such as Polyscribe that automatically writes first drafts of form letters based on previously written content
- Check out tips from the Congressional Management Foundation on addressing common mail issues

BATCHING, ELECTRONIC MAIL AND PHYSICAL MAIL

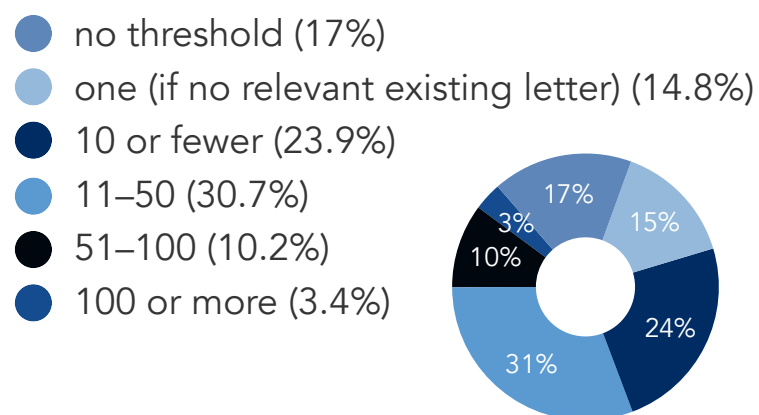
WHICH CRM DO YOU USE?



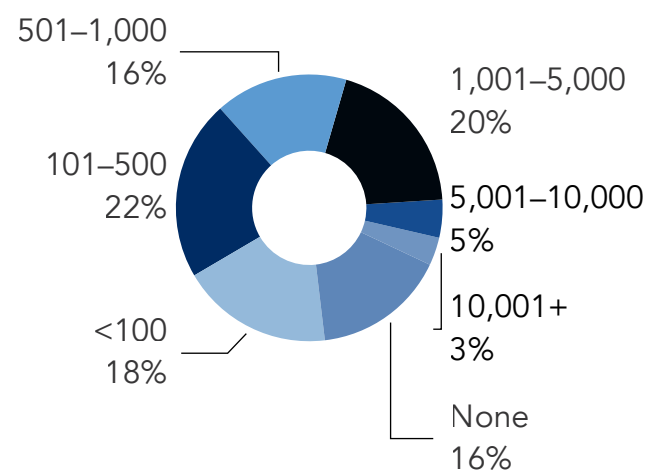
WHAT IS YOUR AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME GOAL?



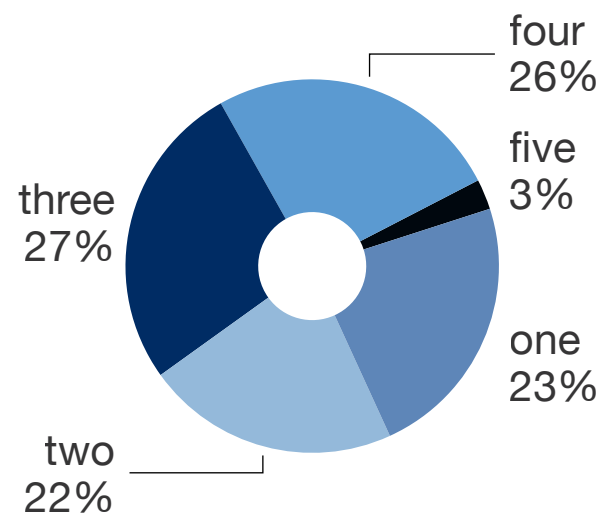
HOW MANY LETTERS PROMPT A NEW FORM LETTER?



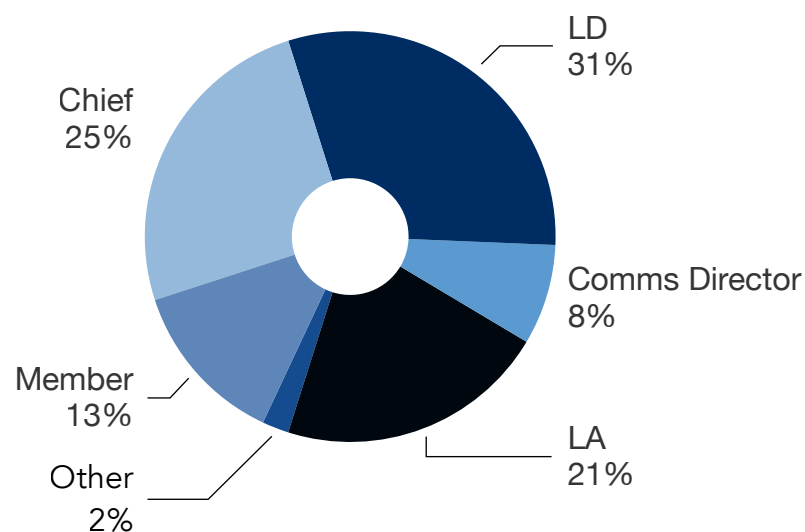
HOW LARGE IS YOUR CURRENT BACKLOG?



HOW MANY PEOPLE MUST APPROVE A FORM LETTER BEFORE IT CAN BE SENT? (BESIDES THE LC)



WHO IS IN YOUR LETTER APPROVAL PROCESS?



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.

Setting up email to fax

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 faxes via email:

Contact your office administrator or technology specialist. They should be routed to a separate inbox that you can add to your Outlook.

Have your mail scanned and uploaded to your CRM automatically

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!

Form Letter Tips



Tim Hysom

Deputy Chief of Staff
Rep. Alan Lowenthal

- “Create a carefully curated format for a mail report with graphs and charts of key metrics, such as top five issues in, overall mail count, top five form letters approved, and how many staff responses each staff member has that are outstanding. It doesn't have to be weekly, but monthly is probably too long.”
- “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.”
- “We have a style guide and a mail manual that includes a general formula for form letters. Don't ever start from scratch; see if there are mail style guides or manuals available from other LCs.”

For Democratic staffers, [DemCom](#) has a Letter Library where staffers across the Hill can upload their form letters for other offices to use as guidance and tag them by issue areas.

As far as we know, there is no Republican equivalent, but please let us know if we are wrong!

Check out these resources from the Congressional Management Foundation:

- [5 Core Elements of a Successful Mail Program](#)
- [Dealing with Backlogged Mail](#)
- [Handling Mail Volume](#)



<https://www.congressfoundation.org/office-toolkit-home/improve-mail-operations-menu-item-new/writing-mail-home/terms/summary>

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.

SURVEY INSIGHTS: CONSTITUENT MAIL

Please add any best practices your office utilizes for your mail program or any challenges you'd like to highlight for dealing with constituent mail

(for a full list, see the appendix at the end of this guide)

- ✓ Making a spreadsheet of batches with who is responsible for next steps for every form letter
- ✓ Each intern manages a different queue, like snail mail, custom response, etc) and we rotate week by week typically. Interns are responsible for getting their queues to mail zero by the end of the week
- ✓ Creating frequent contact / ongoing case documents that summarize individuals' cases briefly (and include points of action taken previously), to help bring new intern cohorts and staff up to speed quickly
- ✓ We have a mail group chat where interns can ask batching questions and I can make suggestions.
- ✓ Best practice that I live by is always batching a little bit every day and keeping that number in my inbox under 5
- ✓ Our mail program has a lot of issues that resulted in a 33,000 message backlog when I came into the position. To help get a handle on it, I requested to close out all campaign mail older than 6 weeks. This helped knock down the backlog a lot and ultimately, those constituents probably forgot they wrote anyway. We do this every week so while it's a shame more people aren't getting a response, we're at least prioritizing the messages we know are recent and representative of current issues
- ✓ I have two notable singles batches that I maintain: one that is sorted monthly so I can make sure to empty by the end of the month so people are getting responses within the 30-day turnaround goal we have. I also have a call/email back directly batch for people who request a call back or who it's easier to just have a quick phone convo instead of writing out a whole email
- ✓ I have 2 generic letters I'll send out instead of one. We have a "General Constituent Response" that thanks the constituent for writing in, highlights our casework numbers and monies, and gives out our office contact details. I also write a "General Response Update" that outlines some of our boss's recent actions/noteworthy news that I update (about) every 3 months. This is slightly more legislative focused and I usually send it to people who write in about multiple issues concurrently
- ✓ Labeling "frequent flyers". People who write in more than once a week consistently get labeled as a "ff" and then we respond to only one of their inquiries per week
- ✓ Proactive letter writing, if there is a big vote coming you start drafting a letter before the vote and start approval process right after a vote series



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

[Date]

[FullName]
[Address]

Dear [Salutation],

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) amidst the coronavirus pandemic. Like you, I believe Congress has the responsibility to provide the USPS with resources to continue operations and ensure postal employees have access to personal protective equipment needed to do their jobs safely.

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 sharp drop in revenue as the demand for paper mail has declined from the coronavirus. 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 expects that absent federal assistance, the USPS will run out of funds 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 frontline postal workers and post offices require immediate support to maintain on-time, consistent deliveries. Across the country, vulnerable populations, including our seniors, rely upon timely mail delivery for 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 \$25 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 frontline postal workers, and other purposes necessary to continue USPS services. I will be advocating for the inclusion of this legislation in the next coronavirus 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, as 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 frontline 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 (978) 459 - 0101. To stay informed on the most recent coronavirus updates, please visit my [coronavirus resources 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.

CRM Tips



IQ

intranetquorum.com

- Want to review or print the steps to conduct a process? These Quick Reference Guides provide detailed step-by-step instructions and/or techniques to support the use of IQ features: <https://www.intranetquorum.com/quick-reference-guides>
- Resources for interns: <https://www.intranetquorum.com/intern-elearn>
- 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



Fireside

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>



iConstituent

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/
- iConstituent also offers product trainings tailored to mail, communications, newsletters and general platform use. iconstituent.com/training/



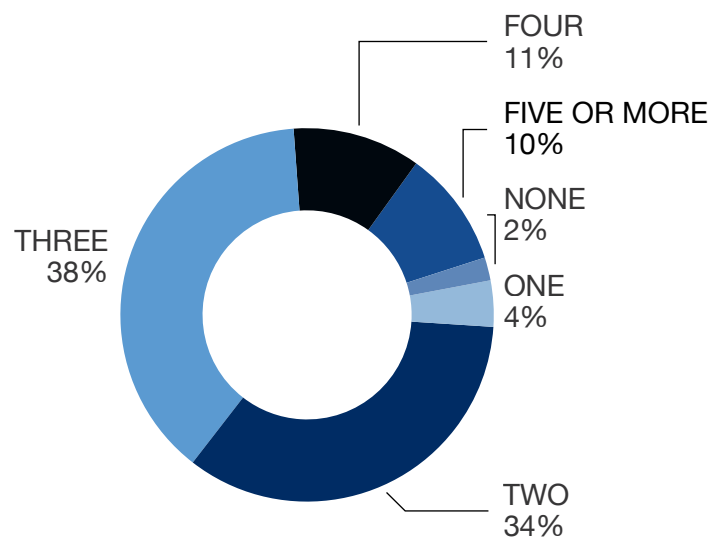
Indigov

indigov.us

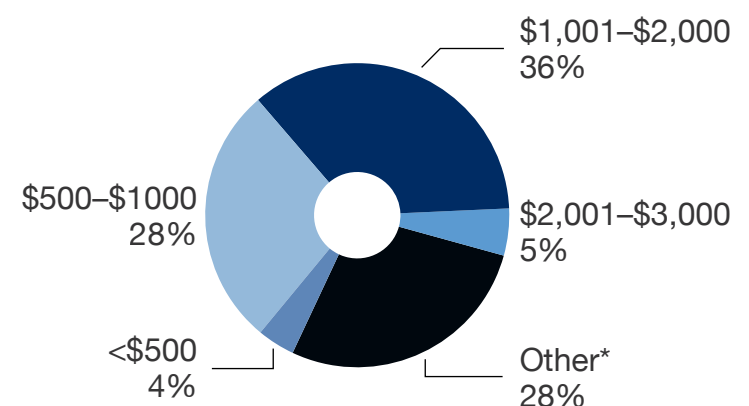
- Indigov is a new CRM that boasts an average response time of only 8 hours. It houses all of your correspondence in one system for easy management: website, CWC, scanned mail, Facebook, Twitter and phone calls, and it auto-responds to campaign emails for you, meaning you never have to batch again. It 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.

RUNNING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

HOW MANY INTERNS DO YOU TYPICALLY HAVE PER TERM?



HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY INTERNS IN SUMMER 2022?



Example of “other” payment for interns:

- We provide \$900-1,500 stipends to student without outside support, based on need
- \$1000/month, pell grant eligible only
- \$750 is our floor. Otherwise \$1000 to \$2000
- \$0. Our boss doesn't want to use the House Paid Internship Program
- It depends, our office typically sets eligibility guidelines for stipends based on outside funding
- We receive summer interns from organizations that pay them a stipend, we only pay Fall and Spring interns

1. Planning your internship program

Before you begin the internship hiring process, it is important to make several decisions, including how many interns you want and how much they will be paid. Some offices hire only one intern, while others hire 10. While the most common number is probably around 2 to 3, you should make this decision based on the kinds of work you want your interns to do, the amount of time you can allot to managing interns, and the amount of money you have to fund a program. If you prefer to give your interns plenty of autonomy and to manage out certain sections of your job, more interns will probably be more helpful. But if you want to double check all of their work and monitor them closely, more interns might be more work for you than helpful. It is important to consider how much they can help you, but also how much time you have to help them in their professional development.

Internships are a critical stepping stone to full time employment on Capitol Hill, so affording opportunities to interns from all backgrounds ultimately impacts not just the makeup of the next intern class, but the diversity of future Hill staffers that will represent the country.

Each House office has an internship program allowance of \$35,000 per calendar year through the [House Paid Internship Program](#). Offices have come up with multiple ways to utilize this money in order to offer the best opportunities:

- 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. The one exception is schools that require internships to be unpaid for students to qualify for college credit (in which case talk to the intern first about their preference).
- Create some need- or merit-based paid internships or paid fellowships that pay more than the others. 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.

Offices are not limited to this \$35,000 either; some spend additional money from their MRA to pay their interns more or hire more interns. Regardless of what option you choose, it is important to remember that there is no reason not to use all \$35,000 from the House. This is free money that can only be used for interns, and every intern would prefer to receive even a small stipend for transportation rather than nothing!

2. Hiring interns

Because Capitol Hill internships are very competitive, many offices receive several applications just from posting their application on their website. It is important to be up front in your post about the details of your program, such as whether internship opportunities are paid, whether or not you hire on a rolling basis, and when (if at all) applicants can expect to hear back from you. You can have interns send a cover letter and resume to a separate email or use a Google form. Below is an example of an internship posting, as well as a common timeline for hiring interns each term:

SAMPLE INTERSHIP POST

STUDENT INTERSHIPS

Congressperson X offers internships through his district office and Washington D.C. office in the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters.

Internships are intended for current undergraduate students, recent college graduates, students currently enrolled in graduate school. Under very rare circumstances the office will also host high school students.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Answering constituent phone calls and greeting constituents at the front desk
- Taking notes at briefings and hearings
- Categorizing and responding to constituent mail
- Conducting tours of the Capitol for constituents
- Drafting form letters and cosponsor requests for the Congressman
- Assembling press and news clips
- Performing a variety of other duties as assigned, such as conducting legislative research

APPLICATIONS

Click [here](#) to apply. If you have trouble accessing the application form, please email _____.

- You will need a cover letter and resume to apply.
- If you are selected for an interview, a staff member will contact you
- Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis
- We are accepting applications for X term through X date

You can find additional [sample job postings](#) on the [HR Hub](#).

SURVEY INSIGHTS: HIRING INTERNS

What do you look for when hiring interns?

(for a full list, see the appendix at the end of this guide)

- ✓ Customer service experience, passion for public service, interest in our office, attention to detail
- ✓ I try to hire a number of interns who complement each others strengths. Some are great writers, others have an encyclopedic knowledge of the Hill, others have wonderful people skills. What all of them need to have is a demonstrated interest in public service and a compelling and cogent reason for wanting to work in this office, on the Hill, or in politics
- ✓ Competent, personable, self-starter, did some research before coming to the interview
- ✓ Personalized cover letters for the office, district ties
- ✓ Public service values, interest in the Congressman's issues, ties to the district, customer service experience
- ✓ Diverse backgrounds, experience in things besides government work/interns that might not get the first pick in other offices
- ✓ Be coachable. I need to be able to train interns to be 100% ready to assist the staff with whatever they need ASAP
- ✓ Interpersonal skills, organization, attention to detail, service industry/retail experience
- ✓ Live in/from the delegation, school involvement, professional experience, if their interests align with our office's key policy areas
- ✓ Competence, confidence, desire to learn
- ✓ Great writing skills, campaign experience, passion
- ✓ Enthusiasm, because I've learned very quickly that the ones who do the work effectively and efficiently are not always the ones who go to the most impressive schools. I want students who know what it has been like to struggle, and has a no quitting attitude
- ✓ Personal Responsibility, ability to interact well with myself(to prepare for constituents), good communication skills(writing and verbal), self motivation and a hard work ethic



Common Intern Application Dates:

Summer Interns

Application Deadline:
March 10

Start-date Range:
May 24 - June 10

Fall Interns:

Application Deadline:
July 20 - August 3 depending

Start-date Range:
August 24 - September 10

Spring Interns:

Application Deadline:
November 30

Start-date Range:
January 1 - 18

Aside from your website, there are multiple ways to find qualified candidates:

- Promote your internship program on social media
- Reach out to colleges in your state (even if outside of your district) and in DC, including to political clubs on campus, career centers, and directly to professors
- Ask other offices if they have qualified candidates on the Tour Coordinators list serv
- Work with community partners and local organizations
- Reach out to federal TRIO program grant recipients

APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

Applications vary, but most offices require at least a resume and a cover letter, and some also ask for recommendations or additional writing samples. Be sure to consider how much time you have to spend reviewing applications before you decide how much content you want your applicants to submit. Some offices set up a separate email account for all internship applications, while others use a Google form.

After this initial stage, most offices move on to a single phone interview before making final decisions. Here is a list of general example interview questions:

- 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 skills would you want to gain from 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?
- How do you like to be led?
- Tell me about yourself without walking me through your resume.
- What recent issues facing the district are you interested in?
- What are the Congressperson's achievements that are important to you?

-Andrea Calderón, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, Delaney Deskin, Rep. Ed Perlmutter
and Dylan Ratliff, Rep. Anthony Gonzalez

"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

Resources for Internship Diversity Outreach

Here is a list of organizations that focus on placing a diverse group of interns on Capitol Hill:

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

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

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)

Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute

<http://www.ccaainstitute.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

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

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

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

Islamic Scholarship Fund, Congressional Leadership Development Program

<https://islamicscholarshipfund.org/internship/>

Mission: "ISF increases American Muslim representation in media and politics in order to improve public opinion and policy."

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

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://www.hepcampassociation.org/dcinternship>

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/#.X1vZftNKg_U

<https://jstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-CIP-Application-1.pdf>

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 and the 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)

Housing Resources for Interns

Here are some ideas for housing in DC if your new hires need help finding a place to live (or for junior staff looking for more reasonable options)

For interns specifically

- InternsDC.com
- Washington Intern Housing Network
- Richardson Building Intern Housing Program
- International Student House DC
- Local Universities: during the summer sessions, several of the local universities open their dorms for interns to rent.
- Facebook Groups: very popular in DC, but of course evaluate each post's trustworthiness. There's more than a dozen groups out there, just search DC/MD/VA/DMV housing, interns, rooms, sublets, roommates, etc.

Government Resources

Affordable Housing, Arlington County, VA

Affordable housing is available at numerous apartment complexes in Arlington. Most of the complexes listed were built, acquired or renovated with public funds as part of their financing, or else had units set aside as affordable through a special exception site plan process.

Contact: Receive a monthly list of affordable units via email

Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (APAH)

APAH believes everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to call home. They develop and preserve, and acquire rental properties in the D.C. metro region.

Contact: To apply for housing in one of their buildings, or if you have questions about eligibility, contact S.L. Nusbaum Realty Co. at (703) 528-8151.

Affordable Dwelling Units, D.C.

Affordable Dwelling Unit is an umbrella term applied to for-sale and for-rent homes that are locally restricted for occupancy by households whose income falls within a certain range. Above is the District of Columbia's free affordable housing listing and search engine, where you can find everything from accessible homes to affordable rental and for-sale homes.

Affordable Housing, Maryland

This is a link to MDHousingSearch.org - a free resource for finding and listing rental housing anywhere in Maryland. Property providers across the state can post apartments and houses for rent at any time.

Contact: Miranda Darden-Willems, Executive Director, Maryland Affordable Housing Coalition, (443) 758-6270, mdarden@mdahc.org

Federally Subsidized Housing

You can use the above map to find a privately owned apartment with reduced rents. To apply, contact or visit the management office of each apartment building that interests you.

Inclusionary Zoning

The Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) Program requires that most new (and some renovated) residential developments include some affordable homes. IZ homes are apartments for rent or condos/townhomes for sale. If you meet the income requirements, you can take a training and enter a lottery system. If selected, you can live in an IZ unit.

Contact: iz.adu@dc.gov, (202) 442-7221

Other Resources

Bungalow

Bungalow is a co-living company that rents private bedrooms in large, sometimes suburban homes. Tenants can use all the common areas, which Bungalow furnishes — fully equipped kitchens, living rooms with sofas and flat-screen televisions, as well as dining tables and general decor.

"The way I found my housing was through bungalow.com; they had some options at rates to fit various budgets in places in and around DC, and made it fairly easy to connect with potential housemates, sign a lease, move in, etc. I now sound a bit like a company apologist so I'll add that they're not perfect – for example, they kind of try to hide a \$99/month services fee (although it's not so hidden you can't see it) – but in my experience they've been good to work with overall."

Contact: Contact Form

The Channel - Affordable/Workforce Housing Units

The Channel is a luxury apartment building in the Wharf that offers 153 apartment residences, ranging from studio, one bedroom and two bedroom floor plans, at rents affordable to households earning 30%, 60%, 100% and 120% of the area median income (the area median income for 2021 can be found here). Housing vouchers are welcome.

Contact: (866) 339-9293

HBCU National Center

The HBCU National Center is a housing grant and professional development program based in Washington D.C. for HBCU students who are completing an internship in D.C. Eligible students receive free housing in an intern-only apartment building for a semester, while also receiving access to career development events such as speaker series with the nation's leaders, graduate school and resume workshop panels, and private tours of D.C. museums.

Contact: Interested students and schools should contact HBCUNC@InternsDC.com with student information

Thompson Mark-Ward Hall

Thompson Mark-Ward Hall (TMH) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to promote the academic and professional success of young women. TMH is in the heart of DC and offers safe, affordable, convenient housing for women who are working, attending school or interning in our nation's capital.

"I lived there my first year in DC when I was a Staff Assistant. It's \$1125/month, so maybe a little more expensive than some other places, but residents get their own room and there's no separate charge for utilities/wifi. They also have a dining hall and serve breakfast and dinner every day, so residents really only have to pay for lunch at work. It's located across the street from Hart, so it's only a 15 minute walk from the House side and staffers wouldn't have to deal with paying money to metro/bus/drive. Another thing - residents can apply to work part-time at the front desk in the building, and in exchange get a discount on their room and board payments. I know several women who took advantage of that when I was living there. I know it's not ideal to work a second job, especially when Hill jobs can be so unpredictable, but it would be a convenient way to bring the cost of living down. One thing to note – I don't think it's the best place for anyone who has specific dietary needs, since residents aren't able to cook or have kitchen appliances in their rooms."

Contact: info@tmhdc.org, (202) 546-3255

Yarmouth Management, Capitol Hill

Contact: (202) 547-3511

3. During the Internship

Right before your interns start, it is helpful to send them an intern handbook, as well as any additional resources that might be useful to them once they begin. Here is an example of an internship handbook from the Congressional Management Foundation, as well as a list of helpful links from another Hill Staff Assistant:

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!
- A colleague surfaced [this video](#) from Melissa Dargan on “8 Financial Secrets of Working in Congress.” TOPICS 1. Student Loan Repayment Program 2. FREE Transportation 3. Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) 4. DC Tax Reciprocity 5. Pension 6. Affordable Gym Memberships 7. FREE Certificate Classes 8. Capitol Hill Credit Unions. A good overview if you’re interested in working on the Hill in the future!
- Share a list of not-super-easy-to-pronounce-correctly town names and elect officials in the district, as well as a list of zip codes in district and ones that are split with another district.

This week’s voting & hearing schedule is packed!! Here’s where you can watch stuff:

- 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
- Women’s Congressional Policy Institute: another amazing non-profit org, they have a Weekly Legislative newsletter you can subscribe to. [See here](#) to subscribe
- Intern Update: Weekly update from the First Branch Intern Project. [Subscribe here](#)

Intern Selfie Scavenger Hunt

Shared by Dylan Ratliff, Rep. Anthony Gonzalez

Tip from Dylan: *I actively reach out to friends in other offices to organize multi-office scavenger hunts so they get some networking practice in addition to the general scavenger hunt benefits.*

Objective: Find the items/paintings/rooms, grab a selfie with the whole group at each stop. As you go, text photos along with the corresponding number to the Staff Assistant.

Rules: USE COMMON SENSE and COMMON COURTESY at ALL TIMES!

*** Do NOT run... ever.*

*** Do NOT disrupt business as usual*

*** Kindly ask for directions only if necessary.*

*** Be polite and courteous. Show respect.*

*** Heed the advice/instructions of Capitol Police Officers and any other authority figures.*

*** Use Google only if necessary*

Please note that the order of things on the list is not at all reflective of where you can or cannot find them.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Both Capitol Statues of our state | <input type="checkbox"/> CUPS & Senate Cafeteria |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Longworth Dunkin' Donuts | <input type="checkbox"/> Senate offices from our state |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supply Store | <input type="checkbox"/> House and Senate Gallery entrances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library of Congress Cafeteria (tunnel in the Cannon basement) | <input type="checkbox"/> Painting of the Battle of Lake Erie (NO PICTURES ALLOWED AT THIS STOP, so text the painter's name instead) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rayburn Room (in the Capitol) | <input type="checkbox"/> House Barber Shop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cloakroom (in the Capitol) | <input type="checkbox"/> Ronald Reagan statue that contains pieces of the Berlin Wall |
| <input type="checkbox"/> UPS drop box location (Longworth Basement) | <input type="checkbox"/> Washington's tomb (NOT the crypt) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaker's Office in the Capitol | <input type="checkbox"/> Statue of the first woman elected to Congress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Minority Leader's Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Cat prints near the Old Supreme Court chamber |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting of the Signing of the Constitution (NO PICTURES ALLOWED AT THIS STOP, so text the painter's name instead) | <input type="checkbox"/> The room where Rep. Preston Brooks of South Carolina caned Sen. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts in 1856 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flag Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Cannon Rotunda |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Walk Up in the CVC | <input type="checkbox"/> Subway (the restaurant) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The train to the Senate side and ride it (preferably with your hands in the air) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The train between Rayburn and the Capitol and ride it (preferably with your hands in the air) | |



Intern Management Tips

by: Bradley Joseph Sinkaus, Congressional Management Foundation

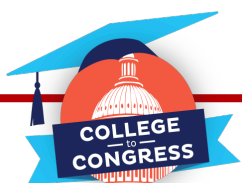
<https://www.congressfoundation.org/news/blog/1755-managing-remote-interns-for-success>

BEFORE INTERNSHIP

- Send your office's handbook (or CMF's!) ahead of time for interns to review, as well as any office policies, confidentiality forms, and evaluation criteria. Go over this information with them their first day.
- Ensure interns have access to a reliable Internet connection and necessary video conferencing software (Teams, Zoom, etc.) as well as the G-Suite (Google Docs, Sheets, Hangouts, etc.) and determine ahead of time which methods are preferable for assigning work and communicating regularly.
- Add interns to your office's Slack and Asana Teams (if used) and assign them an office email account with a login and password.
- Establish mutually agreed-upon intern working hours (considering challenges presented by multiple time zones) and inform all staff of interns' working hours.
- Connect with interns a few weeks before their start date to discuss goals and expectations for their remote internship.
- Record short welcome/introductory videos by staff for your interns (either evergreen or personalized).
- Connect with staff to determine relevant projects/project contacts for interns (e.g., if an intern is doing morning clips, will they report to the press assistant, communications director, or direct supervisor?).

DURING INTERNSHIP

- Develop a mutually agreed upon work plan for their success (and go over via video conference during their first week).
- Include list of everyday mini assignments, potential bigger projects, as well as project contacts for each task so the intern knows who to direct questions to.
- Provide a list of staff contact information that includes their titles, duties, and any issue assignments. Include an organizational chart if you have it.
- Set up 15-minute introductory "meets" between interns and, depending on the size of the office, each staff member, each "department" (comms, leg/policy, casework, etc.), or each "department head."
- Establish a designated staff member with whom the intern will have weekly check-ins (consistency is essential).
- Include the intern wherever possible: ensure intern receives invitation to all-staff meetings and devote part of the weekly staff meeting to briefly discussing the intern's projects as a team.
- When delegating tasks and assignments to the intern, provide examples or templates of relevant work products so they are aware of the end result wanted (such as memos, briefing materials, constituent letters, etc.).
- Conduct a mid-term evaluation of the intern's performance and schedule 1-hour video call to go over evaluation, and listen to any concerns the intern has or problems they have been experiencing.
- Recommend that interns keep running list of completed projects so they have a portfolio of accomplishments when they leave.
- Incorporate interns into office culture. While this can be challenging to accomplish virtually, encourage staff to invite interns to "get-to-know-you" coffees, brown bag lunches, and staff virtual happy hours.
- Encourage interns to connect with each other virtually to promote a friendly and collaborative work environment.



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](#).

Intern Activities

Hill offices primarily use interns to assist Staff Assistants and Legislative Correspondents with managing constituent correspondence. Typical assignments include:

- Answering the phones
- Manning the front desk
- Giving Capitol tours
- Managing voicemails
- Taking notes at briefings and hearings for staff
- Writing first drafts of form letters or direct constituent responses



"Internapalooza" is a welcome event for incoming Congressional interns hosted by POPVOX Foundation and members of the First Branch Intern Project. Check dates and find out more at <http://internproject.org>

It is important to ensure that the basic needs of the office are met and that constituents are getting the assistance they need. However, once interns are able to master these basics and stay on top of their work, it is great to offer them other options so they can learn new skills and have a more engaging experience. Here are examples of other projects to assign interns:

- Writing first drafts of memos or briefings for staff
- Conducting initial casework phone calls: having interns call back constituents and fill out a spreadsheet to get the starting amount of information to open a case for frequent types of casework such as unemployment
- Conducting legislative research on background for letters or bills
- Drafting cosponsor requests for leg staffers
- Drafting one minute speeches
- Suggesting social media posts or creating a calendar of major events to highlight on social
- Conducting research and create spreadsheets of other MOCs that might be supportive of certain policy issues your boss is interested in pursuing
- Redesigning systems for the office: reorganizing or reformatting old spreadsheets, cleaning up a shared Google Drive, revamping or creating a mail report/ social media report/casework report, automating news or press clips (bonus points if you have an intern who knows how to code and can do something really creative!)
- Writing or rewriting an intern handbook
- Reaching out to your local Code for America brigade and see if there are projects to partner on in your district
- Creating a resource guide of contacts or programs in your district for recruiting future interns (including as an effort to increase diversity)
- Drafting a new "general response" form letter each week or every two weeks to send to constituents when there aren't enough messages in for a new form letter
- Having interns write internal newsletters for staff about current events or certain issue areas
- Running an elevator pitch workshop (paired with a staff member with similar interests / backgrounds, works with them for 10-15 minutes on a pitch specific to them, and then presents in front of intern cohort and staff)
- Having interns train each other in responsibilities like campaign mail, tours, etc.
- Running a resume workshop
- Setting up coffee chats with your interns and interns from neighboring offices
- Making a "legislator day" where interns write internal bills that they'd love to get passed
- Creating interview transcripts
- Watching the House or Senate floor and writing down any questions they have
- Photographing the member at events
- Updating the current intern binder so they can pass along all of the knowledge they learn to help make the next interns more prepared

Intern Professional Development

The best way to create a meaningful experience for both you and your interns is to go above and beyond the normal tasks and offer professional development opportunities and ways to get to know each other. Here are some ideas on how to 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 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 coffees with other staffs or have get togethers 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
- Encourage them to use LinkedIn Learning, Staff Academy, or CRS for professional development classes

"One thing that I've done with my interns is have professional development days. It was obviously a lot easier to encourage them to network when we were in person, but basically what I'll do is review their resume and encourage them to network with people from webinars or elsewhere.

Another thing I did was have meetings with all of the interns through their internship and even had a guest speaker (former chief) discuss law school with them and give them tips, since they were all interested in law school. He spoke to them for about an hour about tips and study habits for law school. It was very informative."

-Maryah Thompson, Rep. Gwen Moore

Intern Activity

Weekly Legislation Project

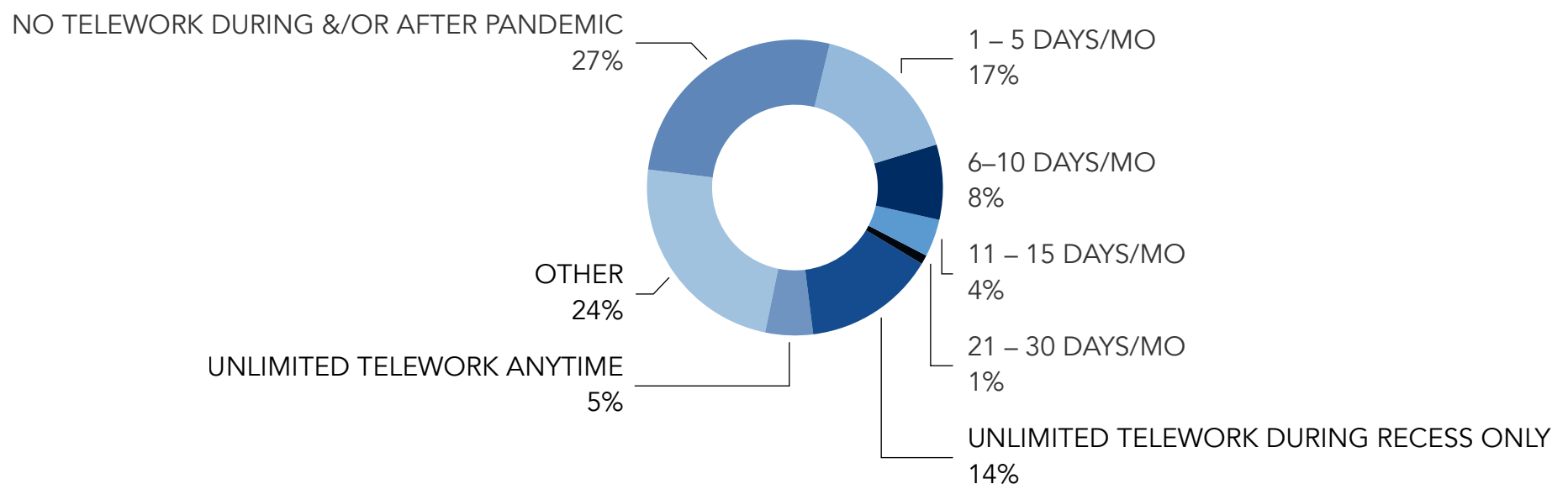
Suggestions from Andrea Calderón, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester

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.

MANAGING (& BEING MANAGED)

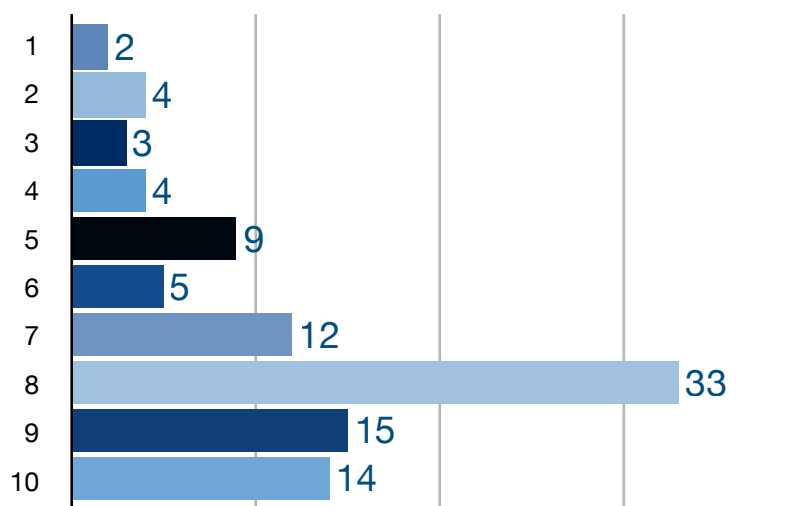
WHAT WILL BE YOUR OFFICE'S PERMANENT WORK-FROM-HOME POLICY (AFTER THE PANDEMIC)?



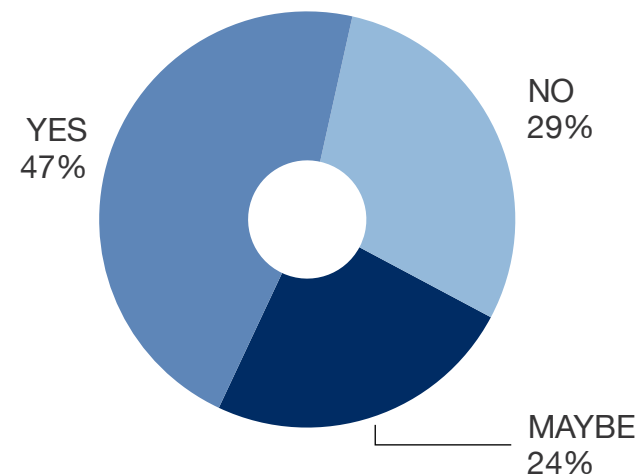
Full list of "other":

- Depends on your position. SA and LC should be in person everyday. Other staffers can work remotely out of session
- Until full reopening TBD
- SA required to be in everyday there is a vote; all others are in 3 days/wk during voting week and 2 days per week during non-voting week
- Currently we WFH one day a week during recess. subject to change
- Two days in session. three days out of session
- We still don't have one
- Telework 3 days/week, out of recess only
- One telework day for each recess week
- Unlimited during recess, required with covid exposure and/or sick symptoms
- Unsure what the permanent policy is, going month to month
- Has not been decided yet
- In the office 2 days on average per two week recess period, telework remainder of recess, and in the office whenever in session
- Unclear
- We can only telework during recess (unless we specifically request it from the Chief for a reason such as travel). But during recess we have a minimum 2 days in the office requirement.
- Case by case
- 3 days per month, recess days only
- Only some people in the office can WFH
- Telework on a case-by-case basis, but never permanently
- Can only telework if sick
- Unlimited telework during recess, but office must be open at all times (usually me there)
- Only office favorites work from home. Certain staff members are denied time out
- Only when necessary (have a personal trip)

ON A SCALE OF 1–10, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE CULTURE IN YOUR OFFICE?



WOULD YOU JOIN A UNION IF AVAILABLE IN YOUR OFFICE?



From the survey: Please describe any other problems related to pay/benefits/culture or what kinds of additional resources you'd like to see for staff
(for a full list, see the appendix at the end of this guide)

- Office is too conservative to pay employees. Return the rest to the Treasury. And is dragging his feet on raising it to \$45,000
- I wish there were more organizations that brought staff from different offices together, ie state/ regional delegations, SA organizations, etc
- Senior staff do not need to have any managerial training. While in other industries, additional higher education is required to manage a team, the hill throws anyone to the head of a team. Without proper training, toxic habits develop quickly
- I want to do more legwork and I get frustrated that as an LC I don't get to attend any policy briefings. I am very frustrated they let interns join but not me
- I personally do not think SA/LC should be one job. I am consistently overwhelmed with the amount of hats I have to wear and think they should be two separate roles
- There is definitely a difference in treatment of women and minorities in our office. There is also an element of favoritism that regularly excludes minorities in our office.
- No wfh flexibility
- I would like for it to be mandatory that office's have a written vacation/sick leave policy because right now I literally have no idea what the policy is - I think it's totally arbitrary based on if the chief decides to approve it or not
- I wish there was a better understanding of when and how to ask for a raise in terms of the budgeting process



Management Tips

Tips from Lisa Sherman, former Chief of Staff for Rep. Susan Davis and Deputy CAO

- ✓ 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 communicate 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.
- ✓ 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.

Request a coaching session

CAO Coaches are mentors who have been in your shoes and can help you get up to speed fast whether you're new, recently-promoted or a veteran staffer looking for fresh ideas.

One-on-one coaching sessions have been very popular with House staff of all levels. All one-on-one meetings with experienced CAO Coaches are confidential. There is no issue too big or question too small.

Whether you need to ask a Coach for ideas about how to set up a Member event, get around a legislative obstacle, respond to an aggressive caller, how to best approach a supervisor or Member about a sensitive office issue or a way to advance your career, a CAO Coach is here to help.

Request a one-on-one consult [here](#) to get critical tips or bounce ideas off a thought partner. You can also call them at (202)-226-3800 or stop by B-241 LHOB.

Tips from Christy Wagner, Legislative Director, Rep. Seth Moulton

- ✓ Ask your leadership for weekly or regular opportunities to sync. Our LA's recommendation to start biweekly virtual leg team office hours has been a great way for me to have one-on-one syncs in a more informal setting, and to discuss issues as they come up. I can also get caught up on other work if no one ends up joining office hours. Our daily 15-minute virtual leg team syncs haven't replaced our office discussions, but that dedicated time is useful to share updates we would have normally talked about in the office, and to have a regular feedback process for decisions we need to tee up through the week.
- ✓ Ask for feedback often, and frame the feedback you give to others. Expecting to give and receive feedback is a productive habit that Seth models for the rest of us, which makes giving and receiving constructive feedback feels like an expectation rather than a criticism. The best tool that our COS flagged for us is framing feedback to others with a simple phrase: "Are you open to some feedback?" Use this phrase with your leadership to initiate uncomfortable or tougher conversations.
- ✓ Be kind, and remind. It's hard for everyone to remember what happened yesterday when every day feels the same. If a process isn't working, or your leadership isn't being responsive about a decision, keep in mind that everyone on your team is dealing with their own challenges working from home. You may need to remind your leadership or peers about something in order to shake a decision loose, don't assume it's not a priority for them. To enforce decisions about process, identify early on what may not be working and be proactive to take responsibility for offering solutions. Everyone needs help.

Tips from Tim Hysom, Deputy Chief of Staff, 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."

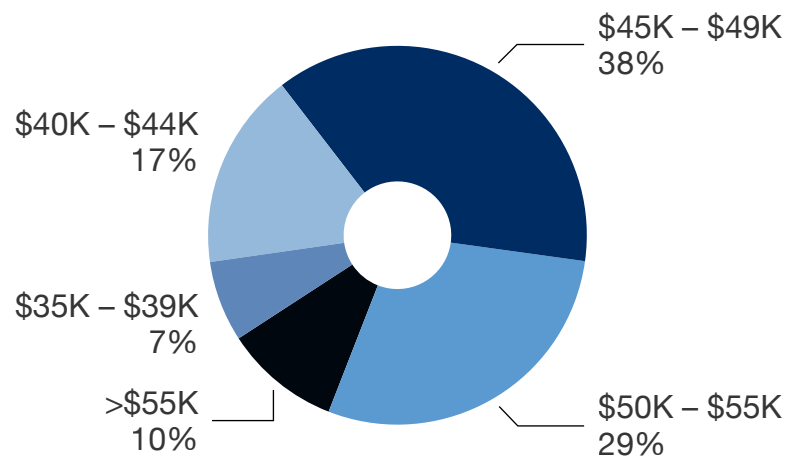
Tips from Roufia Saleh, Legislative Correspondent, Rep. Angie Craig

- ✓ Be clear about what you need. Your COS is probably busy and doesn't have time to wait for you to get to the point. Whether you're just giving them a heads up or asking approval for something; clearly state what you're trying to communicate.
- ✓ How does your COS like to communicate? We all communicate differently; some COS's keep their door open and don't mind taking a moment for a quick chat. Others prefer a heads up. Timing is key - pay attention to when things aren't so busy so you can contact them during that time.
- ✓ Be confident. You are valuable, smart, and qualified - that's why they hired you! Trust that you know what you're talking about and don't be shy to voice your opinion.
- ✓ Prepare for your conversation. If you're going to ask your COS for something, be prepared to back up your reasoning with facts.
- ✓ Be open and honest. A well functioning Congressional office requires a lot of open and honest communication - especially between you and your COS. You are a team! If you make a mistake, be upfront about it and have a plan for how you're going to resolve the issue.

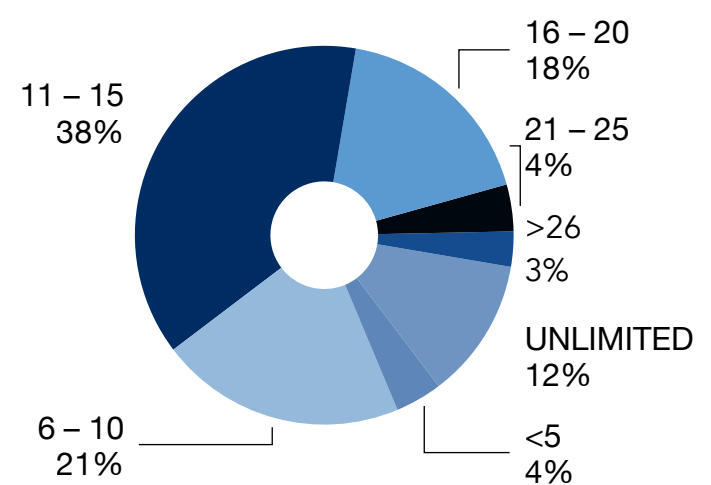
SALARY NEGOTIATION

Best Practices, Video Training and Sample Scripts

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT SALARY?

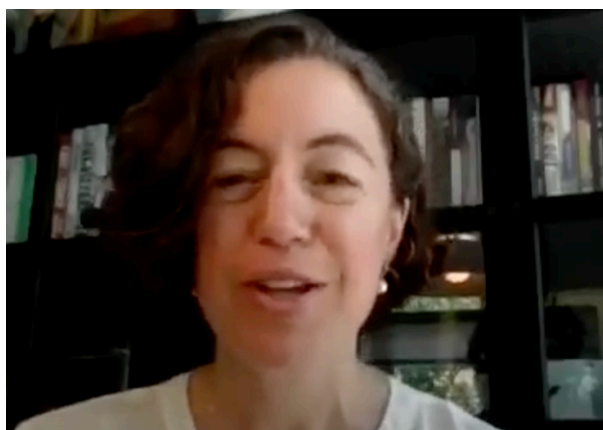


HOW MANY VACATION DAYS DO YOU GET PER YEAR?



Salary Negotiation Tips (VIDEO)

Need further guidance? Watch our [salary & benefits negotiation training](#)



Salary Negotiation Tips

Created by Jack Floros, Brooke Bennett, Michelle Dorothy, Terra Sabag, Haley Wint and Ananda Bhatia

DO:

- ✓ Have a realistic goal, but also know your bottom line and what you need
- ✓ Do research on the position's average salary beforehand
- ✓ If you are currently in the position, prepare a one pager or memo beforehand that outlines why you're negotiating your salary and/or benefits and lists your accomplishments; having data to support your ask is critical!
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice either with a friend or in front of the mirror; the point is to get comfortable and train your brain to keep going even if your heart is racing
- ✓ Ask questions to understand the office's thought process on how they determine salaries:
 - "Can you help me understand that? What is driving that number? Is there a salary cap for the position? Is it tied to years of experience?"
 - You can often uncover underlying interests and design a goal that leaves both parties happy
- ✓ Don't be too humble — show why you deserve the raise!
 - Have data and tangible examples of your achievements at work to support your argument. Have you gone the extra mile, fixed problems, shown initiative?
 - Track your work achievements as they happen — don't wait until you need to list your accomplishments to put this list together
- ✓ Make sure to show confidence and commitment to the office
- ✓ Be open to negotiating if your first offer is declined, or ask the office to revisit in six months
 - Before accepting an offer, ask to see the employee handbook, which spells out office policies and benefits (it's also a good way to assess the culture); if you want something that's not listed, ask
- ✓ Don't forget to address your benefits
 - Most, if not all offices allocate money for your paid leave, student debt reimbursements, and other benefits. Remember to ask questions about them and be aware of everything your office offers that can be negotiated
- ✓ Thank them and show appreciation; follow up with a thank you note or email
- ✓ If there is a change, treat it as an offer and request it in writing.

DO NOT:

- Lose your cool if the negotiation doesn't go as planned
- Have unrealistic expectations
- Over-apologize
- Over-embellish your work achievements; there is a difference between confidence and cockiness
- Rush your conversation and decision
 - In response to an offer, take a moment to compose your thoughts before answering
 - The power of silence in a conversation is important!

Salary Negotiation Script

We recommend you personalize these scripts and tailor them to your role, since they are general guides!

End of the interview process and you have received an offer:

Initial introduction/offer:

Chief of staff or staff director offers \$50,000.

"Thank you for offering me this position. I'm really interested but am still considering many factors, including the salary and benefits. Is there any room to negotiate?"

Counter offering:

Your chief of staff or staff director offers you \$50,000 but you're more comfortable with \$56,000.

"I understand, thank you. I would be more comfortable if we could settle on \$56,000. I feel that amount reflects the importance and expectations of the position for X Committee/Senator/Representative X's office, as well as my qualifications and experience as they relate to this particular position." Provide specific examples of your past work or skills you bring to the table.

Chief or staff director offers \$53,000.

"If you can do \$54,000 (insert amount you're comfortable with), then yes, I accept your offer! I am excited to get started and thank you again for this opportunity."

Chief or staff director stay with \$53,000.

"I understand the best you can do is \$53,000 and you can't come up to \$54,000. If you can do \$53,000 and offer an extra week of paid vacation each year, then I'm on board."

(You can substitute benefits like flexibility for remote work, PTO, etc. if your chief or staff director doesn't meet the number you'd like)

End of negotiation if you accept the offer:

"Thank you again for offering me the position. I accept the terms offered, and I'm excited to get started!"

End of negotiation if you are unsatisfied with the offer:

"Thank you so much for the offer for the X position. I appreciate you taking the time to consider me and for answering so many of my questions about the office and role."

See below for different ways to decline the opportunity.

- 1. "After careful consideration, I've decided to accept a position in another office."*
- 2. "After much thought, I've decided that now is not the best time to leave my current position."*
- 3. "While this position seems like a great opportunity, I have decided to pursue another role that will offer me more opportunities to pursue my interests in Y."*

"Again, thank you for your time and support, and I wish you all the best."

Negotiating for a raise in your current job

Initial conversation via email:

- *"Hello X, it has been [amount of time] since [my last significant salary adjustment OR since I was hired], and I would like to revisit my salary and/or benefits. Do you have a moment this week to talk?"*
- *If you feel uncomfortable being this explicit, you can request a general check-in and frame it as an opportunity for you to receive feedback on your work and share any thoughts you have on the job with your chief or staff director — and then use this opportunity to propose a raise.*

First offer

- *"Hello X, it has been [amount of time] since [my last significant salary adjustment OR since I was hired], and I would like to revisit my salary now that I am contributing much more to the office. I've been researching salaries for [job title], and it looks like the midpoint is around [midpoint from your research]. Based off of my accomplishments of X, Y, and Z, I would like to request a raise to [target salary]."*

Counter offering








- *"I would love to work with you to put together a clear action plan and timeline so we can continue this discussion and monitor my progress as I work toward my goal."*





NETWORKING

If you are new to Hill, you'll quickly learn that most of the networking comes informally. The number one resource for junior staffers on the Hill is your network of fellow junior staffers. Most new staffers get acquainted with their roles and have a lot of their questions answered by joining an email listserv where people ask anything from where to find extra trash cans to [LIST ABUSE] postings asking if anyone is looking for a new roommate. The Staff Assistant listserv is bipartisan and is the place to go for administrative and intern-related questions, as well as to trade snacks with other offices. However, there are two separate partisan listserv for LCs since a lot of the questions involve content for form letters, which are usually partisan.

- An easy place to start is reaching out to other staffers in your same role within your state's delegation.
- A lot of coffees and meetings happen on the Hill, such as at the Dunkin' Donuts in Longworth or the ABP in Cannon.
- You can use Hill Happenings to find plenty of free lunches and happy hours each day
- The [CNCT app](#)
- The National Democratic Club and Capitol Hill Club often have free events and are right next to the Hill.
- One of the easiest ways to formally network on the Hill is to join a staff association, which you can learn about from [this official list](#) or using the resource below.

	<p>The Capitol Hill Community Service Association (CHCSA) provides Hill staff the opportunity to volunteer with different organizations in the DMV area.</p>	<p>Social Media: Capitol Hill Community Service Association - Posts Facebook; @capitolhillcsa (Instagram) Sign up here: Contact information (google.com)</p>
	<p>The Congressional Armenian Staff Association (CASA) is a non-partisan, bicameral Congressional staff organization recognized by the U.S. House Committee on House Administration. CASA aims to recruit, retain, and advance Armenian American staffers in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and is dedicated to encouraging career development and increasing opportunities for its members.</p>	<p>Social Media: https://www.facebook.com/CASACapitolHill/ Sign up: CASA Google Form</p>
	<p>The Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association is a non-partisan, bicameral congressional staff organization designed to provide Asian American and Pacific Islander congressional staff with opportunities to meet other such staff on Capitol Hill through professional development seminars, social networking events, and more.</p>	<p>Website: http://www.capasa.org/</p>
	<p>The Congressional Black Associates (CBA) is an officially House-recognized, bi-partisan Congressional staff organization whose mission is to enhance the political, social and economic capabilities of Black people on Capitol Hill, in the Greater Washington Metropolitan area, the nation, and other countries throughout the world. CBA does this through professional development, community service, and social events as well as outreach across various platforms.</p>	<p>Website: https://www.congressionalblackassociates.com/</p> <p>Social Media: Instagram</p>
	<p>The Congressional Catholic Staff Association (CCSA), established in 2011, is an official Congressional Staff Organization established for the purpose of facilitating opportunities for intellectual and spiritual growth within the Congressional community. We host a series of speaker luncheons and happy hours throughout the year as well as promote the House Chaplain's Lenten and Advent reflections.</p>	<p>Website: https://www.chsadc.org/</p>

	<p>The Congressional Hispanic Staff Association (CHSA) is an official, non-partisan, bicameral Congressional Staff Organization, recognized by the Committee on House Administration, whose mission is to recruit, retain, and advance Hispanic staffers in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives. CHSA provides professional development, networking opportunities, job placement assistance and community to Latinos across Capitol Hill and in congressional state and district offices.</p>	<p>Website: https://www.chsadc.org/</p>
	<p>The Congressional Jewish Staff Association (CJSA) is a Congressional Staff Association for bipartisan Jewish staffers working on Capitol Hill or in politics. CJSA organizes happy hours, Shabbat dinners, community service events, and other social events for its members.</p>	<p>Website: https://www.congressionaljewishstaffassociation.com/</p>
	<p>The Congressional Middle Eastern and North African Staff Association (MENASA) is a bi-cameral and bi-partisan Congressional Staff Organization. MENASA aims to connect House and Senate staffers to professional development, networking, and educational opportunities rooted in cultural exploration. MENASA is dedicated to providing a community for staffers with a connection to the Middle East and North African (MENA) region.</p>	<p>Contact: Samira Damavandi, samira.Damavandi@mail.house.gov, 202-225-2661 Website: https://sites.google.com/view/menasa Sign up: MENASA Google Form</p>
	<p>The Congressional Progressive Staff Association (CPSA) is an official, non-partisan Congressional staff organization whose mission is to advance the interests of current and prospective progressive staffers and the progressive community at large. By mobilizing congressional staff and a diverse coalition of voices and actors whose ideas are underrepresented in Congress, CPSA works to resist systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, wealth and income inequality, ageism, ableism, militarism and environmental destruction and works to amplify efforts to create a more just society predicated on universal human rights; workers' right to organize; economic, political and cultural freedom; and self-determination.</p>	<p>Website: @cpsadc Linktree</p>
	<p>The Congressional Vegetarian Staff Association helps staff and employees on Capitol Hill learn more about healthy eating options in Washington, how to cook vegetarian and vegan dishes at home, how to navigate the world of consumer food options with an eye to personal health, and how to share information with friends and family members about diet's impact on wellness. Our main focus is in-person events with great food, interesting speakers and a community of people curious to learn more, even if they aren't vegetarians or vegans. We're looking forward to holding new events as safely as possible as more people return to in-person work.</p>	<p>Contact: Adam Sarvana, adam.Sarvana@mail.house.gov</p>
	<p>The Democratic Digital Communications Staff Association (DDCSA) offers staff opportunities to improve their digital communications skills through professional development programs, roundtables with key industry experts, and networking events</p>	<p>Social Media: https://www.facebook.com/DemsDigital/</p>
	<p>The Dreamers Congressional Staff Association (DCSA) is a nonpartisan, bicameral staff association dedicated to connecting, empowering, and advancing current and former Dreamers on Capitol Hill.</p>	<p>Contact: Xenia Ruiz, Xenia.Ruiz@mail.house.gov</p>

	<p>The Modernization Staff Association 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. We host networking social events, run working groups on our issues, and create resources like the SA/LC Best Practices Guide and the Mail Program Best Practices Class. • Check out our resources like our Working from Home Guide, SA/LC Best Practices Guide, and Staff Academy Mail Program Best Practices Class</p>	<p>Contact: Ananda Bhatia, ananda.bhatia@mail.house.gov, 703-728-4293 Social Media: @MSA_CapHill (Twitter); @msacaphill (Instagram); Congressional Modernization Staff Association (Linkedin) Sign up here: Modernization Staff Association Email Sign Up (google.com)</p>
	<p>The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Congressional Staff Association--The official, nonpartisan Congressional organization that is dedicated to advancing the interests of all its members and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community at large in the U.S. House of Representatives. Their mission is to promote career development opportunities for LGBT Congressional staffers.</p>	<p>Contact: Josue Ambriz, Membership Director, josue.ambriz@mail.house.gov Website: https://www.lgbtcsa.org/ Social Media: https://www.facebook.com/LGBTCSA/</p>
	<p>The RCA is a professional staff organization for Republican communicators. Events sponsored by RCA provide opportunities to meet and learn from hundreds of others who work in communications on the Hill and in DC.</p>	<p>Contact: republicancommsassoc@gmail.com Website: joinRCA.org Social Media: @RCAorg on Facebook and Twitter</p>
	<p>The Women's Congressional Staff Association is a bipartisan staff organization run by and for women Congressional staffers. It serves to foster professional and personal development and strengthen support systems for women staffers regardless of party affiliation, background, job title, or experience. WCSA offers thoughtful programming, network building, volunteerism, mentorship, and other opportunities that will engender a sense of community for women on Capitol Hill.</p>	<p>Contact: womenscsa@gmail.com Website: http://womenscsa.com/ Social Media: Women's Congressional Staff Association Facebook</p>



MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Resources

[House Wellness Center](#)

[TeleCounseling](#)

The Office of Employee Assistance provides a free confidential consultation to assist employees of the House, Congressional Budget Office, and U.S. Capitol Police.

[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 | Mental Health America](#)
- [The Best Way to Achieve Work-Life Balance - The Atlantic](#)

CAO COACH PROGRAM

Staffed by former top staff from both parties, the [CAO Coach Program](#) helps House staff navigate their uniquely challenging jobs. This first-of-its-kind program, within the Congressional Staff Academy, trains and supports staffers through programming that is relevant, dynamic, connective and efficient.

CAO Coaches meet staff where they are and work with them one-on-one and through classes and other programs to help them do their best work. The CAO Coaches are here to support all Member, Committee and Leadership staff.

Attend a live session, check out their videos, podcasts and best practice sample documents or request a one-on-one meeting. CAO Coach programs and materials cover everything from basic “101” tutorials and advanced tips for each House staff position to talk-show style programs and panel discussions with colleagues and campus leaders on hot topics on the Hill.

HUMAN RESOURCES HUB

The U.S. House of Representatives [Human Resources Hub](#) (House HR Hub) is a one-stop-shop of human resources best practices. This central repository contains tips, tools, and other references for employees who are responsible for hiring, developing, and retaining Hill staff.

House HR Hub content is designed to be copied and adapted by offices to meet their individual and unique needs. Content for the House HR Hub will be added on a regular basis.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Letterhead

Always keep stock of how much letterhead you have. You should also talk regularly with your LC, as they will need large amounts of letterhead when they send out a mass mailing. Be sure to communicate with your District Office as well to make sure they are well stocked.

The Legislative Resource Center will print letterhead at a discounted price. Bring a piece of letterhead, or a mock up, to the LRC located in B81 Cannon HOB (the office in the bottom of the Cannon Rotunda). If your office wants to use union printed letterhead, ask around for vendor recommendations.

If you need standard Congressional letterhead (doesn't have the bosses name or info on it), you can find it in the supply store.

Gallery Passes

These tickets enable constituents to get into the House gallery. You can find more information [here](#). You will also find the request template, which must be on letterhead.

Flat-bed truck (dolly)

Call 5-4141, they usually will arrive within 2-3 hours, but always best to put in the request a day early. Leave a "please do not remove sign," on the cart if you are still using it.

Water Delivery

If your office wants to order water jugs, you can pay via MRA. Call Ericka in Financial Counseling 202-226-0888 to set up your account or speak to your office's financial administrator. Most offices order from Nestle.

Cups

Call the Superintendent 5-4141 to have cups sent up to your office. Warning: they are Styrofoam.

Brochures and Pocket Constitutions

First Call has a stock of sightseeing brochures available for staff pick up in B-227 LHOB. Each office receives up to 500 pocket constitutions free of charge

Additional Resources

- ♦ [Financial secrets of working in Congress](#)
- ♦ [Constituent mail guidance](#)
- ♦ [Flexible work arrangements and related things to consider \(communications, expectations\)](#)
- ♦ [Dealing with difficult constituents](#)
- ♦ [General intern management](#)
- ♦ [Workstation Organization](#)
- ♦ [Affordable Workwear in the DMV](#)
- ♦ List of other [Congressional Staff Organizations](#) (CSOs)

The [Congressional Workers Union](#) can provide information about unionizing within House offices.

Office of the Whistleblower Ombuds

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 Ombuds 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.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OWO SERVICES:

- ▶ Access [Virtual trainings](#) for your staff on best practices for working with whistleblowers
- ▶ Set up personal trainings for you and your interns
WhistleblowerOffice@mail.house.gov or 202-226-6638
- ▶ View the Congressional Audience and Whistleblower Audience tabs on their website
- ▶ Read the training manual, Best Practices for Working With Whistleblowers, now available through HouseNet
- ▶ Read and watch the guidance documents and videos
- ▶ Access the new whistleblower legislation tracker and best practices standards

FULL SURVEY RESULTS

Please describe any issues you have with the flag process, ways you'd like to see it improve, or aspects that are working well

Wish the flag office would inform ours (house) when flags we walk over are ready to be picked up, also that we wouldn't have to go pick those up

I wish we could cut out all the extra steps. Once the flag request is submitted there should not be a need for me or an intern to go buy a flag and a fee card then walk it all over God's green earth to get it flown and get it back. Put all flags through the only system that constituents use to buy flags then have them delivered so there are no more middle steps

I think it works well, we don't do a ton of flags though

Flags being shipped out from the flag office using the MRA of that office

House mail room should notify you by email if you have flags available for pickup that weren't delivered successfully

Tell constituents that they can only order flags if they live in our district and have flags automatically sent out

I would like the ability to change the text of any certificates before I approve the flag request

For the House side, I think having to physically turn in flag forms/checks was tough during the pandemic. I can see how that wouldn't really be an issue now but at the time that was super difficult to coordinate

No issues with flags. My system works just fine

It's currently an ordeal to fix a typo made by the constituent when they submit their form. If there's a typo on the certificate text, the flag office requires a written letter signed by the Member fixing the typo to be faxed to them. If there was a way to just simply edit the certificate text before the flag is flown, that would be great

Having an automated flag service that tracks the flag. So many of our flags have been lost because there's no way to track them

none things work well

No way of tracking anything

People without internet have to send checks and if they write the incorrect amount they have to resend the checks. It is hard for constituents to remember to make the check

for the supply account. It is hard to track the flags when they come through IQ and not the capitol flag portal

Flag office's list outside of "completed flags" isn't updated a lot

I shouldn't have to walk down to the office and look at a bulletin board to see if it's ready for pickup. The fact there's not an automated system or email courtesy existing in 2022 is ridiculous

The boxes the flags are delivered to the office in are too small. Once the flag is folded, it no longer properly fits into the box

The flag office is a scam. They raise them for like 5 seconds. People aren't aware of that when they request to get the flag flown. The whole flag office is a waste of taxpayer dollars

Flags that have been flown over the Capitol are pretty easy to deal with. However, flags that are not flown over the Capitol are a pain! Constituents should only be able to purchase flags that are flown over the Capitol. If this is not possible, the Office Supply Store needs to either mail out the flag themselves or they need to include the mailing address for the person who ordered the flag. The way it works now is, I get the flag, have to decode the code to find out what date the flag was purchased, look on Fireside to see which flags were purchased that day, through the process of elimination, I have to find out which people ordered a flag flown over the Capitol and which ones ordered a flag that was not flown. This is extremely time consuming and a feature could be easily added to the online form to allow the cost of shipping to be payed to the Office Supply Store and then they just send it out without sending them to our office. Or, the form be changed so the Office Supply Store can supply a name and address along with the receipt they give to us when they deliver the flag so we can find the constituent information by name and address rather than by date it was ordered

I wish there was a way to see all flags that our office has processed, even ones that have been closed out. It's easy to accidentally close them out then lose them forever

Please describe any issues you have with the tour request process, ways you'd like to see it improve, or aspects that are working well.

Zero heads up from CVC that it was opening, no clear idea on phase 2. WH keeps changing their rules, HOB entrances keep changing due to tours

There are 5 completely disparate systems. Booking tours takes up half of my days sometimes, meaning I lose an immense amount of productivity. CVC, CAO, and Capitol Security failed to give good guidelines, and most of their guidance contradicted itself. Staff were informed of tours starting at the same time constituents were, and tours AND trainings commenced in the middle of a session week. Most staffers and interns had never used the tour request system. Everyone feels like they're drowning

Allow constituents to book more of their tours, I like what LOC and African American did with online bookings

A centralized portal would be amazing. Would also like for information to be readily accessible, unlike current trends

Just POC for these agencies

The current capitol tour process is extremely time intensive for our office

All places, except *possibly* the White House, should allow the public to request tours on their own, instead of through member offices. Have a document with language for various situations (WH tour req, Cap tour sched, Cap tour denied, etc.) that you can copy-paste into emails

More tours available; open the capital of our country

Searching for a better way to manage reservations all in one place

The entire tour process is incredibly hard for staffers, especially between interns since you have to balance leading tours between your other responsibilities plus the others that are given to you just throughout the day

When tours are too far out, there's no way to know when it comes around to the time for when you should book tours

More tour availability needed for WH and Capitol

Tedious process we should be able to message constituents through IQ rather than having to spoon feed them through outlook email. The Capitol Tour information has not been updated and it makes Capitol Tours very frustrated for interns

Communication to tour coordinators from CVC and WHVO (especially WHVO) are really lacking

Tour requests should go through the CVC and only the CVC for Capitol tours

It's really frustrating when the white house releases all the times at once and everything is booked full for the next three months without any of my constituents getting the chance to be submitted. Also the portal locks me out frequently which I assume is from heavy use during those reservation periods

SA is tour coordinator

Biggest issue has not been knowing the latest update + very confusing "Stage" process

Lack of availability

If the CVC would just give each office a certain amount of tickets per week or month, then we could distribute them how we want without any more restrictions for a Capitol tour, that would be great. One day a week makes it difficult for constituents to see their tax dollars at work and especially on the House side our literal job is to serve our constituents and they do not have much room for the trade of services if we are restricted this much for a Capitol Tour especially during the summer

White house has no available tours and there's no way to get updates on tour info from outside agencies

Not an efficient system at all, office won't pay for tour trackr. And staff/member's friends try to cram in last minute tours all the time

Update request process as Kennedy center does not need congressional offices to book tours

Constituents are unaware that they can book their own Capitol tour, so if we are full they can still book it themselves. The White House tours are impossible to get for offices with the limited reopening, and they are advertising to constituents as if it is no problem to get a tour. This leads constituents to be mad at our office for not getting them a tour, even though there's nothing we can do.

CVC isn't forthcoming when changing rules. White House doesn't answer the phone

Very limited number of capitol tour tickets available :(Had to turn away groups

Our office has tour requests submitted through our Member's website. The only thing I would change is have a place where people can submit the names of the guests in their party for Capitol tour requests

unsure, I do not manage this system

It would be nice to be able to schedule more than one tour per week

WH tour portal lacks clarity on when dates become available

Tours are always books and I can never find availability . Offices are mass booking months in advance which makes it very hard to find tickets. The website is not user friendly and though we have to have tickets no one is actually following the one tour per office rule

Please describe any issues you have with the tour request process, ways you'd like to see it improve, or aspects that are working well (continued)

Open up the Capitol Building again to unlimited capacity. It is a waste of resources to make us reserve spaces, and it forces us to turn groups away sometimes. The 'People's House' should not be 'booked up' a month in advance. Please, I am honestly BEGGING you, open it back up to unlimited tour group sizes and availability. I can't do my actual job because of how much time I have to waste with the current reservation system. That means constituents aren't getting responses to their concerns (letters, emails, calls) because I have to put so much time into coordinating tours. Bringing

people in through security is not the problem. It's the reservation process that isn't working. I put in an extra 10 hours a week of my own time after hours to make these happen, because tours are special and important to me and our constituents, and I still can't get all of my work done. The only thing that is burdensome and unfair within my work environment is the tour process as it is being administered right now. It is a disservice to staffers and constituents alike

I wish there was constantly an updated list that said what is open and if constituents can book tours themselves. I struggle to have enough time during the day to respond to people just to tell them they can book their own tours

improve the availability to book tours by increasing the amount of tours that are able to be booked, tour swapping is stressful for the SA's

I've used TourTrackr before and it is 100% the best system for booking tours

What do you look for when hiring interns?

Customer service experience, passion for public service, interest in our office, attention to detail

Writing skills, experience in an office, experience working independently, state ties, Spanish language skills.

I try to hire a number of interns who complement each others strengths. Some are great writers, others have an encyclopedic knowledge of the Hill, others have wonderful people skills. What all of them need to have is a demonstrated interest in public service and a compelling and cogent reason for wanting to work in this office, on the Hill, or in politics.

Communication skills, writing skills, familiarity with the District

Can be quick on their feet and has a passion for some policy area

competency

Competent, personable, self-starter, did some research before coming to the interview

Public service values, interest in the Congressman's issues, ties to the district, customer service experience

Diverse backgrounds, experience in things besides government work/ interns that might not get the first pick in other offices

I look for best qualities in public service, passion for the field, and just

general desire for success. I know internships and getting here can be hard, so I hope to give the everyone an equal chance.

Initiative and writing skills

strong social and writing skills and prior experience in politics/ campaigns

Self-starter, good writing skills, desire to serve people and learn, humility

Experience in other political offices, writing skills, willingness to take on new tasks/enthusiasm, and professionalism.

Good people who are willing to learn

Not above dirty duties, willingness to help, flexibility, adaptability, performance under pressure

district ties, diverse backgrounds, passion for politics

From the district or state, competent, involved both socially and civically, comfortable with answering the phones, not radical and crazy.

most of the decision is made by senior staff

Specialization or focus in a certain area of interest.

The willingness to learn and strong writing ability

Initiative, demeanor, self-starter

Intuition, sociability, from the district, sense of humor

district ties, experience, positive attitude

dedication to public service, work ethic, district/state ties, writing skills

They apply online but I look at UCDC, Panetta Institute, and hill serve.

enthusiasm; knowledge of the District and MOC; communication skills

Humor, willing to learn, and drive.

Passion for the issues

If they are a constituent, if they have any food service/retail background, Involvement in clubs

State and local government experience, ties to the district/state

Smart, capable, friendly, inquisitive

Connections to the district, desire to work in public service rather than 'politics', friendly and easy-going personality.

District ties + from in-state colleges, personable.

What do you look for when hiring interns? (continued)

Be coachable. I need to be able to train interns to be 100% ready to assist the staff with whatever they need ASAP

Diversity

Team player (prior relevant internships a plus)

state/district ties, strong writing skills, attention to detail,

Connection to/interest in the focus of our Committee, diverse backgrounds / lack of Hill experience (to provide a new opportunity to someone), someone who put in some effort to the application packet (i.e. didn't *just* submit their resume), interest in professional growth on the Hill

Personality, a sense of humor, transferrable skills, ambition, etc.

I look for quality, passion for public service, and a desire to share a common goal to explore the American Dream.

Prior customer service background, how well they answer on their feet during the interview, if they transferred from a community college to a 4 year institution and what their GPA is in both institutions.

State/District ties, community and political engagement, and academic excellence

District ties, Spanish speakers, Writing skills

Team player

Strong academic credentials, eagerness/willingness to learn the political process

able to balance being sociable and professional

Quality experience, friendly demeanor, interest in the work

District ties

Interpersonal skills, organization, attention to detail, service industry/ retail experience

Customer service experience, someone who needs the opportunity, passion for public service

Proactivity, eagerness, humility, quick wit

I look for people who have great attention to detail, organization skills, great communication skills, and a history of writing. I pay close attention to grammatical errors and writing structure both in their cover letters and resumes. I also try to avoid arrogant personality types.

organization, conversational skills, attention to detail and time management skills

Customer service experience and strong writing skills.

Professional and preferably from the state

Maturity, personality, prior professional experience

From the state, good writing, experience in politics/ press, they need to have a reason they want to work for our rep specifically

Personalized cover letters for the office, district ties

self-sufficient, mature, efficient

Live in/from the delegation, school involvement, professional experience, if their interests align with our office's key policy areas

In district or state ties, party affiliation, good writing skills

Self-starters, motivated

someone genuinely interested in the legislative process or political messaging, not just for the sake of "being on the hill"

smart but also social

Competence, confidence, desire to learn

Great writing skills, campaign experience, passion

Enthusiasm, because I've learned very quickly that the ones who do the work effectively and efficiently are not always the ones who go to the most impressive schools. I want students who know what it has been like to struggle, and has a no quitting attitude.

Ability to multi task

Goals and passion for the hill, personality that blends with the staff, hard working, self motivated

writing skills, customer service type skills for when it comes to dealing with constituents

Personal Responsibility, ability to interact well with myself(to prepare for constituents), good communication skills(writing and verbal), self motivation and a hard work ethic.

if they are able to think on their toes, if they are engaged and excited about potentially working in the office, and if they are honest

Independence, hard working, initiative

Open-minded, quick learner, humble, interested in the member and his/her policy

Varied experiences, ties to district, eagerness to learn and serve.

What are your favorite intern projects to assign either for professional development or for fun?

Hearing prep and day-of activities	Scavenger hunt	a staff member with similar interests / backgrounds, works with them for 10-15 minutes on a pitch specific to them, and then presents in front of intern cohort and staff)
Scavenger hunts	Memos and letter writing	
Love assigning my interns cosponsor requests and having them train each other in on responsibilities like campaign mail, tours, etc.	Resume workshop	
Weekly legislative project where they track a piece of leg that will be voted on during the week and then write on it	Scheduling tours, list serves, and sitting in on leg meetings. Writing letters for correspondence.	We have a semester-long project where the interns collaborate and pitch a bill directly to the Congresswoman. It's so fun to see how they grow and improve throughout the semester.
Make your own bill/resolution pitch	For fun: Scavenger hunt/giving tours. For professional development: Answer phone calls and writing letter memos.	Committee hearings and "legislator day" where my interns write internal bills that they'd love to get passed.
Direct policy work	Writing projects with staff	Research, snack trades, flag requests.
Research or policy memo writing	Long term project for interns that they are able to "introduce" a piece of legislation on behalf of the Member and present to the Member at the end of their internship	Legislative memos, graphics for social media or press release, attending hearings/briefings, introduction "scavenger hunts" to learn the lay of the land on the Hill.
Passion project - have intern research a subject they are passionate about and brief appropriate staffer/ Member on this issue	Reach out to people to network, cosponsor recommendations, letter writing, attend briefings	Cosponsor memos
We assign interns a memo on a bill of their choice that they then pitch to the Congressman, who decides on the spot whether he'll cosponsor their bill.	Cosponsor Requests, intern scavenger hunt	Coffees with staff
We assign them a semester-long project to find legislation we haven't co-sponsored, make a pitch as to why we should sign onto it, and write a social media toolkit for when it "passes", complete with activities we could do in the district	I like to set up coffee chats with my interns and interns from neighboring district offices!	Letter writing
Favorite legislation topics and allowing them to attend committee hearings of their choice.	We have our interns do SA and LC duties, no special projects!	policy/issue opinion writing assignments for the staff to review and critique
Setting up their own coffees with members of staff, scavenger hunt of the capitol	I try to get the interns out of the office as much as possible. Many of our interns come from our district, which is pretty far away so allowing them to have opportunities to get out of the office and either do tours or go to events I feel is really important for their experience.	Scavenger hunts, briefings and hearings notes
Capitol Scavenger hunt	Letter writing seminar and allowing them to attend briefings and hearing to learn about the legislative process	Updating constituent letters
Come up with a novel bill idea, go on a scavenger hunt	I pair interns with a staffer whose portfolio aligns with their interests, and they work together throughout the term on various projects.	Weekly foreign affairs memo (update by region), Form letter writing
Our office has a legislative project where interns work with leg staffers to draft a new bill/amendment. At the end of the semester they present their project to the Member.	Bill research memos	Field Trips, District Reports
policy memo on a bill they are interested in	Helping out with bill development proposal research	The walking scavenger hunt or having interns call other congressional offices for information.
Cosponsor memo and one-pager project	Coffee with the Chairman at the end of the semester; intern memo project (pick any bill within Committee jurisdiction and write a memo detailing the bill, its impacts, and why it should be moved through; elevator pitch workshop (paired with	Cosponsor request memos
News briefs		Research projects and writing letters.
Constituent tours		Weekly leg assignments on votes, scheduler project, legislation suggestion, suspensions vote recs, capstone reflection project saying all that they've done

What are your favorite intern projects to assign either for professional development or for fun? (continued)

Creating interview transcripts, fun video projects, decorating the office for Christmas, scavenger hunts, research memos on a specific issue, watching the House floor and writing down any questions they have, attending LOC and CRS seminars, etc.

Photograph the member at events, send leg interns to briefings and events, clean the cage

I like getting them to draft constituent letters and any interesting excuses to get them to visit other offices or the capitol.

Bill project

Scavenger hunts, bill naming contests

Call backs for constituents, drafting letters, research

Resume editing, form letters, archiving

Committee Hearing related work

Weekly legislation projects during session weeks.

I like giving letters to write because it allows opportunity to research history and current status of leg and writing skills for. I also like to allow for some attending/ writing briefings on some events to see more of the beltway or interagency activity

Drafting constituent letters

Campus scavenger hunt

Having the interns do letter writing on behalf of my Congressman is always incredibly fun. The interns feel like they are doing something of major significance and they get to learn more thoroughly about the Congressman's policy positions.

Memos of hearings and press clips from federal agencies

House Net scavenger hunt, goals for coffee and inter events, Monthly checks with staff, focus projects toward their interests

Drafting constituent response letters

I like to have them work on updating the current intern binder so they can pass along all of the knowledge they learn to help make the next interns more prepared.

Briefing forms, memos on bills we are voting on for the week, research projects

Briefings/hearing attendance, tracking legislation

Policy memorandums on an issue important to the interns

Legislative briefings and memos to staff on topics

Please add any best practices your office utilizes for your mail program or any challenges you'd like to highlight for dealing with constituent mail.

Making a spreadsheet of batches with who is responsible for next steps for every form letter

Each intern manages a different queue, like snail mail, custom response, etc) and we rotate week by week typically. Interns are responsible for getting their queues to mail zero by the end of the week

Dealing with niche leg issues that aren't casework and not wanting to come off insensitive

There just isn't the time in the week (focus on session weeks) to focus on mail! That is why I try to alternate weeks and have "scheduled" timelines for the mail program

Writing a ton of letters. Prioritize individual responses. And now call more frequently

Weekly mail reports that hold editors accountable

Keep everything well organized, both in CRM and which letters are out for approval. Have a general

letter for each issue area, and one for animal welfare, wildlife/environment, and horses. Justify the need for new letters and the reasons you drafted it the way you did to the team. For general response letters, customize to say "thanks for contacting me about [issue]" so constituents can't say you didn't read their message. Keep one-offs to a minimum - try to call back instead

Daily IQ mail reports sent to the chief of staff, LD, and LC. As well as weekly mail meetings to discuss any issues

Interns draft all letters

Important to keep interns in the loop on the process, difficult when you are waiting for senior staffers to approve letters and they take awhile

Try to not answer every question individually. Try to create general batches for a large number of letters. Use old messages from other letters or reuse letters from the last Congress if you are an incumbent

Weekly mail meeting with SA, LC, Chief, LD, and District Director

Being the only person sorting mail and writing responses means that I often fall behind on one or the other

Best practice that I live by is always batching a little bit every day and keeping that number in my inbox under 5

The challenge is that my Member insists on editing the letter. We go back and forth for months and by the time it's ready, the topic is no longer relevant

Having the Member involved in the process is time consuming for sure but it also ensures that everything that is sent out/in our letter library is accurately representative of their views and definitely comes in handy in the future when referencing an issue

It's hard to know which if any single message to close out

Please add any best practices your office utilizes for your mail program or any challenges you'd like to highlight for dealing with constituent mail.

Creating frequent contact / ongoing case documents that summarize individuals' cases briefly (and include points of action taken previously), to help bring new intern cohorts and staff up to speed quickly

Our mail program is so backed up due to the member's spouse's involvement in our office.

Constituent calls by the member, staff responds directly to niche messages, staff level emails for topics under 20 messages

each day one intern is assigned to batching and gets it down to zero

proactive letter writing, if there is a big vote coming u start drafting a letter before the vote and start approval process right after a vote series

Be consistent in sending out campaign responses. It is okay to wait a few weeks in writing a letter for a large group of constituents if the situation is still developing.

Labeling "frequent flyers". People who write in more than once a week consistently get labeled as a "ff" and then we respond to only one of their inquiries per week

More approval is inefficient, especially when most letters are formulaic

Email replies for campaign responses under the 10 letter threshold. Phone calls for individual messages

Our mail program has a lot of issues that resulted in a 33,000 message backlog when I came into the position. To help get a handle on it, I requested to close out all campaign mail older than 6 weeks. This helped knock down the backlog a lot and ultimately, those constituents probably forgot they wrote anyway. We do this every week so while it's a shame more people aren't getting a response, we're at least prioritizing the messages we know are recent and representative of current issues

Closing out frequent writers, standard form letter template, letter edits tracker. send mail every MWF, adding affiliations for people who contact us

Using the CRM to its fullest capabilities

We speed up the response process by calling constituents sometimes

Important issues that are not a legislative priority and does not meet batch threshold get a call back

The bureaucracy and speed at which form letters get accepted can be frustrating to deal with

It helps to have interns batching everyday to help make it easier for me to respond to things quicker. No matter what, even if they get 50 messages batched, it helps a lot

batching all mail at the end of each day, having 1 intern do batching, usually the one who does it the fastest

1) Getting form letters approved is often the biggest hurdle to getting mail numbers down. I had our LD approve most outstanding drafted form letters before the holidays in December and we had less than 900 letters in our CRM after that! Such a good feeling. We generally have between 2k - 3k on an average week. I send a breakdown of what letters we need to prioritize approval of to our LD each week based on batch size and age of the mail, and they try to get to a few. 2) I also pull a few (5-8) messages from constituents each week to email directly to our Member with the constituent's name, location and phone number so they can get a sense of the mail and respond directly if they want. However, this was something our MOC requested specifically, not something I pushed for - though it has been a great way to keep them in the loop of what's going on with mail. I usually pull those messages from our Singles batch, because they tend to be more personalized and not just campaign mail. 3) We also have interns batch mail so I don't have to do that - this is useful but can also be a double-edged sword because everyone batches a bit differently and sometimes the batches can get a bit messy. I think if you want to do this you need to have really really good communication between the LC's preferences and the interns. We

have a mail group chat where interns can ask batching questions and I can make suggestions. 4) I have 2 generic letters I'll send out instead of one. We have a "General Constituent Response" that thanks the constituent for writing in, highlights our casework numbers and monies, and gives out our office contact details. I also write a "General Response Update" that outlines some of our boss's recent actions/noteworthy news that I update (about) every 3 months. This is slightly more legislative focused and I usually send it to people who write in about multiple issues concurrently. 5) I also have 2 notable Singles batches that I maintain: one that is sorted monthly so I can make sure to empty by the end of the month so people are getting responses within the 30-day turnaround goal we have. I also have a call/email back directly batch for people who request a call back or who it's easier to just have a quick phone convo instead of writing out a whole email

Please describe any other problems related to pay/benefits/culture or what kinds of additional resources you'd like to see for staff.

Office is too conservative to pay employees. Return the rest to the Treasury. And is dragging his feet on raising it to \$45,000

I wish there were more organizations that brought staff from different offices together, ie state/regional delegations, SA organizations, etc

Senior staff do not need to have any managerial training. While in other industries, additional higher education is required to manage a team, the hill throws anyone to the head of a team. Without proper training, toxic habits develop quickly

I want to do more legwork and I get frustrated that as an LC I don't get to attend any policy briefings. I am very frustrated they let interns join but not me

More pay and more time off

Communication between senior and junior level staff & workload

It would be nice to either have more vacation days or an expanded telework policy.

staff is made to stay til 6 even when member is out of town, pay is low and hard to increase, hard to break into LD's legislative portfolio so i end up just batching mail and not having any issue areas of my own

I personally do not think SA/LC should be one job. I am consistently overwhelmed with the amount of hats I have to wear and think they should be two separate roles

Toxic masculinity and bad leadership. We are also very low paid compared to our counterparts in other Dem offices

There is definitely a difference in treatment of women and minorities in our office. There is also an element of favoritism that regularly excludes minorities in our office.

Hours are much longer than my current salary would justify. Lack of ability to move up in my office hurts my desire to work hard

Information seems to be slow to trickle down to jr. staff, so perhaps just helping to better spread the

word of some general knowledge? Of course much of it may be specific to a certain office, so there isn't always much that can be done on a wide scale, but making sure staff know what is happening (or where they can seek out that information) would be helpful

The pay could always be better. I still work a second job, even after the recent MRA bump, because I can afford rent, groceries, bills, and that's it. If I want to go home or do something fun, I have to rely on the pay I receive from my other job. I also strongly believe that the pay is not proportional to the level of stress that junior staff deal with (i.e.: doing literally all of the grunt work in the office and being harassed and threatened by angry constituents on the phone). Pay is my number one problem

Despite the current salary floor, my office will not raise my pay to help out. They would rather me apply for food stamps and work a second job before they raise my pay before the deadline. People making over \$199,000 doing nothing while junior staff struggle to get by when all of the tools to solve the problem are in his pocket

More growth opportunities for LCs

I'm extremely overworked. We need to end the normalization of SAs doing personal tasks for members. Yes I make overtime pay, but working 12-15 hour days every in session day is not sustainable

More pay is always better - I also want more funding to pay district office interns

Pay is a problem, additional resources/mandatory briefings need to be implemented for members and chiefs as they think increased staff pay is ridiculous and unwarranted

We have an amazing culture and closeness with our team, but this also means that there is a tendency to overextend yourself and be a team player even when it is an unreasonable ask. This also engenders an unwillingness to switch offices, resulting in minimal upward mobility

We still have not seen a raise post MRA increase/required minimum wage increase. We used to be able to borrow vacation days from the future but we have a new chief who isn't ok with that so it is getting hard for junior staff with few vacation days to budget normally

No wfh flexibility

4 Day work week, 9AM-6PM

I would like to see more consistent raises (ie cost of living)

We don't need the ability to unionize. We're bureaucrats

Open up the Capitol Building again to unlimited capacity. It is a waste of resources to make us reserve spaces, and it forces us to turn groups away sometimes. The 'People's House' should not be 'booked up' a month in advance. Please, I am honestly BEGGING you, open it back up to unlimited tour group sizes and availability. I can't do my actual job because of how much time I have to waste with the current reservation system. That means constituents aren't getting responses to their concerns (letters, emails, calls) because I have to put so much time into coordinating tours. Bringing people in through security is not the problem. It's the reservation process that isn't working. I put in an extra 10 hours a week of my own time after hours to make these happen, because tours are special and important to me and our constituents, and still can't get all of my work done. The only thing that is burdensome and unfair within my work environment is the tour process as it is being administered right now. It is a disservice to staffers and constituents alike

Office credit card

Not hiring new people when others leave, which lands a ton of new responsibility towards everyone else, which almost lead me to burnout

Please describe any other problems related to pay/benefits/culture or what kinds of additional resources you'd like to see for staff. (continued)

None my office has great culture that I always feel respected and heard in

I would like for it to be mandatory that office's have a written vacation/sick leave policy because right now I literally have no idea what the policy is - I think it's totally arbitrary based on if the chief decides to approve it or not

I wish there was a better understanding of when and how to ask for a raise in terms of the budgeting process

Truly no problems

I think it would be great to have some resources for transferring between roles in the office - I have been given more LA work since the beginning of the year (which I asked

for and wanted) but basically no formal training on what I'm supposed to be doing or how to appropriately handle my portfolios (expectations, etc) and so it's hard to determine how I am progressing. I also would love to have more social outings with my office to build those relationships but we don't have a central anonymous way to suggest things

MODERNIZATION STAFF ASSOCIATION

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](#).

