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Staff Assistant/Legislative Correspondent Best Practices Guide

Developed by the Modernization Staff Association
with the assistance of POPVOX LegiDash

Why we created this guide

Staff Assistants and Legislative Correspondents have some of the most difficult and undervalued jobs on Capitol Hill. They are primarily responsible for the constituent correspondence that helps to ensure the public is represented, 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.

About the 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)

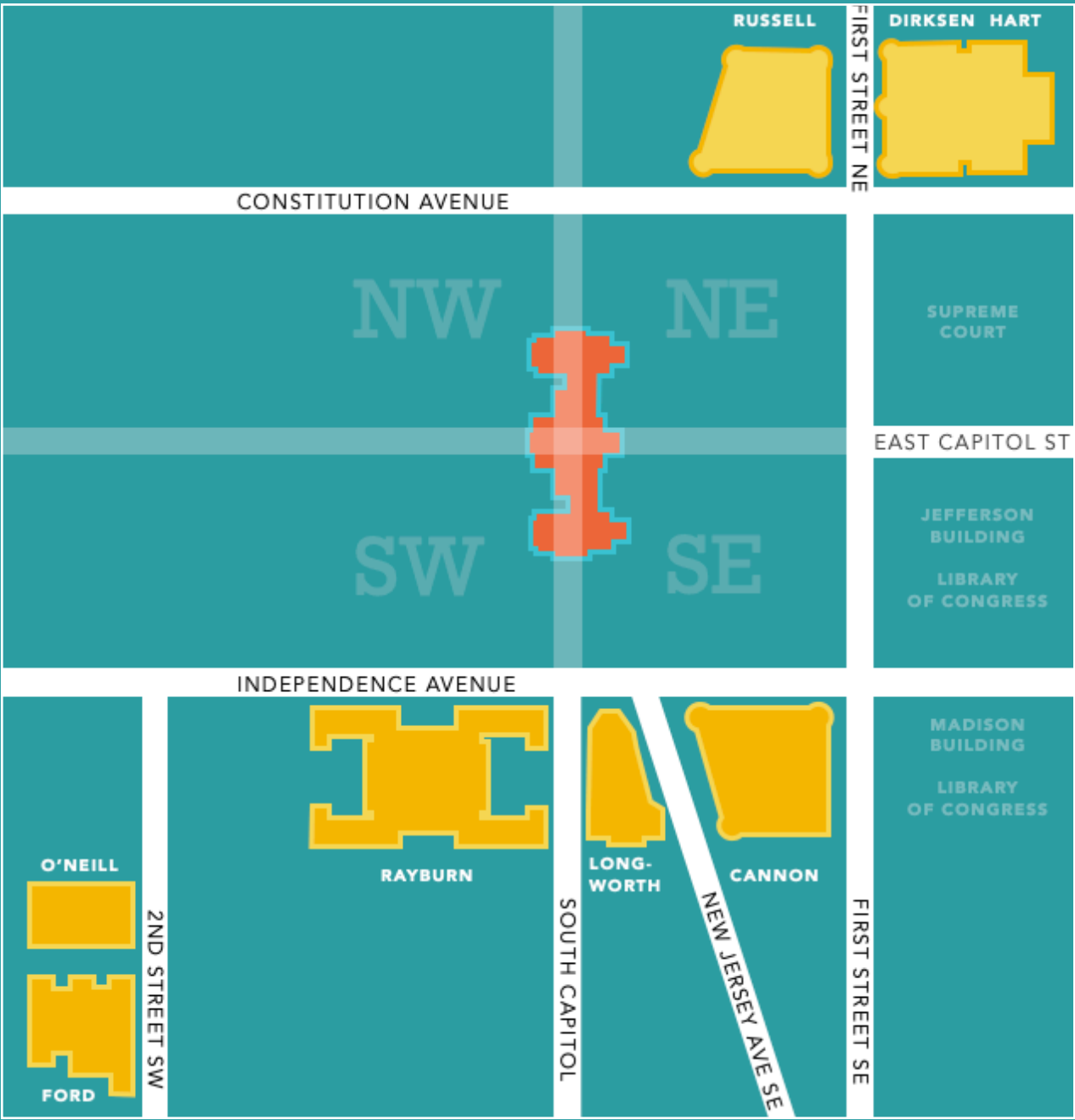
- Three digit room numbers preceded by "SR"
- Example: SR 216 is on the second floor of Russell

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

Remember that quadrants in the District of Columbia (NW, NE, SE, SW) are determined in relation to the Capitol building.

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 (see samples).

Required Trainings

Training	Required for	Contact	Link
2021 Ethics Training	All staff and interns	202-225-7103	https://houseset.house.gov/for-staff/responsibilities/ethics-training
Workplace Rights and Responsibilities (covers previous sexual harassment training)	All staff and interns		https://house.csod.com/LMS/catalog/Welcome.aspx?tab_page_id=-67&tab_id=-1
2021 Escape Hood Training (In Person, only required once per Congress)	All staff	202-225-9500	https://house.csod.com/samldefault.aspx?returnUrl=%252fDeepLink%252fProcessRedirect.aspx%253fmodule%253dlodetails%2526lo%253d5895419f-2fe8-448d-a808-2211d826e6b4
2021 Information Security Training	All staff and interns that have government devices	cybertraining@mail.house.gov	https://houseset.house.gov/for-staff/responsibilities/information-security-awareness-training

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.

ONBOARDING CHECKLIST

- ☐ **Contact the Staff Assistant for the following:**
- ☐ • Office Key
- ☐ • House ID
- ☐ • Business cards
- ☐ • Desk and computer
- ☐ • House email
- ☐ • Access to CRM, common drive, Slack/Teams, text chains
- ☐ • Parking or transit benefits
- ☐ • Schedule welcome lunch/drinks
- ☐ **Contact House Call or Tech office for the following:**
- ☐ • Office cell phone and laptop
- ☐ • Setting up official email on your phone
- ☐ **Contact your manager to review**
- ☐ • Standing meetings
- ☐ • Performance review structure
- ☐ • Org chart
- ☐ • Standard practices for your role
- ☐ **Work with manager to schedule one-on-ones with everyone in the office**
- ☐ **Schedule and complete required trainings**
- ☐ **Update tech inventory spreadsheet**
- ☐ **Complete emergency contact information form**
- ☐ **Add yourself to the staff Facebook**
- ☐ **Update the vacation tracker**
- ☐ **Talk to chief or district director about benefits (transportation, student loan, health care)**
- ☐ **Review TSP benefits with COS or DD**
- ☐ **Talk to SA about signing up for basic CRS courses**
- ☐ **Review and adhere to the cyber security policy**

OFFBOARDING CHECKLIST

Change your address with

- ☐ • The House Finance Office
- ☐ • 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

If your position is based in DC, return to the Staff

- ☐ • Office key
- ☐ • House ID
- ☐ • 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**
- ☐ **Log out and remove your apple id/icloud from all devices before returning them**

Getting an ID for a new staffer

- Send them your form
- Have a staffer escort the person to the ID office so they can still enter the House building
- New ID office hours: Thursdays from 9 am to 1 pm in Cannon 112
- Contact information: idservices.inboundfax@mail.house.gov or 202-225-0239

Office Support Requests

HouseNet is your friend! 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	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
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?

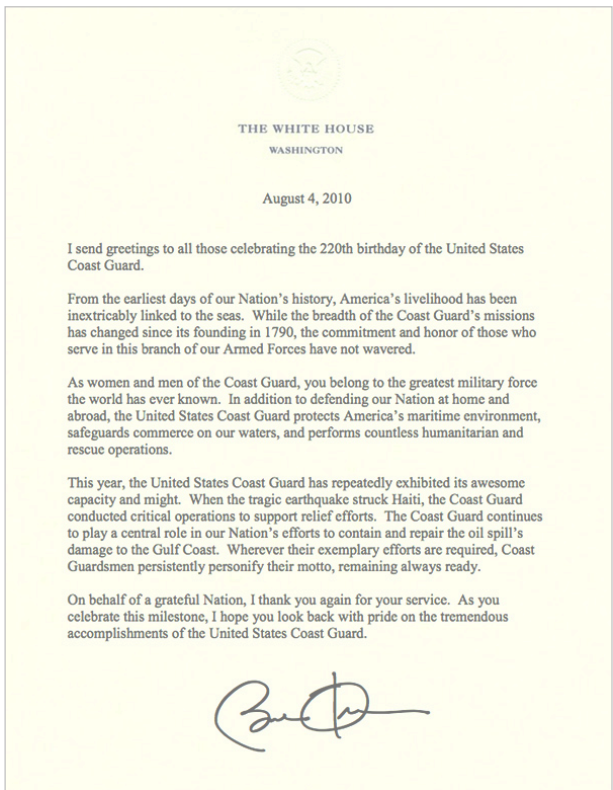
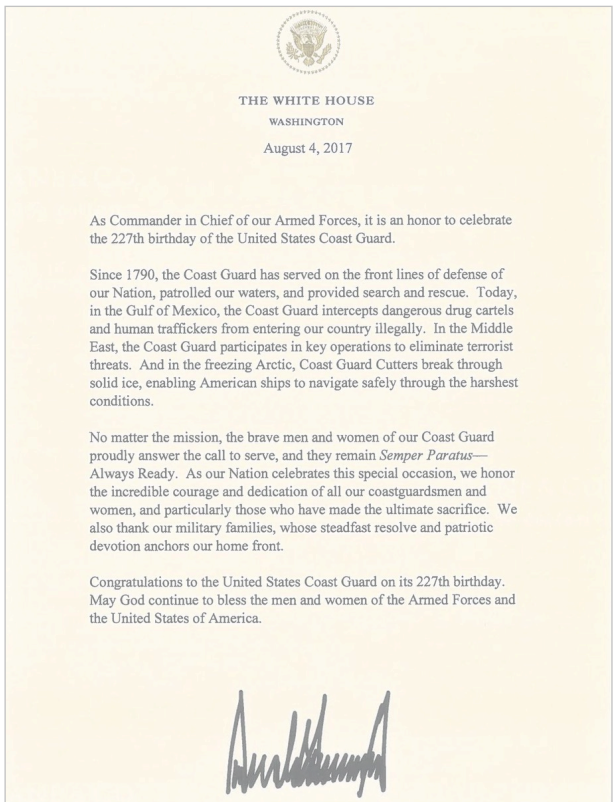
When filling out the form, use the following structure:

- 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.
- OLA cannot give offices official updates
- Once OLA logs in greetings, Presidential Correspondence takes over the process and our office does not get updates from Correspondence on greetings
- Presidential Correspondence will send out the greeting on the day of the event or a few days after
- In order for your greeting request to be sent out on time, greeting requests **MUST** be sent out six weeks before the date of the event
- OLA cannot expedite requests

Information Required for different types of Greetings



Birth of Baby (to be addressed to the parents)

- Baby's date of birth
- First and Last Name of both parents needed
- Home Address

Welcome to the World (to be addressed to the baby)

- Baby's date of birth
- Name of the baby
- Home Address

Birthdays

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

Condolences

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

Eagle Scout

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

Graduation

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

Retirement

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

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

Wedding

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

Wedding Anniversary

- Year of anniversary (ex: 50th Wedding Anniversary)
- Date of the anniversary of THIS year
- First and Last Name of Husband AND Wife is needed
- Home Address

** Please Note: the White House only does wedding anniversaries based off numbers of five (ex: 25th Wedding Anniversary, 60th Wedding Anniversary, etc.)*

DRIVING THE MEMBER

For those who are tasked with driving, 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.
- 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

Every office develops its own standard procedures and priorities for how calls are handled. Here is an example from an office that uses Fireside but is useful for any CRM:

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 your CRM. Sometimes some people don't want to give their contact info. If that happens just listen to what they have to say and thank them for calling. No need to log their message.
- (During or after the call is complete): Record all phone calls in the CRM 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 representative's office (use google). *Do NOT log out-of-district messages!!*
- Anything related to Congressperson's campaign (i.e. donations, platform issues, events, etc) CANNOT be provided by us. We are the "official" office and can only answer questions/provide resources for their public office. Guide the caller to the campaign website, if necessary, but do not speak on behalf of the campaign/ convey information related to the campaign

Phone Policy example (continued)

Voicemails

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

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

Legislative/Staff Inquiry Call

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

- "Standard House" email format: FirstName.LastName@mail.house.gov
- "Standard Senate": FirstName_LastName@SenatorsLastName.senate.gov

Staff Contact

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

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

Event/Meeting Requests

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

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

Casework Request

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

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

Phone: [phone number]

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

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, by usually going to the Representatives 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 optionally 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!

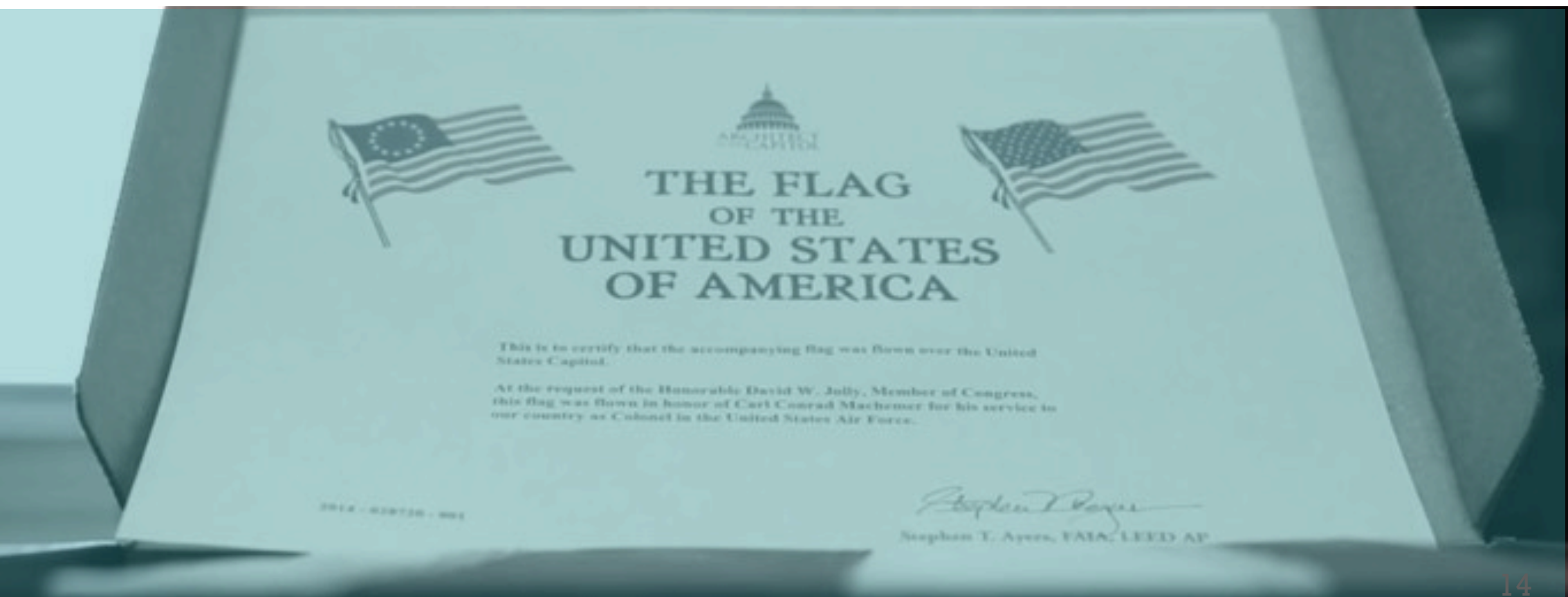
A full explanation of the flag process can be found on [this page on Housenet](#). The most complicated situation is when a constituent sends a physical check. When this happens, you have to:

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



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 [TourTracker](#), 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) congtrous@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 trous@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

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:

- First Call: x58000
- 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- I would recommend reaching out to a Senate office you have a relationship with as a last resort, if the group MUST have a room.



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 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, LA, LD, chief and MOC. However, the slimmer your letter approval process, the faster your turnaround times.

We recommend having only one person above the LC make the final approval for form letters, whether that be an LA, the 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. 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.
- **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

- 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 Poliscribe, which automatically writes first drafts of form letters based on other content previously written by the office
- Check out tips from the Congressional Management Foundation on addressing common mail issues

BATCHING, ELECTRONIC MAIL AND PHYSICAL MAIL

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

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!

Sending and receiving physical mail

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

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 [Redacted]. 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.

Form Letter Tips



Tim Hysom
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 Congressional Management Foundation:

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



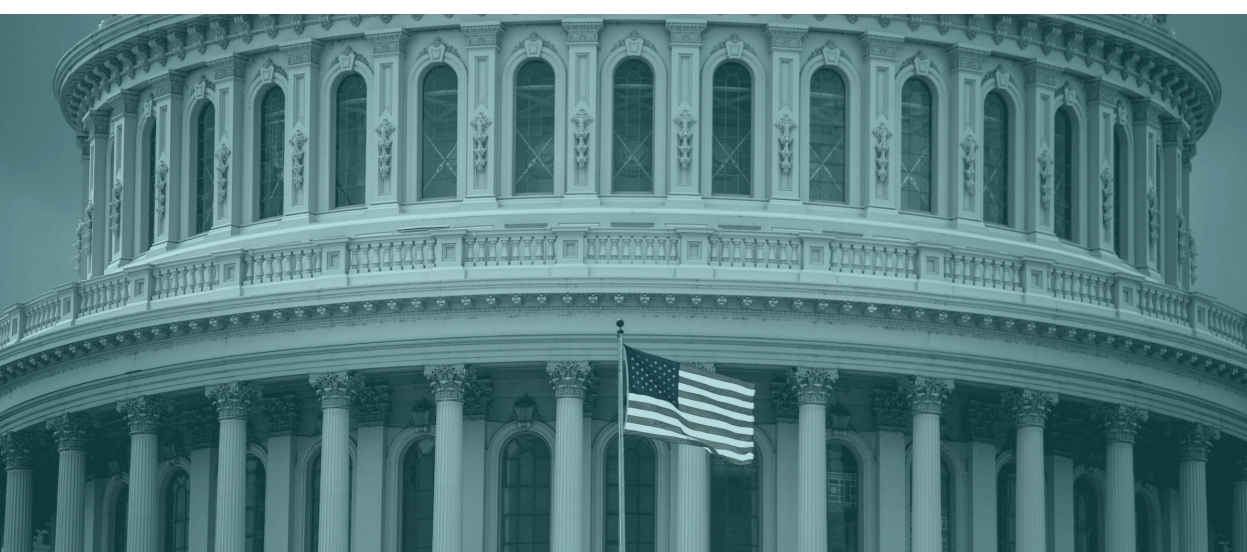
<https://www.congressfoundation.org/office-toolkit-home/improve-mail-operations-menu-item-new/writing-mail-home/terms/summary>

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.



MANAGING INTERNSHIPS

1. Planning your 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 -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 \$25,000 per calendar year. 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.
- Create some need- or merit-based paid internships and some mostly unpaid, but pay everyone something so that everyone still qualifies to use government devices from home.
- Have some unpaid internships and one or two paid fellowships. Case study from Rep. Moulton's office: "We created a foreign policy fellowship aimed at recruiting diverse candidates who would not otherwise be able to intern on the Hill. We determine financial need by requiring that they be Pell-grant eligible, which we determine by asking them for a FAFSA form."

Offices are not limited to this \$25,000 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 \$25,000 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 your 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 INTERNSHIPS

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

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

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/internships/>

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://hepcampassociation.org/internship/>

Mission: "to serve, educate, and empower farm workers"
HEP and CAMP are educational programs which serve students from migrant or seasonal farm-worker families

J Street Congressional Internship Program

https://jstreet.org/about-us/#.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, 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)

Hiring Interns During Remote Work

Sample language for your website:

Thank you for your interest in our internship program.

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

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

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

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

General Interview Questions

Suggestions from Andrea Calderón, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would you describe your communication style? How often are you in contact with your peers and supervisors?
- What challenges and advantages do you foresee for working from home?
- How do you keep yourself engaged in your work and manage your mental health?
- How do you prefer to be managed?
- Why do you want to intern on the hill/for Congresswoman Blunt Rochester?
- What are some issue areas you care about?
- How is your coursework relevant to this internship?
- What 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?

"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*

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!
- House Floor livestream & calendar
- Senate Floor livestream & calendar
- CRS has a list of Congressional liaisons for federal agencies. We use liaisons mainly for casework—to bump a service or contact the status of a case—but sometimes for policy/leg as well. Thought it would be interesting for you all to read through the list; it also serves as a list of ALL federal agencies.

Official Congressional:

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

Non-profit/independent orgs:

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

Floor and Hearings:

- Upcoming House Committee hearings (see here for schedule). To access livestream link, look up the committee’s website & event
- Upcoming Senate Committee hearings (see here for schedule). To access livestream links, click on committee names as listed

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 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)

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

- The key is to think beyond yourself: What does it look like from your boss's side of the table? (How many staff is he/she supervising and what are their abilities and needs? What does the long-term big picture for the office look like and how do you fit in? How tight is the office budget? What jobs might come open?) Too many junior staff don't realize that personnel decisions are about a lot more than themselves. Once there is more work to be done, supervisors will be looking for people to do it. Promotions don't come out of thin air.
- Then look in the mirror: How is my performance? What does my boss care about and am I doing that well? How is my communication with my supervisor? Where else can I help? What should I ask for that makes sense given what I've done so far and what the office needs?
- Think about supervisor/your office: How and when have other people gotten more responsibility? How does my supervisor like to 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.



Tips from Christy Wagner
Legislative Director for 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
Chief of Staff for Rep. Alan Lowenthal

- "The days where LCs can do it all themselves are gone. It takes issue area experts to write or review drafts. If you don't have a culture where the LD cares, it is an uphill battle. I wouldn't suggest undermining them to go to the member. I would say come armed with data, examples and information that make the case for you, because people respond to data. Come with a mail report that shows the average turnaround time, how many messages are over a certain late threshold, how many letters you're writing on average per week as the LC, and how much staff time it takes. Ask to virtually sit down with the LD or chief and remind them that we're in an election year and this is really important—we need to be as responsive as possible, especially if constituents are saying they are unhappy. Propose mild changes at first, and always put it in terms of the boss' responsiveness to constituents, not in terms of your work as an LC."
- "Propose ideas that other offices are doing and that are working for them, like weekly meetings. Some sort of group interaction, no matter what form it takes, is helpful since we aren't constantly talking around the office anymore. Don't just say there are problems; come armed with potential solutions."
- "Always show that you learn from edits and mistakes. If you correct something once, make sure you fix it moving forward."

Tips from Roufia Saleh
Legislative Correspondent for 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.



NETWORKING

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.

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. If you are new to Hill, you'll quickly learn that most of the networking comes informally. 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. Finally, the National Democratic Club and Capitol Hill Club often have free events and are right next to the Hill.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Resources

[House Wellness Center](#)

[TeleCounseling](#)

The Office of Employee Assistance provides 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](#)

RESOURCES AND 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 <https://housenet.house.gov/serving-constituents/dc-visitors/capitol-tours/gallery-passes> 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](#)

List of other [Congressional Staff Organizations](#) (CSOs)

[Office of the Whistleblower Ombudsman](#)

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

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



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](#).

