

Examples of Titles and Roles for Congressional Staff

District/State Staff

The district/state office is a good first point of contact for most constituents. House Members generally have from six to eight people located in the district. Senators usually have 10 to 15 staffers located in the state.

Caseworkers -- If you are looking for help on a problem concerning federal agencies (such as getting your social security check) ask for the **caseworker** who handles that issue (the social security caseworker, for example). District or state caseworkers are masters at maneuvering through the maze of the federal bureaucracy. Their expertise ranges from immigration to social security to veteran's benefits, and they spend most of their time solving the problems constituents encounter with the federal government. For example, a district/state caseworker can help you secure your veteran's benefits, or resolve immigration issues.

District/State Scheduler -- If you want to meet with the representative or senator in the district or state, or if you want to invite him/her to an event, ask for the **district or state scheduler**. This is the person who schedules the Member's time when he or she is in the district or state. (Note that some offices handle all scheduling out of one office, usually the D.C. office, so you may be referred to the D.C. scheduler). Senate offices may have more than one person per office dealing with scheduling duties.

Field Representative -- If you want to meet with a district staff person to discuss a particular local issue, or if you want to invite someone from the district staff to a local

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event or meeting, ask for the **field representative** who handles your issue. Field representatives can also talk with you about federal issues that directly affect the district (disaster relief for your flooded neighborhood, for example) or actions of a federal agency on something that affects a local group of people or a community (as opposed to individual problems).

District/State Office Director -- This staffer oversees the operations of the district or state staff and is often the point person in the district office for highly sensitive local political issues. Constituents should ask for this person if they feel that their concerns are not being met by others in the office.

Washington, D.C., Staff

Washington, D.C., staff are less focused on casework and specific local issues and more focused on legislation. They are ready and willing to answer constituent's questions about specific legislative proposals. In general, if you want to express your opinion or learn the Member's opinion on a particular federal issue that is broad in scope, call or write the Washington, D.C. office. You can also contact the district office, but in many cases your correspondence will be forwarded to Washington.

Staff Assistant -- Most House offices have one **staff assistant**. Most Senate offices have at least two. They handle the front desk duties, which include answering phones, greeting visitors, sorting mail, and coordinating tours. In many offices, these individuals will handle a few policy issues as well. If you are going to be traveling to Washington and want tickets to tour a government building, be sure to ask for the staff assistant/tours coordinator (in a few offices, these are different people), who can let you know what's available. Be sure to plan ahead for such requests, since tickets for some of the more popular tours are claimed months in advance, and each policymaker's office

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receives a limited supply. Buildings where tours are available include the Capitol, the White House, FBI headquarters, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Kennedy Center, and the Supreme Court. (In most cases, you can still tour these buildings without passes from your policymaker's office ahead of time, but you may have to wait in long lines.) You can also receive passes to view House and Senate floor debates.

D.C. Scheduler/Executive Assistant -- If you are going to be in Washington, D.C. and want to meet your representative or senator, contact the **D.C. scheduler** (who is sometimes called the **Executive Assistant**). Information on effective meetings is outlined in following chapters -- but here's the first rule: *Do not be surprised or insulted if your representative or senator does not have time for a meeting.* Schedulers receive dozens of meeting requests a day. Most House Members are scheduled with back-to-back meetings and votes from about 8 am to 9 or 10 pm every weekday, and also have four to five hours of meetings both weekend days. There simply is not enough time in the day for a Member of Congress to meet with everyone who requests a meeting. That said, if you live in the district or state that the representative or senator represents, and want to discuss a substantive policy issue, you always should be able to meet with someone on the staff. In fact, as noted below, meeting with the staff may, in many ways, be even more effective.

Legislative Assistant (LA) -- If you want to talk, either in person or on the phone, about a particular policy issue, ask for the **legislative assistant** who handles that issue. Legislative assistants handle the bulk of the policy work in a policymaker's office. A House office usually will have two to four LAs and a Senate office will have from three to as many as 12 (depending upon the state's population).

Legislative Director (LD) -- In some cases, the person who handles your issue may also be the **legislative director** who, in addition to handling policy issues, also

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oversees the legislative staff. There is usually just one legislative director in each policymaker's office.

Legislative Correspondent (LC) -- You may also be referred to a **legislative correspondent** who, in addition to drafting letters in response to constituents' comments and questions, also generally handles a few legislative issues. Most House offices have one or two LC's. Senators have three to five, depending on their state's population.

Press Secretary/Spokesperson/Communications Director -- If you want to include something about the representative or senator's views in a newsletter, or have questions related to the press operations of the office, ask for the **press secretary**. This individual is responsible for fielding all calls from the media and is often the spokesperson for the office. House offices usually have one designated press person. Senate offices have two to five.

Chief of Staff (CoS)/Administrative Assistant (AA) -- The **chief of staff or AA** oversees the entire operation. The chief of staff may sometimes handle a few policy issues, but generally his or her time is spent managing the office.