

## Why do so many people want to be a Congressman or Senator?

I admit I'm baffled. Why do so many people want to be a Congressman or Senator? Is it the money? At \$170K/year, I doubt it because on that salary you can't keep an apartment in DC and a house in your home constituency, fly back and forth, own a nice car in Washington (and afford a parking place or find one for it) and keep the family jalopy at home in tip top shape.

It's tough to go out to dinner at fancy DC restaurants on your own tab or take expensive vacations. There are perks, however. There's your DC office where you roll out a bedroll and place it gently on your air mattress and sleep next to your desk (many Congressmen are actually doing this) if you don't mind suffering from a stiff back the next day.

You have the House gym where you can work off those nasty calories from eating in the House cafeteria where you can eat three squares a day at rock bottom prices. You get your own Blackberry and have your own computer where you can surf the net and upload your risqué photos like a Congressman recently did.

You have a staff that will get your coffee, schedule your appointments and double as your escort to official functions. You can even dress up in furry animal suits if you feel the urge, though you do risk running afoul of PETA or possibly see yourself on You Tube (like another Congressman did this week). Is it the cache of the position? You get to be called 'Representative' or 'Senator' and can wear a nifty Congressional pin on your lapel or blouse, and you can easily find your way to your own office because there's a bronze plaque on your door with your name on it.

You are also followed everywhere by a gaggle of reporters who are constantly taking your picture and shoving digital recorders in your face asking for a statement on everything from your coiffure to nuclear proliferation to your sex life. Maybe that's it... it's the sex (or rather the power that leads to sex)! Henry Kissinger once said that, "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."

There might just be something to it. I met Kissinger about 25 years ago and had the good fortune to talk with him briefly. While I found him to be an amiable and extremely interesting man, my mind's eye didn't see him occupying a top spot on the World's Sexiest Man List next to George Clooney or Brad Pitt. I fear that many Congressional Representatives are prone to stray off the 'values' reservation because they have begun to believe their own public relations - PR that's designed to create an image of them as giants with extraordinary capabilities and superhuman potency.

Unfortunately, many spend too many hours in that bubble, breathing its tainted air, ignoring the rest of us that are trying to get noticed. Perhaps that's why Congress has an approval rating of under 20%. Can there be another reason why the job is so appealing? Maybe it's a noble one (the optimist in me thinks so) like wanting to put their stamp on the country with good laws, debated by good men and women that will benefit millions of other good men and women.

But then I'm drawn to the current debate on the debt ceiling, watching our elected representatives (and the big elected representative in the White House) cavort about as if they are competing for the lead role in a bad sitcom rather than concentrating on doing the people's business.

The pessimist in me thinks that the real reason so many people may want to become a Congressman is that it's easier than running away from home and joining the circus.

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