Who’s Who in a Congressional Member’s Office

According to the Congressional Management Foundation’s 2017 report that surveyed senior congressional staffers, in-person visits to a member’s Washington, D.C. office are the most effective advocacy strategy that can positively influence lawmakers who are undecided on an issue.

To catch face time with an on-the-go Senator or Representative, face-to-face meetings require a written request. Appointment requests are handled by the scheduler, who works to get bookings on the crowded calendar. The scheduler is one of about a dozen people working in the D.C. office who play vital roles in shaping policy, communicating the office’s positions and keeping the member on track. The staff is “often more knowledgeable of individual issues than the legislators themselves,” says Robert Longley of ThoughtCo.

During fly-ins, these staffers serve as the face of the office, and the eyes and ears of the member. Visiting constituents or groups will typically have access to only the staff, such as a legislative member, and not the lawmaker themselves. The staff, however, will relay constituents’ views and materials to the lawmaker for their consideration.

Typical Office Organization Chart

```
[Diagram showing the typical office organization chart with roles such as Chief of Staff, Scheduler, Legislative Director, Communications Director, Office Manager, Legislative Assistant, Press Secretary, Staff Assistants, Legislative Correspondent, Press Assistant, Systems Administrator.]
```
POLICY TEAM

Researches, drafts, communicates about legislation and informs the member on a range of issues before Congress and in committee.

Legislative Director

Manages the member’s legislative portfolio and priorities and manages the legislative assistants and correspondents. They work directly with the member to establish priorities and strategy. The legislative director is in charge of vote recommendations, creating new legislation and running the legislation through committee hearings.

Legislative Assistant

The assistant, a senior position on the team, conducts research on legislation and handles mail. An office may have multiple legislative assistants that handle different issue areas or priorities of the member’s policy and legislative portfolio.

Legislative Correspondent

Researches legislation and issue areas. Often, they report to legislative assistants. They also draft correspondence to constituents who write in to the member with questions about policy.

COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Manages media requests, executes a strategy that communicates what the team is doing and raises awareness about issues that are important to the member’s constituents.

Communications Director

Implements the member’s communications strategy and manages the press team. The director handles television interviews, press releases, social media and print media. Either the comms director or the press secretary may serve as the formal spokes-person and may speak on the record about a member’s policies and plans. Some chiefs are heavily involved in communication, while others give the comms director free rein.

Press Secretary

Fields media requests and assists in executing media strategy. They report to the communications director and may also work with the press assistant. The press secretary may be responsible for drafting the member’s speeches and other remarks. Depending on size of a member’s district or state, or their role in congressional leadership, a member may have multiple press secretaries or a deputy press secretary who reports to the press secretary.

Press Assistant

Works with the press secretary on media requests and outreach, and can also send releases and pitch media for coverage. The press assistant may also be tasked with compiling press clippings which mention the member or concern issues that are important to the member’s district, state or legislative portfolio.

Systems Administrator

Oversees physical technology (computers, printers, smartphones), software, cybersecurity and the office’s other technological needs. The admin may manage subscriptions and passwords, and ensures that the office aligns with House guidelines for technology and other rules.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

Works to keep the office organized and accountable to the member and constituents. Roles may vary slightly from office to office.

Office Manager

Oversees office needs, which could include managing supplies, human resources, ensuring compliance with House rules and other labor rules, managing paperwork and other compliance matters on mailings, employment and related matters. They may supervise staff assistants and others who work on office administration.

Press Secretary

Answer phones, handle word processing, filing and faxing. They welcome visitors in the reception area and handle other general requests, such as flag and tour requests, from constituents. They are often the first person to greet visitors to the member’s office.

Press Assistant

Depending on size of a member’s district or state, or their role in congressional leadership, a member may have multiple press secretaries or a deputy press secretary who reports to the press secretary.