Congress 101
# Hill Staff Come in Two Forms

## Overview of Personal and Committee Congressional Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line of Reporting</th>
<th>Personal Office Staff</th>
<th>Committee Staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hired by one member of Congress and only responsible to that member</td>
<td>Hired by chairman or ranking member of committee; work for all Democratic or Republican committee members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Overview</td>
<td>Work on combination of policy and constituent-service matters, depending on needs of district</td>
<td>Work exclusively on policy, within area of committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issues</td>
<td>Practice over range of issues</td>
<td>Specialize in committee-related issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>More likely to be from district or state of hiring member; tend to have trust of Member</td>
<td>Less likely to be from district or state of chairman or ranking member; tend to be expert in issue area</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>The average Representative has 14 staffers working for them, average Senator has 30</td>
<td>House committees averaged 68 staff and Senate committees average 46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample Titles</td>
<td>Chief of Staff, Legislative Director, Legislative Assistant</td>
<td>Staff Director, Policy Analyst, Committee Counsel</td>
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Personal office staff report to the member of Congress

Sample de-facto organization of a congressional office

![Organizational chart]

**Analysis**
- Members of Congress are advised to structure their office into discrete areas, depending on their staffers’ functions.
- Nonetheless, almost every office will have a unique structure and series of staff duties.
- The vast Congressional workload means that the day-to-day reporting structure of a Congressional staffer may look very different in practice than on paper.

Expect to meet with staffers during Hill visits

- **Member of Congress**
  Visitors may not realize how highly overscheduled Members are; they average 70-hour weeks when in D.C., often achieved by double-booking meetings.

- **Chief of Staff**
  Visitors may not expect how often chiefs are in communication with a Member; the tight bond means that chiefs are often delegated to speak for Member to constituents.

- **Legislative Director**
  Visitors may not expect that LDs tend to be specialists in the policies of the committees on which Member serves; they may focus less on other areas.

- **Legislative Assistant**
  Visitors may not expect that LAs are very young; their average age is under 29.

- **Legislative Correspondent/Staff Assistant**
  Visitors may not expect that LCs and SAs tend to be even younger than LAs, often recent college grads.

**Analysis**
- Because members of Congress are often running from meeting to meeting to vote, staffers will often have more time to devote to a meeting, and be more capable of affecting any takeaway.

Committee staff can report to multiple bosses

Sample organization of a congressional committee

Committee Members

Committee Chair

Subcommittee Chair

Committee Member

Investigations Subcommittee Chair

Committee Staff

Staff Director

Press Secretary

Subcommittee Staff Director

Deputy Staff Director

Chief Counsel

Chief Investigator

Policy Advisors

Issue Experts

Policy Analysts

Investigative Staff

Analysis

- Although Congressional committee staff are officially hired by the committee chair or ranking member, some committees (especially Appropriations) will allow subcommittee chairs or even ordinary members to designate staff as their own.

Legislative Process: How a Bill Becomes a Law

*Law may be introduced in either chamber except for tax law, which must originate in the House

**Most major legislation goes to conference committee; When one chamber passes legislation originating in the other without making changes, bill goes directly to President

Bills Face Numerous Obstacles to Passage in Senate

The Legislative Process and Obstacles in the Senate

- Introductions to Chamber
- Sent to Committee
- Sent to Subcommittee
- Full Senate Vote
- Amended
- Debated on Senate Floor
- Bill passed in full chamber
- "Poison pill" amendments sabotage final passage
- Bill filibustered during debate on Senate floor
- Bill fails final vote in full chamber
- Senate Majority Leader declines to place bill on the legislative calendar

The Senate relies on unanimous consent to operate efficiently; therefore, individual Senators have the power to delay or prevent a bill’s passage by creating additional procedural hurdles, including filibusters.

House Rules Allow Majority Party to Prevent Passage

The Legislative Process and Obstacles in the House

- Bill is ignored by full committee
- Bill fails passage in subcommittee vote
- Bill fails passage in full committee vote
- Speaker of the House declines to place bill on the legislative calendar

The Senate relies on unanimous consent to operate efficiently; therefore, individual Senators have the power to delay or prevent a bill’s passage by creating additional procedural hurdles, including filibusters.

Bills Continue to Face Hurdles After Passage

Process and Obstacles for Enacting and Enforcing Laws

- President vetoes bill, Congress can override veto with a supermajority vote
- If the law is challenged in court, a judge can rule to prevent enforcement with an injunction and may eventually strike down the law
- Executive orders or signing statements can prevent a law from being enforced as originally intended

Analysis
- Even if a bill manages to pass both chambers of Congress, the President can use vetoes, executive orders, or signing statements to prevent the bill from being enacted or enforced
- Opponents of the bill, including those outside of the legislative process, can prevent the law from being enacted by mounting a successful legal challenge

The Budget Process Has Six Steps

The Federal Budget Process (In Theory)

1. In early February, OMB, after reviewing agency proposals, submits the President’s annual budget request, detailing the administration’s goals for federal revenue and spending, program-by-program funding levels, and project deficits and surpluses.

2. By April 15, Senate and House Budget Committees draft budget resolutions to set total levels of discretionary funding available for the next fiscal year. If a resolution fails to pass both chambers, a chamber will pass a “deeming resolution” to establish enforceable budget levels.

3. Working within the discretionary funding limits set by the budget resolutions, House and Senate Appropriations Committees assign to each of their twelve subcommittees the task of determining program-by-program funding.

4. The Appropriations Committees amend and pass subcommittee appropriations bills.

5. Senate and House leadership negotiate passing all unfinished subcommittee bills together in an omnibus bill. If Congress fails to do this by October 1, it must pass a continuing resolution to keep programs funded, or face partial government shutdown.

6. The President signs the omnibus bill or continuing resolution.

The Budget and Appropriations Calendar

The Federal Spending Process (In Theory)

February*
- President releases budget request

March – April*
- Senate passes budget resolution
- Congress passes combined budget resolution
- Appropriations subcommittees draft bills

May – September*
- Senate’s 12 appropriations bills
- Congress combines and passes 12 bills
- Any unfinished appropriations bills combined into omnibus bill

Source: Congress.gov
Appropriations Process Has Many Failure Points

Appropriations Process for a Single Appropriations Bill

House and Senate subcommittees covering the same appropriations bill each pass their own version of the appropriations bill

House and Senate Budget Committees pass their respective subcommittees’ bills

House and Senate pass their respective appropriations bills

Conference committee amends and combines the two bills

House and Senate pass the combined appropriations bill

President signs the combined appropriations bill

Appropriations bill becomes law, takes effect October 1

The unfinished appropriations bill must be addressed in an omnibus bill or continuing resolution

Terms to Know

- An omnibus bill is multiple appropriations bills packaged together
- A continuing resolution (CR) is an appropriations bill that keeps funding at the previous fiscal year’s funding level