

Each Member of Congress has staff to assist him/her during a term in office. To be most effective in communicating with Congress, it is helpful to know the titles and principal functions of key staff.

Chief of Staff (CoS). The Chief of Staff reports directly to the Member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The CoS is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.

Legislative Director (LD), Senior/Legislative Assistant (LA), and Legislative Counsel. The Legislative Director is usually the staff person who monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of issues. In some congressional offices there are several Legislative Assistants and responsibilities are assigned to these staffers who have expertise in specific areas. For example, depending on the responsibilities and interests of the member, an office may include a different Legislative Assistant who handles health issues, environmental matters, taxes, etc.

Press Secretary or Communications Director. The Communications Director/Press Secretary typically manages the Member's overall public image. The Press Secretary's responsibility is to build and maintain open and effective lines of communication between the member, his/her constituency, and the public. The Press Secretary is expected to know the benefits, demands, and special requirements of both print and electronic media, and how to promote the Member's views or position most effectively on issues.

Appointment Secretary, Personal Assistant, or Scheduler. The Appointment Secretary is usually responsible for allocating a Member's time among the many demands that arise from Congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. The Appointment Secretary may also be responsible for making necessary travel arrangements, arranging speaking dates, visits to the district.

District/State Director. The District or State Director is responsible for state-level operations, including representing the Member of Congress at local events when the Member cannot attend, overseeing office and staff operations in the Member's district or state, and coordinating communications and activities with the Member's office in Washington, DC.

Caseworker/Constituent Services Representative/Field Representative. The Caseworker is the staff member usually assigned to help with constituent requests by preparing replies for the Member's signature. The Caseworker's responsibilities may also include helping resolve problems constituents present in relation to federal agencies, e.g., Social Security and Medicare issues, veteran's benefits, passports, etc. There are often several Caseworkers in a Congressional office, and they may be in the Member's state or district offices.

Other Staff Titles. Other titles used in a Congressional office may include Policy Advisor, Grants and Projects Coordinator, Director of Special Projects and/or Grants, Executive Assistant, Legislative Correspondent, Staff Assistant, Executive Secretary, Systems Administrator, Office Manager, Receptionist, and Intern.