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INTRODUCTION

At first glance, Congress is not an attractive place to work. Staff typically work exceedingly long, unpredictable hours that leave little time for outside activities; receive lower pay than both private sector and federal executive branch staff; work in cramped quarters with no privacy; exercise minimal control over their work schedules; and have virtually no job security.

Despite these daunting working conditions, a 1993 survey conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation on behalf of the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress found that the large majority of staff “like their job” and are generally satisfied with most aspects of their work. According to the survey completed by over 1,400 congressional staff in Washington and district/state offices, the jobs and work environment of Congress are challenging and interesting. Their work provides them excellent opportunities to learn and to work with high-caliber colleagues. Staff tend to be motivated by the desires to help people and contribute to the public good and find their work satisfies these desires. They are highly committed, extremely hard-working, and proud of their work.

Nonetheless, the survey also found that many staff report that they are dissatisfied with the “quality of life” trade-offs that work on the Hill seems to require. In particular, congressional staff report significant frustration with:

- heavy and growing workloads,
- long and unpredictable work hours,
- work demands that too often force staff to sacrifice quality for quantity,
- chaotic and haphazardly managed offices, and
- insufficient training opportunities to help staff work more effectively.

These frustrations combine to create a highly demanding, pressurized work environment that is best characterized by its high levels of **“work-related stress”** -- the number one complaint of staff. Staff report that these pressures promote a good deal of staff “burn-out” and, ultimately, high levels of staff departures from Congress. In our survey, an alarmingly high proportion of both junior and senior staff reported that even though they like their jobs, they plan on leaving Congress in the next several years in search of a more manageable job and lifestyle.

The ramifications of these trying work conditions and high staff turnover extend well beyond the health and well-being of individual congressional staff. These problems directly impede the productivity and effectiveness of the committees and personal offices for which staff work. Staff departures from Congress strip individual offices as well as the institution of critical institutional memory and know-how and clearly hinder the quality of our nation’s policy-making process.

It is telling that many of the same workplace problems that are driving staff off the Hill are cited by the growing number of retiring Members as part of their reason for leaving Congress. Growing workloads, unrelenting pressures, lack of time with their families, and work-related stress are significant factors contributing to many Members' decisions to retire.

It must be readily understood by the Members of Congress that none of these problems are self-correcting. Constituent demands will not suddenly decline; committee chairs will not collectively decide to limit the number of hearings and better focus the work of committees; and staff productivity will not keep pace with work demands on its own accord.

Rather, these problems must be confronted head on. Changes in the way Congress operates at the "macro" or institutional level as well as at the "micro" or individual office level are required. Based upon a careful analysis of the data CMF collected through its survey and focus groups, CMF believes that reasonable, well-targeted, and inexpensive reforms are available to Congress that would create a far more productive work environment, enhance the quality of life for Members and staff alike, and lead to a better policy-making process.

The following pages of this report will outline the findings of our survey in detail and report the comments from the many staff who participated in our post-survey focus groups and interviews. The report concludes with staff-supported recommendations for addressing the serious workplace problems highlighted in this study.

The ramifications of these trying work conditions and high staff turnover extend well beyond the health and well-being of individual congressional staff. These problems directly impede the productivity and effectiveness of the committees and personal offices for which staff work.

PROJECT HISTORY

For the past two years, Congress and the media have devoted considerable energy to assessing the process and performance of the institution and developing recommendations for change. Most of the research has focused on the views of present and former Members of Congress as well as the analysis of political scientists and other congressional experts. Very little of the research has explored the views of the approximately 14,000 congressional staff who work in personal offices or committees and are so essential to congressional operations.

Because top-down reform efforts that focus on the needs and analyses of management and neglect the views of the workforce are likely to make costly mistakes and miss critical opportunities for improvement, the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) sought to elicit the views of congressional staff on the reform of the Congress and their impressions of Congress as a workplace. We wanted to give staff a voice in the process -- a voice that they deserve and that we believe is essential to effective reform. As a non-profit, non-partisan organization committed to improving the effectiveness of Congress and congressional operations, CMF saw such a study as central to its mission and potentially capable of providing the Congress valuable data to assist in its reform efforts.

Consequently, CMF developed an employee opinion survey of congressional staff which was distributed in partnership with the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress in 1993. Employee surveys are used with increasing frequency throughout business and government because they provide a frank, objective forum for collecting the ideas of workers. However, to the best of our knowledge, this is the first and only employee opinion study ever conducted of Congress.

The results of this massive, random survey of 4,000 congressional staff were summarized by CMF and provided to the Joint Committee and used internally, but never released by the Joint Committee. This report summarizes the key findings of the survey and follow-up focus groups and interviews which CMF conducted throughout 1994 with congressional staff. In an effort to make this report readable and relevant to the ongoing reform process, we do not attempt to provide a comprehensive review of all the data collected.

Finally, as you can see in the questionnaire reprinted at the end of this report, most of the survey questions contained a five point scale (e.g., 1 = very dissatisfied, 5= very satisfied). For clarity in reporting the data, we have combined responses of "1" and "2" as dissatisfied and "4" and "5" as satisfied. Responses of "3" are reported as neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.



VIEWS OF ALL STAFF ON 22 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL WORKPLACE

Ranked from Most Dissatisfied to Least Dissatisfied

		Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Satisfied
1.	Amount of work-related stress	43%	29%	28%
2.	Promotion opportunities	38%	32%	30%
3.	Feedback on job performance	38%	27%	35%
4.	Salary	37%	22%	41%
5.	Quality of management in office	33%	20%	47%
6.	Training/job development opportunities	33%	35%	32%
7.	Opportunities for recognition and rewards	33%	39%	29%
8.	Physical working conditions	29%	23%	48%
9.	Predictability of work schedule	29%	26%	45%
10.	Opportunity to work to potential	28%	19%	52%
11.	Job security	24%	29%	47%
12.	Hours of work	21%	27%	52%
13.	Opportunity to work for the public good	15%	21%	64%
14.	Enjoyable work environment	15%	24%	62%
15.	Autonomy to determine how to do job	13%	19%	68%
16.	Challenging and interesting work	13%	18%	69%
17.	Ability to obtain credential for better job	13%	29%	58%
18.	Opportunities to learn	12%	20%	68%
19.	Variety of job activities	12%	21%	68%
20.	Quality of coworkers	11%	19%	70%
21.	Opportunity to help people	11%	22%	67%
22.	Annual and sick leave benefits	8%	17%	75%

This is a summary of staff's responses to section A of the questionnaire. The entire survey (Sections A through L) is reprinted at the end of this report beginning on page 63

WHAT STAFF LIKE ABOUT THEIR WORK

Overview

One of the most important, yet simple, findings from the survey data is that congressional staff overwhelmingly “like their jobs.” They enjoy the nature of their work, its challenge and variety, as well as the autonomy with which they are allowed to perform it. They see the opportunity for ongoing learning in their jobs and feel that they work alongside high-quality colleagues. Perhaps most surprising in these somewhat cynical times is the fact that staff strongly wish to help people and contribute to the public good and are very satisfied with their ability to do so through their jobs in Congress.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

76% of staff agreed with the statement “I like my job.” Only 8% disagreed. Moreover, support for this statement was uniformly above 72% across all different types of staff, whether House or Senate, Democrat or Republican, in a junior position or a senior position.

Percentage of Staff who Agree and Disagree with the Statement, “I Like My Job.”			
	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
House Personal Staff	76%	8%	16%
House Committee Staff	79%	8%	13%
Senate Personal Staff	72%	8%	20%
Senate Committee Staff	78%	10%	11%
Democratic Staff	75%	9%	17%
Republican Staff	77%	6%	17%
Washington Staff	74%	10%	16%
District/State Staff	81%	3%	16%
Senior Staff	78%	8%	14%
Junior Staff	73%	8%	20%
Overall Average	76%	8%	16%

- The aspects of their work that staff like most are generally the substance of their work and the freedom they are given to perform it. As the table at right indicates, over two-thirds of all staff are pleased with the challenging and interesting nature of their work, the opportunities that it gives them for learning, and its variety. Staff in more senior positions tend to be more satisfied with these aspects of their jobs than junior-level staff (75% vs. about 60%).

Top Areas of Staff Satisfaction	
<i>Percent of Staff Satisfied</i>	
1. Annual and sick leave benefits	74.9
2. Quality of co-workers	70.1
3. Challenging and interesting work	68.6
4. Autonomy to determine how to do your job	67.9
5. Opportunities to learn	67.6
6. Variety of job activities	67.6
7. Opportunity to help people	66.5
8. Opportunity to contribute to the public good	63.9

- Among senior and junior staff alike, more than two-thirds are pleased with the autonomy they are given and the quality of their co-workers.

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Autonomy to determine how to do your job:			
Junior Staff	67%	13%	20%
Senior Staff	69%	14%	17%
Quality of coworkers:			
Junior Staff	69%	11%	20%
Senior Staff	72%	11%	17%

- During our focus groups, congressional staff characterized the positive aspects of working in Congress as follows:

“The Hill provides exposure to new ideas and the opportunity to have a role in the national policy debate. There’s a challenge every week of every month.” (House Administrative Assistant)

“Someone in a comparable position in the private sector works on one narrow issue while Congress provides the opportunity to work on a great variety of issues and with a much greater likelihood of having a strong say in the final decision.” (Senate Chief of Staff)

"I loved Capitol Hill because you did a lot of different issues, you had a lot of responsibility, you had a lot of autonomy. You didn't make a lot of money, but you did a lot of things. You'd sit in committee meetings or closed-door meetings with Members of Congress ... that's pretty cool stuff." (former House Legislative Assistant)

"The main attraction of the job is the variety. I've always been interested in a lot of issues and (Congress) is the perfect place to have a lot of issues. I do foreign affairs, defense, veterans', space, immigration, and I run the (office) computer system." (House Legislative Assistant)

"My boss is a person who has always given us a lot of autonomy to do as we like and, every time I've asked for something, I've gotten it. Usually, it's more responsibility." (House Legislative Assistant)

□ Staff are also pleased with their ability to be of service to others. In particular:

- 67% are satisfied with their "opportunity to help people"; and
- 64% are satisfied with the opportunities their work provides to "contribute to the public good."

"Some of the stuff I've done has made a difference. A piece of legislation I wrote was passed into law ... And it wasn't a commemorative, it was (a defense amendment). That's something I feel good about." (House Legislative Assistant)

"You can have a positive influence that affects millions of people. If you can find work that makes the lives of other people better. . . well, that's a pretty good career goal."

(House Administrative Assistant)



STAFF VIEWS OF STRESS, WORKLOAD, AND WORK SCHEDULES

Overview

While congressional staff are generally satisfied with most aspects of their work environment, they lodge several complaints, chief among them is the amount of work-related stress they face. This stress is attributable, in large part, to their increasingly unmanageable workloads.

Over half of all staff report that they work more than 50 hours per week to handle this workload. Interestingly, however, those long hours are not a major complaint of staff. Rather, staff are frustrated by the unpredictability of their hours and by the feeling that they can “never seem to get everything done” and must routinely compromise quality to stay on top of their workloads. These frustrations, in turn, often lead to “burnout” and staff departures from Congress.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

Stress:

From a list of 22 job characteristics, staff rate work-related stress as the greatest source of dissatisfaction with their jobs.¹ Overall, 43% of staff are dissatisfied with the stress in their jobs.

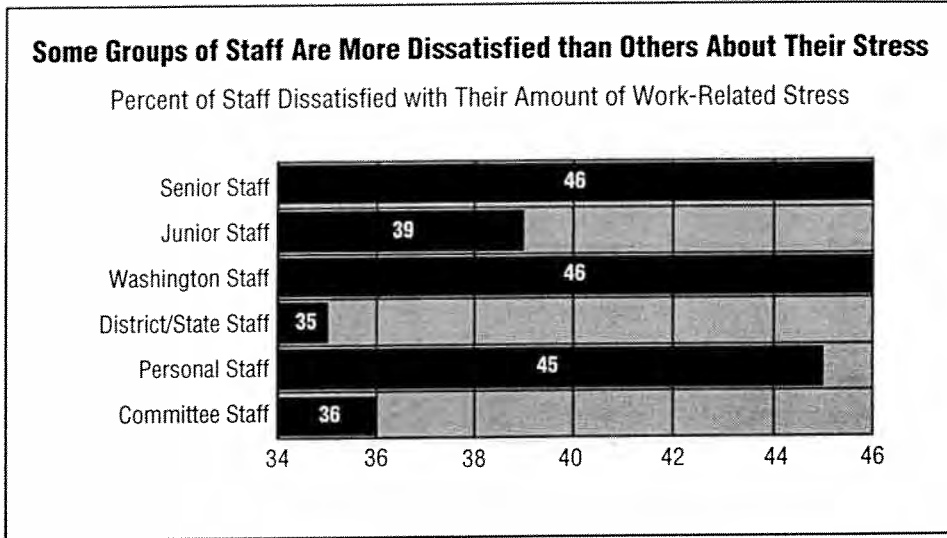
- ❑ The data also suggest that stress encourages staff to leave Congress. Staff who indicate that they wanted to leave congressional employment within the next two years register the highest level of dissatisfaction of any group with stress in their jobs. 50% of this group are dissatisfied with their workplace stress. In contrast, “only” 40% of those planning to stay in Congress for more than two years are dissatisfied with work-related stress.²

¹ On page 5, we summarize staff’s views of all 22 characteristics of the congressional workplace.

² In a later section of the report beginning on page 25, we discuss the factors causing staff to leave Congress in greater detail.

Workload:

There are many sources of job stress in Congress. The principal one is the size of the workload. It is not hard to see how this is so. Members of the House, typically with staffs of only 15 full-time workers, must represent over 500,000 constituents in Washington, answer an average of 240,000 letters per year, arrange 40 or more weekends of district events per year, and be engaged in the legislative process at both the committee and full House level. Senators, who typically have 30 to 50 staff, must do the same for entire states. Staff work long hours to cope with this workload (see page 14). Even so, massive workload pressures lead to frustration and a sacrifice of quality for quantity.



- As the next two tables indicate, workload pressures are felt especially strongly by staff in senior positions (76% of senior staff feel that they “never have enough time to get everything done” and 62% feel that they “have too much to do to do everything well”).

Staff Reporting they “Never Seem to Have Enough Time to Get Everything Done.”			
	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
House Personal Staff	71%	15%	15%
House Committee Staff	59%	19%	22%
Senate Personal Staff	62%	20%	19%
Senate Committee Staff	70%	11%	19%
Washington Staff	70%	14%	16%
District/State Staff	58%	22%	21%
Senior Staff	76%	10%	14%
Junior Staff	55%	24%	21%
Overall Average	67%	16%	17%

Quantity of Work Overwhelms Quality of Work
Staff who agree that "I have too much to do to do everything well."

	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree
House Personal Staff	52%	28%	20%
House Committee Staff	39%	37%	24%
Senate Personal Staff	47%	34%	20%
Senate Committee Staff	49%	30%	21%
Washington Staff	53%	26%	21%
District/State Staff	38%	43%	20%
Senior Staff	62%	21%	18%
Junior Staff	33%	43%	24%
Overall Average	49%	31%	21%

- ❑ Given these data, it is not surprising that 42% of all staff agree that "job burnout is a major problem in my office." Consistent with the preceding workload data, staff burnout is reported more strongly in personal offices than in committee offices (44% vs. 34%).
- ❑ The present and former staff who participated in the focus groups repeatedly expressed their feelings of frustration and burnout at not being able to manage their workload and, often, these were the reasons why they had left or were considering leaving Congress.

"No matter what I was doing, I had a stack of mail this high to do. I had legislation my boss wanted to do. I had issue after issue. Trying to juggle that was what I found most frustrating. When I left the Hill, I said ... I want to focus on some issues." (former House Legislative Assistant)

"I am totally willing to argue with anybody who says that people in their offices aren't killing themselves. They are working awfully hard. We are getting buried with thousands of pieces of mail, and in this culture ... people expect us to answer their mail." (House Administrative Assistant)

"Personal offices are just everybody going a hundred miles an hour all day." (former Senate Committee Staff Director)

"Most of us who work on the Hill feel (like) firefighters. Sometimes I view us as working in a hospital emergency room (where) we are practicing some kind of triage all the time." (Senate Legislative Assistant)

"At one point, I just felt that I was failing at each and every (project), and, for my own personal benefit, I had to do something I felt I was succeeding at." (former House Legislative Assistant citing his reason for leaving Congress)

"Eventually, a lot of people just can't take it anymore. It just doesn't work well, and they say, 'if I don't get someplace where I can actually accomplish something, than I'll go crazy.'" (House Legislative Assistant)

"We have reached the point where we're getting 2,000 to 3,000 pieces of mail a week. Our mail volume is up 400 percent a month over what it was in January 1988. And our personnel is the same. We simply can't do it."

(House Administrative Assistant)

Length of the Workday:

Congressional staff typically work long hours to get a handle on their workload. Below, we detail just how long that takes. However, long hours are not a major complaint of staff. Staff are much more concerned about the **unpredictability** of their work schedules than about their length. This unpredictability is discussed in next section, beginning on page 16.

- ❑ More than one-half of all congressional staff work 50 hours or more during a typical week. Yet, in spite of their long hours, congressional staff are not strongly dissatisfied with this aspect of their jobs. Only 21% report that they are dissatisfied with the number of hours they work, making this just the twelfth highest source of dissatisfaction on a list of 22 work characteristics.
- ❑ The most senior staff on the Hill -- Administrative Assistants and Staff Directors -- as a group work the most: 82% work fifty or more hours per week and 10% average seventy or more hours. In general, senior staff are almost 2½ times as likely as junior staff to work fifty or more hours per week (69% vs. 31%). Not surprisingly, close to three times as many senior staff complain about their hours as junior staff (29% to 11%).
- ❑ Washington-based staff typically work much longer weeks than their district- and state-based colleagues (61% of DC staff average 50+ hours compared to 32% of those in the district and state). Again, not surprisingly, 26% of Washington staff are dissatisfied with their hours compared to only 9% of district and state staff.

Who Works Long Hours?

Percent of respondents who work more than 50 or more hours in a typical week

OVERALL AVERAGE	53.2%
AAs and Staff Directors	82.4%
Senior staff*	68.7%
Junior staff*	30.5%
Staff who earn more than \$30,000	62.9%
Staff who earn \$30,000 or less	33.2%
Male staff	65.8%
Female staff	40.8%
Washington staff	60.5%
District and State staff	32.1%
House personal office staff	54.0%
House committee staff	48.8%
All House staff	52.8%
Senate personal office staff	49.8%
Senate committee staff	64.5%
All Senate staff	53.7%
All personal office staff	52.8%
All committee staff	54.1%

* See page 61 for job titles included in this category.

- Male staff also are more likely to work 50+ hours than female staff (66% vs. 41%), which may be attributable to the fact that men are more heavily represented in senior congressional staff positions than women.³
- There is very little difference between the typical work hours of House and Senate staffers. Finally, there is little difference in work hours between personal and committee staffers overall.

³ Women occupy 39% of the top staff positions in House personal offices and 34% of those in Senate personal offices. Data from CMF's 1994 U.S. House Employment Practices and 1993 U.S. Senate Employment Practices.

- ❑ In contrast to the long hours of congressional staffers, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management reports two-thirds of federal executive agency employees rarely work overtime. Moreover, one-half of these employees who do work overtime are paid for their extra time. Very few congressional staff are paid overtime.

Unpredictability of the Workday:

Despite their extremely long workdays, staff are less concerned about their actual hours worked than about the “predictability of their work schedules.” As the table below shows, 29% of all staff are dissatisfied with their work schedules, while 21% are dissatisfied with work hours.

Staff Views on the "Predictability of Their Work Schedules"			
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Senior Staff	32%	39%	29%
Junior Staff	61%	17%	22%
Washington Staff	36%	35%	29%
District/State Staff	66%	16%	19%
House Personal Staff	46%	29%	26%
Senate Personal Staff	49%	26%	25%
All Personal Staff	47%	28%	25%
House Committee Staff	38%	31%	31%
Senate Committee Staff	37%	37%	26%
All Committee Staff	38%	33%	30%
Overall Average	45%	29%	26%

- ❑ Just as was the case for work hours, senior staff and Washington staff are much more unhappy about the unpredictability of their schedules than their junior and district/state colleagues.
- ❑ For many of the senior congressional staff participating in the focus groups, especially those with children, unpredictable schedules was one of their primary reasons for leaving the Hill.

“If you want to control your life, control your calendar; you can’t do that on the Hill.” (former House Administrative Assistant)

“I can now make choices” about when to work long hours. (former House Administrative Assistant and now lobbyist)

-
- ❑ As the table on the previous page shows, committee staff in both the Senate and House are more dissatisfied than are personal staff with the unpredictability of their schedules. This difference may reflect the fact that their work lives are more closely tied to the often unpredictable legislative schedules of the Senate and House floors. Also, Senate committee staff are more unhappy than House committee staff about this unpredictability (37% vs. 31%).⁴
 - ❑ A focus group of senior Senate staff who also have worked in the House voiced serious concerns about the schedule of the Senate.

“I don’t think staff would complain about the long hours if they knew what they would be. It drives us crazy when we adjourn at 2:00 in the afternoon on one day and stay until midnight the next day.”

(House Administrative Assistant)

“My life is at the total mercy of the hours of the Senate and the unpredictability of the Senate.” (Senate Administrative Assistant)

“On the Senate side, the schedule is very unpredictable; you have to know you’re going to sacrifice a lot of your family life if you’re going to work for the Senate.” (Senate committee professional staff member)

“You could literally sit here all day long in an interminable Quorum call. ‘Vote on it already. Do it.’ It just doesn’t happen.” (Senate Administrative Assistant)

⁴ In a later section of the report beginning on page 37, we discuss the differences between Senate and House staff views at greater length.



STAFF VIEWS OF THE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR OFFICES

Overview

The 535 personal offices and close to 200 committees and subcommittees in Congress all operate in many ways like individual small businesses. Personal offices in the House typically have staffs of between 12 and 18 and budgets of about \$800,000. In the Senate, personal offices have 30 to 50 staff and budgets of 1.5 million dollars or more. Full committees in either chamber range in size from 20 staff to over 100 staff. How personal offices and committees manage these resources has a major impact on their effectiveness, their ability to accomplish their objectives, the satisfaction of the constituents they serve, and the morale and productivity of their employees.

The survey data indicate that, within Congress, the quality of management varies widely from office to office. Across virtually the entire range of management questions, a consistent pattern emerges: about 30% to 50% are pleased with their office's management, another 25% to 40% of staff are displeased, and approximately 25% are neither pleased nor displeased.

Staff who are pleased with the quality of the management of their offices, link the productivity of their office to its management and want to continue serving in these offices for the foreseeable future. Where management is neglected or performed poorly, staff often feel that their office is unable to prioritize its work and maintain its focus. Rather, the office constantly moves from crisis to crisis. The results are ineffectiveness, low morale, staff burnout, and high rates of staff turnover.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

Overall, 43% of staff believe that "my office is well-managed," 32% do not believe that their office is well-managed, and 25% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the management of their offices.

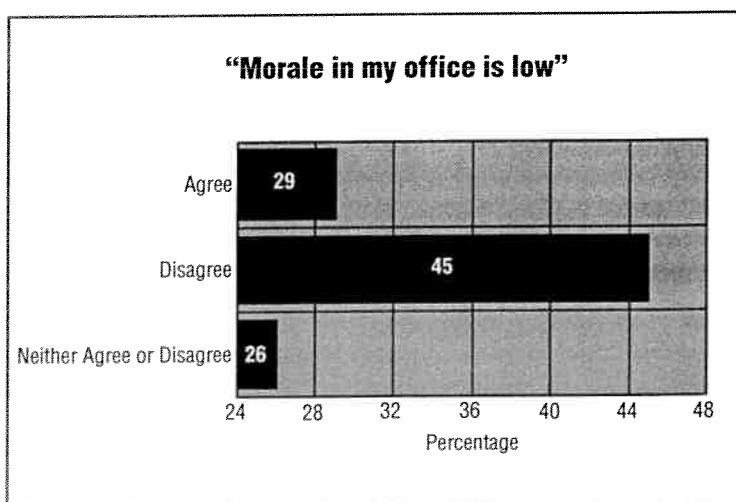
- There are clear differences in the levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with management when comparing different types of offices and different types of staff. For example, personal staff in both the House and Senate are considerably more likely to agree that "my office is well-managed" than are committee staff (48% vs. 35% in the House and 42% vs. 31% in the Senate).⁵

⁵ In a later section of this report beginning on page 39, we discuss the specific management problems of Senate committee staff at greater length.

Staff Reporting "My Office is Well-Managed"

	Agreeing	Disagreeing	Neither Agreeing nor Disagreeing
House Personal Staff	47.5%	29.0%	23.4%
House Committee Staff	35.0%	32.9%	32.1%
Senate Personal Staff	41.9%	32.6%	25.6%
Senate Committee Staff	31.1%	45.3%	23.6%
Washington Staff	39.1%	34.8%	26.1%
District/State Staff	51.8%	24.2%	24.0%
Senior Staff	42.5%	32.3%	25.2%
Junior Staff	44.3%	30.0%	25.7%
Overall Average	42.9%	31.8%	25.3%

- ❑ District and state staff are much more likely than Washington-based staff to agree with this statement (52% vs. 39%).
- ❑ Strikingly, junior and senior staff have virtually the same opinions on whether "my office is well-managed." Thus, it is not where staff sit that determines their views. The management problems, and successes, of congressional offices are equally clear to everyone.
- ❑ On the question of whether their office "spends more time on 'quick fixes' than on solving underlying management problems," 43% of staff agree with this statement, 31% disagree, and 26% neither agree nor disagree, paralleling the rates of satisfaction with overall office management.
- ❑ However, on the question of maintaining staff morale, management seems to be doing a better job than in other areas.



- As the table below shows, regardless of the aspect of management being examined, the results are fairly uniform. Offices seen favorably on one aspect of management are typically seen favorably on all aspects of management. Likewise, offices viewed as poorly managed on a given question are usually graded badly everywhere. Finally, there is a third group of offices whose staff are consistently ambivalent in their appraisal of the management of their offices.

Staff Views on Management Questions			
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied
Quality of management in office	47%	33%	20%
Feedback on your job performance	35%	38%	27%
Opportunities for recognition and rewards	29%	33%	39%
	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
The goals of my office are clear to me	54%	25%	21%
My office has a sincere interest in the satisfaction and well-being of its employees	52%	22%	25%
Overall, my office is well-managed	43%	32%	25%
The manager(s) in my office is/are good at dealing with staff	42%	36%	22%
Salary increases in my office are awarded on the basis of merit	32%	40%	27%
My office effectively communicates and coordinates	30%	39%	31%

The Link Between Management and Turnover:

Management matters to staff. They see it not only making a big difference in the day-to-day effectiveness of offices, but also as an important determinant of whether they are going to switch congressional offices or even leave Congress altogether. Staff's top two reasons for wanting to **leave their present job** for another congressional position were "frustrations with the management of my office" and an "unsatisfactory working relationship with my supervisor(s)." 50% of staff cite each reason.

- ❑ As the following table indicates, those wanting to **leave Congress** within the next two years are much more dissatisfied with the management of their offices than those who want to stay in Congress for more than two years.

Comparison of Responses from Staff Who Want to Leave Congress in the Next Two Years and Those Who Want to Stay Longer		
<i>Percent dissatisfied</i>		
	Staff wanting to stay 2 years or less	Staff wanting to stay 2 years or more
Quality of management in office	41%	30%
Opportunity to work to potential	41%	23%
Feedback on job performance	46%	34%
Promotion opportunities	48%	33%

- ❑ Among the focus group participants, especially those who have worked in more than one congressional office, there is a strong consensus that effective management is critical to the success of congressional offices. They say it can make the difference between an effective and enjoyable workplace and one that is hostile, scattershot, and plagued by ongoing staff turnover.

"Because the institution is so chaotic, the workload so stressful, and the demands exerted by constituents incessant, it's extremely important that each individual office be well managed to help people recapture at least some control over their work environment." (Senate Chief of Staff)

(Where you have long-serving senior staff), "it's usually because they've had good Administrative Assistants and/or good Members who nurture them and who create a work environment that makes all the ebbs and flows of the congressional process worthwhile." (former Senate Administrative Assistant and Committee Staff Director)

"Management in congressional offices varies tremendously, from organized chaos to successful operations. In spite of Members having essentially the same job, it's striking to see the management differences between one office and the one next door." (House Administrative Assistant)

"The tone (of the office) is set by the boss. He or she makes all the difference in the world." (Senate Committee Staff Director)

-
- The focus group participants were especially critical of the lack of prioritization that occurs in congressional offices. They see the consequences as wasted time, stress, and burnout.

"We operate without a focus — it's management by crisis." (House Administrative Assistant)

"I expected (each staffer) to handle the needs of 38,000 people, whether it be on tax problems, immigration problems, or sons lost overseas. You name the problem and (they had to handle it). A congressional office covers anything that flies through the window." (former Member of the House)

"I think you need a realization from the top down that you can't respond to everything; that you can't be involved in every little request that your constituent makes. ... What you're required to do on a daily basis is keep your constituents happy on things you don't have any business spending four hours on." (Former House Legislative Assistant)

"There must be a better way of allocating resources or making decisions on priorities so we don't all have to kill ourselves and see so many young people literally burn themselves out after a few years."

(Senate Legislative Assistant)

"My boss is somewhat guilty of this, and a lot of others are. He gives you something and you say, 'well, I've got this (other project) on my plate right now, which one do you want me to give up?' And he says, '(do) all of them.'" (House Legislative Assistant)

"Because the Members are so busy, they oftentimes don't know what the staff does. They either think they can pile two or three more projects on you or they wonder what you've been doing at all. ... They don't see the mail (or you talking to) constituents. ... That's all pretty invisible to the Members." (House Legislative Assistant)

STAFF TURNOVER

Overview

Staff overwhelmingly say they like working in Congress, yet at both the junior and senior levels they leave the institution in great numbers every year. What explains staff's desire to leave a work environment that they describe as so enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding?

Some of staff's primary reasons for leaving -- interest in pursuing a different type of work, desire for a higher salary, or to move away from Washington -- are quite typical of most workforces and should not be a major source of concern for Congress. However, the other principal causes of staff departures should be a source of great concern and attention because they are particular to the work environment of Congress. These include: an atmosphere of unmanageable workloads, unpredictable hours, and high stress levels. Moreover, these frustrations are not limited to staff. Retiring Members of Congress are citing the same quality of life considerations as important parts of their decisions to leave the Hill.

“In many cases, ill-prepared young people are making very important decisions.”

Many staff are understandably concerned that the high rates of turnover in Congress lead to massive expenditures of time hiring and training new staff, while stripping the institution of valuable institutional memory and expertise. “It’s pretty hard to imagine that someone can spend less than a year in a job or an office and understand the (issues involved) well enough to serve the public interest as it should be served,” notes one former House Chief of Staff. “In many cases, ill-prepared young people are making very important decisions,” adds a Senate Chief of Staff.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

How Much Turnover?

As the table on the next page shows, 44% of all staff said they would like to leave Congress within the next three years and 18% indicate they want to leave within one year.⁶ Most alarmingly, senior staff -- those with the greatest experience, skills, and institutional memory

⁶ So that the reader can see the wording of this and all other questions on the survey, we have reprinted the questionnaire in its entirety beginning on page 63. This question on how long staff want to continue working in Congress is found in part E of the questionnaire.

-- are more likely to want to leave Congress in the near term than junior staff (46% of senior staff vs. 41% of junior staff want to leave within three years).

How Long Do Staff Want to Continue Working in Congress?				
<i>Percent indicating each period</i>				
	1 year or less	2-3 years	4-7 years	8 or more years
House Personal Staff	18.6%	26.3%	25.9%	29.3%
House Committee Staff	11.7%	23.4%	30.9%	34.2%
Senate Personal Staff	17.4%	30.9%	29.1%	22.6%
Senate Committee Staff	26.0%	27.1%	19.7%	27.1%
Washington Staff	19.0%	29.3%	28.0%	23.7%
District/State Staff	14.1%	20.6%	25.2%	40.1%
Senior Staff	17.7%	28.7%	26.7%	26.8%
Junior Staff	17.4%	23.5%	27.7%	31.7%
Overall Average	17.7%	26.7%	27.1%	28.5%

- Among Washington staff, the desire to leave Congress is particularly strong: 48% want to leave within three years, compared to only 35% of district and state staff.
- Senate committee staff are much more interested in leaving the Hill than their colleagues. 53% of Senate committee staff want to leave in the next three years, while only 35% of House committee staff express the same desire.⁷
- Staffers' expectations that they will not stay in Congress for long are supported in practice. 14% of the staff surveyed have been in Congress for one year or less, 37% have been there for three years or less, and 52% have been there for five or fewer years.⁸

⁷ In a later section of the report beginning on page 37, we compare the responses of Senate and House staff at greater length.

⁸ CMF's own studies show the same pattern. 24% of Senate personal office staff have been in Congress for one year or less and another 13% have been there between one and two years. For House personal office staff, the figures are 22% and 21%, respectively. Senate data are taken from CMF's 1993 U.S. Senate Employment Practices and House data are taken from CMF's 1994 U.S. House Employment Practices.

- ❑ Interestingly, the majority of those who want to leave their congressional work soon are not motivated to leave because they no longer enjoy their jobs: 54% of staff reporting that they want to leave Congress within the next two years also reported that they “like their jobs.”

Causes of Turnover:

The two principal reasons cited by both senior and junior staff for wanting to leave Congress were a desire to pursue a different kind of work and a desire to earn more money. Other important reasons include: a desire to leave Washington, dissatisfaction with various aspects of the work environment, and disillusionment with the political process.

Staff's Top Reasons for Wanting to Leave Congress			
<i>Ranked by percentage of staff citing concern as a reason for wanting to leave Congress</i>			
	All Staff	Senior Staff	Junior Staff
1. Desire to pursue a different type of work	67%	72% (1)	62% (1)
2. Desire to earn more money	58%	62% (2)	54% (2)
3. Desire to live in a different city or part of the country	51%	60% (3)	39% (5)
4. To seek a better balance between work and personal life	50%	59% (4)	38% (7)
5. Disillusionment with the political process	50%	50% (5)	50% (3)
6. Desire for a job with less stress and anxiety	45%	49% (7)	39% (5)
7. Desire for a shorter work week with more predictable hours	43%	50% (5)	33% (8)
8. Desire to continue formal education	37%	34% (8)	41% (4)

* The ranking on the left of each reason for leaving Congress reflects the combined views of all staff. In brackets following the senior staff and junior staff columns, we provide the ranking that senior and junior staff give to each reason. See page 61 for a list of the positions that are contained in the senior and junior staff categories.

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- ❑ **Salary.** In spite of the fact that junior staff tend to be much lower-paid than senior staff, the desire to earn more money is more likely to make senior staff want to leave Congress than junior staff (62% of senior staff vs. 54% of junior staff cite this factor). A possible explanation for this seeming paradox is that senior staff tend to be older and have more financial obligations than junior staff.

Among Washington staff, 60% report that the desire to earn more money would make them leave the Hill. A lower proportion (53%) of district and state staff cite this reason.

According to the staff participating in our focus groups, salary concerns are “always a factor in leaving the Hill,” but are rarely the sole determinant of staff departures.

- ❑ **Desire to Leave the Washington Area.** Senior staff are much more likely than junior staff to report that the “desire to live in a different city or part of the country” would make them leave Congress. 60% of senior staff feel this way, compared to 39% of junior staff.

Frustrations with the inside-the-Beltway mindset were also voiced by the focus group. For example:

“I’ve heard people say to me lately that they don’t just want to get out of Capitol Hill, they want to get out of Washington altogether because of the inside-the-Beltway mentality. Some people really feel like they want to go back to a place where people aren’t dealing with these obscure issues all the time.” (House Press Secretary)

- ❑ **Work Environment of Congress.** Many of staff’s other reasons for leaving Congress (after type of work, salary, and location) center around its demanding and often-chaotic work environment. 50% of all staff cite the desire to seek better balance between their work and personal lives as a factor that would make them want to leave Congress. Similarly, 45% would leave in order to get a less stressful job and 43% would leave for shorter and more predictable hours.

As the previous table indicates, the issues of quality of life, workplace stress, and schedule predictability are even more likely to cause turnover for senior staff than for junior staff.

Focus group participants cited these workload and lifestyle pressures as the most critical factors causing staff burnout and turnover on the Hill

“It is hard. In a way, these jobs could be easier if you had no other obligations. Even then, you couldn’t possibly do everything that is required of you.” (Senate Administrative Assistant)

"I was on the telephone until 7:00 last night, at which time I ... started looking at the papers that had come into the office yesterday. I was (at the office) until 11:00 last night. That happens day after day for an average Legislative Assistant." (Senate Legislative Assistant)

"We've had our expectations raised about what life ought to be. And a lot of us feel we've played a part through our jobs, and with our bosses, in making that possible for America. And, guess what? We're not getting a piece of the action. The Senate hasn't lived up to what's happening in America." (Senate Administrative Assistant)

"I've often thought it's funny how stereotypically true Capitol Hill is. ... media scrutiny, low pay, long hours, frustration. After two years, you just say, 'it's tough to take.'"

(House Press Secretary)

In explaining why they retired, many Members of Congress tend to focus on lifestyle frustrations that parallel those of staff.

"As I worked through my decision (to leave the Senate), I remembered 14-hour days: running from one room to another because four of my committees were meeting at the same time; lunching just off the Senate floor while waiting for my amendment to come up; dashing to the Capitol steps for photos with three groups from back home and back to my office for five appointments on pending legislation or projects -- all followed by three or four hours of returning new phone calls, answering dozens of new letters and reading a pile of urgent action memos from staff members asking directions on issues or constituent problems. Those days usually ended at 10 p.m. with dinner at my desk. ... My family life and personal friendships paid a stiff price." (Former Senator David Boren in The New York Times, May 13, 1994)

"There are a lot of theories about Bill Gray's departure (from Congress), but some dismiss too casually the explanation that was given -- the quality of life." (Former Rep. Robert Torricelli in The New York Times, June 23, 1991)

"I don't consider myself a success (with reference to) all of the things I've pushed out of my life.... My schedule simply does not permit quality time in my life." (Former Rep. Michael Kopetski on his retirement in The Wall Street Journal, December 15, 1993, and in an October 18, 1993, press release)

"There comes a kind of revelation, a self-realization that I cannot meet the standards that I set for myself in how I wanted to perform in this body. ... I no longer have the aggressiveness and physical ability to do the job." (Former Rep. William Lehman in Congressional Quarterly, April 4, 1992)

In their calls for internal reform, many current Members of Congress cite the same quality of life concerns. For example:

Speaking on the need for scheduling reform: "So oftentimes in this body we find ourselves casting votes at 12 and 1 o'clock in the morning, coming

"I don't consider myself a success (with reference to) all of the things I've pushed out of my life.... My schedule simply does not permit quality time in my life."

(Former Rep. Michael Kopetski)

in the next morning at 9 o'clock, where we have two weeks straight that we are going at that kind of schedule. ... Our quality of life is important for our families. It is important for our children. It is important for our health." (Rep. Tim Roemer in June 16, 1993, testimony before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress (JCOC))

"We all have been frustrated by the increasing demands on our time. It seems one barely sits down to a hearing or at mark-up when one's schedule, the floor or a conflicting committee assignment forces us away and distracts us from our priorities." (Rep. Steny Hoyer in a May 25,

1993, statement to the JCOC)

- ❑ **Disillusionment with the Political Process.** 50% of staff say that "disillusionment with the political process" would make them leave Congress. Washington staff tend to cite such disillusionment more often than district and state staff (52% vs. 44%).

This disillusionment is not limited to newcomers to Congress. In fact, 47% of staff with more than three years of congressional experience give it as a reason for leaving Congress. 54% of staff who have been working in Congress for three years or less cite this factor.

One explanation for their disillusionment that focus group participants returned to again and again was the sharp increase in partisanship that has occurred on the Hill over the past ten to fifteen years and the overall decline in "a sense of community" among Hill staff.

"Camaraderie (among staff) is essential if we're going to rebuild some comity in the House." (House Administrative Assistant)

"We need to restore some sense of community to the Hill." (former House Chief of Staff)

“(Congress) doesn’t seem to work quite as well. It seems a lot more politically charged today than it was back in the late 70s or even the early 80s. And it seems to be getting more so as time goes on. The place is less collegial.” (Senate staff director)

“The highly partisan nature of (Congress) ... has gotten way out of control.” (former House AA)

This sentiment was echoed in the retirement announcements of Senator Boren and Representative Alex McMillan:

“Today’s Senate is not the body I joined 16 years ago. Partisanship is much stronger. ... making it almost impossible to put party politics aside to work together in the national interest.” (Former Sen. David Boren, The New York Times, May 13, 1994)

“Our Congress has become so excessively partisan that the good ideas from Members of both sides are routinely crushed by political posturing.” (Former Rep. Alex McMillan in December 1, 1993, retirement letter to constituents)



STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

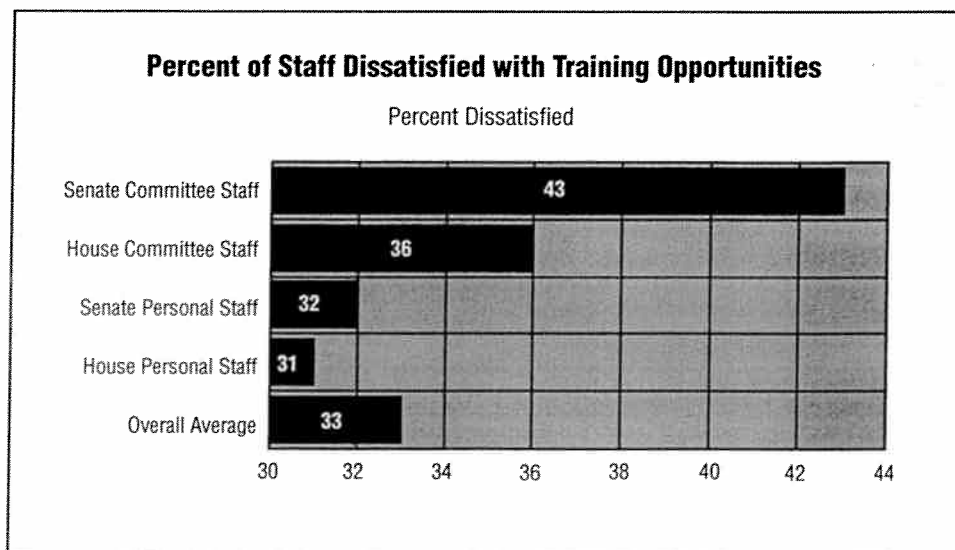
Overview

Congress offers its staff very few opportunities to receive professional development training. No formal staff orientation program is offered by the Congress to its new staff. Few classes or seminars are offered to enhance the work skills and capacities of current staff. And no programs have been developed to promote the ongoing development and professionalism of veteran staff. In short, congressional staff are heavily dependent on informal, on-the-job training.

In our survey of staff, we attempted to measure if this unstructured learning environment met the needs of staff. What we learned was that the lack of training and professional development opportunities is a source of dissatisfaction for many congressional staff. However, we also learned that many staff were unable to assess the potential value of training and professional development for themselves or their offices -- possibly due to their lack of exposure to formal training programs.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

Of 22 job characteristics staff were asked to rate, "training and job development opportunities" ranked as the sixth most dissatisfying characteristic of their jobs -- an area of greater dissatisfaction than opportunities for recognition and rewards, job security, physical working conditions, or work schedule. 33% of all staff were dissatisfied; 32% were satisfied; while 35% were undecided if they were satisfied or dissatisfied.



- ❑ Interestingly, lack of training and professional development opportunities was the second leading cause of dissatisfaction among committee staff. 38% of committee staff were dissatisfied compared to only 31% of personal staff. Senate committee staff were the most dissatisfied.
- ❑ Staff were also asked if their “office would be more productive if more skills and professional development training were available.” Their responses are summarized in the table below. As you can see, personal office staff are more apt to feel that training would be helpful to their office than committee staff (41% vs. 33%).

However, a relatively large percentage of staff in each category indicate that they neither agreed nor disagreed that more training would be valuable for their office. As mentioned in the “Overview” of this section, staff’s uncertainty about the value of training may be due to their lack of exposure to training programs.

Percent of Staff Agreeing “My Office Would Be More Productive if More Skills and Professional Development Training Were Available”			
	Agree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree
Senate Committee Staff	32%	28%	40%
House Committee Staff	33%	30%	37%
All Committee Staff	33%	30%	38%
Senate Personal Staff	40%	25%	36%
House Personal Staff	42%	26%	32%
All Personal Staff	41%	26%	33%
Overall Average	39%	27%	34%

- ❑ District and state staff are much more likely than their Washington-based colleagues to feel that training would be helpful to their offices. 50% of district and state staff vs. only 35% of Washington staff agree that their “office would be more productive if more skills and professional development training were available.”
- ❑ In a series of focus groups with House and Senate staff, support for increased staff training was considerably stronger than in our survey data. Both junior and senior staff arrived at the same general conclusions:
 - (1) Staff training (management training for senior staff and skills training for younger staff) is essential for creating effective personal office and committee operations.
 - (2) This training theoretically can be provided by either individual offices or by Congress itself, but presently neither is taking on this responsibility in a serious manner.

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- (3) Because significant economies of scale exist in delivering training and because senior staff tend to lack the time and interest to be the providers of training, Congress should be the provider of staff training programs.
- (4) Much of this training needs to be “front-loaded”; i.e. given to new staff (and Members) within their first year in Congress.

“We all came up by the seat of our pants. That isn’t working anymore. It is not really adequate anymore to prepare staffers. They’re not here long enough for the process to really work.” (Long-time House staffer)

“Because you also have turnover at the higher levels, those people that should be doing the mentoring (of younger staff) aren’t there. They keep turning over as often as the younger people... You always feel like you’re somewhat reinventing the wheel within your own office and that gets very frustrating.” (Senate Special Assistant)

“The last thing I want to talk about is office management, ... but I know I need to talk about it.” (House Administrative Assistant)

“Nobody teaches you how to be a manager. There’s a strong need for individuals and the institution to take an active interest in increasing the managerial skills of Hill staff.” (House Administrative Assistant)

“The institution gains from management training for AAs, not only because you’re going to keep people longer, but also because they’re going to be better AAs.” (House Administrative Assistant)

“When you think about it, you realize that we invest more time and energy into the training and professional development of summer interns than we invest in all of our paid staff. That doesn’t make sense... And it doesn’t foster staff loyalty in the institution.”

(House Committee Staff Director)



COMPARISON OF SENATE AND HOUSE STAFF

Overview

A good number of House staff move to the Senate side to take advantage of its higher salaries, greater job security (due to the six-year terms of Senators), and greater access to power (because there are only 100 “power centers” in the Senate vs. 435 in the House). For these reasons, it is often assumed that the Senate is a better place to work than the House.

Surprisingly, staff’s responses to our survey indicate otherwise. Senate staff in general, and Senate committee staff in particular, are more dissatisfied than their House counterparts with many aspects of their work. Compared to House staff, those in the Senate were especially critical of (1) their salary levels, (2) the quality of management in their offices, (3) their limited opportunities for promotion, and (4) their work schedules.

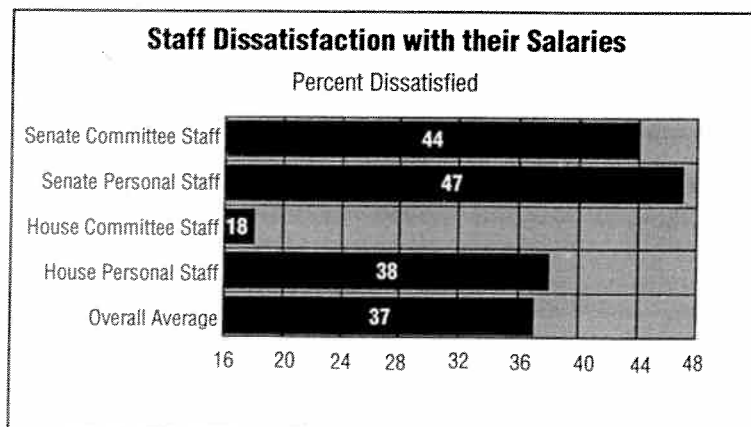
In this section, we compare Senate and House survey responses on these four issues. In addition, in order to try to explain this somewhat surprising disparity between chambers, CMF conducted a focus group of senior congressional staff who have served in both the House and Senate. Their remarks are included in the following discussion.

Analysis of Survey and Focus Group Data

Salary:

The greatest disparity between the views of Senate and House staff occurred on the question of pay. Senate staff in personal offices and committees are more dissatisfied than House staff.

- **Committee staff** in the Senate are 2½ times more dissatisfied about their salaries than House committee staff (44% vs. 18%). This no doubt results at least in part from the fact that committee staff in the Senate are not generally as highly paid as their House counter-



parts. As the table below indicates, Senate committee staff are less likely to receive salaries of \$80,000 or more (20% of Senate committee staff vs. 34% of House committee staff reported salaries in this range) and more likely to receive salaries of less than \$30,000 (20% of Senate committee staff vs. 9% of House committee staff).

Senate committee staffers' greater dissatisfaction with their salaries may also result from the longer hours they work, compared to their House counterparts (65% of Senate committee staff compared to "only" 49% of House committee staff work 50 or more hours per week).

Staff Salaries				
<i>Percentage of staff earning each salary level</i>				
	House		Senate	
	Personal	Committee	Personal	Committee
Less than \$20,000	7%	1%	14%	7%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	34%	8%	33%	13%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	25%	14%	17%	9%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	16%	18%	21%	26%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	10%	25%	8%	25%
\$80,000 or more	8%	34%	8%	20%

- ❑ Despite the fact that **personal staff** in the Senate earn slightly higher average salaries than House personal staff (\$36,844 to \$35,510),⁹ Senate personal staff are more dissatisfied with their salary. 47% of Senate personal staff are dissatisfied with their pay vs. only 38% of House personal staff.

A partial explanation of this disparity may be that, while Senate personal offices pay staff higher salaries on average, they are also twice as likely as House personal offices to give staff salaries in the lowest range (\$20,000 or less). Specifically, 14% of Senate personal staff earn \$20,000 or less compared to only 7% of House personal staff.

⁹ Senate data are taken from CMF's 1993 U.S. Senate Employment Practices and House data are taken from CMF's 1994 U.S. House Employment Practices.

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- Other explanations for the greater dissatisfaction of Senate staff with their salaries came out during focus group discussions. Participants suggested that Senate **personal office** staff may be more unhappy about their pay because they are, in some ways, “cut from a different cloth” than their House counterparts: more specialized, more ambitious and career-oriented, and older.

“Most of the Senate staffers are older, they have family; it’s not like they’re living by themselves in an apartment in Dupont Circle, which was my experience with the House staff. You’ve got people (in the Senate) with kids and mortgages and braces and college educations and all the other real world things to deal with.” (Senate Administrative Assistant)

“You just get a sense (in the Senate) of ... having a somewhat different group who just might be more ambitious and less optimistic.” (Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

“Every LA in our office took a salary cut to come (here) ... They were all working for law firms, making two, three times what they’re making here. There is a sacrifice involved.” (Senate Administrative Assistant)

“On the House side, the pay is low, and you’re not going to specialize much, so you’re hiring (an) altruistic, liberal arts educated, generalist who’s willing to do anything. I didn’t have the luxury of choosing from the pool of people (typically seeking Senate jobs) who are looking to build their resumes and bring some sort of specialty to their jobs.” (Senate Administrative Assistant speaking about her experience as a House Administrative Assistant)

“Most of the Senate staffers are older, they have family; it’s not like they’re living by themselves in an apartment in Dupont Circle, which was my experience with the House staff.”

Office Management:

On a range of issues related to the internal management of their offices, Senate staff also tend to be more dissatisfied than House staff.

- As the table on the next page shows, 39% of Senate staff, but only 31% of House staff, are dissatisfied with the quality of management in their offices. Similarly, 36% of Senate staff compared to only 30% of House staff disagreed when asked whether their “office is well-managed.”

Further, Senate staff report greater dissatisfaction than House staff with various aspects of their offices' management. For example:

- Feedback on job performance (42% dissatisfied vs. 36%)
- Opportunities for recognition and rewards (35% vs. 31%)

- The focus group attributed much of the dissatisfaction on the Senate side, especially in areas such as job feedback and opportunities for recognition and rewards, to the difficulty that Senate personal and committee staff have in getting time and attention from their Senators.

Senate Committee Staff	48%
House Committee Staff	34%
Senate Personal Staff	36%
House Personal Staff	30%
All Senate Staff	39%
All House Staff	31%
All Committee Staff	39%
All Personal Staff	32%
Overall Average	33%

"The number one thing staff complain to me about is the lack of access (to the Senator)." (Senate Administrative Assistant)

"You're devoting your life to this person you work for, and you never get to see him." (Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

"(Young staff) never see (their) Senator, and so they're disillusioned by that. House staff know the Congressman, and the Congressman knows them." (Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

- On all of these management-related issues, **Senate committee staffers** were the most dissatisfied group of all. In particular, 48% of Senate committee staff vs. 36% of Senate personal staff and 31% of all House staff are dissatisfied with the quality of management in their offices. Additionally, 39% of Senate committee staffers are dissatisfied with their opportunities for recognition and rewards compared to 33% of those on Senators' personal staffs.

"The House is much more family-oriented ... Running every two years has advantages in terms of teamwork. It's much more of a business (in the Senate)."

(Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

- Focus group participants had an interesting explanation for the high level of dissatisfaction among Senate committee staff: Senate committees and subcommittees are less numerous and, in total, employ about one-half as many staff as House committees, yet must basically cover the same jurisdiction. One result is that committees in the Senate are frequently "outgunned" by their House counterparts, which frustrates Senate committee staff.

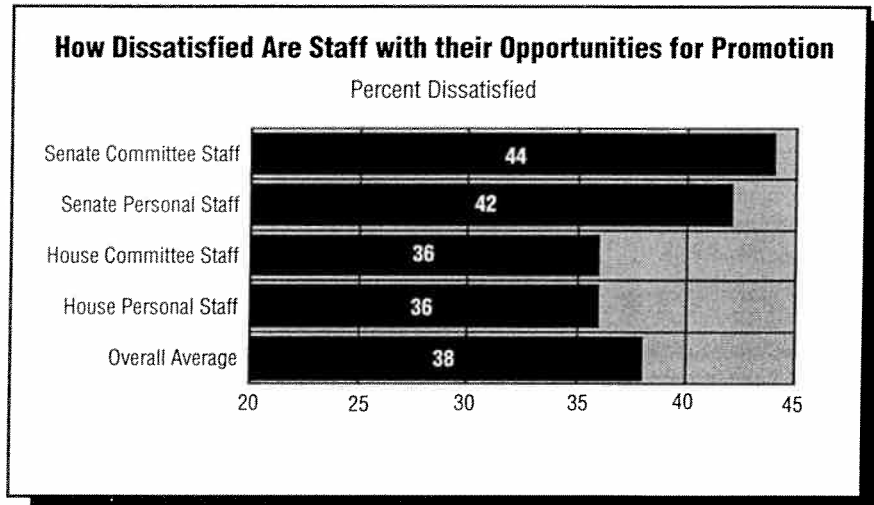
“Every time I want to do a hearing on (even) a remotely interesting topic, the House does it first because they’ve got two subcommittees (on the topic ...and) by the time we get around to having our hearing, (the House) has already had four (hearings on the same subject).” (Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

Opportunities for Promotion:

Opportunities for job promotions is another area with which Senate staff are more dissatisfied than House staff (43% vs. 36%).

Work Schedules¹⁰:

Senate committee staffers are noticeably more dissatisfied than their colleagues in the rest of the House and Senate with both the length and unpredictability of their work schedules.



How Dissatisfied Are Staff with the Length and Predictability of Their Workdays		
<i>Percent dissatisfied with:</i>		
	Predictability of Work Schedule	Hours of Work
Senate Committee Staff	37%	27%
Senate Personal Staff	26%	22%
House Committee Staff	31%	18%
House Personal Staff	29%	21%
Overall Average	29%	21%

¹⁰ See pages 14 to 17 for a more detailed discussion of the schedules faced by congressional staff.

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- ❑ Staff in our focus groups reported that the Senate schedule had a terrible effect on their quality of life.

"You have to know you're going to sacrifice a lot of your family life if you're going to work for the Senate. The House has a schedule, that's what it boils down to, and the Senate doesn't. You can't plan (in the Senate)."
(Senate Committee Professional Staff Member)

"Nothing happens here until 4 o'clock in the afternoon. ... There's no reason why the Senate should be in session much after 5 or 6 o'clock at night." (Senate Committee Staff Director)

"I see no management of the schedule. Should we be voting on major pieces of legislation at 2:00 in the morning?"

(Senate Chief of Staff)

STAFF SALARIES

Staff were asked several questions about salary on the survey. Not surprisingly, salary frustrations are quite important to staff. As we mention on page 27, the desire to earn higher pay is the second-leading reason staff give for wanting to leave Congress. In addition, from a list of 22 job characteristics, salary registered the fourth-highest level of dissatisfaction among staff.¹¹

How Satisfied are Staff with their Pay?			
	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
Female Staff	41%	40%	19%
Male Staff	42%	35%	23%
Minority Staff	33%	45%	22%
White Staff	43%	36%	21%
Washington Staff	44%	36%	20%
District/State Staff	35%	40%	25%
Junior Staff	34%	44%	23%
Senior Staff	48%	31%	21%
Senate Personal Staff	35%	47%	18%
Senate Committee Staff	31%	44%	25%
House Personal Staff	38%	38%	24%
House Committee Staff	64%	18%	18%
Overall Average	41%	37%	22%

- As you can see in the table above, satisfaction with salary varies widely depending on what type of staff one is analyzing. For example:
 - Female and male staffers are almost equally satisfied with their pay;
 - Staff from minority racial or ethnic groups are not as satisfied as their white counterparts with their salaries;

¹¹ On page 5, we summarize staff's views of all 22 characteristics of the congressional workplace.

- Staff in district and state offices are less satisfied than those in Washington offices with their pay;
 - Junior staff are considerably more dissatisfied with their salaries than senior staff; and
 - Senate staff, in particular Senate committee staff, are more dissatisfied with their salaries than their colleagues in the House.
- Staff were also asked to report their salary levels. The results are summarized below.

Annual Staff Salaries			
<i>Percent earning each salary level</i>			
	All Staff	Personal Staff	Committee Staff
Less than \$20,000	7.2%	8.8%	2.5%
\$20,000 to \$29,999	27.6%	33.7%	9.0%
\$30,000 to \$39,999	20.0%	22.5%	12.4%
\$40,000 to \$59,999	18.4%	17.5%	21.2%
\$60,000 to \$79,999	13.3%	9.4%	24.9%
\$80,000 or more	13.5%	8.0%	29.9%

- Overall, 35% of staff earn less than \$30,000 and 65% earn greater than \$30,000. Committee staff tend to be much higher paid than personal staff. 55% of committee staff vs. only 17% of personal staff earn annual salaries of \$60,000 or more. Also, only 12% of committee staff earn less than \$30,000 per year, while 43% of personal staff earn less than \$30,000.¹²

55% of committee staff vs. only 17% of personal staff earn annual salaries of \$60,000 or more. Also, only 12% of committee staff earn less than \$30,000 per year, while 43% of personal staff earn less than \$30,000.

¹² The table on page 38 breaks-out this salary data for staff in the following groups: Senate committees, Senate personal offices, House committees, and House personal offices.

COMPARISON OF DISTRICT/STATE AND WASHINGTON STAFF

While much of this report has been focused on the approximately 9,000 personal and committee staff working on Capitol Hill, we believe that it is important to highlight the opinions of the 3,900 congressional staff working in district and state offices.¹³ These two groups have very different views of working for Congress.

- ❑ Staff in Members' district and state offices tend to be much more satisfied with most aspects of their work than Capitol Hill-based staff. For example, district and state staff are more satisfied than Washington staff with their:
 - Physical working conditions (77% satisfied vs. 36%)
 - Hours of work (70% vs. 45%)
 - Predictability of work schedule (66% vs. 36%)
 - Quality of management in the office (59% vs. 42%)
- ❑ Also, district and state staff are even more likely than Washington staff (81% vs. 74%) to agree, "I like my job."
- ❑ However, district and state staff are noticeably less satisfied than Washington staff with their pay (35% of district/state staff satisfied vs. 44% of Washington staff), and they are slightly less satisfied with their promotion opportunities (28% vs. 31%).

Staff in Members' district and state offices tend to be much more satisfied with most aspects of their work than Capitol Hill-based staff.

¹³ CMF has found that 43% of House personal staff and 33% of Senate personal staff are located in district and state offices, respectively. House data are taken from 1994 U.S. House Employment Practices and Senate data are taken from 1993 U.S. Senate Employment Practices.

STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

On the survey, staff were asked several questions about their demographic background. As you can see below, congressional staff tend to be young and well-educated. In addition, less than one-half of staff are married.

- **Age.** 64% of congressional staff are under 40 years of age and 35% under 30. 14% of staff are 50 years of age or higher. The percentage of staff in each age range is given below.

24 or younger	12%
25 thru 29	23%
30 thru 39	29%
40 thru 49	22%
50 or older	14%

- **Education.** 83% of congressional staff hold college degrees, 32% have some type of graduate degree, and 12% have graduated from law school.¹⁴ Data indicating the highest level of educational attainment for congressional staff is set forth below.

High school or less	3%
Some college	15%
Bachelor's degree	51%
Master's degree	17%
Law degree	12%
Doctorate degree	3%

- **Marital Status.** Roughly one-half of congressional staff are married and 30% have children. The marital status results are summarized below.

Single, separated, divorced, or widowed	47%
Married	46%
Unmarried partnership	7%

¹⁴ While 83% of congressional staff hold *at least* a bachelor's degree, the comparable figures are 37% for the federal government's civilian non-postal workforce and approximately 20% for the U.S. adult population. Data taken from Christine Steele, "Profile of Federal Civilian Non-Postal Employees," Office of Personnel Management, March 31, 1994; and from U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 174.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

The workplace issues with which staff are most dissatisfied -- workload and work hours, unpredictable work schedules, job-related stress, insufficient training, and ineffective management practices -- are all problems that can be successfully addressed directly, promptly, and without significant cost. Reducing these common and increasingly debilitating workplace problems, however, will require both greater institutional discipline and a greater commitment to improving the quality of work life on the Hill.

Historically, the needs of staff were of minimal concern to Congress because the functions of congressional offices and the role of staff in Congress were much more narrowly defined. However, the tremendous growth in the duties and responsibilities of Congress over the past 25 years and the corresponding increase in staff, have left Congress highly reliant on its staff. Yet, as this survey shows, Congress' employment practices do not adequately reflect the needs of its workforce. For that matter, the way Congress carries out its business also is failing to adequately reflect the needs of the Senators and Representatives themselves.

Staff are commonly viewed as easily renewable resources that do not require significant attention. This perspective overlooks the very real costs to the Congress of staff dissatisfaction and turnover: reduced office productivity and impaired work quality. This study demonstrates that a change in the way Congress manages the nation's business -- and the people responsible for carrying out the nation's business -- is in order. We strongly believe that prudent changes in congressional operations will benefit all the relevant parties -- the staff, the Members of Congress, and the constituents they serve.

Below, we have outlined a number of recommendations that address the problems identified in this study. This list is not meant to serve as a comprehensive reform package. Many worthwhile reform recommendations do not appear in this list because they are targeted to other problems not prominently raised by staff in our survey or focus groups.

We strongly urge the 104th Congress to continue to enact reforms geared towards improving the way Congress conducts its business so that the institution will become a more predictable, productive, and less stressful work environment and one that fosters increased professionalism and better balance in the lives of Members and staff alike.

The workplace issues with which staff are most dissatisfied -- workload and work hours, unpredictable work schedules, job-related stress, insufficient training, and ineffective management practices -- are all problems that can be successfully addressed directly, promptly, and without significant cost.

Goal 1: Reduce and Rationalize the Work of Committees

Recommendation 1: Reduce the overall number of committees and subcommittees and consolidate committee jurisdictions.

Growth in the number of committees and subcommittees over the past two decades has created greater legislative acrimony, decreased Member attendance, blurred the focus of Members and the committees on which they serve, and created a good deal of additional work and stress for both Members and staff. Revising committee jurisdictions to better reflect the current needs of the country and reducing the numbers of committees and subcommittees will lead to a more rational, less cumbersome, and more accountable process.

This proposal was strongly supported by staff. Specifically, 74% of all staff and 84% of the most senior staff (AAs and committee/subcommittee Staff Directors) favored "reducing the number of subcommittees." Of 29 possible reform ideas considered by the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress (JCOC) and included in our survey of staff, this ranked as the seventh most popular proposal among all staff and the third most popular among AAs and Staff Directors. (See pages 56 and 57 for a complete list of staff rankings of these 29 reform proposals).

Recommendation 2: Reduce the number of committees and subcommittees on which Senators and Representatives can serve.

Presently, Members of Congress are spread far too thin by their committee assignments. They seek to be active on many policy fronts and represent the needs of as many constituent interests as possible. This desire, reflected in the present rules on the numbers of committees and subcommittees for which Members may serve, compromises the policy-making process. Good policy-making suffers when Members are expected to juggle several hearings in a morning and develop substantive expertise on more issues than they can realistically absorb. As a result, Members and their staff all too often are left exhausted, frustrated, and demoralized by their inability to focus sufficient time on their legislative priorities.

77% of House staff supported "limiting Representatives to no more than 2 standing committees and 2 subcommittees of each standing committee." Likewise, 79% of Senate staff supported "limiting Senators to no more than 6 standing committees and subcommittees." Restricting House and Senate committee assignments ranked as the third and fourth most popular reform respectively among staff. In addition, the JCOC survey of Members of Congress found that 87% of the Representatives who responded and 82% of the Senators favored this proposal.

Recommendation 3: Reduce overlapping committee jurisdictions and, through this measure, reduce the number of concurrent referrals.

Overlapping jurisdictions create a policy-making process that is cumbersome, confusing, and highly inefficient for Members and staff alike. Far too much time is devoted to competing for legislative turf and trying to resolve conflict over competing committee mark-ups. Reducing overlapping jurisdiction would also: allow Members and staff to spend greater

time developing expertise in their issue areas; provide them greater control over their committee jurisdictions; and make individual committees more accountable for the legislation they mark-up and pass.

These two proposals were widely supported by both personal office and committee staff regardless of age, seniority, salary, or party affiliation. Staff ranked “reducing jurisdictional overlap among committees” as the most popular of 29 reform proposals they evaluated. Specifically, 87% of the staff surveyed favored this idea. Of AAs and Staff Directors, 90% favored this reform.

Recommendation 4: Limit the number of days committees and subcommittees can hold hearings and mark-ups annually.

Under present committee rules, the decision over how many hearings or mark-ups a committee can hold in a session is reached separately by several hundred different chairpersons and/or their respective ranking minority members with little consideration of how their decisions affect the effectiveness of Congress as a whole or the workloads of individual Members. Limiting the number of hearings and mark-ups that committees and subcommittees can hold would force both Members and staff to more carefully prioritize their work. Such a process would also encourage committees to: better discriminate between important and marginal issues; stay focused on their priorities; and reduce non-essential work and job-related stress throughout Congress.

Goal 2: Improve the Congressional Schedule

Recommendation 5: Establish a more “family friendly” and “worker friendly” daily schedule by making the congressional schedule far more predictable and orderly with pre-established early adjournment times at least two days each week.

Under present congressional practice, adherence to an established daily schedule is more the exception than the rule. Especially in the Senate, Members and staff often don’t know from day to day whether they will be leaving at 6 p.m. or be required to stay until midnight. Their typical day is filled with hearings and votes that run late throughout the afternoon and additional votes scheduled for the evening. This chaotic, unpredictable schedule exacts a tremendous toll on the personal lives of Members and staff -- especially those with school age children.

To address these serious workplace problems, the House and especially the Senate, should develop and enforce a more orderly and predictable daily schedule. An improved scheduling system should be based on the following general principles:

- All committee hearings should be limited to specifically designated times to ensure committee activity does not conflict with floor activity.

-
- ❑ All committees should be assigned designated days of the week in which they can hold hearings to minimize scheduling conflicts and ensure a more even and manageable distribution of the overall committee work.
 - ❑ Floor proceedings should begin and end based on a standard schedule set at the beginning of the session. More specifically, the House and Senate should adjourn by 6:00 p.m. routinely on at least two workdays each week.

Quality of life task forces in the House and Senate chaired by Representative Frank Wolf and Senator Bob Smith have already advocated far-reaching improvements in congressional schedules similar to those described above. We hope that both chambers adopt, and strongly adhere to, these recommendations.

Recommendation 6: Establish a more “family friendly” and “worker friendly” weekly schedule for the House.

Despite agreement on the importance of this goal, House Members are strongly divided about how to achieve it. The solution to this problem almost certainly cannot be found through trying to build a consensus for one weekly scheduling proposal or another. Instead, the leadership of both parties should meet and decide what general weekly work schedule best supports a more deliberative and effective policy-making process. This decision should be announced early in this Congress, thus giving the Members two years to make the necessary adjustments before implementing the new schedule at the beginning of the 105th Congress.

66% of House staff favored “adopting a ‘family-friendly’ schedule.” Similarly, Members of Congress surveyed by the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress (JCOC) also strongly supported this concept. 81% of these Members indicated that “reform of floor procedures and scheduling” is necessary.

Goal 3: Improve Management and Increase Productivity

Recommendation 7: Develop and offer voluntary, but regular, management training programs to senior staff responsible for day-to-day management of congressional offices.

Few of the senior management staff in Congress who are responsible for running personal offices, committees, or subcommittees have any significant management training or experience prior to taking on their complex management responsibilities. Rather, they tend to be hired and promoted on the basis of their legislative or political experience and accomplishments. Those interested in improving their managerial skills also find there is very little institutional training or support available once they get to Congress. Not surprisingly, only 32% of staff are satisfied with their “training/job development opportunities.” The ramifications of this lack of training are a host of costly but easily avoidable problems: inefficiency and lost productivity; unhealthy levels of stress; debilitating rates of staff turnover; and a reduced quality of work.

Creating regular management training programs for staff would provide a number of important benefits to the Congress. First, such training would significantly raise the knowledge and skills of these critical staff and raise the overall quality of offices throughout the Congress. Second, by investing in the professional development of these senior management staff, Congress would encourage many more of its best and brightest staff to extend their congressional service. Third, such workshops would create a laboratory for inventing new management practices and systems tailored to continually improving the effectiveness of congressional operations.

Recommendation 8: **Develop and offer, on a voluntary basis, leadership training programs for Members of Congress interested in improving their leadership and management skills.**

Most Members of Congress, like most of their senior management staff, had minimal management experience or training prior to their elections to Congress. Yet, no programs have been provided by Congress to assist them in developing the knowledge and skills necessary for becoming effective leaders of their personal offices or committees. This lack of management experience and skills significantly impedes the effectiveness of many congressional offices and the Congress as a whole.

Recommendation 9: **Develop ongoing professional development training programs for all congressional staff.**

Most staff on the Hill are thrown into their jobs with no formal orientation process, few programs to help them perform their jobs more effectively, and no programs to assist them in taking on new jobs with greater responsibilities. Instead, staff are left to learn their jobs and improve their work skills through on-the-job training -- an inefficient method of learning. By investing in better staff training and creating a work environment that encourages staff to continually improve their professional skills and productivity, the performance of staff could be measurably improved. Such programs would also greatly reduce staff stress, promote overall office morale, and reduce staff turnover.

Goal 4: Reduce Non-Essential Congressional Work

Recommendation 10: **Limit the number of work requests personal offices and committees can place on congressional support services by creating a voucher or internal billing mechanism that forces offices to weigh the costs of their requests on the institution at large.**

At present, personal offices and committees incur none of the costs associated with the requests they make to congressional support agencies (e.g., CRS, GAO, OTA, CBO), or congressional support offices (e.g., the Legislative Counsel offices and the Senate Service Department). As a consequence, there is little incentive for congressional offices to be selective

in the work requests they make of these support services. In fact, the present system encourages offices to over-utilize these services and generate a good deal of low-priority work.

Creating a system that would require offices to carefully consider the actual costs to the Congress of their requests before making them would: reduce unnecessary and low-priority work as well as the overall workload and budget of the congressional support agencies and offices.

Recommendation 11: Strictly interpret and enforce the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) in Congress to ensure that the costs -- financial and personal -- of asking staff to routinely work evenings and weekends are considered by Congress.

The first major piece of legislation passed by the 104th Congress was the Congressional Accountability Act, which applies the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and a variety of other labor laws to Congress. This is not the first time that the FLSA has been applied to Congress. In 1990, the FLSA was extended to all House staff, but not to any Senate staff. However, in implementing the FLSA's overtime pay requirements in 1990, the House adopted much less restrictive rules than are used in the federal executive branch or the private sector. Very few House personal office and committee staff were eligible for overtime pay and even those covered could be given compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay.

If the FLSA is now applied uniformly to House and Senate employees using the Department of Labor's guidelines (as the Accountability Act requires), many staff will receive overtime pay when they work more than a 40 hour week. "Comp time" can no longer be substituted for overtime pay. Such a potentially costly provision should force both individual offices and Congress as a whole to pay greater attention to the quality of life complaints regularly voiced by Members and staff alike.

The leadership of both the House and Senate, for example, would need to consider the direct costs to the institution before scheduling a series of late night votes or weekend sessions. Similarly, Members, AAs, and Staff Directors who tend to overwork their staffs because of their inability or unwillingness to properly control office workloads would be forced -- under the overtime pay provision -- to plan better or pay the price for their poor planning.

Recommendation 12: Terminate all unsolicited (i.e. "outreach") mail.

Personal offices, primarily those in the House, spend a great deal of staff time and financial resources sending out outreach mail each year including newsletters and targeted mailings. Developing these mailings costs Congress millions of dollars, consumes huge amounts of staff time, and generates broad public criticism of Congress for wasteful spending and protecting incumbents. This increasingly negative perception, combined with the substantial cost in staff time and mailing costs, justifies terminating this activity in the near-term ex-

cept for announcements of town hall meetings. While the House has taken some recent action in this area by cutting Members' franked mail allowances, we believe that even bolder action is warranted so that Congress can better manage its tremendous workload.

Interestingly, staff seem to recognize that the significant amount of time devoted to these activities should be addressed. In our survey, 57% of all staff and 54% of all personal office staff favored "reductions in franking accounts."

**Views of All Surveyed Staff on 29 Reform Proposals:
Ranked from Most Popular to Least Popular**

(based on the percent of respondents who favored or strongly favored each proposal)

	Percent
1. Reduce jurisdictional overlap among committees	87.1
2. Apply federal laws to Congress (e.g., labor and civil rights laws)	80.2
3. Limit Senators to no more than 6 standing committees and subcommittees	79.7
4. Limit Representatives to no more than 2 standing committees and 2 subcommittees of each standing committee	77.1
5. Establish parallel House/Senate committee jurisdictions	75.8
6. Adopt a timetable at the beginning of each session for major legislation	75.8
7. Reduce the number of subcommittees	74.1
8. Move to a two-year budget process	70.8
9. Adopt "family-friendly" schedule (e.g., start and end legislative day earlier; coordinate recesses with school calendar)	65.5
10. Reduce the number of committees	65.1
11. Adopt a "3 weeks in session and 1 week out of session" calendar	63.2
12. Reduce franking accounts	56.9
13. Match ratio of Democrats and Republicans on committees to ratio in the full House and Senate, except the Ethics and House Rules panels	56.7
14. Encourage greater use of "open rules" when considering legislation on the House floor	54.9
15. Transform Budget Committees into a Joint Budget Committee with committee members selected by party leaders of each chamber	54.8
16. Reduce opportunity for Senate filibusters	53.5
17. Allow Representatives to cast votes electronically from committee rooms on journal votes and quorum calls when committees are meeting	53.4
18. Abolish proxy voting in committee	52.1
19. Introduce Oxford Union-style debates on major issues	51.3
20. Match ratio of majority and minority committee staff to Member ratio in House and Senate	49.7
21. Eliminate the Appropriations Committee	45.6
22. Reduce number of committee staff	45.5
23. Establish 5-day legislative work week in the House and Senate	43.6
24. Impose term limits on committee chairs	43.0
25. Eliminate concurrent budget resolution	39.8
26. Retain current number of committees, but reduce number of Members on each committee	34.6
27. Eliminate Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs)	33.2
28. Reduce support agency staff (GAO, CRS, etc.)	31.0
29. Reduce number of personal office staff	18.0

**Views of AAs and Staff Directors on 29 Reform Proposals:
Ranked from Most Popular to Least Popular**

(based on the percent of respondents who favored or strongly favored each proposal)

	Percent
1. Reduce jurisdictional overlap among committees	89.7
2. Limit Representatives to no more than 2 standing committees and 2 subcommittees of each standing committee	85.0
3. Reduce the number of subcommittees	83.9
4. Limit Senators to no more than 6 standing committees and subcommittees	79.6
5. Move to a two-year budget process	77.4
6. Establish parallel House/Senate committee jurisdictions	75.8
7. Adopt a timetable at the beginning of each session for major legislation	72.1
8. Reduce the number of committees	71.6
9. Adopt "family-friendly" schedule (e.g., start and end legislative day earlier; coordinate recesses with school calendar)	67.5
10. Apply federal laws to Congress (e.g., labor and civil rights laws)	66.3
11. Adopt a "3 weeks in session and 1 week out of session" calendar	63.9
12. Match ratio of Democrats and Republicans on committees to ratio in the full House and Senate, except the Ethics and House Rules panels	60.8
13. Reduce franking accounts	59.2
14. Reduce number of committee staff	58.3
15. Encourage greater use of "open rules" when considering legislation on the House floor	56.6
16. Reduce opportunity for Senate filibusters	52.8
17. Match ratio of majority and minority committee staff to Member ratio in House and Senate	52.3
18. Abolish proxy voting in committee	50.6
19. Introduce Oxford Union-style debates on major issues	47.7
20. Allow Representatives to cast votes electronically from committee rooms on journal votes and quorum calls when committees are meeting	47.4
21. Transform Budget Committees into a Joint Budget Committee with committee members selected by party leaders of each chamber	46.4
22. Eliminate the Appropriations Committee	45.8
23. Eliminate Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs)	42.6
24. Reduce support agency staff (GAO, CRS, etc.)	41.1
25. Establish 5-day legislative work week in the House and Senate	40.3
26. Eliminate concurrent budget resolution	35.4
27. Impose term limits on committee chairs	32.0
28. Retain current number of committees, but reduce number of Members on each committee	29.4
29. Reduce number of personal office staff	19.0



COMPARISON OF CONGRESSIONAL STAFF VIEWS TO WORKERS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NATIONALLY

Our survey of congressional staff shows that the vast majority like their jobs and that their chief areas of dissatisfaction concern the heavy workload, low salaries, and high stress level associated with working for Congress. Are these typical results of employee opinion surveys? To answer that question, we reviewed the findings of three surveys of federal executive branch workers and two surveys of workers from across the U.S.¹⁵

While these surveys did not have identically worded questions, many questions addressed similar issues. In general,

- Congressional staff are just as likely as other workers to like their jobs and are equally satisfied about their pay;
- Both sets of workers share a strong dissatisfaction for the stress they face in their jobs; however,
- Despite logging many more hours than other workers, congressional staff are more apt to feel that they have an unmanageable workload.

Specifically, 76% of congressional staff “like their jobs,” compared to 72% of federal employees and 79% of working women. On the issue of pay, congressional staff are just as likely to be dissatisfied (41%) as federal workers (42%).

The amount of job-related stress was the number one complaint of congressional staff and of the working women participating in the Labor Department’s recent national study. Just as in Congress, problems with stress cut across all income groups in the Labor Department study.

Finally, in a national study of all workers, the average work week was 42 hours. That would be considered an unusually short week in Congress, where 53% of staff work 50 hours or more per week. In spite of these long hours, 67% of congressional staff say that they “never seem to have enough time to get everything done.” Of workers nationally, only 27% agreed with a similar statement about their workload.

In a national study of all workers, the average work week was 42 hours. That would be considered an unusually short week in Congress, where 53% of staff work 50 hours or more per week.

¹⁵ *Working for America: An Update*, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1994 (a study of 13,000 executive branch workers). *Survey of Federal Employees*, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 1992 (a study of 32,000 executive branch workers). *Why are Employees Leaving the Federal Government?*, U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1990 (a study of close to 3,000 executive branch workers). *Survey*, Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, 1994 (a national study of 1,200 working women). *The National Study of the Changing Workforce*, Families and Work Institute, 1993 (a national study of 3,700 workers; data cited with permission).

ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE

	Estimated % in Congress	% of Survey Responses	Number of Survey Responses
All Respondents		100.0%	1422
House	67%	70.0%	993
Senate	33%	29.3%	416
Democratic staff	61%	63.4%	880
Republican staff	39%	36.6%	509
Personal staff	77%	75.0%	1067
Committee/subcomm. staff	23%	24.9%	355
Washington staff	70%	71.6%	1012
District/State staff	30%	28.4%	401
House Respondents only	67%	70.0%	993
Democratic staff	62%	64.5%	629
Republican staff	38%	35.5%	346
Personal staff	77%	75.9%	754
Committee staff	23%	24.1%	239
Washington staff	68%	71.7%	708
District staff	32%	28.3%	279
Senate Respondents only	33%	29.3%	416
Democratic staff	60%	60.0%	244
Republican staff	40%	40.0%	163
Personal staff	77%	74.0%	308
Committee staff	23%	25.9%	108
Washington staff	73%	70.7%	292
State staff	27%	29.3%	121

POSITIONS CATEGORIZED AS “SENIOR” AND “JUNIOR” STAFF

Survey respondents were asked to select the job title that best describes their work. We grouped job titles into the categories of “senior staff” and “junior staff” according to their typical level of responsibility. These categories are used throughout the report and are defined as follows:

Senior Staff

Administrative Assistant
Chief of Staff
Committee Staff Director
Communications Director
Counsel
Deputy Staff Director
District Director
Legislative Director
Legislative Assistant
Office Manager (Senate offices only)
Press Secretary
Professional Staff Member
State Director
Subcommittee Staff Director

Junior Staff

Caseworker
Computer/CMS Operator
Correspondence Director
Deputy Press Secretary
Executive Assistant
Field Representative
Legislative Correspondent
Mail Manager
Mail Room Assistant
Office Assistant/Clerk
Office Manager (House offices only)
Personal Secretary
Projects Director
Receptionist
Research Assistant
Regional Director
Scheduler
Special Advisor
Systems Administrator

CONGRESSIONAL STAFF OPINION SURVEY

Section I: This section focuses on your views about factors that directly affect the operations of your office and that indirectly affect Congress at the institutional level.

On this page we ask you two different questions about various aspects of your job. The first question focuses on your *satisfaction* while the second question focuses on the *importance to you* of each aspect. For each of the following aspects of your job:

- A. Please indicate your level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.
- B. Please indicate the importance to you of each factor, regardless of your level of satisfaction.

	A. Satisfaction					B. Importance to You					
	Very Dissatisfied	1	2	3	4	5	Very Satisfied	1	2	3	4	5
1. Hours of work	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Predictability of work schedule	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Amount of work-related stress	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. Opportunity to work to your potential	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Opportunity to contribute to the public good	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Opportunity to help people	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. Autonomy to determine how to do your job	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
8. Quality of coworkers	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
9. Quality of management in your office	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
10. Feedback on your job performance	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
11. Job security	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
12. Promotion opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
13. Salary	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
14. Annual and sick leave benefits	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
15. Opportunities for recognition and rewards	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
16. Opportunities to learn	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Variety of job activities	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
18. Challenging and interesting work	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
19. Training/job development opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
20. Physical working conditions	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
21. Ability to obtain credential for a better job	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Enjoyable work environment	1	2	3	4	5	.....	1	2	3	4	5

C. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. I like my job	1	2	3	4	5
2. I never seem to have enough time to get everything done	1	2	3	4	5
3. Job burnout is a major problem in my office	1	2	3	4	5
4. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities	1	2	3	4	5
5. The demands of my job leave me inadequate time for my personal life	1	2	3	4	5
6. My work gives me a sense of personal accomplishment	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have too much to do to do everything well	1	2	3	4	5
8. I receive sufficient feedback on my job performance	1	2	3	4	5
9. My office would be more productive if more skills and professional development training were available	1	2	3	4	5

D. How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. My job responsibilities are not clearly defined	1	2	3	4	5
2. My office deals effectively with personnel problems	1	2	3	4	5
3. The goals of my office are clear to me	1	2	3	4	5
4. The manager(s) in my office is/are good at dealing with the staff	1	2	3	4	5
5. We spend more time on "quick fixes" than on solving underlying management problems	1	2	3	4	5
6. My input is valued by the management of my office	1	2	3	4	5
7. My office has a sincere interest in the satisfaction and well-being of its employees	1	2	3	4	5
8. My office effectively communicates and coordinates	1	2	3	4	5
9. Salary increases in my office are awarded on the basis of merit	1	2	3	4	5
10. Morale in my office is low	1	2	3	4	5
11. Staff turnover decreases the productivity and effectiveness of my office	1	2	3	4	5
12. Overall, my office is well-managed	1	2	3	4	5
13. Improved management practices would increase my office's productivity and effectiveness	1	2	3	4	5

E. If it were solely up to you, how many more years would you want to continue working for Congress?
 Circle one:

Years: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 more than 10 years

F. Following are some reasons congressional staff might have for leaving their current job or for leaving Congress. Please tell us whether each of the following reasons: 1) would make you want to leave your current job but not leave Congress; 2) would make you want to leave Congress; or 3) is not a factor for you.

	Leave My Job; Not Congress	Leave Congress	Not a Factor For Me
1. Unsatisfactory leave benefits (e.g., vacation, parental)	1	2	3
2. Inadequate opportunities for professional advancement	1	2	3
3. Desire for more challenging work	1	2	3
4. Desire for more meaningful work	1	2	3
5. Desire for a job that will make better use of my skills and abilities	1	2	3
6. Desire to continue my formal education	1	2	3
7. Desire to earn more money	1	2	3
8. Unsatisfactory working relationship with my coworkers	1	2	3
9. Unsatisfactory working relationship with my supervisor(s)	1	2	3
10. Desire for a shorter work week with more predictable hours	1	2	3
11. Desire for a job with less stress and anxiety	1	2	3
12. Inadequate recognition for and appreciation of my work	1	2	3
13. To seek better balance between my work and my personal life	1	2	3
14. Desire to pursue a different type of work	1	2	3
15. Desire to live in a different city or part of the country	1	2	3
16. Frustrations with the management of my office	1	2	3
17. Disillusionment with the political process	1	2	3
18. Incompatibility with the Member/Chairperson (e.g., politics, management style)	1	2	3
19. Frustration with the low public opinion of Congress	1	2	3

Section II: This section focuses on your views of reform ideas that have been proposed to the Joint Committee.

G. Would you favor or oppose each of the following proposals to change how Congress operates, or do you lack adequate information to answer?

	Strongly Oppose				Strongly Favor	I have Inadequate Information to Answer
<i>Staffing and Office Resources</i>						
1) Reduction in number of personal office staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
2) Reduction in number of committee staff	1	2	3	4	5	6
3) Reduction in number of support agency staff (GAO, CRS, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6
4) Reduction in franking accounts	1	2	3	4	5	6

G. (Continued) Would you favor or oppose each of the following proposals to change how Congress operates, or do you lack adequate information to answer?

		Strongly Oppose			Strongly Favor	I have Inadequate Information to Answer
<i>Calendar/Scheduling</i>						
5)	Establish a 5-day legislative work week in both House and Senate	1	2	3	4	5 6
6)	Adopt a "3 Weeks in Session and 1 Week Out of Session" calendar	1	2	3	4	5 6
7)	Adopt a timetable at the beginning of each session for major legislation	1	2	3	4	5 6
8)	Adopt "family-friendly" schedule (e.g., start and end legislative day earlier; coordinate recesses with school calendar)	1	2	3	4	5 6
<i>Committees</i>						
9)	Reduce the number of committees	1	2	3	4	5 6
10)	Reduce the number of subcommittees	1	2	3	4	5 6
11)	Retain current number of committees but reduce number of Members on each committee	1	2	3	4	5 6
12)	Limit Senators to no more than 6 standing committees and subcommittees	1	2	3	4	5 6
13)	Limit Representatives to no more than 2 standing committees and 2 subcommittees of each standing committee	1	2	3	4	5 6
14)	Abolish proxy voting in committee	1	2	3	4	5 6
15)	Reduce jurisdictional overlap among committees	1	2	3	4	5 6
16)	Impose term limits on committee chairs	1	2	3	4	5 6
17)	Match ratio of Democrats and Republicans on committees to ratio in the full House and Senate, except the Ethics and House Rules panels	1	2	3	4	5 6
18)	Match ratio of majority and minority committee staff to Member ratio in House and Senate	1	2	3	4	5 6
19)	Establish parallel House/Senate committee jurisdictions	1	2	3	4	5 6
<i>Budget Process</i>						
20)	Eliminate the Appropriations Committees	1	2	3	4	5 6
21)	Move to a two-year budget process	1	2	3	4	5 6
22)	Transform the Budget Committees into a Joint Budget Committee with committee members selected by party leaders of each chamber	1	2	3	4	5 6
23)	Eliminate concurrent budget resolution to fix attention on the President's budget	1	2	3	4	5 6
<i>Debate and Deliberation</i>						
24)	Allow Representatives to cast floor votes electronically from committee rooms on journal votes and quorum calls when committees are meeting	1	2	3	4	5 6
25)	Encourage greater use of "open rules" when considering legislation on the House floor	1	2	3	4	5 6
26)	Reduce opportunity for Senate filibusters	1	2	3	4	5 6
27)	Introduce Oxford Union-style debates on major issues	1	2	3	4	5 6
<i>Miscellaneous</i>						
28)	Apply federal laws to Congress (e.g., labor and civil rights laws)	1	2	3	4	5 6
29)	Eliminate Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs)	1	2	3	4	5 6

Section III: This section focuses on the House Office of Fair Employment Practices (OFEP) and the Office of Senate Fair Employment Practices (OSFEP). Because each chamber has an independent office, your answers to the following questions should be based only on the office that serves the chamber for which you work.

H. Before reading this questionnaire, did you know of the availability to you of the House Office of Fair Employment Practices (OFEP) or the Office of Senate Fair Employment Practice (OSFEP)?

_____ Yes _____ No

I. Thinking about OFEP (in the House) or OSFEP (in the Senate), describe your understanding of its mission and services. Check one item in each column.

A) Mission

B) Services

- _____ 1. Good understanding
- _____ 2. Partial understanding
- _____ 3. Limited understanding
- _____ 4. No understanding

- _____ 1. Good understanding
- _____ 2. Partial understanding
- _____ 3. Limited understanding
- _____ 4. No understanding

J. Through what sources have you learned about OFEP/OSFEP? Check all that apply.

- _____ 1. Materials from OFEP/OSFEP
- _____ 2. Contacting OFEP/OSFEP yourself
- _____ 3. Newspaper articles (e.g., *Roll Call*)
- _____ 4. Management in your office (e.g., oral or posted materials)
- _____ 5. Written information from the House/Senate
- _____ 6. Word of mouth
- _____ 7. None

If you thought you had been subjected to a violation of fair employment practices, would any of the following reasons make you:

K: unlikely to *initiate an inquiry* with OFEP/OSFEP?

L: unlikely to *file a complaint* with OFEP/OSFEP?

K: Unlikely to L: Unlikely to
Initiate an Inquiry? File a Complaint?

	Yes	No	Maybe	.....	Yes	No	Maybe
1. Concern that your contact with OFEP/OSFEP would not be kept confidential	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3
2. Concern that OFEP/OSFEP would notify your employer without your permission	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3
3. Concern that you would be subject to retaliation from your employer	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3
4. Concern that your prospects of finding another congressional position would be jeopardized	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3
5. Concern that you would not receive fair treatment in a dispute between you and your employer	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3
6. Concern that processing a complaint through formal channels would not be worth the time and energy	1	2	3	.....	1	2	3

Section IV: This section focuses on your background and your office.

1. **How many hours do you work in a typical week?**
 - A) less than 40
 - B) 40 to 49
 - C) 50 to 59
 - D) 60 to 69
 - E) 70 or more
2. **What is your primary office?**
 - A) Member's/Senator's personal office
 - B) Full Committee
 - C) Subcommittee
 - D) Other
3. **Where do you primarily work?**
 - A) Washington, DC office
 - B) District or State office
4. **Which house of Congress do you work for:**
 - A) House of Representatives
 - B) Senate
 - C) Both
5. **Is the Member you work for a:**
 - A) Democrat
 - B) Republican
6. **How many people do you directly or indirectly supervise?**
 - A) None
 - B) 1 to 3
 - C) 4 to 10
 - D) 11 to 22
 - E) 23 or more
7. **What is your salary?**
 - A) Less than \$20,000
 - B) \$20,000 - \$29,999
 - C) \$30,000 - \$39,999
 - D) \$40,000 - \$59,999
 - E) \$60,000 - \$79,999
 - F) \$80,000 or more
8. **Race/Ethnicity:**
 - A) Black / African American
 - B) American Indian
 - C) Asian or Pacific Islander
 - D) Hispanic
 - E) White
 - F) Other
9. **How long have you worked in your current position?**
 - A) 1 year or less
 - B) 1.1 - 3 years
 - C) 3.1 - 5 years
 - D) 5.1 - 10 years
 - E) 10.1 years or more
10. **How long have you worked in Congress?**
 - A) 1 year or less
 - B) 1.1 - 3 years
 - C) 3.1 - 5 years
 - D) 5.1 - 10 years
 - E) 10.1 years or more
11. **Gender:**
 - A) Female
 - B) Male
12. **How old are you?**
 - A) 24 or younger
 - B) 25 thru 29
 - C) 30 thru 39
 - D) 40 thru 49
 - E) 50 or older
13. **What is your marital status?**
 - A) Married
 - B) Unmarried partnership
 - C) Single, separated, divorced, or widowed
14. **Do any children currently live in your household? Check all applicable categories.**
 - A) Child(ren) 6 or younger
 - B) Child(ren) 7 thru 14
 - C) Child(ren) 15 thru 21
 - D) There are no children in my household
15. **What is your highest level of educational attainment?**
 - A) High School Diploma or less
 - B) Some College
 - C) Bachelor's degree
 - D) Master's degree
 - E) Law degree
 - F) Doctorate degree

16. Which job title best describes your position? Mark only one title.

Management Positions

- Administrative Assistant
- Chief of Staff
- Committee Staff Director
- Subcommittee Staff Director
- Deputy/Assistant Staff Director

Policy/Legislative Positions

- Legislative Director
- Legislative Assistant
- Counsel/General Counsel
- Professional Staff Member
- Research Assistant
- Special Advisor

Press/Communications Positions

- Press Secretary
- Communications Director
- Deputy Press Secretary

Administrative and Support Positions

- Office Manager
- Executive Assistant
- Personal Secretary
- Scheduler
- Systems Administrator
- Mail Manager
- Correspondence Director
- Legislative Correspondent
- Mail Room Assistant
- Computer/CMS Operator
- Office Assistant/Clerk
- Receptionist

State & District Positions

- State Director
- District Director
- Regional Director
- Field Representative
- Caseworker
- Projects Director
- State/District Office Assistant

If you have any comments that you believe would help the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress make useful recommendations on improving the effectiveness of Congress, please provide them below or attach an additional page.

This completes the survey. Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

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American Society of Association Executives (ASAE)

The Joyce Foundation

As an organization that works to improve the management practices and effectiveness of over 11,000 associations across America, ASAE readily understood the importance of a study that does likewise for Congress and made sure that we had the funding necessary to produce it.

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Richard Shapiro and Craig Schultz

ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization dedicated to helping Members of Congress and their staff better manage their workloads. CMF is an independent organization that works with both Democratic and Republican offices and takes no position on policy matters. CMF simply advocates good government through good management. The Foundation does this by tailoring private-sector management tools to the congressional environment in three ways: staff training, office consulting, and management publications.

Staff Training

CMF offers extensive professional development and training opportunities for staff. Seminars, classes, and workshops are held throughout the year, free of charge. Management topics specifically geared to congressional office needs include: strategic planning, motivating staff and reducing staff turnover, managing the mail, personnel management, conflict management, ethical decision-making in Congress, project planning, time and paperwork management, and office communications.

Office Consulting

Consultations are the most individualized service CMF provides. CMF conducts detailed studies of Members' offices, providing Members and staff with a comprehensive internal assessment that helps offices identify weaknesses and find ways of improving performance. CMF also provides offices with targeted assistance for specific management challenges such as: setting office goals, facilitating office retreats, improving office mail systems, establishing personnel systems, using productive time and paperwork management practices, and building effective teams.

Management Publications

CMF's publications provide valuable management information and advice for Members of Congress and their top staff. These publications include:

- Working in Congress: The Staff Perspective
- Setting Course: A Congressional Management Guide
- Frontline Management: A Guide for Congressional District/State Offices
- House and Senate Staff Salary and Employment Practices Reports
- A Congressional Intern Handbook

For Further Information:

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