The New Member Experience
What to Expect for You, Your Staff, and Your Family

Wednesday, December 16, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

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• Training, consulting, research to support a functioning Congress
• 1,000 staff from 300 offices

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• Unique studies, trainings, and resources for citizen advocates
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• New Member Resource Center
  ▪ Google: “CMF New Member Resource Center”
• New Member Training Series
  ▪ December 2020 – June 2021
• Legislative Assistant Training
  ▪ Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University
• District-Based Guidance
  ▪ *Keeping It Local*
  ▪ Templates/Manuals
• Website Guidance
  ▪ Gold Mouse Awards for Best Website
Coronavirus Resource Center for Congress

- Managing Congressional Staff Remotely
- WFH Guides
- Best Practices for Online and Tele-Town Halls
- Managing Stress in Constituents and Staff
Life in Congress: The Member Perspective

A Joint Research Report by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Society for Human Resource Management

JOBD DESCRIPTION
FOR A MEMBER
OF CONGRESS

Written by
KATHY GOLDSCHMIDT, AUTHOR
and
BRADLEY JOSEPH SINKAUS, CO-AUTHOR
“There’s so much to learn and so many people giving you advice, it’s similar to inserting a garden hose in your mouth and turning on the spigot. These days, it’s more like standing under Niagara Falls.”

- Freshman Member of Congress
Agenda

• Part 1: Members and Spouse
• Part 2: Chiefs of Staff
• Part 3: CMF Research on What to Expect
Part 1 – Members of Congress & Spouse
Part 2: Chiefs of Staff
What to Expect – Year 1
Timeline for Year 1 for Freshman

- November to January: Learn how to be a Member of Congress
- January 3, 12:00 pm: Swear in
- January 3, 12:01 pm: Get keys to office
- January 3, 12:02 pm: Meet ALL constituents’ expectations
- January 3, 2:00 pm: Skeleton staff shows you thousands of letters waiting for your review
- January 4, 1:00 am: Finish your first day of work
Timeline for Year 1 for Freshman

• Late January: Get committee assignments
• March: Complete set up of district & state offices
• March: Finalize staff hires
• March: Set up constituent correspondence system
• April: Launch new website
• May: Begin asking the question: “What was I thinking?”
• June 30: Filing deadline for FEC report
• July: Senators – move into permanent office
How many of your current staff has previous experience working for a Member of Congress?
Staff Previous Hill Experience

- Less than 2: 10%
- 3-5: 46%
- 6-9: 38%
- 10 or more: 6%
Congressional Staff Survey Question

When was your office fully staffed?
On or before January 31, 2019: 33%
February 1-28, 2019: 13%
March 1-31, 2019: 21%
After the first quarter of 2019/still in progress: 33%
Congressional Staff Survey Question

Below is a list of various tasks associated with setting up a freshman congressional office. Please rate how difficult each task was.
Establishing a process for making policy-related decisions
Drafting constituent correspondence for staff and the Member’s review
Creating constituent correspondence workflow procedures
Hiring staff
Establishing scheduling procedures

Very Difficult/Difficult:
- Establishing a process for making policy-related decisions: 13%
- Hiring staff: 34%
- Creating constituent correspondence workflow procedures: 34%
- Drafting constituent correspondence for staff and the Member’s review: 24%
- Establishing scheduling procedures: 43%
Average Hours Per Week Worked by Members

- Chamber in session: 70 hours
- Chamber out of session: 59 hours
Sample House Member Schedule—March 6

8:00 AM-9:00 AM  EVENT – Committee Chair Fundraiser – Party HQ

9:00 AM–9:30 AM  SPEECH - National Women, Infants, and Children’s Association

10:00 AM–12:00 PM  HEARING - Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Hearing

10:30 AM–12:00 PM  BREIFING - Bipartisan Classified National Security Briefing

12:00 PM–1:00 PM  MEETING - Caucus/Conference Meeting with Democratic/Republican Colleagues

12:45 PM–1:15 PM  MEETING - Edie Smith, Local County WIC (Women, Infant, Children) Program Manager

1:15 PM–1:45 PM  MEETING - Representatives from The American Public Affairs Committee (APAC)

1:30 PM–2:00 PM  MEETING - Kevin Jones, Local County Supervisor

2:00 PM–2:30 PM  MEETING - Bob Ellis, Solutions for Progress Nonprofit
Before your constituent correspondence system was operational, which of these best characterizes how you managed constituent correspondence?
We sent generic responses thanking constituents for sharing their views.

We waited, then responded once we could communicate our position.

We did not respond to messages sent before our mail system was working.
If you hold your mail, you could have 50,000 unanswered emails by July 4, 2021!
Congressional Staff Survey

Compared to the months prior to the COVID-19 crisis, has your Senator/Representative done more of, less of, or about the same number of the following activities in the past two months?
Online/video town hall meetings: 44%

Telephone town hall meetings: 47%

Significantly Less 0% 1%

Significantly More 44% 47%
Video conferences with constituents: 65%

Telephone conference calls with constituents: 57%

Facility/site visits in the district/state: 75%

In-person meetings with constituents: 88%

- **Significantly Less**
- **Significantly More**
Members Survey
### Member Time Spent on Major Activities

#### Congressional District vs. Washington, D.C.

- **Legislation/Policy**
  - Congressional District: 12%
  - Washington, D.C.: 35%

- **Constituent Services**
  - Congressional District: 17%
  - Washington, D.C.: 32%

- **Political/Campaign**
  - Congressional District: 18%
  - Washington, D.C.: 17%

- **Press/Media**
  - Congressional District: 9%
  - Washington, D.C.: 14%

- **Family/Friends**
  - Congressional District: 9%
  - Washington, D.C.: 9%

- **Administration/Management**
  - Congressional District: 7%
  - Washington, D.C.: 7%

- **Personal Activities**
  - Congressional District: 8%
  - Washington, D.C.: 6%
CMF New Member Training Series

• January 15 – “Setting up a Congressional Office for Success”
• January 29 – “Hiring an Effective and Diverse Staff”
• February 5 – “Setting up a Congressional Scheduling Operation”
• February 22 – “Setting Up Constituent Communications and Engagement Systems”
• March – “Creating and Implementing a Legislative Agenda”
• April – “Managing Freshmen Headaches”
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