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Who's Who in a Congressional Member's Office

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

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

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

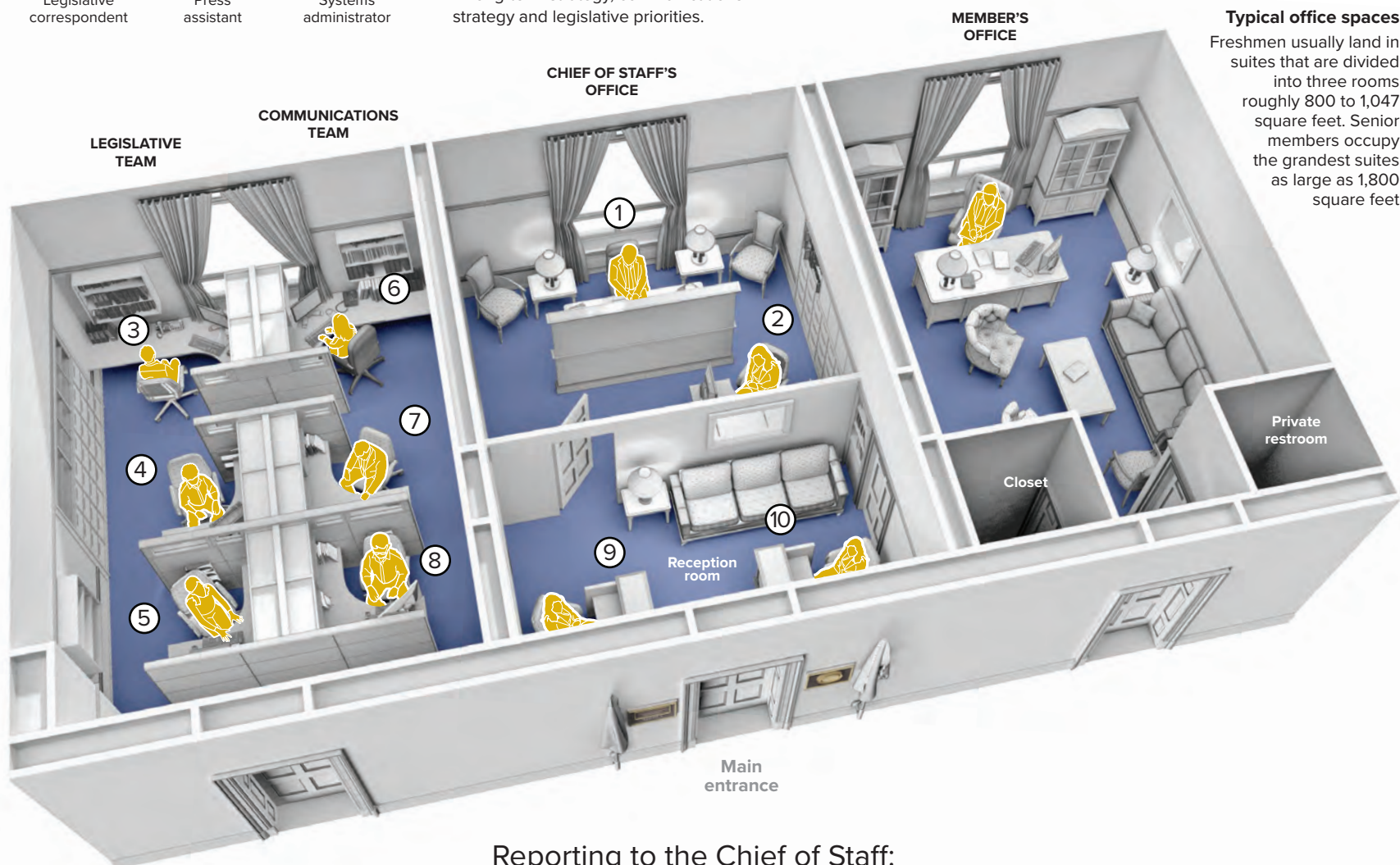


① Chief of staff

The "Number One" in any office. The chief is responsible for how the office functions — they establish office policies and procedures. The chief oversees staffing decisions, manages employees and handles day-to-day responsibilities, including budget and press. The chief, who advises the member on political matters, plays an important role in long-term strategy, communications strategy and legislative priorities.

② Scheduler

Also called scheduling director, the executive assistant is the axis of every congressional office. He or she is responsible for scheduling the member's engagements and works directly with the chief. The director allows time for the communications and legislative teams to meet with the member, organizes and books travel plans, knows the fundraising scheduler and assists with the office's finances. They review invitations to speak at or attend certain events and help plan the member's travel back home.



Typical office spaces
 Freshmen usually land in suites that are divided into three rooms, roughly 800 to 1,047 square feet. Senior members occupy the grandest suites, as large as 1,800 square feet.

Reporting to the Chief of Staff:



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

③ Legislative director

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

THE POLICY TEAM MAY ALSO INCLUDE:

④ Legislative assistant

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

⑤ Legislative correspondent

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



COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

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

⑥ Communications director

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

THE COMMS TEAM MAY ALSO INCLUDE:

⑦ Press secretary

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

⑧ Press assistant

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



OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

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

⑨ Office manager

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

OTHER POSITIONS:

⑩ Staff assistants

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

⑪ Systems administrator (not shown above)

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

Note: Organization charts vary by Congress member.

Sources: Congressional Management Foundation's 2017 report "Citizen-Centric Advocacy: The Untapped Power of Constituent Engagement;" ThoughtCo; ACLU; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and NPR