

Structure of Congressional Offices

Senators and Members of the House maintain both Washington, D.C. and local offices. Because they represent the entire state, Senators will have more local offices than Members. Typically, staff to Senators and Members fall into four broad categories:

- *Policy staff to the Senator/Member:* Led by a *Legislative Director*, a staff of *Legislative Assistants* (“LA”s) and more junior *Legislative Correspondents* (“LC”s) (titles may vary slightly from office to office) cover substantive policy areas for the Senator/Member in the DC office. Note: With few exceptions, each of these individuals covers a vast range of issues (e.g., one staffer may cover education, housing, and defense issues), which means that, of necessity, their memory is short and their knowledge base tends to remain a mile wide and an inch deep.
- *Policy staff to the Committees/Subcommittees of which the Senator/Member is Chair or in Ranking position:* Every committee and subcommittee (e.g., Housing & Transportation Subcommittee of the full Senate Banking Committee) has dedicated professional staff who are assigned to the current Chair and Ranking Member of the minority on the Subcommittee/Committee. Unsurprisingly, the majority—or Chair’s—staff is larger than the minority – or Ranking Member’s—staff. These specialized staffers tend to have a deeper knowledge base than corresponding policy staff within a Member’s own office, though they still must cover lots of ground. The relationship between relevant subcommittee/committee staff and a Member’s own policy and personal staff cannot be generalized, as it will vary depending upon the Member and subcommittees/committees involved.
- *DC-based personal staff to Senator/Member:* Led by the *Chief of Staff*, a portion of any representative’s DC staff attends to scheduling, constituent relations, media relations, and other issues. Again, the division between personal and policy staff in DC can be fluid depending on the office (which, in practice, means that the personal staff may represent another avenue to move a target on a policy issue), but as a rule, personal staff tend to be more parochial in their focus.

Locally-based personal staff to Senator/Member: Every representative has staff based in state/District offices. These staff, led by a *State/District Office Director* tend to be focused almost exclusively on constituent issues. The precise formal relationship between local offices and the DC office is often murky; however, the critical point for grassroots/tops mobilizing is: *Because all politics are local, any policy issue that a constituent raises to a local staffer (no matter how junior) will be taken seriously by the DC-office!!*