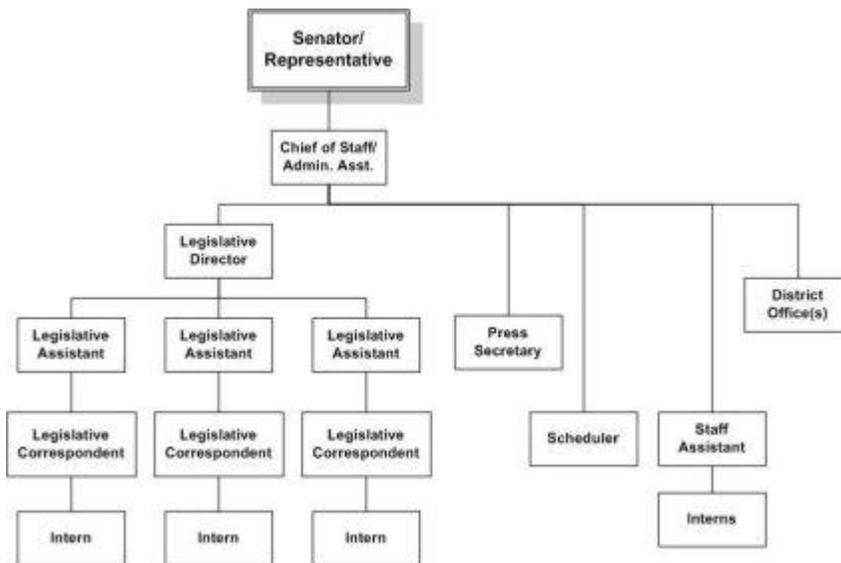


# Congressional offices and staff

Members of Congress rely heavily on staff to handle a lot of legislative and constituent correspondence issues. Congress did not allow for the large staffs that exist now until the 1970s. Previously Members relied on a very few selected staff members unless they hailed from a state or district with more than 500,000 residents. Prior to the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 staff rarely topped one or two advisers.

## Congressional staff



Members of the House of Representatives may hire up to 18 permanent employees for their congressional and district offices. In the Member office, located in one of three Congressional Office Buildings, there is a distinct hierarchy in the office. The diagram to the right lists the titles of each position and the authority of each position.

Senators do not have a limit on the amount staff they can hire. As the diagram shows a Senator's office, housed in one of three Senate Office Buildings, operates in the same manner as an office in the House of Representatives.

The following is a description of key staff positions in the Member office:

- **Chief of Staff/Administrative Assistant:** The Administrative Assistant reports directly to the member of Congress. He/she usually has overall responsibility for evaluating the political outcome of various legislative proposals and constituent requests. The Admin. Asst. is usually the person in charge of overall office operations, including the assignment of work and the supervision of key staff.[\[1\]](#)
- **Legislative Director:** The Legislative Director (LD) is usually the staff person who oversees the legislative agenda for the office and makes recommendations regarding the

pros and cons of particular issues. The Legislative Director usually handles the one or two major issues for a particular member, or often handles the key committee assignment for a member. The Legislative Director manages the Legislative Assistants and Legislative Correspondents.[\[2\]](#)

- **Legislative Assistant:** The Legislative Assistant(LA) specializes in a specific legislative field or fields and crafts and monitors legislation; devises strategy to pass specific legislation; and (in a Senate office) oversees the legislative correspondent working in the same legislative field.
- **Legislative Correspondent:** The Legislative Correspondent(LC)in a Senate office works in a number of specific legislative fields providing research for a Legislative Assistant while primarily writing letters to constituents concerned about issues in the specific legislative fields the LCO specializes in. In a House office, the Legislative Correspondent writes letters exclusively.
- **Press Secretary:** The Press Secretary fields call from the media, writes press releases, and acts as the spokesperson for the Member.
- **Staff Assistant:** The Staff Assistant answers phones and e-mail in the Member office, greets visitors, sorting mail, and provides tours of the Capitol.

## **History of Congressional Staff**

### **House of Representatives**

Prior to 1893 Members of the House of Representatives were forbidden from using public funds to pay personal staff. Those Members who had the ability to hire personal staff could do so with their own funds. In 1893 Members were allotted one clerk per Member to handle administrative duties, freeing the Member to focus on legislative and representational duties. The clerk was employed through the duration of the session of Congress and was paid \$6 a day.

The completion of the House Office Buildings in the earlier 20th century allowed Members to have access to their own personal offices for the first time and thus led to more demands for staff. Authorizations for further staff increased in 1940 to allow for 3 staffers and further increased in 1946 to 6 staffers. The demand for more staff and office space was spurred by the growth in power and size of the executive branch. Members realized that they could not keep up oversight and legislation of the executive branch bureaucracies unless they were able to grow the legislative branch as well. Staffers were paid, commensurate with their position, the same level of pay as an executive branch official.

After the 1946 increase the number of staff allowed to be hired was increased in the annual legislative authorizations Congress passed. By 1966 the number of staff had doubled to 12 staffers per office. In 1975 the current levels were set at 18 and in 1979 each office was allowed to hire 4 additional temporary, part-time, or shared staff.[\[3\]](#)

## Senate

The first authorization for staff for Senators came in 1884 when legislation allowed Senators to employ staff but did not state how many could be employed. The Legislative Appropriations Act of 1891 cleared up this issue by stating that Senators who were not chairs of committees would be provided one staffer, who would be employed for the legislative session. In 1893 the employment of staffers changed from being solely restricted to the legislative session to being annual employees. In 1910 Senators were allowed two staffers and in 1914 they were allotted yet another staffer, raising the number of staff to three.

The number staff eventually grew to 8 by 1947. In 1948 the Senate decided to change the way that staff were allotted by removing the restriction on the number of staff and creating an allowance for each Senator to spend as they saw fit on staff. In 1951 this allowance was set to reflect the size of the Senator's state, thus allowing Senators hailing from large states able to employ more staff.[\[4\]](#)

## Office & Staff Allowances

### House of Representatives

Each Member of the House of Representatives is provided with three allowances to spend on official duties, office, staff, and mail. These allowances are: personnel, official office expenses, and official mail (franked mail). In 2003 the total amount of allowance provided to Members of the House ranged from \$701,136 to \$1,636,750. Members do not have to use all of the money allotted to them in their allowances.[\[1\]](#)

- Personnel: Each Member is allotted \$748,312 to hire up to 18 staff and four additional temporary, part-time, or shared staff. Staff can not be paid more than \$151,974 per year.
- Official office expenses: Each Member begins with a base allowance of \$187,236 to spend on office expenses. Office expenses may include travel costs, office equipment, district office rental, stationary and office supplies, telecommunications, printing, postage, computer services, and other office-related expenses. The price for travel cost is judged by a formula (explained in this document). The minimum mileage amount for a Member is \$6,200.
- Official (franked) mail: Each Member is allowed a certain allowance for franked mail that is based on a formula. That formula sets the allowance at three times the rate of a single piece of first class mail multiplied by the total number of non-business addresses in the Member's district. The allowance is then set at 45% of the calculated number.

## Senate

Like Members of the House Senators have three allowances to draw from for office and official spending. These allowances are: administrative and clerical assistance, legislative assistance, and official office expenses. In 2003 the total amount of all three allowances provided to Senators ranged from \$2,264,345 to \$3,751,995.<sup>121</sup>

- Administrative and clerical: This allowance is allocated based on the size of the Senator's state. The amount varies from \$1,685,301 for a state with a population less than 5 million to \$2,833,718 for a state with a population topping 28 million.
- Legislative assistance: Each Senator is allotted \$450,477 to hire three Legislative Assistants to be paid no more than \$150,159.
- Official office expenses: The official office expense allowance is determined by a number of variables including the distance of the Senator's state from Washington, DC, the population of the Senator's state, and the official mail allocation. Office expenses include official mail, interns, district offices, furniture, furnishings, and office equipment.