

PAYING A VISIT TO CAPITOL HILL

While some of the following comments may seem fairly obvious, it is worthwhile to keep them in mind to ensure that visits to Congressional offices go smoothly.

Be On Time

A corollary to arriving on time is to be patient if interruptions occur during the meeting.

Don't Be Surprised by a Substitute

Hill staff may substitute for one another at the last minute. No harm usually results, because the name of the visitor and the substance of what this individual has to say will be conveyed to the elected official.

Be Prepared to Discuss the Allied Health Reinvestment Act

Rather than trying to remember too much information, concentrate on a few key points such as the acronym *WAFER*:

- **W**orkforce shortages are chronic in certain professions such as medical technology.
- **A**ging of the population will increase the demand for health care services.
- **F**aculty shortages are an impediment to increasing student enrollment.
- **E**nrollment declines in school weaken the allied health workforce supply line
- **R**educed quality of care will result from having an insufficient number of practitioners.

Hill visitors also should attempt to weave their own narratives, using the few key words appearing in bold print above to describe how their respective institutions and geographical locales are affected by allied health workforce problems.

Remember the Political Aspect of Your Visit

A Hill visitor should point out such things as which college/university/professional organization that he or she represents.

Follow-Up Activities

Leave a business card and printed material that emphasizes the points made during the meeting. Upon returning home, send a thank-you note by e-mail, re-emphasizing what action you would like taken such as BE A CO-SPONSOR OF S. 605. Representatives may be contacted by e-mail at <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>. Senators may be reached at <http://www.senate.gov/>. At a time of heightened security on Capitol Hill, e-mail is the most efficient way to communicate. If you meet with a staff person, be sure to ask for a copy of that individual's business card.

CAPITOL HILL STAFF

Many individuals who work in the office of a Senator or a Representative tend to be straight out of college with a degree in government or political science. They may be employed in that setting for only two or three years before leaving for a job in an association or returning to school to further their education. Turnover rates are high.

Individuals who work directly as professional staff for committees such as the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee tend to be older, more seasoned, and often hold graduate and professional degrees in areas such as law and medicine. Some individuals are there for one year or less as Congressional Fellows on leave from an agency in the executive branch. Depending on the issue, appointments can be made with members of one or both kinds of staff. Commonly used titles are:

Administrative Assistant (AA) or Chief of Staff:

This individual reports directly to the elected official, has overall responsibility for evaluating legislative proposals, and is in charge of office operations, including how work is distributed among other staff members.

Legislative Director, Senior Legislative Assistant, or Legislative Coordinator

The Legislative Director usually monitors the legislative schedule and recommends pros and cons of various issues. A Legislative Assistant may be assigned to topics such as health and veterans affairs.

Press Secretary or Communications Director

This individual promotes the elected official's views to the public.

Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler

This individual apportions the elected official's schedule and may assist in making travel arrangements.

Caseworker

Several of these individuals usually are employed both in the Washington office and back in the home office to deal with constituent matters such as problems involving Federal agencies.

Typically, lobbyists and constituents visit with Legislative Assistants (LAs). Although an LA may have responsibility for health topics, it is not unusual for this individual to focus on other topics as well. Listed below is an example of the portfolio for one individual in a Congressional office on the House side of the Hill. This person also serves as the AA with responsibility for managing the office and supervising other staff.

- ABORTION
- AGRICULTURE
- BANKING
- BUDGET
- COMMERCE
- GOVERNMENT REFORM/ETHICS
- HEALTH
- IMMIGRATION
- INSURANCE
- JUDICIARY
- NATIVE AMERICANS
- SECURITIES
- SMALL BUSINESS
- SOCIAL SECURITY
- TAXES
- TELECOMMUNICATIONS
- TRANSPORTATION

Perhaps as many as 150 different kinds of programs come under the category of Health. One of these areas is the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in the U.S. Public Health Service, which has responsibility for a wide range of programs, involving: maternal and child health, primary health care, rural health, and HIV/AIDS. Another area consists of the more than 40 health professions education programs under Titles VII and VIII of the Public Health Service Act, including the *Section 755 Allied Health & Other Programs* that is part of several clusters that were developed when these programs were consolidated as a result of the enactment of the Health Professions Education Partnerships Act of 1998, P.L. 105-392, the legislation that reauthorized these programs for four years.

The sheer magnitude and scope of these programs renders it almost impossible for any single person to comprehend the intricacies of each entity. Allied health professionals have experience and knowledge that legislative aides lack. Thus, advocates of an *Allied Health Reinvestment Act* who meet with legislative aides should feel confident about their personal abilities to engage in a constructive discussion and hold their own while doing so.

THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

The House and Senate are equal from the standpoint of legislative powers. The main exceptions are that the House initiates tax and appropriations legislation while the Senate confirms appointments by the President.

Legislation may be introduced in either chamber. The main forms are:

- Bill
- Joint Resolution
- Concurrent Resolution
- Simple Resolution

Numbering and Referral

The official process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered. **H.R.** signifies a House bill and **S.** a Senate bill. Following introduction of a bill, it is referred to the relevant committee(s) either by the Speaker of the House or by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. The legislator introducing the bill subsequently will seek as many co-sponsors as possible. A companion bill often is introduced in the other chamber.

Committee Action

When a bill goes to a committee, it is placed on the committee's calendar. It may be considered by the committee as a whole or referred to a subcommittee. If not acted upon at these levels, the measure essentially is terminated.

Hearings

Subcommittees study the bill and often conduct public hearings to obtain the views of: executive branch officials, experts, supporters and opponents of the proposed legislation.

Mark Up

Upon conclusion of the hearings, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, i.e., make changes and amendments prior to sending it back to the full committee. If a vote is taken to refrain from reporting the bill to the full committee, the measure is terminated.

Full Committee Action

The full committee reviews the subcommittee's report and decides whether to conduct further study and hearings or vote on the subcommittee's recommendations and proposed amendments. It then votes on its recommendations to the House or Senate, a procedure known as "ordering a bill reported."

Preparing a Written Report

After the committee votes to have a bill reported, the chairperson instructs staff to prepare a written report, describing the intent and scope of the legislation, its impact on existing laws and programs, the position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members of the committee.

Scheduling Floor Action

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. The House has several calendars. The House Speaker and Majority Leader decide if and when and in what order bills will be considered. The Senate has only one calendar and the Senate Majority Leader schedules legislation.

Debate

The House Rules Committee establishes procedures for conducting a debate such as how long it will last and the number of amendments that will be considered. Senate debate is open-ended, producing the possibility that a filibuster might occur. The number of amendments is unrestricted.

Taking a Vote

After debating and considering amendments, a vote is taken. Oftentimes, the bill emerges in different forms from the two chambers.

Conference Committee Action

Conferees from the two chambers meet to reconcile differences in the two versions of the bill. If unable to do so, the legislation is terminated. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared that describes recommendations for changes and it is sent to both chambers for approval.

Referral to the President

Once approved by both chambers, the bill is sent to the President. It becomes law when he signs it. If the President does not do so during a 10-day period when Congress is in session, it automatically becomes law. If the President takes no action after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it amounts to a “pocket veto” and the legislation is terminated. The President also can terminate the bill by vetoing it directly. Congress needs a two-thirds vote in each chamber to override a veto.

In a typical session of Congress, it is not unusual for thousands of bills to be introduced, but fewer than 200 may be enacted into law.

GLOSSARY

Act--The term for legislation that has passed both chambers and has been signed by the President.

Amendment--A proposal by a member of Congress to change the language, provisions, or stipulations in a bill. It usually is printed, debated, and voted upon in the same manner as the bill.

Appropriations Bill--When it becomes an Act, it permits Federal agencies to incur obligations and make payments from the Treasury for specified purposes. It usually follows the enactment of authorizing legislation. Legislation appropriating funds after the regular appropriations bill is enacted is known as a supplemental appropriations bill, which provides budget authority beyond original estimates.

Authorization--Substantive legislation, which establishes or continues a Federal program or agency. It may limit the amount of budget authority to be provided or may authorize "such sums as may be necessary."

Budget Authority--Authority to enter into obligations that result in immediate or future outlays of Federal funds.

Budget Resolution--A concurrent resolution passed by both chambers, but not requiring the President's signature. It sets forth budget totals and functional allocations and may include reconciliation instructions.

Concurrent Resolution--Designated by *H Con Res* or *S Con Res*, it must be adopted by both chambers, but is not sent to the President for a signature.

Continuing Resolution--A joint resolution enacted by Congress (when the new fiscal year is about to begin or has begun) to provide new budget authority for agencies and programs to continue in operation until regular appropriations legislation is enacted.

Filibuster--A time-delaying tactic used by a minority in the Senate to prevent a vote on a bill or an amendment.

Fiscal Year--The Federal fiscal year begins on October 1.

Germane--Pertaining to the subject matter of the measure at hand. All House amendments must be germane to the bill being considered. The Senate requires that amendments be germane when they are proposed to general appropriations bills and in other situations.

Joint Resolution--Designated *H J Res* or *S J Res*, it requires the approval of both chambers and the signature of the President. It is similar to a bill and usually is used to deal with a single limited matter such as a single appropriation.

Mark Up--Going through the contents of a bill in committee or subcommittee, acting on amendments and proposed revisions, or inserting new phraseology and sections.

Omnibus Bill--A piece of legislation, often created by the consolidation of several appropriations bills that were not enacted by the start of a new fiscal year.

Reconciliation--A process established by the Budget Act by which Congress conforms tax and spending legislation to the levels set in the budget resolution.

Rider--An amendment, usually not germane, that its sponsor hopes to get through more easily by including it in other legislation. It becomes law if the bill embodying it is enacted.

Simple Resolution--Designated *H Res* or *S Res*, it deals with matters entirely within the prerogatives of one chamber or the other. It does not require passage by the other chamber nor does it require the signature of the President. Most resolutions deal with the rules or procedures of one chamber in addition to other matters such as expressing condolences to the family of a deceased member.