

CRS Report for Congress

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Casework in a Congressional Office

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Summary

This report and its appendices present a general overview of congressional office procedures associated with handling casework and the assistance provided by a Member of Congress to help constituents in their dealings with federal agencies. It discusses options for assisting Members' constituents and the role of Members and staff in providing casework services.

Casework consists of assistance provided by Members of Congress and their staffs at the request, and on behalf of, constituents in their dealings with federal agencies. Most federally assisted casework involves problems with social security checks, benefits, and appeals; workmen's compensation claims, hearings, and appeals; military service problems, such as a hardship discharge from the service; veterans' benefits, medical care, and home loan guarantees; immigration problems; and other appeals for help.

A Member of Congress usually allocates casework responsibilities to one or more staff members who review and respond to needs, complaints, or personal problems posed by constituents. The caseworker represents the Member, both to the constituents and to the agencies. Identifying the total problem is the first step for the caseworker. Upon receipt of the inquiry, most caseworkers feel it is advisable to send an acknowledgement by letter to the constituent immediately to advise him or her that the Member is aware of the request and is inquiring into the matter, and that the constituent will be contacted again when some response is forthcoming.

Every caseworker has to develop his or her own method of analyzing the nature of the constituent's problem and how to generate the most expeditious and just resolution. Adhering to ethical and legal standards is of concern to Members of Congress and their personal and committee staff when intervening in the administrative process. Once an agency has been contacted on behalf of the constituent, the case should be tracked until completion. Responding to constituents' needs, complaints, or problems gives a Member an opportunity to determine whether the programs of the executive agencies are functioning in accordance with legislative mandates and may indicate the need for new legislation.

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Casework in a Congressional Office

Introduction

Casework consists of assistance provided by Members of Congress and their staffs at the request, and on behalf of, constituents in their dealings with federal agencies. Casework involves individuals (and on occasion a group with a common concern), and typically includes a problem, grievance, question of eligibility, need, or other tangible interest or benefit to these individuals. Whether it is a delayed social security check, a denied veteran's claim, or medicare reimbursement, the constituent's problem usually has to do with a federal program, rule, regulation, or administrative decision resulting from the implementation of a public law. Or the constituent may have another need connected with government, national or foreign, on which a Member may be of assistance.

A basis for casework can be found in the first sentence of the Constitution: "We the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect Union ... establish justice ... promote the general welfare"

There is no doubt that the casework function in a congressional office promotes an individual's general welfare and often may correct an injustice. There is also no doubt that the framers of the Constitution could not have envisioned a bureaucracy such as we have, the scores of agencies, and the thousands of regulations that affect our citizens. Occasionally, an important benefit check is delayed, or a veteran needs hospital care right away—these are some of the many problems addressed to a caseworker. The representative functions of Members of Congress in this area, while not so defined, are arguably implicit in the Constitution. Additionally, the first Article of the Bill of Rights provides that "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the ... right of the people ... to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Casework, or "constituent business" as it was sometimes called, was an early function for Members of Congress, as noted in the diaries of John Quincy Adams and James K. Polk. According to Leonard White's *The Jacksonians*, Polk wrote of cases in which he provided assistance in claims for pensions, land claims, writing letters for appointments to West Point, and a search for a letter in a dead-letter office.¹ Legislators did not have any staff to assist them; that was to come later. Until well into this century, Members had to depend solely upon requests to the executive agencies for information.

¹ White, Leonard. *The Jacksonians*. New York, MacMillan, 1954. P. 144. See also James K. Polk and His Constituents, 1831-1832. *American Historical Review*, v. 28, 1922-23. P. 68-77.

By the 1940s, it had become clear that attending to constituents' needs was consuming large blocks of Members' time. In a report by the American Political Science Association's Committee on Congress, published in 1945, this fact was acknowledged and relief was recommended.² That same year, hearings on the organization of Congress were held by a joint committee at which a number of Members and observers testified about this problem. Several witnesses advocated the appointment of an administrative assistant who would assist Senators and Representatives "in their office and departmental work." Members reported spending from 50-80 percent of their time occupied with nonlegislative matters, including the handling of constituent requests before departments. Some urged deliverance from the growing burden of services to constituents. A few argued that Members should be forbidden altogether from intervening on behalf of constituents.³

In its 1946 report, the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress noted that "expansion of governmental activities during the past 25 years [had] vastly increased the volume of ... requests for service" from constituents.⁴ It further stated that "while it is true that the Constitution does not place this burden directly upon Congress, nevertheless service to constituents has long been an accepted part of the job of a Member of Congress."⁵ This contact affords, said the Committee, one of the few remaining direct links between the citizen and his/her elected representative. Furthermore, it continued, no other agency or office of government can perform this service "so cheaply or with such patience, understanding, and personal interest as congressional offices." Despite suggested alternative ways of rendering this service, therefore, the committee concluded that "it is neither possible or advisable" to do so.⁶

Because in the past the Congress had increased clerical assistance to Members, the committee recommended that there be appointed "a competent assistant capable of assuming a large part of the service burden" so as to release Members for the performance of their legislative duties.

When the Senate subsequently enacted the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, it included a provision to this effect. However, the House acted last; and its version, which was accepted by the Senate due to the lateness of the session, did not contain this provision. Nevertheless, it was successfully argued by Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr., co-chairman of the Joint Committee that drafted the Legislative Reorganization Act, that these assistants should be appropriated for because the Senate had approved them. Within a short period of time, 91 of the 96 Senators

² American Political Science Association. Committee on Congress. The Reorganization of Congress. Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1945. P. 78-81.

³ U.S. Congress. Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. Organization of Congress. Hearings, 79th Cong., 1st Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1945.

⁴ U.S. Congress. Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. Organization of Congress. H.Rept. No. 1675, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1946. P. 15.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

appointed such assistants. Subsequently, administrative assistants were also authorized for the staffs of House Members.

These actions were tantamount to statutory authority for caseworkers in Senatorial offices. Since 1946, of course, their number has grown commensurate with the magnitude of constituent requests for assistance in dealing with the many departments, agencies, and offices of the federal government. It is of both historical and current importance that casework has been perceived as a legitimate, necessary, and irreplaceable function of Members and their staffs and that the Congress explicitly recognized this over four decades ago.

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 provided some increase in the resources for constituent services in its reorganization of the Congressional Research Service. Section 203(a)(5) of Public Law 91-510 authorizes CRS, "upon request, or upon its own initiative in anticipation of requests, to prepare and provide information, research, and reference materials and services to committees and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives and joint committees of Congress to assist them in their legislative and representative functions" The majority of CRS assistance is related to legislation or oversight; CRS assists in casework only by providing readily available materials to Members in responding to constituent inquiries.

CRS Services for Caseworkers

VIDEO AND AUDIO CASSETTES: The Congressional Research Service (CRS) has available for Washington and field offices a one-hour VHS video entitled: *Congressional Casework Approaches and Considerations*. Areas covered include: general principles of casework; dealing with constituents; communicating with federal agencies; and how casework for congressional constituents can be organized and conducted. Limited copies of this program are available for one-week loan to congressional offices by requesting Video Program VT92-1344. The audio portion of this program is also available as Audio Brief AB-50254. CRS also has a video, *Managing Projects and Grant Work* (VT 94-1346) and Audio Brief (AB 50304). To obtain any of these products, call the CRS Products Line at 202-707-7132.

SEMINARS: CRS presents a seminar on casework as part of its three day District/State Staff Institute held periodically in Washington, D.C.. Congressional district office staff interested in attending should call the Office of Special Programs at 202-707-7904.

OFFICES OF CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON: For a listing of more than 130 congressional liaison offices of federal agencies, request *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Agencies*, by Patricia D. Clark, CRS Report 95-413 PGM, April 3, 1996, 38 p. This report is intended to help congressional offices in placing telephone calls and addressing correspondence to government agencies, and is for congressional office use only.

Performing Casework

Assigning Casework Responsibilities

A Member of Congress usually allocates casework responsibilities to one or more staff members who review and respond to needs, complaints, or personal problems posed by constituents. The personal communication aspect is very

important. The caseworker should be personable, helpful, and ready to assist an individual with his or her problem. A caseworker should also be compassionate, realizing that those in need may be desperate when they contact Members. Finally, the caseworker must be well organized and know how to follow through. The caseworker represents the Member, both to the constituents and to the agencies.

Casework is rarely an isolated operation in a congressional office. It can involve the administrative assistant, legislative assistants, grants and projects staff, the office manager, and the press secretary, as well as the staff in the field offices. Caseworkers contribute to the other functions of the office, such as alerting the press secretary of a noteworthy case or identifying for the legislative staff a law that may need changing.

Responding to constituents' needs, complaints, or problems gives a Member an opportunity to determine whether the programs of the executive agencies are functioning in accordance with legislative mandates. Thus, casework has the potential to contribute to legislative oversight of agencies. Indeed, some offices make it a practice to bring casework observations to the attention of the pertinent authorizing committee(s), particularly if a pattern emerges.

In some offices, casework responsibility is divided between the field and Washington offices. If this approach is used, the field offices usually address requests involving community affairs, problems with local social service agencies, district/state matters, and respond to local groups or organizations that need assistance; the Washington offices address problems with federal agencies based in the nation's capital. In other offices, casework may be done entirely in the Washington office or increasingly in the field offices. Ninety-five percent of all House caseworkers work in field offices.

Most federally assisted casework involves problems regarding social security checks, benefits, and appeals; workmen's compensation claims, hearings, and appeals; military service problems, such as a hardship discharge from the service; veterans' benefits, medical care, and home loan guarantees; immigration problems; and other appeals for help. Casework is closely related to, but different from, grants and project work, which usually concerns local governmental units or other organizations (e.g., corporations, universities, and research firms) that compete for federal government funds in the form of contracts, grants, loans or other disbursements. Some congressional offices, however, combine these functions and call them "constituent services."⁷

⁷ For further information from CRS on grants and projects, congressional staff should call 202-707-7132 and request Grants Work in a Congressional Office, by Rhoda Newman, CRS Report 89-658 C, Dec. 5, 1989, 13 p.; Grants and Foundations Support, by Rhoda Newman and James O. Nelson, CRS Report 95-1036 C, Oct. 6, 1995, 13 p.; Grant Proposal Development by Rhoda Newman, CRS Report 90-430 C, Aug. 30, 1990, 11 p.; and Fund Raising Techniques for Groups: Selected References, 1988-1993, by Robert S. Kirk, CRS Report 93-825 L, Sept. 18, 1993, 4 p. CRS also has a one-hour video entitled: Managing Projects and Grant Work, VT94-1346 and an audiobrief Managing Projects and Grant Work, AB5034. For further information on the functions of a congressional office, request Congressional Member Office Operations, by Frederick Pauls and John Pontius, CRS Report

(continued...)

Analyzing the Constituent's Problem

Frequently, when constituents seek assistance, they are coming to a Representative's or Senator's office as a last resort because they do not know where else to go for help. They often feel caught in a bureaucratic labyrinth.

Identifying the total problem is the first step for the caseworker. Sometimes individuals do not provide the entire story. Occasionally people have difficulty communicating or may omit or forget crucial information. When caseworkers read a letter, see a referral from the field office, or receive a phone call from a constituent, they should make certain that they have all relevant information needed to proceed. For example, a social security number and the age of the recipient, or time and length of military service may not only be useful, but necessary in processing a claim.⁸

Upon receipt of the inquiry, most caseworkers feel it is advisable to send an acknowledgement by letter to the constituent immediately to advise him or her that the Member is aware of the request and is inquiring into the matter, and that the constituent will be contacted again when some response is forthcoming. This method establishes a basic office file in the name of the constituent, and is also a means of requesting any additional information from the constituent, if needed.

Casework should be conducted with sensitivity to the constituent's personal privacy rights. Although neither the Freedom of Information Act nor the Privacy Act apply to Congress, they may be used by caseworkers to seek federal department and agency records on behalf of constituents. The former law allows any person to request certain otherwise unpublished documents or papers on any subject so long as the documents being sought are reasonably described and not otherwise restricted. The latter statute permits an American citizen or permanent resident alien to seek agency records or files pertaining exclusively to himself or herself.

General guidance on the Privacy Act is provided in an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) memorandum of October 3, 1975, concerning "congressional inquiries which entail access to personal information subject to the Privacy Act." OMB recommends that as a matter of policy each agency, in administering the Privacy Act, should adhere to the position that disclosure may be made to a congressional office from the record of an individual in response to an inquiry from the congressional office made at the request of that individual.

Since most agencies will not release information without written consent, it is important to have either a letter from the constituent that will serve as a Privacy Act release or a separate form on file. The form may state, "I authorize Senator/Representative _____ to check into my case and receive information

⁷(...continued)

92-882 S, Nov. 30, 1992, 37 p.

⁸ See Appendix A: Types of Cases, Information Required, and Office Contacts.

connected with it.”⁹ The form must be sent to the constituent for signature and return. When contacting an agency on behalf of a constituent, a caseworker may say, “This office has Mr./Ms. _____’s authorization to receive information about his/her case.” Many agencies do not wish to see the form and will accept a verbal authorization but only with the assurance that a Privacy Act form will be forthcoming.

Every caseworker has to develop his or her own method of analyzing the nature of the constituent’s problem and how to generate the most expeditious and just resolution. Knowing where to go first can save time, and in some instances, time is of the essence.

The caseworker should have a working knowledge of federal agencies. This includes an understanding of the relevant agency programs as well as keeping abreast of current legislation that might affect the constituent. Knowledge of the various sources of assistance, federal and non-federal, including welfare organizations and charities, enables the caseworker to assist more fully and expeditiously. Efficient caseworkers develop their own telephone listing of contacts in the various agencies and retain the numbers of fellow Hill caseworkers who can assist with a lead, a number, or advice based on their casework experience.

Members of Congress also receive inquiries from constituents dealing with subjects or programs within the jurisdiction of state or local governments. In such instances, the Member office must decide upon an appropriate response to the constituent inquiry. Most Member offices routinely respond to constituent inquiries about local government issues by referring the matter to local officials. If the decision is to refer the case to local officials, the constituent is notified that the congressional office has done so. However, some Members have directed their field offices staff to work in conjunction with state legislative staff and local government staffs as a means toward more effective constituent services at the federal, state, and local levels.

In communicating with an agency, the caseworker must convey concern and, if necessary, urgency, communicate clearly, and be reasonable but persistent. The caseworker must also decide how best to transmit the case, either by phone, fax, buck-slip, or letter. The form of contact usually depends on the degree of emergency. Sometimes the problem requires an immediate response. More often the situation is not quite so urgent. But all appeals for help have to be dealt with in a timely and personal way on behalf of the Member. Following are examples of several cases:

Worker’s Compensation

With a worker’s compensation case, a constituent has typically filed a claim and has not received the payment to which he or she feels entitled. The Department of Labor, when contacted by a congressional office, will locate the case, check the status, and determine agency action. It is the Department’s practice to answer congressional correspondence within 14 calendar days.

⁹ An example of a Privacy Act form used by one Member’s office is provided in Appendix D: Sample Privacy Act Release Form.

As with most agencies, if the answer is still unsatisfactory, a reconsideration, hearing, or procedure before the Appeals Board are all alternatives for a denied constituent. The appeals process can vary from agency to agency. At the Department of Labor, an individual may request one of the above or all three, but at the appeals board level no new information can be entered. While agencies will allow a caseworker to review the file, it is rarely done.

Military Personnel Inquiries

When contacting a military liaison officer on behalf of a member of the Armed Services, provide the name, rank, social security number, location and unit of assignment. Additionally, a military liaison will probably require an acknowledgement that a Privacy Act clearance has been provided to the congressional office by the military petitioner. The military petitioner's unit is contacted to determine the situation and to verify information provided to the Member of Congress. If assistance or counseling is appropriate, the military organization will do so, and express the Member's interest in the matter. The Member's caseworker is then notified of the findings and/or actions taken as a result of the inquiry.

Military Hardship Discharge

Military liaisons require the individual's name, rank, social security number, location and unit to which assigned, and the circumstances of his or her request for a hardship discharge. Additionally, liaison officers also require acknowledgement that a Privacy Act clearance has been submitted to the congressional office by the requesting military member. The military liaison then contacts the unit to which the member is assigned to find out his or her status and to verify the information the military member has provided the Member. If the military member has not yet filed a request for hardship discharge, the military liaison asks the military organization to advise the military member regarding the application, and expressing the Member's interest in the matter. The military liaison then notifies the Member's staff and caseworker of their actions, and the outcome of the case.

The acceptable hardship criteria for a release as well as the steps involved may differ among services.

Social Security (Lost Check)

Typically, a retiree who has not received his or her social security check contacts a Member of Congress. A caseworker on that Member's staff then contacts the Social Security Administration with the pertinent information—name, social security number, type of benefit, problem. The agency confirms that the individual has reported the problem to its district office and determines the check number, amount, and date of issue. This information is furnished to the congressional office. A caseworker can greatly expedite the claim by phoning this information to the Department of Treasury, Congressional Division of Check Claims.

If the check has not been cashed, Treasury will confirm or place a stop order on the check and reissue it immediately.

If the check has been paid, a photostatic copy and claim form are sent to the payee for endorsement verification. If it is shown that the beneficiary did not receive or cash the check, a settlement check is issued to the payee upon receipt of a properly executed claim. Suspicious circumstances surrounding claims will be investigated, and such investigation can take several months.

Social Security Appeal

Most appeals are within the disability area. An unfavorable decision from the Social Security Administration, either in whole or in part, may lead to an appeal. After a due process notice (appeals rights) goes out, the constituent may file for reconsideration. This request for reconsideration must be filed within 60 days of receiving the notice. The individual's claim is then again reviewed by the disability determination service. If a favorable answer is still not forthcoming, the individual has 60 days to file for a hearing with an Administrative Law Judge, who will hear the case, in a face-to-face hearing if so desired. If the judge's ruling is unfavorable, there is further recourse. A request for further review must be filed within 60 days. An appeals council may review the decision. After that, it can be taken outside the purview of the federal agency to the federal district court in the constituent's area.

Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process

Adhering to ethical and legal standards is of concern to Members of Congress and their personal and committee staff when intervening in the administrative process. Congressional interventions involve varying degrees of intrusion into agency decision making processes.¹⁰

Tracking Casework

Once an agency has been contacted on behalf of the constituent, the case should be tracked. While a letter is usually sent to the agency's head from the Member of Congress, it frequently helps to contact directly key agency staff likely to respond to a casework request. Sometimes an interim response is sent to the constituent advising that the Member is still working on the case. If no agency response has been received after a reasonable amount of time, a follow-up is advised. When the agency finally renders its determination, a caseworker should read it as if the caseworker were the constituent. Rephrasing bureaucratese is an essential task of casework.

Casework and other requests of Members invariably increase over time. In order to cope with the workload, offices have installed computer and word processing systems. Such equipment enables offices to retain, in computers, disks or tapes, casework information, including constituent's name, the problem, any interim communications, and final disposition data.

¹⁰ See Appendix C: Legal and Ethical Considerations of Casework. See also Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process: Legal and Ethical Considerations, by Morton Rosenberg and Jack H. Maskell, CRS Report 90-440 A, Sept. 7, 1990, 78 p.

Disposition of Casework

Successful resolution of a case, more than anything else, will show the individual that his or her Member, and the government, are really working for the constituent. There are times, however, when it is not possible to achieve what an individual has requested. A caseworker has to know when the case is no longer worth pursuing. On the other hand, a caseworker must know when to persist in the face of agency resistance and to do the utmost to assure as complete an effort on behalf of the constituent as possible. If advisable, a negative decision from an agency can be appealed to the appropriate agency office.¹¹

Closed cases are kept on file for future reference. The files provide a Member with examples of service to constituents and can be brought to the Member's attention for possible use when communicating with constituents. If the situation is newsworthy, the Member's press aide should be involved. Successful cases are sometimes included in newsletters, press releases, and in human interest feature stories. The constituent's permission, of course, is required.

Handling Cases When Closing a Congressional Office

Open cases are those that are unresolved or not concluded by the time the Member leaves office. A Representative has a number of options with regard to these cases. He/she may pass on open cases to his/her successor, assuming the successor is willing, and the constituent has granted approval. Sometimes, however, this is not politically desirable. A retiring Member of the House may transfer open cases to one of the state's Senators, assuming a Senator and the constituent are agreeable to this arrangement. If not, the active file is returned to the constituent.

When a Senator leaves office, active files are customarily transferred to the succeeding Senator, or to the other Senator representing the same state, so that work can continue on the problem. In some offices, however, the Senator who is leaving will return the active file to the constituent, with a letter explaining that he or she is leaving office and is no longer able to follow the case to a conclusion.

¹¹ If the case is taken through the administrative process and the constituent feels that he or she has unjustly been denied recourse or benefits, they have the right to take their grievance to federal court, but only after the administrative process and appeals have been completed.

Appendix A: Types of Cases, Information Required, and Office Contacts

For a list of congressional liaison offices in over 130 federal agencies, call CRS Products Line at 202-707-7132 and request *Congressional Liaison Offices of Selected Agencies*, CRS Report 95-413 PGM, a report to aid congressional offices in placing telephone calls and addressing correspondence to government agencies. The most common requests for assistance are noted here, including the type of information usually needed, and a contact name and phone number.

Civilian Pensions and Benefits

1. Social Security Benefits

(a) Retirement

(b) Disability

(c) Survivors

For each case—social security number, nature of the problem, name and address, type of benefit.

410-965-3929 Mr. Edmond DiGiorgio (Social Security Administration)

2. Supplemental Security Insurance — name, address (each state has different rules), social security number and nature of impairment — aged, blind, or disabled.

410-965-3929 Mr. Edmond DiGiorgio (Social Security Administration)

3. Black Lung Benefits (administered by the Department of Labor)—social security number, name, city, nature of the problem, claim number, and date of claim.

202-219-6141 Ms. Geri Palast (Department of Labor)

4. Medicare—name, address, medicare claim number, social security number, and description of problem.

202-690-8220 Ms. Carleen Talley (Health Care Financing Administration)

5. Civil Service—Retirement

The Office of Personnel Management administers both the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS). Applicants include those seeking regular and disability retirements, or their surviving spouses and children.

Other categories of inquiry:

- (a) Lost checks
- (b) Change of address for correspondence and direct deposit for checks
- (c) Refunds of retirement contributions
- (d) Voluntary contributions
- (e) Federal employees health benefits program
- (f) Federal employees group life insurance program
- (g) Federal and state income tax withholding
- (h) Court orders and tax levies
- (i) Deposits and redeposits

For each inquiry it is necessary to have either the civil service annuity number, survivor number, or a social security number, and date of birth of the person receiving benefits.

202-225-4955 Ms. Charlene Luskey (Office of Personnel Management)

6. Railroad Retirement

- (a) Benefits—name, address, social security number
- (b) Unemployment benefits—name, address, social security number

202-272-7742 Ms. Margaret Stanley (Railroad Retirement Board)

7. Unemployment Benefits—name, social security number, place of last employment, reason for termination. In general, cases should be handled through the local unemployment office first.

202-219-6141 Ms. Teri Bergman (Department of Labor)

8. Worker's Compensation—name, address, social security number, claim number, date of injury, and status of care. (Could cover, for example, Longshoreman, F.E.C.A., or black lung programs).

202-219-6141 Mr. Bill Buie (Department of Labor)

Military Affairs and Service Academics

9. Military

(a) Hardship

(b) Retirement

Name, rank, social security number, location, unit to which assigned, nature of the problem

Army: (Senate) 202-224-2881 Col. Randy Bookout
(House) 202-225-6818 Col. Daniel Fleming

Navy: (Senate) 202-224-4681 Capt. Billy Lewis
(House) 202-225-7124 Capt. Ralph Alford

Air Force: (Pentagon) 703-695-7231 Col. Nicki Watson
or 703-695-7375

Coast Guard: (Senate) 202-224-2913 Cdr. John J. Jaskot;
Ms. Liz Moses
(House) 202-225-4775 Cdr. John Gentile

10. Military Academy Recommendations — name, address, desired appointment, indication of credentials and brief history requested for a letter of recommendation.¹²

11. Selective Service System — for those born on or after January 1, 1960: name and social security number; selective service number is helpful. For those born prior to January 1, 1960: name, date of birth, and address at time of registration; selective service number is helpful. For approval or reapproval of educational loans under Title IV of the Higher Education Act—name, social security number, and/or selective service number.

703-235-2051 Mr. Arch J. Kelly (Selective Service System)

12. Veterans (Department of Veterans Affairs (VA))

VA benefits include, but are not limited to, disability, education and training, home loan, life insurance, burial, survivors benefits, and health care benefits. Eligibility for most VA benefits is based upon discharge from active military service other than for training under honorable conditions for a minimum period specified by law.

¹² See Appendix E: Appointments to Military Service Academies.

Please provide veterans name, social security number, claim number, policy number (for insurance), date of birth and period of service. Evidence of honorable discharge may be necessary.

202-224-5351 Mr. Philip Mayo (Senate) (Department of Veterans Affairs)

202-225-2280 Mr. Philip Mayo (House) (Department of Veterans Affairs)

For policy issues or statutes, call congressional liaison:

202-273-5615 Mr. Phil Riggin (Department of Veterans Affairs)

State Department Inquiries

13. Visas—name, date, place of birth, type of visa (visitors, working, student, immigrant); where they applied; nature of the problem, if applicable.

14. Passports (on an emergency basis, may be completed on same day)—name, address, certified birth certificate, driver's license, previous U.S. passport or naturalization certificate, two passport photos, fee, flight tickets, pertinent application form.

202-955-0198 Ms. Patience Tait (Department of State)

15. Letters of Introduction—to American embassy abroad. Congressional office may contact State Department or embassy directly. Provide name of constituent, date of visit to foreign country. Suggested clause to be included in letter: "Please extend appropriate courtesies to my constituent."

16. Overseas citizens services (deaths, arrests, missing persons, adoptions, child custody, injured relatives)—name, relevant information on itinerary or location.

17. Refugee/asylum cases

202-647-8728 Ms. Bernadette Allen (Department of State)

Other

18. Immigration — name, place and date of birth, immigration file number if known, type of case, location and date of filing. If the case was denied, find out if and when an appeal has been filed.

202-514-2535 Mr. Bert Rizzo (Immigration and Naturalization Service)

19. Labor Certification

(a) Employees who have applied for certification — employee name, employer name, type of job, case number, last action, date of application or appeal.

- (b) Employers (former) who are being investigated — name of employer or person being investigated, location, name of individual making the inquiry.

202-219-6141 Mr. Bill Kamela (Department of Labor)

20. Higher Education Loans and Assistance

- (a) Student financial assistance and related issues including repayment, defaults, consolidation.

202-401-1028 Ms. Libby Upshur (Department of Education)

- (b) Budget and general program questions

202-401-1028 Ms. Cindy Sprunger (Department of Education)

- (c) Legislative proposals

202-401-1028 (request appropriate specialists)

- (d) Grant funding

202-401-1028 Ms. Larinese Young (Department of Education)

- (e) Correspondence

202-401-1028 Ms. Theresa Toye (Department of Education)

21. Farmers' Loans — Farm Credit Administration. Would like to know if application has already been made, name, address, county and state in which property is located.

703-883-4056 Mr. Mark McBeth (Farm Credit Administration)

22. Communications Licenses

The information needed depends on the nature of the inquiry. For example, for status queries about pending applications, the agency needs the name of the applicant, file number, call number of station, and city of license.

202-418-1903 Mr. Dan Phythyon (Federal Communications Commission)

23. Government Procurement and Property

- (a) How to obtain surplus personal/donation property

- (b) How to do business with the federal government

- (c) Federal travel regulations/per diem rates for federal employees

- (d) Child care in the federal work place
- (e) Regulations on smoking in federal buildings
- (f) GSA owned/leased space
- (g) Disposal of surplus real property (Land/Structures)

202-501-1250 Ms. Laverne Walker (General Services Administration)

24. Housing — name, address, property address, indications of need, case or file number. Specify public or FHA assisted or insured housing. Programs cover housing for the elderly and handicapped, Section 8 voucher and certificate assistance, Fair Housing, FHA insurance, manufactured housing, home equity conversion mortgages, and home ownership assistance for low and moderate income families. Might get involved with local public housing agency or regional HUD program.

202-708-0380 Mr. John Biechman (Department of Housing and Urban Development)

25. Native Americans — to be eligible for most Bureau of Indian Affairs programs requires that an individual be a member of a federally recognized tribe and living on or near a reservation.

202-208-5706 Ms. Marge Wilkins (Bureau of Indian Affairs)

26. Postal Service

- (a) Employee problems — name, address, Post Office involved
- (b) Job opportunities — name, address, Post Office involved
- (c) Mail delivery — name, address, Post Office involved

202-268-2506 Mr. Gerald McKiernan (U.S. Postal Service)

27. Federal Prisoners

- (a) Prisoner transfers, furloughs at federal prisons — name, register number, name of prison, nature of problem.

202-514-9663 Mr. Steve Scher (Federal Bureau of Prisons)

- (b) Prisoner paroles — name, register number, name of prison

301-492-5990 Ms. Dawn Booze (U.S. Parole Commission)

28. Small Business

- (a) SBA loan — name of business, location where filed, amount if possible, other pertinent information.
- (b) SBA contract assistance — name of contract, type of contract, what government agency provides contract, name of contracting officer if possible.
- (c) SBA 8(A) certification — company name, date the company filed for certification, name of any Small Business Administration contact person they have dealt with, and what they have heard from Small Business Administration.

202-205-6700 Ms. Kris Swedin (Small Business Administration)

29. Recommendations — nature of the situation, whether school or job, relationship with Member of Congress.

Note that federal law narrowly restricts what Members of Congress and their employees can do or say in making recommendations regarding any personnel action related to federal employment, except for political appointments.

See “Prohibited Employment Recommendations,” Appendix C, Legal and Ethical Considerations of Casework.

Appendix B: The Ombudsman or Constituent Assistance Office Alternative¹³

Having Members or their office staff perform casework is not the only way to meet the need for intervention on behalf of constituents. Another alternative is the ombudsman, which is Swedish for “one who represents someone.” These legislative officers, sometimes referred to as the “Citizen’s Defender,” receive and respond to complaints and grievances from individuals in a number of parliamentary democracies, including Sweden, Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. By comparison, ombudsman offices in the United States — which are rarer, less independent, and narrower in jurisdiction than those abroad — are usually in executive or administrative agencies, rather than in the legislature.

Since the early 1960s, legislation has been introduced to implement the ombudsman concept or to create a congressional office of constituent assistance, to respond to casework and constituent complaints or inquiries submitted to it by individual Members. No proposal, however, has advanced beyond the hearing stage, despite the growing casework workload and heightened concerns about the appearance of a conflict of interest when legislators or their staff intervene directly before administrative agencies on behalf of constituents.

Proponents contend that a congressional office of constituent assistance, which would be staffed by experienced and specially trained professionals, could deal with these demands and concerns more efficiently and effectively than the present system, which lacks coordination and shared expertise among the individual congressional offices. Members and their staff, if relieved of conducting casework, would thus have more time to devote to legislative, oversight, and other public policy matters. They would thus be less likely to be in a situation which could lead to a possible conflict of interest. Congress’ oversight capability, moreover, could be enhanced by a legislative ombudsman office that consolidated and reported information, data, and statistics on administrative abuses, questionable actions, and inefficiencies.

Opposition to a congressional office of constituent assistance has arisen, however, for several reasons. First of all, legislators might be reluctant to transfer casework, along with its perceived benefits, to an office outside their immediate control. The constituent assistance office might also be seen as interfering with the representation function and direct contact between a legislator and a constituent or as jeopardizing the confidentiality between the two, if a third party (e.g., the ombudsman or constituent assistance office staff) became involved. In addition, the constituent assistance office’s resources and congressional casework, would come either from existing Member accounts or would require an increase in legislative branch operating expenses overall. Both options have drawbacks for Members.

¹³ This appendix is drawn from A Congressional Office of Constituent Assistance: Proposals, Rationales, and Possible Objections, by Frederick M. Kaiser, CRS Report, 91-893 GOV, Dec. 19, 1991, Summary page.

Appendix C: Legal and Ethical Considerations of Casework

Title 5 United States Code Section 3303 prohibits appointing officers of the federal government from considering or receiving a recommendation other than as to character or residency.

Title 18 United States Code Sections 201(b) and 201(c) forbids Members of Congress and their staff from soliciting or receiving a bribe or anything of value for or because of any official act performed.

Title 18 United States Code Section 203(a) states that Members and their staff may not be privately remunerated for casework interventions on behalf of any person; it sets forth penalties for:

“Whoever ... directly or indirectly demands, seeks, receives, accepts or agrees to receive or accept any compensation for any services rendered or to be rendered personally or by another

1. At a time when such person is a Member of Congress; or Member of Congress Elect ...; or
2. At a time when such person is an officer or employee of the United States in the legislative ... branch of the government ...”

in relation to any proceeding, application, request for a ruling or other determination, contract, claim, controversy, charge, accusation, arrest, or other particular matter in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest, before any department, agency, court-martial, officer, or any civil, military, or naval commission ...

Shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than two years or both; and shall be incapable of holding any office of honor trust, or profit under the United States.

Title 18 United States Code Section 205 forbids government officials from privately handling cases before government tribunals on behalf of an individual, but allows Members of Congress to do so without compensation. There are, however, limits on Member representation; for example, they are prohibited from appearing in maritime cases and before the Court of Claims and the now defunct Indian Claims Commission.

Agency Intervention Protocol

Members of Congress are prohibited from *ex parte* communications concerning formal adjudications (off-the-record communications by one person concerning some

agency action) and must abide by the rules which apply to all citizens making inquiries to federal agencies (5 U.S.C. 557(d)). This does not mean that they cannot contact agencies, but their communications may be made public under the *ex parte* rules of a particular agency. The prohibition only applies to formal agency adjudications (hearings on the record), and not to regular casework. For a further explanation see *Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process: Legal and Ethical Considerations*, by Jack H. Maskell and Morton Rosenberg, CRS Report 90-440 A, Sept. 7, 1990, 78 p.

Employment Recommendation Restrictions

Section 8 of the Hatch Act Amendments of 1993 (P.L. 103-94, effective February 3, 1994) amends Sections 3303 of Title 5 United States Code.

Members of Congress and congressional employees are prohibited from making or transmitting any “recommendation or statement,” oral or written, regarding an individual under consideration for, or personnel actions affecting employees in (1) the competitive service; (2) a career appointee position in the Senior Executive Service (SES) (or a similar appointment in a similar executive service); or (3) the excepted service, other than for Presidential appointments or for positions determined to be of a confidential, policy-determining, policy-making , or policy-advocating character.

Members of Congress and congressional employees **may** make a **recommendation** concerning an applicant or employee who requests or is under consideration for a personnel action **only if** the job is in what is defined as the “excepted service” **and** a presidential appointment or of a confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating character.

Members of Congress and congressional employees may make a “statement,” **not a recommendation**, with respect to an employee or applicant who requests or is under consideration for a personnel action **only if**

1. The statement is furnished in response to a request or requirement of the agency and consists solely of an evaluation of the work performance, ability, aptitude, and general qualifications of the employee or applicant;
2. The statement relates solely to the character and residence of the employee or applicant;
3. The statement is furnished in response to a request made by an authorized government official solely to determine whether the individual meets suitability or security standards (e.g. security clearances);
4. The statement is furnished in response to a provision of law or regulation authorizing the consideration of the statement;
5. The statement is furnished in response to a provision of law or regulation authorizing the consideration of the statement.

This new provision prohibits the making or transmission of recommendations or certain statements concerning **hiring** as well as statements regarding certain types of “personnel actions.” Such personnel actions may include appointments, promotions, disciplinary actions, transfer or reassignments, or pay and benefit decisions, among others. [See 5 U.S.C. 2302(a)(2)(A), clauses (i) through (x).]

The law does not preclude a member of Congress from exercising normal congressional oversight. A member may, for example —

1. Ask for a report on a matter;
2. Inquire as to status;
3. Ask for an explanation of why an agency has acted in a particular way; or
4. Refer the matter to an agency with oversight responsibilities, such as OPM, EEOC or the Office of Special Counsel.

Responsibility to Constituents (House Ethics Committee Advisory Opinion)

In its first advisory opinion of January 26, 1970, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Ethics Committee) concluded that the exercise of the First Amendment right applies not only to petition by groups of citizens with common objectives, but increasingly by people with problems or complaints involving their personal relationship with the federal government. The Committee reasoned that:

As the population has grown and as the government has enlarged in scope and complexity, an increasing number of citizens find it more difficult to obtain redress by direct communication with administrative agencies. As a result, the individual turns increasingly to his most proximate connection with the government, his representative in the Congress, as evidenced by the fact that congressional offices devote more time to constituent requests than to any other single duty.

The reason individuals sometimes fail to find satisfaction from their petitions are varied. At the extremes, some grievances are simply imaginary rather than real, and some with merit are denied for lack of thorough administrative consideration.

Sheer numbers impose requirements to standardize responses. Even if mechanical systems function properly and timely, the stereotyped responses they produce suggest indifference. At best, responses to grievances in form letter or by other automated means leave much to be desired.

Another factor which may lead to petitioner dissatisfaction is the occasional failure of legislative language, or the administrative interpretation of it, to cover adequately all the merits the legislation intended. Specific cases arising under these conditions test the legislation and provide valuable oversight disclosure to the Congress.

Further, because of the complexity of our vast federal structure, often a citizen simply does not know the appropriate office to petition.

For these, or similar reason, it is logical and proper that the petitioner seek assistance of his Congressman for early and equitable resolution of his problem.¹⁴

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct issued House Advisory Opinion No. 1 because it had received a number of requests on what “actions a Member of Congress may properly take in discharging his representative function with respect to communications on constituent matters.” The advisory opinion was written to provide guidelines that would be of assistance to Members in dealing with such matters.

Representations Before Federal Agencies

The Committee was of the “opinion that a Member of the House of Representatives, either on his own initiative or at the request of a petitioner, may properly communicate with an Executive or Independent Agency on any matter to:”

1. Request information or a status report;
2. Urge prompt consideration;
3. Arrange for interviews or appointments;
4. Express judgment;
5. Call for the reconsideration of an administrative response which he believes is not supported by established law; Federal Regulation or legislative intent;
6. Perform any other service of a similar nature in this area compatible with the criteria hereinafter expressed in this Advisory Opinion.

Principles to be Observed

The Committee concluded that the “overall public interest, naturally, is primary to any individual matter and should be so considered. There are also other self-evident standards of official conduct which Members should uphold with regard to these communications.” The Committee recommended that Members observe the following three basic principles of official conduct:

1. A Member’s responsibility in this area is to all his constituents equally and should be pursued with diligence irrespective of political or other considerations.

¹⁴ House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Advisory Opinion No. 1: The Role of a Member of the House of Representatives in Communicating with Executive and Independent Federal Agencies. Congressional Record, v. 116, January 26, 1970. P. 1077.

2. Direct or implied suggestion of either favoritism or reprisal in advance of, or subsequent to, action taken by the agency contacted is unwarranted abuse of the representative role.
3. A Member should make every effort to assure that representations made in his name by any staff employee conform to his instruction.

The Committee noted that “subsequent legislation, regulation or rules may affect part or all of this advisory opinion.”¹⁵

Guidance for Future Conduct (Senate Ethics Committee Report)

The Senate Ethics Committee in the final report on its investigation of five Senators’ who intervened on behalf of Lincoln Saving and Loan Association presented the following guidelines for future conduct:

During the time that the Committee has had the Keating matter before it, the Committee has had the opportunity to review the sources discussed above and to consider at length the issue of the propriety of interventions with a federal agency on behalf of an individual who has made or raised significant political contributions. Based on this experience, the Committee suggests that until written guidelines have been adopted, a Member who has any reasonable doubt about whether to proceed in a particular matter consider the following issues:

The merits of the constituent’s case.

The continuing viability of the constituent’s claim. If the constituent’s claim initially appeared to have merit, has the Senator acted despite facts or circumstances that later undermined the merits of that claim?

The kind of agency involved and the nature of its proceedings. Is the agency performing in a quasi-judicial, adjudicative or enforcement function?

If the Senator or staff member knows that an individual is a contributor, the following issues should also be considered. (If the Senator or staff member does not know if an individual is a contributor, he or she is not required or encouraged to find out. Most Senate staff members are not provided with information regarding contributions and are unaware of whether an individual seeking assistance is a contributor.)

The amount of money contributed. Has the contributor given or raised more than an average contribution?

¹⁵ U.S. Congress. Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Casework Considerations. House Ethics Manual. 102nd Congress, 2nd session. April 1992. Washington, G.P.O., 1992. P. 239-266.

The history of donations by a contributor. Has the constituent made contributions to the Senator previously?

The nature and degree of the action taken by the Senator. To what extent does the action or pattern of action deviate from that Senator's normal conduct?

The proximity of money and action. How close in time is the Senator's action to his or her knowledge of or receipt of the contribution(s)?

In its consideration of this case, the Committee has referred to or quoted from sources which may be largely unknown to Senators, such as the writings of Senator Paul Douglas and Advisory Opinion No. 1 of the House. The Committee believes that these sources have value as helpful guidance to Senators and to the Committee in analyzing the established norms of behavior in the Senate. However, these sources, in and of themselves, are not precedential and should not be considered as established Senate norms for purposes of discipline.¹⁶

Representation of Petitioners Before Federal Agencies (Senate Rule XLIII, Section 2)

On July 2, 1992, the Senate passed S. Res. 273, establishing a new rule of the Senate pertaining to representation of petitioners before federal agencies.¹⁷ Section 2 of the new rule, which lists various actions that a Member may properly take in assisting a petitioner in dealings with government officials or agencies, is drawn in substantial part from House Advisory Opinion No. 1 (above). The Senate Select Committee on Ethics can provide advice and guidance to Members and staff on the requirements of this rule.

Rule XLIII — Representation by Members

1. In responding to petitions; for assistance, a Member of the Senate, acting directly or through employees, has the right to assist petitioners before executive and independent government officials and agencies.
2. At the request of a petitioner, a Member of the Senate, or a Senate employee, may communicate with an executive or independent government official or agency on any matter to—
 - (a) Request information or a status report;
 - (b) Urge prompt consideration;

¹⁶ U.S. Congress. Senate. Select Committee on Ethics. Investigation of Senator Alan Cranston. Senate Report no. 102-223, 102nd Congress, 1st Sess. Washington, U.S. Govt., Print. Off., 1991. P. 13-14.

¹⁷ For a section by section analysis of S. Res. 273, see Congressional Record, Vol. 138, no. 98, July 2, 1992, pp. S9762-4.

- (c) Arrange for interviews or appointments;
 - (d) Express judgments;
 - (e) Call for reconsideration of an administrative response which the Member believes is not reasonably supported by statutes, regulations or considerations of equity or public policy;
 - (f) Perform any other service of a similar nature consistent with the provisions of this rule.
3. The decision to provide assistance to petitioners may not be made on the basis of contributions or services, or promises of contributions or services, to the Member's political campaigns or to other organizations in which the Member has a political, personal, or financial interest.
 4. A Member shall make a reasonable effort to assure that representations made in the Member's name by any Senate employee are accurate and conform to the Member's instructions and to this rule.
 5. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to limit the authority of Members, and Senate employees, to perform legislative, including committee, responsibilities.

Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process¹⁸

When congressional committees engage in oversight of the administrative bureaucracy, or when Members of Congress intervene in agency proceedings on behalf of private constituents or other private entities with interests affecting the Member's constituency, such interventions involve varying degrees of intrusion into agency decision making processes. A CRS Report on congressional intervention in the administrative process (90-440A) briefly examines the currently applicable legal and ethical considerations and standards that mark the limits of such intercessions.

The report reviews the judicial development and application of standards for determining when congressional pressure or influence has been deemed to have tainted an agency proceeding. It concludes that the courts, in balancing Congress's performance of its constitutional and statutory obligations to oversee the actions of agency officials against the rights of parties before agencies, have shown a decided predilection for protecting the congressional prerogatives. Where informal rule making or other forms of informal decision making are involved, the courts look to the nature and impact of the political pressure on the agency decision maker and intervene only where that pressure has had the effect of forcing the consideration of factors Congress did not intend to make relevant. Where agency adjudication is

¹⁸ This section was drawn from Congressional Intervention in the Administrative Process: Legal and Ethical Considerations, by Morton Rosenberg and Jack H. Maskell, CRS Report 90-440 A, Sept. 7, 1990, Summary page.

involved, a stricter standard is applied, and the finding of an appearance of impropriety can be sufficient to taint the proceeding. But even here the courts have required that the pressure or influence be directed at the ultimate decision maker before they will intervene.

The report also examines the conduct of Members of Congress intervening in administrative matters from the perspective of ethics or conflict of interest rules and statutes which may bear upon a Member's official duties. Since congressional intervention and expressions of interest in administrative matters from a Member's office are recognized as legitimate, official representational and oversight functions and duties of Members of Congress, the primary focus of these ethical and statutory conduct restraints is limited to (1) any improper enrichment or financial benefit accruing to the Member in return for or because of his or her official actions, that is, any illegal or corrupt bargain or payment for such activities, sale of influence, or personal financial conflicts of interest in such matters; and (2) any overt coercion or threats of reprisals, or promises of favoritism or reward to administrators, from the Member's office which could indicate an arguable abuse of a Member's official representational or oversight role in such matters. Additionally, ethical guidelines in Congress may incorporate broad "appearance of impropriety" standards for Members which could raise ethical concerns in relation to the acceptance of gifts, favors, donations, and benefits by Members from those who are directly affected by the Member's official duties, even in the absence of a showing of a corrupt bargain, an express payment, or other specific connection to an official act.

Appendix D: Sample Privacy Act Release Form

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Senator/Representative _____
United States Senate (House of Representatives)
Washington, D.C. 20510 (20515)

_____ (Date) _____

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am aware that the Privacy Act of 1974 prohibits the release of information in my file without my approval. I authorize the (*name of federal agency or Department*) to provide information on my claim/case to (Senator/Representative)_____.

_____ (Signature) _____

_____ (Address) _____

CRS-27

____(Social Security or claim number)____

_____ (Telephone Number)_____

If you wish information to be provided to parent, child, attorney, or other interested party, please indicate below.

I authorize _____ to receive information from Senator/Representative _____ relative to my claim/case.

_____ (Signature)_____

Appendix E: Appointments to U.S. Military Service Academies

U.S. Military, Naval, and Air Force Academies

Nominations for appointments to U.S. military service academies made by Members of Congress are accepted by the U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Air Force Academy. The following nominating procedures apply to the U.S. Military, Naval, and Air Force Academies:

Quota for appointments is five cumulative per Senator and five cumulative per Representative to each Academy at any one time. Appointments made by predecessor are considered part of the quota of a newly elected Member.

Nominations by Members are made when a vacancy in the appointment quota occurs, i.e., when an appointed member graduates or for any reason leaves an academy. Announcements of vacancies in the U.S. Naval Academy, the U.S. Military Academy, and U.S. Air Force Academy are made by August of the preceding year. Additional announcements are made as vacancies occur. Notification of vacancies in an individual Member's quota is made at the beginning of a newly elected Member's term of office. Unfilled vacancies are carried over from one year to the next.

Tri-service nomination forms (DD Form 1870) are supplied to a Member with the notification of a vacancy in an Academy quota. Additional forms can be obtained on request from academy liaison offices.

The following information should be typed on a nomination form:

1. Full name (no nicknames);
2. Date of birth;
3. Social security number;
4. Permanent address, temporary address;
5. Identification of candidate as constituent;
6. Type of nomination;
7. Alternate's numerical rank, if applicable;
8. Signature of the Member of Congress.

In addition to requesting nomination by a Member of Congress, the individual must complete an application form for each academy to which the candidate is applying. Application form request cards are supplied by the academies to either Members of Congress or applicants.

A maximum of ten applicants can be nominated for each vacancy. If fewer than ten applicants are available for one vacancy, all names can be submitted as nominees. If more than one vacancy exists, ten names can be submitted for each vacancy.

Three methods of nominee selection can be used by Members:

Competitive Method — ten nominees are submitted for one vacancy; most qualified nominee is appointed by the academy.

Principal with Competing Alternates Method — Member's first choice of nominees is designated as principal nominee. If qualified, the nominee receives the appointment; if disqualified, nominees compete for the vacancy. Most qualified person receives appointment.

Principal with Numbered Alternates Method — principal nominee is designated by Member; alternates are numbered in order of preference. If qualified, principal receives appointment. If disqualified, alternates are considered in order of preference until one is qualified.

A combination of methods can be used if two or more vacancies exist. For example, in the case of two vacancies, one principal with nine alternates and ten competitors can be nominated, or twenty competitive nominees can compete for the two vacancies.

Admission to the academies can also be obtained through the following appointment procedure—qualified alternate can be appointed to bring academies to maximum strength. Qualified nominees who did not receive appointments for which they were nominated are eligible. Appointments are granted in order of merit and are charged against quotas of the secretaries of the military services.

Nominations to more than one academy can be made for one applicant. Applicants can be nominated by both a Senator and a Representative; if appointed, the applicant's appointment will be charged against only one vacancy.

The deadline for submission of nominations by Members is January 31 of the year for which July entrance is desired. Nominations will be accepted at the U.S. Military and Naval Academies from August 1 of the previous year to January 31, and at the Air Force Academy from May 1 of the previous year to January 31.

Members are informed of the status of nominees throughout the selection process.

Notification of a nominee's appointment is made to a Member of Congress by telephone about three days (Military Academy—five days) in advance of the nominee's receipt of the appointment. Advance notice to a Member allows time for personal congratulations by the Member prior to Academy notification to nominee.

Qualifications and Legal Requirements

Qualifications for admissions to the academies include a consideration of scholastic examination scores, physical aptitude scores, class rank, extracurricular activities, athletics and medical examinations, and are determined on an individual basis through evaluation of the “whole person.”

Scholastic Assessment Test-1 or American College Testing examinations are required of all applicants. Guideline scores required generally (check specific requirements with Academy in which interested) are:

	SAT-1 ¹⁹	ACT
Military Academy	560 Verbal; 560 Math	21 English; 27 Math
Naval Academy	530 Verbal; 600 Math	22 English; 26 Math
Air Force Academy ²⁰	580 Verbal; 560 Math	24 English; 25 Math

Test scores will be sent directly to a Member on the request of a nominee. Nominees financially unable to take College Boards can do so, free of charge, with a verification of need from a high school official. Members of Congress may contact the Educational Testing Service (609-771-7881) to be assigned a SAT code number so that SAT-1 scores are sent directly to the Member of Congress. Extra copies of ACT scores are obtained when the applicant indicates a request for them on the ACT application form. The applicant must then send an extra copy to the Member from whom a nomination is being requested.

Class rank in the top 40 percent is usually required but qualification will be waived for nominees attending selected schools.

Physical aptitude examination is required of all nominees.

Medical examination is required of all applicants; exams are given at various locations around the country. Evaluation of all medical examinations is made by the Department of Defense Medical Examination Review Board.

20/20 vision uncorrected is required of 65 percent of the applicants for the U.S. Naval Academy. Vision must be correctable to 20/20 for applicants to the U.S. Military Academy. U.S. Air Force Academy applicants must have visual acuity no worse than 20/50 for potential pilot, 20/200 for navigator and distant correctable to 20/40 in one eye and 20/70 in the other, or 20/30 in one eye and 20/100 in the other, or 20/20 in one eye and 20/400 in the other for commissioning.

¹⁹ Recentered SAT-1 scores.

²⁰ In addition, the Air Force Academy requires ACT scores of 24 in Reading and 25 in Science Reasoning.

Minor disqualifying defects subject to medical or dental correction can be waived. Disqualifying illnesses include: chronic skin disease; asthma; organic heart diseases; uncorrected hernias; and loss of either thumb or great toe.

Candidates must be:

1. Citizens of the United States;
2. At least 17 and no more than 21 years of age by July 1 of the year of entry;
3. Unmarried, not pregnant, and have no legal requirement to provide support to a dependent;
4. Of good moral character; and
5. Be a resident and legally domiciled in the state/district from which they are nominated.²¹

Additional Types of Nominations for Appointments

Presidential Nominations to Academies can be given to sons and daughters of career or retired military parents. Applications by eligible applicants are made directly to the academies. Appointments are competitive.

Vice Presidential Nominations for appointment can be made by the Vice President of the United States as the President of the Senate. Nominations are made from the Nation at large; quota is five appointments to each academy. Applicants must write to the Vice President for consideration.

Sons and Daughters of Medal of Honor winners can be appointed to the Academies. Applications by eligible applicants are made directly to the Academies. Applicants must only meet qualifications for admission. Qualified children of POW's and MIA's and of deceased or disabled veterans may compete for one of 65 appointments by applying directly to the academies.

Nominations for Active Duty Enlisted Members can be made by the secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Honor military schools and ROTC units also have limited nominating authority.

Liaison Offices

Military Academy
U.S. Total Army Personnel Command
Attn: TAPC-OPD-CM
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332-0413

²¹ Legal residence of father normally determines constituency; if parents are divorced, residence of parent with whom the nominee lives determines constituency.

Ms. Jorja Graves
Telephone: 703-325-7414
Fax: 703-325-6073

U.S. Air Force Academy Group
USAFA/RRA
Pentagon Room 4E-144
1040 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1040
Ms. Norma Nottingham
Telephone: 703-697-7116
Fax: 703-695-7999

Naval Academy
Nomination and Appointments Office
117 Decatur Road
Annapolis, MD 21402
Ms. Delma Miller
Telephone: 410-293-4392
Fax: 410-293-4348

Additional information, services, and assistance in making nominations are provided by the academy liaison offices. Services include:

1. Personal visits to Members' offices by academy representatives;
2. Dissemination of information for applicants to Members' offices;
3. Providing assistance, on request, in forming selection committees to assist a Member in making nominations to the academies.

The U.S. Military Academy sponsors one trip a year for congressional staffers to visit the academy and periodic visits for educators. The U.S. Naval Academy hosts 10 to 15 orientation visits each year for congressional staff, educators and the media. The Air Force Academy Group conducts three to four Orientation Tours to the academy each year for congressional staff who are responsible for the academy program.

U.S. Merchant Marine Academy

Each Member of Congress may nominate 10 candidates to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy annually. Nominees must be (a) U.S. Citizens or a national of the United States; and (b) a resident of the state/district represented by such Member. Nominees then compete for appointment to the Academy based upon their competitiveness and state and national vacancies. Qualifications for admission include consideration of the candidate's academic record, class rank, test scores (ACT or SAT-1), and meeting the medical requirements as well as Naval Reserve midshipmen

standards. Additional information can be obtained by calling Capt. James M. Skinner, Admissions Office at 516-773-5391 or 1-800-732-6267, or Fax 516-773-5390.

Coast Guard Academy

The Coast Guard Academy bases admissions on an annual nationwide competition. The Academy does not have a congressional nominee program for applicants. Competition is open to any American citizen who has reached his or her 17th but not 22nd birthday by July 1 of the entering year. In selecting students for admission, the Academy prohibits discrimination based on gender, race, color, national origin, or religion. Factors considered in the competition include ACT or SAT-1 scores, high school standing, and leadership potential as demonstrated by participation in high school extracurricular activities, community affairs, or part-time employment. All candidates must pass a rigid medical and physical fitness examination. Applications are made directly to the Academy, Office of the Director of Admissions, New London, Conn. 06320. For additional information, call Captain Robert W. Thorne at 860-444-8500, or Fax 860-437-6700.

Selected References²²

Armey, Richard K. Dunn, Jennifer. Shays, Christopher.

It's long enough: the decline of popular government under forty years of single party control of the U.S. House of Representatives. Washington, House Republican Conference, 1994. 141 p. LRS94-6829

Three Republican Representatives charge that uninterrupted Democratic control of the House since the 84th Congress has led to "the tainting of the entire legislative process," including increased public perception of the Representative as an "errand runner" to an expanding federal bureaucracy.

Baldwin, Deborah.

Taking care of business. Common Cause magazine, v. 11, Sept./Oct. 1985: 17-19. LRS85-8059

"Members of Congress have found a surefire way to please their constituents: helping them cut through government red tape. This service to constituents—known as casework—rose 100% between 1970 and 1980, and Members typically receive 5,000 to 10,000 inquiries for help per year."

Birnbaum, Jeffrey H.

The limits of constituent service. Government executive, v. 23, June 1991: 28-30, 33. LRS91-8217

"How far should agencies go in accommodating congressional pleas to aid constituents? A high-seas tragedy raises some tough questions for the Coast Guard," which allegedly delayed enforcing a federal safety law on fish-processing ships in response to a congressional request. Fatalities in a Mar. 1990 fishing boat sinking might have been avoided if the law had been enforced, it has been charged.

Bond, Jon R. Covington, Cary. Fleisher, Richard.

Explaining challenger quality in congressional elections. Journal of politics, v. 47, May 1985: 510-529. LRS85-15912

Using data from 1980 contested House elections, the authors "find that both short-term and long-term partisan forces (previous vote margin and the normal vote), national tides, and policy making behavior (ideological discrepancy) significantly affect the probability of attracting politically experienced, well-financed challengers. District diversity and incumbents' use of `perks' available for advertising and casework, on the other hand, are not related to any indicator of challenger quality."

²² Prepared by George H. Walser, Senior Bibliographer, Library Services Division, CRS. The LRS numbers appearing at the end of each reference citation may be used for ordering a document from the CRS inquiry section (202-707-5700). Please limit your requests to more than 10 items.

Cain, Bruce. Ferejohn, John. Fiorina, Morris.

Constituency service in the United States and Great Britain. In Congress reconsidered. Edited by Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 3rd ed. Washington, CQ Press, 1985. p. 109-130. LRS85-2057

Compares and contrasts constituent casework performed by Members of Congress and British MPs. "In both countries members have long traditions of providing services to individuals and groups in their districts. And ... in both countries members behave in similar fashion in the realm of service responsiveness."

—The personal vote: constituency service and electoral independence. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987. 268 p.

JK1071.C28 1987

"Describes the behavior of representatives and the perceptions of constituents in two developed systems, the United States and Great Britain. Service and allocation responsiveness have come to be increasingly important components of the representational relationship.... Constituency service constitutes an important means by which representatives earn personalized electoral support—votes based not on party membership or association with a particular government but on the individual identities and activities of the candidates."

Casework and congressional elections. American journal of political science, v. 25, Aug. 1981: 512-604. LRS81-8800

Contents.—The congressional incumbency effect: is it casework, policy compatibility, or something else? An examination of the 1978 election, by John R. Johannes and John C. McAdams.—Some problems in studying the effects of resource allocation in congressional elections, by Morris P. Fiorina.—The grateful electorate: casework and congressional elections, by Diana Evans Yiannakis.—Does casework matter? A reply to Professor Fiorina, by John C. McAdams and John R. Johannes.

Cohen, William S. Lasson, Kenneth.

Getting the most out of Washington: using Congress to move the federal bureaucracy. New York, Facts on File, 1982. 220 p.

JK464 1982.C63 1982

Senator and his assistant offer "cases where citizens have turned to Congress for assistance in resolving conflicts with, or grievances against, their government." They describe the overall casework function and present anecdotal instances of how it has worked to solve problems in a variety of areas.

Congressional staff journal. 94th Congress, no. 1 (Dec. 1975)-98th Congress, no. 3 (May-June 1983) Washington, For sale by the Supt. of Docs., G.P.O., bimonthly. LRS50-85001

First published as "Staff: A Congressional Staff Journal As a Process for Communications," this magazine focused on offering useful and practical information to staff on congressional operations and office procedures. Representative articles on casework include advice on avoiding Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act difficulties when obtaining constituent records (July-Aug. 1981; LRS81-14008), and tips and guidance in handling social

security cases (Nov.-Dec. 1981; LRS81-14778), IRS tax cases (Jan.-Feb. 1982; LRS82-52), prison cases, including Americans jailed overseas (Mar.-Apr. 1982; LRS82-1009), and immigration cases (Sept.-Oct. 1982; LRS82-20134).

Cramton, Roger C.

A federal ombudsman. *Duke law journal*, v. 1972, no. 1, 1972: 1-14.

LRS72-8134

Article analyzes complaint handling by federal and local government agencies and Members of Congress.

Dear Congressman: help! Edited by Vickie M. Smith and Gloria Van Treese. Tallahassee, Fla., Stone House, 1981. 80 p. JK1083.D4

Seven employees of former Senator Dick Stone outline for constituents the services available from a congressional office and how to effectively request assistance from a Member and work with the office staff.

Epstein, Laurily K. Frankovic, Kathleen A.

Casework & electoral margins: insurance is prudent. *Polity*, v. 14, summer 1982: 691-700. LRS82-7704

“Since the Congress as an institution is judged so poorly and since the evidence points so strongly to an absence of agreement on issues between representatives and their constituents, incumbent security is puzzling Attention to individual constituent demands (casework) constitutes a valuable insurance policy for representatives, particularly those from putatively marginal districts.”

Felten, Eric.

Aiming to please the folks at home. *Insight (Washington times)*, v. 8, Oct. 4, 1992: 6-11, 26-29. LRS92-8510

“When it comes to the business of being reelected, those in Congress have learned what is paramount: constituent service. Gratitude for favors can make the difference between victory and defeat. There are even guidebooks on keeping the customer satisfied and taking credit for it. Meanwhile, the serious work of legislation often gets bypassed.”

Frantzich, Stephen E.

Dealing with casework demands. In his *Write your congressman: constituent communications and representation*. New York, Praeger, 1986. p. 39-64.

JK1083.F72 1986

“Constituency service or ‘casework’ eschews primary concern for broad, universalistic issues of public policy and instead focuses on particularized benefits. Such benefits exhibit two characteristics: (1) each benefit is given out to a specific individual or an identifiable small group, and (2) the perceived rules for distribution do not entitle every petitioner automatic benefits but require special intervention.”

Hamilton, Lee H.

Constituent service and representation. *Public manager*, v. 21, summer 1992: 12-15. LRS92-5356

“The purpose of this article is to explain how and why members of Congress do casework, and to discuss some of the ethical issues we confront as a result. The first part provides background information. Next is a discussion of what members of Congress expect from bureaucrats when we go to bat for our constituents. Finally, I offer some proposals aimed at improving the way congressional casework is conducted.”

Hawthorne, Fran.

Jumping on Washington’s benefits bandwagon. *Institutional investor*, v. 23, Sept. 1989: 154-156, 161, 163, 165. LRS89-10487

“As concerns about health care and retirement grow, a new breed of benefits champions has emerged in Congress to address them.”

Hessenius, Charles.

Explaining who writes to Congressmen: a contextual analysis. *Political geography quarterly*, v. 10, Apr. 1991: 149-161. LRS91-2218

“The study of constituent-congressman relations often ignores the potential importance of the social nature of the constituency itself as it may influence the relationship. It has been believed that seeking casework was almost completely associated with individual attributes. Furthermore, it was believed that social class was not an important predictor of who would write. This paper shows that social class and the class context of an individual are important contributors to whether or not a person will write to his or her congressman.”

High-tech on the Hill: how computers and other wonders are serving Members and constituents. *Roll call*, v. 34, Sept. 25, 1988, suppl.: 1, 3-8, 10. LRS88-8013

Short articles include a description of congressional office use of computers for mail, casework, and campaigning.

Hill, James P.

The third house of Congress versus the fourth branch of government: the impact of congressional committee staff on agency regulatory decision-making. *John Marshall law review*, v. 19, winter 1986: 247-273. LRS86-13659

“Article focuses on the critical, but overlooked, informal oversight role Congress delegates to its committee staff.” Casework inquiries are one technique giving staff numerous opportunities to influence regulatory decision-making, the author finds.

Johannes, John R.

Casework as a technique of U.S. congressional oversight of the executive. *Legislative studies quarterly*, v. 4, Aug. 1979: 325-351. LRS79-9286

“Based on questionnaire data from and interviews with over 250 former and current members of Congress, congressional personal office staffs in Washington and in home offices, and officials in department and agency legislative liaison offices, this paper explores the utility of ‘casework’ for oversight. The theses are that: constituency service is more valuable for congressional oversight than is generally recognized in the literature; oversight via casework is nonsystematic

and selective; casework's utility for oversight is both made possible and constrained by 'opportunity factors' (case loads and types; congressional staff adequacy, location, structure, procedure, and motivation; members' motivations; members' committee assignments and status; and agency motivations, staffing, and procedures); and casework's greatest potential as a contributor to oversight may lie in its effect upon internal agency oversight."

—Casework in the House. In *The House at work*. Edited by Joseph Cooper and G. Calvin Mackenzie. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981 (Dan Danciger publication series) p. 78-96. LRS81-20678

"Casework on Capitol Hill and in district offices has become a semi-professionalized and semi-institutionalized function which some fear may threaten not only more important roles of Congress but electoral competition as well. For some congressional districts, such fears may be real, but available evidence must be stretched to argue that the problem is yet as serious as critics claim."

—Congress, the bureaucracy, and casework. *Administration & society*, v. 16, May 1984: 41-69. LRS84-11151

Concludes in general from interviews with and questionnaire surveys of Members of Congress, congressional staff, and involved federal officials "(1) that casework is more useful than commonly believed for purposes of congressional and internal executive oversight of programs, personnel, and operations; (2) that congressional and administrative elites hold very similar views about congressional casework; and (3) that the positions and responsibilities held by congressional and administrator participants in the casework process affect their views toward casework in a fashion predicted by a textbook understanding of administrative processes."

—The distribution of casework in the U.S. Congress: an uneven burden. *Legislative studies quarterly*, v. 5, Nov. 1980: 517-544. LRS80-12889

Using casework data for the 95th Congress, the author suggests "that the distribution of casework may be largely idiosyncratic. Factors that have independent effects on casework in the House include: region (the East); constituents' abilities to ask for assistance (education, concentration of government employees in districts, and the percentage urban); and member salience and visibility (seniority). In the Senate, legislative activism, state population, and concentrations of the elderly are significantly related to case loads. Several implications are offered for staffing, electoral outcomes, and congressional oversight."

—Entrepreneur or agent: Congressmen and the distribution of casework, 1977-1978, by John R. Johannes and John C. McAdams. *Western political quarterly*, v. 40, Sept. 1987: 535-553. LRS87-9282

"Two hypotheses explaining the distribution of casework are tested: (1) congressmen as entrepreneurs, aggressively generating demands for casework, and (2) congressmen as relatively passive agents, whose casework loads are determined more by the nature of the constituency than by any efforts by the members of their staffs. Both hypotheses receive support, but the 'congressman as agent' perspective provides a stronger explanation. The analysis suggests,

further, that casework is perceived nonpolitically as merely part of a congressman's job. The implication is that there can be relatively little electoral payoff and that efforts to stimulate casework requests are relatively inefficient.”

—Explaining congressional casework styles. *American journal of political science*, v. 27, Aug. 1983: 530-547. LRS83-11401

“Using questionnaire and interview data from 1977 to 1978 on 146 House and 72 Senate offices, this study examines five aspects of congressional casework activity: the amount of time members personally devote to casework, the size of their casework staffs, the percentage of casework done in home offices, the degree to which congressmen attempt to solicit cases, and their propensity to use casework for electoral or public relations purposes.... The most important findings are that (1) only a small proportion of the variance in casework activities can be explained by the variables used here, (2) member seniority proves to be the most consistent factor in explaining such activities, and (3) ‘demand-side’ factors (constituency demands, traditions expectations) are more important than previous research indicated.”

—Political culture & congressional constituency service. *Polity*, v. 15, summer 1983: 555-572. LRS83-11596

“In this article Professor Johannes examines the concept of political culture as an important factor in explaining constituency service orientations and activities in Congress. His data show a strong link between culture and constituency service with reference to congressmen and their staffs. He finds that in the latter's case, the link is even stronger.”

—To serve the people: Congress and constituency service. Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984. 294 p. LRS84-9445

Systematically examines the growth since the 1960s of the casework function of Congress, and the concomitant expansion of executive branch congressional liaison offices, concluding that “the casework system legitimately and effectively provides citizens with direct redress of grievances, while affording legislators, their staffs, and executive branch personnel valuable feedback on how government programs are—or are not—working.”

—Women as congressional staffers: does it make a difference? *Women & politics*, v. 4, summer 1984: 69-81. LRS84-15864

“Women seem more committed to casework, are less skeptical of constituents' problems, seem more forthright and concerned with norms of equity, and are more apt to link casework to other (legislative) functions of Congress. No differences exist, however, with respect to casework success.”

Kaiser, Frederick M.

A Congressional Office of Constituent Assistance: proposals, rationales, and possible objections. Dec. 18, 1991. Washington, Congressional Research Service, 1991. 9 p. 91-893 GOV

This report briefly describes the basic characteristics of a Congressional Office of Constituent Assistance (Or Ombudsman) and suggests rationales for and possible objections to its establishment. The report also summarizes recent proposals along these lines, generated by the increasing volume of casework and

by concerns about the appearance of a conflict of interest when legislators or their personal staff intervene directly with administrative agencies.

Klonoff, Robert.

The Congressman as mediator between citizens and government agencies: problems and prospects. *Harvard journal on legislation*, v. 16, summer 1979: 701-734. LRS79-19166

Article examines “the serious and far-reaching implications which casework has for the legislative process as a whole,” concluding “by presenting a comprehensive plan, calling for the creation of a case handling and monitoring service within Congress, designed to maximize the informational benefits and minimize the resource costs of handling constituent complaints involving federal agencies.”

Koch, Deborah.

Managing projects and grant work; video program. July 19, 1994. Program time: 60 minutes. LTR94-1346

As financial assistance for constituents grows scarce, it is increasingly difficult to know how to advise constituents seeking funding. Deborah Koch, a former Projects Director in a congressional office, discusses how to manage multiple projects and grant requests, how to conduct the relevant research, and how to provide constituents with useful information even when federal funding is unavailable.

Also available as audio brief AB50304.

Lee, Riva.

Grantsmanship. Washington, Congressional Management Foundation, 1977. 44 p. (Guidebook series) LRS77-16754

Discusses sources of federal grant and loan monies, the need for financial assistance at the state and local levels, and the difficulty of obtaining reliable information about the federal grant and loan processes. Focuses on the role of the congressional office in helping to obtain funds for its district.

McAdams, John C. Johannes, John R.

Congressmen, perquisites, and elections. *Journal of politics*, v. 50, May 1988: 412-439. LRS88-14081

“Examines the so-called ‘perquisites/constituency service’ hypothesis that purports to explain incumbents’ electoral margins in congressional elections. The findings are that casework loads, trips home, and mailings did not affect the 1982 vote, but that district partisanship and ideology, redistricting, national electoral tides, and occasionally district education levels did.”

Mason, David M.

Let Congress be Congress: an agenda for legislative reform. *Policy review*, no. 62, fall 1992: 31-36. LRS92-9072

“Some reforms of Congress are more important than others. Structural reforms will be most useful if they encourage legislation and discourage non-legislative activity. Procedural reforms will be most useful if they foster clear decisions on big-picture issues. Several reforms clearly meet these tests,” including an end to casework.

Newman, Rhoda.

Grants work in a congressional office. Revised Dec. 5, 1989. Washington, Congressional Research Service, 1989. 13 p. 89-658 C

Congressional offices are often approached by constituents seeking funds for projects of potential benefit to their states and districts. This report discusses the grants process and varying approaches and techniques congressional offices have developed in dealing with grants requests.

Olson, Kenneth G.

The service function of the United States Congress. In Congress, the first branch of government. Twelve studies of the organization of Congress conducted under the auspices of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. Edited by Alfred de Grazia. Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1966. p. 337-374.

JK1061.T9 1967

“This paper examines the nature and significance of the voluminous set of personal demands and requests which citizens increasingly press upon their congressmen The basis contention of this paper is that the service function, far from being merely a time-consuming diversion from the essential legislative duties of members, is central to all of the work of the Congress.”

Paul, Karen Dawley.

Records management handbook for United States Senators and their archival repositories. Prepared by the Senate Historical Office under the direction of Walter J. Stewart, Secretary of the Senate. Washington, G.P.O. 1992. 179 p. (Publication, Senate, 102nd Congress, 2nd session, S. Pub. 102-~~ILRS~~92-5389

“Revised edition of a handbook first issued in 1985 [LRS85-3496; issued as Senate Publication 99-4 and Senate Bicentennial Publication no. 2] to assist Senate staff who administer the informational resources of senators’ offices.” Includes advice on organizing, managing, and disposing of casework records.

Pauls, Frederick H. Pontius, John S.

Congressional Member office operations. Revised Nov. 30, 1992. 37 p.

92-882 S

This report, with appendices, reviews staff functions in a congressional office. See the chapter on projects and casework, pp. 12-17, and Appendix D, projects and casework staff: duties, tasks and job titles, p. 30.

Povich, Elaine S.

‘Your petitioners therefore pray...’. Chicago tribune, Dec. 18, 1992: 1, 10.

LRS92-11587

Report on the project to catalog and research the approximately 10,000 petitions sent by constituents to the House of Representatives between 1789 and 1817 includes an accompanying article by Lynn Van Matre discussing contemporary constituent relations in Congress, primarily casework and mail.

Rosenblum, Victor G.

Handling citizen initiated complaints: an introductory study of federal agency procedures and practices. Administrative law review, v. 26, winter 1974: 1-47.

LRS74-6031

Article reports on questionnaire responses from 64 federal departments and agencies. Of the total, 51 had no office specifically for handling citizen complaints and therefore had no explicit procedures for processing them. Congressional and White House-initiated complaints got higher priority than direct citizen complaints. Less than one fifth said that citizen complaints directly resulted in procedural changes.

Serra, George.

What's in it for me? The impact of congressional casework on incumbent evaluation. *American politics quarterly*, v. 22, Oct. 1994: 403-420.

LRS94-9419

Uses "actual member-constituent contacts in a congressional district to determine the effect of casework on incumbent evaluation. The results indicate that, although casework does benefit the incumbent, its impact is specified by partisanship. In addition, findings show that casework has a ripple effect on the formation of constituent opinion in the district."

— Casework, issue positions, and voting in congressional elections: a district analysis, by George Serra and David Moon. *Journal of politics*, v. 56, Feb. 1994: 200-213.

LRS94-9238

"This study utilizes data gathered in a particular congressional district (both data on actual member-consistent contacts and survey data) to discern more explicitly whether ombudsman service and relative issue proximity to the incumbent affects consistent vote choice. The findings support the position that both service and policy responsiveness matter in congressional elections."

— The electoral consequences of perquisite use: the casework case, by George Serra and Albert D. Cover. *Legislative studies quarterly*, v. 17, May 1992: 233-246.

LRS92-6964

"Study begins by examining how a particular perquisite, casework, affects incumbent saliency and reputation among constituents... Results are incorporated into a model used to predict the electoral consequences of perquisite use. The model suggests that perquisites have most impact in constituencies in which a relatively small proportion of voters identify with incumbent's party."

Shapiro, Richard H.

Managing casework. In *his frontline management: a guide for congressional district/state offices*. Washington, Congressional Management Foundation, 1989. p. 93-131.

LRS89-12754

Outlines "the issues offices must address in developing an efficient and effective casework system."

Teague, Gerald V.

Profile of congressional grantpersons. *Grants magazine*, v. 4, Sept. 1981: 145-148.

LRS81-20284

Presents results of a March 1981 survey of 107 congressional offices concerning casework devoted to grants assistance. "Particular focus was on the individual staffers assigned this responsibility, the services they routinely perform, and the recipients of their assistance."

Theiler, Patricia.

Capitol letters. Common Cause magazine, v. 10, May-June 1984: 26-29.

LRS84-4313

Examines the impact of constituent mail on Members of Congress. "When Members' offices aren't answering mail or judging its significance, they are handling requests, since, after all, part of their jobs is serving their constituents."

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Casework considerations. In its House ethics manual. 102nd Congress, 2nd session. Apr. 1992. Washington, G.P.O., 1992. p. 239-266. LRS92-2657

Sets forth the standards which House Members and employees should heed in dealing with federal agencies on behalf of constituents.

U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Ways and Means. Subcommittee on Social Security. Social security subcommittee staff survey of congressional caseworkers. Washington, G.P.O., 1978. 27 p. LRS78-3917

At head of title: 95th Congress, 2nd session. Committee print WMCP: 95-71. "The tentative conclusion of the survey is that congressional caseworkers generally approve of how the Social Security Administration deals with their inquiries on behalf of constituents. The other side of the coin, however, is that these same caseworkers, basing their views on complaints from the same constituents, are generally quite critical of the treatment and service afforded claimants by local Social Security offices."

U.S. General Accounting Office.

Observations on the management and operation of executive branch legislative liaison offices. July 25, 1979. Washington, G.A.O., 1979. 12 p.

LRS79-21733

"FPCD-79-70"

Partial contents.—Delegating and referring inquiries.—Guiding congressional contacts.—Assuring timely responses.—LLO staff experience and training.—Attitudes toward congressional relations.

Waldman, Michael.

Quid pro whoa. New republic, v. 220, Mar. 19, 1990: 22-25. LRS90-1165

Discusses the ethical constraints that should apply when Members of Congress assist constituents having difficulties with the government.

Westen, T. Edward.

The constituent needs help: casework in the House of Representatives. In To be a Congressman: the promise and the power. Edited by Sven Groennings and Jonathan P. Hawley. Washington, Acropolis Books, 1973. p. 53-72.

JK1061.G75

"The job of a congressman encompasses a varied set of roles and tasks. This essay describes how with the aid of his staff, a congressman performs everyday constituency service. Casework is differentiated according to whether congressmen themselves must perform it or can delegate it to their staffs. The chapter concludes with a brief evaluation of the casework function."

Congressional casework-related bills in the U.S. Congress. GovTrack.us is an independent website tracking the status of legislation in the United States Congress and helping you participate in government. Now we're on Instagram too! Follow @govtrack.us on Instagram for new 60-second summary videos of legislation in Congress. Follow @govtrack on Twitter for posts about legislative activity and other information we're tracking, and some commentary. And please consider supporting our work by becoming a monthly backer @govtrack on Patreon or leaving a tip. Continue to Site. —. Join GovTrack's Advisory Community. We're looking to learn more about who uses Remember, congressional offices deal only with federal agencies. A lot of issues, such as filing for VA disability and education benefits, can be handled by your county veterans service officer. When it comes to benefits, it's actually best to wait until you are in the appeals process to contact an office. If a congressional inquiry is launched, the VA actually has to take the claim out for examination, slowing down the process. Hopefully, you don't have to utilize a congressional office for any casework issues, but if you do, this should provide you some ideas on how it works and how to be successful. And remember, while it may appear that Congress is unproductive and dysfunctional, it's pretty effective when you know how to work with it. Casework in a congressional office refers to the response or services that Members of Congress provide to constituents who request assistance. Casework appears to be one of the more enduring representational activities; Members of Congress have been providing such service since the early years of the American republic.[1] In contemporary times, thousands of constituents seek assistance annually from Members of Congress, with requests ranging from the simple to the complex. Members and their staffs help individual constituents deal with administrative agencies by acting as facilitators, ombudsmen One challenge to congressional casework is the widely held public perception that Members of Congress can initiate a broad array of actions resulting in a speedy, favorable outcome. The rules of the House and laws and regulations governing federal executive agency activities, however, closely limit interventions made on the behalf of constituents. When performing casework, congressional staff cannot circumvent existing procedures or force an agency to expedite a case or act in favor of a constituent. However, congressional staff can intervene to facilitate the appropriate administrative process Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs Congressional Liaison Service. Casework Guide. "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan" Abraham Lincoln. The Senate Liaison Service was commissioned by Congress on December 10, 1922 and the House Liaison Service was commissioned on February 13, 1925. These offices were brought under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1930 and remain so today. We hope that you will find this Guide helpful. The goal of the CLS is to provide your office with prompt, efficient, and professional service and I invite you to contact us whenever you can use our assistance. Congressional Liaison Service Office Contact.