According to the Congressional Management Foundation’s 2017 report that surveyed senior congressional staffers, in-person visits to a member’s Washington, D.C. office are the most effective advocacy strategy that can positively influence lawmakers who are undecided on an issue. To catch face time with an on-the-go Senator or Representative, face-to-face meetings require a written request. Appointment requests are handled by the scheduler, who works to get bookings on the crowded calendar. The scheduler is one of about a dozen people working in the D.C. office who play vital roles in shaping policy, communicating the office’s positions and keeping the member on track.

The staff is “often more knowledgeable of individual issues than the legislators themselves,” says Robert Longley of ThoughtCo.

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

Key positions on a lawmaker’s staff:

**Chief of staff**
The “Number One” in any office. The chief is responsible for how the office functions — they establish office policies and procedures. The chief oversees staffing decisions, manages employees and handles day-to-day responsibilities, including budget and press.

The chief, who advises the member on political matters, plays an important role in long-term strategy, communications strategy and legislative priorities.

**Scheduler**
Also called scheduling director, the executive assistant is the eyes of every congressional office. He or she is responsible for scheduling the member’s engagements and works directly with the chief.

The director allows time for the communications and legislative teams to meet with the member, organize and books travel plans, know the fundraising scheduler and works with the office’s finances. They review invitations to speak at or attend certain events and help plan the member’s travel back home.

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

**Communications director**
Implements the member’s communications strategy and manages the press team. The director handles television interviews, press releases, social media and print media. Either the communications director or the press secretary may serve as the formal spokesperson and may speak on the record about a member’s policies and plans.

Some chiefs are heavily involved in communications, while others give the communications director free rein.

**Press secretary**
Works with the press secretary on media requests and assists in executing media strategy. They report to the communications director and may also work with the press assistant. The press secretary may be responsible for drafting the member’s speeches and other remarks.

Depending on size of a member’s district or state, or their role in congressional leadership, a member may have multiple press secretaries or a deputy press secretary who reports to the press secretary.

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

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

**Legislative director**
Manages the member’s legislative portfolio and priorities and manages the legislative assistants and correspondents. They work directly with the member to establish priorities and strategy.

The legislative director is in charge of vote recommendations, creating new legislation and running the legislation through committee hearings.

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

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