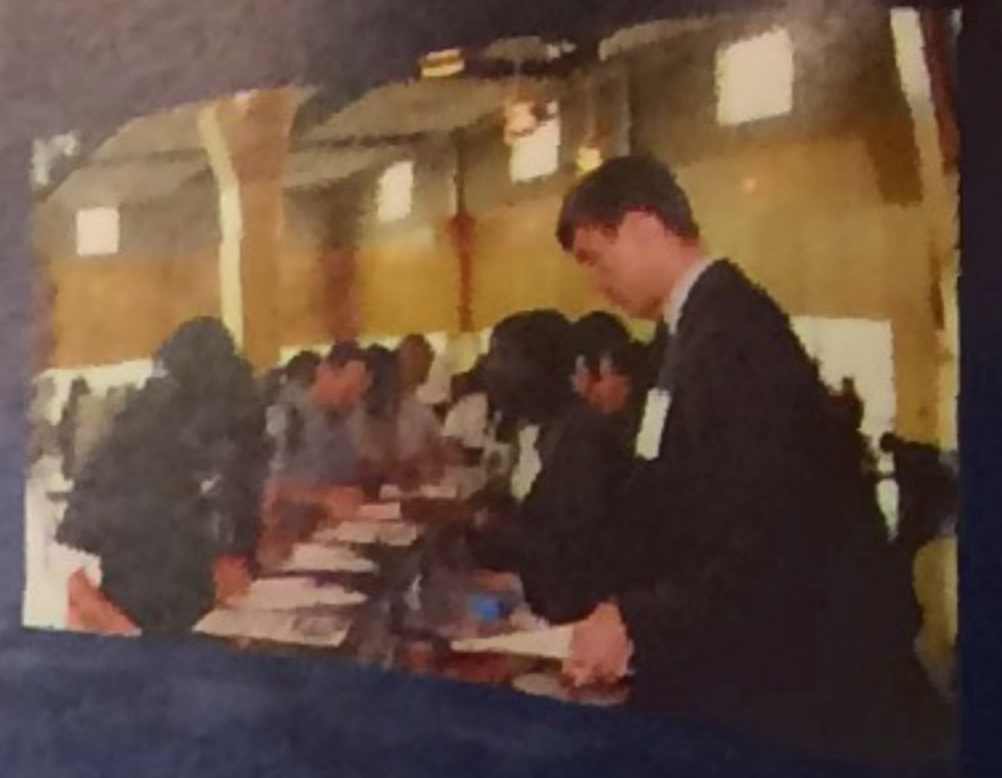
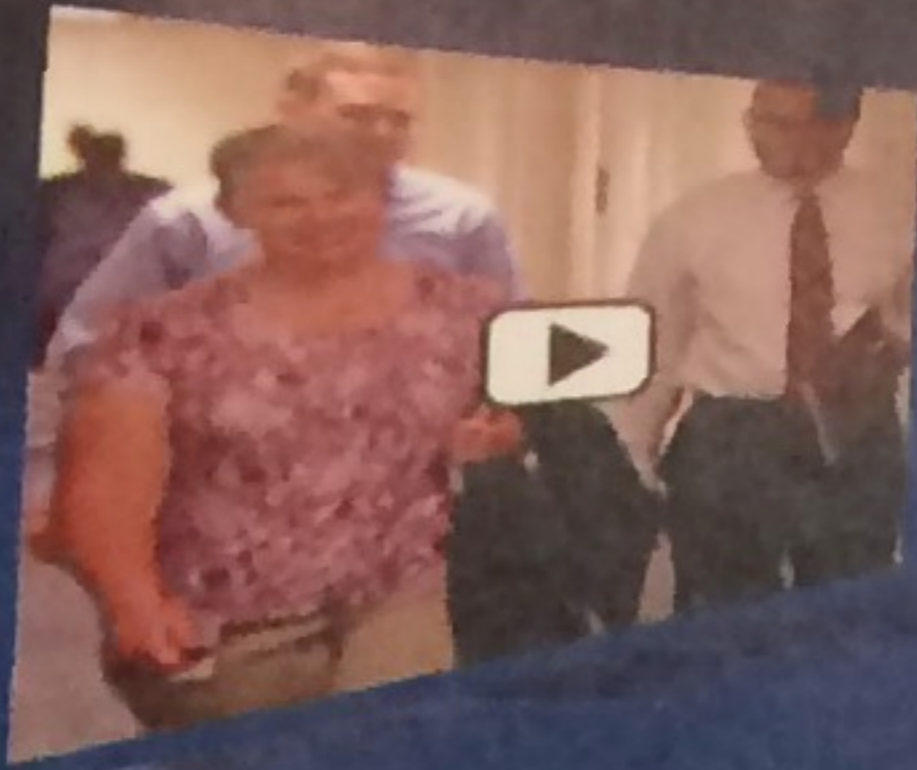


Interact with these digital assets and others in lesson 5

- ✓ INTERACTIVE IMAGE
Congressional Staff at Work
- ✓ PARTICIPATING IN YOUR GOVERNMENT
Becoming Informed About Your Elected Officials, Part 4
- ✓ SELF-CHECK QUIZ
- ✓ VIDEO
Congressional Budget Office

networks
TRY IT YOURSELF ONLINE



LESSON 5 Staff and Support Agencies

ReadingHelp Desk

Academic Vocabulary

- complex
- expert
- coordinate

Content Vocabulary

- personal staff
- committee staff
- administrative assistant
- legislative assistant
- caseworker

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

DESCRIBING Use the graphic organizer to describe the functions of congressional support staff.

Personal Staff	Committee Staff

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is the structure and organization of Congress?

Examine a recent daily schedule for Senator Max Baucus of Montana:

APRIL 24, 2014

Sen. Baucus

8:15 AM	Coffee with Senator Tester and Montana Constituents
9:00 AM	Meeting with Senior Staff
9:30 AM	Meeting with Finance Committee Staff
10:30 AM	Meeting with representatives from the Association of School Business Officials and Indian Impact Schools of Montana
11:45 AM	Lunch with Senator Jon Tester and Congressman Denny Rehberg
12:45 PM	Meeting with Finance Committee Staff
1:15 PM	Meeting with Senator Evan Bayh, Senator Bill Nelson, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Senator Mark Udall, Senator Michael Bennet, Senator Joe Lieberman, Senator Blanche Lincoln, Senator Mark Warner
2:30 PM	Meeting with Staff
3:45 PM	Meeting with Congressman Charlie Rangel
4:30 PM	Remarks on Senate Floor
5:30 PM	Meeting with Senior Staff
6:00 PM	Votes on Senate Floor
7:30 PM	Meeting with Finance Committee Staff

In addition to the activities depicted here, a senator might also hold press conferences or media interviews, attend campaign events, and more. During a typical day, a senator might receive more than 300 calls, e-mails, and letters from constituents. When the public is focused on a divisive issue in the Senate, that number could double.

If you were a senator or representative, what kind of assistance would you want? What tasks could you delegate? If you had the opportunity to hire several staff members, what skills or experiences would you consider important?

continued on the next page

2A give examples of the processes used by individuals, political parties, interest groups, or the media to affect public policy;

8A analyze the structure and functions of the legislative branch of government, including the bicameral structure of Congress, the role of committees, and the procedure for enacting laws;

19B evaluate the impact of the Internet and other electronic information on the political process.

Congressional Staff Role

GUIDING QUESTION *What role does congressional staff play in the work of Congress?*

Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts served more than 46 years in the Senate. When he first arrived in 1963, he had one staff member who worked on his two major committee assignments. Senators handled most of the committee business themselves, and mark-up sessions, when committee bills were being prepared to send to the Senate floor, would last for days as senators went over the bill line by line. By the end of his long career, Kennedy's staff had expanded considerably and mark-up sessions had become brief affairs because staff had already negotiated all of the revisions to the bill. Although Kennedy himself was famous for devoting attention to the bills he sponsored, he lamented that 95 percent of the "nitty-gritty work" of negotiating and drafting bills was now being done by staff.

The work of Congress is so extensive and **complex** that lawmakers have many resources to meet their obligations, including supporting agencies like the Library of Congress. The key resource of Congress, however, is trained staff that can help legislators draw up bills, stay informed on issues, and represent their constituents. Members rely heavily on staff in their committee work. Staff members research issues and topics on the committees' agenda and schedule witnesses for hearings.

When Lowell Weicker of Connecticut was in the Senate, a woman wrote to him complaining about the way an airline had handled her dog. The dog, shipped as animal cargo, died during the flight. One of the senator's secretaries mentioned the letter to Weicker's press secretary, who thought that the incident had news value. He phoned the Federal Aviation Agency and other government offices and found many similar cases. After informing the senator, the secretary wrote a draft of a bill to authorize the Transportation Department to regulate air transport of animals. Senator Weicker later introduced the legislation on the floor of the Senate. The story became headlines in Weicker's home state, and he received many letters of appreciation.

This story illustrates that staffers do much of the important legislative work of Congress. Lawmakers rely on staffers to help them handle their ever-expanding workload, communicate with voters, run committee hearings and floor sessions, draft new bills, write committee reports, and attend committee meetings. Staffers also help lawmakers get reelected. Staffers help members of Congress get publicity, keep an eye on political developments back home, and write speeches and newsletters.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Describing What are the myriad tasks that congressional staff perform?

Congressional Staff Growth

GUIDING QUESTION *Why has congressional staff increased over time?*

Congress has not always relied on staff to accomplish its work. For almost 100 years, senators and representatives had no personal aides. Occasionally they might hire assistants out of personal funds, but Congress provided no paid staff. But inadequate staffing had become an urgent complaint among lawmakers by the time Congress considered the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act. After passage of the act, the number of staff members increased dramatically. The House and Senate employed 2,000 personal staff

TEKS Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

20B create a product on a contemporary government issue or topic using critical methods of inquiry.

21A use social studies terminology correctly

21D create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

complex involved, not simple



Congressional staffs help lawmakers see to the needs of constituents in their states or districts. Here members of Senator Coons's staff register attendees at a job fair.

▲ CRITICAL THINKING

Speculating How might congressional staffers influence the legislative process?

expert a person who has special knowledge in an area

personal staff the people who work directly for individual senators and representatives

committee staff the people who work for House and Senate committees

administrative assistant a member of a lawmaker's personal staff who runs the lawmaker's office, supervises the schedule, and gives advice

legislative assistant a member of a lawmaker's personal staff who makes certain that the lawmaker is well informed about proposed legislation

members in 1947, but that number had grown to more than 10,600 by 2009. Committee staff increased from 400 to more than 2,200 in that same period.

Congressional staffs grew more as lawmaking became more complex in the 1970s. Lawmakers could not be **experts** on all the issues that came before their committees or that they needed to vote on in Congress. The demands that constituents placed on lawmakers also increased over the years. Members of Congress needed a large office staff simply to deal with the many letters, faxes, and e-mails from people in their states or congressional districts. Between 1977 and 2009, staff grew by over 11 percent in the House and 80 percent in the Senate.

Congressional staff are divided into two basic types: **personal staff** and **committee staff**. Personal staff members work directly for individual senators and representatives. Committee staff members work for the many House and Senate committees.

✓ **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

Explaining What are some of the reasons for the growth of congressional staff over time?

Personal Staff

GUIDING QUESTION *What roles are fulfilled by personal staff members?*

The size of each senator's personal staff varies because the allowances to pay for them are based on the population of the senator's state and distance from the capital. Senators each receive a yearly budget to operate their offices. Most of this goes for staff salaries. About one-third of personal staffers work in the legislators' home states; the rest work in Washington, D.C.

Administrative Assistants Lawmakers usually have several types of personal staff members in their offices. The **administrative assistant**, called an AA, serves as the chief of staff. The AA runs the lawmaker's office, supervises the lawmaker's schedule, and gives advice on political matters. A good AA also deals with influential people from the lawmaker's congressional district or state, which may influence the lawmaker's reelection.

Legislative Directors After the AA, the staff member with the most authority is the legislative director, or LD. The LD typically establishes the legislative agenda and briefs the lawmaker on all legislative matters. The LD supervises and serves as a resource person for the more junior legislative staff members. Some LDs also review constituent mail and the work of legislative clerks who handle the requests or e-mails to and from the lawmaker.

Legislative Assistants Supervised by the LD, **legislative assistants**, or LAs, make certain the lawmaker is well informed about the many bills with which she or he must deal. An LA does research, drafts bills, studies bills that are currently in Congress, and writes speeches and articles for the lawmaker.

Other important parts of the LA's job are to assist the lawmaker in committee meetings and to attend meetings when the lawmaker cannot be present. The LA who has followed the meeting and studied the bill in question may have prepared a short speech for the lawmaker or made up a list of questions for the lawmaker to ask witnesses.

LAs keep track of what is happening on the floor of Congress and of any bills that are in committee. While lawmakers may be in committee meetings or talking with voters, they may be interrupted by a buzzer signaling a vote.

Lawmakers rush to the floor of the Senate and House. They might not know what the vote is about, unless it involves a major bill and has been scheduled in advance. As they walk to the chamber floor, they look for their LAs.

In his book *In the Shadow of the Dome*, Mark Bisnow, a former legislative assistant, described the scene:

PRIMARY SOURCE

As the door of the "Senators Only" elevator opened, their bosses would pour out having come up from the tram in the basement that carried them from their offices. If they did not know what they were voting on (votes occurred frequently throughout the day, and it was hard to keep track), and if an aide had not already intercepted them en route, they would glance to the side to see if someone were waiting. A staffer might wave and run up for a huddled conference behind a pillar; or if the senator were in a hurry to make a fifteen minute deadline for voting, he might simply expect a quick thumbs-up or thumbs-down gesture."

—Mark Bisnow, 1990

Press Secretaries Lawmakers' chances of reelection and of running for higher office depend heavily on the media coverage they receive. They want their constituents to know that they are serving their interests, and they also want to avoid negative publicity. As a result, almost every member of Congress employs a press secretary or communications director. Frequently former journalists themselves, press secretaries know how the media works and how to attract attention. Press secretaries draft press releases, schedule press conferences, and answer questions from the media.

With the development of social media, press secretaries also assist senators and representatives with their websites, videos, blogs, tweets, and other electronic communication. These help shape the lawmakers' public images, publicize their policy positions, and help citizens follow their legislative activities. Aided by their press secretaries, lawmakers can also conduct town meetings and press conferences by telecommunications, reaching extensive audiences in their home states and districts.

Caseworkers A large part of a congressional staff consists of **caseworkers**, a term borrowed from the social services field, because they handle the many requests for help from a member's constituents. In addition to their offices in Washington, D.C., lawmakers have offices in key cities in their home states and districts. Caseworkers usually staff these offices.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying What do legislative assistants and caseworkers do? How are their roles different?

Committee Staff

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the role of committee and subcommittee staff?*

Every committee and subcommittee in Congress has a staff. The larger a committee, the more staff people it usually has. The committee chairperson and the senior minority party member of the committee hire and supervise staff members who support the committee as a whole, such as press

EXPLORING THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Interviewing Contact the office of one of your lawmakers. Ask permission to interview a staff member about his or her work. Plan your questions—here are some sample questions, but you should add several of your own.

- What is your job title and what do you do?
- What education and experience did you have before you began working on the Hill? How has that helped you be successful?
- What is the most challenging aspect of your work? The most rewarding or exciting?

You may consider sending the questions to the staff member in advance so he or she can be prepared. When the interview is complete, write an article for your school newspaper, create a poster that features your subject, or write an essay about that person and his or her work.

caseworker a member of a lawmaker's personal staff who handles requests for help from constituents

PARTICIPATING

M Your Government

Becoming Informed About Your Elected Officials, Part 4

Continue to develop the profiles you began in previous lessons called "My Representation in Congress."

- What is the address and phone number for your representative's and senators' offices in Washington, D.C.? What are their e-mail addresses?
- What are the addresses and phone numbers for their offices close to your home? (Many representatives and senators have multiple "district" offices. Choose the one closest to you.)

CRITICAL THINKING

Using Technology Add this information to the profiles you began previously. Prepare a class presentation of the final, complete profile.

EXPLORING THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Analyzing Look at the web page of your Representative or one of your Senators. Does it show the names, titles, and contact information of staff? If so, what can you learn about the staff's expertise and responsibilities? If not, why do you think some or all of the staff might be "invisible"?

secretaries, clerks, and office managers. In addition, individual members of Congress who are assigned to that committee also designate their own staff to work specifically on those issues and will loan other staff when needed. Committee staffers draft bills, study issues, collect information, plan committee hearings, write memos, prepare committee reports, and negotiate with other staff on the pending legislation. They are largely responsible for the work involved in making laws but are much fewer in number than personal staff.

Some senior committee staff members are very experienced and are experts in the area their committee covers, whether it is tax policy, foreign affairs, or health care. Laurence Woodworth, who spent 32 years on staff of the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, is a good example of such an expert. As the committee's staff director for 14 years, he was largely responsible for all changes in the tax laws. Later, Woodworth left the committee to become assistant secretary of the treasury.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Contrasting How do personal staff and committee staff differ?

Support Agencies

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the role of congressional support agencies?*

Several agencies in the legislative branch of government provide services that support the Congress. Some of their services are available to the other two branches of government and to American citizens, too. The four important support agencies created by Congress are discussed below.

The Library of Congress The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, containing more than 100 million books, journals, music pieces, films, photographs, and maps. The Library is the administrator of the copyright law. As a result, it receives two free copies of most published works copyrighted in the United States. In 2010 it acquired a collection of all public tweets housed in a new Twitter Archive.

The Library of Congress has a Congressional Research Service (CRS) with hundreds of employees. Every year, the CRS answers thousands of requests for information from lawmakers, congressional staff, and committees. The CRS researches a broad range of topics for Congress.

Congress members use the CRS to research matters related to bills that are before Congress and to answer requests from voters.

Congressional Budget Office (CBO) Congress established the CBO in 1974 to **coordinate** the budget work of Congress, to study the budget proposals put forward by the president each year, and to project the costs of proposed programs. The CBO counterbalances the president's elaborate budget organization, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). CBO staffers study economic trends, track how much congressional committees are spending, and report on the budget each April. They also calculate how budget decisions might affect the economy.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) Established in 1921, this agency is the nation's watchdog over how the funds Congress appropriates are spent. A comptroller general appointed to a 15-year term directs the GAO. The agency has a professional staff of about 3,000 people, who review the financial management of government programs that Congress creates, collect government debts, settle claims, and provide legal service.

Many GAO staff members answer requests for information about specific programs from lawmakers and congressional committees. They also prepare reports on various federal programs for lawmakers, testify before committees, develop questions for committee hearings, and provide legal opinions on bills that are under consideration. Almost one-third of the GAO's work now comes from congressional requests for information.

Government Printing Office (GPO) The GPO began in the era of printing presses. In the digital era, it now makes the Congressional Record, House and Senate bills, committee hearings, reports, and other publications available online as well as through web-based apps. The GPO promotes transparency in government by providing these publications over the Internet at no charge. It also shares its legislative information databases with the Library of Congress's THOMAS information services to track Congress's legislative activities, past and present.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Defining What do the acronyms CRS, CBO, GAO, and GPO stand for? How does each support the work of the Congress?

SKILLS PRACTICE

Use the words *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* to ask questions about this lesson. Have a partner respond to your questions.

coordinate to arrange and organize

LESSON 5 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

1. **Specifying** What are the roles of an administrative assistant and a legislative assistant in the U.S. Congress?

8A, 21A

Using Your Graphic Organizer

2. **Analyzing** Use your completed graphic organizer to analyze the functions of congressional personal staff and committee staff. How do their roles and functions differ? 8A

Answering the Guiding Questions

3. **Identifying** What role does congressional staff play in the work of Congress? 8A

4. **Explaining** Why has congressional staff increased over time? 8A

5. **Stating** What roles are fulfilled by personal staff members?

6. **Specifying** What is the role of committee and subcommittee staff?

7. **Describing** What is the role of congressional support agencies? 8A

Writing About Government

8. **Informative/Explanatory** How do you think the Internet has transformed the work of Congress and congressional support agencies? Do some research to find out more, and then write a brief essay explaining the transformation. 8A, 19B, 20B, 21D