Working with Congress
Leveraging Your Experience to Impact Policymakers

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What Are the 3 Main Factors that Influence a Member of Congress?

• Media / Current Events
• Personal Conviction/Issues
• District
The 2 Most Effective Way to Communicate with Policy Makers

• Know Your Audience
  • What’s their background, history, profile, schedule, age, agenda, etc.

• Tell Your Story
  • Weave your ask or purpose into a compelling narrative.
Knowing your Audience: 116th Congress Demographics

- House: 235 Democrats, 199 Republicans. Senate: 53 Republicans, 47 Democrats and 2 Independents who caucus with Democrats
- Average age in the 116th in House is 57.6 years, Senate 62.9, among oldest in history
- Dominant profession is public service/politics, business and law
- 131 women (a record number) in congress: 106 in the House and 25 in the Senate
- Most diverse congress in history, though still predominantly white
- 10 new scientists in congress – an ocean scientist, and a slew of engineers including industrial, computer, nuclear, aerospace, and biochemical
- Fun Facts: 1 almond orchard owner in the House down from two, as well as 1 vintner
- 1 flight attendant, 3 pro football players, 21 insurance agents, 6 social workers
## Most Frequently Listed Occupational Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>SENATOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Service/Politics</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Education Background of Incoming Class

• **21** Representatives and **4** Senators have doctoral degrees

• **161** Members of the House (36.6% of the House) and **53** Senators (53% of the Senate) hold law degrees

• **21** Members of the House and **4** Senators have medical degrees

• **94.8%** of House Members and **100%** of Senators hold bachelors degrees

• **17** Members of the House have no educational degree beyond a high school diploma
## Education in 116th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE</th>
<th>SENATOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No degree beyond high school</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Degree</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D., D.Phil., Ed.D., or D. Min</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Degree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“[It] is important to remember that not all people will reach the same policy conclusion based on the same scientific information—even if they understand and accept that information.”

— REP. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY, RETIRED)
Congress is organized into committees
“Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work.”

— WOODROW WILSON
Authorization VS Appropriations

- “There are three types of congressmen – Democrats, Republicans, and Appropriators.”
Committees

The House's committees consider bills and issues and oversee agencies, programs, and activities within their jurisdictions.

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Budget
- Education and Labor
- Energy and Commerce
- Ethics
- Financial Services
- Foreign Affairs
- Homeland Security
- House Administration
- Judiciary
- Natural Resources
- Oversight and Reform
- Rules
- Science, Space, and Technology
- Small Business
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Veterans' Affairs
- Ways and Means
- Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
- Joint Select Committee on Solvency of Multiemployer Pension Plans
- Joint Economic Committee
- Joint Committee on the Library
- Joint Committee on Printing
- Joint Committee on Taxation
Congressional staffers are drinking from a fire hose

200 inbound e-mails from advocacy groups, constituents, and colleagues
5 e-mail alerts
150 headlines
15 Internet searches
5 Washington-focused publications
4 newspapers
3 news magazines
8 hours of (background) cable news
3 hours of radio news
5 online newsletters
2 hours of committee hearings
300 pages of documents from Leadership’s Office
75-PAGE report from Congressional Budget Office
25 faxes from interest groups
20 publications, position papers, received by mail
30 phone calls
4 lobbyist meetings
Important Factors in Science Advocacy

- Science for Policy VS Policy for Science
  - Climate Change, Comets, and Outside Your Field Bias

- The Purpose of Congress
  - Pass laws, Fund Stuff
Tell Your Story

Tell me a fact and I’ll learn, tell me the truth and I’ll believe, but tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever...

— INDIAN PROVERB
Congress Tells Stories

Countless
to remer

The Notx
death. From celebr
of Brooklyn, New 
artwork and audio
murdered in 1997.

Brooklyn Congressman Hakeem Jeffries recited 
lyrics to Biggie Small's "Juicy" on the floor of the
Like the fabled goose that laid the golden egg, federally funded scientific research has yielded extraordinary yet unexpected returns.

Science moves forward in unexpected ways. The Golden Goose Award celebrates seemingly obscure research projects that have led to game-changing discoveries.
“We do not suffer from a lack of information here on Capitol Hill, but from a lack of ability to glean the knowledge and to gauge the validity, the credibility, and the usefulness of the large amounts of information and advice that we receive.”

— REP. RUSH HOLT, JUNE 2006
The Language You Speak Matters

- Overcoming the Curse of Knowledge
- Science Communication
US SPACE TEAM's

**UP GOER FIVE**

The only flying space car that's taken anyone to another world

(explained using only the ten hundred words people use the most often)

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**THING TO HELP PEOPLE ESCAPE REALLY FAST IF THERE'S A PROBLEM AND EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE, SO THEY DECIDE NOT TO GO TO SPACE**

**STUFF TO BURN TO MAKE THE BOX WITH THE PEOPLE IN IT ESCAPE REALLY FAST**

**THING TO CONTROL WHICH DIRECTION THE ESCAPING PEOPLE GO**

**PLACE WHERE FIRE COMES OUT TO HELP THEM ESCAPE**

**PEOPLE BOX**

**DOOR**

**CHAIRS**

**COLD AIR FOR BURNING (AND BREATHING) THIS PART HAD A VERY BIG PROBLEM ONCE**

**PART THAT FLIES AROUND THE OTHER WORLD AND COMES BACK HOME WITH THE PEOPLE IN IT AND FALLS IN THE WATER**

**PART THAT GOES ALONG TO GIVE PEOPLE AIR, WATER, COMPUTERS, AND STUFF; IT COMES BACK HOME WITH THEM BUT BURNS UP WITHOUT LANDING**

**PART THAT STAYS ON THE OTHER WORLD (IT'S STILL THERE)**

**FEET THAT GO ON THE GROUND OF THE OTHER WORLD**

**RING HOLDING MOST OF THE COMPUTERS**

**PART THAT FLIES DOWN TO THE OTHER WORLD WITH TWO PEOPLE INSIDE**
Tell **your story** clearly & with context

Do:

- Talk about **your experiences** as a student, innovator, manager, etc.
- Share **your informed opinions** on what can be done to improve processes
- Be willing to say ‘**I don’t know**’ when that’s the truth
- Connect invention to jobs, the economy, high skilled workforce
- Let the conversation go where staff want to take it
- Be a **RESOURCE**!

Don’t:

- Feel the need to answer every question
- Cast federal funding of R&D as an entitlement or criticize other interest groups
- Use jargon
Talking Points

Your Ask Should be Simple. *Example: Support Federal Funding for R&D in the FY20 Budget*

- **Jobs**: Federal R&D fosters innovation ecosystem which is the greatest job creation engine in the world.
- **Workforce**: Federal R&D is a crucial investment in building a competitive 21st century workforce
- **Economic Competitiveness**: Federal R&D trains students like me to drive innovations in the private sector
- **Losing Ground**: R&D funding on a downward trend for past decade, at lowest levels since 1990. We’re falling behind rest of the world
CASE Example

Drew Story’s Story

• Started with where he was from
• Talked about his research and its relevance
• Explained he received funding from federal agencies
• Asked that funding levels remain the same or increase in FY18
Science and the American audience

87% of Americans are “very” or “moderately” interested in new scientific discoveries

Science & Engineering Indicators 2016, National Science Board
Science and the American audience

85% of Americans express support for government funding of basic research

Science & Engineering Indicators 2016, National Science Board
89% of Americans have “some” or “a great deal of” confidence in the scientific community*

*second only to the military
Science & Engineering Indicators 2016, National Science Board
Helpful Tips

• Research your fact or prep sheets
• Go over scripts
• Designate point person(s)
• Prep for 5, 15 or 30 minute meeting
• Know what to expect: Age, location, environment, lines
• Ask for business card, and FOLLOW UP!
Helpful Tips

• The buildings are connected underground, but go outside if switch chambers
• Allow at least 15 minutes to get between the House and Senate side
• Capitol Police are very helpful, and located everywhere
• If you have a lot of meetings, wear comfortable shoes
Follow Up

• Communication/Outreach must be consistent

• “OK, you've convinced me. Now go out and put pressure on me.”

— FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
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