

## PRACTICE SETTINGS

### Working on Capitol Hill\*

There are numerous opportunities for attorneys and law students interested in federal legislation and public policy to work on Capitol Hill – directly with Members of Congress and congressional committees, and indirectly with political parties, campaigns, PACs and other advocacy groups. There are also opportunities for attorneys and law students to work with law and lobbying firms. There is no central clearinghouse of Capitol Hill job listings; most offices hire their own staffs, and many openings are filled through word-of-mouth. Finding a Hill job takes persistence, serious networking, and patience!

This handout provides information and resources to assist you with finding professional positions on the Hill and working for Congress as well as a discussion of various employment opportunities including: the personal offices of representatives in the House and Senate; the committees in both bodies; the Democratic and Republican Parties; the congressional administration; and the Executive Offices.

#### Political Positions

##### Members' Personal Offices

Each Member of Congress has a staff to advise on legislative matters and to assist in responding to constituents' needs. The size and composition of staffs (and salaries) vary, and each staff is divided between DC and home offices. Generally, Senate offices have larger staffs and higher salaries. Staffs typically consist of: Staff Assistants and Legislative Correspondents, who handle administrative matters and constituent services; Legislative Assistants, who research and advise the Member regarding legislative issues; a Legislative Director who oversees the Legislative Correspondents and Legislative Assistants; and a Chief of Staff, who is the head of the office and the main staff advisor.

The *primary points of entry for attorneys* on the Hill are as a Legislative Assistant (LA) or a Legislative Director (LD). Often, LAs and LDs start out by working as interns in the same office. Each LA is responsible for certain substantive areas dictated by the Member's committee assignments and constituent concerns. Each LA researches his or her assigned areas and advises the Member on bills that will come through the committee or up for vote. LAs are often the first point of contact for lobbyists, and stay in frequent communication with the committee and

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[http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/CDO\\_Public/CDO\\_Working\\_On\\_Capitol\\_Hill\\_Public.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/CDO_Public/CDO_Working_On_Capitol_Hill_Public.pdf)

subcommittee staffers and the Office of Legislative Counsel. The LD is a more senior position and responsible for long-range planning of the Member's legislative activities.

The fast-paced, political work of the LA can provide great experience, but job security is an issue since Representatives come up for reelection every two years and Senators every six years. Long hours are to be expected, particularly when a bill is active in your area of responsibility. LA openings are usually for immediate needs, so apply when you are available to start right away.

*Best practices to learn of position openings:* Networking with Members and staffers is essential. A great resource for finding contact information for the Chief of Staff and other staffers is the Leadership Directories (information for this online resource can be found in the resources section of this manual). You must spend time informational interviewing and seeking out congressional internships. Start with Members from districts where you have ties (*i.e.*, your hometown, undergraduate school location, etc.), and note which Members have larger staffs (depends on the size of their state). Students graduating in May of an election year should be aware that House and Senate members running in contested races may be unlikely to make any new hires prior to the November elections. It is important to research individual office policies to learn more about their hiring and promotion policies. Interested individuals are also encouraged to stay abreast of the current issues affecting Members by reading *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Roll Call* and/or *Politico* daily, monitoring any developments important to the committee or the state.

### Committee Work

The Committee staff, appointed by the committee or subcommittee chair or "ranking Member" (the highest ranked representative from the party in the minority), are the real issue specialists. Committee work includes drafting legislation, writing reports to create legislative history, assisting Members in debates, organizing hearings and witnesses, overseeing administration of a designated executive branch agency, meeting with lobbyists, and preparing remarks and briefing papers for Members. Each committee (and subcommittee) has a staff for both the minority and majority sides.

Committee staffers find work rewarding and feel privileged to be involved in policymaking. Salaries tend to be higher than personal office staff; however, the hours can be long, especially when Congress is in session. Turnover is frequent, as people leave to take positions with government agencies or lobbying firms, but as a subject matter expert you may be well-positioned even with regular changes in committee leadership.

Committees *do hire staff directly out of law school*. Your primary contact will be the Chief of Staff, but you should write to the committee chair and minority leader (see information for the Leadership Directories in the resources section). When applying to positions, emphasize your home state ties and your interest in the committee's substantive focus. Remember, the size of the staff fluctuates if the majority changes, and some committees have larger staff. Also remember to apply to subcommittees.

## Party Positions

Some political positions function as party offices and are unaffiliated with specific Member offices. For example, the Senate Republican and Democratic Policy Committees are steering committees that coordinate party platform issues; the Republican and Democratic Conferences serve similar functions. The Leadership Offices, including the Majority and Minority Leader, Speaker of the House, Majority and Minority Whips employ political staffers to assist party leaders with their responsibilities.

## How to Apply for Political Positions

To apply for summer volunteer positions in a Member's personal office, write to the Chief of Staff or Legislative Director. For committee work, write to the majority or minority staff director or to the Chief of Staff. Your political background with one party may impact employment with the committee staff of the other party, so you may need to adapt your resume accordingly. Remember to follow up in a few weeks with a phone call.

Follow a similar approach to apply for permanent positions. In addition, although positions on Capitol Hill are not typically advertised, both the House and Senate have offices that handle some job listings.

Please see resources for job postings in the resources section of this manual. There is also the tradition of going from office to office in person to leave a resume with a junior staffer. This is your opportunity to ask about vacancies, learn what skills are of interest to each office, and get information about how to follow up on your applications. This is a common and effective practice.

***Remember***, if considering a job on the Hill, keep in mind that prior Hill experience is often required for more senior positions. Starting out as a Legislative Assistant will get you in the door and put you in a good position to advance quickly.

## Salary Information

Hill salaries are substantially less than private sector salaries. For more specific information, check out <http://www.legistorm.com/salaries.html>. Public sector employees may also be eligible for federal student loan reimbursement. (A comprehensive discussion of available debt relief can be found on the Equal Justice Works website at <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/resources/student-debt-relief/public-service-loan-forgiveness>.)

## Non-Political Positions

### House and Senate Administrative Offices

The Offices of Legislative Counsel (House and Senate) are non-partisan offices that provide technical expertise in legislative drafting to Members and committees. Attorneys in these offices do not set policy; they make sure the draft of a bill accurately reflects policy. Counsel meet with Members and staff to discuss legislative proposals, attend committee meetings, research prior legislation, and draft bills and amendments.

Substantial political activity will disqualify an individual from employment. Though the work load is unpredictable and requires long hours, these jobs are prestigious and involve a wide variety of interesting work. The Offices hire both interns and new graduates but seek candidates from the top 1/3 of the class with strong writing skills. Interns and new attorneys receive intensive training in drafting skills and a background or graduate work in public policy is helpful. Positions are filled as-needed, and there is limited turnover.

The House Office of Legislative Counsel (HOLC) employs about 40 attorneys and has 2L summer associates (paid). More information can be found on the website at <http://www.house.gov/legcoun/>.

The Senate Office of Legislative Counsel (SOLC) employs about 30 attorneys and also has 2L summer interns (paid). More information can be found on the website at <http://www.slc.senate.gov/Careers/careers.htm>.

### Senate Legal Counsel and House General Counsel

The Office of Senate Legal Counsel provides legal assistance and representation to Senators, committees, officers, and employees of the Senate on matters pertaining to their official duties. The office is led by the Senate Legal Counsel and deputy counsel, who are appointed by the President pro tempore upon the recommendation of the majority and minority leaders. The professional staff of the office includes three attorneys and a support staff.

The Office of General Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives (OGC) provides legal advice and assistance to Members, committees, officers and employees of the House, without regard to political affiliation, on matters related to their official duties. The OGC represents Members, committees, officers and employees, both as parties and witnesses, in litigation arising from or relating to the performance of their official duties and responsibilities. The OGC also represents the House itself in litigation, both as a party and as amicus curiae in cases in which the House has an institutional interest.

### State Legislature

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on

the most pressing state issues. NCSL is also an excellent resource for individuals seeking positions with the state legislators. On <http://www.ncsl.org> under Resources & Directories – Jobs Clearinghouse you will find employment opportunities with state legislatures and other public policy positions.

### Library of Congress

The Library of Congress (LOC), the research arm of Congress and national repository of information, has over 150 J.D. jobs, and a Master in Library Science is not required. These are civil service jobs, meaning they are not tied to the election schedule (so there is more security). You can learn about job opportunities at [www.loc.gov/hr/employment](http://www.loc.gov/hr/employment) and <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/opportunities/#employment>.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is the public policy research arm of the LOC, with six research divisions. The American Law Division (ALD) is the chief employer of attorneys, who provide written analyses and legal opinions at stages in the legislative process. The ALD is further broken down into four research sections: Administrative Law, Business, Congress, and Natural Resources (<http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/research/div-ald.html>). The ALD takes law students as summer volunteers, and hires attorneys (<http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/opportunities/#employment>).

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## **Resources**

### Capitol Hill

- [http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/CDO\\_Public/CDO\\_Working\\_On\\_Capitol\\_Hill\\_Public.pdf](http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/CDO_Public/CDO_Working_On_Capitol_Hill_Public.pdf) (Yale Law School: Working on Capitol Hill - An excellent tool to incorporate in your Capitol Hill Job Search)
- Leadership Directories - provides contact information for the leaders of major United States government, business, professional, and nonprofit organizations. The database is searchable by name, organization, practice area, geographic location and educational institution. This information can be helpful when looking for contacts to include in your networking efforts. (accessed through the GW Portal on the Career Center Department Information site under Networking – Database Subscriptions)
- “Job Listings from Brad Traverse” is the most comprehensive resource for anyone seeking a job on Capitol Hill in the fields of government relations, public policy and affairs, public relations, communications and political campaigns. “Job Listings from Brad Traverse” can be found at <http://www.bradtraverse.com>. You can attain the username and password for this site by contacting your GW Law Career Counselor or the Career Center at (202)994-7340. A link to the site and the username and password are also available on the Career Center’s section of the GW Portal under Employers-Government.
- The House of Representatives maintains a Member and Committee Vacancy Announcement Service. To subscribe to the weekly House Employment Bulletin and to upload your resume to the Resume Bank of candidates seeking employment with the House please visit [http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/members\\_and\\_committees.php](http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/members_and_committees.php). The printed Bulletin is also available for pick-up in three locations: House Vacancy Announcement and Placement

Service Office, Longworth House Office Building, Suite B-235, (202) 226-5836; First Call Service Center, Longworth House Office Building, Suite B227, (202) 225-8000; CAO Human Resources Office, Ford House Office Building, Suite H2-102, (202) 225-2926. Follow the instructions in each vacancy announcement on how to apply.

- For positions with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, you can apply online at <http://cao.house.gov/careers>.
- The Office of the House Majority Whip (The Capitol, Room H-107 (202) 225-0197) maintains an active resume bank for three months.
- The Committee on House Administration (CHA) sets up a resume drop area following House elections to facilitate staff hiring for newly elected Members. The CHA website (<http://cha.house.gov/>) also provides lists of House organizations which can be good sources for networking.
- The nonpartisan Senate Placement Office (SH-116 1st Floor, Senate Hart Office Building (202) 224-9167), maintains a resume bank of individuals seeking Senate employment, and provides confidential referral of resumes of candidates if/when Senate offices request them. To become registered in the resume bank applicants must complete the New Applicant Resume Bank Registration form, complete the Applicant Referral Form and participate in an informational interview. Applicants should be available for employment within two weeks at the time of their informational interview. Informational interviews are conducted on a walk-in basis between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Placement Office is open from 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The Placement Office also publishes the Senate Employment Bulletin as a resource for Senate offices wishing to advertise staff vacancies. The listing is updated daily at [www.senate.gov/employment](http://www.senate.gov/employment).
- Opportunities in Public Affairs (<http://www.opajobs.com/index.php>) collects jobs for subscribers from entry through senior level positions in the Washington, DC area and nationally, including Capitol Hill Jobs, Public Relations Jobs, and Jobs in Government Affairs, Legislation, and Journalism in Congressional Offices, the media, nonprofits, and corporations.
- A free resource available to the public is Indeed (<http://www.indeed.com/>). Indeed has given job seekers free access to millions of jobs from thousands of company websites and job boards. Indeed enables users to create multiple accounts to monitor employment opportunities in various sectors and geographic locations. Once a user has set their account Indeed will send them email updates with job placements that may be of interest to the user.
- [www.cq.com/corp/showtab.do?page=corp\\_hilljobs](http://www.cq.com/corp/showtab.do?page=corp_hilljobs) (Congressional Quarterly; lists job vacancies)
- [www.thehill.com/resources/classifieds/employer](http://www.thehill.com/resources/classifieds/employer)
- <http://www.workforcongress.com/> (monthly subscription)
- [www.hillzoo.com](http://www.hillzoo.com) (job vacancies by political party)
- <http://dyn.politico.com/politicojobs>
- [www.jobsthatareleft.com](http://www.jobsthatareleft.com)
- [www.wuxx.com/yda/resources/jobs.aspx](http://www.wuxx.com/yda/resources/jobs.aspx) (jobs for young Democrats)
- [www.leadershipinstitute.org](http://www.leadershipinstitute.org)
- [www.conservativejobs.com](http://www.conservativejobs.com)
- [www.loc.gov/crsinfo](http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo) (Library of Congress Congressional Research Service)
- [www.opajobs.com](http://www.opajobs.com) (Opportunities in Public Affairs; biweekly publication on job openings)

- [www.gpoaccess.gov/plumbbook/](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/plumbbook/)
- [http://www.psjd.org/resource\\_center](http://www.psjd.org/resource_center)
- [www.rcjobs.com](http://www.rcjobs.com) (Roll Call)
- Symplicity Student Evaluations (information on other students' Hill experiences)
- LinkedIn (Join Congressional/Committee Groups)

#### House of Representatives

- [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) (general info on Representatives)
- <http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/> (House job postings)
- [www.cha.house.gov/](http://www.cha.house.gov/) (Committee on House Administration lists House staff organizations)
- <http://www.house.gov/legcoun/> (House Office of Legislative Counsel)
- [www.house.gov/content/jobs/hvaps\\_subscribe.php](http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/hvaps_subscribe.php) (House Employment Bulletin)
- [http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/members\\_and\\_committees.php](http://www.house.gov/content/jobs/members_and_committees.php) (House Vacancy Announcements and Placement Service - Resume Bank)

#### Senate

- [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) (general info on Senators)
- [www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/placement\\_office.htm](http://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/placement_office.htm)
- <http://www.senate.gov/employment/po/positions.htm> (Senate Employment Bulletin)
- <http://slc.senate.gov/Careers/careers.htm>

#### Campaign Committees

- [www.rpc.senate.gov](http://www.rpc.senate.gov) (Senate Republican Committee)
- [www.dpcc.senate.gov](http://www.dpcc.senate.gov) (Democratic Policy Committee)
- [www.campaignjobs.com](http://www.campaignjobs.com)
- [www.dscc.org](http://www.dscc.org) (Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee)
- [www.dccc.org](http://www.dccc.org) (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee)
- [www.nrsc.org](http://www.nrsc.org) (National Republican Senatorial Campaign)
- [www.nrcc.org](http://www.nrcc.org) (National Republican Congressional Committee)

#### Lobbying/Government Relations

(see also Capitol Hill resources above)

- <http://www.asacenter.org> (American Society of Association Executives – for Trade Association Positions)
- [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) (Martindale Hubble - search for law firms with Government Relations practice)
- [www.alldc.org](http://www.alldc.org) (American League of Lobbyists)
- [www.lobbyingjobs.com](http://www.lobbyingjobs.com)
- <http://www.dmoz.org/Society/Politics/Lobbying/>
- [http://www.lobbyists.info/government\\_relations\\_resources.cfm](http://www.lobbyists.info/government_relations_resources.cfm)
- <http://www.wgr.org/> (Women in Government Relations)

#### State Fellowships

- <http://www.ncsl.org/> (The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) under Resources & Directories – Jobs Clearinghouse you will find employment opportunities with state legislatures and other public policy positions.)

City/County Positions

- <http://www.nlc.org/> (National League of Cities)
- <http://www.naco.org/Pages/default.aspx> (National Association of Counties)

**Print Resources:** (available in the Career Center Resource Library)

- Associations Yellow Book (directory of major trade and professional associations)
- Congressional Yellow Book
- Government Affairs Yellow Book
- Washington Representatives