

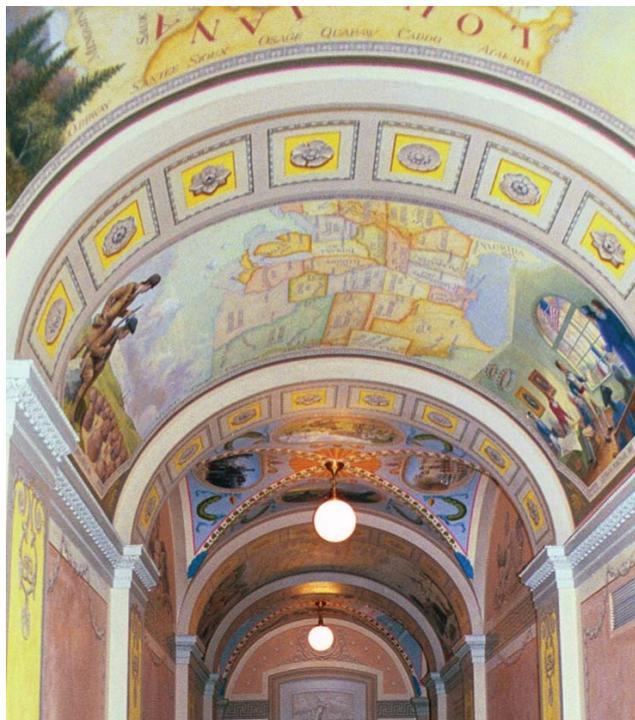
Political Intelligence

Members of Congress, both representatives and senators, stake out positions on a wide variety of issues, but care fervently about only a small fraction of these. Similarly, they interact with hundreds of their colleagues, but gravitate to a smaller group. This Best Practices Guide provides recommendations about how to determine which issues a Member truly cares about and how to discern (as much as possible) who their friends are.

Issues Research

To build strong relationships with the Members of Congress who represent your university, you must conduct in-depth issues research on each of them. Here are some specific suggestions:

- **Committee/Subcommittee Assignments.** Senators and representatives come to Washington after they are first elected and meet with their party's leaders to discuss committee assignments. Being newly elected, they may not get their initial choices, especially if they're interested in the most prestigious panels. However, once they are reelected and gain seniority, they generally gravitate to committees and subcommittees with jurisdiction over issues of interest to them and/or their constituents. To learn which panels your Members serve on, consult any of the published directories listed in Table 1. (Pay particular attention to subcommittee jurisdiction/assignments to really zero-in on their interests.)
- **Caucus Memberships.** In addition to official committee/subcommittee assignments, representatives and senators often join informal coalitions (caucuses). These "congressional member organizations" are either broad in scope (such as the Northeast-Midwest Caucus which represents Members from "rust belt" states) or narrowly focused (e.g. the Zoo and Aquarium Caucus). A few caucuses have dedicated staff (e.g. the Congressional Black Caucus) but most are staffed part-time by assistants working for the caucus chair(s). See Table 2 for sources.
- **News Releases.** To discover what issues motivate a Member, do a deep dive into their news release archives. Fortunately, most Members make this easy by providing access to such releases through their official web site.



ABOUT US

Cornerstone Government Affairs is a full-service, bipartisan public affairs firm founded in 2002. We represent a diverse group of clients, from myriad industries and sectors, and maintain expertise in a wide range of issue areas including agriculture, defense, education, energy, health, homeland security, international affairs, tax policy, telecommunications, and transportation and infrastructure.

ABOUT THESE BEST PRACTICES GUIDES

To help our land-grant clients become more effective citizen advocates, we have prepared a series of Best Practices in Government Relations Guides. These can be found at: www.land-grant.org/guides.html

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When wading through these releases, look for issues closely related to your university's research, education, or public outreach programs. (For example: Do they mention food safety? Farm productivity? Childhood obesity? Water?) Pay special attention to what the member says in their own quotes. That's what they most want to see repeated in the newspaper and a likely indicator of what they care most about.

- **Bills and Resolutions.** Another good way to bring to light a Member's true interests is to look at the bills and resolutions they introduce. Senators and representatives generally sponsor measures that they'd like to see enacted into law, but sometimes the mere introduction of legislation serves a useful political purpose. To look up the bills and resolutions that each Member has sponsored in the current Congress, visit the Congressional Research Service (CRS) web site: thomas.loc.gov and select the Member's name from the House/Senate drop-down lists under the heading "Browse Bills by Sponsor." (There are also links to sponsorship information from previous Congresses.)
- **Voter Scorecards.** The 100 U.S. senators and 435 representatives cast hundreds of recorded votes every year covering the full gamut of issues. Many special interest groups sift through these roll-call votes and publish "scorecards" showing how each Member voted on select issues. Some scorecards are circulated only within an organization, but others are publicly accessible. Table 3 provides a handy list of key scorecards. (Important note: these interest groups all have "an axe to grind" and thus carefully choose which recorded votes to include/exclude.)
- **Personal Insight.** As detailed in another Best Practices Guide (*Congressional Offices and Staff*), it is useful and important to establish and sustain relationships with congressional staff in Washington and the Member's home state/district. As you get to know these staffers, ask them to tell you which issues their boss cares the most about. After all, it is their job to know such things and they will be more than happy to help you "connect the dots."

Birds of a Feather Flock Together

A key objective of many congressional advocacy campaigns is to convince Members to make face-to-face contact with the leaders of the committees or subcommittees of

jurisdiction over a particular issue. So, for example, to influence Senate Farm Bill decisions you must get your senators to "button-hole" the chair and/or ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Members who are most likely to follow through on such requests are those who are personally close to the chair or ranking member. Here are three ways to ascertain whether any two Members might be "birds of a feather" and thus "flock together."

- **Political Caucuses.** As discussed above, there are hundreds of congressional caucuses. While many focus on distinct issue areas (e.g. the Congressional Horse Caucus) others bring together individuals who self-identify themselves as falling on one segment of the political spectrum or another. So, start by asking: Are they Blue Dog Democrats? New Democrats? Progressives? Populists? Republican Study Committee members? Tea Partiers? A short list of the political caucuses is displayed in Table 4.
- **Joint Service.** Other questions that can reveal how close two members may be include: Are they from the same state or geographic region? Were they first elected in the same year? Have they served side-by-side on the same committee(s) for several terms? If senators, did they serve together in the House?
- **Cosponsorships.** Another way to determine the linkage between two Members is to discern how often they cosponsor each other's bills. The legislative web site maintained by CRS (www.thomas.loc.gov) provides handy lists of "Sponsor/Cosponsor Summaries" for each Congress. While using these lists may seem daunting, to determine if a committee chair has cosponsored one of your Member's bills, simply: (1) find the committee chair on the list; (2) click on the number that corresponds to the bills he/she has cosponsored; and (3) scroll down the results page making note of which of your Members introduced bills that the committee chair cosponsored.

Political intelligence is neither an oxymoron nor an exact science. It's more like a treasure hunt. Follow the clues and you will be rewarded with insight about what excites the Members of Congress connected to your institution. That, in turn, will help make your congressional advocacy efforts more successful.



Table 1. Congressional Directories (Expensive but Invaluable)

Congressional Yellow Book

www.leadershipdirectories.com/Products/LeadershipPrintDirectories/Government/CongressionalYellowBook

Congress.Net

www.thecapitol.net/Publications/congdirectory.html

Congress At Your Fingertips

http://corporate.cqrollcall.com/content/60/en/Congress_At_Your_Fingertips

Table 2. Congressional Caucuses

Committee on House Administration

http://cha.house.gov/sites/republicans.cha.house.gov/files/documents/cmo_cso_docs/cmo_112th_congress.pdf

Congressional Yellow Book

www.leadershipdirectories.com/Products/LeadershipPrintDirectories/Government/CongressionalYellowBook

Table 3. A Sampling of Voter Scorecards (2012)

AFL-CIO

<http://www.aflcio.org/Legislation-and-Politics/Legislative-Voting-Records>

Chamber of Commerce of the United States

http://marcomcentral.app.pti.com/printone/catalog.aspx?uigroup_id=14895&folder_id=596174

Food Policy Action

<http://www.foodpolicyaction.org/>

Heritage Foundation

<http://heritageactionscorecard.com/scorecard/index.html#home>

Humane Society

www.hslf.org/pdfs/Humane_Scorecard_2012_Final.pdf

League of Conservation Voters

<http://www.lcv.org/scorecard/>

National Association of Manufacturers

www.nam.org/~media/882C6A552061423380D5B1C8B96E8DDC/NAM_Voting_Record_for_the_112th_Congress.pdf

Table 2. Congressional Caucuses

Committee on House Administration

http://cha.house.gov/sites/republicans.cha.house.gov/files/documents/cmo_cso_docs/cmo_112th_congress.pdf

Congressional Yellow Book

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