

My Legislative Agenda - MCs



You made it! Your legislative staff, many of whom worked on your campaign, are gathered in your office. Their task over the next two years will be to act as your eyes, ears and advocates in the halls of Congress. To ensure that they represent you effectively, you have brought them together to hear your legislative agenda.

These are ambitious young people (some aspire to be elected to office themselves in a few years) who want to make a difference. They are your eager legislative army, and it is time for you to issue the call to arms!

1. Our Legislative Agenda. Begin by filling them in on the district they will all be representing. What issues are of paramount importance to your constituents? Which issues should staff be most concerned about because of how your positions or decisions might be received in the district?

District concerns aside, what should they know about your political philosophy and legislative priorities? Are you conservative, progressive or what? Which issues are your top priorities?

2. Casework. Many of your staff will be spending much of their time contacting agencies on behalf of constituents. These activities are called casework. Another important element of casework is replying to constituents who take the time and trouble to express their views on issues. As their representative, you should feel obligated to respond, but casework can also be good political advertising!

The media are reporting that Congress intends to take up a bill to reinstate the military draft. Your office is getting quite a bit of mail on this topic and staff are looking for guidance.

A number of arguments about the draft have been raised to date. Defense hawks argue that recruiting difficulties are threatening national security. Liberals complain that an all volunteer army has lower income families doing the fighting (and dying) for upper income Americans. Others argue that the solution is to pay volunteer soldiers a decent wage. Still others respond that the federal government cannot afford to raise pay that much, especially in light of the future costs to society of caring for veterans of recent wars.

Your staff asks you to draft a constituent letter on this issue. They will then mail it to the hundreds of constituents who have contacted your office. You probably have an opinion on this issue, and constituents will probably consider what you have to say. But having just struggled through a tough election, you also need to think about how your views - once they become known - may affect your chances in the next election cycle.

[Casework in a congressional office](#)

For an interesting experiment demonstrating the electoral benefits of casework, see:

Albert D. Cover and Bruce S. Brumberg, "Baby Books and Ballots: The Impact of Congressional Mail on Constituent Opinion"
The American Political Science Review, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Jun., 1982), pp. 347-359 (article consists of 13 pages)