

From the Inside Looking Out

Now that we have briefly covered Congress in today's context, we turn to the issues of majority party, leadership, power, and the many hats a Member of Congress wears. In the various roles a Member plays, his performance will be subject to the chamber in which he serves (i.e., House or Senate), whether the Member's party is currently in the majority or minority, expectations of the party leadership, and other factors. A general understanding of the main factors that enhance or constrain a Member's actions is fundamental to one's understanding of Capitol Hill and an accurate assessment of entry points and opportunities to shape the debate.

In this assessment, we will generalize broadly about what are often unique circumstances related to a particular Member's power, personality, and interests, the level of expertise of the Member and his staff, and the interests of the constituencies that the Member serves. It is therefore critical to familiarize yourself with your representative or senator before approaching his office. Understanding the context in which he operates, the roles he is expected to play, and the daily demands on Members and their staffs is an essential element in formulating one's strategy.

This chapter will use two fictional case studies in order to help you think through how party affiliation, power, and roles performed by a Member and the media apply to peace and security efforts. Our intent in the use of these case studies is to assist you in viewing the institution from the inside looking out and to coach you in thinking like a Member (or his staffer) in order to devise creative options on how to help the Member help you.

CASE STUDY ONE: PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

You are a well-established professor of conflict resolution. Last year you were given a wonderful but challenging task: Establish a peace and conflict studies program at your university, a state institution that serves a diverse population in the Rocky Mountain West. You have been involved in peace studies for

many years, but you have also been active as a practicing mediator in the community. It is important to you that both the theory and the practice of peacemaking are understood as inseparable and important. Your organization has many resources to offer to an interested policymaker. After just one year in existence, you have students eager to become more involved in international issues, as well as a student-organized conflict resolution service on campus. Within your immediate reach are not only theoretical and practical knowledge, but also several bright, eager students who would like to be involved in applying what they are learning in your program to international issues of peace and conflict.

In your view Congress does not appear to recognize the possible role of conflict resolution in addressing current global security challenges. You have repeatedly witnessed how indicators of an impending conflict were ignored until the situation exploded into a full-blown crisis requiring an international response. How would you approach a Member of Congress about your program and the role of conflict resolution in mitigating crises, preventing atrocities, and lowering the long-term costs of intervention? Is your representative in the majority party in the House? If not, what about your senator? How might you tie your program's efforts to issues of broad public concern? What opportunities might you offer to your Member that would be mutually beneficial to him and to your program?

CASE STUDY TWO: BIKES AND BANDAGES ABROAD

You are a bike shop owner in New England. Five years ago, you visited an impoverished Caribbean country as part of a humanitarian mission organized by your church. When you returned, you decided to do something practical based on the advice of a local teenager you met while on the mission. This young local, Sami, wistfully told you, "I could go to school in the next village if only I could get there." Later that year, you brought up this issue while sitting at a high school basketball game with the school's nurse. By the following year, you and the school nurse developed a partnership to collect used bikes and excess medical supplies and to deliver them once a year to Sami's village and nearby communities.

This program was an instant low-cost, high-impact hit. Numerous individuals in the local community, including many in

your church community, jumped on board to advertise the need, donate bikes and medical supplies, and raise funds for transport of the donated items to their destination. High school kids raised money to help pay the freight costs, learning valuable lessons about poverty in the developing world and the role of nongovernmental actors as part of US efforts abroad. Several students recently asked if they could accompany you to deliver the goods, and the school nurse has several colleagues who would like to accompany you and offer their medical expertise for hands-on training in these communities. In addition, three months ago your best friend, who is a Civil Affairs Officer with the National Guard, returned from a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan. She became very excited upon hearing about the success of your project and wants to duplicate it for a small town in Afghanistan.

Although duplication of this project for a village in Afghanistan might be entirely feasible without getting politicians involved, might your congresswoman be interested in the project's success in the Caribbean and helpful in efforts to expand to a country currently in the headlines? Is your congresswoman well positioned to be of assistance in these efforts? What aspects of the program could be highlighted to garner her support? What are the expectations and constraints she might confront in trying to support these efforts?

INSTITUTIONAL PARAMETERS

Majority and Leadership

In both the House and Senate, the majority party controls all committee chairs and controls the legislative agenda. Both the Democratic and Republican Party leaderships use carrots and sticks alike to maintain party discipline. The party leadership in both chambers is also responsible for fostering cooperation, building coalitions, and sometimes, facilitating compromise. At the same time, the House is much more dominated by the majority than the Senate. This difference results largely from the role of the Rules Committee and prerogatives of the majority in the House, as compared to the consensus-based legislative process in the Senate. Senators have statewide and national constituencies; representatives focus heavily on local issues and formulate agendas highly tailored to their constituencies. While the Senate tends to

be more deliberative, the House is generally more partisan and ideological. This trend in the House leads to greater party cohesion and frequent party-line votes on issues.¹

Presiding Officers

The Speaker of the House is the leader of the majority party as well as the chamber's presiding officer. These dual roles allow the Speaker to use his parliamentary and political powers to govern proceedings on the floor. He recognizes—or refuses to recognize—Members to speak. In the Senate, the presiding officer is formally the vice president, as provided in Article 1 of the Constitution. The Constitution further stipulates that a “President *pro tempore*” preside in the vice president's absence.² In reality, however, only rarely does either the vice president or the president *pro tempore* preside over Senate proceedings. The vice president typically presides only when he might be needed to break a tied vote on an issue of great importance to the White House. The president *pro tempore* exercises his right to appoint a senator as “Acting President *pro tempore*,” and that senator can then appoint still another to serve as Acting President *pro tempore*. The duty of presiding officer in the Senate is routinely filled by a rotation of junior or first-term senators of the majority party for one-hour intervals.³

Because the presiding officer in the Senate is not necessarily an official member of the body, presiding in this instance does not confer the same powers in terms of recognition and controlling floor proceedings. The Senate's presiding officer may speak only if granted permission by “unanimous consent,”⁴ and he must recognize the first senator standing and seeking recognition. In the

¹ A “party-line” vote refers to alignment on the issue being a result of party membership—all Republicans vote one way and all Democrats the other.

² The president *pro tempore* is the most senior senator of the majority party and is elected by a majority vote in the Senate. See Mary E. Mulvihill, *House and Senate Rules of Procedure: A Comparison* (Washington, DC, Congressional Research Service Report 97-270GOV, February 1997), p. 7.

³ Mulvihill, *House and Senate Rules of Procedure: A Comparison*, pp. 6-7.

⁴ “Unanimous consent” refers to a procedure for expedited consideration of a measure: All Members agree to the measure so long as no individual Member objects. See David Silverberg, *Congress for Dummies* (New York: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2002), p. 331.

case that several senators simultaneously seek recognition, preferential recognition goes to the majority and minority leaders, and then the majority and minority floor managers.⁵ Control of Senate floor proceedings is maintained only through building consensus between the majority and minority parties and through accommodating individual senators' wishes on an ongoing basis.

Majority Party and Procedure

Ample publications explain in detail the procedures, rules, and traditions that guide the legislative process and agenda-setting within Congress.⁶ What is most important to understand is that in the House, the majority rules when party cohesion is maintained; conversely, collegiality and consensus are fundamental to the legislative process in the Senate. This is especially true when majority status rests on only a very slim margin, as has been the case in the past several years. The House maintains a very structured legislative process, with strict adherence to the chamber's rules and precedents needed to manage the decision-making process for 435 representatives. The Senate's smaller numbers allow for more flexibility in its approach to the standing rules. Whereas representatives typically must yield to the will of the majority, any senator's individual legislative priorities will often be accommodated in some fashion.

The different processes each chamber uses to structure floor consideration of bills reveal the House's premium on the power of the majority will and the Senate's premium on the power of individual senators. "Special rules" establish the conditions governing floor deliberations on most legislative measures in the House. The House Rules Committee determines the rules for debate, such as the amount of "floor time," whether amendments will be "in order" (allowed), limitations on debate, and possibly, a

⁵ The "floor manager" in the Senate attempts to coordinate deliberations on specific legislation.

⁶ See Michael L. Koempel and Judy Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook 2003-2004*, (Alexandria, VA, The Capitol.Net; 2003). For online resources, see: <http://www.thecapitol.net/PublicPrograms/als.html>. Also, the State Department makes several publications from the *Congressional Research Service* available on-line at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/s98-94.htm>.

waiver of “points of order”⁷ against specific provisions. In the Senate these parliamentary conditions are specified by a “unanimous consent” agreement that functions similarly to a “special rule” in House procedure. The major distinction is that unanimous consent agreements are negotiated by the majority leader in consultation with the minority leader, committee chairmen, and interested senators. All senators must accept a unanimous consent agreement; an objection by any senator can prevent the agreement from taking effect. This gives any interested senator the opportunity to thwart all legislative action—by refusal to agree to a unanimous consent or through use of a filibuster—until his concerns are adequately addressed.⁸ Of course, any senator who considers throwing himself on the legislative train tracks for a cause must carefully balance the political costs with respect to all other legislative priorities on the list. Abusing the prerogative of individual power can quickly undermine his longer-term effectiveness within the institution.

Legislative Agenda

As mentioned earlier, the leadership sets the legislative agenda in both chambers. Agenda-setting is, however, not solely a matter of making a list and moving bills to the floor in sequence. This ever-changing agenda will be shaped by numerous factors, including the President’s priorities, public expectations, and the pressure brought to bear by powerful Members. Two realities inevitably hold sway. First, each year the Congress is *supposed* to pass a budget resolution and *must* pass thirteen appropriations bills, either as stand-alone spending bills or as part of an “omnibus,” to complete the budget. The annual budget process alone consumes an immense amount of Congress’ floor time. Second, the agenda of the Senate majority is always subject to the possibility that

⁷ A “point of order” is an “objection to a current proceeding, measure or amendment because the proposed action violates a rule of the chamber, written precedent, or rule-making statute.” See Koempel and Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook 2003-2004: 108th Congress*, p. 578. For example, points of order are often raised against bills thought to violate the budget resolution by exceeding the funding amount set forth for federal spending in a given fiscal year.

⁸ A filibuster is a time-delaying tactic associated with the Senate and used by the minority to delay, modify or defeat a bill or amendment. A filibuster can only occur in the absence of a unanimous consent. Mulvihill, *House and Senate Rules of Procedure: A Comparison*, p. 5.

amendments not directly pertaining to the purpose of a legislative item will be offered during its consideration, unless precluded by the governing unanimous consent agreement for that item.⁹ Setting the agenda is always a process of backroom negotiations, coalition-building on must-pass items, and horse-trading to avoid unhappy surprises in the outcome, especially in the Senate.

In Chapter 2 we discussed the difference between values and priorities on Capitol Hill. The majority party's priorities can be identified by what items are placed at the top of the legislative agenda. Legislative priorities must be squeezed into an already tight calendar, made more so by must-pass bills, White House priorities and possible emergencies. These constraints make time for floor consideration of specific legislative items rare and, therefore, valuable.

Most priorities are obvious and directly reflect a must-pass budgetary item, a political imperative due to public pressure and expectations (such as emergency federal assistance to combat forest fires), or a political opportunity. For instance, the fact that a comprehensive restructuring of US foreign assistance has not been addressed since 1985 reflects the (lack of) priority placed on the role of non-military engagement in achieving US objectives abroad. This contrasts with the fact that, in most years, the defense appropriations legislation is the first spending bill passed by both chambers and signed into law by the president.

Party, Power, and Political Capital

A Member's political position is determined by party politics, seniority, and the committees on which he serves. It is important to consider each of these items to gauge the potential role he might perform in promoting a particular policy or cause. Floor debates and voting decisions are largely dictated by the party. Party loyalty confers the privileges—such as advancement to leadership

⁹ A Member will be constantly seeking a good “vehicle” for his legislative priorities. A vehicle is a “legislative measure that is being considered,” the term being used usually in a Senate context where amendments and riders can be attached. See Koempel and Schneider, *Congressional Deskbook 2002-2003*, p. 581. For example, during the first session of the 108th Congress, the State Department reauthorization bill failed to be considered on the floor due to a threat to amend this State Department bill (vehicle) with a minimum wage amendment.

or plum committee assignments—most Members find necessary to advance their own position of power within the institution. If a Member votes against the dictates of his party, there will be consequences at some point in the future such as a desired committee assignment not awarded, a bypassed legislative priority or an alienated group of colleagues. Very few Members can afford to be renegades on a continual basis.

Because seniority plays such an important role in both chambers, longstanding Members can mitigate some of the costs of being a rebel. The seniority system generally allows Members to accumulate power proportionate to their longevity in office. The more powerful a Member becomes, the more likely she is to attain committee chairmanships and leadership positions within the party. In addition, greater seniority confers increased contacts, a greater fundraising base, name recognition, and more frequent media coverage. In some cases, however, power and ability to break ranks is unrelated to seniority or committee membership, and is based instead on a Member's personal experience. Senator John McCain (a prisoner of war during Vietnam), former senator Bob Kerrey (a decorated Vietnam veteran), and former senator Max Cleland (a triple amputee from his own service in that war) all have more credibility and political latitude on questions of peace and security due to their personal histories. Senator (and currently Majority Leader) Bill Frist, a medical doctor, played a leadership role during the Senate anthrax crisis, and he has successfully championed the Bush Administration's HIV/AIDS initiative.

Accurately assessing real power in Congress is anything but a straightforward calculation. In addition, the power constellation shifts with each election when leadership and committee assignments change. Even though the importance of seniority permeates both chambers, it also differs between them. While the post-Watergate House reforms of 1974 devolved power from committee chairmen to individual representatives, "over the past decade the Speaker and his leadership team have once again become more powerful."¹⁰ With the Republican takeover of the House in 1994, the seniority system was shaken up. Whereas earlier committee chairmen could serve unlimited terms, the new rules limit chairmanship to no more than three terms. In addition, chairmanships are now determined by a process of interviews with

¹⁰ Hamilton, *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care*, p. 63.

the leadership rather than by seniority. These procedural changes increased the power of leadership and decreased the role of committees, especially authorizing committees. These changed rules and procedures in the House for moving legislative proposals have made the challenge of promoting alternative views all the greater. These changes also make bipartisan efforts more difficult because the majority leadership can bypass committee chairmen.¹¹

How should you think about process, party politics, and power in formulating a strategy? First, it is important to remember that all Members, regardless of seniority, committee assignments, or gravitas on a subject, have finite political capital.¹² An investment of any increment of their political capital on a particular issue will be based on a complex calculation of constituent support, party politics and long-term costs and benefits. A senator with six years between election campaigns will have a very different calculation from a representative whose two-year term essentially means the campaigning never ceases. Anyone promoting a particular policy option—especially in the current environment—needs to be realistic about garnering majority support. It is highly unlikely that any legislative item will move forward without majority party support in the House. Again, the Senate is a different story.

Let's look at our two case studies to see how these institutional parameters apply to one's assessment.

CASE STUDY ONE: PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

After some initial research, you discover that your Member of Congress does not appear very engaged on peace and security issues. He does not serve on any of the defense or foreign policy committees and is quoted in a newspaper article as being “proud that I've never had a passport.” Although his party is in the majority, you are not very optimistic that he will care about the resources you could offer. However, before you give up, ask yourself these questions: Whom can you partner with to make this offer seem more appealing? A local veterans' group? Are there any Reserve Officers Training Corps or recently deployed students

¹¹ Rae and Campbell, eds., *New Majority or Old Minority?*, pp. 89-90.

¹² “Political capital” is the sum total of all tangible and intangible factors that enable leaders to get anything done, including reputation, media attention, statutory role, friends and networks, fundraising ability, and so forth.

in your classes? Alternatively, try using a more local angle. What has been the success rate of the mediation services on campus? Are these services saving the university money? How many conflict resolution programs exist in the Member's district? Does your local criminal justice system use mediators? How much does this save the district as a whole? A solid local hook to demonstrate the growing importance of conflict resolution—both its local applications and its international implications—can help the Member understand the tangible value of your program.

Think creatively about what you might offer to interest a Member. You could, for example, propose any one of the following “services” to the Member:

- Offer a cost-free intern from your university to help on conflict resolution/peacekeeping for the Member, and give the student credit toward graduation for Capitol Hill experience;¹³
- Be the Member's support organization on issues of conflict prevention or peacekeeping, available at a moment's notice to the Member and his staff;
- Keep abreast of bills being offered in the House and Senate that support international conflict resolution, and make your expert advice on these legislative items available to the Member on a timely basis;
- Offer the opportunity for the Member to pitch your school's program to other districts (this can make for an exciting leadership opportunity for the Member);

¹³ Numerous positions and advisory roles on Capitol Hill are staffed by “fellows.” Academic institutions in particular can leverage these positions to improve their internal understanding of Congress and to offer a great learning experience for students or faculty. In addition, since expertise is usually quite thin on the personal staffs in Congress (especially in the House) and since budgets for staff are limited, Members often welcome the possibility of retaining such experts free of charge. See ethics standards for the House and Senate for the rules that apply to this possibility at <http://www.house.gov/ethics/> and <http://ethics.senate.gov/>.

- Agree to prepare continually updated memos on the Member's top three international issues;
- Conduct a yearly local poll on local citizens' interest in international cooperation issues; or
- Keep track of the peace-and-conflict-related jobs in the district, including activities of local Guard and Reserve units, local businesses with international activities, exchange programs, etc.

If you think the Member's views are far from your own, keep looking for ways to define the issue that are easier for the Member to entertain. For example, you can work with other local groups that care about the issues, approach other mediation programs in the local community, find tangible examples that demonstrate the value of your program, and then follow up with logical next steps if possible. If you do not have a group already organized to press your issue, you could use a petition, letter-writing campaign or visits to the Member of Congress as a way to get one started. Try not to approach this in a hostile manner. Members of Congress do not mind getting mail, petitions, and the like, so long as your approach is respectful and you give them a way to respond that allows them to appear in a positive light.¹⁴ Always try the positive approach first. If your Member already shares your views, strategize together about the next steps and try to get him to help you expand the constituency for your views.

CASE STUDY TWO: BIKES AND BANDAGES ABROAD

According to your initial research about your congresswoman, not only is she in the minority party, but she also does not serve on any committees directly relevant to international affairs. However,

¹⁴ Regular mail is the least efficient. Since the anthrax attacks in 2001, mail is first sent to the Midwest for irradiation before reaching Capitol Hill. Fax and email are far superior. In addition, the motto in many offices regarding incoming mail is this: "Only put as much effort into the response as went into the original letter." In other words, a form letter from one hundred constituents will get one hundred uniform responses in return and probably little action beyond that.

you did come across her name as the co-chair of the Women's Caucus in the House Directory and found a couple of press releases detailing speeches she had given on the importance of women's rights in economic development and security efforts abroad, especially in Islamic countries. In light of your current desire to expand this program to Afghanistan, the educational opportunities for girls in remote villages would appear to be an appropriate hook. In addition, access to health care for women, although still not a core mission of your organization, could be made a central theme for the program's mission in Afghanistan.

Again, however, as your congresswoman is in the minority, how can you get a buy-in from the majority? What positions do your senators hold? Does either of them belong to the majority party or serve on a relevant committee? How are relations between your congresswoman and the rest of the state's delegation in DC?¹⁵ Is there any particular relationship between your congresswoman and a senator that could serve as a bipartisan and bicameral duo to advance your efforts? If not, could you help your congresswoman to use statements and priorities related to US efforts in Afghanistan as a hook for majority interest? The issue of weak states as security risks has been repeatedly highlighted by high-level policy officials in the executive branch and by the majority leadership in Congress. For example, the preface to the 2002 National Security Strategy stated: "The events of September 11, 2001 taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states." In short, there are plenty of statements by the majority party that would suggest bringing *Bikes and Bandages* to Afghanistan is not a partisan issue. Moreover, as your success in the Caribbean did not require any federal assistance, expanding these efforts to Afghanistan should be perceived as a win-win, even by fiscal conservatives.

¹⁵ DC delegations differ tremendously. Whether the two senators from your state are in the same party or not, there will likely be some rivalry between them. Communications between the House and Senate are likely to be sporadic. Keep this in mind if you are attempting to coordinate an effort among Members within your DC delegation. Make sure you provide the same information to all contacts each time, because it is highly unlikely that the contacts involved are communicating regularly about your issue.

If the Member has a track record that makes you think she is unlikely to be supportive of your approach in general, is it possible to break down the issue into distinct pieces, humanize it, and find the hook that will bring the Member on board little by little? Is your friend in the National Guard willing to meet with Members and talk about her personal experience in Afghanistan? Remember that all of the folks in your community working on the project are also (hopefully) voting constituents who bring their own networks and possible connections to the Member. In both of the case studies listed, it would be well worth your effort to work with people who are already close to the Members, such as volunteers, campaign contributors, or people in the Member's social network.

Given its short attention span and domestic focus, Congress presents a challenge to those hoping to educate on broad and long-term security threats. Convincing your Member that diffuse, long-term projects that contribute to our nation's application of soft power most likely presents a challenge. This is why your discussion with a Member must couch the issue at hand in a broad understanding of security. Remember that you want to provide her with an opportunity to do something for you beyond merely voting your favor. Inviting the Member into a mutually beneficial relationship is your goal.

Initiating the Relationship

For example, consider the following fictitious conversation about international exchange programs:

You: Mr. Representative, I'd like to tell you about a sister-cities program that Middletown has set up with the former Soviet republic of Uzbekistan. We organized this group after September 11th with the hope that Middle America could contribute to US security by educating itself and helping people around the world understand US culture and values.

Representative: That's wonderful. Exposing cultures to each other is important, as is spreading American values.

You: We also would like to point out that now is a particularly important time for us to be involved. Uzbekistan is in the midst of a democratic transition from its Cold War past. Its institutions are fragile and our program specifically targets and supports young citizens—those who will make important decisions in ten years' time.

Representative: I agree with you. Attracting a young audience is very important for these efforts. The older leaders sometimes get stuck in their ways.

You: We tend to agree. That's why we hope you will consider our program part of a much broader, long-term security strategy for our country. Investments in citizen exchange are paying off. Just last year a former exchange student from the Republic of Georgia—who attended Columbia Law School—was elected president of his country. This is a tremendous achievement in view of the fact that Georgia used to be part of the Soviet Union. It is a fledgling democracy in a volatile part of the world. We now have a good friend in power and that can only help us.

Representative: That is very encouraging indeed.

You: Would you be willing to learn more about our program? We have a delegation coming in a few months. Perhaps we could organize an event at the library in Middletown and you could introduce our visitors.

Representative: I'll have to check my schedule...but it sounds good!

You: If that doesn't fit into your schedule, we could easily arrange for you to meet the three Uzbek high school exchange students living with Middletown families during one of the district recesses...

In this example, you framed international exchanges within the context of a security concern in simple, concise language and made a case for continued investment in light of evident returns. This fictitious discussion illustrates perfectly how soft security issue

like people-to-people programs dovetails with a hard security concern like regional stability. It is also an example of how constituents can solicit Members' interest in a soft power element of the toolbox through a tangible local activity with a broader impact on the community. Through numerous interactions of this nature you will develop an ongoing relationship and become part of the Member's core constituent group. You will also have reference points and a healthy and trusting past relationship so that if an event does come up suddenly—perhaps Uzbekistan elects a new Western-oriented president who attended Middletown University—you will be able to respond quickly. Direct engagement to elicit the Member's awareness and an opportunity to build a trusting relationship can go a long way in overcoming outdated perceptions.

Members and Their Roles

Voting on legislation is only one of many roles played by our congressional leaders. According to Lee Hamilton, who served in Congress from 1965 to 1999, a “Help Wanted” ad for the job of congressman might read something like this:

Wanted: Person with wide-ranging knowledge of scores of complex public policy issues. Must be willing to work long hours in Washington, then fly home to attend an unending string of community events. Applicant should expect that work and travel demands will strain family life, and that every facet of public and private life will be subject to intense scrutiny and criticism.¹⁶

According to Hamilton, Members typically perform the following roles:

- *national legislator* working to pass the laws of our nation and determine spending levels for thousands of federal programs;
- *local representative* serving the priorities, interests, and economic needs of the constituents;

¹⁶ Hamilton, *How Congress Works and Why You Should Care*, p. 49.

- *constituent advocate* for individuals, groups, industries, and communities in the district;
- *committee member*, which requires developing specific expertise;
- *investigator* charged with oversight of the federal government;
- *educator* who can translate the work of Congress for constituents as well as the media;
- *student* of his or her constituents;¹⁷
- *local dignitary* performing ceremonial functions at home and serving as “ambassador” from the nation’s capital;
- *fundraiser* in order to run for re-election;
- *staff manager* for anywhere between seventeen and eighty staffers in DC and at home;
- *party leader* in the party’s caucus; and, lastly,
- a consummate *consensus builder*—both within and between parties.

The wide-ranging knowledge criterion in this job description inevitably implies assistance from many others, especially for Members with little to no previous experience or direct exposure to peace and security concerns. This is where a knowledgeable constituent or local organization can help. Again, try to think like a Member. What are the local issues that may relate to your Member’s top priorities? Do any of the local issues provide a link to the activities of your organization or institution?

¹⁷ Congressman Hamilton notes: “No matter what subject, there was always a constituent who knew more about it than I did.” See Hamilton, p. 51.

For our purposes, the Member's role as legislator, representative, constituent advocate, educator, and student all suggest the breadth of opportunities for an engaged constituency. In an ideal situation, the engaged constituent or local organization can help educate the Member or his staffer. As suggested by our case study, with the Member as newly minted expert on conflict resolution, the Member can then serve as an *educator* to others in the district or his colleagues in Congress. As a *constituent advocate* the Member should be perceived as a part of your coalition. As opinion leaders in their district, state, and nation, Members can, at times, help organize constituent interests back at home to create an even broader coalition of support. Do not overlook any of these roles in seeking to educate Members or to get them to work with you on educating their colleagues and the public at large. The roles played by a Member might be critically important to the growth of conflict resolution programs and recognition of their contribution to remedying US security concerns. Similarly, such a coalition might be necessary for successfully expanding the *Bikes and Bandages* effort to Afghanistan, in light of additional transportation costs, security concerns, and more extensive cultural barriers.

Members and the Media

Members of Congress regard press relations as vital. Almost every office has a press secretary (or communications director) whose job usually encompasses handling the Member's relations with the media, writing press releases regarding the Member's actions or opinions, and analyzing and monitoring local events to see if actions taking place in DC can get good press coverage for the Member. The press secretary is also responsible for collecting, compiling, and disseminating the headline articles from major national newspapers—as well as any articles mentioning the Member by name, whether in a national, regional, or local newspaper—to everyone on the Member's staff daily. The articles compiled are not just from print media but also include online resources of different varieties. People on the Hill are deluged continuously with headlines and have little to no time to decipher and synthesize the information received. This relates to the next chapter on the importance of turning information into knowledge, but it also underscores how the media plays a major role in the

lives of our elected leaders (and their staffs). Getting favorable coverage of a Member's activities or positions on an issue is a fundamental motivating factor as a measure of job performance, not just for the press secretary but also for the other staffers advising the Member.¹⁸

Good press relations are not just a convenience. The effectiveness of a Member's relations with the press will sometimes determine the success of many of his other activities, such as promoting his position or legislation. The media also serve as a critical link to the larger political environment and a source for different ideas, recommendations, views, and reactions. Conversely, the press is also a political tool through which a Member can communicate his views and objectives directly to people. If a Member is a lousy communicator, his re-election prospects may be threatened. Losing touch with the desires of constituents and local issues and failing to communicate with those same constituents via the media, are paths to defeat. For this reason reporters readily gain access to lawmakers. Regardless of occasional animosity and wariness between them, the symbiotic relationship between the journalist and the legislator is fundamental to the democratic process.¹⁹ The action-reaction feedback loops among the public, the media, and our elected leaders must be seen as a complex whole.

The activist and educator need to be attentive to the media as a useful tool in promoting their causes. Members of Congress are extremely sensitive to the press, even "Letters to the Editor." When appropriate, the activist should seek to get press for her issue or event and then use that press coverage to interest the Member. Activists can use the "hook" of positive press coverage for an event to compel a Member to participate. Remember also that local and national press has varying levels of significance. As one House Press Secretary said, "A representative lives and dies by the coverage of the hometown rag." While this is true for senators as

¹⁸ Hill offices differ with respect to whom is allowed to talk to the media. In some instances, interaction with the media is solely handled by the press secretary, while in others, more senior staffers with expertise in a specific issue area are allowed latitude to interact with the press.

¹⁹ For a summary of the reasons that media are crucial to Congress, see Silverberg, *Congress for Dummies*, p. 218.

well, a Senate office will be concerned about local, regional, and even national coverage.

Let us turn to our case studies as they apply to the possible role of media.

CASE STUDY ONE: PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

Will you be holding a conference to which you can invite the Member to offer a keynote speech? Can you get press involved and portray the Member in a positive light? Does the Member have someone on staff willing to talk to your class about the role of conflict prevention in US foreign policy? Has the Member done anything recently on peace and security issues about which you could write a supportive op-ed or “Letter to the Editor?” Are there local legislators with an interest who could also participate? The media can be the initial hook to get the Member’s interest. They can be leveraged for an event in which the Member has agreed to take part. And they can be used as an educational tool by people in the program or by your Member as part of the coalition.

CASE STUDY TWO: BIKES AND BANDAGES ABROAD

Similar thinking applies to this case. Could you interest a local journalist in writing an article about *Bikes and Bandages* for the local newspaper? Is there an opportunity to mention the expansion of *Bikes and Bandages* to Afghanistan and underscore women’s rights as part of your educational strategy for young girls to elicit your Member’s support? Can you involve both the Member and local media in an event at the high school to recognize the public service contributions made by the nurse and students in this effort? Any or all of these possibilities can leverage the media to get the Member’s attention. If the Member is involved in an event, remember “above all” that your goal is to have the Member portrayed in a positive light.

CONCLUSION

Although Congress is a stimulus-response institution, pressure is not the only way to get a Member to respond. Hard-and-fast realities are reflected in party loyalties, political constraints, and committee assignments. In addition, relationships matter. A good lobbyist knows that Members of Congress respond to their friends.

Thus, he will devote his energies to building those relationships and then use those relationships to strategize about the best ways to move his issues forward. An engaged and informed constituency should do the same. When meeting with a Member or staffer, or when seeking to get a Member to speak to your group, try to think like a Member. What knowledge or resources might you bring to bear that are useful to the Member? How can his involvement in this issue benefit him and his constituents? Is it an issue the Member can take to his colleagues in Congress? Can he make a name for himself, carving out an area of special expertise and providing leadership? Is it something he will feel good about working on?

The constituency basis of American politics offers a key way of providing alternative views and influencing Members' willingness to spend political capital. There are many creative ways to offer support to a Member, and, in turn, to reap benefits from his increased attention to your issue. Too often, public interest advocates fail to notice the extent to which Members of Congress appreciate the support of knowledgeable people, especially from their own district or state, who are willing to engage them in meaningful activities. Your goal should be to become part of the Member's key constituent groups whose resources—knowledge, local activities, access to means of communication and organizational skills—he finds useful. At the same time, Members of Congress have organizing resources at their disposal. If you can get one or more Members to buy into an idea, they can help you educate others, both in Congress and at home. Is it possible to think of your Member as part of the coalition? This prospect opens the door for leveraging the Members' access and reach in order to expand your coalition. Lastly, understanding the various roles Members perform, as well as how the media figures into each role, will be an important part of your strategy.