

# *I n t r o d u c t i o n*

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As the name *Congressional Deskbook* implies, this book is meant to be kept close at hand for answering the variety of questions that arise daily in monitoring, interacting with, and studying Congress. The book is organized for daily use in answering questions, but it may be read in sections, by chapters, or in its entirety, as the reader chooses.

Chapter One attempts to create an image of what it is like to be a member of Congress. It describes the competition that imbues every aspect of the institution and the fragmented life of a member.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four guide the reader through some of the major pressures affecting members of Congress. These pressures come from campaigns and elections, constituency, media, the president and executive branch, the courts, lobbyists, and the ethics environment. The chapters provide an overview of the laws and congressional rules that affect members, staff, and the individuals who interact with them.

Chapters Five and Six explain the support structures of Congress. They identify components of the expense allowance system, staff positions and responsibilities, the work of support offices, and features of the Capitol and congressional office buildings. These chapters orient the reader to congressional staff roles and offer a guide to finding one's way around Capitol Hill.

Chapter Seven describes the organization of Congress. It addresses not only the structures of the committee system and of the leadership hierarchy, but also how committee assignments are made and leaders are selected. It describes the early organization activities of the House and Senate following a general election.

Chapter Eight describes the legislative process in detail. It explains hearings and committee markup strategies and methods of obtaining floor consideration of legislative initiatives. Amendments between the chambers and conference procedures are explained. The chapter describes options available to leaders and members throughout the legislative process, and provides guides for keeping track of events at each major stage of the legislative process.

Chapter Nine demystifies the federal budget process. It includes discussion of the president's role in budgeting, the congressional budget process, authorizations, and appropriations. It explains the terminology, concepts, and procedures of the budget process, such as reconciliation.

Chapter Ten discusses procedures and powers in Congress's relations with the executive, the judiciary, and the states and localities. It also explains some of the ways in which Congress deals procedurally with defense and foreign policy. Topics in this chapter include confirmation of presidential appointees to executive and judicial posts, the role of legislative history, fast-track procedures, the War Powers Act, alternative procedures for selection of a president and vice president, constitutional amendments, and unfunded mandates.

Chapters Eleven and Twelve identify and explain the use of congressional documents. Subjects include the forms and versions of legislation, laws and implementing executive documents, official rules and procedure manuals, and party and administrative publications.

Chapter Thirteen identifies numerous private and governmental information resources, and provides descriptions of print and electronic resources, web addresses, and telephone contacts for obtaining additional information on resources. Numerous tips on research will facilitate a reader's work.

Chapter Fourteen guides the reader in researching members and committees, monitoring floor action, and tracking legislative action.

A case study in Chapter Fifteen ties the legislative process, legislative documents, and other topics in the book together as it takes a measure enacted into law in the 106th Congress through the legislative steps from inception to public law. Document excerpts are displayed, and explanatory texts and annotations accompany each excerpt.

A cumulative, expanded glossary complements the individual glossaries and definitions that appear in individual chapters. Appendices One through Seven provide extensive telephone and room listings for members, committees, and leaders on Capitol Hill. All of the web sites listed throughout the book are cumulated in a table. This list is followed by an index to the book.