

Communicating Demographic Results to Policymakers

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PAA Government and Public Affairs Mission

PAA organizes contact with policymakers through the Government and Public Affairs Committee (GPAC).

GPAC Mission

- Articulate views of PAA/APC members on issues before the legislative and executive branches of government.
- Educate federal policymakers about the importance of population research as it relates to current public policy issues and advocate for funding of the federal agencies that support it.
- Inform board and members about status of public policy issues.
- Advise board, presidents, and members on how PAA/APC may respond to actions taken by the legislative and executive branches of government.

PAA Office of Government and Public Affairs

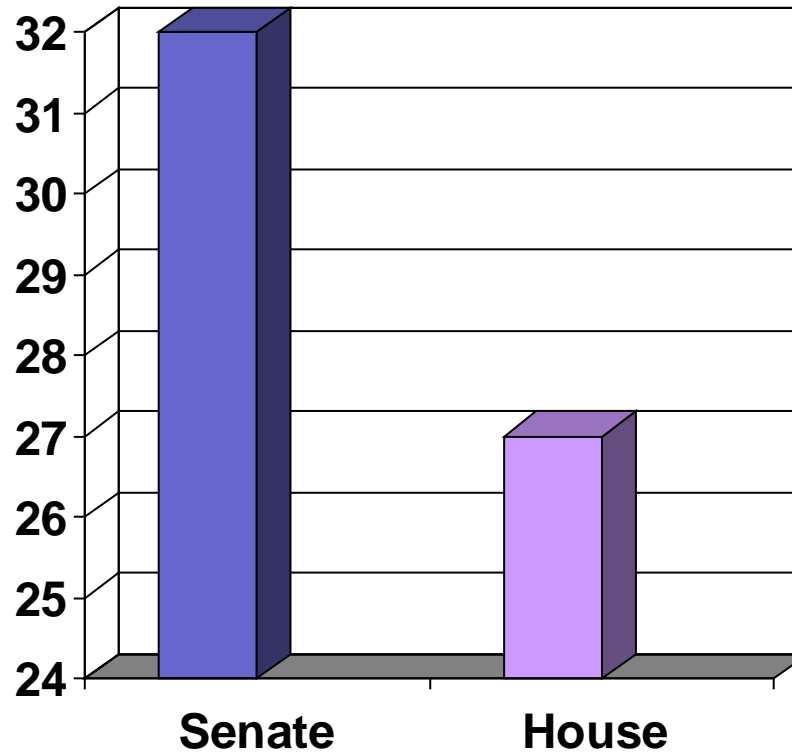
- Participate in interest group coalitions
- Submit congressional testimony and bill report language
- Organize issue briefings and meetings
- Develop briefing materials and communications
- Organize bi-weekly GPAC phone calls
- Report to GPAC, PAA board and APC members
- Prepare legislative updates and action alerts

Knowing Your Audience: Staff Demographics

- **Legislative Assistant**
 - Most common legislative position
- **Average LA Educational Attainment:**
 - Senate—86.3% B.A.; 51% M.A. or ↑
 - House of Representatives— 96.6% B.A. or ↑
- **Average Annual Turnover**
 - 25% in House

Sources: Congressional Management Foundation, 2001 Senate Staff Employment Study
ICF International, 2006 House Compensation Study

Knowing Your Audience: Average Age of Legislative Staff Members



Sources: Congressional Management Foundation, 1999 Senate Staff Employment Survey
Congressional Management Foundation, 2004 House Staff Employment Study

House Legislative Assistant: Sample Issue Portfolio

- Labor
- Health
- Immigration
- Education
- Civil Rights
- Disabilities
- All related funding issues on these topics.

Senate Committee Analyst: Sample Issue Portfolio

- Budget
- Social Security
- Unemployment
- *Committee vs. Personal Office*
 - Committee staff cover fewer issues than staff in personal offices
 - Committee staff considered resident issue “experts.”

Knowing Your Audience: Staff Demographics

- Young
- Well-Educated
- Turnover high, experience low
- Issue portfolios very diverse

Few Staff, Lots of Issues!

- 5 LAs –average in Senate offices
- 2 LAs –average in House offices

External Pressures on Congressional Staff

- Frequent elections
- Declining number of days in session
- Frequent travel from DC to state or district
- Members' competing interests
- Enhanced constituent communications

Examples of Staff Resources

- Internet
- Interest Groups
- Media
- Congressional Research Service
- Government Accountability Office
- Federal Agencies
- Think Tanks
- Constituents

Communicating with Congressional Staff

Question:

Why would staff contact you or use your material?

Answer:

They will if your information is:

- Timely
- Targeted
- To the point

Better Question:

Why don't you contact them?

Communication Challenges for Researchers

- Lack of time to develop materials and relationships.
- Lack of available staff to develop materials.
- Frustration with recommended format.
- How Congress values research outcomes at odds with values of research community.