

# Effective Communications with Congressional Staff

Nicole Kunko

ASTHO Chief of Public Policy

Former Professional Staff, House Appropriations Subcommittee  
On Labor, HHS, and Education (2001-2010)

Population Association of America

April 1, 2011



# Who Lobbies in the Health Sector?

- Hospitals and universities
- Health departments
- States, counties, and cities
- Employers and business organizations
- Unions
- Medical professional associations
- Research organizations
- PhRMA and medical device companies
- Insurance plans
- Individual doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals.
- Patients and their families

# Who Does Congress Listen To?

- CONSTITUENTS
- Employers from their district
- Local officials
- Experts
- Coalitions, associations, and unions
- Administration officials

# Advocacy Roles

- Participate in agenda setting process
- Participate in a “Hill Day” or other similar event
- Develop/sustain Hill relationships
  - Become a “go to” resource for Members/staff
  - Host visits back at home for Members and staff
  - Participate in Hill briefings/meetings
  - Proactively provide articles, reports, data
  - Provide impact information on proposed legislation and budgets
- Provide subject matter expertise to support initiatives

# Effective Legislative Strategy

- Identifying tangible, realistic goals
  - Recognize Washington is in budget cutting mode
- Targeting key legislators and officials
  - In this case, those who make funding decisions
- Timing and capitalizing on opportunities

# Reorganization of Congress

- 87 House Republican Freshmen have proven to be a voting block that can buck Leadership.
- In the Senate, Minority Leader McConnell and Moderate Democrats up for reelection will force a more conservative direction. (2/3 of the senators up in 2012 are Democrats).

# Targeting Players: Understanding Budget, Appropriations, and Authorizing

- Asking the right people for the right things...
  - Congress is organized by committees, which have different functions
  - Ability of Members to help you depends on the committees they sit on, time, and interest

# Role of Committees

- Budget Committee sets broad overall annual spending limits.
- Appropriations Committee set funding levels for annual discretionary spending on a program-by-program basis with input from the Administration through the President's Budget request.
- Authorizing Committees create programs (establish purpose, eligibility, funding targets) and provide direct spending for mandatory or entitlement programs such as Medicare or SCHIP.



# House Committees

**Agriculture**  
**Appropriations**  
**Armed Services**  
**Budget**  
**Education and the Workforce**  
**Energy and Commerce**  
**Ethics**  
**Financial Services**  
**Foreign Affairs**  
**Homeland Security**  
**House Administration**  
**Judiciary**  
**Natural Resources**  
**Oversight and Government Reform**  
**Rules**  
**Science, Space, and Technology**  
**Small Business**  
**Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**Veterans' Affairs**  
**Ways and Means**  
**Permanent Select Intelligence**

# Senate Committees

**Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry**  
**Appropriations**  
**Armed Services**  
**Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs**  
**Budget**  
**Commerce, Science, and Transportation**  
**Energy and Natural Resources**  
**Environment and Public Works**  
**Finance**  
**Foreign Relations**  
**Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions**  
**Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
**Judiciary**  
**Rules and Administration**  
**Small Business and Entrepreneurship**  
**Veterans' Affairs**  
**Indian Affairs**  
**Select Committee on Ethics**  
**Select Committee on Intelligence**  
**Special Committee on Aging**

# 12 Appropriations Subcommittees

Agriculture (FDA)

Commerce Justice Science

Defense (DoD healthcare)

Energy and Water

Financial Services

State, Foreign Operations (global health, PEPFAR)

Homeland Security

Interior and Environment (IHS, EPA)

Labor, HHS, Education (HRSA, NIH, CDC, CMS)

Legislative Branch

Military Construction/Veterans Affairs

Transportation, HUD

# House Committee on Appropriations



Rep. Hal  
Rogers (R-KY)  
- Chair

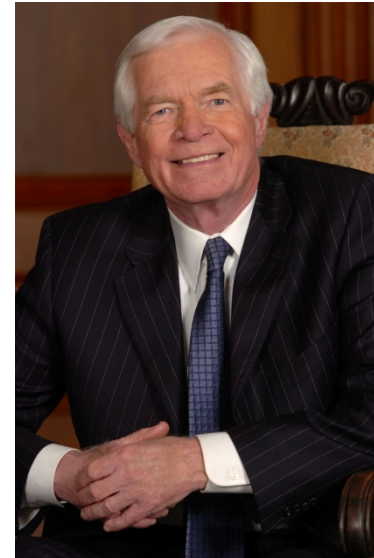


Rep. Norm Dicks  
(D-WA) – Ranking Member

# Senate Committee on Appropriations



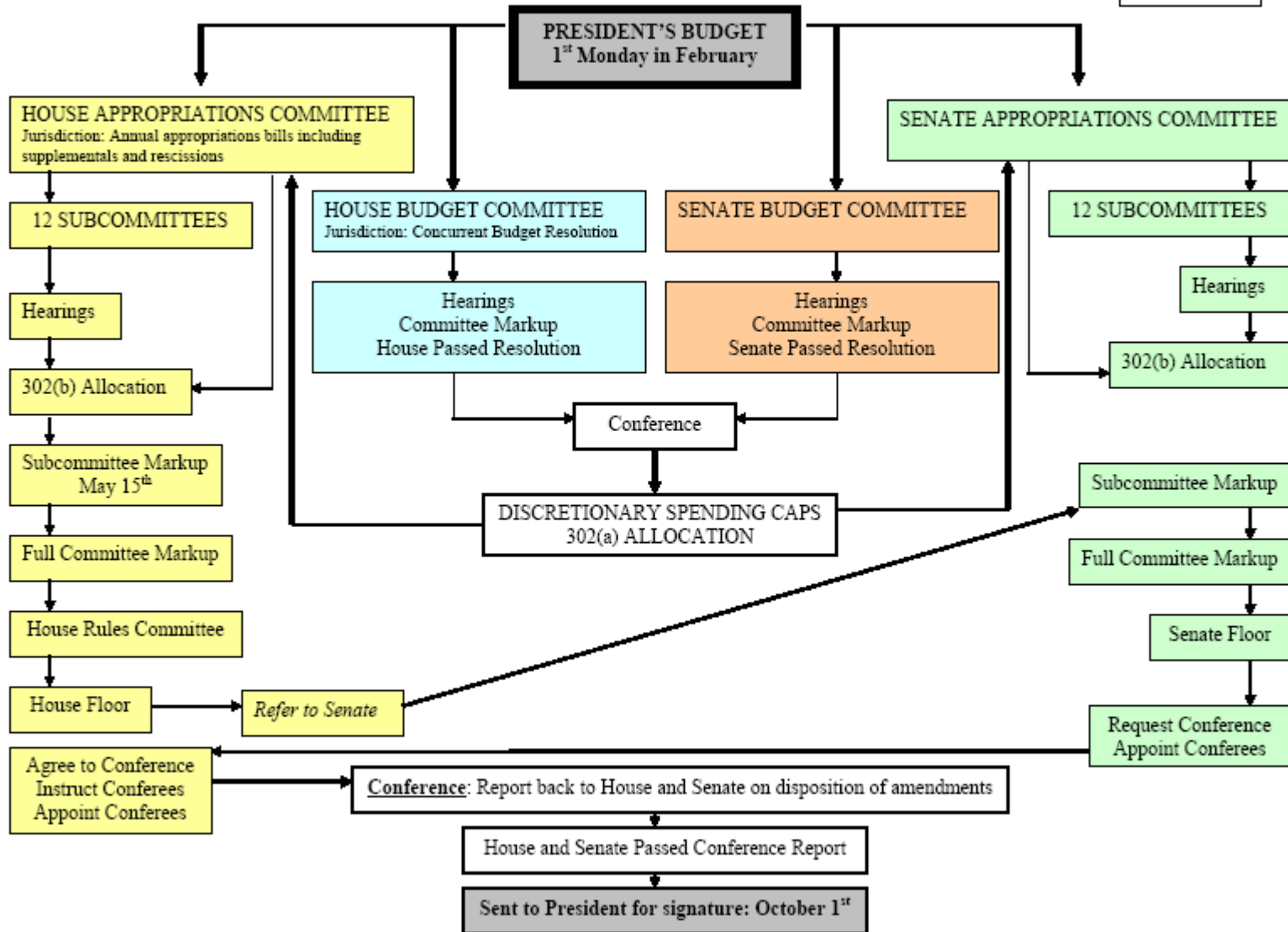
Sen. Dan Inouye  
(D-HI) - Chair



Sen. Thad Cochran  
(R-MS) – Ranking Member

# APPROPRIATIONS PROCESS

Attachment 1



# Typical Appropriations Schedule

- 1st Mon. Feb. President submits budget to Congress
- Feb - May Hearings
- March/April Wish lists due to Subcommittees
- May - June Sub & Full Committee markups  
(presentation of Chairman's bill and amendments)
- June - July Floor action
- August Recess
- Sept- Dec Conference Committee  
Send bill to President
- October 1 Fiscal year begins (bill enacted or begin continuing resolutions)

# Chief Opportunities to Influence the Process

## **Jan-April 15**

Impact Budget Resolution to Raise Health Funding (Function 550) – Budget Committee

## **February-March**

Deadlines for funding requests to appropriations committee – Appropriations Committee

## **Fall**

Appropriations conference committees meet

## **Congressional Session**

Can advance authorizing legislation at any point – Authorizing Committees



# The Congressional Appropriations Decision Makers

- Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Member (Draft the bill and report)
- Full Committee Chairman and Ranking Member  
Subcommittee Members or Full Committee
- Members of the Leadership
- Members of a Caucus (such as rural health)
- Any Member of the House or Senate

# Staffers' Roles and Responsibilities

- Chief of Staff/Administrative Assistant
- District Director (back home)
- Legislative Director (legislation)
- Legislative Assistants (legislation, ie, health LA)
- Legislative Correspondents (mail)
- Scheduler (Member's daily schedule)
- Press Secretary

# Typical Office Visit Timeline

- 1 minute, get to know staff background, introductions
  - From the state? Prior experience with issues?
- 2 minute overview of the programs.
  - Key programs, needs, and impacts on state and communities.
- 10 minute presentation of particular issue papers
- 3 minutes for questions.
- ELEVATOR PITCH

