

Chapter 26

ROLE OF THE PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT AS THE CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

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“The Congress shall have the power to . . . raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years.”

—*Article I, Section 8, Clause 12 of the US Constitution*

Introduction

The mission of the Office of the Chief, Legislative Liaison (OCLL), is to provide effective liaison between the US Army and Congress to gain congressional trust and support. This is a strategic mission that involves the participation of legislative subject matter experts from across the Army. The chief of legislative liaison (CLL) is directly responsible to the secretary of the Army (SECARMY) regarding legislative affairs, including formulating, coordinating, supervising, and executing the Army’s congressional policy and strategy. The CLL ensures the overall integration of the Army’s efforts with Congress, develops comprehensive congressional engagement strategies for Army senior leaders (ASLs), and disseminates critical information on all significant congressional activities.¹

Army congressional fellows, other Army officers, senior noncommissioned officers (typically sergeants major), and Army civilians comprise the staff of OCLL. These individuals represent various interests and portfolios to members of Congress (MoCs) and their personal and professional staff. Numerous Army civilians,

including two in Senior Executive Service positions, manage daily operations, strategic planning, and routine correspondence to MoCs and congressional staff who serve on committees of authorization (primarily the House Armed Services Committee, and Senate Armed Services Committee, and associated subcommittees). The assistant secretary of the Army for financial management, budget liaison (SAFM-BUL), accomplishes much of the same functions as the OCLL; however, the SAFM-BUL deals specifically with MoCs responsible for congressional appropriations (eg, the House Committee on Appropriations–Defense).

Army Medicine Within the Legislative Community

Army medicine maintains two positions within the legislative liaison community. The first position is an 05A (area-of-concentration-immaterial Medical Portfolio Lead) within the OCLL Programs division, which has been occupied by officers from the varying medical branches of the Army Medical Department (Army Nurse Corps, Medical Specialist Corps, Medical Corps, Medical Service Corps). This position is assigned to the Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) with duty in the Pentagon under the personnel services directorate. The position covers all topics germane to Army health care and is focused on defense authorizers with oversight interests in the Army health system, as well as committees within their jurisdiction, including the House and Senate armed services committees. Typically, the officer is a senior major and a Command and General Staff College graduate who is selected by the Office of the Surgeon General (OTSG) in consultation with MEDCOM.

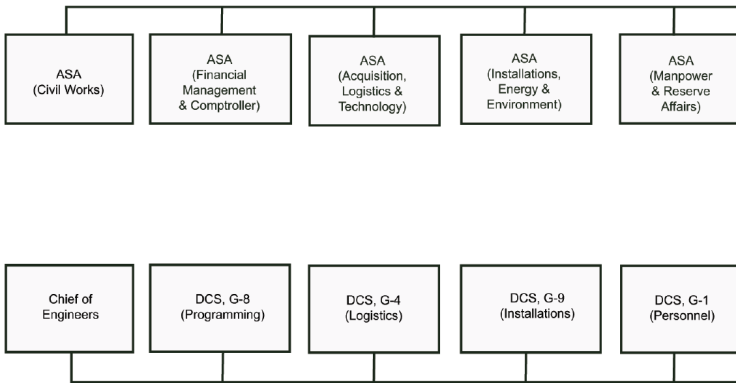
The second position, coded for a 70C (Medical Comptroller), is assigned to OTSG with duty at SAFM-BUL, also located at the Pentagon. The SAFM-BUL position focuses exclusively on congressional appropriation committees. The OCLL and SAFM-BUL medical portfolio liaisons work closely with the MEDCOM congressional affairs contact officer (CACO) and senior OTSG/MEDCOM leaders to craft Army medicine messages, develop a congressional engagement strategy to socialize and explain Army medical policies to relevant MoCs and committees, escort Army medical leaders to meetings and hearings on Capitol Hill, and escort MoCs and their staff to Army health care entities worldwide.

A third position was established within the OCLL House Liaison Division (HLD) by Lieutenant General Patricia Horoho, the 43rd Army surgeon general, to increase the Army medicine presence on Capitol Hill and perform critical functions as a forward medical liaison. As liaison to the House, this person serves the preponderance of the congressional community. Responsibilities of this position are primarily those of a legislative liaison and include planning, supporting, and executing Army events on Capitol Hill; rapidly responding to questions about medical policy and operations; supporting ASL meetings and engagements with MoCs and their staff; and supporting congressional travel when requested. As a MEDCOM asset, the position provides an unparalleled opportunity to support Army medical leadership engagements on Capitol Hill.

Unit Structure

The OCLL falls under the Secretariat of the Army (Figure 26-1) and is led by a major general who reports directly to the under secretary of the Army and the SECARMY (both of whom are nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate). Within OCLL are seven subdirectorates (Figure 26-2), each led by a colonel (or GS-15 civilian): the House, Senate, Operations, Inquiry, Programs, Investigations and Legislation, and Management and Support divisions.² The Senate division functions much like the House division, but with a smaller staff. The Operations division manages OCLL plans, training, and strategy. The Inquiry division tracks, researches, and replies to inquiries originating from MoCs and their staff. The Programs division contains subdivisions that manage various portfolios, including medical, munitions, tracked vehicles, rotary-wing aircraft, cyber, missile defense, personnel, and many other subjects. Investigations and Legislation manages all operations involving legal review and prepares political appointees and general officers for confirmation hearings. The Management and Support office conducts the daily management of OCLL and supports congressional travel operations. The medical legislative liaison is typically rated by the division deputy chief (a GS-14 civilian) and senior-rated by the division chief, usually a colonel or equivalent (O-6 or GS-15).² A liaison who is a practicing medical provider may choose to have an intermediate rating by their supervising physician if applicable under the provisions of Army Regulation (AR) 623-3, *Evaluation Reporting System*.³

Secretariat



Army Staff

Figure 26-1. Structure of the Headquarters, Department of the Army.

ASA: Assistant Secretary of the Army

CSA: Chief of Staff of the Army

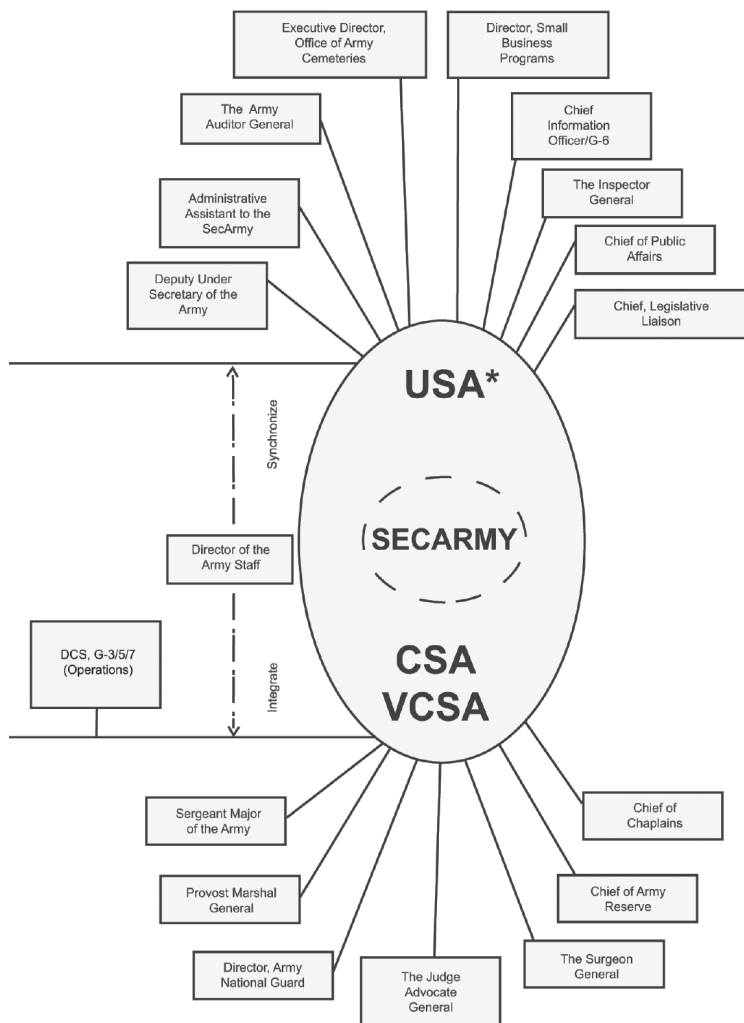
DCS: Deputy Chief of Staff

SECARMY: Secretary of the Army

USA: Under Secretary of the Army

VCSA: Vice Chief of Staff of the Army

Physician Assistant as Congressional Legislative Liaison



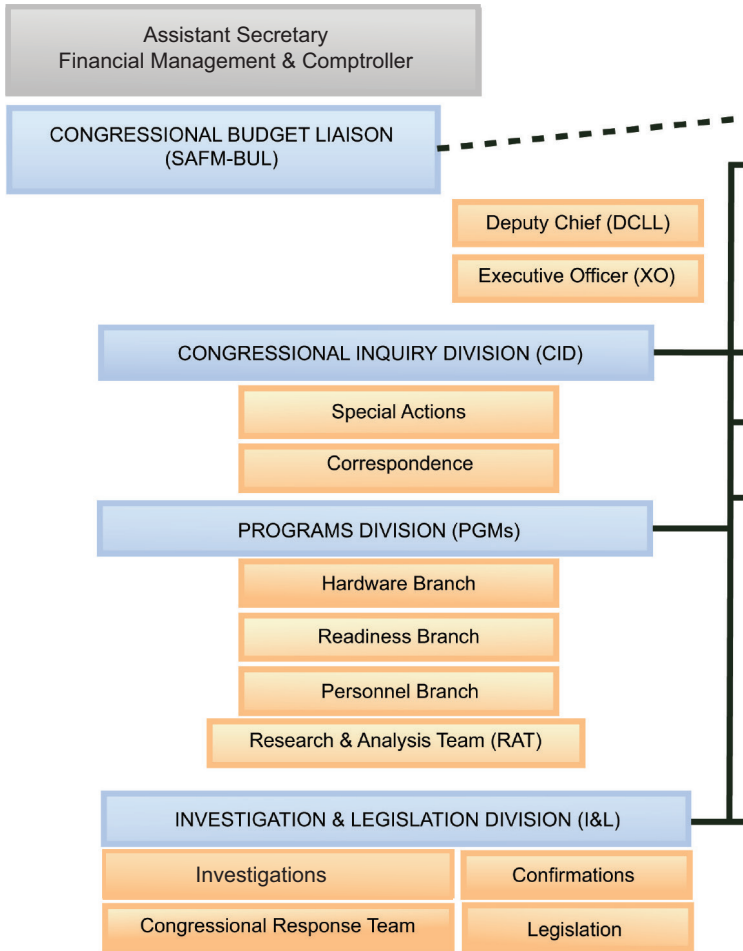
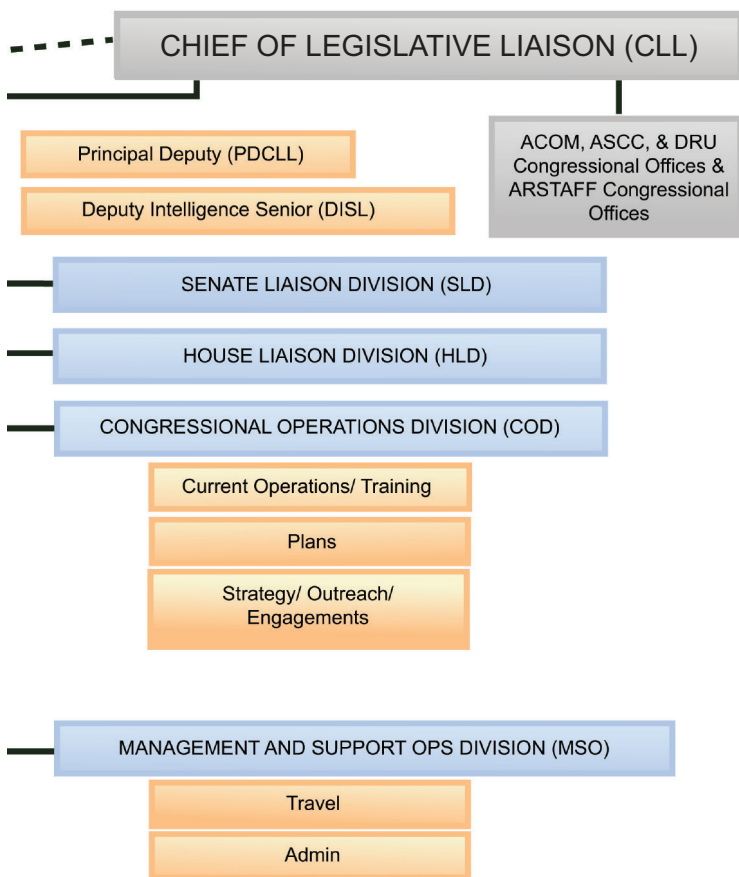


Figure 26-2. Office of the Chief, Legislative Liaison, organization chart.
 ACOM: Army command
 ARSTAFF: Army staff
 ASCC: Army service component command
 DRU: direct reporting unit
 SAFM-BUL: Secretary of the Army, Financial Management–Budget Liaison



Legislative Liaison as a Clinician

The legislative liaison position is not wholly consistent with the execution of routine clinical duties due to the OCLL's high operational tempo. With planning, however, the position is amenable to maintaining at least the minimum clinical requirements called for in policy: title 37 USC § 335, Pay and Allowances of the Uniformed Services⁴; Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6000.13, *Accession and Retention Policies, Programs, and Incentives for Military Health Professions Officers*⁵; and AR 40-68, *Clinical Quality Management*.⁶

Options for credentialing in the national capital region (NCR) are numerous, including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, the Fort Meade Army Medical Activity, and Fort Belvoir Community Hospital. DiLorenzo Troop Medical Clinic (DTMC), under the oversight of Fort Belvoir, is located in the Pentagon (8th corridor) and may provide the most appropriate option for guest providers due to its proximity to Capitol Hill and the OCLL-HLD offices. Individuals can easily utilize the Washington DC Metro, Pentagon shuttles, or a personal vehicle (parking is available at the Pentagon). The Fort McNair Army Health Clinic, under the oversight of Fort Meade, and Radar Health Clinic, at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, also offer guest provider options, with dedicated parking and quick access to the Waterfront Metro Station. The DTMC serves a preponderance of the 26,000 people working in the Pentagon and consistently needs support in the acute, primary, or executive care clinics. Credentials and privileges at DTMC are obtained through the credentialing coordinator at Fort Belvoir. It is also possible to work at other regional clinics within the NCR, including Fort Myers, Joint Base Anacostia–Bolling, and Andrews Air Force Base.

Numerous MoCs and their staff are members of the Army National Guard or Reserve and routinely contact OCLL for various support functions. When OCLL-HLD is occupied by a credentialed and privileged provider, the position is capable of supporting basic Army medical readiness requirements, such as periodic health assessments and vision screenings, for these individuals; additional support can be provided as appropriate. Providers assigned to OCLL do not function as the primary care provider or medical operations officer for MoCs or the OCLL and should maintain caution and boundaries as appropriate. Health care

for MoCs and congressional staff with congressional health insurance is provided by the Office of the Attending Physician or through the individuals' insurance provider.

Daily Operations

Liaisons who work exclusively on Capitol Hill usually wear formal business attire (business suits that are dark in color, white or blue shirt with a conservative tie, or similar attire for men, and commensurate business attire for women). When Congress is not in session, more relaxed business casual attire is appropriate (eg, open-collar shirts or Army-related polo-style shirts). There is no uniform allowance for officers assigned to OCLL. When working at the Pentagon, liaisons may wear the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) within the building, but must wear formal business attire (or Army Service Uniform with cap or Army Green Uniform with cap) when conducting business on Capitol Hill. At no time should soldiers wear the ACU on Capitol Hill. When escorting ASLs, liaisons commonly wear business attire. When traveling in support of congressional delegations or congressional staff delegations, liaisons should anticipate wearing both business attire and business casual attire throughout; liaisons will not wear military uniforms or carry weapons (Figure 26-3).

Beyond daily interaction with military legislative staff, liaisons provide a critical role in supporting and shaping congressional oversight travel. MoCs and their staff routinely execute oversight visits to military treatment facilities (MTFs) and other medical facilities to ensure that the Department of Defense (DOD) and Army Medical Department (AMEDD) are responsible stewards of appropriated funds and in compliance with legislative changes and policy implementation. Congressional travel may be investigative in nature (causing elevated concern), or purely informational (Figure 26-4). In conjunction with various CACOs, liaisons help develop delegation itineraries that include presentations, demonstrations, tours, and activities of interest to the MoC or their staff. Coordinating for travel includes planning for all aspects, including but not limited to arranging air and ground transportation; coordinating with government, nongovernment, and possibly foreign agencies to conduct requested meetings; managing all baggage and support supplies for travel, planning events, and meals; and managing and disbursing per diems. The OCLL Management Support Operations office supports liaisons in these efforts.



Figure 26-3. Major Sean Donohue and Representative Greg Harper of Mississippi's 3rd Congressional District, in Provence, France, on a congressional delegation addressing national museums, digitizing national archive content, and cybersecurity for national museum operations; May 2019.



Figure 26-4. Congressional staffers observe a demonstration at the Tactical Combat Medicine Course, Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, September 2018.

Liaisons may also be tasked with coordinating and executing Army briefings in the US Capitol complex. This includes advertising the events, contracting for catering, and providing a room and audio-visual support. Liaisons may also plan for and execute large-scale events such as the Army Birthday Congressional Cake Cutting ceremony (Figure 26-5), the Joint Service Congressional Social, and other Army and Defense Secretariat-level congressional receptions. Liaisons may also be called on to support other defense and NCR missions such as state funerals, the State of the Union address, and the presidential inauguration.

Medical Recruiting Liaison

The legislative liaison positions also serve as a liaison between Army medical recruiting and Congress. Historically, the OCLL-HLD liaison has assisted in the recruitment of MoCs into the Army Reserve Medical



Figure 26-5. Lieutenant Colonel Maureen (Mo) Giorio stands in the US Capitol Congressional Atrium during the Army Birthday Congressional Reception, June 2016. The Congressional Cake Cutting ceremony recognizes the connection the Army has with Congress and the establishment of the Continental Army by congressional resolution in 1776.

Corps, assisted staff with enlisting in the Army, recruited civilians visiting the office, and helped congressional offices assist constituents who join the AMEDD through their local medical recruiting office.

Army Congressional Fellowship Program

Those wishing to complete the Army Congressional Fellowship Program should reference AR 1-202, *Army Congressional Fellowship Program*.⁷ The fellowship program provides outstanding commissioned officers, noncommissioned officers, and Army civilians with firsthand experience and understanding of the strategic relationships between the Army and Congress, and allows fellows to learn about the Army as an institution through contact with Army personnel working in their office. Officers wishing to apply for the fellowship should be in the grade of captain or major (O-3 or O-4), with at least 6 years of active federal commissioned service, and have graduated from the Captains Career Course. Upon selection by the annual liaison selection board, students will conduct a permanent change of station move to the NCR, with an assignment to the Army Student Detachment at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Fellows will complete a Masters in Legislative Affairs at George Washington University and work as a legislative fellow within the office of a MoC (typically a member of the House Armed Services Committee). Upon completing the fellowship, the officer will execute a 2-year utilization tour and concurrent active duty service obligation with OCLL or SAFM-BUL. (Selection for the fellowship as an Army medical officer does not mean that the officer will serve their utilization as the medical liaison.)

Medical Command Congressional Affairs Contact Officer

The MEDCOM CACO is a colonel (O-6) position serving as a personal staff officer to the surgeon general. The CACO's staff includes two major (O-4) positions, one senior enlisted, and two civilians (Figure 26-6). The MEDCOM CACO is the proponent for all Army medicine-related issues involving Congress, supporting AMEDD and OTSG efforts such as congressional testimony, and supporting the OCLL Programs medical lead. The MEDCOM CACO also interviews and recommends officers for proponent positions within OCLL when appropriate. It is also worth

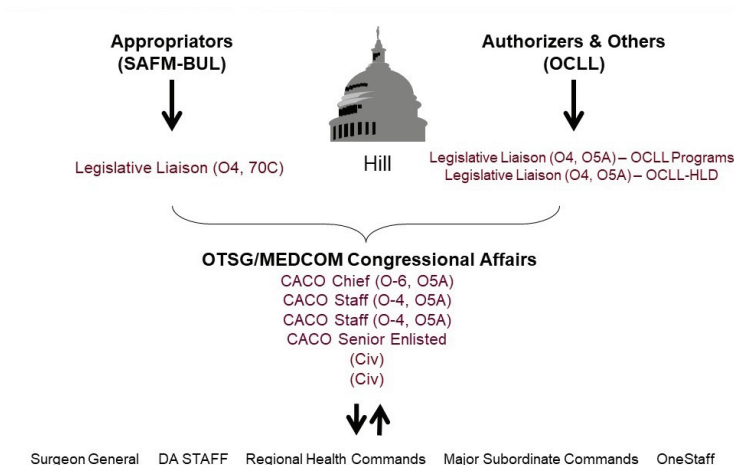


Figure 26-6. Legislative relationships and structure.

CACO: Congressional Affairs Contact Office

CIV: civilian

HLD: House Liaison Division

OCLL: Office of the Chief, Legislative Liaison

SAFM-BUL: Secretary of the Army, Financial Management–Budget Liaison

noting that most Army garrisons and division elements and above have a formal or informal CACO responsible for congressional interactions, often combined with the political advisor position. Historically, the O-4 staff positions have been filled by a Medical Service Corps officer, one of whom concentrates on appropriations (budgeting) and the other on authorizations (programmatic). In 2016, a 65D (Army Physician Assistant [PA]) served in the appropriation position (therefore, precedence exists for future consideration of PAs). A clinician working as a CACO must be prepared for an increased operational tempo; however, guest privileges can be obtained for biweekly or monthly clinic time for skills maintenance (see *Legislative Liaison as a Clinician*, above).

While the CACO position is largely a deviation from clinical practices, it rewards the clinician with a greater understanding of medical policy and the delicate balance of the finite medical resources required to achieve readiness across the Army, MTFs, and other military services. A clinician as CACO also has a unique opportunity to see and learn from best practices across clinical service lines, MTFs, Centers of Excellence,

and operational units—and how to avoid common clinical leadership issues and pitfalls. Moreover, there is ample mentorship opportunity and face-time with ASLs. Skills gained in the CACO position set up the PA clinician for future broadening and leadership opportunities.

The CACO's staff communicate daily with the legislative liaison to support and enhance the overall congressional engagement strategy. As liaisons plan and organize staff and congressional delegations, the CACO's staff works in parallel to prepare medical leaders and MTF commanders for visits. Delegation preparation includes a thorough analysis of current political optics, MoC interests, past congressional visits, and any relevant activities to highlight. Delegations are *strategic opportunities* for ASLs to communicate success, needs, and challenges to legislators. Military services are unable to lobby; therefore, the liaison, CACO, and ASLs must synergize efforts to ensure that timely information is delivered via the right platform to successfully influence future legislation or policy implementation.

CACO staff also prepare official responses to congressional inquiries, compose oral and written testimony for the surgeon general, and prepare witnesses (ASLs) for congressional hearings. Testimony writing and preparation is a sensitive and time-consuming process that can be stressful when a hearing is called on short notice or in response to a negative issue.

The CACO, OTSG staff, legislative liaison, and senior leaders work closely to ensure delivery of consistent themes, messages, and talking points, and to articulate best practices and relevant concerns across MTFs and other medical equities. Of recent interest, the military health system reform first prescribed in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has dominated ASL attention and the AMEDD's congressional interactions. Changes set in motion by this groundbreaking legislation have caused both concerns and opportunities for care delivery. The CACO and legislative liaisons serve as the AMEDD's front line to form and maintain beneficial relationships and facilitate key leader meetings to communicate concerns, affected entities, and projected outcomes associated with the NDAA and related policy implementation.

Desired Skills and Attributes

Those considering service with OCLL, as CACO, or as a congressional fellow should have solid and advanced organizational, writing, and briefing skills; maintain good fiscal habits; and be comfortable with

public speaking. A history in government policy or politics is not required but can be helpful. Because liaisons are routinely trusted with sensitive national military strategic messaging priorities, sensitive social military topics, and large sums of money, a solid ethical and moral footing is paramount to success. To be successful, individuals serving in the OCLL must be sound time managers, as well as proving themselves accountable, efficient, and dutiful.

Lessons Learned

Army PAs thinking of serving within the congressional community should consider several issues before undertaking such a position, primarily the impact on family. Living in the NCR can be fun and exciting, with the proximity to museums, sports, and outdoor activities, but the area is also notorious for traffic problems. Housing becomes more affordable the further it is from the Pentagon or the Capitol, but even a mile outside the beltway can significantly increase commute times. However, joint-basing has improved options for those who desire to live closer to the city and are willing to make some trade-offs. Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling is on the southeast side of Washington and within an easy commute of the Capitol or the Pentagon by car or commuter bus. Because liaisons must often work hours outside the typical 0800 to 1700 workday, and there is consistent travel (typically flying from Dulles or Reagan National airports, and occasionally from Andrews Air Force Base), choosing where to live is important.

Inconsistent schedules also make it difficult to maintain personal fitness. Legislative liaisons working at the Capitol can join the congressional staff gym for a nominal fee; those working at the Pentagon or MEDCOM headquarters also have gyms within their respective footprints.

Liaisons working in the congressional realm must be responsive and tactful. Any engagement, from email to casual conversation, may include topics of national interest and defense policy. Liaisons must understand that their every word may be circulated well outside their immediate realm of influence and be seen and heard by numerous general officers and elected officials. It is crucial to understand that a liaison's role is to stick to talking points while remaining approachable and forthright in conversation. Although it is best to maintain conduct as though every conversation is "on the record," there are still many

opportunities to forge personal relationships with congressional staff and MoCs. Liaisons must not forget they are specially selected representatives of the Army and DOD.

Tips for Success

Legislative liaisons must be highly organized and detail-oriented; have solid grammar and editing skills; and be proficient in Microsoft Office software. To guide the approach of ASLs to MoCs and their staff, it is imperative that liaisons and CACOs track the MoCs' personal preferences, committee assignments, and constituent interests. Liaisons must maintain close working contacts across congressional offices to understand the mood and opinions on Capitol Hill. These relationships are forged with hard work and consistent contact; they subsequently help inform ASLs about congressional opinions of Army efforts and programs. Coordinating correspondence and requests for information



Figure 26-7. Major Sean Donohue (second from the left) with members of the Army House Liaison Division staff and the 54th Speaker of the House, Paul Ryan, during the 115th Congress.

are essential to daily liaison operations, who must ensure that each question is answered to the satisfaction of the office requesting the information (Figure 26-7).

Conclusion

Service as a legislative liaison or a CACO is a highly competitive and rewarding broadening opportunity that brings selected individuals into daily contact with senior DOD and elected government leadership. These assignments will provide participants a high-level, behind-the-scenes understanding of the legislative branch of government and Army operations.

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