
Be a Team Player

Offer to help others who are swamped with work. You're likely to learn something, and you might need their help in the future.

Offer to pick up food for a swamped colleague.

Be helpful. Guaranteed, whomever you work for has too much on their plate.

Work-Life Balance

Figure out how to leave work at work. You need it; your family needs it, and it will open your eyes to other points of view.

Learn the difference between a crisis that needs immediate response and everything else that can wait till morning.

Advancement

Do the small things well. Strive to be consistent. Keep showing up, and good things will happen.

If you ask for work from a superior and they aren't eager to give you more projects, then you haven't exceeded their expectations in your current responsibilities.

If you have mastered all of your responsibilities and have room to take on more – do so.

Add value. Ask yourself if what you are doing contributes positively to your team.

Be prepared for every interview (even the informational ones). You never know when an office is looking for the right person to complement their team.

Have FUN!

Appreciate the beauty of Congress. The House and Senate give a local voice and perspective to every corner of our nation.

You don't have to denigrate an opposing side's existence or belittle their opinion to make your voice valid.

Working on the Hill is often challenging, difficult, and sometimes unpleasant, but it's also likely to be the most rewarding job you'll ever have.

Enjoy it! Congress is an amazing place to work. Your job is amazing. The experiences and opportunities you have now are unlike any other. It is fleeting; don't squander it.

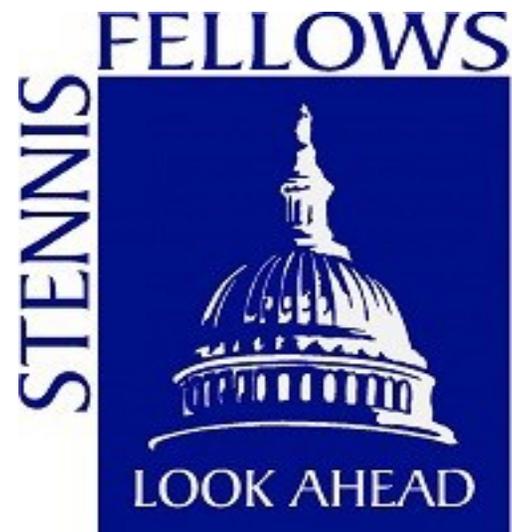
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Inside the Dome:

**Tips for
Surviving and
Thriving on
Capitol Hill**

First Edition.

*Compiled and edited by the
113th Congressional Stennis Fellows*

Basics

Don't underestimate how many doors are opened or locked depending on whether people see you as an honest broker.

Be genuine. People know the difference.

Do your job well and take pride in the service you perform to our nation.

Poor planning by you doesn't create an emergency for others.

Be smart enough to know when you are not the smartest person in the room.

Ask yourself first – "Who, when, what, where and why?"

Ask questions (fear not). People will be impressed by your desire to master the details.

Never make up an answer if you don't know. Simply say 'let me find out.' However, it is important to be prepared, so make sure this doesn't become a routine reply.

Ask for help. Those you ask will appreciate the fact that you've acknowledged their expertise. It is not a sign of weakness.

Silence can be an extremely powerful tool in conversation.

Don't let mistakes get you down; learn from them. If you never make one, you're probably not pushing yourself enough. No one is perfect.

Think before you push the "Send" button. You can't take it back. In the heat of the moment you may say something you'll regret, and you never know where it could end up.

Don't assume there is only one way to accomplish a goal. Be open to creative solutions and the advice of others. Don't be shy about suggesting alternatives.

Constant Classroom

As a congressional staffer you have access to experts from all walks of life, around the globe.

Solicit several opinions on issues. There are always (at least) two sides to the story.

Take time to learn about other Members of Congress and their districts. Congress represents a large and diverse nation.

Attire

Dress for the job you want, not for the one you have.

Women: buy a slip, no, buy two. Yes your mother wore them for good reason.

Men: buy undershirts.

First impressions matter. Don't smell like an ashtray or a bottle of perfume. Use mints.

Decorum

Practice your manners. Don't talk with food in your mouth.

Congressional courtesy is not a lost art. Be thoughtful in respecting protocols, processes, and traditions. Seek to understand them and why they exist. Your job is to solve puzzles, but you do not have to destroy the institution to achieve your goals.

Be courteous and respectful to everyone with whom you work, including interns. Each has a role to play in making the engine go. You'll be impressed by the future accomplishments of those who once interned in Congress.

Make a lasting impression with a handwritten thank you note.

Managing the Avalanche

The flow of information in Congress is equivalent to standing in front of an open-throated fire hose.

To be successful you must develop strategies and tactics for dealing with it.

Effective time management is essential to be able to resolve the immediate while still making progress to achieve medium and long range goals.

Beyond the to-do list; make a plan, think through each of the steps, and set deadlines for yourself.

Don't enslave yourself to email. Master the use of folders and sorting rules in Outlook.

Respect your own time just as much as you respect others' time. In other words, mark off time on your calendar for your work. This will help with self-discipline and alert others that just because you are not in a meeting, doesn't necessarily mean you are free.

Relationships & Networks

Connecting with people when you have no agenda will make it more likely that they will respond to you when you really do need something.

Get to know your team. Build relationships with the district or D.C. staff. Seek to understand how roles and functions differ. Success in both spheres is necessary to be the best.

Introduce yourself to committee and leadership staff, preferably before you ask them to pull a rabbit out of the hat for you.

Make friends on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the dome.

Take advantage of opportunities to get out from behind your desk and meet colleagues in different settings. The relationships you develop will be fun and can last a lifetime.

Phone and email relationships are no substitute for face-to-face interactions.

Leadership & Management

Make professional development a priority for your team.

If one of your staff makes a mistake and you have reviewed the recommendation, it's your responsibility. Live up to that and your staff will follow you anywhere.

Don't be stingy with information. Share these tips, and other lessons and opportunities with your staff.

Role & Place

Never, ever, use the following phrase - "Do you know who I am?"

Remember that your calls are returned because of the name on the door and the institution for which you work.

Be patient with constituents. They are the boss and unlike you they do not live and breathe the technical details of Congress and government.

Regardless of your education, experience, or title, you are not too important to answer the phone, pick up the mail, or make copies if it is necessary for success.

Do not judge a book by its cover – or its title. Knowing who has the ability to make the decision you care about is far more important and valuable.