


# Wake Up, Congress...

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**Special Educators  
are  
IN THE HOUSE  
(and SENATE)!**

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“Our children should learn the general framework of their government and then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else’s business, but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine.”

-- Eleanor Roosevelt

# And just as a reminder...

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It is not only your RIGHT as a citizen to VOTE for the candidates of your choice....

It is also your RESPONSIBILITY!

(This message was approved by Myrna Mandlawitz and MRM Associates, LLC!)



# What IS Congress?

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- 535 small businesses!
- No “typical congressional office.”
- What are your “businesses” selling?  
(...and are you buying?)
- Can you influence your store’s “buyer?”
  - SEE NEXT SLIDE!

## (Congressional staff) Survey Says...

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- 94% (2015): “in-person visits” = some/a lot of influence.
  - Down from 97% in 2010; 99% in 2004.
- 79%: get to know issue area LA.
  - 62%: get to know district/state director.
- 91%: helps to get info about issue impact on state/district.
  - ***But only 9% said they get that info!***

# And what about MoC?

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- 535 human beings!
- In the '90s, no-no to avoid calls, etc.
- Avoidance more tempting now, especially if “opponent” constituent.
- YOUR best method: Give regular feedback.
  - So when “catastrophe,” more likely to be heard.

# Some stuff, different year!

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- Bipartisanship – not the norm.
  - Special Ed = an exception.
- Crisis management!
- Very few major decisions being made.
- Same issues:
  - Fiscal stuff.
  - Health care.
  - School choice.
  - School safety.
  - Immigration reform.

# Another election?!

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- Midterm elections often critical.
- Up for grabs:
  - 435 House seats.
  - 35 Senate seats.
- Also, 36 governorships.
- What changes might occur?  
Impact?





# Taking the Big Step...

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**The “hot tips” to becoming  
a SpEd advocate!**

# Some Truths about MoC

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- Reelection is always front and center!
- “Running” affects all actions!
- Only way to effect change is to stay in office!
- They want your vote: *“My MoC cares about me, shares my values, & is working hard for me.”*
- Image” is everything!

# Some dos and don'ts...

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- Agree with your MoC?
  - “Thanks, keep up the good work!”
- MoCs who don't represent you?
  - Not interested in your opinions!
  - Maybe if on committee?
  - Simply put, you don't vote for them.

# “How long will I have with Sen. X?”

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- Maybe no time, photo op, or ½ hour.
  - Remember: 535 human beings...all with different schedules!
- If just a photo op, save the real talking for staff.
  - More on staff coming up...!

# NOW FOR THE DETAILS....

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# Please, no “edu-speak,” but...

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Staff *will* jargonize. Here’s a handy list:

- ***Authorization***: Enacts program into existence.
- *Mark-up*: Subcommittee/committee meets to debate, amend, vote on a bill.
- *Scoring*: Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyzes all bills to determine cost.

# Just a few more terms...

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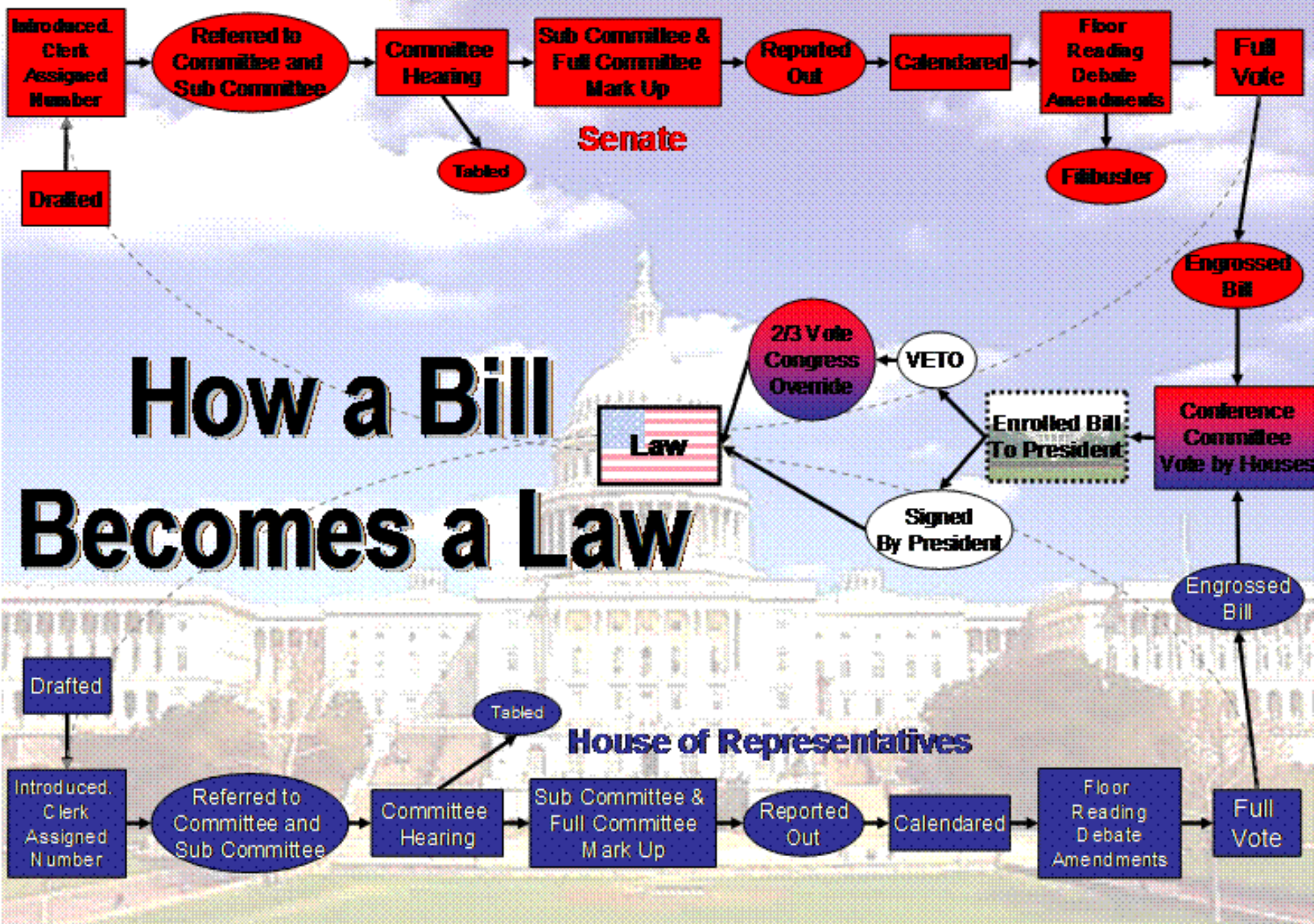
- ***Appropriation***: Funding for authorized programs.
- *Discretionary Spending*: Government functions funded through annual appropriation.
  - Defense and NDD.
- *Mandatory Spending*: “Entitlement” or nondiscretionary spending; no annual spending ceiling.

# Now you're an Expert!

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- *Federal Fiscal Year* = 10/1 – 9/30.
- *Budget Resolution*: Broad funding priorities with total spending number.
- *Continuing Resolution*: Stop-gap funding bill to keep government operating....while Congress figures out appropriations!





# It's Really Not THAT Complicated!

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- Issue raised.
- Bill introduced.
- Hearings.
- Bill markup.
- Floor consideration.
- Consideration in other chamber.

# Just A Few More Steps....

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- Conference committee to reconcile versions of the bill.
- Chambers vote on final bill.
- Bill sent to president for signature or veto.
- Possible veto override vote.

# Once the Law is Passed...

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- All “details” not in law.
- Administrative law provides the details.
  - Regulations; Guidance.
- Easier to change regulations than to amend laws.
- Regulations/guidance = Administration’s stamp on the law!

# How does stuff get funded?

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- Quick review: authorization & appropriation.
- Two main processes to get stuff funded:
  - Budget.
  - Appropriations.

Now for the (simple) details....!

# Budget Process 101

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- President proposes budget.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in February.
  - Developed between Office of Management & Budget (OMB) and federal agencies.
- President's budget recommends
  - overall federal fiscal policies.
  - spending priorities.
  - changes in spending and tax policy.

# Budget Resolution

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- Each chamber develops BR.
  - Sets “302(a)”: overall total to be allocated to approps subcommittees.
- If no BR by 4/15, “deem” the total allocation to be final!
  - # usually different in House & Senate.
- BR includes spending priorities, but only the # is binding.

# Appropriations Process 101

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- 12 approps subcommittees.
  - Each has specific jurisdiction over certain agencies.
  - ***Labor-Health & Human Services-Education*** covers all our programs.
- Only deal with “discretionary” spending: 1/3 of federal total.
- Deadline for complete process: Sept. 30.



# Approps bill process

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- Each subcommittee (in each chamber) writes/passes bill.
  - Gets part of 302(a) = 302(b)!
- Bill goes to full Appropriations Committee and for floor vote.
- House and Senate bills conferenced and final bill signed.

# BUT.....

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- If process not complete by 9/30 (end of fiscal year), either:
  - Shut down government (no \$ to spend!).
  - Pass Continuing Resolution.
  - Pass omnibus spending bill combining several subcommittee bills.
- Process has not been completed on time since 1996!

# And what about *sequestration*?

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- Bipartisan Budget Act passed 2/18.
- Suspended budget caps for FY 2018 and FY 2019.
  - Caps well above pre-sequestration levels for both years.
- Without action, in FY 2020, the *return of sequestration!*
  - Would mean **big** cuts below FY 2019.



# Who's Who on Capitol Hill?

**...And why we care!**

# Now that you know the process...

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Here's when you speak...!

- When you want *your* issue to become *their* issue.
- When a lawmaker raises an issue,
  - Giving committee testimony.
  - Providing research.
  - Drafting bill language.
  - Drafting floor statements.
  - Signing/veto.

# Whose voices make a difference?

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- Lawmakers.
- Personal & committee staff.
- Professional & volunteer lobbyists.
- “Experts”
  - Researchers.
  - Practitioners in the field of interest.
  - Folks with personal experience.
- Constituents!

Into which categories can you fit?

# How does business get done?

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- Congress legislates by anecdote!
  - Compelling stories prompt action.
  - #HearOurEdStories.
- MoC need to hear from “home!”
  - Constituents have an impact.
- Congress is run by 20-somethings !
  - Young staffers have smarts, power, and influence, but not YOUR expertise!

# Staff members have...

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- Direct access to MoC.
- Their bosses' trust.
- Some degree of knowledge on issue areas.
- Real INFLUENCE over legislators' decisions and actions!



# To be in the know, it's WHO you know!

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- DC personal staff:
  - LAs for Education & Appropriations.
  - Receptionist & Scheduler
  - ...and maybe Legislative Director
- District staff:
  - Often more accessible.
  - Communicate regularly with DC staff.
  - Generally know local issues better.

# Is your MoC a BM(W)OC?

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- The answer's "yes" if your Rep or a Senator is on –
  - House Education & Workforce.
  - Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP).
  - Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee (House or Senate) or full Appropriations Committee.
- Extra credit if Rep/Senator is chair or ranking member!

# Office Visit Etiquette!

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# Do your homework!

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- Which party and “wing” of that party?
- Record, especially on your issue?
- Committee assignments/positions?
- Is your issue favored by constituents?
- Helpful personal information?
- “Opposition” arguments?

# When approaching staff...

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- Be professional, transparent, reasonable, respectful, & genuine!
- Connect dots between issue and state/district.
  - Relevance to the MoC?
  - Relevance to constituents?
- Help staff understand issue and how Congress's actions matter & affect lives.

# More on the “approach!”

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- Frame your message in terms of why MoC should care about issue.
  - Local impact.
  - Constituent concerns or “outrage!”
  - Good politics!
- Don’t forget that personal info about MoC & how it might relate.
- Have key info about the district/state.

# Coming in for a landing....!

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- Think of the meeting as more than a “one and done.”
  - Goals:
    - open dialogue.
    - build relationship.
    - become a “resource.”
  - And then, stay in touch!
- RELAX! They’re people, too!

# “Pet peeves” from staffers

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- Being intentionally misleading.
- Not researching MoC & community.
- Making assumptions based on “hearsay” about staff or MoC.
- Referring to MoC by first name (unless you really know him/her!).
- Droning on too long!



# Steps to a Successful Meeting

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- *Time your arrival:* Not late, but not too early!
- *Meeting length:* 10-30 minutes
- *Anticipate last-minute changes:*
- *Influence the influencer:*  
Remember staff directly advises the member...and you're a constituent!

# A Few More Steps


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- *Go over basics*: Ask if familiar with issue before getting in too deep!
- *Stay on topic*
- *Make it local*: How are constituents affected? DATA!
- *Watch the clock (AND the body language)!*
- *Follow up and become a "regular!"*

# Takeaways!

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- Getting to know staff can be very beneficial.
  - Access to power structure.
  - Capacity to influence decisions.
- You do NOT have to be in DC to develop relationships.
  - Work with district/state staff.
  - Meet with DC staff when they're at "home."
- This visit to DC is just one step in a long advocacy adventure!



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“If you have a plan, we want to hear it. Tell your community leaders, your local officials, your governor, and your team in Washington. Believe me, your ideas count. An individual can make a difference.”

--George H. W. Bush



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Thanks for being a special  
education advocate!

**Questions? Comments?**