



SELS in DC...in *July*?!

**What a 'Capitol'
IDEA!"**

**MYRNA MANDLAWITZ, M.ED., JD
MRM ASSOCIATES, LLC**

What the Founding “Parents” Said

“We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”

-- Thomas Jefferson

“We have too many high-sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them.”

-- Abigail Adams

When we say “Congress,” we mean...

- 435 Representatives.
 - + District of Columbia “delegate.”
 - + 5 territorial “delegates.”
- 100 Senators.
-and a **WHOLE LOT** of legislative, administrative, security, and other staff and “experts!”

How MANY staff...? (2015 stats)

- House: 7,703
- Senate: 5,887
- Joint Committees: 99
- Support Agencies: 3,833
- Miscellaneous: 2,103

Total: 19,625

(not including keeping the place clean
and the lights on!)

And what about MoC?

- 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.

How busy ARE they: House?

- 110th Congress (2007-08)
 - Met 286 calendar days.
 - Averaged 7.5 hours/day in session.
 - Introduced 7,441 bills; passed 1,101. (14.8%)
- 115th Congress (2017-18)
 - Met 384 calendar days.
 - Averaged 4 hours/day in session!
 - Introduced 7,542 bills; passed 1,162. (15.4%)

Made ME feel better..?!

How busy ARE they: Senate?

- 110th Congress (2007-08)
 - Met 374 calendar days.
 - Averaged 6.3 hours/day in session.
 - Introduced 3,738 bills; passed 556! (14.9%)
- 115th Congress (2017-18)
 - Met 386 calendar days.
 - Averaged 5.7 hours/day in session.
 - Introduced 3,874 bills; passed 583! (15%)

Again, not too bad!

What's the “Mood” in Congress?

- Bipartisanship – not the norm.
 - Special Ed = an exception.
- Still very few major decisions being made.
- Many of the same issues:
 - Immigration reform.
 - Fiscal stuff.
 - Health care.
 - School choice.
 - School safety.

2020 Election – Yes, ALREADY!

- PRESIDENT! (collective “DUH!”)
- All members of House: Yes, AGAIN!
- Senate: 12 Ds; 22 Rs.

REMEMBER: “Majority” party controls

- All committee chairmanships.
 - The legislative agenda!
-
- ALSO, FYI, 4 D and 5 R governors!

“Hot Tips”

The “How-To” and “What For”
of Advocacy!

Some Truths about MoC

- Reelection is always front and center!
- “Running” affects all actions!
- Have to stay “in” to effect change!
- Image” is everything!
- ...AND they want your vote.
- CONSTITUENCY = POWER!

Some dos and don'ts...

- 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.

“Stopping by” – maybe literally!

- Maybe no time, photo op, or ½ hour.
 - Don't take it personally!
 - They really ARE busy doing something?!
- If just a photo op, save the real conversation for meeting staff.
- More on staff coming up...!

“What the hell did they say?!”

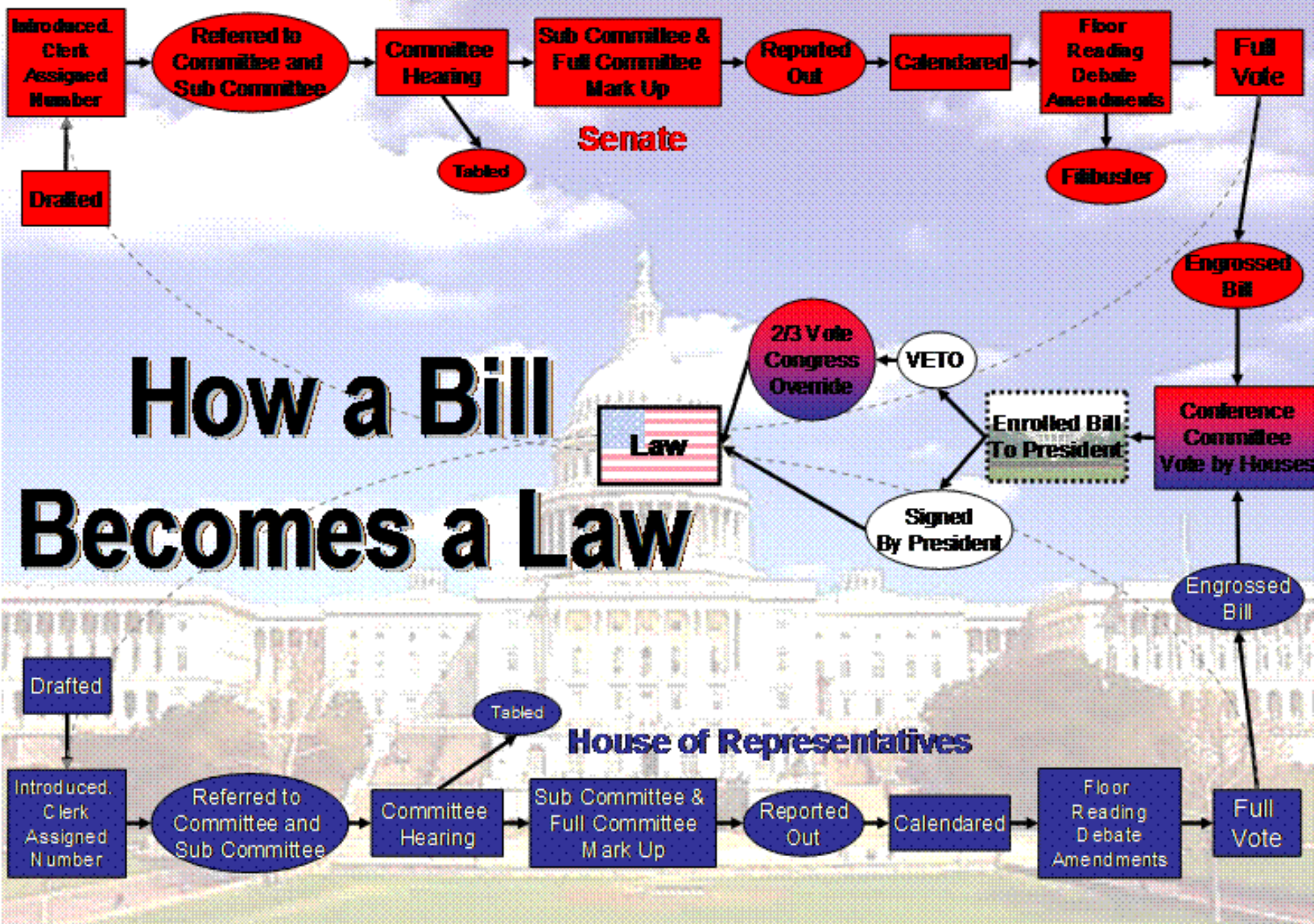
- **Authorization:** Enacts program into existence.
- *Mark-up:* Subcommittee/committee meets to debate, amend, vote on a bill.
- *Scoring:* Congressional Budget Office (CBO) analyzes all bills to determine cost.

More of the Capitol Hill lexicon...

- ***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.

By Jove! I think you've got it!

- *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!



Once the Law is Passed...

- 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 do we pay for it?”

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

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

Appropriations Process 101

- 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 process: Sept. 30.

Approps bill process

- Each subcommittee (in each chamber) writes/passes bill.
- Bill goes to full Appropriations Committee and for floor vote.
- House and Senate bills conferenced and final bill signed.

The big “BUT”....

- 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.



Timing is everything...!

In 40 years since current spending process in place, Congress has passed all appropriations measures on time only FOUR times: FY 1977, 1989, 1995, and 1997!

Sequestration...STILL a dirty word!

- Bipartisan Budget Act (2/18):
suspended FY 2018/2019 budget caps.
 - Caps well above pre-sequestration levels for both years.
- Without action, in FY 2020 (THIS YEAR!) the *return of sequestration!*
 - Would mean **HUGE** cuts below FY 2019.



Congressional Staff

Your New BFFs!

Whose voices make a difference?

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

WHERE DO YOU FIT? (Hint, hint...!)

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

- 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.

Staff members have...

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

Is your MoC a BM(W)IC?

- “Yes” if your Rep/Senate is on –
 - House Education & Labor.
 - Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP).
 - Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee or full Appropriations Committee.
- Extra credit if Rep/Senator is chair or ranking member!

How does business get done?

- Congress legislates by anecdote!
 - Compelling stories prompt action.
 - #HearOurEdStories.

https://cef.org/wp-content/uploads/CEF_HearOurEdStories_Toolkit2_4.13.18.pdf

- MoC need to hear from “home!”
 - Constituents have an impact.
- Lots of “newbies” on staff!
 - Smart with power, and influence, but NOT with YOUR expertise!



Office Etiquette 101

AKA, "The Congressional Cotillion!"

(You Southerners get that, right?!)

Do your homework!

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

When approaching staff...

- Be professional, transparent, respectful, and genuine!
- Connect dots between issue and state/district.
 - Relevance to the MoC?
 - Relevance to constituents?
- Bottom line: How will action on this issue affect constituents' lives?

More on the “approach!”

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

This is just the beginning...

- Your REAL goals for this visit:
 - Open dialogue.
 - Build relationship.
 - Become a “resource.”
- And then, stay in touch!
- RELAX! You’ve got this!

Steps to a Successful Meeting

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


A Few More Steps

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

This could be the start of something big!

- Getting to know staff well is beneficial.
 - Access to power structure.
 - Capacity to influence decisions.
- You DON'T have to be in DC to build relationships.
 - Work with district/state staff.
 - Meet DC staff when they're "home."

This DC visit is just one step in an exciting advocacy adventure!



“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.”

- *Franklin D. Roosevelt*



Thanks for being a special
education advocate!

Questions? Comments?