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FabJob Guide to  
**Become a  
Congressional  
Aide**



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# Welcome

Welcome to the **FabJob Guide to Become a Congressional Aide**. In this guide I offer you the tools and techniques you need to enter the world of working for Congress.

**If you are a beginner**, this guide will offer you the information you need to land your first job on Capitol Hill.



**If you are an experienced legislative or policy aide**, you can learn how to get hired for senior-level positions in Congressional and committee offices.

The first step to finding a job on Capitol Hill is to take a look at where you are now. Are you:

- **Interested in politics?**
- **A good writer?**
- **Able to handle a variety of projects at once?**
- **Eager to make a difference in people's lives?**

If so, you may already have many of the skills you need to become a successful Congressional aide.

This guide offers you:

**Information** on what Congressional offices are **looking for**

**Techniques** that will get your resume **noticed**

**Insight** into Capitol Hill **operations** and **people**

**Ways** to identify **job openings** and potential **networking opportunities**

**Options** for finding a way onto Capitol Hill through a **back door**

You'll learn about **the most important things you can do to get hired**, and the **pitfalls** that cause people to miss out on getting the job – plus a great deal **more!**

Each section is set up for a distinct purpose:

The **Introduction** covers the **essentials of life on Capitol Hill** — what to expect and the jobs that are available.

**Getting Ready** helps you understand the kinds of **educational, work, and volunteer experiences** that will serve you best in your job hunt. Included in this section are resources for gaining the skills you need to be successful.

**Learning the Ropes** details the best ways to get and take advantage of **internships** and **fellowships**, as well as some other ways to get the crucial experience you need to be noticed by potential employers.

**Getting Hired** explains how to find out about **job openings**, including **insider tips** and advice you won't find anywhere else. It also tells you what your resume should (and shouldn't) look like and provides an in-depth look at **how to ace your interview** through preparation and insider knowledge.

**Being Successful** offers insights into **how to get noticed** once you've been hired – and the keys to moving up quickly! It also gives you a preview of your new home: **Washington, D.C.** from a local's perspective.

# 1. Introduction to Life on the Hill

As someone who worked for various Members of Congress for a total of six years, I can say that being a Congressional Aide is one of the most **rewarding, personally satisfying, and exciting** careers around. For people who want to **make a difference**, not just for themselves but for generations to come, there's nothing like being involved with the legislative process. Life in Congress offers rewards that few other jobs can match, which explains why the best and the brightest minds flock to Washington, D.C. to work for Congress.

In this guide, you'll learn how you can join these ranks. But remember, life in Congress isn't for everyone. After you've read through this guide, sit down and think long and hard about whether you want to take the risk – and good luck!

## 1.1 Benefits and Personal Rewards

Working in a Congressional office offers all kinds of exciting possibilities for **travel, important responsibilities, and career advancement**. Just think – you will be responsible for advising a Member of Congress on voting and will have a number of opportunities to make a real difference for people across the country. Some people consider the space to be a bit cramped, or the pace to be much faster than they might be used to, but consider the **benefits**:

You may be in cramped quarters, but that's OK – because you're leaving in two days for a trip to visit with dignitaries in Asia.



Or, the meeting that you had standing up in the hallway (because there was no other place to meet) leads to important legislation that you get to draft and take responsibility for shepherding through the process.

This may be the third night in a row that you've worked until 10:00 pm, but that's because a major piece of legislation on an **issue you care about** is being considered – and you have the responsibility of advising a Member of Congress on how to vote.

A barrage of angry constituents may be calling, but they don't have the right information. Fortunately, you're able to **set them straight** and make your boss look good. In fact, they wind up thanking you for clarifying the situation.

The point here is that there are both rewards and challenges working in a Congressional office. Fortunately, the rewards relate to the **wonderful, fulfilling work** and **opportunities for advancement**, while the challenges relate to questions of personal time, finances and comfort. If you are the type of person who considers exciting, fulfilling work and future rewards more important than six-digit paychecks or long summer vacations, then becoming a congressional aide is for you!

Because of how **dynamic and fast-paced** this career is, most congressional aides are young—the average age is about 31. But as long as they are the kind of person who has energy and enthusiasm, **anyone can pursue this career** and succeed. The **FabJob Guide to Become a Congressional Aide** will even help you determine how your current skill set can help you get hired!

Your salary may start out low, but it's highly likely that **you'll be promoted** sometime in the next year, with more responsibility and a higher rate of pay. For example, within 6 years of working for Congress, I moved from my starting-out position to Chief of Staff. So even if you're starting out at the bottom, if you demonstrate your worth to the Congressional office I guarantee you will move up quickly. Check out some of the positions you can advance to and their **average rates of pay** in Section 1.2.

Many congressional aides use this career as a **stepping-stone** to even bigger things, and some only plan to stay a short while to learn all they can about Congress — the outstanding experience they get as a Capitol Hill staffer gives them a leg up on all the competition in the job market. For this reason, there are always **tons of jobs** opening up on Capitol Hill. This guide will show you how to learn about these often-unadvertised job openings and be the top resume in the pile.

Perhaps more importantly, having a Hill job on your resume makes you a very **hot commodity** in Washington, D.C. and around the country. When I was working on the Hill, I frequently received calls from 'head-hunters' seeking to interest me in jobs that **paid twice or even three times as much** as what I was making in Congress.

So, if you think the Congressional Aide life may be for you: read on!