

CONGRESSIONAL INFORMATION PROCESSES  
FOR COORDINATING NATIONAL POLICIES

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## INTRODUCTION

A common view of the Congress is that expressed by the prestigious Committee for Economic Development in its September 1970 report on Making Congress More Effective:

Too many committees and subcommittees fragment broad policy issues into bits and pieces of legislation. There is inadequate communication between separate, independent power centers. The coordination essential to consistent and coherent decision making is lacking... Congress has not brought its methods, approaches, or structures into conformity with the dynamics of change. 1/

There can be no doubt that the increasing interdependence of all government activities is placing a strain on the ability of Congress, with its decentralized structure, to act consistently and effectively across interlocking areas of public policy. We are becoming more sensitive to the unanticipated secondary effects of one policy on another. For instance, housing policy affects school desegregation, highway policy determines the shape of metropolitan areas, and welfare policy affects basic migration patterns.

The Executive Branch has considerable machinery available to attempt to fulfill the classic role of central institutions in the policy-making process: "to arbitrate in those instances where the decisions made in one policy subsystem may have a spillover into others." 2/ In recent years Congress has been revising its institutional rules, procedures, and structure with the goal of creating counterpart machinery. The problem is twofold:

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1/ Committee for Economic Development. Making Congress more effective. N.Y., Committee for Economic Development, 1970. p. 11.

2/ Schneier, Edward. The intelligence of Congress: information and public policy patterns. Annals, v. 388, March 1970: 17.

acquiring and dispensing information to Members and committees and, on the basis of that information, devising integrated, coherent public policy.

This paper will describe developments related to four types of information systems available to Members of Congress. These systems tend to cut across committee jurisdictions, help identify policy interrelationships, and improve access to existing information sources. The first type includes traditional sources of expertise: Members, their staffs, and professional staffs of committees. Formal and informal groups of Congressmen, which aspire in some measure to have an influence on public policy formation and to provide support services for their members, comprise the second type. Examples are the Senate and House party policy committees, the Democratic Study Group, the Republican Study Committee,\* and non-partisan groups such as the Rural Caucus and the New England Congressional Caucus. The third type is composed of the six major non-partisan research instrumentalities of Congress: the Congressional Research Service, the General Accounting Office, the Office of Technology Assessment, the Legislative Classification Office, the Commission on Information and Facilities, and the Congressional Budget Office. Finally, the contributions of non-legislative joint committees and oversight committees will be described.

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\* Until the 94th Congress it was called the Republican Steering Committee.

## Congressional Information Systems

### Traditional Sources of Expertise

The Member. The most intimate, available, and trustworthy source of information is the Member himself. Whatever the other information inputs available, the actual legislative decision-making in committee work, negotiation, and voting falls ultimately to the individual Congressman. In the end he must rely on his own best judgment. Recent research in the House found "that Members did 30% of their own general legislative research and 60% of their own preparation for committee meetings and hearings and for floor debate and voting." 3/

Members of Congress bring considerable academic and public service experience to their jobs. They are among the most highly educated groups in the country. In the 93d Congress 68 percent, and 76 percent of House and Senate Members, respectively, had received an A.B. or B.S. degree; 12 percent and 9 percent an M.A. or M.S.; 38 percent and 49 percent an LL.B.; 11 percent of both bodies had received the J.D.; and 2 percent of both had earned a Ph.D. 4/ Eighty-two percent of the Representatives and 96 percent of the Senators had been active in public service and/or politics prior to Congressional service. 5/

A well-documented long-term trend with profound consequences for Congressional expertise is the increasing longevity in office of Members. At the beginning of the 93d Congress the average numbers of Congresses served in by Senators and Representatives were 6.2 and 5.6 respectively. 6/ Schneier has commented that:

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3/ Saloma, John S. III. Congress and the new politics. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1969. p. 217.

4/ Findings based on information in the Congressional directory and Congressional quarterly weekly reports.

5/ Congressional quarterly weekly report, Jan. 6, 1973: 14-20.

6/ Calculated from the "service" lists in the Congressional directory, 93d Congress, 1st session, pp. 241-255.

The more incumbents the House and Senate contained the greater possibilities for specialization, and the more the members of each body could look to their colleagues rather than to outside sources, for information 7/

Indeed, an impressive number of studies indicate that the most consistently used source of information for the individual Member of Congress is other Members, particularly those with expertise derived from serving on the committee reporting a bill. As one example, some 40 percent of the decision premises of Congressmen studied by Kovenock came directly from other Members of the House -- almost three times as many as from staff employees of the Congressmen. 8/ The long-term trend toward stability of membership in Congress should augment the importance of trusted colleagues as sources of information.

Members' Staff. The Congressman has many options in meeting his legislative and service needs. But for day-to-day personalized assistance in meeting requests from constituents, for assessing local opinion, for developing new legislative proposals, and for evaluating the effects of proposed and existing legislation on his district, the Member must turn to his own immediate, personally loyal staff.

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7/ Schneier, op. cit.,: 16.

8/ Kovenock, David. Influence in the U.S. House of Representatives: some preliminary statistical 'snapshots.' Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 1967, p. 22. (Cited in Saloma, op. cit.,: 218.

Statutory limits exist which serve to contain the size of Members' staffs. House Members are permitted to employ a maximum of 18 persons out of an allowance of \$182,616 per year. 9/ In addition, the House Administration Committee may grant a Member's request for an extra \$22,104 provided he designates one of his 18 staff members a research assistant. 10/ Unlike the House, the Senate does not limit the number of persons a Member may hire but instead allocates each a lump sum of money based on the population of his State. A Senator may pay such salaries as he desires within certain limitations spelled out in law. The lump sums available in 1974 ranged from a low of \$392,298 to a high of \$751,980 per year. 11/ As in the House, Members can pay for additional staff from other resources.

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9/ 2 U.S.C. 332, 334, 335, as amended by Order No. 3 of the Committee on House Administration [Congressional record (daily edition), February 29, 1972, H 1596-H1597], and Order No. 16 of the Committee [Congressional record (daily edition), March 6, 1975, H1450 ], under authority of H. Res. 457 [Congressional record, v. 117, July 21, 1971, 26446-26451], enacted into permanent law by Public Law 92-184, 85 Stat. 636, December 15, 1971 and increased by 5.52 percent by Executive Order 11811 of October 7, 1974 under authority of Public Law 91-656, 84 Stat. 1946, January 8, 1971). The Delegates from the territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands are entitled to an annual clerk hire allowance for the employment of not to exceed 11 clerks. (Public Law 92-271, 86 Stat. 119, April 10, 1972 and Order No. 16 of the Committee [Congressional record (daily edition), March 6, 1975, H1450 ].

10/ Order No. 5, 93d Cong., 1st Sess., of the Committee on House Administration [Congressional Record (daily edition), April 19, 1973, H2879], pursuant to H. Res. 457, 92d Cong., 1st Sess., enacted into permanent law by Public Law 92-184, 85 Stat. 636, December 15, 1971; and increased by 5.52 percent by Executive Order 11811, op. cit.

11/ 2 U.S.C. 61-1(d); Public Law 93-371, 88 Stat. 430, August 13, 1974, and by Order of the President pro tempore of October 7, 1974, providing for a 5.52 percent pay increase, implementing Executive Order 11811 of October 7, 1974 under authority of Public Law 91-656, 84 Stat. 1946, January 8, 1971.

During hearings held in 1965 by the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress the problem of inadequate staff assistance for Members was often raised.

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 provided for one potentially significant reform relating to personal staff. A Congressional Office of Placement and Office Management was established, with the functions of recruiting qualified employees and advising Members on office procedure, organization, equipment and printing needs.

Committee Staff. Providing valid and reliable information is a primary function of committee staff. Before the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, most committee chairmen chose committee staff primarily on a patronage basis. The only exceptions were the two Appropriations Committees and the Joint Committee on Internal Revenue Taxation, which employed professional tenured staff. The 1946 reform legislation authorized each standing committee to appoint up to four professional and six clerical staff members. The number of personnel has expanded greatly over the years. As of 1973, Senate standing committees employed 854 staff. 12/ As of mid-1974, House committees had 1,251 employees. 13/ (These totals include investigative staff.)

A recent study of the professional staffs of Congressional committees drew a number of conclusions concerning the capability and role of these largely anonymous legislative personnel:

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12/ Based on count of employees in U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Rules and Administration. Senate inquiries and investigations. (Committee print) Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1973.

13/ Based on count of employees listed in Congressional record, v. 120, July 31, 1974: H7465-7476.

--Although party affiliation is sometimes involved in appointment, most staff members are hired on the basis of their competence. Tenure is secure and salaries are competitive with the Executive Branch.

--Senior committee members, both majority and minority, tend to make much more use of committee staffs than do junior members.

--Committee staff have considerable impact on public policy through the selection and analysis of the information used, the preparation for public hearings and investigations, and the drafting of legislation and committee reports. Deference in policy matters is given to members of the committee, and to the chairman in particular.

--A considerable proportion of professional staff have well-recognized expertise, often acquired on the job.

--Committee staffs contribute to the integration of diverse but related public policy considerations by serving as the center of an internal communication infrastructure, linking counterpart House and Senate committees with the executive agencies concerned with the committee's jurisdiction. This coordinating role is somewhat offset by the isolation of standing committees from each other. 14/

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 contains a number of reforms designed to improve committee performance in legislative, investigative and oversight work. A major change was to ensure the minority party the right to have committee staff. This formalized for all committees the existing arrangement in many. The result should be to stimulate critical analysis

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14/ Patterson, Samuel C. The professional staffs of Congressional committees. Administrative science quarterly, v. 15, March 1970: 22-37.

and innovation -- important functions of the minority as well as the majority. The legislation provided that two of the six permanent professional staff employees may be nominated for employment by the minority members of the committee. Final authority was retained by the full committee in the House to hire and fire by majority vote all staff members. In the Senate, minority hiring is not subject to majority vote.

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 contains other significant management provisions designed to enhance committee staff capability. All standing committees are authorized to hire individual consultants and organizations for temporary or ad hoc assignments. In addition, committees may authorize special training for their professional staff where it is determined that such additional education will be of assistance in carrying out committee responsibilities. (To date, six committees have taken advantage of this opportunity.) These new authorities represent a move toward a greater parity with the Executive Branch in the availability of outside assistance and in-service training.

The Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 further expanded committee resources in the House by increasing from six to eighteen the number of professional staff employees to which a committee is entitled. In addition, the number of such clerical staff allowed a committee was increased from six to twelve. For both categories of committee staff, one-third of the employees may be selected by the minority members, subject in each case to approval by a majority of the committee.<sup>15/</sup> H. Res. 5 of 1975 adds that the chairman and ranking minority member of each subcommittee (for up to six subcommittees

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<sup>15/</sup> These minority staff provisions do not apply to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

per committee -- a limit which does not apply to the Committee on Appropriations) may appoint one staff person to serve at the pleasure of that member. These staff positions are to be made available from the thirty positions per committee authorized by the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 unless they are made available pursuant to a primary or additional expense resolution. 16/

Congressional Groups with Information and/or Policy Resources

Two major functions, rendered in different degree by a number of Congressional organizations, are to provide sources of information and of policy guidance for Members. The majority of these organizations are oriented around the Congressional parties; their membership includes, and they provide services for, the entire membership of a party or some subset thereof. Others are bipartisan in membership, existing primarily to promote some set of interests which is not seen in partisan terms.

A number of scholars and Congressmen have held the view that the most likely source of policy integration and information coordination is the political party. For instance, advocates of "party responsibility" envision a situation in which members of a Congressional party agree on a party program and support the elements of that program at each stage of the legislative process. In this spirit, the 1946 Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress recommended the establishment of policy committees for both parties in each House. The goals of these committees were to aid in determining the parties' role in Congress and in counteracting the influence of interest groups.

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16/ The numerical limitations on professional and clerical staff do not apply to the Committee on Appropriations or the Committee on the Budget.

Nevertheless, the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 contained no provision for policy committees because this section was opposed by the House. The Senate, however, in a 1947 Appropriation Act, added language which provided authority for creating the Senate Committees and requisite support staff. <sup>17/</sup> In Fiscal Year 1975 the Committees each received an appropriation of \$342,780 to support the research and analytical activities of their staffs. The staff are competent research generalists organized by broad program area.

The Senate Democratic Policy Committee, whose members are chaired and appointed by the Floor Leader, meets every other week and at the call of the chairman. Until recently its most important role was to advise the Majority Leader on the scheduling of legislation. Since 1969 the Committee has played a more active policy role than before, issuing policy statements on national issues and passing resolutions to be sent to the Democratic Conference for ratification.

The Republican Policy Committee, composed of Senators holding positions of party leadership in the Senate and others elected by the Conference, meets weekly for a lunch to which all Republican Senators are invited, and at the call of the chairman. At the luncheon meetings, individual Senators often deliver short statements on the status of legislation in their committees and discussion ensues. The Committee issues statements of party posture on major issues, acting either on its own initiative or at the direction of the Conference.

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<sup>17/</sup> Public Law 663, 79th Cong.

The House counterparts to the Senate policy committees are the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, the Republican Policy Committee, and the Republican Research Committee. Staff personnel of the above organizations numbered 2, 2, and 13-14 in the 93d Congress. Public Law 93-245 authorized the appropriation of funds for the Democratic Steering Committee and the Republican Conference. Both received an appropriation of \$148,710 for 1975.

The membership of the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee consists of the elected Democratic leadership, 12 members elected by region, not to exceed 8 members appointed by the Speaker, and, in the 94th Congress, one additional member appointed by the Speaker. The Committee meets once a month when the House is in session and upon call of the chairman (the Speaker) or whenever requested in writing by four of its members. Its functions are to "make recommendations regarding party policy, legislative priorities, scheduling of matters for House or Caucus action, and other matters as appropriate to further Democratic programs and policies." <sup>18/</sup> In so doing, the Committee recently has made a practice of utilizing task forces appointed from the membership of the Democratic Caucus. These task forces issue policy statements on whatever matters they have been created to study, which recommendations may be sent to the Caucus for approval. Beginning with the 94th Congress, the Committee was given the additional responsibility of making, subject to Caucus approval, most Committee assignments for House Democrats.

The Republican Conference is served by two advisory committees. The Policy Committee is composed of the leadership, a maximum of 7 members appointed by the Floor Leader, 8 members elected by region, and members

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<sup>18/</sup> Preamble and rules adopted by the Democratic Caucus, R 11, M VII (c).

elected from each of the two latest Congressional (freshman) Clubs. It meets at the call of its chairman or the Floor Leader. Its function is to discuss legislative proposals with members of the appropriate legislative committees and with other selected Republican Members and to report its suggestions to the Conference. The Policy Committee often utilizes subcommittees to arrive at recommendations.

The Republican Research Committee is composed of a maximum of 17 members including the leadership, a chairman elected by the Conference, and other members selected by the leadership and confirmed by the Conference. This Committee also utilizes task forces, selected from Conference members, which engage in long-range research into important issues. Task force products may be legislative proposals or compilations of information. Topics are selected on the basis of requests or anticipated interest of the Members. The Committee maintains a file on over 100 topics. On important issues, fact sheets are distributed.

The parent bodies of these House party organizations -- the Democratic Caucus and the Republican Conference -- provide regular forums for discussion of issues and decision-making on party policies. The Caucus, although until recent years inactive except for selecting floor leaders, has become at least as active as the Conference. Active elements within the Caucus have made use of its jurisdiction over party rules in a number of successful attempts to modify those rules -- one major goal being to increase the likelihood of coordinated party policy emerging from the decentralized committee system.

The largest of the intra-party organizations is the Democratic Study Group (DSG), formed in 1959. A major goal of its leaders has been to alter aspects of House and party procedure and politics which they believe have

contributed to domination of the legislative process by conservative interests. The exact number of DSG members is not known, but 158 Congressmen paid dues in 1974 and 30 additional Members received some form of DSG services. A director, 16 full-time employees, and several interns comprise the staff.

DGS leaders have been very active in trying to solve the information needs of their members. In recent Congresses the staff director has assigned individual staff members responsibility for collecting and summarizing information about bills in particular issue areas. The responsibility for an issue area generally remains with a staff member across Congresses, enabling that person to develop dependable information sources and expertise. Their reports state concisely the legislative history of a bill, the substantive problem, major provisions, views of interested parties, the nature of possible amendments, and arguments for and against the bill. No DSG position is stated. Should further information be sought by a Congressman, the appropriate DSG staff member can be consulted.

Membership meetings, frequently with guest speakers, offer forums for exchange of information. DSG issues a weekly bulletin intended to aid members' staffs by making available such items as research bibliographies. And at the beginning of each Congress, DSG holds meetings for freshman Democrats at which they are advised on such matters as staffing and the use of Library of Congress resources.

DSG leaders also have attempted to provide the political leadership and organization required for the successful pursuit of their policy goals. A major effort has been to strengthen the Caucus as a centralizing force in the making of party policy, largely through procedural changes to decrease the political autonomy of committee chairmen.

Two new organizations within the House Democratic Party, each of which has policy and information goals, are the Democratic Research Organization and the United Democrats of Congress. The Democratic Research Organization had between 70 and 80 members in the 93d Congress. Its members come largely from the conservative wing of the party. A staff of 3 1/2 persons conducts research and furnishes members with analyses and issue briefs, focusing primarily on issues which are controversial in an ideological sense. Members discuss legislative topics at their meetings; occasionally they are briefed on important issues by outside experts.

Members of the United Democrats of Congress numbered almost 100 in the 93d Congress. UDC's major purpose is to provide a forum for discussion among Democrats of different persuasion in the hope of finding common ground. Meetings allow members to learn about and discuss bills before they reach the floor and to be briefed on important topics.

The Republican Study Committee, conservative in its orientation, plays an active role in the legislative process. In the 93d Congress it had approximately 80 members and associates and a staff of 11. The Committee issues briefing reports for its members and operates its own whip system; the staff also helps members with drafting legislation.

The Wednesday Group, a House Republican organization composed primarily of liberal and moderate Members, had around 30 members in the 93d Congress. The Group meets weekly during sessions to discuss the status of major legislation. With 4 staff members, it conducts intensive research into a few issues in each Congress; conclusions and recommendations are issued by Members through whatever channel seems most appropriate.

The major non-partisan House groups which provide information and policy services are the Congressional Black Caucus, the New England Congressional Caucus, and the Rural Caucus. The Congressional Black Caucus was founded in 1970. Most of its attention is focused on legislative issues of concern to Blacks. Based on findings from Congressional hearings and its own fact-finding conferences held around the country, the Caucus develops a legislative agenda around which members try to rally Congressional support.

The Caucus operates with a staff of around 7 persons. Each week the staff decides which of the matters scheduled for Congressional action the following week merit attention. An alert is put together on each of these matters and sent to each Caucus member. An alert consists of a statement of the background of a bill, its pros and cons, an analysis, and a staff recommendation. <sup>19/</sup> Caucus members have their own subcommittee system to aid in intra-group communications and in the development of policy proposals.

The New England Congressional Caucus, founded in 1973, is composed of the 25 New England Members. Its goals are to increase the political clout of the region through the united action of its members and to act as liaison between members and organized interests in New England. The members meet every three weeks, more often if necessary, to discuss legislative matters of interest to New England. At these meetings they occasionally are briefed by outside speakers. A full-time staff of 3 is responsible for research activities, the results of which frequently are summarized in written reports.

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<sup>19/</sup> Joint Center for Political Studies. A salute to the Congressional Black Caucus. Focus, v. 1, September 1973: 3-6.

The Rural Caucus, founded in 1973, numbered approximately 50 members in the 93d Congress. Its primary functions are to protect rural interests and to promote rural development. In so doing, in 1974 it sought through the courts to force the release of impounded funds for highway aid and for water and sewer grants. Members also have united behind several legislative initiatives with benefits for rural areas. And they have sponsored meetings in which members met with private citizens as well as Federal, State and local officials to discuss issues of mutual concern. In the 94th Congress the Caucus is being led by a seven-member Executive Committee.

Another research group which supplements more formal Congressional structures is the Members of Congress for Peace through Law. MCPL is bipartisan and bicameral and is composed of Members concerned with U.S. commitments overseas, military spending, and the United Nations. Through staff work and direct inputs by Members, it provides a Congress-wide source of knowledge and self-education over and above that available from committee or party activities.

The organization had its beginnings in 1959, about the same time as the DSG. It has evolved more slowly, however, from a small lunch group to its 1974 membership of 133 (32 Senators and 101 Congressmen.) It is primarily composed of younger Members who tend to have less say and access to assistance from committee and Congressional party machinery. Currently there is a staff of 4 full-time researchers. Staff members work as assistants to the 7 program committees and with aides of the Congressmen involved.

#### Congressional Agencies for Program Analysis

In reporting the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, the House Rules Committee expressed concern over the legislative oversight and program analysis capabilities of Congress. One of their primary recommendations in

response to this concern, which was incorporated in the Reorganization Act, was to expand the duties and resources of the supplementary research staffs housed in the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress and in the General Accounting Office. The Committee noted these agencies' familiarity with the needs of Congress, their "excellent relationships with many committees," their "reputations for objectivity, non-partisanship, and confidentiality," and their insulation from "political and lobby pressures." <sup>20/</sup>

In 1972 Congress created new support capabilities by establishing the Office of Technology Assessment. The function of this agency is to advise Congress on the public policy implications of technological developments. Then in 1974 the House incorporated in its Committee Reform Amendments a provision establishing in the House a Legislative Classification Office. The function of the Office is to develop a system for linking programs and expenditures to authorizing statutes and indicating the committee jurisdiction for each authorization. Also created by that Act was a House Commission on Information and Facilities. Finally, in a major step toward program analysis and coordination, Congress established in the Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 a Congressional Budget Office.

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<sup>20/</sup> U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Rules. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1970. (91st Congress, 2nd session. House. Report no. 91-1215). p. 17.

Congressional Research Service. A major policy research arm available to the Congress is the Congressional Research Service (formerly the Legislative Reference Service). <sup>21/</sup> Established in 1914, its purpose is to provide Members, committees and staff of Congress with information in an objective, non-partisan, and scholarly manner. In staff size, background of staff members, and subject coverage (the whole range of national public concerns), CRS is similar to the Office of Management and Budget. CRS is noted for its professional striving for objectivity, anonymity and non-partisanship, avoidance of interest group influences, ability to present a range of alternatives, concern for retaining the confidence of its clients (employers), and awareness of the interrelationships among policy areas.

A wide range of research services is available through CRS only to Congressmen, committees, and Congressional staffs. These services include analysis of issues before Congress, legal research and analysis, consultation with Members' office and committee staffs, assistance with statements and speech drafts, and general reference assistance. Special staff services include translations and preparation of charts, graphs and maps.

The bulk of CRS requests are answered from existing in-house information resources and basic standard reference sources. More than 200,000 such requests are responded to annually (61 percent within one day of receipt). The program divisions -- American Law, Economics, Education and Public

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<sup>21/</sup> For a more complete description of the Congressional Research Service, -- see Beckman, Norman. Use of a staff agency by the Congress: the Congressional Research Service. *Bureaucrat*, v. 3, January 1975: 401-415. The author presents a brief history and introduction to CRS, concentrating on new developments since the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, measures to provide additional analytical support to Congress, and possible new directions for the Service. -- see U.S. Congress. Joint Committee on the Library. Annual report of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress for fiscal year 1973 to the Joint Committee on the Library; pursuant to Public Law 91-510 (Section 321). Washington, U.S.Govt. Print. Off., 1974. 209 p.

Welfare, Environmental Policy, Foreign Affairs, Government and General Research, and Science Policy -- staffed by more than 300 subject specialists, handle all analytical research.

As research back-up, the contents of 8 newspapers, 2,500 journals and magazines, and other relevant documents and pamphlets are scanned for inclusion in the weekly annotated current awareness service. CRS staff analysts receive an annotated bibliographic card on each item indexed during the week within their subject areas.

The Service is gaining increasing competence in computer storage and retrieval in its attempts to deal with mushrooming quantities of information. The Congressional Research Service currently has access to a number of automated data files. The Bill Digest contains information on all public bills and resolutions of the 93d and current Congress. Each bill is monitored for 22 data elements (for example, bill cosponsors, committee action, identical bills). Information is retrievable in several formats -- e.g., a list of all bills assigned to a particular committee, or a list of all bills relating to a specified subject. The Bibliographic file contains citations to CRS reports, Congressional documents, and articles from professional journals and other periodicals. The Major Issues file is a collection of concise, objective briefs on key issues of public policy. Each brief contains several sections. These include: a precise definition of the issue, a background and policy analysis statement, references to major legislation introduced in the current Congress, hearings, committee reports, other congressional action, a chronology of events, and references to pertinent literature. Currently the file contains 150-200 briefs. These will be kept up to date, and more will be added as the issues emerge.

For the convenience of Members and their staffs, CRS has reference centers in the Rayburn and Russell Office Buildings. These centers are staffed by librarians and contain sizable collections of reference materials. Computer terminals, which provide access to the three automated information files, are located in these centers.

In addition to programs maintained by CRS personnel and stored in the Library's computer, the Service has obtained rental access to outside data banks. The New York Times Information Bank contains indices and abstracts of all New York Times news articles published since 1970 and selected abstracts from 35 additional magazines and newspapers. This data bank is "accessed" by computer terminals with highspeed printers; questions are transmitted by direct telephone line to the files and responses are printed on the terminal screen. JURIS is a legal information system housed in the Justice Department and available to the CRS via a computer terminal located in the American Law Division. JURIS contains the total text of the United States Code, which can be searched through words in the text of the statutes or by descriptive terms assigned by the Justice Department. MEDLINE is an automated bibliographic service made available to national users by the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. It contains over 400,000 entries identifying materials in some 1,200 journals from the medical research and public health fields. Its data may be retrieved by author or subject through all of the CRS's typewriter terminals.

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 changed the name of LRS to the "Congressional Research Service" to emphasize its new substantive and policy analysis responsibilities. It was the general intent of the Act to

expand and change the nature of CRS support to congressional committees, to emphasize the importance of assistance on legislative matters, and to promote analytical research. Several of the Act's provisions are directed to the Service's support of Congressional committees.

First, upon request, CRS will supply committees with experts to prepare objective, non-partisan analyses of legislative proposals evaluating the advisability of enacting these proposals, or alternatives, and estimating their probable results.

Second, to stimulate advance planning, the Service is directed to prepare and present to each committee at the beginning of each Congress a list of subject and policy areas that the committee might profitably pursue.

Third, CRS is directed to make available to each committee at the beginning of each Congress a list of programs and activities scheduled to expire during that Congress and to prepare, upon request, legislative histories on measures to be considered in hearings.

The Act authorizes preparation of purpose and effect memoranda on legislative measures for which forthcoming hearings have been announced and directs the Service to "maintain continuous liaison with all committees." The continuation of traditional CRS services was authorized as well, including the preparation of shorter-term information, research and reference materials, digests of bills and other legislative compilations.

The duties of the CRS were further expanded with the passage of the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974. CRS is required to prepare a description of each bill or resolution introduced in the House. The Service is also doing such descriptions for Senate bills. These descriptions are factual

and brief (less than 100 words). They are published in the Congressional Record and the Digest of General Bills and Resolutions as soon as possible after introduction of a measure.

General Accounting Office. The General Accounting Office is the primary arm of the Congress concerned with the Congressional responsibility to ascertain that appropriated monies are spent efficiently and in conformity with statute. Established by Congress in 1921 as a counterpart to the Executive Branch's Bureau of the Budget, and headed by the Comptroller General, GAO is authorized to investigate all matters relating to the use of public funds and to make recommendations for greater economy and efficiency.

Assistance to the Congress takes the form of liaison with committees to explain the several hundred audits and investigations reported on each year, special assistance at the request of Congressional committees, and furnishing comments on proposed legislation. GAO's auditing responsibilities encompass fiscal, management, and program evaluation concerns.

GAO's fiscal investigatory functions are performed within certain generally defined jurisdictional boundaries.

We do not believe that the Congress intended that the GAO initiate or be called upon to initiate new program proposals to deal with technological, social, economic, or other problems or needs. Nor do we believe it was intended that we initiate recommendations with respect to funding levels or budget priorities. It is clear, however, that the GAO can and should direct its work in a way which will provide information concerning the results of authorized programs.

and activities which will be useful to the Congress and its committees in making judgments on these matters. 22/

At the end of Fiscal Year 1969 only some 300 of GAO's professional staff had training or experience in other than accounting and auditing. To improve its information and analytical skills in serving Congress, however, up to half of the professional employees now being recruited (including computer specialists, systems analysts, engineers, economists, etc.) are other than accountants.

The 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act enables Congressional committees to make better use of GAO reports and personnel. GAO is directed, at the request of any committee, to explain any GAO report which would assist the committee in its consideration of proposed legislation (including requests for appropriations) and in its review of any program or any Federal agency activities within its jurisdiction. All of the Comptroller General's reports are now automatically sent to the Committees on Appropriations and Government Operations. The Comptroller General is directed by the Act to prepare a monthly list of all GAO reports issued during that period; lists are sent to all committees and Members who, should they so request, may receive copies of the reports. Also, supplemental staff from GAO are provided to committees to help analyze federal programs. Full-time assignment to committees is limited by the Reorganization Act to no more than one year. Finally, GAO

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22/ U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Science and Astronautics. Subcommittee on Science, Research, and Development. Technology assessment. Hearings, 91st Congress, 1st session, 1970. Washington, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1970. pp. 147-148.

expertise is now explicitly available to help committees better understand and critically evaluate Executive Branch cost-benefit studies used to justify Executive requests.

The 1970 Reorganization Act also vests authority in GAO, on request or on its own initiative, to review and analyze the results of Executive Branch activities. Recognizing that the above functions are related to the policy analysis functions of CRS, the House Rules Committee report on that Act called for the two agencies to exchange information freely and to work together.

The General Accounting Office was given new evaluation responsibilities under the Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Acting on his own initiative or at the behest of a Congressional committee, the Comptroller General is to review and evaluate the results of Government programs and activities. If requested, he is to aid committees in developing a statement of legislative objectives and the methods of assessing and reporting program performance; he also is to assist committees in assessing program evaluations prepared by and for any Federal agency. And he is to recommend to the Congress methods for review and evaluation of existing Government programs. To assist him in carrying out these responsibilities the Comptroller General was authorized to create and staff (subject to stated limitations) an Office of Program Review and Evaluation. He is to report annually to Congress on these activities.

In addition, the Budget Act authorized the Comptroller General to report to Congress in two situations: 1) should he find that an impoundment has not been reported to Congress in a special presidential message; 2) should he believe that the President, in his special message, has reported a deferral as a rescission or a rescission as a deferral. If he believes that the

President is withholding budget authority from obligation, in violation of the Budget Act, the Comptroller General is empowered to initiate a civil action to require that such budget authority be made available for obligation.

Office of Technology Assessment. The Technology Assessment Act of 1972 (Public Law 92-484) created an Office of Technology Assessment within the Legislative Branch "to provide early indications of the probable beneficial and adverse impacts of the applications of technology and to develop other coordinate information which may assist the Congress." 23/ The policy and leadership component of the OTA is the Technology Assessment Board. The Director of CRS and the Comptroller General of GAO are statutory members of the Board's Advisory Council. The Office is intended to provide Congress with new and effective means for securing competent, unbiased information concerning the physical, biological, economic, social, and political effects of technological applications.

The Office may undertake studies upon request of the chairman of any committee of Congress or at the initiative of the Board. In so doing, the Office can seek advice from persons and organizations outside the Office, including the Congressional Research Service, and it can arrange contracts with any person, firm, association, corporation, or educational institution. As of March 1974, the OTA staff consisted of 16 persons; 26 additional positions were projected for the remainder of the fiscal year. Most assessments carried out to date, however, have been accomplished by bringing in outside specialists to serve as principal investigators on particular projects. 24/

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23/ Public Law 92-484, 92nd Cong.

24/ Mosher, Charles A. OTA's first year -- a good start. Remarks in the House of Representatives. Congressional record, v. 121, January 31, 1975: E303-305.

As of December 1974, the Office of Technology Assessment had received 43 requests, covering a wide range of subjects. Of these requests, 6 had been funded, 6 had funds earmarked for them, 6 were in the organizational stage, and 1 study had been completed. The growth of OTA (as well as its current limitations) can be indicated by its budgets: \$2,000,000 for fiscal 1974 and \$4,600,000 for fiscal 1975.

Legislative Classification Office. The Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 established in the House a Legislative Classification Office. This Office is to develop a cross-reference capability for the House, so that Members and committees can ascertain for each program the appropriate committee jurisdiction, authorization statutes, appropriation Acts, budget authority, budget outlays, unexpended balances, and other relevant matters. Development of such a system is intended to increase the potential for effective legislative oversight. As a result, Members may be more capable of tracing a program to ascertain what happened to it at each stage of the legislative and executive processes.

House Commission on Information and Facilities. In recent years the resources and duties of the CRS and the GAO have been expanded significantly, the OTA has begun its operations, and the mechanical facilities available for information storage and retrieval have increased tremendously. With the sense that each of these developments has occurred in response to a particular need rather than as the outgrowth of a well-considered plan, the House Select Committee on Committees recommended in 1974 the creation of commissions to study existing support systems and problems in the area of information and administrative services.

Rather than separate commissions, the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 created a bipartisan Commission on Information and Facilities, composed of nine Members of the House appointed by the Speaker, to include the House Members of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations. With the aid of an advisory council appointed by the Speaker, the Commission is to study the information problems of the House as well as its facilities and space requirements. This study is to take into account existing information resources, inside and outside the House, methods for organizing the flow of information between Congress and the Executive, information management, collection, and dissemination for the House, and related areas. The Commission then is to recommend to the Speaker the directions which future developments in House support systems should take.

Congressional Budget Office. Of particular importance in Congress' attempt to strengthen its capabilities are the provisions of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Congress had been subjected to criticism for its lack of a systematic, coordinated approach to budget-making. There had existed within Congress no forum or procedure for arriving at Congressional spending priorities for fitting program authorizations and appropriations, and revenue-raising decisions, to those priorities. The Budget Act has established a logical procedure for Congressional budget consideration. House and Senate Budget Committees are created, as is a Congressional Budget Office which is to accumulate the technical expertise and support equipment necessary to analyze the President's budget proposal and accompanying data.

### Joint Committees and Oversight Committees

The committee and subcommittee structure of Congress has been criticized as the cause of fragmentation in legislative policy, preventing the formation of public policy "in the round." In its efforts to compensate for this deficiency, Congress has utilized two primary strategies: to create joint non-legislative committees with jurisdiction over policy areas which span activities of a number of legislative committees and to create committees with the broad mandate to oversee Government operations.

The use of a joint committee structure has potential for assisting Congress in its oversight capacity. First, the device increases the likelihood of intercameral cooperation and coordination in dealing with the Executive. Second, joint staffs reduce competition for the limited supply of talented professionals. Since they are generally precluded from handling proposed legislation, they can concentrate on the research, educational, investigatory and information needs of Congress. Finally, the overlapping memberships of the joint and standing committees promote coordination in the legislative process by stimulating and assisting the standing committees.

Not all joint committees deal with comprehensive national or legislative issues. In order to convey a sense of the potential for overcoming issue fragmentation, we shall describe the operations of two joint committees which do have a broad mandate. Then we shall describe the Government Operations Committees of the two Houses of Congress.

Joint Economic Committee. The Joint Economic Committee was established by the Employment Act of 1946. It is composed of seven Senators and seven Representatives. The Act gave the Joint Committee broad and flexible authority

to study, review, recommend, investigate, and report on the whole range of economic policy -- domestic and foreign.

A recent appraisal of the Joint Economic Committee concludes that:

through the adroit use of talk in a myriad of forms -- reports, hearings, compendiums and staff studies -- the JEC has helped create an awareness of the economic manifestations of governmental actions that have been traditionally handled in Congress on a piecemeal basis. 25/

Of special interest to those concerned with social science contributions to national policy are the new approaches developed by the JEC modifying the conventional hearing and investigatory process. Beginning in 1949 the Committee has made increasing use of the panel-type hearing in which outstanding economists and social scientists have debated their theories with each other and created a valuable public record. Scholars have been invited to submit papers on specific economic and related long-range issues. These are then published and have served as major contributions to the field. Full use is also made of the conventional hearing process. This combination of approaches has improved the quality of debate within the Congress and between Congress and the Executive Branch and the academic community.

The Committee operated in Fiscal year 1975 with around 30 staff members and a budget of just over \$950,000. In addition to its traditionally thorough review of the President's economic program, the Committee, through its subcommittee system, has been engaged in a broad range of studies. An example of the potential of a committee such as this to utilize its broad oversight powers to achieve the ultimate goals of policy coordination and waste elimination

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25/ Moore, John L. Economic report/Joint Economic Committee: it's only jawboning, but Washington listens. National journal, v. 1, June 20, 1970: 1287.

is provided by the Subcommittee on Fiscal Policy. This Subcommittee has been conducting a comprehensive study of public welfare programs, analyzing the interconnections within the large and complex group of programs located within a number of federal agencies. As of 1974 the Subcommittee had produced reports on problems of the program and 5 additional volumes were in the last stages of preparation.

Joint Committee on Congressional Operations. This Committee was created by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. As part of its broad mandate, two of its functions are to:

Make a continuing study of congressional organization and operation and recommend improvements designed to strengthen Congress, simplify its operation, improve its relationships with other branches of the United States Government, and enable it better to meet its responsibilities under the Constitution.

and,

Control and supervise the Congressional Office of Placement and Administration. 26/

Under the Committee Reform Act of 1974, House Members of the Committee were directed to engage in a continuing study of the standing committees of the House and to make recommendations regarding the distribution of workload of proposed jurisdictional changes to the Committee. In addition, House Members of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations also serve on the newly created House Commission on Organization and Facilities.

In the 93rd Congress the Committee held hearings and issued reports on the following subjects: the relationships between Congress and mass communications, focusing on Congress' ability to relate its role and activities to the people;

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26/ Public Law 91-510.

Congress' support and information services; and Congressional immunity. It conducted background studies on a number of questions relating to Congress' investigative powers. Several other studies are in progress. 27/

In the 92d Congress, the Committee reported recommendations which were implemented in the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 and it continues its efforts to see that Executive and Legislative agencies provide Congress with fiscal, budgetary, and program information as needed.

The Committee's Office of Placement and Office Management began providing services in January 1972. Since then an estimated 24,559 individuals seeking employment have submitted applications and 3,757 job orders have been placed. The Office also has issued and revised a Congressional Handbook which consolidates information on support services available to Members. In early 1975 the Office provided training sessions for new staff employees. 28/

As of June 30, 1974, the Committee employed 28 persons, including staff assigned to the Office of Placement and Office Management. In Fiscal Year 1975 \$600,000 was appropriated for its operations.

The Government Operations Committees. While the conventional investigatory activities of the standing committees rarely extend beyond the concerns of their relatively constrained substantive jurisdictions, the Government Operations Committees have a broader investigatory mandate. Their charter is a broad

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27/ Metcalf, Lee. Activities of the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations. Remarks in the Senate. Congressional record, v. 121. January 23, 1975: S763-766.

28/ Ibid.

one: "studying the operation of government activities at all levels with a view to determining its economy and efficiency." 29/

The Committees are able to achieve considerable objectivity and perspective. A recent study of the review and oversight capabilities of the House Government Operations Committee concluded that: "With the exception of the GAO and the GSA there are no administrative units which they consider as 'their agency.' Therefore, members are free to criticize programs without casting aspersions on a legislative decision of their own devising." 30/

The Committees are comparatively well staffed. At the beginning of the 93d Congress the House Committee employed 11 permanent staff members and 43 investigatory staff members. Comparable figures for the Senate Committee were 9 and 74. Staff members maintain a professional independence in their oversight of Executive Branch agencies.

The supplemental role of the Government Operations Committees to the existing committee structure has permitted attention and ultimately corrective legislation in a wide range of concerns. Examples are; the consistency in Federal grant-in-aid programs; reorganization of the Executive agencies, and the Executive Office of the President; and the quality of administration throughout the Executive bureaucracy.

Pursuant to adoption of the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974, each standing committee of the House (other than the Budget and Appropriations Committees) is to assess the operation of Government programs within their

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29/ Public Law 601: 79th Cong.

30/ Henderson, Thomas A. Congressional oversight of executive agencies: a study of the House Committee on Government Operations. University of Florida Social Sciences Monograph No. 40. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 1970. p. 56.

areas of jurisdiction, as well as the need for new legislation. The Government Operations Committee is to assist in coordinating all House oversight activities. To achieve this end, representatives of the Government Operations Committee are to discuss the oversight plans of other committees with appropriate committee representatives. The Committee must submit an oversight report to the House within 60 days after a new Congress convenes.

#### A Quiet Revolution

Congress is enjoying a renaissance. Widespread reaction to a continuing ascendance of presidential power has augmented the desire of Congressmen to assume greater leadership responsibilities. This trend has been evident recently in a number of areas of substantive policy -- e.g., foreign policy and defense spending -- and in fundamental questions regarding the balance of powers between the Executive and Legislative branches -- e.g., the presidential authority to impound appropriated funds and to withhold information requested by Congress. Further evidence of this trend toward Congressional responsibility can be found in Congress' strides toward improving its own operational capabilities.

A close look at the developments within Congress in recent years indicates, as described above, a strengthening of staff and mechanical resources, an activation of party policy machinery, changes in committee responsibilities and procedures, receptivity to policy analysis approaches -- in general, broadened resources for gathering, analyzing, and dispersing information. 31/

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31/ For further information about the services provided by some of the Congressional organizations described in this paper, see the Congressional Handbook: U.S. House of Representatives and the Congressional Handbook: U.S. Senate, prepared by the Joint Committee on Congressional Operations.

Complementing the crucial role played by the standing committees is a network of resources that contributes to intelligent consideration of national priorities, coordination of interrelated public policy concerns, and reconciliation of diverse special interests:

- The expertise and qualifications of Members themselves
- The expertise and qualifications of committee staff and Members' staff
- Information and policy coordination functions adopted by an increasing number of formal and informal groups of Members
- The Congressional Research Service, General Accounting Office, Office of Technology Assessment, House Legislative Classification Office, House Commission on Information and Facilities, and the Congressional Budget Office, all of which have responsibilities in one or more of the following areas: information storage and retrieval, policy analysis, and program review capabilities.
- Joint committees and oversight committees which, through their investigations, provide research and education on government-wide problems that cut across traditional committee and subject area boundaries.

Criticism from within and outside the Congress confirms the conventional wisdom that our national legislature is an imperfect mechanism. Yet a quiet revolution to improve the effectiveness of Congress continues. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, establishment of OTA, the Committee Reform Amendments of 1974, and the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974 represent some of the more visible actions taken as part of a continuing process to strengthen Congress' capabilities. These capabilities must be continually improved if Congress is to be a significant partner with the President in governing the Nation.