

# Preparing for Political Science Careers: Getting a Job in Congress or the White House

## I. Job Description

There are a wide range of jobs available in the White House and Congress. Often these are great “first jobs”: the hours may be long and salaries limited, but these conditions make them ideal for young, single, fresh-from-college graduates. These jobs offer relatively higher levels of excitement and responsibility than other opportunities for recent graduates. It is not necessary to have an advance degree to obtain entry-level jobs. Many staffers later move on to graduate school or other political jobs.

While there are a range of positions, opportunities include:

- Policy Analysis and Advocacy: developing policy proposals, monitoring proposals by others, meeting with advocates and constituents, aiding legislators with committee duties.
- Media Relations: helping legislators or a President attain favorable media coverage and responding to press inquiries.
- Office Management: help develop a schedule for legislators and key White House staff. Payroll, answering phones, computer systems, etc.
- Constituent Relations: help constituents work with federal agencies. Distribute flags flown over the White House or Capitol.
- Event Planning (White House): “advance” staffers help prepare for Presidential visits and press conferences. Advance work offers lots of travel opportunities. Also, the White House hosts periodic events (e.g. Easter egg hunts).

## II. Preparation

Obviously, you should have an interest in American politics to pursue one of these jobs. You should follow news on American politics on a regular basis. Generally, it is a good idea to develop a record with one party—these are thoroughly political jobs, and it is helpful to understand the workings of your party. It is helpful, for example, to volunteer for state and local campaigns and party organizations.

Most important, it is helpful to intern in Washington, D.C., in the White House or a Congressional office or committee. You can do this over the summer (for credit), or arrange a semester in Washington. If you work with the University of Miami and the Washington Center, it is possible to obtain a full semester of college credit while interning in Washington, D.C. Internships help you see an office from the inside and develop the connections you will need to get a job later.

## III. Job Searching

Formally, the House, Senate, and White House maintain websites and offices to coordinate job-seekers and opportunities.

House: <http://www.house.gov/cao-hr/>

Senate: [http://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/placement\\_office.htm](http://www.senate.gov/visiting/common/generic/placement_office.htm)

White House <https://app2.whitehouse.gov/ppo/>

However, much hiring is informal. You will probably need to send your resume to each Congressional office and to invest time in finding out about job openings. In particular, it will be helpful to have references who can vouch for your maturity, discretion, and ability to write and communicate.