



HOW TO AFFECT CHANGE IN CONGRESS (without contributing a single dollar or becoming an intern!)

Congress

The House of Representatives contains 445 members, 440 of which vote. The five additional are from the territories or the District of Columbia. The Senate is made up of 100 members, 2 from each state, who serve 6 year terms rather than the 2 year terms of their House counterparts. Each chamber convenes three days a week on average, with weeklong recesses usually occurring around holidays. Members often return to their district from Friday-Monday to be with family and work locally. Despite this short work week in DC for the members, their staff are on hand five days a week, meeting with or responding to constituents, lobbyists, other congressional offices, working on committee assignments, drafting new legislation, etc. Each chamber of Congress has a number of important groupings, the understanding of which can help citizens better to evaluate their representatives' positions on issues and ability to influence legislation and policy.

Leadership

House and Senate Leadership remain very reluctant to cosponsor the legislation we bring to them, because of their specific role in deciding which bills receive consideration from the Congress, except for a few notable exceptions. No amount of grassroots pressure or meetings seems to sway them. They are more concerned with what is politically possible at this moment and won't do much to shepherd along a particular issue.

Speaker of House – Nancy Pelosi (CA)
House Majority Leader – Steny Hoyer (MD)
House Majority Whip – Jim Clyburn (SC)
Dem Caucus Chair – John Larson (CT)

Senate Majority Leader – Harry Reid (NV)
Senate Assistant Majority Leader – Dick Durbin (IL)
Vice Chair of the Democratic Conference – Charles Schumer (NY)

These are the important ones but we can provide a lengthy list if you want.

Committees

Within the House there are 22 committees, most of which contain a number of subcommittees, ranging up to 12 in Appropriations. The Senate consists of 20 committees

In both chambers, the two committees with jurisdiction over the issues most relevant to Utah public lands are the natural resources and appropriations committees. The **House Natural Resources Committee (HNRC)** is chaired by Nick J. Rahall (D-WV), the **Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (SENRC)** is chaired by Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). The **House Appropriations Committee** is chaired by David Obey (D-WI), the **Senate Appropriations Committee** is chaired by Daniel Inouye (D-HI). The House subcommittees most important to us are the **Parks, Forests & Public Lands Subcommittee** chaired by Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) of HNRC and the **Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Subcommittee** chaired by Norm Dicks (D-WA) on Appropriations. Senate subcommittees of most importance are the **Public Lands & Forests Subcommittee** chaired by Ron Wyden (D-OR) of SENRC and **Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Subcommittee** chaired by Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) on Appropriations.

These committees have differing jurisdiction – with HNRC developing hundreds of **authorizing bills** – legislation that tells an agency how to discharge its duties. This does not include an appropriation, which is why the Aprops committees seem to be the most powerful and most

abused in congress. **Wilderness bills are referred to the Public Lands Subcommittee**, which holds hearings and then discharges the legislation to the full committee, which holds legislative markups. These markups allow members to submit amendments for an up or down vote within the committee members present. The bill then goes up for an up or down from the committee and if passed, is discharged to the full House or Senate.

Appropriations is able to set policy more subtly, by directing Federal agencies how to use the monies this committee directs their way. This is where we often hear of “earmarks,” and “riders” Much of this language comes from committee members’ personal home state interests, but can also be the result of intensive lobbying campaigns and campaign contributions. If a certain or “funding limitation” does not make it into the “chairman’s mark” then it can be added by amendment. This is a much more open process and is sometimes more desired depending on the issue and whether attention is beneficial to the long-term prospects of the issue.

Other Committees of relevance:

Rules – Sets the procedures for considering bills on the floor

Caucuses

There are more caucuses in Congress than you can shake a stick at – there was even once a Wilderness Caucus. Caucuses serve members’ interests on various issues, but do not necessarily vote in bloc on all issues. The two big ones are the Democratic and Republican caucuses (yes, they count) – and they have the most sway on members’ votes through committee assignments and other incentives to behave. On next level of power are usually caucuses related to ethnicity or race (no WASP caucus though).

In the House, the **Blue Dog Democrat caucus** falls in fairly high in the power structure, containing at present approximately 50 center leaning Democratic members, grouped together in an effort to advocate for conservative government spending. As you may know, Jim Matheson of Utah is a Blue Dog and in fact is a co-chair for energy policy, which allegedly gives him some credibility when it comes to environmental issues. However, through our work in the past year with the environmental community, we have learned that there is a rift within the Blue Dogs over their “Energy Principles,” which barely passed as caucus policy. Many members do not feel that a “fiscal conservative” organization should be commenting on such an unrelated issue as the environment. However, many of these members do have good personal or working relationships with Mr. Matheson and will defer to his opinion on matters relating to his home state. However, we have had some success overriding these restraints through grassroots pressure.

Other House caucuses to be aware of (Senate has far fewer caucuses):

Sportsmen’s Caucus – Champion hunting & fishing issues – oftentimes good on individual issues (mining, oil & gas, ORVs) but does contain some of the most reactionary members of HNRC

Rural Caucus – Run by folks like Rob Bishop of Utah, but includes important Western D’s

Progressive Caucus – ARWA’s core supporters. We have all but 3 of over 70 members as cosponsors. Generally all supportive of good enviro policy.

Wildlife Refuge Caucus - Interesting amalgam of members who take interest in public lands & wildlife. Many possibilities and many who may never sign or cosponsor but may vote for the bill

NLCS Caucus – Not sure on number, but large, diverse, bipartisan and getting larger. Dedicated to the codification of National Landscape Conservation System and future preservation of these units, which include WSAs.

Historic Preservation Caucus – Supported by National Trust for Historic Preservation mainly. Includes cultural resources...although many members of this caucus would inevitably debate how to preserve...