



In May 2018, a request for information was posted to the electronic discussion group of the Legislative Information and Communication Staff about the structure of communications staff in order to learn how many staff work in communications, and how many members they serve. The specific question was:

Can you provide a brief description of how communications staffers serve members—are they employed by a central agency, chamber, caucus, leader(s) or individual members?

Shown below is a summary of the responses.

Alabama – House

This is pretty easy question to answer since I'm the entire communication staff for the Alabama House. As public information officer, I'm the main media contact for the House. My position comes under the Clerk's Office. I'm non-partisan and work for all 105 members.

I write press releases for the members, write talking points, and schedule news conferences for them. However, because of my non-partisan position I don't write speeches and I don't comment on partisan issues. If a member of the media calls about a partisan issue, I'll steer them to members of the House who are involved.

Alabama House Republicans and Democrats each have a caucus office and they too will issue press statements along partisan lines.

Additionally, a member of the speaker's staff usually handles media inquiries for that office but I have assisted the speaker in the past on non-partisan issues.

Arizona – House Democratic Caucus

In the Arizona House Democratic Caucus we have one communications director (me) for our 25-member caucus, including leadership. I am assisted by a deputy communications director who also splits time staffing other caucuses (Latino, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ, Veterans, Womens); and one intern per session.

Arkansas – House (Office of Communications)

All staff in the Arkansas House is nonpartisan, so with that, we serve all 100 members we run all media requests, write speeches, broadcast all meetings of the House of Rep that happen in the capital, produce graphics, newsletters, and run a website and all social media for the House. We do not do party bias material or campaign-related speeches, videos etc. We mainly focus on legislation already passed or reports from task force or committees that are informing the public.

We are a team of 3 in the office. Our Chief Information Officer is the team lead and coordinates our projects, media requests, and is the main speechwriter. My coworker and I are the production assistants and each has specialties. I run all A/V operations so I lead the live stream, any radio address request or archiving of video, PSAs, and another video request. Our third member is lead Photographer/Graphic Designer, runs social media, and updating website every day. As we are nonpartisan we do have to be careful what we can work on but we, as a team, work on many side projects to keep public as informed as possible such as our Kids in The House section and AR Girls Lead (an initiative by state female Representatives to encourage girls in leadership). We also have 2-4 interns during the session help with the broadcast of committee meetings and broadcast of chamber sessions.

California – Assembly

Assembly Speaker's Press Office

We have a staff of five in the California Assembly Speaker's press office. As a few of my colleagues have already noted, Assemblymembers typically designate a member of their staff – either in the Capitol office or district office –

to manage their communications. We also have a unit called the Democratic Office of Communications and Outreach that handles constituent outreach and other support services for members of our caucus.

Communications Director for Majority Leader

I serve as the Communications Director for an individual member, and he also happens to be the Majority Leader for the CA State Assembly. My responsibilities include communications and press-related duties. At some point, I had additional legislative responsibilities such as a staffing bills. Each member handles communications differently and the Democratic and Republican caucuses both provide us with additional communications assistance upon request.

Communications Director for Member

In California I serve as the Communications Director for an individual member in the California State Assembly, although in addition to my press duties I still have responsibilities for many legislative activities as well. Each legislator's office here handles communications slightly differently – some have their Chief of Staff do most of it, while others have a specific person like me designated. Additionally, the Democratic and Republican Caucuses have external units that serve all of their membership for things like district outreach, constituent brochures/graphics, press conference equipment and assistance, etc.

Communications Staff for Member

I work as the communications person directly for the member. I think this is fairly common to have an in-house person (who frequently has other duties like legislation) We occasionally get technical support from the caucus on certain products that require equipment or expertise (video/audio clips, PSAs, web feeds, certain print products)

California – Senate

The California State Senate offers Members the opportunity to hire a communications staffer. The Caucuses also have people to help with communications. In addition, the Senate Mail Program, an office within the Senate Rules Committee, provides generic non-partisan brochures on a variety of subject that each office can order for the constituent outreach. The Senate Mail Program is the Member's one-stop-shop for mail, brochures and handouts for Member events. Our office makes sure that printed material complies with the Mass Mailing Law. We also offer ideas and work with our Senate Reprographics Department, Member offices and Caucuses. Finally, the Senate Rules Committee Operations Department works with Legal Counsel to help Senate staff navigate social media policy and closed caption laws.

Colorado – Senate Republicans

As the communications director for Colorado Senate Republicans, I handle press relations for the 18 members in our caucus, including the Senate President and Majority Leader. I'm a non-partisan state employee who works at the pleasure of caucus leadership. I have one full-time assistant during our 120-day session, who specializes in digital communications, and we get sporadic help from interns when they are available. I work solo during the off-session. The Senate minority and House majority and minority have their own communications shops, which generally consist of two full-time staff during the legislative session, and one during the off-session period.

Colorado – House Majority Caucus

I serve as the Deputy Communications and Digital Director for the Colorado House Majority. My Communication Director and I serve all 35 members of our caucus.

Connecticut

In Connecticut each caucus employs their own communications team. The size of the caucus determines the number employed. In each case 1 staffer would handle the communications for a handful of members. We have no communications staff for the nonpartisan offices.

Speaker of the House

I serve as the Senior Legislative Communications Advisor for the Speaker of the House in Connecticut. Each caucus handles their communications department differently. In the House Democratic Caucus, the Speaker has myself and a press secretary who handle all of his press, communications and public relations. The caucus has 8 press aides who each handle press for 9-10 state representatives. We also have 4 staff members who make up a digital communications department. Those staff members are responsible for taking photos and videos of the representatives, providing website and social media assistance, and creating customized graphics and videos for individual reps and the caucus as a whole.

Georgia – Senate

The Georgia Senate Press Office is a non-partisan press and media relations resource for all 56 Senators both during and outside of the state legislative session. Each Senator is assigned a press representative from the Senate Press Office to assist in drafting press releases, media advisories, opinion pieces and newsletter/newspaper columns. In addition, these press representatives are available to provide communications strategy and insight for high-profile projects, act as a media liaison between the Senator and the Capitol Press Corps, provide media training and public speaking coaching, share social media best practices and produce, cut and edit videos. Our office also handles the livestream for the Senate Chamber and all Senate Committee Meetings. Additionally, our office handles the official Twitter, Instagram and Facebook account for the Georgia Senate. Along with livestreaming the chamber and committee meetings, we live tweet them as well.

We have four full-time staff members and then hire two communication aides, one broadcast aide and a photographer during session which typically runs from the 2nd Monday in January to mid-April.

Hawaii – House

I am the Communications Director for the Hawaii House of Representatives. We are a two-person shop and work for the House majority caucus comprised of 46 representatives. We provide media relations, news releases and advisories, talking points, statements, photos, social media services, and crisis communications support.

Illinois – Senate (respondent: Office of the Senate President)

There are 59 members in the Illinois State Senate. We have a super majority of 37 democrats. My position, director of communications, is partisan. I have a staff of 25 people who manage the communication needs of all democratic senators except for the Senate President. His communication needs are managed by the spokesman. Services for the other 36 members include: press releases, talking points, opinion pieces, media advisories, social media account management, photography, e-newsletters, print mail, videography and website maintenance. We also manage a website and social media pages for the caucus.

Illinois – House (respondent: Press Secretary, Office of the Speaker)

As with most other topics, there is no one size fits all. Illinois House Democrats take an approach that sees our delegation of 67 members aided by 30 full-time staffers. They handle a range of duties including communications. This group includes photographers and graphic designers. Five members of this group are trained as videographers.

I handle general media relations for the Speaker and rely on this staff for production of releases and social media material.

I also get involved in general media matters for the House of Representatives, credentialing and logistics. I am involved in the scheduling of the common space utilized by anyone who wants to hold a press event in the State House.

In a handful of instances, individual members have retained additional communications help from private sector consultants.

Louisiana – House Communications Office

There are a total of 105 members in the Louisiana House of Representatives. I serve as the Director of Communications with a staff of 10 employees... 1 Director, 1 Deputy Director, 2 Communications Specialists, 2 Digital Media Specialists, 1 Print Specialist, 1 Communications Coordinator, 1 Television Audio Engineer and 1 part-time intern.

The House Communications Office (HCO) serves as the public and media liaison for the Louisiana House of Representatives, its members, and staff. The office assists members and staff with all facets of public outreach and media relations as they develop and set public policy.

Similar to the Louisiana Senate, the HCO is also non-partisan and serves all 105 members of the House, as well as the institution as a whole. We also provide non-partisan services to several House caucuses and delegations upon request.

Examples of the work conducted by the HCO include:

News Releases, Special Feature Writing, Op-Ed Pieces, Informational Direct-Mail Marketing, Newsletters, Photography, Videography, Speeches, Talking Points, Internal House Printing Services, Civic Education, Graphic Design, Weekly Session Updates & Annual Wrap-Ups, Daily News Links, News & Photo Archiving, Web Design & Maintenance of 17 Websites, Video Streaming and Archiving of all House Committee and Floor Proceedings back to 1999, Management of House Audio & Video System, Management of House Social Media Accounts, Media Credentialing and Media Training for Legislators.

Louisiana – Senate

There are 3 people employed in the Louisiana Senate Communication Office - we provide media relations, news releases, speeches, talking points, issue analysis, photos, tech support for operation of automated audio/video broadcast and stream of Senate proceedings and committee meetings, etc. for 39 members. We are a non-partisan office and work for all 39 members regardless of party or philosophy. The party caucuses have their own staff for partisan matters at this point in time.

Minnesota – House

The Minnesota House has both a DFL (Democratic-Farmer Labor) media department and a Republican media department handling the needs of our 134 members. We also have a nonpartisan department (House Public Info) that employs a few full-time staffers and five session-only staffers who record, upload and handle internal television stations that show committee and floor; they also write up a publication called Session Daily. In addition to that, they employ one full-time and one session-only photographer.

In our DFL Media Department we have 7 full-time and 2 session-only staffers. We have a Communications Director who works for the Minority Leader, a Strategic Communications Manager who does social media, video, etc., our boss does radio and writes for two members, but our 4 full-time communications specialists do the bulk of the member work as they write op-eds, news releases, handle social media accounts, e-mail updates, handles press conferences, design literature, write speeches, coordinate mailings, take photos, staff members, etc. When not in session we handle about 15 members each, during session we handle about 10 and our session-only staff handle six each.

Republicans have a similar, but slightly larger department.

So all in all, we have ~5 nonpartisan, 7 DFL and 9 GOP full-time staffers handling communications, with the DFL and GOP contingents changing depending on who controls the majority.

Mississippi – House

We have 122 members in the Mississippi House of Representatives. The House Information Officer, a non-partisan position, helps 121 of the members with any assistance they might need: press releases, social media set-up, statements, photos, summaries of legislation. I originally had that position and also represented the Speaker. The position changed, and now I only handle the Speaker's communication. So, technically, the Mississippi House of Representatives has two people handling communications officially.

Nebraska

Our office in the Nebraska Legislature is composed of a photographer/graphics person, three PIO/writers and a director. We're employed by the clerk's office and serve as the communications office for the institution. We don't directly serve individual members, although we do host blogs on the website for each of the 49 senators, provide photos for their use and other services. Each member uses their own staff for speechwriting, press communications and similar duties.

North Carolina – Senate

In North Carolina, I serve the Senate Minority Leader and the Senate Democratic Caucus (15 total) with research, press releases, speeches, floor strategy and more – all legislative, not political. The Senate Minority Leader's office has its own budget to allocate as they wish. The House Minority Leader's office has the same autonomy in staff funding, but doesn't have a comms person on staff.

The majority senate and house members have larger comms shops.

Ohio – House

House Majority Caucus

The Ohio House of Representatives Majority Caucus consists of 66 members. The Majority Communications Department assists all 66 members and has on staff a director, deputy director/press secretary, two communications assistants, a constituent services advisor, a photographer, and an intern.

House Minority Caucus

In the Ohio House, communications staff is separated by caucus – majority and minority. We currently have three communications staff members serving 33 members in the minority caucus, while the majority maintains about six communications staff for their 66 members.

We are not statutory or classified employees, and all positions, hires and coverage decisions (whom to provide services to and how) are ultimately made by the House speaker. The House speaker traditionally extends the courtesy of coverage decisions and, most of the time, hiring decisions to the minority leader for communications staff, as these are partisan positions.

We have organized ourselves differently over the years, but right now we have a communications director, deputy communications director, and constituent communications coordinator. Our leader values caucus service, so while he and our minority leadership members are a priority, we also provide the same services to the rest of the caucus.

We assist each minority office with news releases, media relations, social media, news conferences, infographics, PowerPoints, fliers, webpage management, brochures, constituent letters, talking points, messaging, photography, newsletters, video production, town halls, etc. – basically any product or service that could fall under constituent contact, community relations and earned/owned media.

In addition to communications director, I also serve as deputy chief of staff to the minority caucus.

Ohio – Senate Democratic Caucus

In the Ohio legislature, communications staff serve caucuses. The Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus has two communications staffers, with a member to staff ratio of 4.5:1.

Oklahoma – House (respondent: Press Secretary/Senior Advisor for Public Affairs, Office of House Speaker Charles A. McCall)

In Oklahoma, the House Communications and Public Affairs Office is non-partisan. There are four employees in the Office. The director and three media specialists. The current director is also a videographer. The other three are primarily writers who help all 101 members with various communications needs. They mostly do non-partisan news releases, weekly columns, speeches, talking points, set up news conferences, etc. The videographer does bill highlights and weekly updates for members to push out on social media and also isolates floor audio and video (such as debates) for members to use on social media.

One area we have had success is by using our videographer to provide content for news stations. The Capitol is in Oklahoma City, so a news crew from Tulsa or Ardmore, for example, may not have the time to come all the way to OKC to interview a lawmaker from their area about a specific bill. We can record the interview for them (we even let them provide the questions) and provide it to them on an FTP site so they can use it on their local news. That has greatly increased the television coverage of many of our urban members.

I serve as press secretary to the Speaker of the House and handle partisan messaging for the Republican Caucus. The minority caucus used to have a person to handle partisan messaging for them, but he left and has not been replaced yet.

The Oklahoma Senate Communications Division is similarly structured.

Oregon

In Oregon, each of the presiding officers have a CD; in most instances each is responsible for the President and Speaker then each chamber's co-chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. That's 2 for 4 members. Then each of the 4 caucuses has a CD (and sometimes an assistant). So that's 4 more for the other 86 members. In most cases, however, a legislative assistant in each member's office is responsible for newsletters.

Oregon – House

The Speaker has a Communications Director, and both the Republican and Democratic caucus leader have a Communications Director to serve their respective caucus members.

Rhode Island

In Rhode Island, a staff of three in the Legislative Press Bureau serves all 113 members of the General Assembly — that's both House and Senate. Both the House Minority office and the Senate Minority Office prefer to use their own staffers for that purpose. In addition, there is a director of communications that serves the Speaker of the House and another that serves the president of the Senate.

Tennessee – House Republicans

On the GOP side of the Tennessee House, our Speaker has her own press secretary. For the other 73 House Republicans, they are served by our Caucus communications team. This team is made up of our Director of Communications (housed in our Majority Leader's office), our Caucus Press Secretary (housed in our Caucus Chairman's Office), and myself, the Digital Communication Coordinator (housed in our Caucus Chairman's Office). We are all state employees and serve all of our members equally.

Texas – Senate

In Texas, the Senate Media Services department is non-partisan. We have a staff of 16 during the interim and hire a few session-only staff for the 6 months we are in Session every other year. The department comprises audio, video, photography, graphic design, a web master, a writer and a Spanish translator. We provide official and historical documentation of Senate proceedings and multimedia services to the employees, Lt. Governor and 31 members of the Senate. In addition, we are responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Senate webpage and the production of several reference publications.

Examples of work that we provide for our staff and members: Audio record and archive all official Senate proceedings, record radio actualities, produce English and Spanish radio show, produce and maintain programming on Senate television, provide video production services, photograph Senate business and floor action, as well as special events and studio head shots, provide printed and digital copies of Senate photographs, mat prints and mount maps, produce art and copy for visual presentations, create visual designs for publications, stream Senate session and committee meetings over the internet, produce a Texas Senate news article for website, and lots more!

Utah – House Majority

I serve as the communications director for the Utah House majority, which consists of 62 members including the Speaker and leadership team. There is an additional person that helps with research and messaging. We offer assistance with press releases and news conferences, social media, statements, talking points, photos, create and edit videos, summaries of legislation, graphics, presentations, one-pagers, newsletters, special events, media relations, etc. as well as provide social media best practices. Additionally, I serve as a media liaison and manage the official social media accounts – Twitter, Instagram and Facebook – and websites for the House and majority caucus. We hire one or two communication interns during the seven-week session. The minority office has a communication specialist that serves their caucus and leadership.

West Virginia

West Virginia Legislature's Office of Reference and Information is a non-partisan, apolitical office that serves the 100-member House of Delegates and 34-member state Senate. With me, there are two other PIOs, a photographer, a three-person web team and a resource manager. We provide press releases, columns, speeches, etc. for the membership as required. The House and Senate each have a Communication Director respectively but no other communication staff.

Washington

In the Washington Legislature, the comshops are under caucus management. The four partisan caucuses each have a pool of policy and communications staff. In the Washington State Senate, caucus staff is divided up by party and each caucus is made up of policy and communication staffers. There also are comshops for the House Republican Caucus and the House Democratic Caucus.

Senate Republican Caucus

I am a Senior Public Information Officer with the Senate Republican Caucus. We have a Comms Director, Deputy and 6 other PIOs who serve 3-4 Senators, managing their public facing communications. The Deputy and Director are generally responsible for handling leadership communications. A couple of the PIOs have specific job tasks such as social media or radio, and have a lower ratio of members they serve.

Senate Democratic Caucus

The Senate Democratic Caucus is made up of 22 staff members. Policy staffers cover committees (usually 1-3 max depending on how busy a committee is) while communication staffers typically serve 3-5 members each.

The screen shot below shows you the Senate communications staffing here in the Washington State Legislature, including one hybrid FTE (Dave Pringle is half communications specialist, half policy analyst). This link shows the entire caucus staff: <http://sdc.wastateleg.org/contact/>. Generally speaking, each comm specialist staffs 2-4 members depending on their other specialty areas (webmaster, editor, FB coordinator, tweeter, etc.).

Communications

NAME	PHONE	TITLE
Aaron Wasser	(360) 786-7333	Communications Director - Sens. Hobbs, Nelson
Chris West	(360) 786-7328	Communications Deputy & Webmaster - Sens. Pedersen, Rolfes, Wellman
Amelia Dickson	(360) 786-7535	Communications Specialist - Sens. Chase, Frockt, Nelson
Steven Ellis	(360) 786-7887	Communications Specialist - Sens. Carlyle, Conway, Mullet
Rick Manugian	(360) 786-7569	Communications Specialist - Sens. Cleveland, Palumbo, Van De Wege
Sharlett Mena	(360) 786-7013	Communications Specialist & Broadcast Coordinator - Sens. Dhingra, Hunt, Saldaña
Dave Pringle	(360) 786-7721	Communications Specialist - Sens. Billig, Ranker
Aaron Sherman	(360) 786-7853	Communications Specialist - Sens. Darnelle, Kuderer, Lias, Takko
Bre Weider	(360) 786-7326	Communications Specialist - Sens. Hasegawa, Keiser, McCoy

Washington – House

I'll echo what the other three communications managers from Washington stated. We're a part-time legislature. Each senator and representative has one full-time legislative assistant, though the senate member offices have extra office help during the legislative session.

House Democrats

We have a year-round communications staff of 9.5 FTEs that currently serve 50 members. Our pool staff ratios are partly based on election results. So if Democrats gain seats this year, we will get additional staff. Pre-recession, the communications staff could have up to four session positions available to help with the session workload. Those positions were eliminated during the recession and unfortunately have yet to be restored.

Most of our communications staff serve 5-6 member offices (too many!). A few, like me and the director, directly serve fewer as we have other responsibilities that come with a senior staff positions. The communications positions have traditionally been heavily focused on writing. Though with the dramatic changes in the mass communications landscape these past 15 years, we're expanding our portfolios to focus on other skill sets as well (podcasting, videos, infographics, etc.)

House Republicans

I am the Communications director for the [Washington State House Republicans](#). Our caucus has 48 members (98-member body). Our Communications [shop](#) consists of eight people: a director, deputy director and six PIOs. Every member is assigned one PIO. Within our shop, three PIOs also have the specialized functions of: broadcast coordinator (radio and audio), web and social media coordinator, and outreach coordinator. We are partisan staff, but (state) employees of the Washington State House of Representatives.