



## **CRS Report for Congress**

# **House Sergeant at Arms: Legislative and Administrative Duties**

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The Sergeant at Arms is an officer of the House with law enforcement, protocol, and administrative responsibilities (House Rule II). The Sergeant at Arms is elected at the beginning of each Congress by the membership of the chamber. The duties of the Sergeant at Arms are mandated in law, House rules, custom, and policies determined by the House Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on House Administration in the exercise of their oversight roles. This report will be updated as events warrant. See [<http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml>] for more information on congressional processes.

### **Protection, Security, and Decorum Responsibilities**

As the chief law enforcement officer of the House, the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for security in the House wing of the Capitol, the House office buildings, and on adjacent grounds. Under the direction of the Speaker of the House or other presiding officer, the Sergeant at Arms plays an integral role in maintaining order and decorum in the House chamber. The Sergeant at Arms is authorized to hold up the mace, the symbol of the Sergeant at Arms' authority, before unruly Members, and to carry the mace down the aisles of the House chamber to subdue disorderly conduct. The Sergeant at Arms may be directed to compel absent Members to attend House sessions in order to achieve the necessary quorum by escorting them to the chamber (House Rule XX). Both practices have been rare, particularly in recent years. The Sergeant at Arms or his assistant attends all floor sessions.

The Sergeant at Arms is also responsible for ensuring the safety and security of Members of Congress, congressional staff, visiting national and foreign dignitaries, and tourists. Toward this mission, the Sergeant at Arms works in concert with the Senate Sergeant at Arms, and the Architect of the Capitol. These three officials comprise the Capitol Police Board.

### **Protocol Responsibilities**

Through custom and precedent, the Sergeant at Arms performs a number of protocol and ceremonial duties. Among these duties are to lead formal processions at ceremonial events such as presidential inaugurations, joint sessions of Congress, and formal addresses

to the Congress; to greet and escort visiting foreign dignitaries; and to supervise congressional funeral arrangements.

## Administrative Responsibilities

The Sergeant at Arms performs a number of administrative services in support of the Members, staff, and visitors associated with the security and other operations of the House. In addition to serving on the Capitol Police Board, the Sergeant at Arms serves with the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Architect of the Capitol on the Capitol Guide Board. This board oversees the Capitol Guide Service, which provides tours of the Capitol to visitors and special services to tourists. In addition, the Sergeant at Arms serves with the Clerk of the House on the House Page Board, which sets policies for the page program.

House rules require the Sergeant at Arms to report semiannually to the Committee on House Administration the financial and operational status of each function under his jurisdiction (House Rule II). The reports provide financial statements, describe current operations, and present new and future plans. The Office of the Sergeant at Arms comprises six divisions, which are described in the following table.

Division	Functions/Responsibilities
Member Support	Assists House Members and their staff with administrative issues such as Member and spouse pins and Member tags.
Chamber Security	Oversees security, maintains order and decorum of the House chamber; and oversees access to the House floor and galleries.
Garages & Parking Security	Oversees the safety and security of vehicles and pedestrians in all House garages and parking areas.
Identification Services	Provides identification cards to permanent and temporary House staff (and other workers), and to the spouses and immediate family of House Members.
Police Services	Coordinates (as one of the three members of the Capitol Police Board) the security efforts affecting the Capitol and House office buildings; investigates threats/crimes against House Members and staff; and provides protective details for House Members and leaders.
Special Events/Protocol	Coordinates logistical support for all major events held in the Capitol, House office buildings, or on the Capitol grounds; and also coordinates House events related to the visits of foreign dignitaries and other protected persons.

The website of the Office of the Sergeant at Arms is [<http://sgtatarms.house.gov>] (House access only).