



CRS Report for Congress

House Administrative Officers and Officials

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Article I, Section 2 of the U. S. Constitution empowers the House of Representatives to choose its Speaker and other officers. The Constitution does not specifically identify the other officers, who currently are the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, chief administrative officer, and chaplain. These officers are elected at the beginning of each Congress (Rule II). Over time, the House has also established offices under the direction of an inspector general, Parliamentarian, Historian, general counsel, legislative counsel, and law revision counsel, who are appointed by House leaders. The Architect of the Capitol, an officer of Congress, is appointed by the President, subject to Senate confirmation. The Speaker (Rule I) is not included in this report; see CRS Report 97-780, *The Speaker of the House: House Officer, Party Leader, and Representative*. For more information on congressional processes, see [<http://www.crs.gov/products/guides/guidehome.shtml>].

Elected by the House

Clerk of the House (Rule II). The Clerk of the House presides over the House pending the election of the Speaker at the beginning of a new Congress, and certifies the credentials of newly elected members. The Clerk, as chief legislative officer, directs administrative activities that support the legislative process such as keeping the *Journal*, recording all votes, certifying bill passage, and processing all legislation. Other entities under the Office of the Clerk deal with employment counsel, legislative operations, official reporters, printing services, legislative computer systems, and legislative information. (See CRS Report 98-761, *Clerk of the House: Legislative and Administrative Duties*, and [<http://clerk.house.gov>].)

Sergeant at Arms (Rule II). The Sergeant at Arms, as the chief House law enforcement officer, is responsible for maintaining security, order, and decorum in the House chamber, House wing of the Capitol, and House office buildings. The Sergeant at Arms also serves, with the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Architect of the Capitol, on the Capitol Police Board and the Capitol Guide Board. (See CRS Report 98-835, *House Sergeant at Arms: Legislative and Administrative Duties*.)

Chief Administrative Officer (Rule II). The chief administrative officer (CAO) is responsible for certain administrative and financial activities that support the operations of the House, including the finance office, Members' accounts, information resources, human resources, office systems management, furniture, office supplies, postal

operations, food services, and various media services. (See CRS Report RS22731, *Chief Administrative Officer of the House: History and Organization*.)

Chaplain (Rule II). The chaplain of the House opens each legislative session with a formal prayer, a custom since the First Congress. The chaplain, who neither represents nor is selected on the basis of a particular denomination, also provides pastoral counseling to Members, their families, and staff. Guest chaplains of various denominations regularly offer the prayer. (See CRS Report RS20427, *House and Senate Chaplains*, and [<http://chaplain.house.gov>].)

Jointly Appointed by the Speaker and Majority and Minority Leaders

Inspector General (Rule II). The inspector general (IG) conducts periodic audits of the financial activities of other House officers and reports the findings and recommendations simultaneously to the Speaker, the majority and minority leaders, and the chair and ranking member of the Committee on House Administration [<http://www.house.gov/IG>]. If possible violations of law or House rules are indicated, the IG is required to report them to appropriate House officers and committees, including the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

Appointed by the Speaker

Parliamentarian (Rule II). The House Parliamentarian provides advice on parliamentary procedure, compiles a record of the precedents of the House, and, acting in behalf of the Speaker, determines the referral of measures to committees. The Parliamentarian or an assistant is always present and near the podium during legislative sessions to offer procedural assistance to the presiding officer. The *House Rules and Manual* is revised by the Parliamentarian, who also usually reviews special rules before the Rules Committee reports them. (See CRS Report RS20544, *The Office of the Parliamentarian in the House and Senate*.)

Historian (Rule II). The Historian directs the Office of the Historian, which researches the history of the House of Representatives and makes historical information available to Members of Congress, the press, and the public. The office conducts oral history interviews of Members, former Members, and selected staff; prepares committee histories; and trains congressional staff on the history of the House. The office has also initiated a House Fellows Program, an educational institute for secondary education teachers to further their knowledge and understanding of the House. (See [<http://historian.house.gov>].)

General Counsel (Rule II). The general counsel heads the Office of the General Counsel, which provides legal advice to Members, committees, officers, and employees of the House of Representatives on matters pertaining to their official duties, and represents them in litigation that relates to the performance of those duties (House access only: [<http://generalcounsel.house.gov>].)

Legislative Counsel. The legislative counsel heads the Office of Legislative Counsel, which assists Members, committees, and staff in drafting legislation and

preparing conference reports, and, in certain situations, assists Members on the House floor. See CRS Report RS20735, *Office of Legislative Counsel: House*, and [<http://legcoun.house.gov>].

Law Revision Counsel. Under the direction of the law revision counsel, the Office of the Law Revision Counsel prepares, publishes, and keeps current the United States Code, a consolidation and codification by subject matter of the general and permanent laws of the United States [<http://uscode.house.gov>].

Appointed by the President

Architect of the Capitol. As an officer of Congress, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is charged with the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the U.S. Capitol and adjacent buildings and grounds. The AOC also performs certain administrative functions affecting the House and Senate. A bicameral congressional advisory commission conducts a search for an architect, who is then nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate for a tenure limited to 10 years. (See CRS Report RL32820, *Architect of the Capitol: Appointment, Duties, and Operations*, and [<http://www.aoc.gov>].)