



Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate: Legislative and Administrative Duties

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Summary

The Sergeant at Arms of the Senate is an officer of the Senate with protection, security, decorum, protocol, and administrative responsibilities. The Sergeant at Arms is elected by the membership of the Senate. As the Senate's chief law enforcement officer, the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for security in the Senate wing of the Capitol, the Senate office buildings, and on adjacent grounds.

As the chief of protocol of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms performs ceremonial functions that fall within his jurisdiction through custom and precedent. In carrying out these duties, the Sergeant at Arms greets and escorts the U.S. President, heads of state, and other official Senate guests while attending functions in the Capitol; leads Senators from the Senate side of the Capitol to the House chamber for joint sessions of Congress, to their places on the inaugural platform, and to any other place the Senate goes as a body; and assists in arrangements for inaugurations and the planning of funerals of Senators who die while in office. By custom, the Sergeant at Arms is custodian of the Senate gavel.

As an administrative official of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for specified services to Senators' offices. In the administration of Senators' offices the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for securing home state office space, including mobile home state office space; purchasing office equipment; managing telecommunications services; establishing prices of items available for use in Senate offices; reimbursing Senators for items purchased through their offices; maintaining records of equipment used in offices; and administering orientation seminars, among others.

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History of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper

On April 6, 1789, James Mathers was elected as Senate Doorkeeper and became the chamber's first elected officer.¹ On February 5, 1798, Mathers's duties were expanded when he was "invested with the authority of Sergeant-at-Arms, to hold said office during the pleasure of the Senate, whose duty it shall be to execute the commands of the Senate, from time to time, and all such process as shall be directed to him by the President of the Senate."² Initially, the Senate met in closed-door sessions and it was the responsibility of the Doorkeeper to ensure that a quorum of Senators was present and that other interested parties were kept out of the chamber. This officer is hereafter referred to as Sergeant at Arms.

Today, the Sergeant at Arms performs the original duties of the doorkeeper and is responsible for the protection of the Senate wing of the Capitol, the Senate office buildings,³ and the Senate chamber.⁴ In addition, the Sergeant at Arms serves as the Senate's chief protocol officer and has administrative responsibility for Senate offices and other Senate services, including the Senate beauty and barber shops, the Senate garage, the Senate post office, the Senate recording studio, and the Senate photographic studio. The Sergeant at Arms is elected by the Senate and serves "from Congress to Congress until a successor is chosen."⁵

Origins of Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper have developed over time through several sources.⁶ These sources include statutes, Senate rules and orders, and customs and precedents. Statutes, rules and orders, and other materials may be found in

- the *United States Code*, which is the codification, by subject matter, of the general and permanent laws of the United States;⁷

¹ Senate debate, *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, vol. 1 (April 6, 1789), pp. 17-18.

² Senate debate, *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, vol. 7 (February 5, 1798), pp. 497-498.

³ U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, *Senate Manual—Containing the Standing Rules, Orders, Laws, and Resolutions Affecting the Business of the United States Senate*, 110th Cong., 1st sess., S.Doc. 110-1 (Washington: GPO, 2008). [Hereafter, *Senate Manual*] Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing of the United States Capitol and Senate Office Building, Rule I (§ 120).

⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Standing Rules of the Senate*, 110th Cong., 1st sess., September 14, 2007, S.Doc 110-9 (Washington: GPO, 2007). Rule XXIII specifies those individuals who may be admitted to the Senate floor when the Senate is in session.

⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate Historical Office, "The Office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms," *Sergeant At Arms*, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/sergeant_at_arms.htm.

⁶ U.S. Congress, Congressional Research Service, *The Senate Sergeant at Arms: Authorities, Duties, and Administration of Office*, created at the request of the Senate Sergeant at Arms, by (name redacted) (January 16, 2008), 117 pp. Copies are available only from the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

⁷ The *U.S. Code* can be found online at the Office of the Law Revision Counsel website, <http://uscode.house.gov/search/criteria.shtml>.

- the *United States Statutes at Large*, which is the collection of all laws and concurrent resolutions enacted during each session of Congress, published in the order they were enacted into law;⁸
- the *Senate Manual*, which contains the texts of the (1) Standing Rules of the Senate, (2) Standing Orders of the Senate, (3) rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing of the United States Capitol, and (4) excerpts from law applicable to the Senate;⁹ and
- custom and precedent.¹⁰

Additionally, many of the duties of the Sergeant at Arms are defined by the Senate Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration. As a consequence of its jurisdiction over Senate administrative matters, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration oversees operations of the Sergeant at Arms.

Areas of Responsibility

The duties and responsibilities of Sergeant at Arms can be divided into three broad categories: law enforcement and security, protocol, and administration. Each category reflects the basic responsibility to ensure safe and effective operation of the Senate.

Law Enforcement and Security

As the Senate's chief law enforcement officer, the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for security in the Senate wing of the Capitol,¹¹ the Senate office buildings, adjacent grounds,¹² and for the security of Senators. At the request of a majority of Senators present on the floor, the Sergeant at Arms also has the authority to compel the attendance of absent Senators.¹³ The Sergeant at Arms enforces rules made by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and serves as a member of the Capitol Police Board, which is authorized by law to design, install, and maintain security systems for the Capitol and its grounds.¹⁴

⁸ The *Statutes at Large* is prepared and published by the Office of the Federal Register at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). For more information see <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/publications/statutes.html>.

⁹ *Senate Manual*. The Standing Rules of the Senate were most recently published on September 14, 2007, and can be found on the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration website <http://rules.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=RulesOfSenateHome>.

¹⁰ For example of some of the precedents of the Senate see, U.S. Congress, *Riddick's Senate Procedure: Precedents and Practices*, 101st Cong., 2nd sess., S.Doc. 101-28 (Washington: GPO, 1992).

¹¹ *Standing Rules of the Senate*, Rule XXII; Rule XIX; and Rule XXXIII. Additional responsibility can be found in the *Senate Manual*, Rules and Regulations of the Senate Wing of the United States Capitol and Senate Office Buildings, Rule III, Rule IV, Rule VI, and Rule X.

¹² The Senate Committee on Rules and Administration has directed that the Rules of the Regulation of the Senate Wing of the Capitol extend to the Senate Office Buildings under their authority from the *Standing Rules of the Senate*, Rule XXV (1)(n).

¹³ *Standing Rules of the Senate*, Rule VI.

¹⁴ 2 U.S.C. § 1901, note. The Sergeant at Arms serves on the Capitol Police Board with the House Sergeant at Arms, the Architect of the Capitol, and the chief of the United States Capitol Police, who serves as an ex-officio member.

Together with the Secretary of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms develops and maintains a continuity-of-operations plan that enables the Senate to conduct business and access data at offsite locations, and oversees the office of security and emergency preparedness, which serves as the Senate's emergency planning and response team.¹⁵

Protocol

As the chief of protocol of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms performs ceremonial functions that exist through custom and precedent. In carrying out these duties, the Sergeant at Arms greets and escorts the U.S. President, heads of states, and other official Senate guests while attending functions in the Capitol; leads Senators from the Senate side of the Capitol to the House chamber for joint sessions of Congress, to their places on the inaugural platform, and to any other place the Senate travels as a body; and assists in arrangements for inaugurations and the planning of funerals of Senators who die while in office. By custom, the Sergeant at Arms is custodian of the Senate gavel.¹⁶

The Sergeant at Arms is responsible for protocol surrounding the death of a Senator. These responsibilities include the enforcement of a provision in the Standing Orders of the Senate which prohibits flowers in the Senate chamber unless an order is given waiving the prohibition for a display of flowers on the desk of a deceased Senator on the day of eulogies.¹⁷ The Sergeant at Arms also ascertains that the construction of a monument to a deceased Senator, who is to be buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C., conforms to specific construction materials and procedures.¹⁸

Administration

As an administrative officer of the Senate, the Sergeant at Arms is responsible for specified services to Senators' offices, including the following:

- acquiring home state office space, including mobile office space;¹⁹
- purchasing office equipment and maintaining records of equipment use;²⁰
- operating computer support services;
- managing telecommunications services;²¹
- establishing prices of items available for use in Senate offices; and

¹⁵ Testimonies of the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate William H. Pickle and former Sergeant at Arms of the Senate Alfonso Lenhardt, U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, *Oversight of the Sergeant at Arms, Library of Congress, and Congressional Research Service*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., April 8, 2003.

¹⁶ Silvio A. Bedini, "The Mace and the Gavel," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 87, part 4 (1997), pp. 53-70. The Senate gavel is used to call for the commencement, adjournment, and for order in the Senate. For more information on the Senate gavel see, U.S. Congress, U.S. Senate Art & History, "Senate Gavel," http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/artifact/Decorative_arts/Other/71_00002.htm.

¹⁷ *Senate Manual*, Standing Orders of the Senate, § 64.

¹⁸ 2 U.S.C. § 51.

¹⁹ 2 U.S.C. § 59.

²⁰ 2 U.S.C. § 59b(a)-(c).

²¹ 2 U.S.C. § 58a; 2 U.S.C. § 58a-2; and 2 U.S.C. § 52a-3.

- administering orientation seminars for Senators, Senate officials, or members of the staffs of Senators or Senate officials and other similar meetings.²²

The administrative duties of the Sergeant at Arms also include services to the Senate as a whole, including the following:

- Senate service department, which is responsible for production of newsletters and other Senate mailings, purchase and maintenance of equipment, storage of Senate publications, and micrographics services;
- Senate computer center, which oversees Senate computer operations;
- Senate post office, and recording and photographic studios;
- Senate barber and beauty shops;
- custodial services, office furnishings and equipment, and automobiles;
- Senate garage and other parking facilities;
- appointment desk to greet visitors on official business;
- Senate health promotion office;
- Senate placement office;
- Senate telecommunications, the Capitol telephone exchange, and the Senate telephone directory;
- Capitol Guide Service and other visitor services including assistance in Braille, sign language interpretation, and telecommunications devices for the deaf;
- Senate page program and assignment of duties to messengers;
- oversight of the doorkeepers;
- issuance of identification cards to Senate employees;
- disposal of surplus equipment; and
- education and training programs for Senate staff as needed.

²² 2 U.S.C. § 69a.

Appendix. Sergeants at Arms and Doorkeepers of the Senate

Since 1789, 38 men and women have been elected Sergeant at Arms of the Senate. **Table A-1** lists those individuals, the Congress, when their term began, and when their term concluded.

Table A-1. Sergeants at Arms and Doorkeepers of the Senate

Congress (in which service began)	Name	Term Began	Term Concluded
1 st (1789-1791)	James Mathers	April 6, 1789	September 2, 1811 ^a
12 th (1811-1813)	Montjoy Bayly	November 6, 1811	December 9, 1833
23 rd (1833-1835)	John Shackford	December 9, 1833	1837 ^b
25 th (1837-1839)	Stephen Haight	September 4, 1837	June 7, 1841
27 th (1841-1843)	Edward Dyer	June 7, 1841	December 9, 1845
29 th (1845-1847)	Robert Beale	December 9, 1845	March 17, 1853
33 rd (1853-1855)	Dunning R. McNair	March 17, 1853	July 6, 1861
37 th (1861-1863)	George T. Brown	July 6, 1861	March 22, 1869
41 st (1869-1871)	John R. French	March 22, 1869	March 24, 1879
46 th (1879-1881)	Richard J. Bright	March 24, 1879	December 18, 1883
48 th (1883-1885)	William P. Canaday	December 18, 1883	June 30, 1890
51 st (1889-1891)	Edward K. Valentine	June 30, 1890	August 7, 1893
53 rd (1893-1895)	Richard J. Bright	August 8, 1893	February 1, 1900
56 th (1899-1901)	Daniel M. Ransdell	February 1, 1900	August 26, 1912
62 nd (1911-1913)	E. Livingston Cornelius	December 10, 1912	March 4, 1913
63 rd (1913-1915)	Charles P. Higgins	March 13, 1913	March 3, 1919
66 th (1919-1921)	David S. Barry	May 19, 1919	February 7, 1933
73 rd (1933-1935)	Chesley W. Journey	March 9, 1933	January 31, 1943
78 th (1943-1945)	Wall Doxey	February 1, 1943	January 3, 1947
80 th (1947-1949)	Edward F. McGinnis	January 4, 1947	January 2, 1949
81 st (1949-1951)	Joseph C. Duke	January 3, 1949	January 2, 1953
83 rd (1953-1955)	Forest A. Harness	January 3, 1953	January 4, 1955
84 th (1955-1957)	Joseph C. Duke	January 5, 1955	December 30, 1965
89 th (1965-1967)	Robert G. Dunphy	January 14, 1966	June 30, 1972
92 nd (1971-1973)	William H. Wannall	July 1, 1972	December 17, 1975
94 th (1975-1977)	Frank "Nordy" Hoffman	December 18, 1975	January 4, 1981
97 th (1981-1983)	Howard S. Liebengood	January 5, 1981	September 12, 1983
98 th (1983-1985)	Larry E. Smith	September 13, 1983	June 2, 1985
99 th (1985-1987)	Ernest E. Garcia	June 3, 1985	January 5, 1987
100 th (1987-1989)	Henry K. Giugni	January 6, 1987	December 31, 1990

Congress (in which service began)	Name	Term Began	Term Concluded
102 nd (1991-1993)	Martha S. Pope ^c	January 3, 1991	April 14, 1994
103 rd (1993-1995)	Robert Laurent Benoit	April 15, 1994	January 3, 1995
104 th (1995-1997)	Howard O. Greene, Jr. Gregory S. Casey	January 4, 1995 September 6, 1996	September 6, 1996 November 9, 1998
105 th (1997-1999)	James W. Ziglar	November 9, 1998	September 3, 2001
107 th (2001-2003)	Alfonso E. Lenhardt	September 4, 2001	March 16, 2003
108 th (2003-2005)	William H. Pickle	March 17, 2003	January 4, 2007
110 th (2007-2009)	Terrance Gainer	January 4, 2007	Present

Source: Senate Historical Office, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/sergeant_at_arms.htm.

Notes:

- a. James Mathers was originally elected to be Senate Doorkeeper, making him the first Senate officer. On February 5, 1798, the Senate expanded his duties to include those of Sergeant at Arms.
- b. John Shackford's exact date of death is unknown.
- c. Martha S. Pope was the first woman to serve as Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper of the Senate.

Author Contact Information

(name redacted)
Analyst on the Congress
[redacted]@crs.law7-....

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