



# Functional Bureau Strategy

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## The Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H)

FY 2018 - 2022

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## 1. Executive Statement

**Mission Statement:** The Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H) promotes the mission and legislative priorities of the United States Department of State (DOS) through strategic interaction with the Congress that is consistent with the Constitution. H's work is customer focused, accountable, objective and responsible; it is informed by the spirit of collegiality, integrity and public service. It supports the advancement of United States foreign policy on behalf of the American people.

**Communicating with Congress:** The Bureau of Legislative Affairs coordinates legislative activity for the Department of State and advises the Secretary and other Department principals on legislative strategy. H facilitates effective communication between State Department officials and the Members of Congress and their staffs. Along with the management of Congressional hearings and briefings throughout the legislative year, the Bureau of Legislative Affairs coordinates the annual testimony provided by the Secretary to the several congressional committees with oversight on U.S. foreign policy issues and the programmatic and operational budgets that support our nation's diplomatic and consular activities, and our foreign assistance.

We seek passage of foreign policy legislation, including annual and supplemental appropriations, obtain approval of treaties, and work to ensure Senate confirmation of more than 120 of the President's foreign affairs nominees. The bureau supports Secretary-level national security briefings to Congress on topics of importance to American security, foreign policy, and economic prosperity, requiring coordination and collaboration with the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Department of Justice, Treasury Department, Homeland Security, and other foreign affairs agencies. The Bureau manages notifications of arms sales, budget matters, Congressional investigations, and all policy oversight and administrative operations with Congress, including correspondence, case work, and Congressional travel. The bureau also supports the direct link between Congress and Americans experiencing a crisis while travelling overseas through our work with Congressional constituent services staff. H is a core participant in the Department's emergency response mechanisms, serving routinely on task forces established by the Operation Center's Crisis Management Strategy (CMS) team in order to facilitate coordinated Congressional outreach and response to inquiries.

The Bureau of Legislative Affairs must reflect modern government relations work as it amplifies its role as an external communications component of the Department. To support this, the bureau continually seeks to expand and strengthen partnerships with our internal stakeholders in the various offices and bureaus within the Department. H works closely with the Bureau of Public Affairs to ensure external communications with Congress and the media reflect the Department's goals of transparency, public understanding of the Department's goals, and the appropriate protection of sensitive foreign policy deliberations. H coordinates its work closely with all bureaus within the Department, and assures policy conformance with top-level policies, budgets, and operations set by the White House, the Secretary, and further refined by D, P, S/P,

Approved: 11/29/2018

and M. Coordination with F and BP is critical with regard to budget and appropriations. Externally, coordination on policy initiatives with the other agencies is essential for the Department to realize its goals and objectives.

**Operating Environment/Challenges:** H has made important strides in Congress for the Department, including on the budget and flexible authorization legislation. The Department has secured resources to accomplish the Department's foreign policy goals. Typically the Bureau of Legislative Affairs coordinates over 2,000 briefings, calls, and meetings for members of Congress and their staff; coordinates and submits approximately 370 formal reports; manages the confirmation process annually for the President's more than 120 foreign affairs nominees and thousands of annual Foreign Service promotions; responds to thousands of Questions for the Record (QFR); and working in conjunction with Consular Affairs, responds to over 5,000 constituent cases for members of Congress, including issues ranging from lost passports, to missing constituents overseas, to helping with visas for constituents' family members, to supporting coordinated Department support to Americans stranded by hurricanes or other emergencies. Despite the challenges posed by a Presidential transition, H was an indispensable and effective part of communicating the budget and legislative needs of the Department. H seeks to continue to effectively communicate the foreign policy initiatives of the Secretary and further the legislative interests of the Administration and the Department.

The Assistant Secretary for H reports directly to the Secretary who is a confirmed political appointee. The H organization is comprised of the following offices/teams: House and Senate Affairs, each headed by a Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS); Regional and Global, and Four Functional Affairs Offices, each of which reports to a DAS; Appropriations Team; and the Executive Office which oversees the Congressional Correspondence Unit and the Congressional Travel Office.

## 2. Bureau Strategic Framework

### Strategy Outline

#### Goal 1 - Advance the Department's Foreign Policy and Legislative Goals in the Congress

Objective 1.1: Maintain and continuously build on relationships with the Department's core authorizing and appropriation committees.

Objective 1.2: Expand internal engagement to be strategic and anticipatory.

#### Goal 2 - Support Congressional Oversight: Hearings, Congressional Travel, Letters and Inquiries

Objective 2.1: Enhance strategic support for Congressional delegations (CODELS)

Objective 2.2: Continue to improve processing time for responses to Congressional inquiries.

Objective 2.3: Continue to improve internal IT systems.

#### Goal 3 - Maintain a Talented, Resilient Workforce

Objective 3.1: H enhances its professional development efforts to support its expert workforce.

Objective 3.2: H enhances staffing back-up and redundancy system to maintain workload and tempo in face of heavy Congressional demands.

#### Goal 4: To fully implement the Managing for Results (MfR) framework.

Objective 4.1: To be in full compliance with all MfR requirements.

### 3. Goals, Objectives and Sub-Objectives

#### **Bureau Goal # 1 - Advance the Department's Foreign Policy and Legislative Goals in the Congress.**

##### **a. Description and Linkages**

The Bureau works with Congress on all aspects of the four pillars of the Administration's National Security Strategy to include protecting the American people, the homeland, and our way of life; promoting American prosperity; preserving peace through strength; and advancing American influence. To achieve these national security objectives, H works with the Senate to confirm the nominees to fill the Department's leadership, and with Congress to secure and sustain funding for Department operations and foreign assistance priorities, and to facilitate transparency, oversight, and American citizen services. By advancing the Department strategic priorities in congress H supports all the Department goals including: SG 1: Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad. SG 2: Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation. SG 3: Promote American Leadership through Balanced Engagement. SG 4: Ensure Effectiveness and Accountability to the American Taxpayer. H's greatest risk is reliance on partners and colleagues in congress for whom the Departments issues are not a priority. Despite the aforementioned risk, H advances a wide range of issues and works to insure that the Department's foreign policy and legislative goals are understood and supported by appropriators.

**Bureau Objective 1.1 - Maintain and continuously build on relationships with the Department's core authorizing and appropriation committees.**

##### **Justification**

The Department depends on collegial relationships with members of congress and staffers in order to secure resources, legislation and nominee confirmations that benefits the Department and assists in attaining its goals and objectives.

**Bureau Objective 1.2 - Expand internal engagement to be strategic and anticipatory.**

##### **Justification**

H can only be strategic and anticipatory if it has advance notice and information about developing strategies, emerging issues, and issues of high profile media interest. H will

Approved: 11/29/2018

enhance communications with the Department to ensure bureaus have broader awareness of Congressional actions, so that H can better integrate Congressional interest in the strategic planning of bureaus. This will be integral to H's work to build a bureau able to carry our modern government relations work, amplify its role as an external communications component of the Department and develop regular communication products that are integrated into the Department's operations.

## **Bureau Goal # 2 - Support Congressional Oversight: Hearings, Congressional Travel, Letters and Inquiries**

### **Description and Linkages**

Working together, the H team coordinates congressional travel and official communications with the Hill including correspondence and legislative reference functions. In order to meet new and ongoing needs, the Bureau must strengthen information systems and satisfy facility management requirements. To date, we have followed through on management reforms by upgrading our use of electronic means to distribute reports, track and clear correspondence and track other information; increased our reliance on our House and Senate Liaison Offices to keep abreast of emerging Congressional issues; and continued to pursue consolidation and simplification of Congressionally-mandated reports and improve our support for Congressional travel. It is critically important that we continue advancing our management reform efforts. That means continuing to reduce our processing times on Hill correspondence and continuing to streamline our congressionally mandated reporting requirements. Management reforms and enhanced electronic document tracking supports the following Department Goals: SG 4: Ensure Effectiveness and Accountability to the American Taxpayer. H has worked diligently to provide a Distance Learning Course on support for CODELS. If our staff at overseas posts do not avail themselves of training, H risks missing strategic opportunities to promote legislative initiatives and key issues if CODELS and STAFFDELS are not effectively managed.

### **Bureau Objective 2.1 - Enhance strategic support for Congressional delegations (CODELS)**

#### **Justification**

A key opportunity for the Department to demonstrate to members of Congress the Department's priorities, operational agility, and key issues, is through regular travel of members of Congress and their staff to overseas posts. The bureau will take several steps to enhance its strategic support for Congressional delegations (CODELS) to include launching with FSI a new Distance Learning Course on support for codels. In concert

with this, H will build an interactive page on H's internal site to share key priorities with Missions overseas and help reinforce Department goals and priorities with visiting CODELS and STAFFDELS.

**Bureau Objective 2.2** - Continue to improve processing time for responses to Congressional inquiries.

**Justification**

Outstanding Congressional correspondence can have a direct impact on the consideration given to the Department in nomination confirmations, appropriations, and other legislation. While our tracking/routing system has continued to improve overall response times, there is still room for greater efficiencies.

**Bureau Objective 2.3** - Continue to improve internal IT systems to support Congressional oversight and inquiries.

**Justification**

H must maintain modern, integrated, and nimble IT Systems through the development and implementation of state-of-the-art hardware and custom applications to improve how the Bureau processes and tracks tasks to the Department, coordinates Congressional travel, and communicates with the Congress.

**Bureau Goal # 3 - Maintain a talented, resilient workforce.**

**Description and Linkages**

The bureau's most important resource is its people. In providing outstanding support for Congress and the Department, the Bureau of Legislative Affairs fully utilizes its diverse workforce comprised of Foreign Service, Civil Service, and political appointees. H is faced routinely with high profile, politically charged, and challenging issues, extremely short deadlines, and little room for error or delay. To maintain a high caliber workforce in the face of this challenging work environment requires constant leadership and professional support. A high caliber workforce supports the following Department Goals: SG 4: Ensure Effectiveness and Accountability to the American Taxpayer. One of H's greatest risk associated with maintaining a highly motivated and professional staff is inadequate training and lack of professional development opportunities. H needs to encourage and support training for all H employees in order to maintain a strong agile work force.



**Bureau Objective 3.1** - H enhances its professional development efforts to support its expert workforce.

**Justification**

H is a fast-paced office at the forefront of the Department's wide array of issues. Finding time for staff to develop their skills, broaden their expertise, and develop their leadership and supervisory potential will be essential to ensuring H maintains a strong work force.

**Bureau Objective 3.2** - H enhances staffing back-up and redundancy system to maintain workload and tempo in face of heavy Congressional demands.

**Justification**

Given the pace and volume of inquiries and demands from Congress, building systems and enhancing portfolio turnover will enhance H's ability to share information and fill gaps.

#### **4. Cross-cutting Management Objectives or Management Goal**

**Management Goal:** To fully implement the Managing for Results (MfR) framework.

**a. Description and Linkages**

Fully implementing the MfR framework will help H achieve improved outcomes by conducting policy, resource, and programmatic decision-making that is informed by

annual strategic planning and data collected through monitoring and evaluation practices. Creating and reinforcing feedback loops between these processes will allow H to better align its resources with management and strategic goals and help justify new resources. Without full implementation of the MfR framework, H risks not being able to effectively and timely explain the Department's capabilities. Implementing the MfR framework is a key element in identifying, analyzing, mitigating and deciding on, and monitoring risk. Without a fully integrated MfR framework, H risks not being able manage or clearly articulate and document the benefits of a given activity against the risk.

**Management Objective** To be in full compliance with all MfR requirements.

**a. Justification**

In order to be fully in compliance with the MfR framework H is required to do continuing evaluations on its programs and processes. At this time, H has very limited resources and will seek additional funding from BP to do further evaluations.

## Appendix. Definitions and Acronyms

Codel	Congressional Delegations
CS	Civil Service
DoD	Department of Defense
DoJ	Department of Justice
DOS	Department of State
EU	European Union
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FTAs	Free Trade Agreements
FTE	Full time employee
FS	Foreign Service
GAO	Government Accountability Office
H	Bureau of Legislative Affairs
HACFO	House Appropriations Committee on Foreign Operations
HFAC	House Foreign Affairs Committee
IT	Information Technology
L	Office of the Legal Adviser
NSC	National Security Council
QFRs	Questions for the Record
SACFO	Senate Appropriation Committee on Foreign Operations
SFRC	Senate Committee of Foreign Relations
Staffdel	Staff delegations
TDY	Temporary Duty
UN	United Nations

Approved: 11/29/2018

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UNSC United Nations Security Council  
USAID United States Agency for International Development  
USG United States Government

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