



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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Policy

As a trust establishment of the United States, the Smithsonian Institution has a unique relationship to the United States Government, and works closely with the Executive Branch and Congress, as well as with various levels of state and local governments in carrying out its mission to increase and diffuse knowledge. The Smithsonian's interactions with each entity take various forms, including submitting annual budget justifications, responding to requests for testimony, and answering correspondence, among others.

The Executive and Legislative branches have particular expectations and ways of doing business, and it is important that the Institution's interactions with them be framed to take these protocols into account. In order to present a complete, consistent, and responsive picture of its activities, the Smithsonian must coordinate closely all interactions with the Executive Branch, Congress, and state and local governments. The Office of Government Relations (OGR) is charged with ensuring that coordination.

Policy
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In all communications with the Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress, it is important to remember that, while it is permissible and desirable to provide information about Smithsonian activities, Smithsonian employees are prohibited from using any Smithsonian resources, federal or trust, including Smithsonian telephones, facsimiles or copy machines, to advocate the passage or rejection of any legislation. Smithsonian employees may express their personal opinions about any pending policy or legislative matter to the Executive Branch or the U.S. Congress in their private capacity on their own time, but may not use their position as an employee of the Smithsonian in any such communication, except for identification purposes. Smithsonian Directives 103, *Smithsonian Institution Standards of Conduct*, and 300, *Use of Appropriated Funds for Lobbying Purposes*, also bear on this point, as does the paragraph below under *Procedures/Clearance of legislative proposals and enrolled bills*.

In all communications with the Executive Branch and the U.S. Congress, where an employee identifies himself or herself as an employee of the Smithsonian Institution and is communicating in his or her official capacity as a representative of the Institution, if the communication is of a substantive nature related to the Smithsonian or a matter of interest to the Smithsonian, the employee must coordinate the communication with the Office of Government Relations.

**Function of the
Office of
Government
Relations**

The function of the Office of Government Relations is to provide service and assistance to units in their dealings with the Executive Branch and Congress. OGR's goal is to increase support for the Institution and to assist units in achieving their goals when the Executive Branch and Congress are involved. OGR is also the central repository for information regarding interactions with the Executive Branch and Congress. Unlike activities such as development and public affairs, which have officers serving in each major unit, OGR is a central office serving the entire Institution. It is therefore imperative that OGR be involved in all communications with the Executive Branch and Congress.

The scope of OGR's operations, in close cooperation with other Smithsonian offices, includes

- Coordinating the Institution's communications and other interactions with the Executive Branch and Congress
- Preparing correspondence for the signature of the Secretary, Under Secretaries, or Directors, in order to explain the Institution's requirements or to respond to inquiries
- Assisting in the development of testimony by Institution officials on the Institution's activities
- Responding to requests from the Executive Branch and Congress for the Institution's views on pending legislation and enrolled bills
- Representing the Institution's activities to the Executive Branch and Congress and keeping various parts of the Institution apprised of congressional activity that may bear on their areas of interest and expertise

**Function of the
Office of
Government
Relations**
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- Maintaining central files that track all interactions with the Executive Branch and Congress

OGR staff are always available to discuss with units their plans and concerns, and to answer questions regarding the Executive Branch and Congress.

Procedures

The following paragraphs describe circumstances under which units should contact the Office of Government Relations to ensure that appropriate actions are taken and/or responses made.

Congressional Correspondence. When a unit receives a letter from a Member of Congress, the unit should notify OGR so that OGR can assist in preparing the response. Similarly, when the Secretary receives a letter from a Member regarding a particular unit's activities, OGR will contact the unit for assistance in preparing the Secretary's response. OGR reviews all congressional correspondence before it is transmitted, regardless of who signs the response.

Calls from congressional offices. When a unit receives a call from a congressional office, regardless of the reason for the call, the unit should notify OGR. If the call is a request for routine information, such as hours of operation or the dates of an exhibit, the unit may respond directly. However, if the call is for something other than routine information, the unit should refer the caller to OGR, which will then work with the unit to prepare a coordinated response. Ultimately, the response may come from the unit, from OGR, or from senior management, depending upon the circumstances.

Procedures
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Tours. When a unit receives a call from a congressional office requesting a tour or tickets, the unit should notify OGR, which will then assist the unit in preparing for the visit and delivering any necessary materials to the congressional office.

Preparing Testimony. As soon as a request for testimony or an appearance before the U.S. Congress, an Executive department or agency, or a State or Municipal entity is received, the unit should notify OGR when the request relates to Smithsonian activities or a matter of interest to the Smithsonian. While the unit will be in the best position to prepare the substance of the presentation, OGR can assist with format, logistics, overall tone, preparation of witnesses, and securing the mandatory clearance of the written statement by the Office of Management and Budget. Draft testimony should be delivered to OGR no later than 10 days before the presentation, to allow time for internal and external clearance and delivery of written material.

Events involving Administration officials and Members of Congress. When a unit begins to plan an event to which Administration officials and Members of Congress will be invited, the unit should notify OGR. OGR can assist the unit in preparing the guest list by identifying officials and Members who will be most interested in the event, and can provide advice about the congressional calendar in an effort to maximize attendance. OGR should review the invitation before it is finalized.

Clearance of legislative proposals and enrolled bills. On occasion, congressional offices may ask for the Smithsonian's opinion on pending legislation. Similarly, the Office of Management and Budget may ask the Smithsonian to comment

Procedures
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on enrolled bills that are presented for the President's signature or on testimony being prepared by federal agencies. OGR coordinates the response to these requests, in collaboration with the relevant units.

Reporting Unit Requirements. If a unit determines that it has a specific requirement that should be conveyed to the Executive Branch and/or Congress, the unit should notify OGR, which can assist the unit in preparing an explanation of the requirement and in identifying which offices need to be notified. Similarly, if a unit determines that a particular project might be of interest to the Executive Branch or Congress, OGR can assist the unit in preparing a presentation and making appointments.

Distribution of publications. If a unit wishes to distribute its publications to the Executive Branch or Congress, the unit should consult with OGR. OGR can advise the unit on the best method of delivery, and can often arrange the delivery for the unit.

Budget-Related Matters. OGR maintains a close working relationship with the Office of Planning, Management and Budget (OPMB). All correspondence—whether written, oral, or in testimony—that addresses budget matters must be cleared by OPMB. OGR facilitates this clearance for other units.

CANCELLATION:
INQUIRIES:
RETENTION:

SD 812, October 23, 1991
Office of Government Relations
Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 24 months from date of issue