



USAID
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ADS Chapter 553

Congressional Inquiries and Congressional Correspondence

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ADS Chapter 553 – Congressional Inquiries and Congressional Correspondence
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Text highlighted in yellow indicates that the adjacent material is new or substantively revised.

ADS Chapter 553 - Congressional Inquiries and Congressional Correspondence

553.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

This chapter specifies how to respond promptly and thoroughly to all inquiries from Members of Congress or their staff and how to provide clear, concise, and uniform information to Congress regarding the activities of USAID. Agency guidance on congressional correspondence is posted to the Executive Secretariat (ES) Web site.

553.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

a. The **Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA)** is responsible for responding to inquiries from Congress regarding the activities of USAID, including congressional correspondence.

b. The **Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (AA/LPA)** is responsible for overseeing the processing of congressional inquiries and approving all correspondence with Members of Congress or congressional staff, and for designating LPA staff to attend briefings between Members of Congress and other USAID personnel.

c. The **Executive Secretariat (ES)** is responsible for ensuring that congressional correspondence received by USAID personnel is tasked to LPA including designating the signatory, generally AA/LPA or the Administrator. LPA will provide a recommendation regarding the appropriate signatory, but ES will make the final determination. ES has no role in the management of other congressional inquiries.

d. The **Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs, Office of Legislative Affairs (LPA/LEG)** is responsible for assigning action on all congressional communications, including inquiries, to USAID Bureaus/Independent Offices (B/IOs). For congressional correspondence, following ES tasking to LPA, LPA in turn tasks to the appropriate B/IO for drafting including Agency officials whose statutory functions are relevant to the assigned action. When congressional correspondence or inquiries from Congress are received by another B/IO, including ES, the correspondence or inquiry must be forwarded to LPA.

e. **USAID Bureaus/Independent Offices** are responsible for forwarding all congressional inquiries and correspondence that they receive to LPA. B/IOs are responsible for preparing responses to congressional inquiries and congressional correspondence as assigned by LPA.

553.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

553.3.1 Congressional Inquiries

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

It is USAID policy to make information concerning its objectives and operations freely available to Members of Congress and their staff. Because congressional understanding of development assistance programs is dependent upon the availability of this information and prompt and reliable response to inquiries, the Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) must respond promptly to all requests for information from Congress.

Although LPA is the focal point for the preparation and release of information, there must be a continuing, comprehensive, Agency-wide concern for producing and disseminating timely, accurate information. LPA must stimulate program, and coordinate these efforts, but must rely on the active participation of all B/IOs in USAID in responding to the need for an accurately informed Congress.

All USAID B/IOs must adhere to the essential procedures stated in section **553.3.1** and the responsibilities stated in **553.2** when working to prepare responses to congressional inquiries and correspondence through email or other means, such as congressional telephone inquiries.

Telephone Inquiries: The following procedures apply when a USAID Bureau/Independent Office, other than LPA, receives a telephone inquiry directly from a Member of Congress or the member's staff:

- a. The USAID official contacted by the Member of Congress or congressional staff **should be courteous and responsive, but should explain that** LPA is the proper Bureau to call for information pertaining to USAID. In all cases, the caller must be given **LPA's contact information, including LPA's direct line (202-712-4300)**, for future reference.
- b. If the USAID official does not consider directing the Member of Congress or congressional staff to LPA appropriate during the conversation, the USAID official must report the conversation to LPA, **through appropriate channels**, after its conclusion in the following manner:
 1. Email or call the congressional liaison officer in LPA immediately to explain the nature of the inquiry, including the following information:
 - Name of congressional office (member or committee),
 - Name of congressional staffer making call,
 - Brief description of inquiry,
 - USAID official who received the inquiry and their contact information.

2. LPA, typically the appropriate congressional liaison officer, will determine how to reply or whether to prepare written materials requested by the Member of Congress or congressional staff and assign to B/IOs accordingly. The congressional liaison officer must determine which B/IO clearances are necessary depending on the inquiry.

553.3.2 Conversations with Members of Congress or Staff

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

In addition to telephone inquiries, all other conversations or meetings between USAID officials and Members of Congress and their staff concerning official business matters of interest to USAID must be conducted with LPA staff accompanying.

553.3.3 Written Materials Furnished to Congress

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

LPA must transmit to Congress responses to congressional inquiries, hearing testimony, responses to questions for the record, reports to Congress required by law, special reports requested by Congress or offered by USAID, and correspondence responses to Members of Congress and their staff.

When a B/IO receives a direct congressional request for publications, documents, or other USAID printed materials, the B/IO must forward the requested materials to LPA with the necessary envelopes addressed to the Member of Congress. Upon approval from the AA/LPA or designee, LPA will forward the material to the Member of Congress.

553.3.4 Congressional Correspondence

Effective Date: 07/21/2017

All congressional correspondence, regardless of the addressee, received directly by USAID officials must be forwarded to LPA for appropriate action. LPA will work with ES to ensure that the correspondence is recorded in the official Agency correspondence database and tasked formally to LPA. ES saves and maintains copies of final, signed responses to congressional correspondence in the official Agency correspondence database. LPA provides ES with a copy of the final, signed correspondence for this purpose.

Response Deadline: LPA assigns action on congressional mail and drafting time is generally tasked to be five working days. LPA must respond to all correspondence within 15 business days. If this time limit cannot be met, the responsible B/IO must draft an interim response letter and send it to LPA. LPA will then send the letter to the Member of Congress (see 553.3.3). If any correspondence requires an urgently short turnaround, LPA will make this clear to drafting bureaus.

Signatures on Congressional Correspondence: All correspondence with Members of Congress or their staff on USAID matters must be prepared either for the signature of the

Administrator, **Deputy Administrator**, or the Assistant Administrator for Legislative and Public Affairs (AA/LPA), **and rarely**, other designated individuals.

Clearance of Congressional Correspondence: All correspondence with Members of Congress or their staff on USAID matters signed by the Administrator or other designated individual must be cleared, in final, by LPA. **If congressional correspondence must be signed by the Administrator or Deputy Administrator, following LPA clearance, the letter is sent to ES. Once signed, ES forwards the signed letter and clearance pages to LPA. Then LPA delivers the documents to the Member of Congress or their staff via the congressional mail system. Congressional correspondence signed by the AA/LPA or designated individual is cleared in final by LPA and delivered via the congressional mail system.**

553.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

553.4.1 External Mandatory References Effective Date: 07/21/2017

- a. [Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended](#)

553.4.2 Internal Mandatory References Effective Date: 07/21/2017

There are no Internal Mandatory references for this chapter.

553.5 ADDITIONAL HELP Effective Date: 07/21/2017

There are no Additional Help documents for this chapter.

553.6 DEFINITIONS Effective Date: 07/21/2017

See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

congressional correspondence

Any written request from Members of Congress or congressional staff regarding the activities of USAID and related topics. (**Chapter 553**)

congressional inquiries

Requests for information from Members of Congress or congressional staff regarding the activities of USAID and related topics. (**Chapter 553**)

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