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Institution: Committees

Preparation for Hearings

Explanation of the mechanisms that keep committee hearings running.

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Basically you're setting up a meeting that the Members are having to take testimony from a series of witnesses that they have invited. They—we would be responsible, the staff assistants are responsible for getting the correspondence, which is an invitation letter, from the chairman of that subcommittee, to the person that they would like to testify, giving them the parameters of the discussion we were going to have, what we're going to be talking about, and what we need from them. In other words, we need 100 copies of your testimony, we need a contact point, and then your contact point on the committee would be the staff assistant, and they would get back to me. I would make sure that they had everything they needed, whether it's a slide projector or whatever, to make their presentation at that particular meeting. I'd also make sure that they got what they needed after the meeting. Did they need copies of this or that? And I'd follow up with a transcript, send it to them, which in turn they would edit and send back to me, and then we'd put it in final print. But my job was just to make sure the paper flowed.

The professional staff on that particular subcommittee met with—usually talked to the witness a couple of times before they testified to make it—them—comfortable with what we were going to talk about, what they saw the issues coming up from both sides of the aisle would be, so that they were kind of prepared. The minority was also made aware at that time of who the witnesses were, and notice went out. And the subcommittee did that too. The subcommittee would usually put out the notice, or send the information to full committee, who would in turn put out the notice. And basically, it was follow up. So, you'd be running maybe two hearings a week. You'd have one that just finished, so you're closing that out, put that aside, start the other one up. And then the follow up. And most of the time, it was up to you to keep the records straight. And you're like this needs to be in by this time, and this time, and this time. So, you're creating the mechanism to make it work.