

Chapter 4

Congressional Inquiries

Replies to Congressional inquiries, whether referred or direct mail, must clear through supervisory channels to the ARS Correspondence Management Unit (CMU). Official telephone conversations between ARS employees and Members of Congress and their staff must be documented and forwarded to the ARS Legislative Staff. It is imperative that all ARS employees document Congressional conversations.

Abbreviations: See Chapter 22 for commonly used acronyms and abbreviations.

References: P&P 125.3 - Documenting Official Congressional Conversations
Manual 261.2 - ARS Correspondence Manual, Chapter 3, Section 4
ARS Form 213 - Report of Congressional Conversation

Points of Contact:

| Conversations with members of Congress or their aides... | Written inquiries, whether referred or direct mail including correspondence to and from the USDA Secretary's Office... |
|---|--|
| Ms. Tina Street Area Administrative Officer USDA-ARS-NPA 1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 150 Fort Collins, CO 80525-5562 Telephone: (970) 229-5500 Fax: (970) 229-5564 E-Mail: streett@npa.ars.usda.gov | Ms. Olga Lee Secretary to the Area Director USDA-ARS-NPA 1201 Oakridge Drive, Suite 150 Fort Collins, CO 80525-5562 Telephone: (970) 229-5557 Fax: (970) 229-5565 E-Mail: leo@npa.ars.usda.gov |
| Ms. Marshall Tarkington Senior Legislative Analyst USDA-ARS-LS Room 315-A, Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-2280 Telephone: (202) 720-3173 Fax: (202) 720-6882 E-Mail: mtarkington@ars.usda.gov | Ms. Mary Haley USDA-ARS-CMU Stop 0303, Room 315-A, Whitten Building 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-0303 Telephone: (202) 720-3985 Fax: (202) 720-5427 E-Mail: mhaley@ars.usda.gov |

CONGRESSIONAL CONVERSATIONS

The Legislative Affairs Office must be informed whenever communication is held with the Congress or State Legislatures in whatever form (i.e., telephone conversation, direct contact regarding requests for information, requests to appear or present papers to a congressional committee for a hearing or otherwise, etc...).

It is particularly important that the Legislative Affairs Office be informed when preparing for submission to the Congress or State Legislatures papers which will ultimately become part of a permanent record. Any "testimony" or information for submission before a Congressional Committee must be cleared in the Office of Management and Budget. Otherwise, it cannot and should not be submitted.

In case of telephone conversations or in-person contacts, you should respond to the best of your ability or refer the call or person to your supervisor if you are not qualified to respond authoritatively. P&P 125.3 requires that a "Report of Congressional Conversation" Form (ARS-213) be completed immediately afterwards.

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Originator immediately completes an ARS-213 after the conversation. |
| 2 | Originator will fax the ARS-213 (initialed by the Research Leader, Center Director/Lab Director) to the Area Director's Office. |
| 3 | Area Director's Office will fax a copy to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Administrator's Office• National Program Staff, Deputy Administrator• Legislative Affairs Office• Budget and Program Management Staff |

REPORT OF CONGRESSIONAL CONVERSATION

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|----------------------|
| DATE OF CONVERSATION |
| TIME OF CONVERSATION |

INSTRUCTIONS: As soon as possible after completing an official conversation, prepare ARS-213 and distribute as follows:

- Original – Administrator, Agricultural Research Service
- Copies to – • Legislative Staff • Director, Budget and Program Management Staff • File • Area Director – *Field Offices ONLY.*

CONVERSED WITH – Name and Title of Individual; Congressional Representative's Name, State, and Office Phone Number.

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| EMPLOYEE'S NAME, TITLE, AND LOCATION | PHONE NO. |
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SUBJECT OF THE CONVERSATION

INFORMATION GIVEN

ACTION RECOMMENDED (*If further action is required*)

CONGRESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

All Congressional correspondence directed to individuals within the Agency can, if appropriate, be responded to by the individual. However, that correspondence must be cleared, through supervisory channels, by the ARS Correspondence Management Unit (CMU). The correspondence must be approved by the Legislative Affairs Office and the Administrator's Office before final transmission to the Congress.

| Step | Action |
|------|---|
| 1 | Originator will generate a draft (double spaced) copy of the letter. |
| 2 | Originator will have the draft copy initialed by the Research Leader, Center Director/Lab Director, and Area Director's Office. |
| 3 | Originator will fax a copy of the initialed draft letter and a copy of the incoming letter, if any, to CMU. |
| 4 | CMU will obtain initials from Legislative Affairs and the Administrator's Office. |
| 5 | CMU will fax the approved draft letter to the originator. |
| 6 | Originator will mail out the signed letter to addressee. |
| 7 | Originator will forward 2 copies of the signed letter to CMU for filing. (1=CMU, 1=Legislative Affairs) |
| 8 | Originator will file the yellow copy of the letter and attach the initialed draft to show approval was obtained. |

Please refer to Chapter 5 (Correspondence) in this handbook for samples and models of address.