Happy New Year CAN Coordinators!

On January 6, 2015, the 114th Congress was sworn in. With 13 new senators and 58 new representatives there are a lot of new faces to become familiar with. At the start of the New Year, now is the perfect time to develop your relationship with your Congressional Delegation. As CAN Coordinators, it's important to present yourself as a resource to your members of Congress - one who represents the interests of their constituents.

To help you with this process, the CAN Do Newsletter for January will provide some resources to help you navigate and understand the 114th Congress, including:

- 10 Facts about power change and process under the constitution for new members of Congress.
- Information about new members of Congress with Guides for introductions.
- Resources to be familiar with and to contact and learn about your Congressional members.

*10 Facts: A Refresher on the Swearing in of New Congress Members*

1. Our current Constitution, under the 20th Amendment, says a new Congress should start on January 3 in odd-numbered years, unless a law passed by a previous Congress changes the start date. The 114th Congress did just that, moving the start date to January 6, 2015.

2. The Vice President opens the Senate session, and the chaplain offers a prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The clerk of the previous House calls it to order, with the prayer and the Pledge following.

3. Members of the House and Senate swear a lot on the floor, in a positive way. The entire House and one-third of the Senate are sworn in to duty as the first order of business. But the House and Senate do this in different ways.

4. In the House, the clerk establishes that a quorum exists to conduct business by calling for the new members to insert voting cards into a machine. When a majority is established (50 percent plus one of the total House), the session can proceed. This process fulfills the requirements of Article I, Section 5, of the Constitution that a quorum must be present to conduct business.
5. Then the House holds an election to pick the Speaker of the House, who will take over the duties of running the House from the clerk. Nominations are spoken, and a roll call vote is taken. The newly installed Speaker administers the oath of office to the rest of the House.

6. In the Senate, the Constitution provides that the current Vice President can run the session. The Vice President calls up the Senators in small groups, and they take an oath identical to the one taken by House members:

7. The Senate establishes its quorum by voice vote after the oath is taken.

8. Once both Houses establish a quorum, the House and Senate leadership call the President on the telephone to confirm a new session of Congress has started.

9. The House and Senate move on to naming its leaders and officers for the two-year session. In the Senate, this includes the Senate Pro Tempore, who runs the Senate in the absence of the Vice President.

10. The rules, floor practices and orders are then established for the two-year session of Congress. These are the important parliamentary guides required for the conduct of business on the floor, and they are usually agreed to before the new Congress meets.

*From the National Constitution Center Blog.

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**The New Congress**

With the new and diverse Congress sworn in as of January 6th with a lot of new faces, it's possible you have a new member of Congress! But before we delve into the details of the new members and ways to reach out to them.

Check out some facts about today's new Congress:
Nearly three-quarters of incoming representatives and about 90 percent of all new senators are Republican.
In both the House and the Senate, about 80 percent of newly elected politicians are men.
The new group's average age will be 50 in the House and 51 in the Senate.
In the House of Representatives, the youngest member-elect is Elise Stefanik, a 30-year-old Republican representative from New York.
The oldest is Alma Adams, a 68-year-old grandmother, teacher, former North Carolina state legislator and Democrat from Greensboro. She is also the 100th woman to serve in this Congress.
A record 104 women will serve in Congress.
Mia Love of Utah, who will become the first black Republican woman in Congress and the first Haitian-American member from either party.

Whether you have new members or not, now is a great time to get up to speed on the positions of your Representatives and Senators so that you can plan your approach to advocacy for the coming session. Check out their websites and familiarize yourself with their platform, their positions on education issues and, if they are incumbents, their previous voting record. You may also find The Hills new member guide in learning the basics of the new members.

Another great resource to use comes from CQRollCall, a company that uses real-time state and federal legislative tracking tools and is the guiding baseline for CEC’s Legislative Action Center. They have recently released an Ultimate Guide to the New Congress which includes profiles of new members, party agendas, committee previews, and more. The guide is broken down into four parts due to its size.

Part 1
Part 2
Part 3
Part 4

The next step is, of course, to reach out to your members of Congress. If your members are the same from the 114th Congress, now is a good time to reaffirm those connections, to reach out to your Representative and your Senators.

If your Representative or Senators are new, the very beginning of their term is the perfect time to introduce yourself as a member of CEC, a professional in the field of special/gifted education and a constituent. To that end, we're providing some resources which you can use to give your new members of Congress perspective on special education policy.
CEC makes getting in touch with your members of Congress easily through the Legislative Action Center. As many of you have become familiar with, the LAC allows you to find your elected official in several ways: entering your zip code, the last name of your legislator, or simply by clicking your state on the interactive map provided.

Once you find your congressional representatives, you may click their name to receive information including biography, contact information, committees they are on, their staff, and bills they are supporting. The contact information will provide you with the best way to be in touch with your representatives.

Questions? Contact Rosie Haller-Kaplan: rosehk@cec.sped.org or 703-264-9498