



Finding Partners

“Soft Power: Oversight from Personal Offices or the Minority”

If you are in a personal office or in the minority, you may have little independent authority to demand compliance with your investigation. Finding and working with partners can help give your work more weight and make it harder for people to ignore you. Here are some partners you can try to work with:

1) Members of the Other Party: Scrutinize their policies and politics. Is there any overlap with your member’s interests and concerns and theirs? Do those areas suggest potential cooperation on an oversight project? Bipartisanship has many benefits, and an unlikely ally can capture the attention of both the agency and the media.

2) Members of Your Own Party: There is strength in numbers. Depending on the issue or concern, consider reaching out to other members of your state’s delegation, members of other committees, or a member from the other chamber. Consider opportunities for unlikely alliances, which can gain more attention from both the agency and the media, and improve the chances of a legislative fix passing.

3) The Media: Look at wrongdoings exposed in news reports. Those outlets are aching to write follow-up stories showing the impact of their work. Don’t overlook the trade press. An oversight letter from your boss that might otherwise be ignored could be front-page news if it also follows up on that outlet’s previous reporting. (Note: Be sure to mention or cite the news outlet in the letter.)

4) Interest Groups: Business groups, unions, professional associations, scientific organizations, nonprofits, and others keep a close watch on government activities that affect their membership. If a problem exists, they may know about it, have evidence of it, or help you identify key players.

5) The Public: Although vague, popular concern can provide leverage for your request. For example, a company worried about its reputation may be more inclined to cooperate with you if you are building on a visible public concern about their product or practices.