

# **Members' Congressional Handbook**



## **Committee on House Administration**

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*All citations to the House Rules refer to the Rules of the House of Representatives*

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# Introduction

During each session of Congress, each Member is authorized a single Members' Representational Allowance ("MRA") to support the conduct of official and representational duties to the district from which elected.

Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by the Member or the Member's employees within the United States, its territories, and possessions in support of the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected are reimbursable in accordance with the regulations contained in this Members' Congressional Handbook.

"Ordinary and necessary" means reasonable expenditures in support of official and representational duties to the district from which he or she is elected that are consistent with all applicable federal laws, Rules of the House of Representatives and regulations of the Committee on House Administration (Committee). Official and representational duties include matters which relate directly, but are not limited to:

1. the legislative process;
2. Congressional functions generally;
3. constituent services;
4. facilitating interaction between constituents and the Federal government (including, but not limited to: info or services on laws, programs, regulations, funding, decisions, and other actions by the Federal government);
5. day to day operations of Congress;
6. Federal issues of public concern;
7. actions taken as a representative of the district from which elected;
8. requests for public opinion of constituents regarding policy issues; or
9. issues areas or programs established by the House.

The following regulations of the Committee, collectively known as the Members' Congressional Handbook (Handbook), govern all expenditures from the MRA.

The Handbook is compiled of regulations meant to assist Members in determining whether expenses are reimbursable. Therefore, the Handbook contains broad descriptions of reimbursable expenses, but is not an exhaustive list of such expenses. Questions about reimbursement of an expense should be directed to the Committee prior to incurring an expense.

The Communications Standards Commission ("Commission") regulates all official communications. Questions about communications should be directed to the Communications Standards Commission.

For all questions relating to policies and procedures applicable to the acquisition, transfer, disposal, and maintenance of furnishings, equipment, software, and related services, please refer to the User's Guide.

Administrative, financial and non-legislative support services (e.g., equipment purchases, technology standards and services, office supplies, room reservation and set-up) are acquired through the Office of the House Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). For further information about the CAO's services, please refer to [HouseNet](#), the House intranet or the CAO's services office, First Call, at x58000.

## GENERAL

Only expenses, the primary purpose of which are official and representational, and are incurred in accordance with the Handbook are reimbursable. In general:

1. The MRA may not be used to pay for:
  - a. a settlement or award in connection with a claim filed with the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights or in federal court for conduct prohibited under the *Congressional Accountability Act of 1995*;
  - b. any expenses related to activities or events that are primarily social in nature (including but not limited to: sporting events, theme park activities, concerts, personal events, etc.);
  - c. any expenses related to a charity or fundraiser;
  - d. personal expenses;
  - e. campaign expenses;
  - f. campaign-related political party expenses;
  - g. capital improvements to the district office;
  - h. committee expenses; or
  - i. expenses incurred outside of the United States, its' territories, and possessions.
2. Committee resources may not pay for a Member's official and representational expenses.
3. A Member may not maintain, or have maintained for his or her use, an unofficial office account for the purpose of defraying or reimbursing ordinary and necessary expenses incurred in support of a Member's official and representational duties with the exception of:
  - a. A Member may expend personal funds in support of official and representational duties.
  - b. Campaign funds may be used to defray official expenses in certain limited circumstances where authorized by the Committee on Ethics. Pursuant to House Rule XXIV, clause 2, campaign funds cannot be used to defray official expenses for communications (including franked mail), compensation for services, office space, furniture, equipment or information technology services (excluding handheld communications devices). Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for guidance on use of campaign funds for official purposes.
4. A Member may not accept from any private source in-kind support having monetary value for an official activity, except for support provided by an entity qualified under § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code in co-sponsoring a constituent service event consistent with the applicable regulations.

5. Only appropriated funds, not personal or unofficial funds, may be used to pay for mail sent under the frank.
6. Each Member is personally responsible for the payments of any official and representational expenses incurred that exceed the provided MRA or that are incurred but are not reimbursable under these regulations.
7. Unless specifically authorized by an applicable provision of federal law, House Rules, or Committee Regulations, no Member, relative of the Member, or anyone with whom the Member has a professional or legal relationship may directly benefit from the expenditure of the MRA.
8. Official resources may not be used to advertise for any private individual, firm, charity, or corporation, or imply in any manner that the government endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.
9. The MRA is available for services provided and expenses incurred from January 3 of one year through January 2 of the following year. All expenses incurred will be charged to the allowance available on the date the services were provided or the expenses were incurred. Upon the death, resignation, or expulsion of a Member, the Member's allowance will be made available only for services provided and expenses incurred at the direction of the Member up through the last day of the Member's term in office. Otherwise, such funds will be subject to the direction of the Clerk of the House.
10. The MRA is not transferable between years.
11. Members may not use official resources to misrepresent their current official positions or titles within the House.
12. Pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1913, the MRA may not be used for certain activities in the absence of authorization by Congress. Contact the Committee for more information.

All expenditures must be part of an "arms-length marketplace transaction," which is an arrangement in which goods and/or services, including quality of and access to such goods and/or services, are acquired under the same terms and conditions as are available to the public.

## **BUDGETING AND DISCLOSURE**

Each Member should establish a budget each session (budgeting and planning tool is available in FinMart) and monitor expenditures each month using the monthly financial statement. The expenditures reflected in the monthly financial statements are compiled and published in the quarterly Statement of Disbursements, which is a public document published online.

## **INCIDENTAL USE**

Incidental personal use of official equipment and supplies is permitted only when such use is negligible in nature, frequency, time consumed, and expense.

For example, limited use of government resources to access the Internet, to send or receive personal email or to make personal phone calls is permissible, so long as the use meets the

above criteria, and otherwise conforms with the Regulations of the Committee and the Code of Official Conduct (House Rule XXIII).

Each Member office may adopt a more restrictive incidental use policy.

## **OVERSPENDING**

Each Member is personally responsible for the payment of any official and representational expenses incurred that exceed the authorized MRA which the Member shall pay from personal funds. If the Member fails to pay the obligation voluntarily, the CAO will deduct the amount owed from any pay, mileage, or expense reimbursement due to the Member or through an administrative offset or legal action in the case of a former Member. The Office of Financial Counseling will notify a Member if he or she is projected to overspend their MRA.

Contact the Office of Financial Counseling at x57474 or the Committee for assistance with accounting and budgeting.

## **STAFF**

### **GENERAL**

For purposes of this Handbook:

- “Staff” refers to all individuals who serve in the office of a Member including employees, fellows, unpaid interns, and volunteers.
- “Employee” refers to an individual appointed to a position of employment in the House of Representatives by an authorized employing authority including individuals receiving pay disbursed by the CAO and individuals in a Leave Without Pay or furlough status. Employees count against a Member’s employee ceiling.

The Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) also contains definitions of “employees” and “interns.” Nothing in this Handbook alters those statutory definitions as applied under the CAA.

Each Member is an authorized employing authority and determines the terms and conditions of employment and service for their staff consistent with applicable federal laws and House Rules.

1. Personnel actions affecting employment positions in the House of Representatives must be free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation or gender identity), service in the military, disability, marital or parental status or age.
2. Pursuant to House Rule XXIII, clause 8(a), a Member may not retain an employee on the Member’s payroll who does not perform official duties commensurate with the compensation received for the offices of the employing authority.

3. Teleworking is entirely at the discretion of the Member, subject to the Telework Policy regulations, and a Member is under no obligation to offer a teleworking option to employees. Offices offering teleworking must establish a teleworking program and enter into teleworking agreements with employees who are eligible to telework. The Telework Policy and sample teleworking program and agreement are located on the Committee website.
4. Members are not authorized to procure consultant services or to enter into detailee agreements.

## **EMPLOYEES**

### **Employee Ceiling**

Under 2 U.S.C. § 5321, each Member of the House of Representatives may employ eighteen (18) permanent employees and four (4) additional employees. The 4 additional employees must be appointed to one of the following categories:

1. Interns paid from the MRA
2. Part-time employees
3. Shared employees
4. Temporary employees
5. Employees on leave without pay status

### **Paid Interns**

Paid interns must perform services for the Member on a temporary basis as part of an educational plan. Examples of an educational plan include, but are not limited to, participation in the Intern Lecture Series, attendance at committee hearings, attendance at CRS internship training programs, etc. Each Member is responsible for determining the activities of the Member's interns consistent with these requirements.

Paid interns may work for no more than 120 calendar days in a 12-month period, per employing authority and may not be shared between Member offices. Pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights, paid interns are not employees for purposes of compliance with the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act. However, interns, both paid and unpaid, are covered under the anti-harassment and anti-discrimination provisions of the CAA.

The rate of pay is at the discretion of the Member but may not be less than \$1,200 annually or exceed the maximum rate of pay for interns set by the Committee, which is currently set at \$38,500 annually.

The Member determines the terms and conditions of employment of the internship, including provisions for leave (e.g., Annual, Administrative, and Sick).

Paid interns are ineligible to telework unless an office, as part of its continuity of operations plan, requires employees to telework due to a disaster (natural or man-made), pandemic, or other emergency. All equipment issued to support telework must be returned to the employing



office no later than thirty days from the end date of the internship and costs incurred to return such equipment are reimbursable.

Any Member interested in employing a foreign national as an intern should contact the Office of General Counsel at x59700.

Paid interns are eligible for transit benefits on a reimbursable basis but are ineligible for the following benefits:

1. Federal Employees' Retirement System
2. Federal life insurance
3. Federal health insurance
4. Thrift Savings Plan
5. Student Loan Repayment Program

### ***MRA Paid Interns***

Interns paid by the MRA count against the Member's employee ceiling utilizing one of the Member's four temporary positions.

### ***House Paid Internship Program***

The House Paid Internship Program is an allowance separate from the MRA for compensation of interns. The yearly allowance for each Member office is determined by law. In the event of a vacancy in office, amounts will be available to the succeeding Member on a prorated basis as determined by the Committee.

These interns do not count against the Member's employee ceiling.

A Member may place an intern they employ through this program with an eligible Congressional Membership Organization (ECMO). Interns placed with an ECMO must be employed by a Member who belongs to the ECMO and are subject to same to the same federal laws and regulations, House Rules, House regulations, and Ethics regulations as interns who may be paid with MRA funds and program participants performing duties for Members offices.

See *Unpaid Interns*.

### **Part-time Employees**

"Part-time employees" are employed by the Member and their normally assigned work schedule is not more than the equivalent of 15 full workdays per month or the equivalent amount in hours. A typical month has 22 workdays so a part-time employee would be an individual who typically works 15 or fewer full 8-hour days per month, or the equivalent amount in hours (e.g., all 22 workdays, but only 5 hours per day).

### **Temporary Employees**

"Temporary employees" are employed for a specific purpose or task for not more than 90 calendar days in a 12-month period, unless extended with the written approval of the Committee.

Temporary employees are ineligible for the following benefits:

1. Federal Employees' Retirement System
2. Federal life insurance
3. Federal health insurance
4. Thrift Savings Plan
5. Student Loan Repayment Program

## **Shared Employees**

Individuals employed by more than one employing authority of the House of Representatives are considered a "shared employee."

Shared employees must work out of the office of an employing authority but are not required to work in the office of each employing authority. The primary duty station for any employee shared with three or more employing authorities is either Washington, D.C. or the District of one of his or her employing authorities, which is determined by the location of the employee's primary residence. All employing authorities must agree in writing to the designation of the shared employee's primary duty station to ensure they are aware of the potential cost to their official funds to cover travel expenses if the shared employee's primary duty station is not in Washington, D.C., or the Member's District.

Employees may not be shared between a Member or Committee office and the office of an Officer of the House if the employee, in the course of duties for an Officer, has access to the financial information, payroll information, equipment account information, or information systems of either Member, Committee, or Leadership offices.

Any shared employee who is employed by three or more House employing authorities must:

1. Inform each employing authority in writing of the employee's employment status and any change in employment status with other employing authorities.
2. File with the Office of Risk Management a signed Acknowledgment of Receipt and Understanding of the Shared Employee Manual and Certification of Continued Compliance upon becoming simultaneously employed by three or more employing authorities. (See Acknowledgement and Certification).
3. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C § 13101 et seq., each House employee who is simultaneously employed by three or more House employing authorities for more than 60 days during a calendar year must file a Financial Disclosure Statement by May 15 of each year.
4. Comply with all the regulations set forth in the Shared Employee Manual.
5. Complete all financial trainings prior to gaining access to financial systems and must annually recertify.

## **Fair Labor Standards Act**

Employees are classified into one of the following two categories:

1. Employees who are Exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as incorporated by the Congressional Accountability Act, are those who are not required to be paid overtime for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in one workweek. Exempt employees are expected to work whatever hours are necessary to meet the job responsibilities and needs of the Office.
2. Employees who are Non-Exempt from the overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as incorporated by the Congressional Accountability Act, are those who are required to be compensated for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours per workweek.

The employee classification determination is based on the actual job duties and responsibilities of the employee. For a detailed review of overtime pay and work requirements for Non-Exempt employees, at the request of a Member or his/her designee, the Office of House Employment Counsel can advise an office of the Fair Labor Standards Act as it pertains to that respective office.

## **FELLOWS**

“Fellows” perform services in a House office on a temporary basis as part of an established mid-career education program while continuing to receive the usual compensation from his or her sponsoring employer.

Fellows do not count against the Member’s employee ceiling.

Fellows not employed by the House may use existing resources but cannot be reimbursed from House appropriated funds. If a fellow incurs an expense as a result of work performed for the Member, the fellow may either be reimbursed by the fellow’s sponsoring entity or a Member may use personal funds as authorized under House Rules.

The use of fellows is subject to regulations established by the Committee on Ethics. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for more information.

## **GREEN AND GOLD CONGRESSIONAL AIDE PROGRAM**

The Green and Gold Congressional Aide Program provide paid fellowships for disabled veterans and members of Gold Star Families to work in Member offices.

The House-funded positions to participate in the two programs are divided evenly between Members of the majority and minority. Although they are referred to as “fellows” and placed in individual Member offices, participants in the programs are considered employees of the CAO and in general, all expenses are paid for by the CAO. These fellows do not count against a Member’s employee ceiling.

However, Members may use their MRA to reimburse Green and Gold Congressional aides for expenses incurred during their fellowship not otherwise covered by the CAO. Members may also use their MRA to provide compensation, such as a bonus, in addition to compensation the fellows receive from the CAO.

Additional information about the respective programs, including application information, eligibility, and other details, is available from the CAO.

## **UNPAID INTERNS**

Unpaid interns are ineligible for benefits and are not eligible for reimbursement. The Committee on Ethics regulates the use of unpaid interns. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

“Volunteers” perform services in a House office without compensation from any source.

The voluntary service should be of significant educational benefit to the participant and such voluntary assistance should not supplant the normal and regular duties of paid employees.

Volunteers should be required to agree, in advance and in writing, to serve without compensation.

The use of volunteers is subject to regulations established by the Committee on Ethics. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103.

## **EMPLOYMENT LAWS & REGULATIONS**

### **Congressional Accountability Act**

Pursuant to the Congressional Accountability Act, the following civil rights, labor, and workplace safety laws are applicable to House employing offices:

1. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938;
2. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
3. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990;
4. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967;
5. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993;
6. The Employee Polygraph Protection Act of 1988;
7. The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act;
8. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
9. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994;
10. Chapter 71 of Title V of the U.S. Code, the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute;
11. The public service and accommodations provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act;
12. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970;
13. The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008.

14. The Federal Employee Paid Leave Act of 2019;
15. The Fair Chance to Compete for Jobs Act of 2019; and
16. The Pregnant Workers Fairness Act of 2022.

The Office of Congressional Workplace Right (OCWR) publishes the poster highlighting employee rights, responsibilities, and procedures under the CAA. The CAA requires that the poster be displayed in all Member offices (both DC and district offices). The poster is available on the OCWR website, at Room LA-200, John Adams Building, Library of Congress (202-724-9250) or Longworth Mailroom in B-240 (202-226-3764).

A Model Employee Handbook providing sample office policies to assist in developing an organization that complies with applicable laws and House Rules is available on [HouseNet](#).

The Office of House Employment Counsel is available to provide advice and guidance to House management staff on employment matters generally, and on establishing office policies consistent with these laws. The Office of the House Employment Counsel can be reached at x57075 and [EmploymentCounsel@mail.house.gov](mailto:EmploymentCounsel@mail.house.gov).

## **Financial Disclosure**

Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by Members and their employees, in support of the filing of reports consistent with the provisions of the Ethics in Government Act, are reimbursable.

Members and employees receiving basic pay at a rate equal to or greater than 120 percent of the minimum pay for GS-15 for at least 60 days during any calendar year must file a Financial Disclosure Statement upon appointment, termination, and annually on May 15th.

Each Member office that does not have an employee paid at or above the threshold must designate one employee as the “Principal Assistant” who must file a Financial Disclosure Statement.

Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for guidance concerning the current applicable rate of pay and other information regarding Financial Disclosure requirements.

## **Nepotism**

A public official may not appoint, employ, promote, advance or advocate for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement in or to a position in the office in which that public official is serving or over which that public official exercises jurisdiction or control any individual who is a relative of that public official. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 3110, the term “public official” includes a Member, an employee, and any other individual who has authority, or to whom the authority has been delegated, to appoint, employ, promote, or advance individuals, or to recommend individuals for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement in connection with employment in an office.

Every employee must certify a relationship to any Member of Congress on a Certificate of Relationship form available from Payroll and Benefits. If, at any time, the relationship of an

employee to any current Member of Congress changes the employee must file an amended certificate of relationship form with the employing office. Contact Payroll and Benefits at x51435 for such forms.

Individuals with the following relationship to the Member may not be employed by the Member:

Aunt	Brother
Brother-in-law	Daughter
Daughter-in-law	Father
Father-in-law	First cousin
Granddaughter	Grandson
Half-brother	Half-sister
Husband	Mother
Mother-in-law	Nephew
Niece	Sister
Sister-in-law	Son
Son-in-law	Stepbrother
Stepdaughter	Stepfather
Stepmother	Stepsister
Stepson	Uncle
	Wife

However, if a House employee becomes related to the employing Member (by marriage), the employee may remain on the Member's personal or committee payroll. Similarly, if a Member becomes the employing authority of a relative who was hired by someone else (e.g., the Member ascends to the chairmanship of a Committee or subcommittee for which the relative is already working), the relative may remain on the payroll. However, the Member may not then give that individual further promotions or raises, other than cost-of-living or other across-the-board adjustments.

The statute does not prohibit a Member from employing two individuals who are related to each other but not to the Member. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for further information.

### **Non-Disclosure Oath**

House Rule XXIII, clause 13, requires Members and employees to execute an oath of non-disclosure before having access to classified information.

### **Post-Employment Restrictions**

Members and employees paid at a rate equal to or greater than 75 percent of the basic rate of pay of a Member for at least 60 days in the one-year period preceding termination are subject to post-employment restrictions. For the current applicable rate and information regarding the applicable restrictions, contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103.

## **PAY**

The Speaker sets the minimum and maximum rate of pay by issuance of a Speaker's Pay Order consistent with Federal law. The minimum rate of pay set by the Speaker's Pay Order does not

apply to interns, part-time or temporary employees. However, for part-time and temporary employees, Members must adhere to the applicable minimum wage provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (\$7.25 per hour as of July 24, 2009). Interns are not employees for purposes of compliance with the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Total compensation in one month, including regular pay and any lump sum payment, may not exceed 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the maximum rate of the Speaker's Pay Order.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 5505, the monthly payroll is based on a 30-day pay period. Payment is made on the last business day of the month.

Government contributions to retirement, life insurance, Thrift Savings Plan, transit benefits, Student Loan Repayment Program and health benefits programs are not charged to the MRA.

### **Dual Compensation**

The aggregate gross annual salary of an employee receiving payment from the House who is also receiving payment from the U.S. Senate, Architect of the Capitol, or any other department or agency of the U.S. Government, may not exceed the gross annual rate established by 5 U.S.C. § 5533. For the current applicable dual compensation rate, contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits at x51435.

### **Federal Civilian Annuitants**

If a Member employs a federal civil service annuitant, the amount of the annual annuity, when added to the annual rate of pay at which the employee is to be paid by the Member, may not exceed the highest rate of basic pay as authorized by the Speaker's Pay Order. The combined total of the civil service annuity and the amount of the salary will be charged to the MRA.

Member offices will not be granted waivers of applicable annuity reductions or pay reductions.

### **Outside Earned Income**

For the current applicable rate of basic pay, the amount of the limit and application of the House Rule, contact the Committee on Ethics, Office of Advice and Education, at x57103.

### **Overtime Wage Rate Compensation**

Employees who are classified as "non-exempt" must be compensated at a rate of time-and-a half for all hours worked in excess of 40 hours during any work week, either in pay or in time-off at the time and a half rate during the same pay period.

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 for assistance in establishing overtime and time-off policies.

### **Payroll Actions**

To appoint an employee a Payroll Authorization Form (PAF) signed by the Member, along with the completed onboarding packet, must be submitted to the Office of Payroll and Benefits

no fewer than two business days prior to the effective date of hire.

All subsequent payroll transactions including salary adjustments, title changes, furlough or Leave Without Pay status, must be made on a PAF, signed by the Member or submitted through the eForms application. PAFs submitted to the Office of Payroll and Benefits by the 15th day of the month in which the adjustment is effective will be included in the monthly regular payroll cycle, which is paid on the last business day of the month. PAFs submitted after the 15th of the month will be processed in the off-cycle payroll. All PAFs must be submitted no later than the last business day of the month in which the payroll transaction is effective.

Members may adjust, in any month, an employee's pay to reflect exceptional, meritorious, or less than satisfactory service.

Retroactive pay adjustments are prohibited. Only corrections due to administrative errors are allowed within two months after the end of the month that the error occurred.

Terminations must be made on a PAF and submitted to the Office of Payroll and Benefits as soon as the date of termination is known. If the termination PAF is received after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month during which the termination becomes effective, the payroll for that month may have already been processed.

## **Lump Sum Payments**

Pursuant to 2 U.S.C. § 4537, a Member may authorize a lump sum payment for payout of accrued annual leave, a bonus, severance, or other purpose.

Payments must be consistent with House Rule XXIII, clause 8(a), which requires that employees perform official duties commensurate with the compensation received. Employees may not be compensated from public funds to perform non-official, personal, campaign-related political party, or campaign activities on behalf of the Member, the employee, or anyone else. Lump sum payments may be for services performed during more than one month.

1. A lump sum payment may not exceed the employee's monthly pay and total compensation in any month (lump sum payment and regular pay) may not exceed 1/12<sup>th</sup> of the maximum rate of pay specified in the Speaker's Pay Order.
2. Members may provide lump sum payments for accrued annual leave only if such leave was accrued in accordance with written personnel policies established prior to the accrual of such leave.
3. Lump sum payments are disclosed separately in the quarterly Statement of Disbursements.
4. Lump sum payments are considered "supplemental wages" for taxation purposes.
5. Lump sum payments are not considered as part of "basic pay" for purposes of calculating Thrift Savings Plan, life insurance, or federal pensions.

Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for information on the treatment of lump-sum payments with regard to financial disclosure, post-employment restrictions, and outside earned income limitations.



## **Payroll Certification Form**

Each month, Member offices receive a Payroll Certification Form from the Office of Payroll and Benefits that lists the annual pay and gross pay earned for each employee. If an employee is a relative of a current Member of Congress, the nature of the relationship to the Member must be noted on the Payroll Certification Form. The Member must certify the information and return the form to the Office of Payroll and Benefits no later than the 15th day of the month.

## **LEAVE**

### **General**

The Member determines the terms and conditions of employment, including provisions for leave (e.g., Annual, Administrative, and Sick) consistent with applicable Federal laws and House Rules.

The Model Employee Handbook, located on the Committee website, contains a model leave policy that complies with all applicable laws, House rules and Committee regulations.

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 with questions regarding model leave policies.

### **Family and Medical Leave**

Pursuant to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a person employed by a Congressional office is entitled to up to 12 weeks of paid, job protected leave for the following reasons:

- A. For the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child; or
- B. To adopt a child or to receive a child in foster care.

An individual employed by any Congressional office for at least twelve months (aggregate) and for a total of at least 1,250 hours during the previous 12-month period is entitled to up to a total of 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for the following family and medical reasons:

- C. To care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition; or
- D. For the employee's own serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her job; or
- E. Because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employees spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on covered active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty); or
- F. Injured Servicemember Caregiver Leave: FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits employees to take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12-month period.

Offices may choose to pay some or all of FMLA leave for types C-E and Injured Servicemember

Caregiver leave. Employees on FMLA remain eligible for all benefits. Please contact OHEC at x57075 with questions concerning FMLA leave.

## **Furlough**

Furlough is an absence without pay initiated by the Member. Placement in furlough status is at the discretion of the Member, unless a statute otherwise requires placement in such status.

To be eligible for appointment to furlough status, an employee must have been employed by the Member for the entire month prior to the effective date of furlough status.

An employee placed in a furlough status continues to fill an employee position. The name of such employees will be listed on the monthly payroll certification forms.

Furloughed employees may continue to receive employee benefits and are responsible for paying the employee portion of their benefits. Employees should contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits at x51435 for information on how to arrange payment for continuation of employee benefits while in a furlough status.

## **Jury and Witness Duty**

Under 2 U.S.C. § 4503, the pay of an employee shall not be reduced during a period of absence with respect to which the employee is summoned as a juror; or as a witness on behalf of any party in connection with any judicial proceeding to which the United States or a State or local government is a party.

An employee may not receive fees for service as juror in a court of the United States or the District of Columbia; or as a witness on behalf of the United States or the District of Columbia. If an employee receives an amount (other than travel expenses) for service as a juror or witness in such a court, the employee must remit such amount to the Office of Finance for deposit in the general fund of the Treasury.

## **Leave Without Pay**

Leave Without Pay (LWOP) is an absence without pay initiated by the employee subject to approval of the Member, unless statute otherwise requires placement in such leave status.

To be eligible, an employee must have been employed by the Member for the entire month prior to the effective date of the LWOP status. LWOP status should be requested in advance of the period of absence and may not exceed 12 months in a 24-month period.

As a basic condition for approval of LWOP status, there should be a reasonable assurance that the employee will return to duty at the end of the approved period. Members are encouraged to contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 prior to approving a LWOP status request to confirm that no conflict-of-interest issues exist.

To place an employee on LWOP status, a PAF must be submitted to the Office of Payroll and Benefits on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month in which the placement is to take effect. When an employee has been appointed to LWOP status, he or she continues to fill a payroll position. The name(s) of such employees will be listed on the monthly payroll certification forms.

Employees on LWOP status may continue to receive employee benefits and are responsible for paying the employee portion of their benefits. Employees should contact the Office of Payroll and Benefits at x51435 for important information on continuation of employee benefits prior to going on LWOP status.

## **Military Leave**

Under 5 U.S.C. § 6323, an employee in the National Guard or Reserves is entitled to up to 15 days of paid military leave per fiscal year for active duty, as well as for other qualifying purposes (such as inactive-duty training).

Employees are also entitled to non-reduction in pay. In addition, under 5 U.S.C. §5538, an employee called to active duty in the uniformed services in support of a contingency operation, as defined under 10 U.S.C. §101(a)(13)(B), is entitled to up to five years of paid leave offset by the employee's military salary.

Contact the Office of House Employment Counsel at x57075 for additional information on the rights, benefits, and obligations of individuals absent from employment for service in a uniformed service.

# **GENERAL OFFICE EXPENSES**

## **APPLIANCES**

Small appliances (microwaves, coffee makers, toaster ovens, air purifiers, etc.) under \$500 in value for use in the Member's congressional offices are reimbursable.

In district offices, the MRA can be used to purchase mini and full-size refrigerators.

In Washington, D.C., congressional offices, the MRA may not be used to pay for items that are readily supplied to offices by the CAO and AOC (e.g., mini-fridges, full size refrigerators).

## **BOTTLED WATER**

The MRA may be used to purchase bottled water, water coolers and water filtration systems for use in the Member's congressional offices.

## **CONGRESSIONAL ART COMPETITION & APP CHALLENGE**

*Officially sanctioned competition* means an academic or civic competition designed for participation by each Congressional office, in which entry is limited to the district constituents

of each respective participating Congressional office.

Offices must receive prior approval from the Committee on Ethics before soliciting on behalf of the Congressional Art Competition or App Challenge. Please see the Officially-Sanctioned Competition section in the User's Guide for important information and details.

The MRA may be used in a limited fashion to support The Congressional Art Competition and App Challenge. Permissible uses include:

1. The Frank provided the content of such communication is frankable.
2. Advertisements, Member official website and social media communications that are otherwise compliant with Handbook regulations and the Communications Standards Manual.
3. Use of letterhead and official seal of the House by the Member office provided such letterhead and seal are not used for solicitations.
4. Food and beverage expenses that are otherwise compliant with Handbook regulations.
5. Rental of rooms, chairs, and audio systems that are otherwise compliant with Handbook regulations.
6. Items for recognition of public service and acts of public distinction that are otherwise compliant with Handbook regulations.
7. Mileage.

The MRA cannot be used to:

1. Hold an event that is primarily social in nature.
2. Purchase prizes.

In addition, the following expenses for the Congressional Art Competition are reimbursable.

1. Expenses related to framing the winning artwork ONLY when a Member determines in his or her discretion that a hardship case is demonstrated.
2. Cost of shipping the winning artwork by means other than the Frank. A Member may not mail an entry under the Frank but can use the MRA to pay for postage.
3. Insurance expenses for the artwork are not reimbursable except for shipping insurance.

A Member may only solicit donations (including in-kind) on behalf of the officially sanctioned competition if the Member first receives written approval from the Committee on Ethics.

## **ACADEMY NOMINATIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to reimbursement of travel expenses in support of attending information sessions/briefings at any of the National Military Academies is reimbursable.

## **AMICUS BRIEF**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to amicus brief filing fees are reimbursable for the

following purposes:

1. To file an amicus brief in his or her capacity as a Member of Congress;
2. To participate in a civil action challenging the validity of any federal law or regulation;
3. To participate in a civil action challenging the lawfulness of an action of a federal agency, or an action of a federal official taken in an official capacity, provided that the action concerns a matter of public interest, rather than a matter that is personal in nature.

All other legal fees associated with the filing of an amicus brief are not reimbursable from the MRA.

## **BUSINESS CARDS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses for business cards for Members and employees are reimbursable. The MRA can only be used to purchase business cards for individuals who are employed by the House. Business cards must contain the name of the employing authority and accurately describe the position to which the employee has been appointed.

## **COMMUNITY FUNDING PROJECTS**

The MRA may be used to procure the temporary services of a professional individual or entity, such as a lawyer, accountant, or financial advisor, for the limited purpose of assisting a Member in reviewing whether the Member has a “financial interest” in a community funding project the Member may wish to request or support.

Such an expenditure is permitted if the Member seeks assistance in making a determination of their financial interest that is required as part of a certification process that is required by federal law, House Rules, or the rules of a committee of the House before making such a request or statement of support. This includes the requirement of House Rule 23, clause 17, that a written certification may be required with respect to a congressional earmark, limited tax benefit, or a limited tariff benefit sought by the Member in any bill or joint resolution (or an accompanying report), in any conference report on a bill or joint resolution (or accompanying joint statement of managers), or as may otherwise be required by federal law, House Rules, or the rules of a committee of the House.

All such expenditures are subject to public disclosure in the same manner as for other expenditures of MRA funds. In addition, if a Member retains an individual or entity for this purpose, when the Member submits required documentation to the Office of Finance, the Member must also provide a copy of a written certification by the individual or entity that assisted the Member in the review and certification process that such individual or entity does not have a financial interest or other conflict of interest in any specific community funding project, congressional earmark, limited tax benefit, or limited tariff benefit which the individual or entity reviewed for the Member.

## **CONTRACTORS**

Members may contract with firms or individuals for general, non-legislative and non-financial, office services such as, equipment maintenance, information technology services, data entry, staff training, photography, web services, personal security and, for district offices only, custodial services.

Contractors may not perform duties pursuant to 2 U.S.C. § 4301 or regular core functions of employees or provide consulting services (including, but not limited to: legal fees (except where otherwise noted), speech writers, communications advisors or consultants, political or campaign advisors, etc.).

Contracts must be for a specified time period not to exceed the Member's current term. Contractors are not employees of the House, so they do not count against the Member's staff ceiling and are ineligible for benefits.

The Committee recommends that offices contact the Office of Administrative Counsel prior to signing a contract.

## **DEPOSITS**

Security and other deposits are not reimbursable and must be paid from the Member's personal funds. Vendors should be notified that any return of deposits should be made to the Member.

## **DUES**

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 5946, membership fees or dues in a society or association or expenses of attendance at meetings or conventions of members of a society or association are not reimbursable.

## **EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses for Members or employees to attend informational programs and take professional training related to the official and representational duties to the district are reimbursable.

Informational programs include conferences, seminars, briefings, forums and symposiums on issues, policies and legislative matters that directly relate to the district or the Member's work in Congress. The MRA cannot be used to attend events that are primarily political or social in nature (such as award ceremonies, galas, balls) or events in which official interaction is incidental and the primary benefit of the Member or employee's attendance is to the organization hosting the event and not the Member's district.

Expenses related to professional training or development that relates to a Member's or employee's official duties are reimbursable even if such a program provides a certification upon completion.

Expenses to obtain a primary, secondary, graduate, postgraduate, professional degree or acquiring or maintaining a professional certification or license are not reimbursable with the exception for basic first-aid, CPR or notary certifications.

The CAO offers a wide range of training courses and professional development programs through the CAO Coaches Program and Staff Academy at no cost to offices. More information about the training opportunities available through the Congressional Staff Academy is available on [HouseNet](#). The Congressional Research Service has issued multiple reports on House Rules, procedure, major policy issues, and can provide tailored confidential memoranda, briefings, and consultations upon request in addition to seminars and workshops.

## **EMPLOYEE-RELATED EXPENSES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to filling employment vacancies are reimbursable.

The following expenses are not reimbursable:

1. Transportation to and from employment interviews.
2. Relocation expenses upon acceptance or termination of employment.
3. Relocation expenses incidental to a change in duty station are not reimbursable.

## **EQUIPMENT**

All official work of the House of Representatives must be performed and maintained on House equipment, except for in certain circumstances handheld devices. Members may use campaign funds to pay for handheld devices (phones and tablets only) and/or use their personal handheld devices for official use.

Ordinary and necessary expenses for equipment (including cost of installation, maintenance, warranties, and repairs) for use in the Member's congressional offices are reimbursable subject to Committee regulations.

Equipment used for telework purposes should only be issued to paid employees or vendors.

Any equipment with a purchase price of \$1,000 or more and any high-risk equipment (e.g., equipment that presents a cybersecurity risk because it contains official data and/or provides access to the House network) regardless of original cost, will be added to the Member's office inventory.

Members are personally liable for all equipment on the Member's office inventory. If an item is lost, stolen or damaged, a Member is automatically assigned liability. Members may request a waiver from liability.

See the User's Guide for additional information on equipment.

## **FLAGS**

Members offices can assist constituents in purchasing U.S. flags. The flags are ordered by the Member office and the cost of the flag and, if applicable, the additional flag flying fee, is initially charged to the MRA. Individuals can submit payment for the flag and flag flying fee via check or the pay.gov system. The MRA will be credited once payment is received.

For information on use of the MRA to purchase flags for official presentation in honor of an act of public distinction, please see the Recognition of Public Distinction section of the Handbook.

## **FOOD AND BEVERAGE EXPENSES**

Food and beverage expenses incidental to an official and representational meeting that includes one or more person(s) who are not a Member or employee of the House are reimbursable.

Food and beverage expenses related to social activities or social events (e.g., hospitality, receptions, entertainment, holiday or personal celebrations, and swearing-in or inauguration day celebrations) are not reimbursable.

The MRA may not be used to pay for alcoholic beverages.

## **FRAMING**

Framing services for items to be displayed in the Member's D.C. or district Congressional offices are reimbursable. In Washington, D.C., when a Member uses the in-House framing service provided by the CAO, costs will be automatically charged to the MRA.

## **FURNITURE AND DECORATIONS**

The MRA can be used to purchase furniture, carpet, draperies, blinds, and other items (i.e., lamps, coat racks, etc.) in district offices. Furniture exceeding \$5,000 per item can only be purchased with prior written approval by the Committee.

In Washington, DC, the MRA cannot be used to purchase furniture and items that are readily supplied by the CAO and AOC. Carpet and draperies are provided by the CAO at no cost to offices every seven years. If an office wants to replace the carpet and draperies earlier, then the Member's MRA will be charged.

Decorations (e.g., as frames, bookends, flags, seals, rugs, plants, etc.) under \$1,000 in value for display in congressional offices are reimbursable.

In D.C. offices, the AOC provides a palette of standard colors and provides labor and materials to paint offices. The MRA may not be used to purchase paint. If an office wants a non-standard color, the Member may use personal funds to purchase the paint and provide to the AOC for application.

The MRA may be used to pay for items such as desks (standing and traditional), office chairs, and desk lamps necessary for telework subject to any applicable telework requirements. Offices are required to maintain an inventory of such items. The purchase of any single item exceeding \$250.00 is subject to preapproval by the Committee.

## **INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATING SERVICES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to interpreting and translating services, including



accommodations, are reimbursable. For events held in House Office Buildings, contact the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services at x44048.

## **LATE FEES**

Ordinary and necessary fees related to late payments incurred beyond the control of the Member are reimbursable.

## **MAIL PREPARATION**

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the printing and preparation of Member correspondence are reimbursable. Franking expenses associated with all mailings will be deducted from the MRA.

## **OFFICIAL PRESENTATION OF ITEMS TO FOREIGN DIGNITARIES**

Items of nominal value purchased for official presentation by Members to foreign heads of State and other foreign officials are reimbursable.

To purchase items from the House Gift Shop, select the item(s) and notify the salesclerk that it is for official presentation to a foreign dignitary. Receipts for such items should be vouchered for payment to the Office Supply Store, and the voucher description should note that it is for official presentation to a foreign dignitary and must be supported by a listing of the name, title or position, and country represented of all individuals to whom an official presentation was made.

## **PARADES**

No official funds or resources may be used to participate in a parade.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY EXPENSES**

Ordinary and necessary photography expenses related to a Member's official and representational duties, including but not limited to, the Member's official photo, official photographs for distribution to constituents, and photograph presentation folders and frames of nominal value, are reimbursable.

Official photographs must comply with applicable rules and regulations for official use and may not be used for personal or campaign purposes. Members may use personal funds to retire a photograph from official use at a cost established by the House Photography Studio. At this time, the reimbursement cost is \$20. Payment is by check made out to the "U.S. Treasury." An official photograph is considered retired from official use one week after payment is received by the House from the Member and all official resources (e.g. documents, websites, social media, etc.) have discontinued use of the image(s).

A Member may not use MRA funds to purchase 1) photos that have been retired from official use, 2) photos from a Member's campaign, or 3) photos from a political organization. A Member

may use MRA funds to purchase photographs that are official in nature, at the established market rate, from outside organizations such as media outlets.

In Washington, D.C., contact the House Photography Studio at x52840 for services, charges, and availability.

Photographs provided by a constituent may implicate the gift rule. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for more information.

## **POSTAGE EXPENSES**

The MRA may be used to pay for postage when the Frank is insufficient, such as certified, registered, insured, express, foreign mail, and stamped, recovery of official items or to return gifts prohibited under House Rules, but cannot be used in lieu of the Frank. All mailings initiated by a Member must be in compliance with the Communications Standards Manual.

Members may not spend more than \$100 per month to return items not authorized as gifts under House Rules for purposes of returning the item(s) to the donor. Unused postage stamps must be returned to CAO First Call (x58000) at the end of a Member's service in the House.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing or subscribing to print, broadcast, and electronic publications, including but not limited to research materials, reference books, informational brochures, periodicals, and clipping/media monitoring services of such publications are reimbursable.

Subscriptions to publications (including clipping and media monitoring) are eligible for advance payment and may extend beyond the term of the Congress. Subscriptions that extend beyond a Member's term in office will be assigned to the Member's successor.

All invoices for these subscriptions received by the Office of Finance through the close of business January 2 will be debited from the current MRA year. Subscriptions beginning on January 1 or 2 may be debited from either allowance year, as directed by the Member.

## **PUBLICATIONS FOR CONSTITUENTS**

The MRA can be used to purchase informational and educational federal government publications of nominal value to be distributed to constituents, such as pocket constitutions and the U.S. Capitol Historical Society publications (including calendars).

## **REPRESENTATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to programs established by the Member to promote the public good or civic service, or to solicit input/information from constituents related to official business are reimbursable. Any program's title may only include the state and district of the Member. The program's title may not include the name of the Member.

Members and staff may not solicit any items of value for the program. Only goods authorized under the Recognition of Public Service and Acts of Public Distinction section of the Handbook are permitted to be paid for by the MRA.

## **RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ACTS OF PUBLIC DISTINCTION**

The MRA may be used to purchase only those items listed below for presentation to honor and recognize constituents for matters of public distinction in connection with official and representational duties.

1. Certificates of recognition (must comply with Communications Standards Manual).
2. U.S. flags flown over the Capitol (including the flag flying fee).
3. Printed excerpt from the Congressional Record that are directly related to the individual being recognized for a matter of public distinction.
4. Presentational folders, frames, or shadow boxes which are of nominal value.
5. A replacement medal, decoration, or award for a veteran or family member of a veteran if either the veteran or family member of the veteran is a constituent.
6. A challenge coin for distribution in connection with official activities. For purposes of this provision, a “challenge coin” is a token of nominal value that may be personalized, such as to recognize the Member’s home state or congressional district. The challenge coin may include the Member’s name, state and district, Congressional or State Seal, State motto, ribbons or medals awarded, professional license or military rank and phrases. The challenge coin may not include the Member’s political party affiliation, slogans, private entity endorsement, greetings, picture or likeness of the Member or family crest.

For purposes of this section, a “slogan” is a motto or catchphrase representing a product, company, campaign or political party whereas a “phrase” is an idiom or expression that relays a meaning.

Official recognized acts of public distinction for which the MRA can be used include election or appointment to public office, publicly notable awards and honors, U.S. Citizenship, Eagle Scout/Gold Award, High School graduation, heroism, appointment to a U.S. military academy, Military Service (upon enlistment, promotion, honorable discharge, or to the family of a fallen soldier), Emergency Personnel (upon hiring, promotion, retirement, or to the family of a fallen first responder), Public Education professionals (upon hiring, promotion or retirement) and for the opening of or to be flown at government buildings.

No other gifts are reimbursable (e.g. magnets, keychains, stickers, notepads, buttons, pens, pencils, etc). The MRA cannot be used to purchase items to be donated to a charity or for a fundraiser.

## **STAFF RETREATS AND LEGISLATIVE PLANNING SESSIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to staff retreats or legislative planning sessions at a Member-authorized location in the Member's State or in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area (within 90 miles of the U.S. Capitol) are reimbursable.

Members and staff may be reimbursed for expenses related to attendance at such meetings no more than two times per year. Expenses that are reimbursable include, but are not limited to, food and beverage, rental of space, and hiring a contractor to facilitate the retreat consistent with Handbook regulations.

Staff whose duty station is in the location of the meeting may not incur lodging expenses when staff meetings are held in that area, subject to official travel restrictions.

The MRA may not be used for social events or activities (including but not limited to: boating, skiing, sporting events, theme or adventure parks, touring national monuments or historical sites, etc).

The Office of Employee Assistance offers customized in-person and virtual retreats for congressional offices at no cost. These retreats can help Member offices improve communication, enhance work processes, develop long-term strategic plans and more. Offices can also pay a private vendor to facilitate staff retreats.

## **STATIONERY**

Pursuant to 44 U.S.C. § 734, ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the printing and production of official stationery (franked envelopes and official letterhead) are reimbursable. Official stationery may be procured from the Government Publishing Office through the Legislative Resource Center (x65200) or an outside vendor.

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the purchase of other types of stationery (i.e., writing paper, press or news release letterhead, etc.) are reimbursable.

## **Appearance**

Official stationery must contain the Member's name, Member's district and state, and Congress of the United States, House of Representatives, or comparable language.

Official stationery may contain the Leadership-appointed positions, Congressional Member Organization membership, and professional license(s).

Official stationery may not contain:

1. Seals other than the Great Seal, Congressional Seal, or State Seal
2. Member's political party identification
3. Slogans
4. Private entity information or endorsement

5. Campaign contact information (e.g., address, phone number, email address)
6. Greetings
7. Picture or likeness of the Member
8. Family crest

## **Use**

Official stationery may be used only for a letter or other document the content of which must be official in nature and must comply with Communications Standards Manual.

## **SUPPLIES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses for office supplies to support the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable.

The MRA may be used to procure or reimburse the cost of certain personal protective equipment such as facemasks, face shields, protective gloves, protective eyewear, and certain personal use thermometers as authorized by the Committee upon the recommendation of the Office of Attending Physician.

## **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to official use, including periodic or flat service fees, for internet connection in the residence of a Member or employee are reimbursable. The primary purpose of the internet connection must be for official business with de minimis personal use and no political/campaign-related purpose. The cost of installation of such lines is not reimbursable.

## **TELEWORKING**

Ordinary and necessary teleworking expenses incurred in compliance with the Committee's Teleworking Policy are reimbursable.

# **DISTRICT EXPENSES**

## **BOOTHS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with renting or outfitting a booth to provide public information directly related to the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable. While the booth may be located outside the district, it must serve your district's constituency.

## **CLOTHING**

The MRA may be used to purchase shirts (short, long-sleeve or polo style) at a reasonable value. No other clothing items (e.g., pull-overs, jackets, hats, etc.) are reimbursable. Shirts may only be

used to identify paid employees at official district events. Staff shirts may only include the House seal, Member's name, district, state, US House of Representatives and/or the Member's official logo. The shirts are considered property of the Member office.

## **OFFICIAL MEETINGS & EVENTS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to conducting official meetings and events (i.e., townhalls and constituent service events) inside the district to facilitate the exchange of information regarding the Member's official and representational duties are reimbursable. These expenses include, but are not limited to:

- procuring space, chairs, tables,
- audio/video equipment
- interpreting services
- ADA accommodations
- reporting and transcription services;
- banners/leaflets or flyers that comply with Communications Standards Manual;
- plants or other relevant decorative items of nominal value; and
- custodial services.

Members may invite any Member of Congress to participate in an official meeting. Travel expenses for a guest Member or Senator are reimbursable from the MRA of the host Member. No other travelers are reimbursable.

All meeting notices should include a contact person to arrange for accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Members and employees may not accept, from any private source, in-kind support having monetary value with the limited exception of authorized co-sponsor(s) of constituent service events and/or benefits that a private organization routinely offers without charge. Contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 for guidance.

The presence or involvement by the Member or staff does not sufficiently define an activity as official.

For official meetings outside the district, only travel and travel related expenses are reimbursable.

### **Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Events**

In limited circumstances, Members may co-sponsor constituent service events with one or more entities qualified under § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), pursuant to the Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Memorandum the Committee issued in conjunction with the Committee on Ethics. Offices are strongly encouraged to thoroughly read and review the Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Event Memorandum prior to planning or reaching out to an outside entity regarding co-sponsoring an event.

Members may co-sponsor constituent service events with federal, state, or local government entities. Members are also free to cooperate in any event organized, financed, and conducted

solely by another federal, state, or local government entity, even if it is not an official House event.

## **Insurance**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchase of liability insurance for securing space in which to conduct an official meeting or event in the district is reimbursable if the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act are not adequate. When a compensable event occurs, the deductible portion of a policy may be paid from the MRA.

The expenses of fire and theft insurance are not reimbursable.

See the User's Guide for additional information on Insurance.

## **Virtual**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to conducting a virtual official meeting or event for constituents in the district from which the Member is elected, including but not limited to, radio broadcast time, internet resources (Skype, Oovoo, streaming, etc.), are reimbursable. Costs related to television broadcast time are not reimbursable.

## **JOINT OFFICIAL MEETINGS & EVENTS**

Members may be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary expenses associated with holding joint official meetings and events (i.e., townhalls and constituent service events) with Members of the House of Representatives representing adjacent districts or United States Senators representing the same state, as specified below.

1. Joint meetings and events must be held in one of the hosting House Members' districts, or if held jointly with the home state Senator, then the meeting must take place within the House Member's district.
2. Expenses (excluding mail) may be divided to reflect an accurate representation of each Member's expenses, and may be directly vouchered through the Office of Finance with supporting documentation (invitation, agenda, etc.) for the meeting.
3. Members are prohibited from directing any unsolicited mass communications outside of the district from which elected. Therefore, official expenses that relate to promoting joint events must be separately accounted for and charged to the MRA of the Member into whose district the mass communication was delivered.

## **Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Events**

Members may jointly host co-sponsored constituent service events with one or more entities qualified under § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC), pursuant to the Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Memorandum the Committee issued in conjunction with the Committee on Ethics. Offices are strongly encouraged to thoroughly read and review the Co-Sponsored Constituent Service Event Memorandum prior to planning or reaching out to an outside entity regarding co-sponsoring an event.

Members may jointly co-sponsor constituent service events with federal, state or local government entities.

### **Virtual**

Members may be reimbursed for ordinary and necessary expenses related to conducting a joint virtual meeting or event for constituents (via telephone or internet) with Members of the House of Representatives (from any state) or United States Senators (from the same state as the House Member), as specified below.

1. Expenses which are identical or flat-rate must be divided evenly between the two hosts. Expenses which are billed based on the number of constituents contacted must be divided to reflect an accurate representation of each Member's expenses. Joint virtual meeting expenses may be directly vouchered through the Office of Finance with supporting documentation (invitation, agenda, etc.).
2. Members are prohibited from directing any unsolicited mass communications outside of the district from which elected. Therefore, official expenses that relate to advertising joint virtual meetings must be separately accounted for and charged to the MRA of the Member into whose district the mass communication was delivered.

Unsolicited mass mailings and communications related to joint meetings and events may only be sent by Members to their own constituents and may only contain the sending Member's contact information.

Joint virtual meetings and events may only target the hosts' Congressional Districts (telephone and internet) or the hosts' social media followers (internet).

### **OFFICIALLY LEASED VEHICLES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to a long-term lease of a vehicle in support of the conduct of official and representational duties in the Member's district are reimbursable, including but not limited to the following:

1. Actual monthly cost of the lease
2. Cost of insurance incurred pursuant to the terms of the lease
3. Excess mileage charges incurred pursuant to the terms of the lease
4. Incidental operating expenses (gasoline, electric charging, oil, general maintenance, etc.)
5. Wear and tear
6. Registration fees
7. Property tax during the term of the lease

Monthly payments may be made in advance.

Security deposits, termination fees, traffic violations, parking tickets, depreciation loss based on premature return, and similar fees, penalties or charges may not be reimbursed.

Officially leased vehicles may not be used as a personal vehicle of the Member and non-



governmental use of such a vehicle may be made only when such use is:

1. During the course of and generally along the route of a day's official itinerary.
2. Incidental to the day's official and representational business.
3. De minimis in nature, frequency, and time consumed.
4. Does not otherwise constitute a significant activity or event.
5. Not for any campaign/campaign-related political party purpose.

In the event of an accident with an officially leased vehicle, Members or staff may contact the Office of the General Counsel (x59700) for guidance related to the Federal Tort Claims Act.

Leased vehicles are not to exceed \$1,000.00 in lease payments, per vehicle, in any month, excluding mobile offices.

Members must submit leases to the CAO Office of Administrative Counsel for review prior to being signed by the Member and lessor. The House will authorize disbursement of funds under the terms of the lease agreement only if the lease agreement complies with House Rules and Committee regulations. The House will not authorize disbursement of funds to make payments under the terms of the lease agreement until the CAO Office of Administrative Counsel has reviewed the lease and has signed the lease attachment.

See the User's Guide for additional information on officially leased vehicles.

## **SECURITY**

### **Security Personnel Support**

Payment for security personnel is an ordinary and necessary reimbursable expense when such personnel is hired:

1. To provide security at official, Member-hosted district events (e.g., town halls);
2. To accompany Members during the performance of their official duties; or
3. To be stationed inside or outside the district office during business hours.

Members are strongly urged to consult the District Security Service Center before hiring a security provider and should coordinate any security needs with the House Sergeant at Arms (SAA) Law Enforcement Coordinator Program: <http://saa.house.gov/members/information-for-lecs.shtml>.

For information on the SAA Residential Security Program, contact the District Security Service Center at x5-3380 or [SAA\\_Residentialsecurity@mail.house.gov](mailto:SAA_Residentialsecurity@mail.house.gov).

### **Security Items**

Security equipment is a high-risk category and must be added to the Member's inventory regardless of the original purchase cost. The purchase of a bulletproof vest is a reimbursable expense. Member offices should contact the Office of General Counsel concerning applicable laws for ballistic vests in their state and district.

## **Security Training**

Security training for Members and staff is a reimbursable expense. Please contact the House Sergeant at Arms for training resources available to the D.C. and District Offices.

## **DISTRICT OFFICE EXPENSES**

### **Cable**

Costs of cable television subscriptions in support of official and representational duties in the district office(s) are reimbursable.

Itemized premium channels and sports packages are not reimbursable.

### **Custodial Services**

Ordinary and necessary expenses for custodial services for district office(s) are reimbursable.

### **Insurance**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchase of liability insurance for the purpose of entering into a lease for a district office is reimbursable if the provisions of the Federal Tort Claims Act are not adequate. When a compensable event occurs, the deductible portion of a policy may be paid from the MRA.

The expenses of fire and theft insurance are not reimbursable.

Offices are encouraged to consult with the Office of General Counsel at x59700 prior to purchasing insurance.

See the User's Guide for additional information on Insurance.

### **Leases**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the rental of a district office except for security deposits, are reimbursable. There is no limit on the number and size of district offices a Member may establish. No lease may extend beyond the Member's elected term.

Members may not accept free office space from private entities. Private office space must be leased at a fair market value as the result of a bona fide, arms-length, marketplace transaction. The Committee on Ethics has ruled that Members may accept free office space, located in their district, when such space is provided by a federal, state, or local government agency.

All leases must include a House lease attachment. Leases and lease attachments must be submitted to the CAO Office of Administrative Counsel at x56969 for review and processing prior to being signed.

Regulations governing the location of district offices, process for obtaining approval of lease agreements and other important information is located in the User's Guide.

## **Mobile District Offices**

A Member may lease a mobile district office consistent with the “Officially Leased Vehicle” regulations located in the General Office Expenses section of the Handbook. Additional information regarding mobile district offices is also located in the User’s Guide.

## **Parking**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to parking at district offices is reimbursable. See the User’s Guide for more information on district office parking.

## **Repairs**

Ordinary and necessary expenses for minor office repairs and non-capital improvements are reimbursable. Capital improvements to district offices are not reimbursable.

See the User’s Guide for more information on capital and non-capital improvements.

## **Security Improvements**

Ordinary and necessary expenses to purchase and install security systems or make non-capital security enhancements in a district office are reimbursable. For questions concerning security equipment and services in the district, contact the District Security Service Center maintained by the House Sergeant at Arms at 202-225-3380.

## **Sharing Offices**

A Member may share office space with Members of the United States Senate from the Member’s state or with state and local officials, but all expenses (including rent, utilities, etc.) and space must be kept and billed separately.

Members may share a district office with another Member of the U.S. House of Representatives; however, they must submit a district office sharing plan to the Committee for approval.

Contact CAO Office of Administrative Counsel at x56969 to submit such leases for review, and the Office of Finance at x57474 to establish billing arrangements.

## **Signs**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to purchasing sign(s) to identify the location of a district office are reimbursable. Such signs may not include a picture or likeness of the Member and must identify that the premises is a district Congressional office. If a sign includes more than a Member’s name and district, the content must comply with Communications Standards Manual.

## **Storage**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to procuring storage space are reimbursable.

Storage should be negotiated as part of the district office lease. However, if storage space is unavailable or insufficient within the district office space, Members may negotiate a separate

storage space lease and submit it to the CAO Office of Administrative Counsel for review and processing.

GSA will provide temporary storage for up to 120 days for district offices at no cost to the Member's MRA.

Contact the CAO Office of Administrative Counsel at x56969 for lease standards.

## **Utilities**

Utilities are reimbursable. They may be integral to the lease and included in the monthly rent, or may be vouchered separately, or processed as an automatic payment to the Government Purchase Card.

# **COMMUNICATIONS**

## **GENERAL**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to official communications that comply with the Communications Standards Manual regulations are reimbursable.

## **ADVERTISEMENTS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to advertisements are reimbursable. Advertisements must comply with all applicable Federal laws and House rules, including the Communications Standards Manual content and disclosure requirements.

Members must disclose, within a television and radio advertisement, the source of payment for the official advertisement. Members may use any of the following:

1. Paid for with official funds from the office of [Member's name].
2. Paid for by the funds authorized by the House of Representatives for the [district number] District of [name of state].
3. Paid for by official funds authorized by the House of Representatives.

Certain advertisements may require an Advisory Opinion from the Commission. For details, please consult the Commission.

## **AUDIO AND VIDEO EXPENSES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to audio and video recording and materials, including but not limited to the following, are reimbursable:

1. Production of public service announcements for distribution to the stations serving the Member's district;
2. Interpretation services;

3. Filming related to the appearance of a Member or the Member's employee at an official event;
4. Videos and transcripts of commercial broadcasts related to the Member or the Member's district for in-office use; or
5. Videos that are produced by the Member or videos that are provided to a Member and authorized by the providing entity to be reproduced for official distribution; or
6. Video teleconferencing services incurred in support of the Member's official and representational duties.

Except where authorized, the costs related to purchasing television broadcast time are not reimbursable. Members are subject to copyright laws when utilizing outside materials.

Content must be official in nature and must comply with Communications Standards Manual. Any content distributed as an unsolicited mass communication must receive an advisory opinion from the Commission prior to being distributed.

## **DATA PACKAGES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the procurement and production of data packages may be reimbursed. Lists may not contain information about individuals whose primary residence is outside the district the Member is elected to represent with the exception of government officials. The list may not contain any campaign or campaign-related political party information. The list must be procured or compiled as a result of a bona fide arm's length marketplace transaction.

Members may not purchase or acquire data packages from their campaign offices or campaign-related political party entities. Official mailing and data packages may not be shared with a Member's campaign committee, any other campaign entity, or otherwise be used for campaign purposes.

Use of data packages must comply with House information technology and security policies as approved by the Committee.

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to electronic communications are reimbursable.

- All official electronic communication content, which is sent out as an unsolicited mass communication, must comply with the Communications Standards Manual.
- All official electronic communications must comply with House information technology and security policies as approved by the Committee.
- All official electronic communications sent to an email list of 100 or more individuals must include a usable opt-out in the body of the email that enables an individual to opt-out from the Member's email list. Opt-out requests must be honored. These mailings must comply with House IT Policy 007.0 – Bulk Email List Management as approved by the Committee.

- All unsolicited mass communications must be reported on the Quarterly Mass Communications Report.

### **Subscribed Emails**

A subscribed email is an email sent to individuals who have taken a willful action to subscribe to the Member's email list. Members must notify individuals who subscribe to email updates that the individual is authorizing the Member to send regular email updates from the Member's office to the individual's email account. All email updates to subscribers must contain an option that enables the individual to unsubscribe from the email list. Members may send subscribed email updates without obtaining an advisory opinion, but the contents must still adhere to Franking regulations.

### **Non-subscribed Emails**

If each email address used in a mass communication was not obtained with an individual subscribing for subscribed email updates, then the Member must receive a Franking Advisory prior to the distribution of the mass communication.

## **MAIL PREPARATION**

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the printing and preparation of Member correspondence are reimbursable. Franking expenses associated with all mailings will be deducted from the MRA.

## **NEWSPAPER INSERTS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the production and distribution of newspaper inserts are reimbursable. The content must be in compliance with the Communications Standards Manual.

## **PRESS CONFERENCES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to conducting an official press conference are reimbursable.

## **PRINTING AND PRODUCTION**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the printing and production of materials related to official and representational duties of the Member are reimbursable.

Printed materials only require an Advisory Opinion when they are distributed as an unsolicited mass communication. Items not distributed as an unsolicited mass communication do not require an Advisory Opinion but must still comply with the Communications Standards Manual.

## **UNSOLICITED MASS COMMUNICATIONS**

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to unsolicited mass communications are reimbursable. Unsolicited mass communications are subject to the Communications Standards Manual, including blackout dates.

## **WEBSITES**

Ordinary and necessary expenses associated with the creation and continued operation of websites, in support of the Member's official and representational duties, are reimbursable.

The content of a Member's official website and official social media is governed by the Communications Standards Manual.

Members' websites may be maintained by either House Information Resources (HIR), the Member's Congressional office, or a private vendor authorized to provide Web services to the House in compliance with the regulations issued by the Committee.

Committee websites may not be hosted on websites paid for by the MRA.

Members may include information within their website about CMO issues and activities. All CMO references within a website must relate to the Member's official and representational duties.

In addition to their official HOUSE.GOV website, a Member may establish profiles, pages, channels or any similar presence on third-party sites that allow individuals or organizations to offer information about themselves to the public (Social Media Accounts). Member-controlled content on Social Media Accounts is subject to the same requirements as content on Member websites.

Regulations governing the use of URLs and information security are located in the User's Guide.

## **Travel**

Travel must be in support of the Member's official and representational duties to the district from which elected, and the primary purpose of the travel must be official in nature to be deemed "official travel."

Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by the Member, the Member's employees, and in limited circumstances, vendors, while on official travel including transportation, lodging, meals (excluding alcohol), fees (e.g., parking, tolls, ticket change fees, travel insurance, etc.), and incidental expenses are reimbursable.

Official travel includes local travel and travel away from home overnight to conduct official and representational duties, within the United States and its territories and possessions, when returning to the duty station or residence is impractical. For Members who represent the insular territories, travel expenses incurred abroad (e.g. hotels) during the normal course of official travel by the Members to and from their duty station is authorized when no practical alternative is available.

A Member's primary duty station is their district. An employee's primary duty station is either the employing Member's district or Washington, D.C., which is determined by the employee's primary residence.

Please see the Telework Policy for additional information regarding alternate work sites.

Official travel may not exceed 60 consecutive days.

## **GENERAL**

1. Official travel must originate and terminate in either Washington, D.C., the Member's District, or another location of official business except where otherwise stipulated in the Handbook.
2. Transportation expenses to connect to or from another official or officially connected trip is also considered official travel. Any of the connecting/linking travel must occur within the U.S. to be reimbursed with official funds, and the primary purpose of the secondary trip must be official.
3. Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred by Members during official travel between a Member's primary residence and Washington, D.C., as well as while on official business in Washington, D.C., are reimbursable. These expenses include meals, incidentals and lodging. Lodging reimbursement may include costs associated with hotels, rentals, or other housing expenses. Members may be reimbursed for official and necessary travel expense incurred for meals, incidentals, and lodging on days the House is in session or when attending an official committee business meeting or hearing but not to exceed the daily rate for meals, incidentals and lodging as determined by the General Services Administration for the Washington, D.C. area. Members seeking reimbursement shall submit a monthly expense voucher, and reimbursement shall not exceed expenses incurred. In lieu of receipts, Members shall certify that they have incurred the eligible expenses (for which reimbursement has not otherwise been received) for which they seek reimbursement. Members whose primary residence is within 50 miles of the Capitol may not be reimbursed for lodging expenses except in extraordinary circumstances. Expense reimbursements are subject to existing state and federal tax law.
4. Living expenses (meals, housing and other personal expenses) incurred at the Member's or employee's primary residence or primary duty station, are not reimbursable, except in extraordinary circumstances when authorized by the Committee.
5. Commuting expenses (local transportation expenses incurred by the Member or employee while commuting between their residence and duty station) are not reimbursable, except in extraordinary circumstances (e.g., extreme weather conditions, staff working beyond availability of mass transit or rideshare arrangements, etc.) when authorized by the Member.
6. Official travel, paid for with the MRA, may not be for personal, campaign-related political party, campaign, or committee purposes.
7. In order to ensure the safety of Members, the MRA may be used to reimburse the cost of a



Member's individual, annual CLEAR Plus membership. This plan enables individuals to access CLEAR check-in and security lines at participating airports. Official funds may not be used to pay for any other travel screening services or upgrades to a CLEAR Plus membership that enable additional travelers to access CLEAR kiosks, lines, and facilities.

8. Only ordinary and necessary charges associated with failure to cancel reservations incurred beyond the control of the Member and the Member's employees are reimbursable.
9. In-flight Wi-Fi applications are reimbursable when used for official business only, and when purchased on an hourly, per day, per flight or monthly basis only.
10. Advanced payments for tolls or transponder expenses are not reimbursable; however, monthly transponder statements with official travel tolls clearly identified may be submitted for reimbursement. Transponder service or rental fees are not reimbursable unless use is entirely official.

### **Shared Official Travel Expenses**

Official travel expenses may be shared by more than one Member or committee office. The division of expenses must accurately reflect each traveler's expenses, and offices may only pay for the expenses of their respective Member, staff, and authorized vendors.

### **COMBINED TRAVEL**

Combined travel is when a Member or employee for personal reasons either travels to an intervening destination or spends additional time at the location of official business. The primary purpose of the travel must be official, and any expenses incurred (e.g., lodging, meals, rental car, etc.) on the days of personal travel must be paid for with personal funds.

### **Intervening Destination**

Traveling to an intervening destination either on the way to or back from an official trip for personal reasons can be done by one of the following ways:

1. Traveler purchases both segments of the trip (official to personal to official) with personal funds at the commercial rate. Traveler then seeks reimbursement for the government rate of the direct route (official to official) and means to the destination required for official business, or the actual traveled fare, whichever is less.
2. Traveler purchases the "personal" segment (official to personal) of the trip with personal funds at the commercial rate, no reimbursement is sought for this segment. The "official" segment (personal to official) can be purchased at either the commercial or government rate. Traveler then seeks reimbursement for the government rate of the direct route (official to official) or the actual traveled fare (personal to official), whichever is less.

The Member or employee must include the [Combined Travel Form](#) when submitting for combined travel reimbursement, stating that the official travel and personal travel was combined for personal convenience.

## **GOVERNMENT RATE ELIGIBILITY**

The government rate is available to Members and employees to support the conduct of official travel. The government rate is not available for privately sponsored officially connected travel.

To be eligible for the government rate when purchasing tickets for official travel, Members and employees may present:

1. The Government Travel Card; or
2. An Official Travel Authorization (OTA) coupon available from the Office of Finance. (Some airlines only allow the government rate for tickets purchased with the government travel card.)

Contact the General Services Administration (GSA) to obtain a listing of schedules and fares of the federal contract air, rail, bus carriers, car rental companies, and hotels/motels.

## **MIXED PURPOSE TRAVEL**

Mixed purpose trips typically involve travel that includes official, campaign and/or privately-sponsored activities. Often this travel is funded by a mix of official, campaign and/or private funds. If the primary purpose is for a non-official event/purpose, the office cannot schedule official activities around the non-official event/purpose to make the travel eligible for congressional offices to be reimbursed. Mixed-purpose trips may need to be approved by the Committee on Ethics.

Because mixed travel is so nuanced and specific, please contact the Committee with any questions prior to making any travel arrangements.

## **MODES OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **Aircraft**

Members may not use personal, official or campaign funds for a flight on an aircraft unless specifically authorized in House Rule XXIII, clause 15(b):

1. Aircraft operated by an air carrier or commercial operator certificated by the Federal Aviation Administration;
2. Aircraft owned or leased by a Member or a family member of a Member;
3. Flight of personal use by a Member supplied by an individual on the basis of personal friendship or another Member;
4. Aircraft operated by a government entity (Federal or State); or
5. Owner or operator of the aircraft is paid a pro rata share of the fair market value of the normal and usual charter fare by dividing costs by Members or employees of Congress on the flight.

For any questions related to the use of campaign funds for a flight on an aircraft please contact the Committee on Ethics x57103 and the Federal Election Commission's Office of Congressional, Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs. For any questions related to the use of personal funds for a flight on an aircraft, please contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103.

### ***Chartered Aircraft***

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to chartering an aircraft for official travel are reimbursable when passengers are restricted to Members, their employees, and their immediate family members (spouse, child, parent), the names of whom must be stated on the voucher.

If an immediate family member is a passenger, the Member may seek reimbursement for the full cost of the chartered aircraft and the family member must submit a check to the Finance Office payable to the U.S. Treasury equivalent to the cost of a comparable commercial first-class fare. A letter explaining the reason for its submission must accompany the check.

Other non-Congressional individuals may travel on the Member chartered aircraft when the chartered aircraft vendor has the ability to charge based on individual seating in the same manner as a commercial aircraft vendor; and the other passengers are federal, state, and local officials, and are joining the Members and staff in support of Congressional issues related to the district.

Prior written approval must be obtained from the Committee, for a charter aircraft originating from or terminating at the D.C. metropolitan area and/or when the anticipated cost for the total itinerary exceeds \$7,500.

The Committee recommends that charter aircraft be used sparingly, and only if/when the Member determines there is no suitable commercial flight available. Please contact the Committee for more information.

### ***Private or Corporate Aircraft***

Members may use their own privately owned aircraft for official business and may be reimbursed on a per mile basis, set annually by the Committee, and not for fuel purchased or any other expense.

Members may accept at no cost travel on private aircraft owned by another Member, U.S. Senator, or a family member. For questions related to accepting flights on private aircraft owned by any other individual, please contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103.

Use of corporate aircraft in support of the conduct of official and representational duties may occur ONLY if the corporation is reimbursed for the fair market value of the flight.

To determine the fair market value of such a flight, apply the following:

1. When the travel is via a previously or regularly scheduled flight by the corporation,

reimbursement is based on the cost of a commercial first-class flight to the nearest location served by a commercial passenger airline. If only coach rates are provided at the nearest location, the Member must reimburse the cost of a commercial coach rate.

2. When the flight is scheduled specifically for Member use, payment will be made based on the cost of an equivalent commercial chartered flight to that location.

## **Rental Vehicle**

Members and employees may be reimbursed for the following costs associated with renting a vehicle for use while on official travel:

- Vehicle rental charges
- Gasoline and/or electrical charging
- Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) insurance if the government rate is not available.

Offices should ensure that the rental vehicle has CDW coverage. To ensure CDW coverage, offices can make their reservation through the Combined Airline Ticket Office (CATO) or notify the rental company the rental is for official government use at the government rate. If the government rate is unavailable or CDW coverage is not included in the government rate, then the cost of CDW is reimbursable. The Member or employee must verify that CDW is included when signing the rental car agreement when picking up the vehicle.

Personal accident insurance (PAI), personal effects coverage (PEC), and equivalent insurance policies are not reimbursable.

Non-governmental use of such a vehicle may be made only when such use is:

1. During the course of and generally along the route of a day's official itinerary.
2. Incidental to the day's official and representational business.
3. De minimis in nature, frequency, and time consumed.
4. Does not otherwise constitute a significant activity or event.
5. Not for any campaign/campaign-related political party purpose.

In the event of an accident with a rental vehicle, Members or staff may contact the Office of the General Counsel (x59700) for guidance related to the Federal Tort Claims Act.

Vehicle rentals may not exceed 60 consecutive days.

Traffic violations and parking tickets are not reimbursable.

## **Privately-Owned/Privately-Leased Vehicles**

A Member or employee who uses his or her privately-owned or privately-leased vehicle while on official and representational business, may be reimbursed on a rate per mile basis, set by the Committee annually, and not for fuel purchased or any other expense. Employees are eligible for mileage reimbursement when driving the Member in the employee's privately owned

vehicle between the Member's residence and the office. Each Member may establish a lower reimbursement rate for themselves and his or her employees.

Mileage reimbursement may not be made for a vehicle that is owned or leased by the principal campaign of a Member, a political action committee, a political party or anyone other than a Member or employee.

## **SATELLITE RADIO SERVICE**

Costs of satellite radio service in support of official and representational duties are reimbursable.

## **TRAVEL PROMOTIONAL AWARDS**

Free travel, mileage, discounts, upgrades, coupons, etc., awarded at the sole discretion of a company as a promotional award earned by the Member or employee while on official travel may be used at the discretion of the Member or employee. The Committee encourages the official use of travel promotional awards wherever practicable.

Members and employees cannot be reimbursed for utilizing promotional awards for official travel as no expense was incurred.

## **UNEXPECTED OFFICIAL TRAVEL**

If a Member or employee is unexpectedly required, beyond the control of the Member office, to travel for official business (e.g., previously unscheduled House vote or committee meeting or hearing, natural disaster, or civil disorder, etc.), then travel from and back to the personal destination is considered official travel and is eligible for the government rate.

Travel to and from campaign or other political activity is not reimbursable.

## **VENDOR OFFICIAL TRAVEL**

Official travel also includes travel by a vendor when traveling to provide service or training to Member offices.

A vendor that provides a service under a valid House contract or working on a time and material basis, may be reimbursed for travel expenses between Washington, D.C. and the District when traveling to provide service or training to Member offices.

All travel costs must be negotiated and agreed upon in writing by both parties prior to vendor travel. Offices are encouraged to utilize the federal government per diem rates established by the General Services Administration for vendor travel costs as a benchmark. For a listing of the per diem rates by state and locality, see the [GSA website](#).

## **DISBURSEMENTS**

Disbursements from the MRA are made on a reimbursement or direct payment basis that require supporting documentation (i.e., receipt, lease, invoice, etc.) and Member certification as to accuracy and compliance with applicable federal laws, House Rules, and Committee regulations. The [Voucher Documentation Standards](#), available on [HouseNet](#), specify what documentation is required for each type of expense.

All vendors must have a W-9 on file with the Office of Financial Counseling in order to receive payment for services or goods provided.

Reimbursements and payments from the MRA may be made only to the Member, the Member's employees, or a vendor providing services to support the operation of the Member's offices.

The CAO prepares for each office a monthly financial statement showing the year-to-date expenditures and obligated amounts. The quarterly expenditures reflected in these statements are compiled and published online as the quarterly Statement of Disbursements.

## **ADVANCE PAYMENTS**

There are instances in which advance payments may be paid from the MRA.

Advance payments must meet the following criteria:

1. Vendor provides these billing options to other customers (documentation required).
2. Amount to be paid must be fixed at the time of purchase (e.g., variable cost contracts or services are ineligible).
3. All transactions for the next legislative year must be submitted for payment before the beginning of that legislative year.
4. Vendor may not bundle items that are eligible for advance payment with items that are not eligible.

Unless specifically authorized by the Committee, only the following advance payments are reimbursable.

***Between first and second session of a Congress ONLY (may not exceed a Congress):***

1. Public information booth and facility rentals and related expenses, excluding deposits
2. Educational expenses
3. Authorized insurance premiums
4. Telecommunications devices and services (tele-townhalls are not eligible for advance payment)
5. Post-office box rentals

6. Original Equipment Manufacturers' warranties (*when purchased with equipment even if warranty exceeds a Congress*).
7. Web and information technology services (including software license and maintenance fees). Advance payments are not allowed for custom services to be performed, such as, but not limited to, designing, or building websites.
8. District office security enhancements, including equipment, installation, labor, monitoring, and maintenance costs.
9. Correspondence Record Management system
10. Water/coffee services
11. District office recycling and trash fees, janitorial services
12. District office rent
13. District office parking
14. Airport parking
15. Constituent databases

***Between Sessions and Congresses (but may not exceed beyond the next Congress):***

1. Subscriptions for print and electronic publications, including media monitoring and clipping services.
2. Travel screening services permitted by these regulations (may be paid after a general election only for a returning Member).

Any Member who is sworn into Congress midterm is the assignee of all advance payments of his or her predecessor.

## **EXPIRED APPROPRIATIONS**

The Salaries and Expenses appropriation for the House of Representatives, which includes MRA funds, is withdrawn two years after the year for which the funds were originally appropriated. This occurs on September 30 of the year.

In the unlikely event an office requests reimbursement for an official and representational expense incurred during a year for which the appropriation has been withdrawn, the Office of Finance will determine if an amount sufficient to pay the expense would have been available if the appropriation had not been withdrawn. If no funds would have been available, then the expense is the personal liability of the Member.

If the expense would have been payable had it been timely submitted, notwithstanding the expired appropriation, then the expense may be paid from a currently available allowance, if available.

## **INTENT TO OBLIGATE FUNDS**

Requests to obligate prior year funds after January 2 of the succeeding year to purchase equipment and software in both the Washington, D.C. and District offices, and furniture and security enhancements in the district office only, will be considered when a Member provides documentation demonstrating a bona fide intent to obligate.

Office supplies, printing, data packages, customized software and decorations cannot be included on a letter of intent.

To obligate funds, Members must submit a “Letter of Intent” signed by the Member to First Call by 5:00PM EST on January 2 (*or the Friday before when January 2 falls on a weekend*) including the following information:

- Description of the item(s) to be purchased, including quantity, make, model, cost per item, name of vendor, and vendor’s contact information, if that information is available (Offices may not block off a general amount.)
- Explanation as to why the items listed cannot be purchased prior to the end of the legislative year.

The amount of all the items listed on a letter of intent may not exceed the amount remaining in the current year MRA.

If the “Letter of Intent” is in compliance with the applicable regulations and procedures, prior year funds will be available through March 31 of the following year (*or the Friday before when March 31 falls on a weekend*). If the items are not purchased by the deadline, the Member forfeits the opportunity to use prior year funds for the purchase.

## **PURCHASE CARD**

The Government Purchase Card is available for Member and employee use for the purchase of goods and services obtained in support of official business (e.g., office supplies, subscriptions, training, etc.). Expenses incurred on this card are directly reimbursable to Citibank with applicable receipts.

Members and employees are reminded that the Government Purchase Card is for official non-travel related expenses only. Use of this card for any personal or non-official purchases is prohibited.

## **TRAVEL CARD**

The Government Travel Card is available for Member and employee use for official travel and travel-related expenses. Travel expenses incurred on this card are directly reimbursable to Citibank with an accompanying voucher, and applicable receipts.

Members and employees are reminded that the Government Travel Card is for official travel purposes only and may be used by the cardholder only. Use of this card for any personal or non-official purchases is prohibited. Any personal purchase or unauthorized charges will be the



sole responsibility of the cardholder who must submit payment directly to Citibank.

The cardholder may use the card to purchase travel-related services (e.g., airline tickets, hotel expenses, etc.) for other authorized travelers.

The Office of Finance will monitor the monthly delinquency report received from Citibank and alert offices of delinquencies. The Office of Finance will not intervene in the event of a delinquency; the cardholder will be responsible for any delinquent amount.

## **TAX EXEMPT LETTERS**

To avoid paying unnecessary taxes, please contact the Office of the General Counsel at x59700 for tax exempt letters applicable to each state.

## **CONGRESSIONAL MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS**

### **GENERAL**

Congressional Member Organization (“CMO”) are informal member organizations established to pursue common legislative objectives.

Eligible CMOs (ECMOs) can establish an account to pay for employees and their expenses. For regulations governing ECMOs, please see the ECMO Handbook located on the Committee’s website.

### **REGISTRATION**

Each Congress, CMOs must register with the Committee. Registration letters should be sent to the to the Chairman of the Committee electronically to [cmocsoregistrations@mail.house.gov](mailto:cmocsoregistrations@mail.house.gov) and include the following information:

1. Name
2. Statement of Purpose
3. Officers of the CMO
4. Employee designated to work on issues related to the CMO

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Members of both the House and Senate may participate in CMO, but at least one of the Officers of the CMO must be a Member of the House. The participation of Senators in a CMO does not impact the scope of authorized CMO activities in any regard.

### **FUNDING AND RESOURCES**

CMOs have no separate corporate or legal identity and are not employing authorities.

The MRA may not directly support a CMO as an independent entity and may not be assigned separate office space.

CMOs may not hold independent events outside of the Washington, D.C. area and the MRA cannot be used to conduct travel in support of a CMO.

Neither CMOs nor individual Members may accept goods, funds, or services from private organizations or individuals to support the CMO. Members may use personal funds to support the CMO.

A Member of a CMO, in support of the objectives of that CMO, may utilize employees (including shared employees) and official resources under the control of the Member to assist the CMO in carrying out its legislative objectives, but no employees may be appointed in the name of a CMO. Business cards for individuals who work on CMO issues may refer to the CMO but must make clear that the individual is employed by the Member and not the CMO.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

CMOs may not use the Frank, nor may a Member lend his or her Frank to a CMO.

A Member may prepare materials related to CMO issues for dissemination to their colleagues and use official resources for communications on their official social media and websites related to the purpose of a CMO but may not prepare a document representing the CMO as an independent entity. Any such communication must comply with Communications Standards Manual.

Members may devote a section of their official website to CMO issues. CMOs may have independent web pages when no official resources are used, outside of staff time, to create and support the site.

Members may refer to their membership in a CMO on their official stationery. Official funds may not be used to print or pay for stationery for the CMO.

CMOs may have independent web pages when no official resources are used, outside of staff time, to create and support the site.

Members may request a URL for a CMO, provided that the request complies with the CMO domain name regulations issued by the Committee. Web pages using such a URL need not have the same design or layout as the Web site of the sponsoring Member.

## **CONGRESSIONAL STAFF ORGANIZATIONS**

### **GENERAL**

Staff can form a Congressional Staff Organization (“CSO”) for the purpose of facilitating interaction among Congressional staff.

## **REGISTRATION**

Each Congress, CSOs must register with the Committee in order to use official resources. At least one officer of a CSO must be an employee of the House, and all officers must be employees of the House or Senate.

A Sponsoring Member must submit a letter, on official letterhead, to the Committee electronically to [cmocsoregistration@mail.house.gov](mailto:cmocsoregistration@mail.house.gov) with the following information:

1. Name;
2. Statement of purpose;
3. Officers including contact information;
4. Specify which of the following resources the CSO requests use of:
  - a. Inside mail
  - b. House Intranet site
  - c. House Postbox; and
  - d. Individuals designated to maintain web and mail services on behalf of the CSO (if applicable)

## **OFFICIAL RESOURCES**

Other than as specified in this section, House staff that participate in a CSO may make only incidental use of official resources for activities related to a CSO. A CSO is not an employing authority of the House and may not be assigned separate office space.

After the CSO is registered, the sponsoring Member may submit, at any time, a letter requesting access to Inside Mail, a House postbox, or a presence on the House Intranet for CSO related activities.

A CSO should contact the Committee on Ethics at x57103 before accepting anything of monetary value from a private source.

## **MODIFICATIONS**

### **ADDITIONAL CHANGES**

The Chairman of the Committee is authorized to make technical and conforming modifications to the Members Handbook, and to make other modifications with the concurrence of the Ranking Minority Member of the Committee and notification to all members of the Committee. In the event changes are made pursuant to this clause, the Chairman shall notify all congressional offices by suitable means.