



Update about the coronavirus

Sending Office: Committee on House Administration

Dear Colleague:

We wanted to take this opportunity to provide you additional information about the work of the Committee on House Administration (CHA) and other offices to help the House community with respect to the coronavirus. As we have previously indicated, all of these measures will help House offices improve their emergency preparedness in general, and we urge offices to take advantage of the types of assistance highlighted below.

New Attending Physician guidance. The Attending Physician has issued updated guidance with important information for Members and staff with appropriate tips about social distancing, hygiene, and disinfection. All of this guidance has been posted on the [Attending Physician's website](#) and [CHA's website](#), and those tips are also below:

Social Distancing:

- Members should adopt a stance that avoids close direct contact with other individuals, such as shaking hands, giving/receiving hugs, taking selfies, etc.
- Visitors should be queried about current symptoms of respiratory illness upon arrival. If visitors are ill, the meeting should be re-scheduled for an alternate time.
- Larger meeting events should be conducted via teleconference type means if possible. This is suggested for protecting the health of all participants.
- If Members attend large gatherings, they should enter/exit via stage entrances to avoid mingling through large crowds of people.
- Offices should prepare and activate telework procedures for Members or staff that develop signs of illness. Personnel should NOT report to work in this circumstance. They should remain home until 24 hours fever free without medication, or until cleared by their health care provider (additional restrictions for a COVID confirmed case to return to work are likely).
- CDC guidelines regarding home quarantine actions may be found at the following link:<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>

Hygiene Procedures:

- Frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at a time should occur immediately after touching high contact areas, such as doorknobs, railings, phones, etc.
- If soap is unavailable, Members should plan to have hand sanitizer readily available on their person as a substitute.

- Members, staff, and visitors should wash hands/use hand sanitizer before and after visitations and meetings.

Disinfection:

- Offices should frequently wipe down hard surface high contact areas (telephones, keyboards, doorknobs, desks, railings, counters, computer mouse, etc.) with a standard home disinfectant product and allow to air dry per manufacturer instructions, especially following any potential contact with individuals displaying respiratory complaints.

Tele-townhalls. In light of the Attending Physician's recommendations with respect to social distancing, we recommend tele-townhalls as a useful and vital alternative way to communicate with your constituents. We recommend that offices that have not previously held a tele-townhall consult with the [Franking Commission](#). Also, CHA has determined that remaining unspent LY 2019 funds may be used in connection with previously unscheduled tele-townhalls if conducted for the specific purpose of relaying information regarding the coronavirus.

Telework. In our prior communications, CHA has announced that employees of an office that implements a previously established emergency or Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan may telework during the period that the COOP plan is in effect. CHA has developed a model policy that offices may wish to adopt to permit telework on a temporary basis in response to an emergency or implementation of the office's COOP plan. CHA has also developed a model employee agreement for use by staff. (Please note that an office may opt to permit telework on a temporary basis in these circumstances while choosing not to permit telecommuting as part of its regular operations. However, the equipment an office purchases to provide for telework in an emergency scenario may also be used for telecommuting in the ordinary course of business.) We also note the [CDC's recommendations that people at higher risk – including older adults and people who have serious chronic medical conditions, like heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease – take extra precautions to keep space between themselves and others and avoid crowds](#). We recommend that telework be implemented for any such employees.

Telework equipment and services – LY 19 funds. In light of the unique and unusual circumstances presented by the coronavirus, as well as to promote House office emergency preparedness in general, we previously announced CHA's determination that it is appropriate for Member offices to be able to access any remaining unspent LY 2019 funds to purchase teleworking equipment and supplies (e.g. laptop and tablet computers, cell phones, etc.). CHA has now extended this determination to apply to committee offices, too. Both Member and committee offices may continue to use LY 2020 funds for this purpose, as well.

Telework equipment and services – availability. CHA has worked with the CAO to ensure that additional laptops and other mobile devices have been ordered and are available for offices that may wish to purchase such equipment. Although offices are welcome to continue using regular options to purchase equipment, we strongly recommend that offices consider using the House Office Supply Store, which can likely provide equipment and ensure that it is prepared for use on the House network on a more expedited basis than an outside vendor or store.

Telework equipment and services – Telework Readiness Center. The CAO has set up an in-person House Telework Readiness Center to provide offices with the technical assistance they may need to be prepared to work remotely. House Information Resources and various information technology vendors who serve the House are available in the Rayburn Cafeteria seating area daily from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. to help staff assess their equipment and other technical needs to be prepared to work from a remotely. An office that has new telework equipment or existing equipment that may not have been used recently is strongly encouraged to take advantage of this service. Staff may bring House-issued laptops for system checks to ensure they have the necessary telework software. Training will also be provided on how to remotely connect and access your office data and resources.

Increase visual communications. We recommend that you post graphics in your office to inform your staff and visitors of key facts regarding coronavirus and remind them of steps they can take to help prevent the spread coronavirus and other respiratory diseases. The CDC has made a number of images available for this purpose, which you can find [online at their website](#). You can use these images to print copies to post in your offices or include in digital communications. These images and fact sheets are also available to the general public.

We hope this information is helpful. If you have further questions, please contact CHA at (202) 225-2061 (majority) or (202) 225-8281 (minority).

Sincerely,

Zoe Lofgren

Rodney Davis

Chairperson

Ranking Member