

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
119th CONGRESS
COMMITTEE RESOLUTION 119-14

Resolution to Amend the *Members' Congressional Handbook*

Be it resolved, pursuant to clauses 1(k)(1), (6), and (9) of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives that the Committee on House Administration adopt the following regulations amending and superseding the relevant portions of the prior regulations known collectively as the *Members' Congressional Handbook*.

SECTION I. GREENAND GOLD CONGRESSIONAL AIDE PROGRAM

Under section titled “Staff,” strike and replace subsection titled “Green and Gold Congressional Aide Program” and insert the following:

“Green and Gold Congressional Aide Program

“The Green and Gold Congressional Aide Program provides an opportunity for disabled veterans and members of Gold Star Families to work in a Member office for two years in a paid position. Green and Gold Congressional Aides are placed in a Member office but do not count against a Member’s statutory staff ceiling as they are officially employed by the CAO, which provides the aide’s compensation and reimbursement for most expenses. Positions in the two programs are divided evenly between Members of the majority and minority.

“Green and Gold Congressional Aides may accrue leave. Offices must approve the dates of leave, but all approved leave must be reported to the CAO for tracking purposes as the CAO will pay out any unused accrued annual leave upon the aide’s separation from the program. Aides are eligible for transit benefits through the CAO. Offices may assign and provide parking from their roster.

“The MRA may be used to reimburse Green and Gold Congressional Aides for expenses incurred for official business, including travel expenses, during their employment, that is not otherwise covered by the CAO. The MRA may also be used to provide bonuses in addition to the compensation aides receive from the CAO.

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

SECTION II. ATTENDANCE AT EVENTS

Under section titled “General Office Expenses,” after subsection titled “Amicus Brief” insert the following new subsection:

“Attendance and Events

“Ordinary and necessary expenses incurred to attend an event in support of the Member’s official and representational duties to the district from which elected are reimbursable, including but not limited to informational programs such as conferences, seminars, forums and symposiums.

“Members and staff are often invited to attend events because of their official position but that does not necessarily mean that the event itself is official in nature. To qualify for reimbursement from the MRA, the event must be primarily official in nature and the primary benefit of the Member’s or staff’s attendance must be to the district and not the organization facilitating the event.

“The MRA cannot be used for any expenses related to:

1. An event that is primary social in nature (such as award ceremonies, galas, banquets, receptions, graduations, etc.);
2. A campaign or political event;
3. A sporting or entertainment event;
4. A fundraiser or charity that solicits or collects donations of goods, services or funds, or;
5. A visit to a monument or museum.”

SECTION III. VENDORS

Under section titled “General Office Expenses,” strike and replace subsection titled “Contractors” with the following:

“Vendors

“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.

“Vendors 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.).

“Vendor contracts must be for a specified time period not to exceed the Member’s current term. Vendors 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 at x56969 prior to signing a contract with a vendor.”

SECTION IV. EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Under section titled “General Office Expenses” strike and replace subsection titled “Educational Expenses” with the following:

“Educational Expenses

“Ordinary and necessary expenses for Members or employees to take professional training and development courses related to the official and representational duties to the district are reimbursable.

“The MRA may be used for Members and staff to take professional training or development courses that impart knowledge, tools and skills to improve their ability to conduct their official duties. The MRA cannot be used to retain a consultant to provide expert advice, strategies or solutions. For example, the MRA may pay for a Member or employee to take a class on effective public speaking but may not hire a communications advisor or consultant to provide expert analysis and/or a strategic communications plan.

“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. 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.

“The Retention through Educational Advancement Program (REAP), which replaced and expanded the Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP), allows a Member and an eligible employee to enter into a written service agreement under which the House will make repayments to eligible student loans, tuition assistance, and the cost of eligible professional development programs. Additional information about REAP can be located on [HouseNet](#). 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.”

SECTION V. PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Under section titled “General Office Expenses” after subsection titled “Postage Expenses,” insert the following:

“Professional Liability Insurance

“The MRA may be used to reimburse up to one-half of the cost of the annual premium to maintain a professional liability insurance policy for Members and certain qualified employees pursuant to 5 U.S.C § 5941, which defines ‘qualified employees’ as a supervisor who has been

delegated the authority to make employment decision and/or a manager who is authorized to formulate or influence policy.

“To obtain reimbursement, a receipt or invoice of payment of the premium together with a copy of the insurance policy must be submitted to the Office of Financial Counseling. Financial Counseling will send the policy to the Office of Administrative Counsel for review prior to processing the reimbursement.

“Nothing in this section should be construed as inconsistent with the Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) Reform Act of 2018 as it pertains to a Member’s personal reimbursement obligation. If a member is reimbursed for any portion for a premium of an annual professional liability insurance plan, the Member is prohibited from utilizing an amount(s) paid out under the plan to satisfy the personal repayment obligation as set forth in the CAA Reform Act.”

SECTION VI. PUBLICATIONS

Under section titled “Communications,” in the subsection titled “Publications” section, after the first sentence in the third paragraph insert the following:

“The start date of the subscription must be on or before January 2 in order to use current year funds.”

SECTION VII. SUBSCRIBED EMAILS

Under section titled “Communications” in subsection “Electronic Communications,” under paragraph titled “Subscribed Emails,” in the last sentence strike “Franking” and replace with “Communications Standards Commission’s.”

SECTION VIII. TRAVEL

Under section titled “Travel,” in subsection titled “General,” after the fifth item insert the following:

“6. Expenses incurred during travel or while outside of the United States, its’ territories and possessions are not reimbursable.”

Following this newly inserted sixth bullet, renumber the subsequent bullets from the current 6-10 to 7-11.

SECTION IX. COMBINED TRAVEL

Under section titled “Travel,” strike the” subsection titled “Combined Travel” and replace with the following:

“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.

“If traveling to an intervening destination either to or from a location of official business for personal reasons, the traveler must purchase the “personal” segment (official to personal) with personal funds at the commercial rate. The “official” segment (personal to official) must be purchased with personal funds at either the commercial or government rate and the official travel card may not be used. The traveler may then seek reimbursement for the government rate of the direct route (official to official) or the actual traveled fare (official to personal to official), whichever is less.

“A Combined Travel Form must be included when submitting for combined travel reimbursement, stating that the official travel and personal travel was combined for personal convenience.”

SECTION X. INTENT TO OBLIGATE FUNDS

Under section titled “Disbursements,” in subsection titled “Intent to Obligate Funds” strike the first sentence and replace with the following:

“Requests to obligate prior year funds after January 2 of the succeeding year to purchase equipment and, for district offices only, furniture and security enhancements, will be considered when a Member provides documentation demonstrating a bona fide intent to obligate.”

In the second paragraph under this subsection strike “customized.”