

**Testimony before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.**

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Madam Chairman and members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me to participate in this important hearing.

I strongly support the efforts by members of Congress to reform the rules on congressional travel. It is critical that public trust be restored in the institution.

As director of The Aspen Institute Congressional Program, a leading sponsor of educational seminars for members of the Senate and House, I will limit my remarks to the area of congressional travel.

I would recommend the following reforms:

- 1) Funds should not be accepted from registered lobbyists or from groups that employ registered lobbyists;
- 2) Travel should not include in any way, shape or form the participation of lobbyists;
- 3) Sponsoring organizations should be required to disclose their funding sources in invitations to members;
- 4) In particular, enforcement mechanisms must be put in place.

However, a total ban on privately-funded travel would be a disservice to members of Congress, denying them valuable resources to gain greater knowledge and understanding of the range of issues they must address.

As a former member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, coming from a background as a professor of international relations, I experienced the wide gap between the average legislator's understanding of complex foreign policy issues and the expertise that exists in the academic community. I saw firsthand the necessity of bringing policy scholars together with those who make policy.

After leaving the Senate, this was my catalyst to create a program that is designed to do just that—foster a relationship between the worlds of scholarship and policy making.

Since I established the Congressional Program in 1983, funding has come solely from established, independent foundations such as Ford, MacArthur, Carnegie, and Kellogg. We accept no support from lobbyists, governments, corporations, private individuals or special interests; and honoraria are not paid to members of Congress or scholars. Lobbyists are not permitted at our meetings and are not involved in the program in any way. The program does not pay for any recreational activities.

Nearly 200 governmental leaders (including heads of state) and approximately 800 scholars have participated.

Seminar discussions revolve around the 4-8 scholarly papers commissioned for each meeting, which ensures a diversity of opinion based on the scholars' research. These are, in essence, graduate seminars.

Participants are required to attend all conference events which last at least six hours a day over the course of four days during congressional recesses. These include roundtable discussions, luncheon speeches with questions and answers, and dinners with assigned seating that expose members to various scholars and a range of viewpoints.

Published reports of the seminars are sent to all members of Congress, and the agendas and scholars' papers are widely disseminated on our website.

A very important aspect of our program is a series of breakfast meetings conducted in the Capitol building for members of Congress.

Twenty-five breakfasts are held annually, providing members with ongoing, direct access to internationally-recognized experts and analysts on a variety of topics.

Members tell us that an exceptional benefit of the program is that it provides a “faculty” of scholars and experts whom they call on to give testimony or advice.

The Congressional Program is a bicameral, nonpartisan *neutral convener*. In the current political climate, members of Congress need a “safe haven” where they can study critical issues in an academic, in-depth way with members of both parties and both chambers. The program, described by one Senator as “an oasis of civility,” has been the genesis of major initiatives such as the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction act.

We have taken steps to ensure that our educational mission is not compromised, including conferring with the Ethics committees to make certain that we comply with their standards.

Foreign travel is essential in an era of globalization. It is critical for members to personally see developments on the ground in other countries, meeting with world leaders, academics and others. Insularity is not an option for the world’s only superpower. If our lawmakers are to effectively address immigration, international trade, the war on terror and other pressing matters, an understanding of the peoples of the world is vital.

Mickey Edwards, former Republican congressman from Oklahoma and director of the Aspen Institute–Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership, joins me in supporting these much needed reforms. His program brings together promising young political leaders to explore the underlying values and principles of western democracy.

Again, Madam Chairman, I thank you and distinguished members of the committee for giving me the opportunity to share my views on this important subject.