

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515

TRAVEL GUIDELINES AND REGULATIONS

MEMORANDUM TO ALL MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES

From: Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
Stephanie Tubbs Jones, Chairwoman
Doc Hastings, Ranking Republican Member

Date: February 20, 2007

The new travel rules that were passed at the beginning of the 110th Congress require the Committee to issue guidelines concerning the reasonableness of travel expenses and the types of information that must be submitted to the Committee in order to obtain prior approval of privately-sponsored, officially-connected travel.¹ The rules also direct the Committee to issue regulations describing when a two-night stay will be permitted in order for a Member, officer, or employee to participate in a one-day event sponsored by a private entity that retains or employs a lobbyist, and the circumstances under which a lobbyist is permitted to have *de minimis* involvement in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging a trip.²

The Committee hereby issues guidelines and regulations concerning the new travel restrictions and requirements. In many significant areas, the regulations and guidelines set forth below are new restrictions and requirements that *supersede* the Committee's policies under the travel rules that existed in previous congresses, and *they take effect on March 1, 2007*.

Travel Guidelines and Regulations³

A. Connection between Trip and Official Duties

A Member, officer, or employee seeking approval for travel must demonstrate that the activities on the trip are related to the individual's official responsibilities or matters arising from his or her official duties. In evaluating a request for approval to

¹ House Rule 25, cl. 5(i).

² House Rule 25, cl. 5(b)(1)(C). For brevity's sake, references in the text to the term "lobbyist" also include agents of a foreign principal.

³ These provisions address both the acceptance of in-kind transportation, lodging, and meals as well as reimbursement of travel expenses.

travel at private expense, the Committee will evaluate the individual's responsibilities, and/or whether the purpose of the trip relates to matters within the general legislative or policy interests of the Congress. Travel will not be approved if it does not include sufficient officially-connected activities, or if it includes excessive amounts of unscheduled time or opportunities for recreational activities during the official itinerary, even if such activities are engaged in at personal expense.

B. Reasonableness of Travel Expenses

(1) *Transportation to the Event*: Members, officers, and employees may accept up to business-class transportation on commercial air carriers or trains to participate in Committee-approved, privately-sponsored travel. Other transportation (including first-class airfare or train fare, charter travel, or travel on private aircraft) may *only* be accepted if:

(a) it is demonstrated that the cost of such travel does not exceed the cost of available business-class transportation (or if the traveler uses the traveler's own frequent flyer or similar benefits to upgrade to first class);

(b) such travel is necessary to accommodate a disability or other special need as substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority;

(c) genuine security circumstances require such travel;

(d) the scheduled flight time, including stopovers and change of planes, is in excess of 14 hours; or

(e) the Committee permits such travel based on *exceptional* circumstances.

(2) *Local Transportation*: Local area transportation expenses during a trip must be reasonable and unrelated to personal or recreational activities.

(3) *Lodging*:

(a) For travel to events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations or other membership organizations), Members, officers, and employees may accept lodging accommodations at a pre-arranged location for event attendees commensurate with those customarily provided to or purchased by other event attendees. The quality or location of the accommodations may not be enhanced because of the official position of the Member, officer, or employee.

(b) For travel to events arranged or organized *specifically with regard* to congressional participation (for example, fact-finding trips, site visits, educational conferences, and other trips designed for congressional attendance), Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable lodging expenses at an appropriate facility. Among the factors to be considered in judging the reasonableness of expenses for a lodging facility are the cost of the facility, the location of the facility and its proximity to

the site(s) being visited, the quality of its conference facilities, any security concerns, and whether the facility may accommodate the number of attendees at the event.

(4) Food:

(a) For travel to events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations or other membership organizations), Members, officers, and employees may accept meals related to the event that are similar to those provided to or purchased by other event attendees.

(b) For privately-sponsored travel to events arranged or organized *specifically with regard* to congressional participation (for example, fact-finding trips, site visits, educational conferences, and other trips designed for congressional attendance), Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable meal expenses at an appropriate facility. The factors to be considered in judging the reasonableness of a meal expense include the maximum *per diem* rates for meals for official Government travel published by the General Services Administration or, for international travel, the maximum *per diem* rate for meals published by the State Department.

(5) *Other Travel Expenses:* Members, officers, and employees may accept reasonable miscellaneous travel expenses, such as transportation to and from airports, security costs, interpreter fees, visa application fees, and similar expenses that are necessary for the officially-connected purpose of the trip.

C. Relationship Between an Event and the Officially-Connected Purpose of the Trip

The location of events arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation (for example, annual meetings of business or trade associations) is presumptively reasonable. The location of *other* events must be necessary to the purpose of the event, or if more than one possible location may be relevant to the event, then the location selected must be a reasonable one in relation to the alternatives. If there is no specific location necessary or relevant to the purpose of the event, the location selected must be a reasonable one in light of the nature of the event and its participants, and should not create the appearance that the Member, officer, or employee attending the event is using his or her public office for personal gain.

D. Direct and Immediate Relationship between Source of Funding and an Event

Expenses may only be accepted from an entity or entities that have a significant role in organizing and conducting a trip, and that also have a clear and defined organizational interest in the purpose of the trip or location being visited. Expenses may not be accepted from a source that has merely donated monetary or in-kind support to the trip but does not have a significant role in organizing and conducting the trip.

E. One-day Event Trips Sponsored by a Private Entity that Retains or Employs a Lobbyist

The Committee will authorize a Member, officer, or employee to accept a second night's lodging and meal expenses in order for the individual to participate in a one-day event when it determines that such expenses are necessary due to availability of transportation to or from the event, or in those circumstances when an additional night's stay is practically required in order to facilitate the individual's full participation in the event. The Member, officer, or employee seeking approval for a two-night stay *must request approval from the Committee.*

In determining whether to permit a second night's stay, the Committee will consider the following factors:

(1) the availability of transportation to and from the location of the one-day event;

(2) whether the trip is outside the continental United States or involves travel across two or more time zones;

(3) whether the Member or staff person is participating in a full-day's worth of officially-connected activities (*e.g.*, is the individual giving a speech, taking part in fact-finding, observing presentations, or participating in a panel discussion); or

(4) any other *exceptional* circumstances that are described in detail by the traveler.

F. De Minimis Lobbyist Involvement in Planning, Organizing, Requesting, or Arranging a Trip

Member and staff participation in officially-connected travel that is in any way planned, organized, requested, or arranged by a lobbyist is *prohibited*, except as provided below:

(1) when the travel is sponsored by an institution of higher education within the meaning of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965; or

(2) when the travel is for a one-day event trip *and* the involvement of a lobbyist in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging the trip is *de minimis*, meaning only negligible or otherwise inconsequential in terms of time and expense to the overall planning and purpose of the trip.

G. Information that must be Submitted to the Standards Committee for Purposes of Receiving Prior Approval of Privately-Sponsored Travel

A private sponsor offering officially-connected travel to a Member, officer, or employ must complete and sign a Private Sponsor Certification Form, and provide a copy of that form to the invitee(s). The sponsor should not submit that form directly to the Committee. Private sponsors are strongly urged to submit the form to the invitee(s) at least 30 days before the travel is scheduled to begin.

A Member, officer, or employee must submit to the Committee a completed and signed Privately Sponsored Travel Approval Form that attaches or includes the Private Sponsor Certification Form and, for staff travel, a copy of the Advance Authorization of Employee Travel Form.

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct**

**PRIVATE SPONSOR TRAVEL CERTIFICATION FORM
(provide directly to invitee)**

This form should be completed by private entities offering to provide travel or reimbursement for travel to House Members, officers or employees under House Rule XXV, clause 5. A completed copy of the form should be provided to each invited House Member, officer or employee, who will then forward the form to the Committee. The trip sponsor should NOT submit the form directly to the Committee.

Private sponsors are urged to submit this form to the invitee at least 30 days before travel is scheduled to begin. The failure to provide the Committee with adequate time to review the form and attachments may result in the invitee not receiving approval for the trip. The submission of an incomplete form will delay the review process. Before completing this form, sponsors are also urged to carefully review the Committee's private travel regulations, guidelines and advisory memoranda detailing the rules and restrictions for private travel, and to call the Committee with any questions. Please type form.

1. Sponsor(s) (who will be paying for the trip): _____

2. I represent that the trip will not be financed (in whole or in part) by a federally-registered lobbyist or a registered foreign agent (*signify "yes" by checking box*):
3. I represent that the trip sponsor(s) has not accepted from any other source funds earmarked directly or indirectly to finance any aspect of the trip (*signify "yes" by checking box*):
4. Is travel being offered to an accompanying family member of the House invitee(s)? Yes No
5. Provide names and titles of House invitees; for each invitee, provide explanation of why the individual was invited (include additional pages if necessary): _____

6. Dates of travel: _____
7. If travel is for participation in a one-day event, check one of the following:
 - a. One-night's lodging and meals are being offered: *or*
 - b. Two-nights' lodging and meals are being offered:If "b" is checked, please indicate the circumstances under which the second night is warranted: _____

8. Cities of departure – destination – return: _____

9. Reason for selecting the location of the event or trip: _____

10. Attached is a detailed agenda of the activities taking place during the travel (*i.e.*, an hourly description of planned activities) (*signify "yes" by checking box*):

11. I represent that (*check as applicable*):
- a. The sponsor of the trip does not retain or employ a federally registered lobbyist or registered foreign agent: *or*
 - b. The sponsor of the trip is an institution of higher education within the meaning of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965: *or*
 - c. The trip is for attendance at a one-day event *and* lobbyist involvement in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging the trip was *de minimis* under the Committee's travel regulations.
12. If the trip is not sponsored by an institution of higher education, I represent that a federally-registered lobbyist or foreign agent will not accompany House Members or employees on any segment of the trip (*signify "yes" by checking box*):
13. Private sponsors must have a direct and immediate relationship with to the purpose of the trip or location being visited. Please describe the role of the sponsor(s) in organizing and conducting the trip:
- _____
- _____
14. Describe the sponsor's organizational interest in the purpose of the trip: _____
- _____
- _____
15. Describe the type and class of the transportation being provided. Indicate whether coach, business-class or first-class transportation will be provided. In addition, for travel via aircraft, please indicate if travel is being offered on a commercial flight, chartered flight or on an aircraft operated or paid for by a carrier not licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration to operate for compensation or hire (*i.e.*, a private aircraft). If first-class fare is being provided, or if travel is via chartered or private aircraft, please provide an explanation describing why such travel is warranted: _____
- _____
- _____
16. I represent that the expenditures related to local area travel during the trip will be unrelated to personal or recreational activities of the invitee(s) (*signify "yes" by checking box*):
17. Name of hotel or other lodging facility: _____
18. Cost per night of hotel or other lodging facility (approximate cost may be provided): _____
- _____
19. Reason(s) for selecting hotel or other lodging facility: _____
- _____
- _____
20. I represent that either (*check one of the following*):
- a. The trip involves an event that is arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation and that meals provided to congressional participants are similar to those provided to or purchased by other event attendees: *or*
 - b. The trip involves events that are arranged or organized *specifically with regard* to congressional participation:
- If "b" is checked, detail the cost per day of meals (approximate cost may be provided): _____
- _____

21. TOTAL EXPENSES FOR EACH PARTICIPANT:

<input type="checkbox"/> actual amounts <input type="checkbox"/> good faith estimates	Total <i>Transportation</i> Expenses per Participant	Total <i>Lodging</i> Expenses per Participant	Total <i>Meal</i> Expenses per Participant
For each Member, Officer, or employee			
For each accompanying family member			

	<i>Other</i> Expenses (dollar amount)	Identify Specific Nature of "Other" Expenses (e.g., taxi, parking, registration fee, etc.)
For each Member, Officer, or employee		
For each accompanying family member		

22. I represent that reimbursement for miscellaneous travel expenses for the trip, such as travel to and from airports, security costs, interpreter fees, visa application fees, and similar expenses, will be for actual costs incurred and are necessary for the purpose of the trip (*signify "yes" by checking box*):

23. I certify that the information contained in this form is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Name and title: _____

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Fax number: _____

Email Address: _____

The Committee staff may contact the above individual above if additional information is required.

If there are any questions regarding this form please contact the Committee at the following address:

Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
 U.S. House of Representatives
 HT-2, The Capitol
 Washington, DC 20515
 (202) 225-7103 (phone)
 (202) 225-7392 (general fax)
 (202) 226-7172 (fax for travel approvals)

Version date 2/2007 by Committee on Standards of Official Conduct

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct**

**PRIVATELY-SPONSORED TRAVEL APPROVAL FORM
For Members, Officers and Employees
(submit directly to the Committee)**

This form should be completed by House Members, officers or employees seeking Committee approval of privately-sponsored travel or reimbursement for travel under House Rule XXV, clause 5. The completed form should be submitted directly to the Committee by each invited House Member, officer or employee, together with the completed and signed Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form.

Members, officers and employees seeking approval for travel are urged to submit all forms to the Committee at least 30 days before travel is scheduled to begin. The failure to provide the Committee with adequate time to review the form and attachments may result in the invitee not receiving approval for the trip. The submission of an incomplete form will delay the review process. A copy of this form will be made available for public inspection. Please type form. Form (and any attachments) may be faxed to the Committee at (202) 226-7172.

1. Name of Member, officer or employee (traveler): _____
2. Sponsor(s) (who will be paying for the trip): _____

3. Is travel being offered to an accompanying family member? Yes No
4. Dates of travel: _____
5. If travel is for participation a one-day event, check one of the following:
 - a. Approval for one-night's lodging and meals is being requested: or
 - b. Approval for two-nights' lodging and meals is being requested:If "b" is checked, please indicate the circumstances under which the second night is warranted: _____

6. Travel destination(s): _____
7. Purpose of the trip: _____

8. Provide explanation of why participation in the trip is connected to your official or representational duties: _____

9. Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form is attached (*signify "yes" by checking box*):
10. For staff, Advance Authorization of Employee Travel Form is attached (*signify "yes" by checking box*):

11. I certify that the information contained in this form is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: _____

Office address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Committee staff may contact you if additional information is required.

If there are any questions regarding this form please contact the Committee:

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