

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515

September 23, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO ALL MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES

FROM: **Committee on Standards of Official Conduct**
Gene Green, Acting Chairman
Doc Hastings, Ranking Republican Member

SUBJECT: Changes to the Pre-Approval Process for Officially-Connected Travel Paid for by a Private Source

This memorandum will outline two key changes to the travel approval process for privately funded officially-connected travel. The changes are (1) a new, hard deadline for pre-trip approval requests to be submitted to the Standards Committee, and (2) information on updates to the forms to be used in making requests to participate in such travel and in disclosing the travel after the trip has been completed.

I. TRAVEL REQUESTS MUST BE SUBMITTED NO LATER THAN 14 DAYS PRIOR TO TRIP

Despite repeated requests from the Committee that travel forms be submitted 30 days prior to the departure date of proposed travel, many Members and staff have continued to submit pre-trip approval requests far short of that guideline, often only a day or two prior to the start of the trip in question. In the vast majority of cases, such belated requests are not due to any special circumstances, but instead stem merely from a failure to submit the request in a timely fashion. The Committee has nonetheless generally processed such pre-trip approval requests. This practice has, however, proven to be too burdensome.

To address this burden the Committee generally will no longer process pre-trip approval requests submitted after the deadline noted in the process detailed below. However, recognizing that most trips cannot be arranged 30 days in advance, the Committee has changed the deadline for submitting pre-trip approval requests from 30 days to 14 days. *This means that pre-trip approval requests, including all the requisite information and documentation, must be submitted to the Committee no less than 14 days before the start date of a trip, even if the Committee has approved of the participation of another Member or staff member in a particular trip.* This deadline is calendar days, and includes weekend days and holidays. It applies irrespective of whether or not the House is in session. *The new deadline will be effective for any trip commencing on or after October 21, 2008.*

Each individual Member or House employee must obtain Committee approval prior to participating in a privately funded officially-connected trip. Failure to obtain pre-trip approval may result in the participating Member or staff member having to reimburse the sponsor of a trip from the travel participant's personal funds, a Member's principal campaign committee funds, or the Member's MRA (Member's Representational Allowance). Use of the MRA for such travel must comply with the rules and regulations governing official travel that are issued by the Committee on House Administration. Guidance on those regulations should be sought from that committee directly.

The only exception to the new 14-day deadline will be for instances when a House Member receives a last-minute request from a media outlet to appear for purposes of a media interview or appearance. Otherwise, exceptions to the 14-day deadline will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. "Exceptional circumstances" do *not* include instances when the sponsor provides the prospective traveler with an invitation less than 14 days before the trip, or when prospective travelers fail to forward their requests to the Committee until after the 14-day deadline has passed.

Anyone who fails to submit a request for privately-funded travel prior to the 14-day deadline may still be able to participate in a trip using one of the alternate funding sources listed above. Specifically, if a Member deems that his or her participation in a trip is officially-connected, or that the participation of an employee in their personal office is officially-connected, then monies from that Member's MRA or principal campaign committee may be acceptable alternative sources of funding to facilitate participation on the trip. Members (but not staff) may also use their personal funds to pay for official travel.

II. NEW FORMS FOR PRIVATELY FUNDED TRAVEL REQUESTS

In response to concerns expressed by staff about the public disclosure of their signatures on paperwork related to privately-funded officially-connected travel, the Committee has created new forms for use in the travel pre-trip approval and post-travel disclosure processes. On the revised forms, any signature required of a staff member will now appear on the first page of the form. The initial (signature) pages of both the Traveler Form and Employee Post-Travel Disclosure Form will not be made available for public inspection by the Clerk.

The Committee has also made minor editorial changes to all forms related to the travel process in an effort to assist filers in completing them correctly. In addition, the Committee has issued instructions to provide additional information to individuals completing the Traveler Form. Copies of all rules, forms, and instructions relating to travel are available on the Standards Committee website at <http://www.ethics.house.gov>.

Please contact the Committee at (202) 225-7103 with any questions.

**U.S. House of Representatives
110th Congress**

**EMPLOYEE
POST-TRAVEL DISCLOSURE FORM**

This form is for disclosing the receipt of travel expenses from private sources for meetings, speaking engagements, fact-finding trips, or similar events undertaken in connection with official duties. This form does not eliminate the need to report all privately-funded travel on the annual Financial Disclosure Statements of those persons required to file them. In accordance with House Rule 25, clause 5, complete this form and file it with the Clerk of the House of Representatives, B-106 Cannon House Office Building, within **15 days** after travel is completed. The Clerk is to make the second page of this form publicly available as soon as possible after it is filed.

Name of Traveler (print or type): _____

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

SIGNATURE OF TRAVELER: _____

DATE: _____

I authorized this travel in advance. I have determined that all of the expenses listed on this form were necessary and that the travel was in connection with the employee's official duties and would not create the appearance that the employee is using public office for private gain.

NAME OF SUPERVISING MEMBER: _____

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISING MEMBER: _____

DATE: _____

EMPLOYEE POST-TRAVEL DISCLOSURE FORM

1. Name of Traveler (print or type): _____
2. a. Name of Accompanying Family Member (if any): _____
 b. Relationship to Employee: ___ Spouse ___ Child ___ Other (specify): _____
3. a. Date of Departure and Date of Return: _____
 b. Dates at personal expense (if any): _____
4. Itinerary (cities of departure – destination – return): _____

5. Sponsor(s) (who paid for the trip): _____

6. Describe meetings and events attended (attach additional pages if necessary): _____

7. Attached to this form are EACH of the following (*signify that each item is attached by checking the corresponding box*):
 - a. the Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form completed by the trip sponsor, including all attachments;
 - b. the Traveler Form completed by the employee; **and**
 - c. the Committee on Standards' letter approving my participation on this trip.
8. a. I represent that I participated in each of the activities reflected in the sponsor's agenda. (*Signify that statement is true by checking box*):
 b. If not, explain: _____

9. TRAVEL EXPENSES: *Obtain actual dollar amounts from the sponsor. If exact dollar amounts are unavailable by the due date, provide a good faith estimate and file an amended form once the correct amounts are received.*

	Total Transportation Expenses	Total Lodging Expenses	Total Meal Expenses
For employee:			
For accompanying family member:			

	Other Expenses (dollar amount)	Specific Nature of Expenses (e.g., taxi, parking, registration fee, etc.)
For employee:		
For accompanying family member:		

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

**PRIVATELY SPONSORED TRAVEL: TRAVELER FORM
For Members, Officers, and Employees**

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 25, 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 and any attachments. A copy of this form, minus this initial page, will be made available for public inspection. *Please type form. Form (and any attachments) may be faxed to the Committee at (202) 225-7392.*

YOUR COMPLETED REQUEST MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE NO LESS THAN 14 DAYS BEFORE YOUR PROPOSED DEPARTURE DATE. Absent exceptional circumstances, permission will not be granted for requests received less than 14 days before the trip commences.

Name of Traveler: _____

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

Signature: _____

Name of Signatory (if other than traveler): _____

For staff, name of employing Member/Committee: _____

Office address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address of contact person: _____

- Check this box if the sponsoring entity is a media outlet and the traveler is a Member traveling to make a media appearance sponsored by that entity and these forms are being submitted to the Committee less than 14 days before the trip departure date.

NOTE: You must complete the contact information fields above, as Committee staff may need to contact you if additional information is required.

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

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 (fax)

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

PRIVATELY SPONSORED TRAVEL: TRAVELER FORM

1. Name of Traveler: _____
2. Sponsor(s) (who will be paying for the trip): _____

3. Travel destination(s): _____
4. a. Date of Departure and Date of Return: _____
b. Will you be extending the trip at your personal expense? Yes No
If yes, dates at personal expense: _____
5. a. Will you be accompanied by a family member at the sponsor's expense? Yes No
b. If yes, name of accompanying family member: _____
c. Relationship to traveler: ___ Spouse ___ Child ___ Other (specify): _____
6. a. Did the trip sponsor answer "yes" to Question 9(c) on the Trip Sponsor form (*i.e.*, the travel is being sponsored by an entity that employs a lobbyist)? Yes No
b. If yes, check one of the following: N/A – Sponsor checked 9(a) or 9(b)
(1) Approval for one-night's lodging and meals is being requested: or
(2) Approval for two-nights' lodging and meals is being requested:
If "(2)" is checked, explain why the second night is warranted: _____

7. Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form is attached, including agenda, invitee list, and any other attachments (*indicate that form is attached by checking box*):
8. Explain why participation in the trip is connected to your individual official or representational duties:

9. **FOR STAFF:
TO BE COMPLETED BY YOUR EMPLOYING MEMBER:**

I hereby authorize the individual named above, an employee of the U.S. House of Representatives who works under my direct supervision, to accept expenses for the trip described in this request. I have determined that the above-described travel is in connection with my employee's official duties and that acceptance of these expenses will not create the appearance that the employee is using public office for private gain.

Date: _____

Signature of Employing Member

NOTE: This page must be submitted with your post-travel disclosure form within 15 days of your return, so you should maintain a photocopy of the completed form for your records.