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Members' Representational Allowance: History and Usage

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SUMMARY

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March 24, 2022

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Specialist on the Congress

Members' Representational Allowance: History and Usage

Members of the House of Representatives have one consolidated allowance, the Members' Representational Allowance (MRA), with which to operate their offices. The MRA was first authorized in 1996 and was made subject to regulations and adjustments of the Committee on House Administration. Representatives have a high degree of flexibility to use the MRA to operate their offices in a way that supports their congressional duties and responsibilities, and individual office spending may be as varied as the districts Members represent.

Following FY2010, when the appropriation for the MRA reached its prior peak of $660.0 million, the account

- decreased in FY2011, FY2012, and FY2013 (-7.1%, -6.4%, and -5.2%, respectively);
- increased from FY2013 to FY2014 (+1.9%);
- remained flat in FY2015 (0.0%);
- remained flat in FY2016 (0.0%);
- increased from FY2016 to FY2017 (+1.5%);
- remained flat in FY2018 (0.0%);
- increased from FY2018 to FY2019 (+2.0%);
- increased from FY2019 to FY2020 (+7.2%);
- increased from FY2020 to FY2021 (+4.1%); and
- increased from FY2021 to FY2022 (+21.0%).

While the FY2022 enacted level of $774.4 million represents the first appropriation to exceed the FY2010 level in current dollars, it remains below the FY2010 level in constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars by approximately 6%.

Although operating on a different timeline, changes to the authorizations for individual offices follow a similar pattern.

- In the 112th Congress, the House agreed to H.Res. 22, which reduced the amount authorized for salaries and expenses of Member, committee, and leadership offices in 2011 and 2012. This resolution stated that the MRA allowances for these years may not exceed 95% of the amount established for 2010.
- Individual MRAs were further reduced 6.4% in 2012 and 8.2% in 2013.
- In 2014, the individual MRAs increased by 1.0%.
- In 2015, the individual MRAs remained flat.
- In 2016, the individual MRAs increased by 1.0%.
- The individual 2017 allowances initially increased by 3.9% from 2016, and then by another $25,000 when the House agreed to H.Res. 411.
- In 2018, the individual MRAs increased by $25,000.
- In 2019, the individual MRAs increased by 1.0%.
- In 2020, the individual MRAs increased by $62,250.
- In 2021, the individual MRAs increased by $65,000.

This report provides a history and overview of the MRA and examines spending patterns in recent years. The data exclude nonvoting Members, including Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, as well as Members who were not in Congress for the entirety of the session. Information is provided on total spending and spending for various categories, including personnel compensation; travel; rent, utilities, and communications; printing and reproduction; other services; supplies and materials; equipment; and franked mail. The data collected demonstrate that, despite variations, many Members allocate their spending in a similar manner, and spending allocation patterns have remained relatively consistent over time.

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Introduction

Congressional office spending has been a regular topic of interest to academics, interest groups, newspapers, and constituents for many years. It is a topic frequently mentioned in newspaper articles that address individual Member spending or generally discuss financial accountability among elected officials, and it has been examined by watchdog organizations and interest groups covering congressional spending on internal operations generally. A few scholars have also examined how Members typically spend their office allowances, analyzing spending within broader theories of representation.[1] Individual office spending may be as varied as the districts Members represent. Factors affecting spending include the tenure or interests of the Member, levels of casework, geography, unexpected events, and even the congressional calendar.

While Representatives have a high degree of flexibility to operate their offices in a way that supports their congressional duties and responsibilities, they must operate within a number of restrictions and regulations. The Members' Representational Allowance (MRA), the allowance provided to Members of the House of Representatives to operate their DC and district offices,[2] may only support Members in their official and representational duties. It may not be used for personal or campaign purposes. Additional regulations or restrictions regarding reimbursable expenses may be promulgated by the Committee on House Administration, the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, also known as the Franking Commission, and the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and may be found in a wide variety of sources, including statute, House rules, committee resolutions, the *Members' Handbook*,[3] the Franking Manual,[4] the *House Ethics Manual,* "Dear Colleague" letters, and formal and informal guidance.[5]

This report provides a history of the MRA and overview of recent developments. It also demonstrates actual MRA spending patterns in recent years for all voting Members who served for a defined period.[6] Spending and practices across offices and across time vary, and an

[1] Burdett Loomis and Wendy Schiller, *The Contemporary Congress*, 5th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thompson-Wadsworth, 2006), Ch. 7-8; Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Congressmen in Committees* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 1; David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 49; Gary W. Cox and Jonathan N. Katz, "Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in the U.S. House Elections Grow?" *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, no. 2 (May 1996), pp. 479-481; and, David C.W. Parker and Craig Goodman, "Making a Good Impression: Resource Allocation, Home Styles, and Washington Work," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4 (November 2009), pp. 493-524. One study of MRA expenditures during the 106th Congress, for example, examined the effect of a Member's standing within the House, time in office, and plans for retirement or reelection on spending (Garry Young, "Choosing How to Represent: House Members and the Distribution of Their Representational Allowances," updated version of a paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 7, 2005, pp. 15-18, available at http://home.gwu.edu/~youngg/research/Homestyle%20Choices%20v3.02.pdf).

[2] For additional information on the resources available to Members of Congress, see CRS Report RL30064, *Congressional Salaries and Allowances: In Brief*, by Ida A. Brudnick.

[3] Available at https://cha.house.gov/.

[4] Available at https://cha.house.gov/.

[5] Available at https://ethics.house.gov/sites/ethics.house.gov/files/documents/2008_House_Ethics_Manual.pdf.

[6] Information on spending by certain Members was excluded from the observation data and summary findings because of characteristics related to the district or status or tenure of the Member. Nonvoting Members, including the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner, have been subject to the same expense formula as other Members since January 1, 1983 (P.L. 97-357, 96 Stat 1711, October 19, 1982), although the distance from D.C., size of population, or both, may vary greatly from other Members. Members who were not in Congress for all of a calendar year, whether the Member left Congress prior to the end of the year or entered any time after the beginning of the session, were excluded from the calculations from that year since spending for any portion may not be reflective of allocations for an uninterrupted year. This limitation resulted in the following number of Members included in the data: for 2009, 429; 2010, 428; 2011, 430; 2012, 426; 2013, 428; 2014, 430; 2015, 431; 2016, 431; 2017, 426; 2018, 424; and 2019, 428.

examination of additional Congresses would be required for a more complete picture of congressional office spending patterns.

Recent Actions: Expenses Related to the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act, P.L. 116-136, enacted March 27, 2020) provided additional funding to allow legislative branch entities "to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus, domestically or internationally." Funding included $25.0 million for the "House of Representatives, Salaries and Expenses." This account funds all activities of the House, but it does not fund salaries of Members of Congress.

Although individual MRA levels were not adjusted, Member offices were provided with additional flexibilities due to the coronavirus pandemic. On March 16, 2020, the Committee on House Administration (CHA) issued a "Dear Colleague" letter stating that, while ordinary commuting expenses are not reimbursable, staff experiencing "unique commuting expenses associated with the coronavirus" could seek reimbursement.[7] CHA also "authorized Member and Committee Offices to use their remaining LY19 funds towards unanticipated expenses for teleworking equipment, teletownhalls, and supplies. Acceptable purchases include desktop computers, laptops, tablets, docking stations, monitors, keyboards, mice, printers, multi-function printers (scanner/fax/copier/printer), toner, and cell phones for continuity of operations (COOP)."[8] Offices could also use available legislative year 2020 funds. CHA also adopted new regulations governing House paid interns due to the circumstances of the pandemic, including allowing funds to be used for interns in district offices, allowing paid interns to telework, and allowing House offices to issue paid interns House equipment such as laptops or phones.[9] Face masks purchased for official business were also deemed reimbursable.[10] Additional telework support, including technical assistance and training and continuity of operations (COOP) planning, was also provided by the House Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and the House Sergeant at Arms. In addition, the CAO "purchased several hundred plexiglass barriers of various types," and the purchase of additional barriers by House offices would be considered a reimbursable expense.[11]

Establishment of the MRA

The MRA, which was first authorized in 1996, was preceded by multiple allowances for each Member covering different categories of spending—including the former clerk hire allowance, official expenses allowance, and official mail allowance. The establishment of the MRA followed

[7] Dear Colleague letter from the Committee on House Administration, "Update about the coronavirus: commuting expenses," March 16, 2020. See also Dear Colleague letters of March 6 and March 11, 2020, and joint guidance from the Committee on House Administration and the Committee on Ethics issued on March 15, 2020.

[8] "Use of LY19 Funds for Continuity of Operations Supplies," March 24, 2020, available to House offices on HouseNet.

[9] Dear Colleague letter from the Committee on House Administration, "Updated House Paid Internship Program Regulations and Intern Telework Policy," May 6, 2020, and https://cha.house.gov/member-services/house-paid-internship-program.

[10] Dear Colleague letter from the Chief Administrative Officer, "Availability of Hand Sanitizer and Face Coverings for Member and Committee Offices," April 21, 2020.

[11] Dear Colleague letter from the Chief Administrative Officer and the Attending Physician, "Guidelines for Modified Office Occupancy," June 15, 2020.

efforts by the House, dating back to the late 1970s, to move to a system of increased flexibility and accountability for Member office operations.[12]

In September 1995, the Committee on House Administration authorized the consolidation of these allowances.[13] Subsequently, in November 1995, the FY1996 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act combined the separate appropriations for personal office staff, official office expenses, and mail costs into a single new appropriations heading, "Members' Representational Allowances."[14] According to the House Appropriations Committee report on the FY1996 bill, the consolidation was adopted to simplify Members' accounting practices and allowed Members to more easily show savings achieved when they did not spend all of their allowance.[15] Subsequent legislation in 1996 further defined the MRA and made it subject to regulations and adjustments adopted by the Committee on House Administration.[16] Additional provisions included in the FY2000 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act amended language regarding official mail and repealed obsolete language and terms.[17]

Subsequent MRA Legislation

Appropriations Acts: Administrative Provisions Related to Unexpended Balances and Deficit Reduction

Since the MRA's establishment, appropriations acts funding the legislative branch have contained—or continued, in the case of a continuing resolution—a provision requiring unused amounts remaining in the MRA be used for deficit reduction or to reduce the federal debt.[18]

This provision was included in legislative branch appropriations bills reported by the House Appropriations Committee in FY1999 and since FY2002. In some years prior to consideration of FY2002 funding, it was added by amendment, including

- H.Amdt. 458 (403-21, Roll no. 415) to H.R. 1854, 104th Congress (Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1996);

[12] See, for example, House Administration Committee Orders 35, 38, 39, and 40 (effective May 1, 1983; August 1, 1985; March 15, 1990; and May 8, 1991, respectively). These were reprinted within the notes for 2 U.S.C. 57 in prior versions of the *U.S. Code*.

[13] Committee Order No. 41, effective September 1, 1995.

[14] P.L. 104-53, 109 Stat. 519 (November 19, 1995).

[15] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1996*, report to accompany H.R. 1854, 104th Cong., 1st sess., H.Rept. 104-141, p. 10.

[16] P.L. 104-186, 110 Stat. 1719 (August 20, 1996); 2 U.S.C. 5341.

[17] P.L. 106-57, 113 Stat. 415 (September 29, 1999).

[18] The first few laws with this provision referred to the federal deficit. A budget deficit (or surplus) is calculated based on total spending of the entire federal government less total revenue collected. Since P.L. 106-57 (September 29, 1999), these provisions have also referred to the debt, stating any amounts remaining after all payments are made "shall be deposited in the Treasury and used for deficit reduction (or, if there is no Federal budget deficit after all such payments have been made, for reducing the Federal debt, in such manner as the Secretary of the Treasury considers appropriate)." Annual legislative branch appropriations bills with this language include P.L. 104-53, P.L. 104-197, P.L. 105-55, P.L. 105-275, P.L. 106-57, P.L. 106-554, P.L. 107-68, P.L. 108-7, P.L. 108-83, P.L. 108-447, P.L. 109-55, P.L. 110-161, P.L. 111-8, P.L. 111-68, P.L. 112-74, P.L. 113-6, P.L. 113-76, P.L. 113-235, P.L. 114-113, P.L. 115-31, P.L. 115-141, P.L. 115-244, P.L. 116-94, P.L. 116-260, and P.L. 117-103. The two long-term continuing resolutions (also known as CRs) enacted during this period—P.L. 110-5 and P.L. 112-10—continued this language from prior years.

- H.Amdt. 1245 (voice vote) to H.R. 3754, 104th Congress (Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1997);
- H.Amdt. 287 (voice vote) to H.R. 2209, 105th Congress (Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1998);
- H.Amdt. 166 (voice vote) to H.R. 1905, 106th Congress (Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2000); and,
- H.Amdt. 865 (voice vote) to H.R. 4516, 106th Congress (Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2001).

Other MRA Legislation Introduced

In addition to the appropriations language, numerous bills and resolutions addressing the MRA have been introduced (for examples, see tables in the **Appendix**). This legislation has generally fallen into three major categories:

- Attempts to change the MRA procedure or regulate, prohibit, authorize, disclose, or encourage the use of funds for a particular purpose.
- Stand-alone legislation that would govern the use of unexpended balances, including language to require these funds to go toward deficit reduction.
- Bills or resolutions that would limit or change the growth of overall MRA or adjustment among Members.

MRA-related amendments have also been offered to the legislative branch appropriations bills. These include

- H.Amdt. 213, which was offered to H.R. 3219, the FY2018 legislative branch appropriations bill, increasing funding for the Government Accountability Office, offset by a reduction in the Members' Representational Allowance, which failed by voice vote.
- H.Amdt. 214, which was offered to H.R. 3219, the FY2018 legislative branch appropriations bill, relating to the use of the Members' Representational Allowance for Member security, was agreed to by voice vote.
- H.Amdt. 642, which was offered to H.R. 4487, the FY2015 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, on May 1, 2014. This amendment, which would have prohibited the use of the MRA for leased vehicles, excluding mobile district offices and short-term vehicle rentals, was not agreed to by a recorded vote (Roll no. 188).
- H.Amdt. 1284, which was offered to H.R. 5882, the FY2013 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, on June 8, 2012. This amendment, which would have prohibited paid advertisements on any internet site other than an official site of the Member, leadership office, or committee involved, was not agreed to by a recorded vote (Roll no. 375).
- H.Amdt. 708, which was offered to H.R. 2551, the FY2012 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, on July 21, 2011. The amendment, which prohibited the use of funds to make any payments from any MRA for the leasing of a vehicle in an amount that exceeds $1,000 in any month, was agreed to by voice vote. This language was included in P.L. 112-74 and subsequent legislative branch appropriations acts. H.Amdt. 709 and H.Amdt. 710, which also proposed restrictions on the MRA, failed by voice vote.

Appropriations and Allocations: Timing Differences with the Overall Fiscal Year Appropriation and Individual Member Calendar Year Authorization

Funding is provided on a fiscal year (beginning October 1) basis and a single total amount for all Members is provided under the appropriations heading, "Members' Representational Allowances," within the House account "Salaries and Expenses" contained in the annual legislative branch appropriations bills.

Allowance or authorization levels for individual Members of the House are authorized in statute and are regulated and adjusted by the Committee on House Administration pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 4313 et seq. and House Rule X(1)(j). The individual MRAs for the 441 Members, Delegates, and the Resident Commissioner are authorized for periods that correspond closely to the sessions of Congress—from January 3 of each year through January 2 of the following year.

In addition to the complexity involved in different time frames and split responsibilities—with the appropriation on a fiscal year determined by the Committee on Appropriations, and the authorization roughly following the calendar year as allocated by the Committee on House Administration—the House has indicated that the total authorized level for all MRAs may be more than the total appropriation due to projections on spend-out rates.

For example, the House Appropriations Committee report accompanying the FY2020 legislative branch appropriations bill stated that, of the amount recommended, "Almost half of the increase is needed just to bring the appropriation more in line with currently authorized spending."[19]

A discussion of the use of prior spending patterns in the determination of MRA appropriations levels was included in numerous House reports, particularly in the first few years of the MRA.[20] For example, the FY1997 report accompanying the legislative branch appropriations bill stated,

> Many Members do not expend their full allowance. That is why the Committee bill does not fully fund this account. The frugality of those Members is already projected in the bill presented by the Committee. Since these prospective savings are already taken in the bill, they reduce the need for appropriated funds and, therefore, contribute directly to the reduction in federal spending and consequently lower the projected deficit. If the Committee bill were to fully fund the Members' Representational Allowance, the amount appropriated would have to be increased by $27 million. Thus, the account is underfunded by almost 7%.[21]

[19] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 2020*, H.Rept. 116-64, report to accompany H.R. 2779, p. 2.

[20] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1996*, H.Rept. 104-141, report to accompany H.R. 1854, p. 12; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1998*, H.Rept. 105-196, report to accompany H.R. 2209, p. 10; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1999*, H.Rept. 105-595, report to accompany H.R. 4112, p. 10; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 2000*, H.Rept. 106-156, report to accompany H.R. 1905, p. 11; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 2001*, H.Rept. 106-635, report to accompany H.R. 4516, p. 11; U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 2010*, H.Rept. 111-160, report to accompany H.R. 2918, p. 8.

[21] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill, 1997*, H.Rept. 104-657, report to accompany H.R. 3754, p. 11.

This difference was also discussed during a hearing on the FY2009 legislative branch appropriations requests.[22]

Pursuant to law, late-arriving bills may be paid for up to two years following the end of the MRA year.[23] The permissibility of payment for late-arriving bills does not provide flexibility in the timing of the obligation, a point emphasized in the *Members' Congressional Handbook*, which states: "all expenses incurred will be charged to the allowance available on the date the services were provided or the expenses were incurred" and the "MRA is not transferable between years."[24]

Fiscal Year Appropriations: Funding History

The MRA is funded in the House "Salaries and Expenses" account in the annual legislative branch appropriations bills. One single line-item provides funding for all Members' MRAs.

Prior to the enactment of FY2022 funding, the MRA funding level peaked at $660.0 million in FY2010. It was subsequently reduced to $613.1 million in FY2011 (-7.1%), and then to $573.9 million in FY2012 (-6.4%). The FY2012 funding level was continued in the FY2013 continuing resolution (P.L. 113-6), not including a 5.2% sequestration (i.e., an across-the-board rescission of nonexempt spending). The FY2014 level of $554.3 million was continued in the FY2015 act (P.L. 113-235) and the FY2016 act (P.L. 114-113).

At an April 20, 2016, markup of the FY2017 bill, the House Appropriations Committee Legislative Branch Subcommittee recommended a continuation of this level. At the May 17, 2016, full committee markup, an amendment offered by Representative Farr to increase this level by $8.3 million, to $562.6 million (+1.5%), was agreed to. This level was included in the House-passed FY2017 bill (H.R. 5325). H.R. 5325 was not enacted, however, this increase was provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 115-31), which was enacted on May 5, 2017.

The FY2017 level was continued for FY2018. The FY2019 level of $573.6 million represented an increase of $10.998 million (+2.0%). The FY2020 law (P.L. 116-94) provided $615.0 million, an increase of $41.4 million (+7.2%). The FY2021 law (P.L. 116-260) provided $640.0 million (+4.1%). The FY2022 law (P.L. 117-103) provides $774.4 million (+21.0%).

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[22] At this hearing, Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard indicated that the appropriation "is usually 92 or 93 percent of the authorization." U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, *Legislative Branch Appropriations for 2009*, hearings, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., April 9, 2008, pp. 518-519, 528-529.

[23] The two-year period for late receipts for Congress is shorter relative to annual appropriations for much of the rest of the federal government, which is subject to a five-year period (31 U.S.C. §1551 et al.). This is discussed in the *Principles of Federal Appropriations Law*. This publication states: "For appropriations of the House and Senate, unobligated balances more than two years old cannot be used short of an act of Congress. Instead, obligations chargeable to appropriations that have been expired for more than 2 years 'shall be liquidated from any appropriations for the same general purpose, which, at the time of payment, are available for disbursement.' 2 U.S.C. §102a." United States General Accounting Office, *Principles of Federal Appropriations Law*, Third Edition, vol. I, January 2004, http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/3rdEditionVol1.pdf, pp. 5-76 – 5-77. Chapter 5 ("Availability of Appropriations: Time") also has a section on the "Evolution of the Law" related to the treatment of unexpended balances. Another section in this chapter, on "Closed Appropriation Accounts" contains the following footnote on Treasury operations and the treatment of closed appropriations: "We commonly talk about "returning" appropriation balances to the Treasury. In point of fact, for the most part, they never leave the Treasury to begin with. An appropriation does not represent cash actually set aside in the Treasury. Government obligations are liquidated as needed through revenues and borrowing. Thus, the reversion of funds to the Treasury is not a movement of actual cash, but a bookkeeping adjustment that in the various ways discussed in the text, affects the government's legal authority to incur obligations and make expenditures."

[24] The *Members' Handbook*, available at https://cha.house.gov/.

Table 1 provides the appropriation for the overall MRA account for all Members from FY1996 through FY2022. **Figure 1** shows the same information in current and constant (2022) dollars. These show that the FY2021 enacted level remained below the FY2010 level in current (non-inflation adjusted) dollars. While the FY2022 enacted level represented the first appropriation to exceed the FY2010 level in current dollars, it remains below the FY2010 level in constant (inflation adjusted) dollars by approximately 6%.

Table 1. MRA Appropriations: FY1996-FY2022

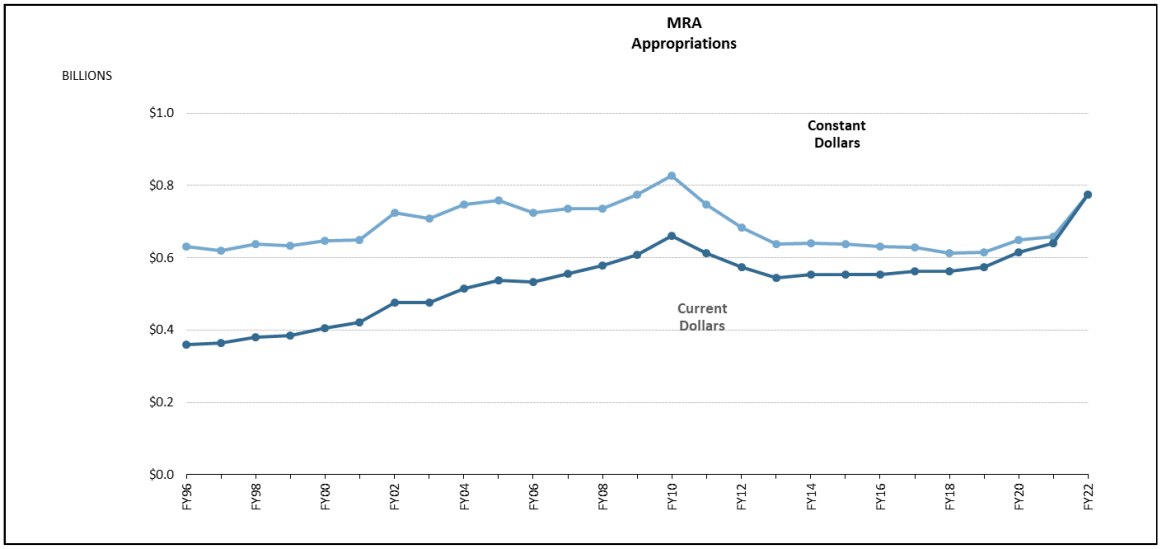
(in thousands of current dollars)

Fiscal Year	$	Fiscal Year	$	Fiscal Year	$	Fiscal Year	$
1996	360,503	**2003**	476,536	**2010**	660,000	**2017**	562,632
1997	363,313	**2004**	514,454	**2011**	613,052	**2018**	562,632
1998	379,789	**2005**	538,655	**2012**	573,939	**2019**	573,630
1999	385,279	**2006**	534,109	**2013**	543,919	**2020**	615,000
2000	406,279	**2007**	554,716	**2014**	554,318	**2021**	640,000
2001	420,182	**2008**	579,548	**2015**	554,318	**2022**	774,400
2002	475,422	**2009**	609,000	**2016**	554,318		

Source: Annual and supplemental appropriations conference reports, acts, and committee prints.

Figure 1. MRA Funding: Current and Constant Dollars

(FY1996-FY2022)

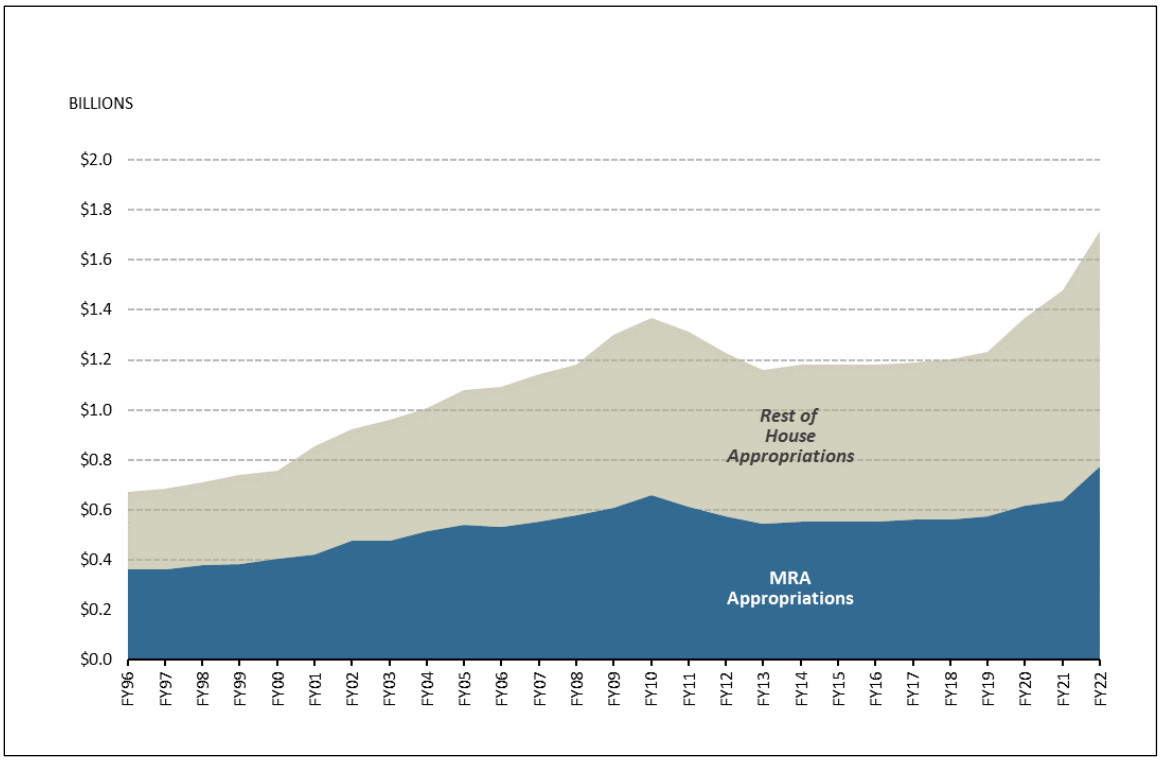


Source: CRS calculations based upon annual legislative branch appropriations acts, including supplemental appropriations and rescissions. Constant (2022) dollars based on CPI-U information from Congressional Budget Office, *An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2021 to 2031*, "Historical Data and Economic Projections," July 1, 2021.

Figure 2 shows that the MRA is the largest category of appropriations within the House of Representatives, regularly comprising approximately 45%-50% of House appropriations. The MRA appropriation does not include certain benefits—including any government contributions toward health and life insurance and retirement, which are paid through another House account.

Figure 2. MRA Funding Compared to Overall House Appropriations

Current Dollars



Source: CRS calculations based upon annual legislative branch appropriations acts, including supplemental appropriations and rescissions.

Establishment of a Separate Account for Paid Interns in FY2019

Prior to FY2019, any payments for interns in House Member offices were derived from the MRA. In FY2019, an administrative provision in the legislative branch appropriations act (P.L. 115-244) established a separate allowance for interns in Member offices.

In the initial year, $8.8 million was provided for paid interns. In FY2020, $11.0 million was provided; in FY2021, $11.0 million; and in FY2022, $15.4 million.

Individual MRAs for Members: Formula and Authorized Levels Since 1996

The MRA for each Member is set by the Committee on House Administration based on three components: personnel, official office expenses, and official (franked) mail. The personnel allowance component is the same for each Member. The office expenses and mail allowances components vary from Member to Member. The office expense component includes a base amount; a mileage allowance, which is calculated based on the distance between a Member's district and Washington, DC; and an office space allowance, which is based on the cost of office space in a Member's district. The official mail component is calculated based on the number of

nonbusiness addresses in a Member's district. The three components result in a single MRA authorization for each Representative that can be used to pay for official expenses.[25]

Table 2 demonstrates the variation in authorization levels that resulted from this formula since 1996. **Figure 3** presents this information graphically.

As with the overall FY2021 appropriation, the average individual authorization for 2021 remained below the 2010 level in current (non-inflation adjusted) dollars.

Additional information on actions taken to adjust the annual individual allowances follows.

Table 2. Variation in Individual MRA Authorization Levels: 1996-2021

(current dollars)

Year	Minimum	Average (Mean)	Maximum	Lower Quartile (25th Percentile)	Median (50th Percentile)	Upper Quartile (75th Percentile)
1996	$824,671	$886,751	$1,026,976	$865,420	$881,682	$902,167
1997	$836,231	$901,165	$1,038,535	$879,620	$896,606	$918,490
1998	$854,904	$919,396	$1,056,176	$897,967	$914,672	$936,395
1999	$885,424	$952,102	$1,088,405	$930,137	$947,661	$967,940
2000	$914,895	$985,831	$1,122,018	$962,571	$981,204	$1,001,807
2001	$1,009,420	$1,081,069	$1,216,831	$1,057,403	$1,076,568	$1,097,123
2002	$1,043,283	$1,114,319	$1,258,737	$1,089,931	$1,109,598	$1,130,975
2003	$1,116,519	$1,191,527	$1,338,831	$1,166,075	$1,186,107	$1,212,784
2004	$1,152,825	$1,234,976	$1,370,805	$1,206,116	$1,228,892	$1,258,233
2005	$1,188,715	$1,286,784	$1,524,617	$1,253,938	$1,278,424	$1,310,388
2006	$1,218,685	$1,335,086	$1,574,753	$1,301,692	$1,326,374	$1,360,650
2007	$1,262,065	$1,356,251	$1,600,539	$1,322,060	$1,346,203	$1,383,810
2008	$1,299,292	$1,393,391	$1,637,766	$1,359,350	$1,383,430	$1,420,454
2009	$1,391,370	$1,484,174	$1,722,242	$1,451,041	$1,475,849	$1,510,755
2010	$1,428,395	$1,522,114	$1,759,575	$1,488,258	$1,513,947	$1,549,464
2011	$1,356,975	$1,446,009	$1,671,596	$1,413,845	$1,438,250	$1,471,991
2012	$1,270,129	$1,353,205	$1,564,613	$1,323,334	$1,345,972	$1,377,773
2013	$1,183,717	$1,243,560	$1,356,445	$1,226,726	$1,240,212	$1,257,959
2014	$1,195,554	$1,255,909	$1,370,009	$1,239,263	$1,252,531	$1,270,493
2015	$1,195,554	$1,255,960	$1,370,009	$1,239,165	$1,252,531	$1,270,516
2016	$1,207,510	$1,268,520	$1,383,709	$1,251,557	$1,265,056	$1,283,221
2017[a]	$1,251,177	$1,315,523	$1,433,709	$1,298,423	$1,311,873	$1,329,280
2018	$1,307,510	$1,368,520	$1,483,709	$1,351,457	$1,365,056	$1,383,243
2019	$1,320,585	$1,382,329	$1,498,546	$1,365,073	$1,378,707	$1,397,053
2020	$1,382,835	$1,444,579	$1,560,796	$1,427,323	$1,440,957	$1,459,303

[25] For the 2021 formula, see U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from April 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 117-48, 117th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2657.

Year	Minimum	Average (Mean)	Maximum	Lower Quartile (25th Percentile)	Median (50th Percentile)	Upper Quartile (75th Percentile)
2021	$1,447,835	$ 1,509,219	$1,625,796	$1,492,110	$1,505,847	$1,524,314

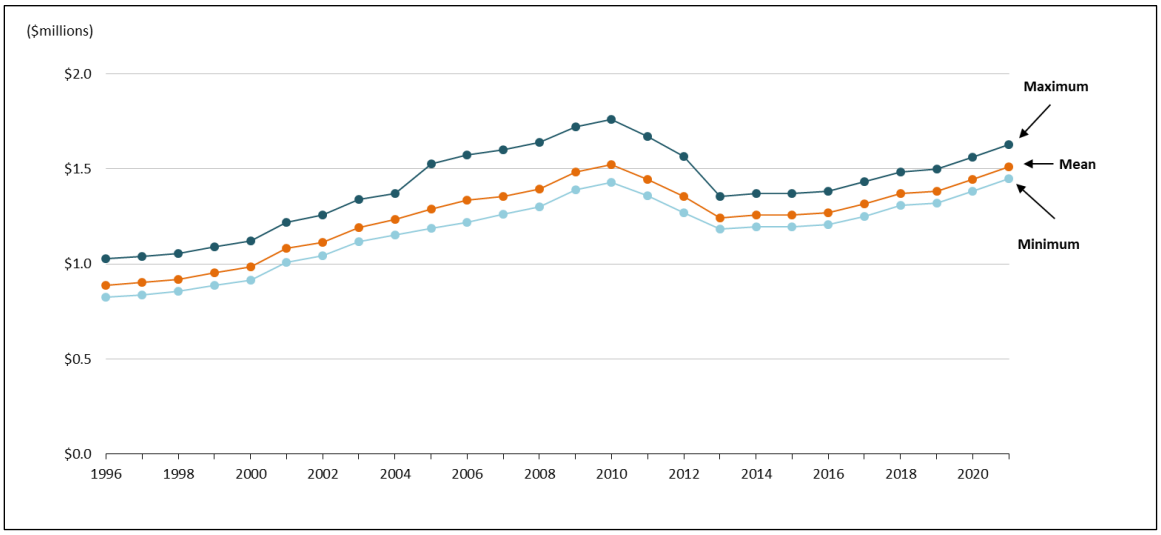
Source: CRS calculations based on the *Statements of Disbursements* for 1996-2021 (in current dollars). The Member allowances are available from January 3 through January 2 of the following year. This table will be updated when 2022 information is available.

Notes: The calculations exclude nonvoting Members, including Delegates and the Resident Commissioner. Members elected by special election and sworn in during the quarter are also excluded since the allowance level may be prorated.

a. Levels represent the initial 2017 authorizations and do not include the increase of $25,000 for each authorization provided by H.Res. 411, which was agreed to on June 27, 2017.

Figure 3. MRA Allowances by Member: Maximum, Minimum, and Mean

(current dollars, 1996-2021)



Source: CRS calculations based on the *Statements of Disbursements* including expenses for 1996-2021 (in current dollars). The Member allowances are available from January 3 through January 2 of the following year. This figure will be updated when 2022 information is available.

Notes: The calculations exclude nonvoting Members, including Delegates and the Resident Commissioner. Members elected by special election and sworn in after the start of the session also excluded since their allowance level may be prorated.

112th Congress: Resolution Reducing Individual Authorizations

In the 112th Congress (2011-2012), the House agreed to H.Res. 22, which reduced the amount authorized for salaries and expenses of Member, committee, and leadership offices in 2011 and 2012. This resolution, agreed to on January 6, 2011, stated that the MRA allowances for these years may not exceed 95% of the amount established for 2010. Individual MRAs, which reflect authorized levels from January 3 of each year through January 2 of the following year, subsequently were reduced, resulting in a total reduction of 11.08% from 2010 to 2012.[26]

[26] The *Statement* contains the following: "The total amount of each Member's 2012 Representational Allowance is 88.92% of the amount authorized in 2010. This is in accordance with a 5% reduction to the 2010 authorization mandated in House Resolution 22, agreed to on January 6, 2011, and a 6.4% reduction to the 2011 authorization as

113th Congress: Multiple Influences on Individual Authorized Levels

Individual authorization levels for 2013 (January 3, 2013-January 2, 2014), which were affected by both redistricting[27] and sequestration,[28] were reduced by a total of 8.2% according to the *Statement of Disbursements*.[29] For legislative year 2014 (January 3, 2014-January 2, 2015), each Member's MRA increased by 1.0%.[30]

Subsequent Years

The FY2015 MRA appropriations level remained unchanged from FY2014, and Members' individual allowances were continued from legislative year 2014 to 2015.[31]

The FY2016 MRA appropriations level remained unchanged from FY2014 and FY2015, although Members' individual allowances for legislative year 2016 were increased by 1.0%.[32]

The FY2017 MRA appropriations level increased by 1.5% from FY2016. According to the *Statement of Disbursements*, each Member's authorization for 2017 was increased "by approximately 3.9% of the average MRA."[33] This resulted in an average increase of approximately $47,000.

A shooting on June 14, 2017, at a practice for the Congressional Baseball Game, which wounded one Member of Congress, two U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) officers, and two members of the public in Alexandria, VA, had an impact on consideration of MRA funding for FY2018.

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reflected in H.R. 2055, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-74)." U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from October 1, 2012, to December 31, 2012, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 112-160, 112th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 2409.

[27] The individual authorizations correspond to the legislative year (January 3-January 2), while appropriations correspond to the fiscal year (beginning October 1). The 2013 authorization was the first to follow redistricting after the 2010 census and 2012 election cycle. Since the variables in the MRA formula—including distance from DC, the cost of office space, and the number of nonbusiness addresses—account for district characteristics, the individual MRA may vary following redistricting.

[28] Pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-25), as amended by the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-240), a sequestration order was issued on March 1, 2013 (White House, President Obama, Sequestration Order for Fiscal Year 2013 Pursuant to Section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, As Amended, March 1, 2013, available at https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/DCPD-201300132/pdf/DCPD-201300132.pdf).

[29] The *Statement* contained the following: "Because the House is operating under a continuing resolution at FY 2012 levels, the total amount of funds available for MRAs remains unchanged.* However, to account for redistricting and other factors, individual MRAs have been recalculated using the sum of the following components adjusted proportionally to ensure the total is consistent with 2012 funding levels.... **This amount was reduced on March 4, 2013, by 8.2% to comply with sequestration orders issued pursuant to the Budget Control Act of 2011*." U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from April 1, 2013, to June 30, 2013, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 113-41, 113th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2597.

[30] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from April 1, 2014, to June 30, 2014, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 113-141, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 2559.

[31] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from January 1, 2015, to March 31, 2015, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 114-29, 114th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2854.

[32] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from January 1, 2016, to March 31, 2016, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 114-120, 114th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 2861. For information on the relationship between the appropriations and allocations, see the section on "Appropriations and Allocations: Timing Differences with the Overall Fiscal Year Appropriation and Individual Member Calendar Year Authorization."

[33] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from April 1, 2017, to June 30, 2017, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 115-52, 115th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2664.

The report accompanying the legislative branch appropriations bill (H.R. 3162), in addition to addressing funding for the Capitol Police and the House Sergeant at Arms, indicated that the Appropriations "Committee has provided resources necessary to support the Committee on House Administration's plan to increase Member's Representational Allowance (MRA) by $25,000 per account this year for the purpose of providing Member security when away from the Capitol complex."[34]

The House approved the MRA authorization increases when it agreed to H.Res. 411, by unanimous consent, on June 27, 2017.

As stated above, during consideration in the House of the FY2018 legislative branch appropriations bill (H.R. 3219)[35] on July 26, 2017, two amendments related to the MRA were offered: H.Amdt. 214 was agreed to by voice vote, and H.Amdt. 213 failed by voice vote.

Subsequently, on July 28, 2017, House Sergeant at Arms Paul D. Irving issued a "Dear Colleague" letter announcing that his office "will assume the cost of and oversee future District Office security upgrades, maintenance, and monthly monitoring fees."[36] These upgrades were previously supported through the MRA.

On August 15, 2017, the Committee on House Administration issued a "Dear Colleague" letter announcing updates to the *Members' Congressional Handbook* incorporating these and other changes.[37] The MRA remains available for security measures necessitated by official duties as discussed in the letter and the *Handbook*.

The FY2018 act continued the FY2017 level of $562.6 million. According to the *Statement of Disbursements*, the "Members' Representational Allowance for 2018 utilizes each Member's 2017 amount and increases that amount by $25,000."[38]

The FY2019 act provided $573.6 million (+2.0%). According to the *Statement of Disbursements*, Members' individual allowances for legislative year 2019 were increased by 1.0%.[39]

The FY2020 law (P.L. 116-94) provided $615.0 million, an increase of $41.4 million (+7.2%). According to the *Statement of Disbursements*, Members' individual allowances for legislative year 2020 were increased by $62,250.[40]

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[34] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, *Legislative Branch, 2018*, report to accompany H.R. 3162, 115th Cong., 1st sess., July 6, 2017, H.Rept. 115-199, p. 3. See also the *Members' Congressional Handbook,* https://cha.house.gov.

[35] On July 18, the text of H.R. 3162 was included in a print issued by the House Rules Committee entitled, "Text of the Defense, Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, Legislative Branch, and Energy And Water Development National Security Appropriations Act, 2018" (Committee Print 115-30, which also contains the text of H.R. 3219, H.R. 2998, and H.R. 3266). Subsequently, the House agreed on September 14 to H.Res. 500, which included the text of Rules Committee Print 115-31, as amended, in an amendment in the nature of a substitute for H.R. 3354. The text of the legislative branch bill, as agreed to in H.R. 3219, was unchanged. H.R. 3354, which then included text for all 12 appropriations bills, was agreed to in the House on September 14, 2017.

[36] Available to House offices at https://e-dearcolleague.house.gov/.

[37] The updated Handbook is available at https://cha.house.gov/.

[38] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from July 1, 2018, to September 30, 2018, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 115-161, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 2523.

[39] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from January 1, 2019, to March 31, 2019, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 116-26, 116th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2981.

[40] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from January 1, 2020, to March 31, 2020, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 116-116, 116th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 3399.

The FY2021 law (P.L. 116-260) provided $640.0 million (+4.1%). According to the *Statement of Disbursements*, Members' individual allowances for legislative year 2021 were increased by $65,000.[41]

The FY2022 law (P.L. 117-103) provides $774.4 million (+21.0%).

Guidelines, Operations, and Sources of Regulations

Expenses related to official and representational duties are reimbursable under the MRA in accordance with the regulations contained in the *Members' Congressional Handbook*.

The *Handbook*, for example, states that a

> Member is personally responsible for the payment of any official and representational expenses incurred that exceed the provided MRA or that are incurred but are not reimbursable under these regulations.[42]

Certain expenses, including personal expenses, greeting cards, alcoholic beverages, and most gifts and donations, are also not reimbursable. The MRA is not transferable between years, and unspent funds from one year cannot be obligated in any subsequent year.

Other limitations on the use of official funds are also contained in House Rule XXIV.

"Dear Colleague" Letters Related to the MRA

"Dear Colleague" letters—which are distributed among Members, committees, and officers—frequently mention the MRA. These "Dear Colleague" letters have announced changes in the dissemination of information or the processing of vouchers, elaborated on procedures, reminded Members and staff of guidelines on the use of funds, and asked for support for MRA legislation.

The Committee on House Administration, for example, has distributed regular annual "Dear Colleagues" announcing or explaining regulations, such as those pertaining to end-of-year expenses, district office space, and travel.[43] Other letters have been issued regarding allowable franking and MRA expenses for the annual Congressional Art Competition or travel for a Member's funeral service, as well as reminders of prohibited expenses.[44] The letters have explained the implication of new regulations, rulings, or decisions on MRA spending.[45] They also

[41] U.S. Congress, House, *Statement of Disbursements of the House*, as compiled by the Chief Administrative Officer, from April 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, part 3 of 3, H.Doc. 117-48, 117th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2657.

[42] The *Members' Handbook* is available at https://cha.house.gov/.

[43] For example, recent Dear Colleague letters issued by the Committee on House Administration have included "End-of-Year Expenses: Policies and Best Practices," November 15, 2021; "End-of-Year Expenses: Policies and Best Practices," December 6, 2018; and "Updates to the Members' and Committees' Congressional Handbooks," March 5, 2018.

[44] For example, Dear Colleague letter from the Sergeant at Arms related to travel for the funeral of a deceased Member of Congress, March 19, 2018; Dear Colleague letter from the Committee on House Administration, "2018 Conference and Caucus Retreats," January 8, 2018; "Non-Commercial Aircraft Travel," April 10, 2019; and "Joint House Administration-Ethics Guidance Regarding Redistricting," September 10, 2021.

[45] For example, Dear Colleague letters issued by the Committee on House Administration have included, "Using Your MRA for District Office Security Assessments and Upgrades," January 18, 2011; "Automated Calls to Mobile Devices," July 26, 2016; and "Availability of Hand Sanitizer and Face Coverings for Member and Committee Offices," April 21, 2020.

have summarized changes to the *Statement of Disbursements* and announced the publication of new quarterly information.[46]

Categories of Spending

House spending is categorized by the standard budget object classes used for the federal government.[47] These may include

- personnel compensation;
- travel;
- rent, communications, and utilities;
- printing and reproduction;
- other services;
- supplies and materials;[48]
- transportation of things; and
- equipment.

The disbursement volumes also contain a category for franked mail.

Certain costs are not included in the MRA and will not be reflected in these totals. The costs include the salaries of Members[49] and certain benefits—including any government contributions toward health and life insurance and retirement—for both Members and staff. Additionally, the range of items that may be covered by an office has changed over time.[50] The MRA also does not reflect spending by House officers and legislative branch agencies in support of Member offices.

Statements of Disbursements: Online Publication and CSV Availability

The *Statements of Disbursements* are published as House documents and were historically available in bound volumes. Beginning with the disbursements for the quarter ending September 30, 2009, the *Statements* have been posted on the House of Representatives website, House.gov.[51]

[46] For example, Dear Colleague Letter from the CAO [Chief Administrative Officer] of the House, "Increased Transparency in Statement of Disbursements," August 18, 2011; Dear Colleague Letter from the CAO of the House, "Statement of Disbursements to Publish Merchant Information for Purchase Card Transactions," CAO of the House, June 22, 2012; and Dear Colleague Letter from the CAO of the House, "First Quarter 2019 Statement of Disbursements," May 28, 2019.

[47] This classification system is based on U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *OMB Circular A-11*, 2019 edition, https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-for-agencies/circulars/.

[48] This may include, for example, office supplies, bottled water, and publication/reference material.

[49] Member pay is included in a permanent appropriation (P.L. 97-51; 95 Stat. 966; September 11, 1981).

[50] For example, in a "Dear Colleague" letter of April 20, 2009, the Committee on House Administration announced that effective June 1, 2009, the transit benefit program would be administered centrally and available to all qualifying House employees. Previously, Members could determine whether or not to provide the transit benefit to their employees from the MRA, and those who offered this benefit would record the expenditure under the personnel benefits category. For another example, certain security-related costs, including "the cost of ... District Office security upgrades, maintenance, and monthly monitoring fees," is now supported by the House Sergeant at Arms ("Dear Colleague" letter of July 28, 2017, issued by House Sergeant at Arms Paul D. Irving).

[51] The *Statements of Disbursements* are available at https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained/open-government/statement-of-disbursements.

Beginning with disbursements covering January-March 2016, this website provides SOD information in a sortable CSV (comma-separated values) format.

The MRA in Historical Practice: An Analysis of Spending in Selected Years

This section examines the use of the MRA in practice in recent years.

Methodology

Disbursement information for each authorization year may appear in *Statements* for 12 quarters, since, as discussed above, late-arriving bills may be paid for up to two years following the end of the MRA year (although unspent funds from one year cannot be obligated in any subsequent year). For example, while Members could only obligate 2011 MRA expenditures from January 3, 2011, until January 2, 2012, late-arriving receipts could be paid through the quarter ending December 31, 2013. While some bills, particularly from outside vendors, may be settled up to eight quarters after the end of the MRA year, the vast majority of billing occurs during the session or in the quarter immediately following the close of the MRA year. Billing for some categories—like personnel compensation—is almost entirely within the disbursements for the calendar year of study.[52] By examining volumes from subsequent quarters, in addition to those from the authorization year, it is possible to provide a more complete picture of spending patterns.[53]

Analysis

Numerous characteristics of individual congressional districts or Member preferences can influence spending priorities, which is reflected in the flexibility provided to Members in establishing and running their offices.[54] Despite some variations, the data, however, show a relative consistency in the overall allocation of MRA resources by category of spending both across Members and over time.[55]

Table 3 provides a distributional analysis of office-level data for certain categories of spending, while **Figure 4** demonstrates aggregate House spending in these years.

The office-level and aggregate data indicate that personnel compensation is by far the largest category of expense for Member offices, and it increased as a percentage of spending over this time period. Spending on travel and "Rent, Communications, and Utilities" remained relatively stable, while spending on franked mail decreased for the average and median Members and for the House overall.

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[52] Since the MRA is available through January 2, but the *Statements* for the fourth quarter cover obligations through December 31, personnel compensation for January 1 and January 2 in an MRA year will usually appear in the volume for the subsequent calendar year (January 1-March 31), under a heading indicating that it is billed to the previous MRA year.

[53] For 2018 and 2019, preliminary data are provided.

[54] These may include, for example: the cost-of-living in the districts from which Members are elected; actual transportation costs to and from the district or around the district; geographical size of the district; number of people living in the district; or other characteristics of a district that may influence spending patterns, including varying expectations among constituents for different levels or types of contact.

[55] See also information on average expenditures for FY2013 provided for the record during the House Appropriations Committee FY2015 hearings (U.S. Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, *Legislative Branch Appropriations for 2015*, hearings, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., March 6, 2014, pp. 292-293).

Table 4 shows spending as a proportion of the total individual authorization.

Table 3. Distribution of Office-Level Spending on Select Categories: 2009-2019

(percentage of total expenditure in the individual MRA)

Category of Expense	Year	Min %	Ave. % (Mean)	Max %	Lower Quartile (25th%)	Median (50th%)	Upper Quartile (75th%)
Franked Mail	2009	0	4	15	1	4	7
	2010	0	4	16	2	4	6
	2011	0	3	13	1	3	5
	2012	0	3	14	1	2	5
	2013	0	2	14	0	1	3
	2014	0	2	12	0	1	4
	2015	0	2	16	0	1	4
	2016	0	2	19	0	1	4
	2017	0	2	12	0	1	3
	2018	0	3	13	0	2	4
	2019	0	2	12	0	1	3
Personnel Compensation	2009	48	69	86	65	70	75
	2010	53	71	88	65	71	76
	2011	45	71	89	66	71	76
	2012	54	75	91	71	75	80
	2013	56	75	88	70	76	79
	2014	56	76	88	72	77	80
	2015	46	75	88	71	75	79
	2016	47	77	90	73	77	81
	2017	53	74	89	71	75	79
	2018	53	77	90	72	77	82
	2019	54	74	88	70	74	79
Travel	2009	0	4	11	3	4	6
	2010	0	4	15	3	4	5
	2011	0	4	11	3	4	6
	2012	0	4	12	2	4	5
	2013	0	4	13	3	4	5
	2014	0	4	15	3	4	6
	2015	0	4	15	3	4	6
	2016	0	4	13	3	4	5
	2017	0	4	14	3	4	5
	2018	0	4	16	3	4	5

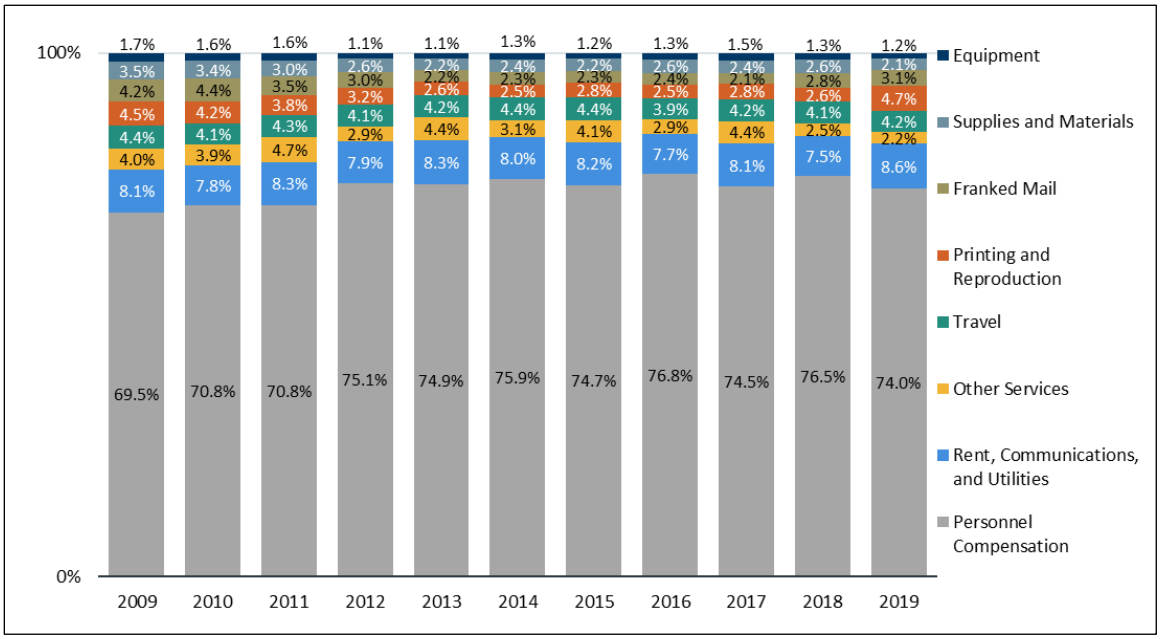
Category of Expense	Year	Min %	Ave. % (Mean)	Max %	Lower Quartile (25th%)	Median (50th%)	Upper Quartile (75th%)
	2019	0	4	15	3	4	5
Rent, Communications, and Utilities	2009	3	8	17	7	8	9
	2010	3	8	17	6	7	9
	2011	3	8	17	7	8	10
	2012	3	8	15	6	8	9
	2013	3	8	18	7	8	10
	2014	3	8	18	7	8	9
	2015	2	8	19	7	8	10
	2016	3	8	19	6	8	9
	2017	3	8	20	7	8	10
	2018	2	8	20	6	7	9
	2019	2	9	21	7	8	10
Equipment	2009	0	2	11	1	1	2
	2010	0	2	9	1	1	2
	2011	0	2	7	1	1	2
	2012	0	1	7	0	1	2
	2013	0	1	10	0	1	1
	2014	0	1	6	1	1	2
	2015	0	1	7	0	1	2
	2016	0	1	6	0	1	2
	2017	0	1	9	1	1	2
	2018	0	1	7	0	1	2
	2019	0	1	7	1	1	2
Printing and Reproduction	2009	0	5	23	1	4	7
	2010	0	4	14	1	3	6
	2011	0	4	15	1	3	6
	2012	0	3	18	0	3	5
	2013	0	3	16	0	2	4
	2014	0	3	14	0	2	4
	2015	0	3	23	0	2	4
	2016	0	2	24	0	2	4
	2017	0	3	17	0	2	4
	2018	0	3	23	0	2	5
	2019	0	3	22	0	2	5
Supplies and Materials	2009	1	3	9	3	3	4
	2010	0	3	11	2	3	4

Category of Expense	Year	Min %	Ave. % (Mean)	Max %	Lower Quartile (25th%)	Median (50th%)	Upper Quartile (75th%)
	2011	1	3	10	2	3	4
	2012	0	3	10	1	2	3
	2013	0	2	8	1	2	3
	2014	0	2	8	1	2	3
	2015	0	2	7	1	2	3
	2016	0	3	9	2	2	3
	2017	0	2	9	1	2	3
	2018	0	2	9	1	2	3
	2019	0	2	6	1	2	3
Other Services	2009	1	4	11	3	4	5
	2010	0	4	10	3	4	5
	2011	2	5	13	4	5	6
	2012	1	3	9	2	3	3
	2013	2	4	9	3	4	6
	2014	2	3	8	2	3	4
	2015	1	4	8	3	4	5
	2016	1	3	8	2	3	4
	2017	1	4	9	3	4	6
	2018	1	3	12	2	2	3
	2019	2	5	11	3	4	6

Source: CRS calculations based on the *Statement of Disbursements* covering expenditures for 2009-2019. For 2018, nine quarters are available as of the date of this update. For 2019, five quarters are available as of the date of this update. Preliminary data are provided.

Notes: Data exclude nonvoting Members, including the Delegates and Resident Commissioner. Members who were not in Congress for the entirety of the MRA year were also excluded, since spending for any portion may not be reflective of expenditures in an uninterrupted year. This limitation resulted in the following number of Members included in the data: for 2009, 429; 2010, 428; 2011, 430; 2012, 426; 2013, 428; 2014, 430; 2015, 431; 2016, 431; 2017, 426; 2018, 424; and 2019, 428.

Figure 4. Expenditures by Category, as a Percentage of Aggregate MRA Spending



Source: CRS calculations based on the *Statements of Disbursements*.

Notes: This figure only represents spending supported by the MRA. For example, this figure does not include government contributions for employee benefits (which are paid through another House account), Member salaries, the cost of DC office space, and various services provided by House support offices or legislative branch agencies. It also does not include categories of spending that occasionally appear in the *Statements of Disbursements*, but generally account for less than 0.00% of spending each year (e.g., "transportation of things"). Data exclude nonvoting Members, including the Delegates and Resident Commissioner. Members who were not in Congress for the entirety of the MRA year were also excluded.

Table 4. Spending as a Percentage of Authorization: 2009-2019

(based on Members who served the entire year)

	Percent of Members								Percent Spent	
Year	**<70%**	**70-75**	**75-80**	**80-85**	**85-90**	**90-95**	**95-99**	**>99%**	**Mean**	**Median**
2009	0.5%	0.5%	1.4%	5.6%	13.8%	28.7%	35.4%	14.2%	93.7%	94.9%
2010	0.2%	0.7%	2.6%	4.9%	13.1%	20.1%	37.1%	21.3%	94.2%	96.0%
2011	0.7%	0.2%	1.9%	5.8%	12.8%	24.0%	34.7%	20.0%	94.0%	95.6%
2012	0.2%	0.7%	1.6%	3.1%	11.3%	21.6%	38.0%	23.5%	94.8%	96.8%
2013	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%	1.4%	4.4%	17.8%	40.9%	34.6%	96.5%	98.1%
2014	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%	3.5%	7.0%	21.4%	41.4%	26.0%	95.6%	97.2%
2015	0.5%	0.0%	0.2%	0.5%	5.6%	17.2%	45.7%	30.4%	96.5%	98.0%
2016	0.2%	0.0%	0.5%	3.2%	9.5%	18.1%	42.5%	26.0%	95.5%	97.2%
2017	0.5%	0.0%	1.2%	4.0%	9.4%	25.8%	43.4%	15.7%	94.7%	96.2%
2018	0.7%	0.5%	1.9%	4.7%	10.1%	22.4%	42.7%	17.0%	94.3%	96.3%
2019	0.0%	0.2%	0.7%	2.1%	6.5%	16.1%	59.1%	15.2%	96.0%	97.4%

Source: CRS calculations based on the *Statement of Disbursements* covering expenditures for 2009-2019. For 2018, nine quarters are available as of the date of this update. For 2019, five quarters are available as of the date of this update. Preliminary data are provided.

Notes: Data exclude nonvoting Members, including the Delegates and Resident Commissioner. Members who were not in Congress for the entirety of the MRA year were also excluded, since spending for any portion may not be reflective of expenditures in an uninterrupted year. This limitation resulted in the following number of Members included in the data: for 2009, 429; 2010, 428; 2011, 430; 2012, 426; 2013, 428; 2014, 430; 2015, 431; 2016, 431; 2017, 426; 2018, 424; and 2019, 428.

Appendix. Examples of Legislation Introduced Affecting the MRA by Type

Table A-1. Examples of Legislation Introduced to Regulate, Prohibit, Authorize, Disclose, or Encourage the Use of the MRA for a Particular Purpose

Legislation by Congress
117th Congress
• H.Res. 8, Adopting the Rules of the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Seventeenth Congress, and for other purposes (related to Congressional Member Organizations);
• H.Res. 56, Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the amount of the Members' Representational Allowance should be increased in response to increasing threats against Members of the House;
• H.Res. 73, Providing the Sergeant-at-Arms with the authority to fine Members, Delegates, or the Resident Commissioner for failure to complete security screening for entrance to the House Chamber, and for other purposes;
• H.R. 1078, Prohibiting Perks and Privileges Act; and
• H.R. 4471, Improving Veterans Access to Congressional Services Act of 2021.
116th Congress
• H.Res. 6, Adopting the Rules of the House of Representatives for the One Hundred Sixteenth Congress, and for other purposes (related to Congressional Member Organizations);
• H.Res. 530, Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the amount of the Members' Representational Allowance should be increased in response to increasing threats against Members of the House;
• H.Res. 756, Moving Our Democracy and Congressional Operations Towards Modernization Resolution;
• H.R. 577, Prohibiting Perks and Privileges Act;
• H.R. 1626, To prevent the enrichment of certain Government officers and employees or their families through Federal funds or contracting, and for other purposes;
• H.R. 2370 House Intern Pay Act of 2019; and
• H.R. 7251, Proxy Vote Windfall Prohibition Act.
115th Congress
• H.Res. 5, Adopting rules for the One Hundred Fifteenth Congress;
• H.Res. 411, Adjusting the amount of the Members' Representational Allowance;
• H.Res. 642, Prohibiting the use of the Members' Representational Allowance of a Member of the House of Representatives to pay awards, settlements, or other compensation in connection with allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct by the Member or the employees of the Member's office, and for other purposes;
• H.Res. 724, Requiring each employing office of the House of Representatives to adopt an anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy for the office's workplace, establishing the Office of Employee Advocacy to provide legal assistance and consultation to employees of the House regarding procedures and proceedings under the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995, and for other purposes;
• H.R. 839, Public Service Spending Integrity Act;
• H.R. 2951, To allow Members of Congress to carry a concealed handgun anywhere in the United States, with exceptions;
• H.R. 4497, To amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to prohibit the use of public funds to pay settlements and awards for workplace harassment and discrimination claims under the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 which arise from acts committed personally by Members of Congress, and for other purposes;

Legislation by Congress

- H.R. 4503, Empowering Victims of Sexual Misconduct Act;
- H.R. 4674, Stop Taxpayers Obligations to Perpetrators of Sexual Harassment Act;
- H.R. 4822, Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act;
- H.R. 6640, Prohibiting Perks and Privileges Act;
- H.R. 6711, House Intern Pay Act of 2018;
- H.R. 6956, Intern Opportunity Act;
- S. 2236, Congressional Harassment Reform Act; and
- S. 2872, Congressional Accountability and Harassment Reform Act.

114th Congress

- H.R. 5993, CAN Act;
- H.R. 1381, Transparency in Government Act of 2015;
- H.R. 3077, Giveback Deficit Reduction Act;
- H.R. 3147, Constituent Services Disclosure Act of 2015;
- H.R. 5166, WINGMAN Act; and
- H.R. 5336, Taxpayer-Funded Travel Transparency Act of 2016.

113th Congress

- H.Res. 558, Prohibiting the use of the Members' Representational Allowance for the payment of the costs of first-class airline accommodations;
- H.Con.Res. 113, Amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to require any Member whose Members' Representational Allowance is used to pay for a flight on a private aircraft to report information on the flight not later than 30 days after the flight; and
- H.Amdt. 642 to H.R. 4487, to prohibit the CAO of the House of Representatives from making any payments from any Members' Representational Allowance for the leasing of a vehicle, excluding mobile district offices and short-term vehicle rentals.

112th Congress

- H.R. 3774, Citizen Legislator Act of 2012;
- H.Res. 135, Holding Congress Accountable Act of 2011;
- H.Res. 482, Prohibiting the use of a Members' representational allowance to obtain advertising on any internet site other than an official site of the Member involved;
- H.Res. 580, To prohibit the use of the Members' Representational Allowance for air travel expenses of any individual unless the individual provides an itemized description of the expenses, including the specific flight number, and uses a credit card provided by the House of Representatives to pay for the expenses; and
- H.Amdt. 709 to H.R. 2551, An amendment numbered 10 printed in H.Rept. 112-173 to require all mail funded by the Members' representational allowance and from funds for official mail for committees and leadership offices of the House bear the official letterhead of the Member, committee, or office involved.

111th Congress

- H.R. 5151, Congressional Oversight and Spending Transparency (COST) Act of 2010; and
- H.Res. 1707, Holding Congress Accountable Resolution of 2010.

110th Congress

- H.R. 5598, To establish a program under which employing offices of the House of Representatives may agree to reimburse employees for child care expenses, and for other purposes;
- H.Res. 1186, Prohibiting the use of funds in a Members' Representational Allowance for the long-term lease of a vehicle; and
- H.R. 6, Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007.

Legislation by Congress
109th Congress
• H.Res. 879, Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Members of the House of Representatives should use alternative fuel vehicles in their professional and personal lives; and
• H.R. 5338, CLEAR Act.
108th Congress
• H.R. 2106, To permit Members of the House of Representatives to use funds provided in Member's Representational Allowances to obtain POW/MIA flags and distribute them to constituents.
105th Congress
• H.R. 1046, To allow each Member of the House of Representatives to hire one additional employee, if the employee is hired from the welfare rolls, and to provide that, if such employment is in the District of Columbia, the jurisdiction represented by the Member may count the employment toward its welfare participation rate requirement.

Source: CRS examination of congress.gov.

Table A-2. Examples of Legislation Introduced Regarding the Use of Unexpended Balances

(not including regular appropriations provisions)

Congress	Bills
116th Congress	H.R. 1790; H.R. 1085
114th Congress	H.R. 3077
113th Congress	H.R. 106; H.R. 496
112th Congress	H.R. 121; H.R. 262; H.R. 297
111th Congress	H.R. 2656; H.R. 4825[a]
110th Congress	H.R. 272
109th Congress	H.R. 267; H.R. 1273
108th Congress	H.R. 297; H.R. 921; H.R. 2412
107th Congress	H.R. 47; H.R. 2414
106th Congress	H.R. 431; H.R. 2117; H.R. 2171
105th Congress	H.R. 80; H.R. 866
104th Congress	H.R. 26; H.R. 376; H.R. 572

Source: CRS examination of congress.gov.

Notes: Unless otherwise noted, bills were introduced and referred to committee, but no further action was taken.

a. H.R. 4825 was agreed to in the House on March 17, 2010. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and no further action was taken during the 111th Congress.

Table A-3. Examples of Legislation Introduced to Limit the MRA

Legislation by Congress
112th Congress
• H.Res. 22, Reducing the amount authorized for salaries and expenses of Member, committee, and leadership offices in 2011 and 2012; and,
• H.R. 1088, Reduction of Irresponsible MRA Growth Act.
111th Congress
• H.R. 3189, Reduction of Irresponsible MRA Growth Act; and
• H.R. 4761, Congressional Belt-Tightening Act of 2010.

Source: CRS examination of congress.gov.

Notes: Unless otherwise noted, legislation was introduced and referred to committee, but no further action was taken.

a. H.Res. 22 (112th Congress) was agreed to in the House on January 6, 2011.

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