

Reimbursement for State-Related Conferences

In January 2019, a request for information about state legislative policies regarding reimbursement for members' conference travel was posted to the electronic discussion group of the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. The specific question was:

We received a request for state legislature policies regarding reimbursement to members for state-related conferences. Does your chamber reimburse members for any of the following?

- (1) registration/conference fees
- (2) meals
- (3) lodging
- (4) travel
- (5) other

Responses from 23 chambers follow:

Alabama – Senate

In the Alabama Senate, members are reimbursed for all of the listed items for approved state-related conferences.

Alabama – House

The Alabama House reimburses actual expenses for out-of-state travel as long as the travel is approved in advance by the Speaker.

Qualifying members (that is almost all of the House members) are paid mileage and per diem for in-state, out-of-district travel.

Members get actual expenses for national and regional meetings that are held in Alabama.

Alaska – Senate and House

Yes for Alaska – all types of expenses mentioned for pre-approved travel.

Arkansas – Senate

Yes – for all.

Arkansas – House

Please note that these House reimbursement standards are for legislator travel APPROVED IN ADVANCE by the Speaker. Similar standards apply to travel reimbursements authorized through certain legislative committees.

Does your chamber reimburse members for any of the following?

- (1) registration/conference fees
 - a. Yes
- (2) meals
 - a. Yes, but reimbursement is based on the “meals and incidentals” portion of the federal General Services Administration’s per diem amounts specific to the conference city

(3) lodging

- a. Yes

(4) travel

- a. Yes. For driving, mileage reimbursement is based on current GSA rate and is calculated round trip from the member's home to the conference location. For flying, reimbursement is for reasonable round trip airfare PLUS round-trip mileage from member's home to local airport PLUS ground transportation (taxi, shuttle) at the conference location. By law maximum reimbursement is the lesser of reasonable airfare or of mileage driven.

(5) other

- a. Once members are authorized to attend a conference they are provided a detailed summary of reimbursable expenses. Exceptions to allowable reimbursements are rare and must be approved by the Chief of Staff and, ultimately, the Speaker

California – Senate

Yes – for all.

California – Assembly

Yes – for all.

Colorado – Senate

Yes – for all.

Georgia – Senate

Does your chamber reimburse members for any of the following?

- (1) registration/conference fees Yes
- (2) meals Yes
- (3) lodging Yes
- (4) travel Yes (with prior approval if out of state)
- (5) other Yes

Hawaii – House

Hawaii House members must first seek approval from the Speaker, but then may be reimbursed for all categories listed. "Other" would include ground transportation. Reimbursement is from each member's legislative allowance, which is a lump sum amount they receive each year for expenses related to their legislative duties.

Illinois – House

We do not allow reimbursement for these activities from state resources in the Illinois House.

Louisiana – Senate

Yes – for all.

Louisiana – House

Registration is reimbursed; lodging, at conference rate, is reimbursed; air fare (or mileage not to exceed air fare) is reimbursed. Meals and incidentals are covered by a per diem Members receive equal to their in-session per diem.

Michigan – Senate

Technically members could be reimbursed, but it has been a highly discouraged use of funds so it is not used. Also, the process to receive reimbursement is very public and is itemized in our journal. The legislator must also receive permission in advance. Thus, I cannot recall anyone in the last 8 years in Senate or House having used public funds for conferences and related expenses.

Nevada – Senate

1. Reimbursement of Legislators for attendance at meetings of national and multistate organizations of Legislators. Each Legislator who represents the State of Nevada at a meeting of a national or multistate organization to which the Nevada Legislature pays membership dues, is entitled to be reimbursed for up to \$1,000 per fiscal year for the following expenses incurred in attending the meeting:

- (a) Travel;
- (b) Meals and lodging; and
- (c) Registration.

2. The reimbursement must be paid upon approval of the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau of a request for reimbursement filed by the Legislator with the Accounting Unit of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

New Hampshire – House

The NH House typically will reimburse for: registration fees, lodging, airfare. Meals are never included. Members have to be approved by the Speaker to attend; in a chamber with 400, not all get to!

Oregon – House

In the Oregon House we provide an equal allotment for each legislative office that they can draw from to be reimbursed for these types of conference and travel related expenses – among other things. I need to sign off as Chief Clerk that it's a legislative expense.

Pennsylvania – House

We will reimburse for all of the below items as long as they are approved by the respective caucus leaders.

Texas – Senate

The Texas Senate reimburses members for all conference-related expenditures. A travel voucher request is turned in to my office for processing. Both the Secretary of the Senate and the Chair of the Administration Committee must approve the reimbursement. There is no limit to the number of conferences a member may attend.

Utah – House

The Utah House's current policy allows for reimbursement for one conference per year if you have served at least one Session and are a returning member. The items reimbursed are:

- Conference registration
- Meals not provided by the conference (up to the state reimbursement rate)
- Lodging
- Airfare
- Transport to/from the airport

Virginia – House

SHORT ANSWER: The Virginia House of Delegates reimburses its members for all of the listed items for approved state-related conferences. Members of the Virginia House of Delegates may attend conferences pursuant to prior approval of the Speaker.

LONG ANSWER:

(1) Registration/conference fees: House Members are eligible for reimbursement for the cost of conference registration, and are required to submit a receipt for this expense.

(2) Meals: House Members receive \$45.00 per day for meals when attending conferences not sponsored by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Itemization of meal expenses is not required.

(3) Lodging: House Members are reimbursed for their lodging expenses. Hotel rates for conferences are based on the rate the conference is given by the hotel(s).

(4) Other travel expenses: House Members also are eligible for reimbursement for the cost of airfare, luggage fees (maximum of 1 bag), and shuttle/taxi to and from the airport. (Receipts also are required for these expenses.) If House Members wish to drive their personal vehicle instead of fly to a conference location, they are eligible for mileage reimbursement up to an approved estimated airfare cost. (Note: The use of personal autos for approved state-related conference travel shall be reimbursed at an amount equal to the most recent business standard mileage rate as established by the Internal Revenue Service.)

Washington – House

Yes, assuming it involves legislative business and a travel authorization was submitted and approved in advance.

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) registration/conference fees | YES |
| (2) meals | YES |
| (3) lodging | YES |
| (4) travel | YES |
| (5) other | YES (parking, Uber/Lyft, etc.) |

Wisconsin – Senate



In the Wisconsin Senate, members are reimbursed for all of the listed items after approval from leadership. They are also reimbursed for items listed for pre-approved travel within their district.

Wyoming – Senate

Yes to all listed expenses, for authorized Legislative travel.