

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mark Amodei
Chair
House Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C., 20515

The Honorable Adriano Espaillat
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C., 20515

Re: Support retaining House Member Resource Allocation funding for Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Chairs Granger and Amodei and Ranking Members DeLauro and Espaillat:

We urge the House of Representatives to retain funding levels for Members Representational Allowances (MRA) to its FY 2023 amount. Congress's ability to effectively uphold its Article I responsibilities absolutely depends on the hard work of dedicated public servants. Members of Congress could not carry out their representational and policy making responsibilities without the support of staff. And that's exactly why Congress needs to do the most to support them. Providing the same funding for the MRA as in FY 2023 will enable personal offices to recruit and retain highly qualified staff as well as instill confidence in the workforce that funding will not be decreased.

Prior to the increases in the MRA made in FY 2022 and FY 2023, funding levels for personal and committee office staff were unsustainably low, which resulted in the highest staff turnover rate in over 20 years in 2021.¹ A cut to the MRA would lead to a crisis for staff that work in the halls of Congress, not to mention the Members and committees that they support. Providing staff with appropriate compensation for their work and ensuring sufficient staff levels in offices are essential to retain expert staff and promote a strong workforce.

A lack of adequate personal and committee office funding is a bipartisan problem, with lawmakers of both parties expressing support for funding increases. Several weeks ago, numerous House committee chairs and ranking members emphasized the need for higher operational budgets to attract and retain quality staff in the Committee on House Administration's allotment hearing. Most committees requested increases between five and 10% of FY2024 budgets specifically for staffing needs.²

¹ Hetrick, K. "Last year's staff turnover was the House's worst in decades, data shows" Legistorm, March 21, 2022, https://www.legistorm.com/pro_news/2907/last-years-staff-turnover-was-the-houses-worst-in-decades-data-shows.html?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=caught-our-eye

² For more information on which chairs and ranking members requests what funding, see [1] "Part 1: Committee Funding for the 118th Congress" Committee on House Administration, February 28, 2023, <https://cha.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/part-1-committee-funding-118th-congress> [2] "Part 2: Committee Funding for the 118th

There are many reasons why staff choose to leave Congress, but low pay and limited benefits consistently rank high on the list. Hill salaries are significantly lower than salaries in the executive branch and private sector.³ Furthermore, congressional staff salaries have not kept up with inflation. Since 2001, the chief of staff position is the only staff position in Member offices that has experienced salary growth in real dollars.⁴

Congress's long-running loss of staff capacity, particularly in committees, has severely undermined its ability to oversee and rein in the federal government's sprawling administrative bureaucracy. Congress is only as strong as its staff. If cuts to the MRA are made in FY 2024, it will be much harder to recruit and retain the best, and Congress will suffer. As the nation faces unprecedented new levels of spending and debt, it is imperative that Congress invest in itself to preserve balance between the three branches, ensuring that our government remains accountable to the American people.

Thank you for your consideration. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Taylor J. Swift, Senior Policy Advisor for Demand Progress at Taylor@DemandProgress.org.

Sincerely,

American Family Voices
Citizens for Responsible Ethics in Washington (CREW)
College to Congress
Congressional Management Foundation
Demand Progress
DotGov.com
Free Government Information
Issue One
Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies
Judicial Watch
Media Alliance
NALEO Educational Fund
P Street
Pay Our Interns
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
RootsAction.org
Social Security Works
Unite America

Kevin R. Kosar, American Enterprise Institute*

Congress" Committee on House Administration, March 1, 2023, <https://cha.house.gov/committee-activity/hearings/part-2-committee-funding-118th-congress>, and [3] Wilkins, E. "House Committee Chairs Seek Funding Bump for Salaries, Travel" Bloomberg Government, March 1, 2023, <https://www.bgov.com/next/news/RQUWHJDWRGG0>

³ Schuman, D. "Keeping Congress Competent: Staff Pay, Turnover, And What It Means for Democracy" Medium, June 6, 2018 <https://medium.com/@danielschuman/keeping-congress-competent-staff-pay-turnover-and-what-it-means-for-democracy-a6a4bfe2c1f3>

⁴ Cioffi, C. "This was supposed to be a big year for Hill pay. Staffers aren't holding their breath" Roll Call, November 18, 2021, <https://rollcall.com/2021/11/18/this-was-supposed-to-be-a-big-year-for-hill-pay-staffers-arent-holding-their-breath/>

Robert Cook-Deegan, Arizona State University*
Justin Strekal, Better Organizing to Win Legalization*
Lorelei Kelly, Georgetown Democracy, Education + Service (GeoDES)*
Rick Shapiro, Strategic Assets Consulting*
J.D. Rackey, Sunwater Institute*
Kevin Esterling, University of California, Riverside*

*= Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.

Cc: Members of the Appropriations Committee
Speaker Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries