

# COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

## EMPLOYEE POST-TRAVEL DISCLOSURE FORM Original Amendment

This form is for disclosing the receipt of travel expenses from private sources for travel taken in connection with official duties. This form does not eliminate the need to report privately-funded travel on the annual *Financial Disclosure Statements* of those employees required to file them. In accordance with House Rule 25, clause 5, **you must complete this form and file it with the Clerk of the House by email at [gifttravelreports@mail.house.gov](mailto:gifttravelreports@mail.house.gov), within 15 days after travel is completed.** Please **do not** file this form with the Committee on Ethics.

**NOTE: Willful or knowing misrepresentations on this form may be subject to criminal prosecution pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1001.**

- Name of Traveler: Katherine Sears
- a. Name of Accompanying Relative: Chris Bien **OR**  None  
b. Relationship to Traveler:  Spouse  Child  Other (specify): Fiance
- a. Dates: Departure: March 27, 2026 Return: March 29, 2026  
b. Dates at Personal Expense, if any: \_\_\_\_\_ **OR**  None
- Departure City: Washington, DC Destination: Middleburg, VA Return City: Washington, DC
- Sponsor(s), Who Paid for the Trip: Center Forward
- Describe Meetings and Events Attended: I attended presentations, discussions, and briefings on key issues impacting CA-20 and priorities for my boss, Rep. Fong. I learned nuanced insights on trade, AI, energy, and healthcare and heard from seasoned Hill/Administration officials on how to legislate effectively in a hyperpartisan environment.
- Attached to this form are **each** of the following, *signify that each item is attached by checking the corresponding box*:
  - a completed *Sponsor Post-Travel Disclosure Form*;
  - the *Primary Trip Sponsor Form* completed by the trip sponsor **prior** to the trip, **including all** attachments **and** the *Additional Sponsor Form(s)*;
  - page 2 of the completed *Traveler Form* submitted by the employee; **and**
  - the letter from the Committee on Ethics approving my participation on this trip.
- a.  I represent that I participated in each of the activities reflected in the attached sponsor's agenda. *Signify statement is true by checking the box.*  
b. If not, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of Traveler:  Date: 04/03/2026

I authorized this travel in advance. I have determined that all of the expenses listed on the attached *Sponsor Post-Travel Disclosure 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: Congressman Vince Fong Date: 04/03/2026

Signature of Supervising Member: 

# COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

## SPONSOR POST-TRAVEL DISCLOSURE FORM

Original  Amendment

This form must be completed by an officer of any organization that served as the primary trip sponsor in providing travel expenses or reimbursement for travel expenses to House Members, officers, or employees under House Rule 25, clause 5. **A completed copy of the form must be provided to each House Member, officer, or employee who participated in the trip within 10 days of their return.** You must answer all questions, and check all boxes, on this form for your submission to comply with House Rules and the Committee's Travel Regulations. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the denial of future requests to sponsor trips and/or subject the current traveler to disciplinary action or a requirement to repay the trip expenses.

**NOTE: Willful or knowing misrepresentations on this form may be subject to criminal prosecution pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1001.**

1. Sponsor(s) who paid or provided in-kind support for the trip: Center Forward

2. Travel Destination(s): Middleburg, VA

3. Date of Departure: Friday, March 27, 2026 Date of Return: Sunday, March 29, 2026

4. Name(s) of Traveler(s): Katherine Sears


*Note:* You may list more than one traveler on a form only if **all** information is **identical** for each person listed.

5. **Actual amount** of expenses paid on behalf of, or reimbursed to, each individual named in Question 4:

	Total Transportation Expenses	Total Lodging Expenses	Total Meal Expenses	Total Other Expenses (dollar amount per item and description)
Traveler	\$8.00	\$500.00	\$290.00	\$500.00 (waived registration fee)
Accompanying Family Member	\$0.00	N/A	\$170.00	N/A

6.  All expenses connected to the trip were for actual costs incurred and not a *per diem* or lump sum payment. *Signify statement is true by checking box.*

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

Signature:  Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Name: Riley Kilburg Title: Executive Director

Organization: Center Forward

**I am an officer of the above-named organization. Signify statement is true by checking box.**

Address: 1214A Ingleside Avenue, McLean, VA 22101

Telephone: (563) 542-6821 Email: riley@center-forward.org

*Committee staff may contact the above-named individual if additional information is required.*

If you have questions regarding your completion of this form, please contact the Committee on Ethics at 202-225-7103.

# COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

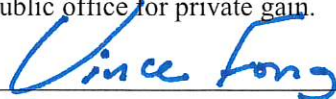
## TRAVELER FORM

1. Name of Traveler: Katherine Sears
2. Sponsor(s) who will be paying or providing in-kind support for the trip: Center Forward
3. City and State **OR** Foreign Country of Travel: Middleburg, VA
4. a. Date of Departure: March 27, 2026 Date of Return: March 29, 2026  
b. Yes  No  Will you be extending the trip at your personal expense?  
If yes, list dates at personal expense: \_\_\_\_\_
5. a. Yes  No  Will you be accompanied by a family member at the sponsor's expense? **If yes:**
  - (1) Name of Accompanying Family Member: Chris Bien
  - (2) Relationship to Traveler:  Spouse  Child  Other (specify): fiance
  - (3) Yes  No  Accompanying Family Member is at least 18 years of age?
6. a. Yes  No  Did the trip sponsor answer "Yes" to Question 8(c) on the *Primary Trip Sponsor Form* (i.e., travel is sponsored by an entity that employs a registered federal lobbyist or a foreign agent)?  
b. **If yes**, and you are requesting lodging for two nights, explain why the second night is warranted:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Yes  No  *Primary Trip Sponsor Form* is attached, including agenda, invitation, invitee list, and any other attachments and Additional Sponsor Forms.  
NOTE: The agenda should show the traveler's individual schedule, including departure and arrival times and identify the specific events in which the traveler will be participating.
8. Explain why participation in the trip is connected to the traveler's individual official or representational duties. **Staff should include their job title and how the activities on the itinerary relate to their duties.**  
~~As chief of staff to a Republican Member in a state with a majority-Democrat Congressional delegation, this conference will be critical to providing insight on where we can find bipartisan agreement on key legislative issues impacting CA-20, especially when it comes to energy, innovation, trade, and healthcare. The panels and the discussions fostered by them will ensure we can govern responsibly/productively in the current House majority and serve our constituents to the best of our ability in Washington.~~
9. **Yes  No  Is the traveler aware of any registered federal lobbyists or foreign agents involved in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging the trip?**
10. For staff travelers, to be completed by your employing Member:

### ADVANCED AUTHORIZATION OF EMPLOYEE TRAVEL

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.

Signature of Employing Member: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: 2/18/2026

# COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

## PRIMARY TRIP SPONSOR FORM

This form should be completed by private entities offering to provide travel or reimbursement for travel to House Members, officers, or employees under House Rule 25, clause 5. A completed copy of the form (and any attachments) should be provided to each invited House Member, officer, or employee, who will then forward it to the Committee together with a *Traveler Form* **at least 30 days before the start date of the trip**. The trip sponsor should *NOT* submit the form directly to the Committee. The Committee's website (ethics.house.gov) provides detailed instructions for filling out the form. The Committee will notify the House invitees directly of its decision and will not notify the trip sponsors.

**NOTE: Willful or knowing misrepresentations on this form may be subject to criminal prosecution pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 1001. Failure to comply with the Committee's Travel Regulations may also lead to the denial of permission to sponsor future trips. Signatures must comply with section 104(bb) of the Travel Regulations.**

1. Sponsor who will be paying for the trip:

Center Forward

2.  I represent that the trip will not be financed, in whole or in part, by a registered federal lobbyist or foreign agent. *Signify that the statement is true by checking box.*

3. **Check only one.** I represent that:

- a.  The primary trip sponsor has not accepted from any other source, funds intended directly or indirectly to finance any aspect of the trip; **OR**
- b.  The trip is arranged without regard to congressional participation and the primary trip sponsor has accepted funds only from entities that will receive a tangible benefit in exchange for those funds; **OR**
- c.  The primary trip sponsor has accepted funds, services, or in-kind assistance from other source(s) intended directly or indirectly to finance all or part of this trip and has enclosed disclosure forms from each of those entities.

If "c" is checked, list the names of the additional sponsors: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Provide names and titles of **ALL** House Members *and* employees you are inviting. **For each House invitee, provide an explanation of why the individual was invited** (include additional pages if necessary): Please see attachment

5. Yes  No  Is travel being offered to an accompanying family member of the House invitee(s)?

6. Date of Departure: Friday, March 27th, 2026 Date of Return: Sunday, March 29th, 2026

7. a. City of departure: Washington, D.C.

b. Destination(s): Middleburg, VA

c. City of return: Washington, D.C.

8. **Check only one.** I represent that

- a.  The sponsor of the trip is an institution of higher education within the meaning of section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965; **OR**
- b.  The sponsor of the trip does not retain or employ a registered federal lobbyist or foreign agent; **OR**
- c.  The sponsor employs or retains a registered federal lobbyist or foreign agent, but the trip is for attendance at a one-day event *and* lobbyist / foreign agent involvement in planning, organizing, requesting, or arranging the trip was *de minimis* under the Committee's travel regulations.

9. **Check only one of the following.**
- a.  I checked 8(a) or (b) above; **OR**
  - b.  I checked 8(c) above but am not offering any lodging; **OR**
  - c.  I checked 8(c) above and am offering lodging and meals for one night; **OR**
  - d.  I checked 8(c) above and am offering lodging and meals for two nights. If you checked this box, explain why the second night of lodging is warranted. \_\_\_\_\_
- 

10.  Attached is a detailed agenda of the activities House invitees will be participating in during the travel (i.e., an hourly description of planned activities for trip invitees). *Indicate agenda is attached by checking box.*

11. **Check only one of the following.**
- a.  I represent that a registered federal lobbyist or foreign agent will not accompany House Members or employees on any segment of the trip. *Signify the statement is true by clicking the box;* **OR**
  - b.  *Not Applicable.* Trip sponsor is a U.S. institution of higher education.
12. For *each* sponsor required to submit a sponsor form, describe the sponsor's interest in the subject matter of the trip *and* its role in organizing and/or conducting the trip:  
**Please see attachment.**
- 

13. **Answer parts a and b. Answer part c if necessary:**
- a. Mode of travel: Air  Rail  Bus  Car  Other  (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - b. Class of travel: Coach  Business  First  Charter  Other  (specify: Car or mini bus)
  - c. If travel will be first class, or by chartered or private aircraft, explain why such travel is warranted:  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 

14.  I represent that the expenditures related to local area travel during the trip will be unrelated to personal or recreational activities of the invitee(s). *Signify that the statement is true by checking box.*

15. **Check only one.** I represent that either:
- a.  The trip involves an event that is arranged or organized *without regard* to congressional participation and that meals provided to congressional participants are similar to those provided to or purchased by other event attendees; **OR**
  - b.  The trip involves events that are arranged specifically *with regard* to congressional participation. If "b" is checked:
    - 1) Detail the cost *per day* of meals (approximate cost may be provided): \_\_\_\_\_
    - 2) Provide the reason for selecting the location of the event or trip: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

16. Name, nightly cost, and reasons for selecting each hotel or other lodging facility:

Hotel Name: Salamander Middleburg City: Middleburg, VA Cost Per Night: \$250  
 Reason(s) for Selecting: Ample meeting space with necessary A/V near Washington, D.C.

Hotel Name: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost Per Night: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason(s) for Selecting: \_\_\_\_\_

Hotel Name: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Cost Per Night: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Reason(s) for Selecting: \_\_\_\_\_

17.  I represent that all expenses connected to the trip will be for actual costs incurred and not a per diem or lump sum payment. *Signify that the statement is true by checking the box.*

18. **Total Expenses for each Participant:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Actual Amounts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good Faith Estimates	Total <b>Transportation</b> Expenses per Participant	Total <b>Lodging</b> Expenses per Participant	Total <b>Meal</b> Expenses per Participant
For each Member, Officer, or Employee	\$60.00	\$500.00	\$300.00
For each Accompanying Family Member	\$60.00	\$0.00	\$300.00


	<b>Other</b> Expenses (dollar amount per item)	Identify Specific Nature of "Other" Expenses (e.g., taxi, parking, registration fee, etc.)
For each Member, Officer, or Employee	\$500.00	Waived registration fee
For each Accompanying Family Member	\$0.00	

19. **Check only one:**

- a.  I certify that I am an officer of the organization listed below; **OR**
- b.  *Not Applicable.* Trip sponsor is an individual or a U.S. institution of higher education.

20. **I certify by my signature that**

- a. **I read and understand the Committee's Travel Regulations;**
- b. **I am not a registered federal lobbyist or registered foreign agent; and**
- c. **The information on this form is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge.**

Signature:  Date: Friday, February 6th, 2026  
 Name: Riley Kilburg Title: Executive Director  
 Organization: Center Forward  
 Address: 1214A Ingleside Avenue, McLean, VA 22101  
 Email: riley@center-forward.org Telephone: (563) 542-6821

If there are questions regarding this form, please contact the Committee on Ethics at 202-225-7103 or [travel.requests@mail.house.gov](mailto:travel.requests@mail.house.gov).

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Shahid	Ahmed	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Jennifer McClellan	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Ahmed can offer insight into how the globalization of industries to domestic technology industries in the U. S. are impacted by investment in emerging markets.
Alyssa	Anderson	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Ryan Mackenzie	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee, Ms. Anderson can discuss the distinct market opportunities for U.S. businesses as it relates to nations in Southeast Asia.
Hailey	Barringer	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Emilia Sykes	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Committee on Science, Space and Technology, Ms. Barringer can discuss the advancements in energy technology being studied in U. S. research institutions.
Hillary	Beard	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Terri Sewell	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, Ms. Beard can speak to how strengthening ties with U.S. allies will provide opportunities for optimal trade outcomes for the U.S.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Caroline	Bender	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Erin Houchin	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Energy & Commerce subcommittee on commerce, manufacturing, and trade, Ms. Bender can discuss the distinct impact that the USMCA Trade Agreement will have on our domestic manufacturing industry.
Steffanie	Bezruki	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Dave Min	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Natural Resources Committee, Ms. Bezruki can provide insight on the impact of government regulation on energy pricing and access.
Jenifer	Bradley	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative John Rutherford	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Ms. Bradley can speak to opportunities for government funding related to securing America's health infrastructure.
Tristan	Breaux	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Shomari Figures	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, Mr. Breaux can offer insight into the future of energy infrastructure, and its impact on American economic development.

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<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Cara	Camacho	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Jim Himes	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Financial Services Committee, Ms. Camacho can speak to the impact that financial institutions have on the development of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence.
Yvanna	Cancela	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Steven Horsford	As Chief of Staff of a Member on the House Ways & Means Committee, Ms. Cancela can highlight the influence that the USMCA Trade Agreement will have on North American economies.
Sarah	Carlson	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Laura Gillen	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Ms. Carlson can touch on the advancements in artificial intelligence and how grant programs can keep American technology competitive.
Steven	Carlson	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Chris Pappas	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Veteran Affairs, Mr. Carlson can offer insight on how artificial intelligence can assist healthcare operations in VA hospitals.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Abby	Carter	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Suhaz Subramanyam	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Ms. Carter can highlight the advancements in artificial intelligence research in U.S. institutions.
Dylan	Chandler	Deputy Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Jason Smith	As Deputy Chief of Staff to the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Chandler can offer insights on Chairman's views on renegotiating the USMCA trade agreement.
Andrew	Christianson	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Dusty Johnson	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Select Committee on China, Mr. Christianson can highlight the importance of fostering investment in emerging markets in the Asia-Pacific region as a strategy to compete with Chinese influence in the region.
Dante	Cutrona	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative John Joyce	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, Mr. Cutrona can weigh in on the importance of strengthening health security as it relates to combatting bio attacks from foreign adversaries

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

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Reid	Dagul	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Ben Cline	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Mr. Dagul can touch on the national security risks the U.S. faces from its lagging cyber security protections in the healthcare and energy industries.
Tim	Del Monico	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Sam Liccardo	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Financial Services, Mr. Del Monico can discuss the obstacles present in the housing market that are leading to a shortage of affordable family housing.
Toby	Douthat	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Chuck Edwards	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on financial services and general government, Mr. Douthat can highlight the rapidly changing global financial services industry and its impact on U.S. businesses to invest in emerging markets.
Jordan	Downs	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Michael Guest	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, Mr. Downs can discuss the opportunities for government programs to bolster our domestic hydroelectric power industry.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Mark	Dreiling	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Don Bacon	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Agriculture Committee, Mr. Dreiling can highlight the unique challenges faced by the dairy and livestock industries as it relates to the USMCA Trade Agreement.
Jaryn	Emhof	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Daniel Webster	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Ms. Emhof can discuss opportunities for expanded domestic energy production on federal lands.
Jack	Ganter	Legislative Director	Office of Representative Buddy Carter	As the Legislative Director to a Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Ganter can discuss the impact that artificial intelligence has and will have on the communications and technology industry.
Sarah	Gilbert	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Neal Dunn	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the U.S. and the Chinese Communist Party, Ms. Gilbert can discuss the impact that government regulation on the energy industry has on U.S. competitiveness with China.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Cesar	Gonzalez	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Mario Diaz-Balart	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Appropriations, Mr. Gonzalez can speak to opportunities for funding programs that promote healthcare security, including cybersecurity and pandemic preparedness efforts.
Jenny	Gorski	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Michael Baumgartner	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on South and Central Asia, Ms. Gorski can speak to the unique opportunities for U.S. industries to invest and develop relationships with emerging markets in Southeast Asia.
Liana	Guerra	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Darren Soto	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Natural Resources Committee, Ms. Guerra can address the unique energy and grid issues facing coastal regions.
Aaron	Harawa	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Glenn Ivey	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Appropriations, Mr. Harawa can provide insight on how U. S. investment in technology programs will impact our artificial intelligence capabilities.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Nick	Hawatmeh	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Lisa McClain	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Committee on Financial Services, Mr. Hawatmeh can highlight the impacts that government mortgage subsidy programs have had on the U.S. housing market.
Maeve	Healy	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Grace Meng	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Committee, Ms. Healy can discuss how reducing investments in organizations with an international focus can impact U.S. companies' ability to invest in emerging markets.
Emily	Hebein	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Bob Latta	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy, Ms. Hebein can offer insight on the impact that changes in energy policy will have on the economic prosperity of the local economies in the U.S.
Chloe	Hunt	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Sean Casten	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Financial Services Committee, Ms. Hunt will provide insights on the impact that financial markets have on the supply of and demand for housing.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Nancy	Juarez	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Ami Bera	As the Chief of Staff to a Member on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ms. Juarez can share her insights on how positive relationships with our allies impact opportunities for economic collaboration in emerging markets.
Melissa	Jung	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Nydia Velázquez	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Small Business Committee, Ms. Jung can offer insight on the impact that the USMCA Trade Agreement has on small businesses.
Carolyn	King	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Rob Wittman	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Natural Resources Committee, Ms. King can discuss how the domestic production of critical minerals and other valueable resources will impact the USMCA renegotiation.
Desiree	Koetzle	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Pete Stauber	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Small Business Subcommittee on Rural Development, Energy, and Supply Chains, Ms. Koetzle can discuss the impact that the USMCA Trade Agreement has had on rural economies in the U.S.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
John	Lee	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Nikki Budzinski	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Agriculture Committee, Mr. Lee can speak to housing issues in rural communities and opportunities for federal support.
Yujin	Lee	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Rob Menendez	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Ms. Lee can provide insight on the energy policy as it relates to the balance of conservation of the environment and prioritizing domestic production.
Lane	Lofton	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Doris Matsui	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Lofton can directly speak to advancements in traditional and new energy sources and how government regulation impacts the industry.
Molly	Lowe	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Mark Amodei	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Natural Resources Committee, Ms. Lowe can speak to the importance of critical mineral supply chains on advanced technologies like artificial intelligence.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Willie	Lyles	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Troy Carter	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, Mr. Lyles can speak to the present and future cybersecurity risks to the healthcare industry.
Sean	McCabe	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Pat Harrigan	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Mr. McCabe can provide insight on the unique challenges faced by military families as it relates to finding and securing reliable housing.
Matt	McMurray	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Robin Kelly	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Mr. McMurray can speak to the integration of artificial intelligence in the healthcare industry and its impact on efficiency and quality of care.
Caitlyn	McNamee	Deputy Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Brad Schneider	As Deputy Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Ms. McNamee can highlight the effect that strong relationships with U.S. allies in the Western Hemisphere can have on USMCA renegotiations.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Gabe	Merkel	Executive Director	Problem Solvers Caucus	As Executive Director of the Problem Solvers Caucus, Mr. Merkel can speak to the diverse housing challenges facing districts represented by caucus Members in urban and rural areas.
Megan	Miller	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Steve Scalise	As Chief of Staff to Majority Leader Scalise, Ms. Miller can speak to the Republican Conference's opinions on energy policy as it relates to the U.S.'s use of traditional and new energy sources.
Maddie	Mitchell	Deputy Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Jen Kiggans	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Ms. Mitchell can discuss the distinct challenges veterans face when trying to secure reliable and affordable housing.
Andrew	Noh	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Marilyn Strickland	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Mr. Noh can discuss the impact highways and public transit systems have on the housing market as it relates to property values.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Louise	O'Rourke	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Kim Schrier	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Ms. O'Rourke can speak to the impact the government regulation has on access to technological innovation.
Cesar	Prieto	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Tony Gonzalez	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the Homeland Security Committee, Mr. Prieto can speak to the necessity to build strong economic relationships globally as way to protect the U.S. from foreign adversaries.
Andrew	Renteria	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative David Valadao	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, Mr. Renteria can speak to the diplomatic tactics used by U.S. military forces to build strong relationships with countries worldwide.
Cheredith	Rhone	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Cleo Fields	As the Chief of Staff to a Member on the Committee on Financial Services, Ms. Rhone can speak to the impact that investment in emerging markets has on domestic capital and financial markets.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Mitch	Rivard	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Jason Crow	As Chief of Staff to the Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Intelligence and Special Operations, Mr. Rivard can provide insight on how artificial intelligence has changed the opportunities and threats to intelligence operations.
Megan	Ruane	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Madeline Dean	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ms. Ruane can provide insight on how fostering relationships with U. S. allies can provide economic benefits to the American people.
Dan	Scharfenberger	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Thomas Kean	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. Scharfenberger can offer insight on opportunities to strengthen ties with Africa by investing in key markets in agriculture, energy, and critical minerals.
Katherine	Sears	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Vince Fong	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, Ms. Sears can share her perspective on the opportunities for government programs that teach K-12 students to use AI and keep America competitive in the global AI race.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Gabrielle	Sheitelman	Deputy Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Juan Ciscomani	As Deputy Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on transportation, housing, and urban development, Ms. Sheitelman can offer insight on how government housing programs affect the Southwest region.
Heather	Smith	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative William Timmons	As Chief of Staff of a Member on the House Financial Services Committee, Ms. Smith provides valuable insight on the impact that artificial intelligence has had on the technologies used in financial markets.
Will	Smith	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Nick Langworthy	As Chief of Staff to a member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. Smith can offer a diverse perspective on the opportunities and threats caused by artificial intelligence on America's public health infrastructure.
Amy	Soenksen	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Morgan McGarvey	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Small Business Committee, Ms. Soenksen can speak to the impact that artificial intelligence is having on small business operations as it relates to workforce and efficiency.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Anne	Sokolov	Executive Director	Office of Representative New Democrat Coalition	As Executive Director of the New Democrat Coalition, Ms. Sokolov can offer insight into the diverse perspectives on energy policy of the constituents represented by New Democrat Coalition Members.
Hannah	Spengler	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Don Davis	As Chief of Staff to the Vice Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, Ms. Spengler can provide insight on the impact artificial intelligence has on U.S. military readiness.
Joanne	Stiles	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Joseph Morelle	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Administration Committee, Ms. Stiles can speak to how advanced technologies will impact the modernization of Congress.
Heather	Swift	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Ryan Zinke	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia, Ms. Swift can speak to the unique opportunities of emerging markets in Northern Africa.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Deena	Tauster	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Andrew Garbarino	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, Ms. Tauster can discuss the unique impact that insurance companies have on housing markets.
Allison	Teixeira Sulier	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Sharice Davids	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Committee on Agriculture, Ms. Teixeira Sulier can speak to the impact that the USMCA trade agreement has had on the U.S. agriculture industry.
Jeremy	Tittle	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Salud Carbajal	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Committee on Armed Services, Mr. Tittle can provide insight on the impact that investment in emerging markets has on resources available to the U.S. military.
Lauren	Toy	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Susie Lee	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Natural Resources Committee, Ms. Toy can provide insight on the advancements in energy technology and the impact that government regulation has on innovation in the energy industry.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Ted	Verrill	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Julia Letlow	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Education and Workforce, Mr. Verrill can speak to how artificial intelligence will impact education opportunities in the U.S. from Pre-K to college students.
Rachel	Wagley	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Blake Moore	As Chief of Staff of a Member on the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade, Ms. Wagley can directly discuss how the USMCA Trade Agreement has affected the cost of goods and services in the U.S.
Blakely	Wall	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Janelle Bynum	As Chief of Staff to a Member of the House Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, Ms. Wall can speak to the impact large financial institutions have on the housing market.
Rebecca	Walldorff	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Lucy McBath	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, Ms. Walldorff can discuss how government regulation is affecting healthcare workers.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Chris	Walsh	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Pat Ryan	As a Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Armed Services Committee, Mr. Walsh can discuss the impact strong communication between the Executive and Legislative branches has on supporting U. S. Armed Service members.
Yebbie	Watkins	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative James Clyburn	As Chief of Staff to the Ranking Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, Mr. Watkins can speak to the unique challenges urban markets face when developing housing.
Shane	Wolfe	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Kristen McDonald Rivet	As Chief of Staff to a Member on the House Committee on Agriculture, Mr. Wolfe can discuss how the USMCA Trade Agreement has impacted the agriculture industry as it relates to crop export markets.
Andrew	Wright	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Dan Goldman	As Chief of Staff to a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security, Mr. Wright can weigh in on the advancements in cybersecurity and the importance of strengthening the security of America's healthcare industry.
Noah	Yantis	Chief of Staff	Office of Representative Dan Newhouse	As Chief of Staff of a Member on the House Agriculture Committee, Mr. Yantis can offer insight on the impact that artificial intelligence has had on farmers' efficiency and the larger agriculture industry.

**Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form: Supplemental**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Reason</b>
<p>12. Sponsor’s interest in the subject matter and role in organizing the trip:</p> <p>Center Forward’s 2026 Spring Issues Conference is being convened to bring together pragmatic policy influencers from various industries, organizations, and the public sector. Center Forward’s organizational mission is to provide centrists the information they need to craft common-sense solutions and provide support in turning those ideas into results. Center Forward brings together Members of Congress, not-for profits, academic experts, trade associations, corporations, and unions to find common ground.</p> <p>Center Forward is the sole organizer of the trip. Center Forward is planning the Conference and is responsible for the organization and execution of the event logistics as well as the programming content. Discussion topics will include: the way that U.S. foreign policy impacts investment in global emerging markets; the future of energy policy and the government's role in promoting sustainable practices; the role industry and government can play in developing and regulating AI and emerging technologies; the 2026 USCMA renegotiations and the factors that will influence the government's approach to dealmaking; legislative opportunities for the federal government to make housing more affordable; healthcare security and preparing for future pandemics and biological attacks; and the importance of finding ways to put aside partisan differences and work together to solve America's challenges. Participants are expected to include policymakers and advocacy groups as well as business leaders, academic researchers, and a member of the press.</p>				



2026 Center Forward Spring Issues Conference  
The Salamander, Middleburg, VA  
Friday, March 27th – Sunday, March 29th, 2026

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<b>Friday, March 27th, 2026</b>
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**Recommended Attire: Casual**

**2:30 pm** Shuttle departs from Capitol South Metro station en route to the Salamander

Capitol South Metro Station  
355 First Street SE  
Washington, D.C. 20003

**3:00 pm - 5:00 pm** Conference Registration – Hamilton Room, the Salamander

*Note: If you arrive after registration is closed, please join us at Lost Barrel Brewing. Registration will reopen from 8:00 am - 9:00 am on Saturday.*

**3:45 pm** Shuttle arrives at the Salamander

The Salamander  
500 N Pendleton Street  
Middleburg, VA 20117

**6:00 pm - 9:00 pm** Conference Welcome Reception

Lost Barrel Brewing  
36138 John Mosby Highway  
Middleburg, VA 20117

Conference attendees are welcomed with a reception and BBQ buffet dinner. A shuttle will run continuously from 6:00 pm - 9:00 pm between the Salamander and Lost Barrel Brewing.

**6:30 pm - 7:30 pm**

Welcome Remarks and Conference Review – Building Consensus in a Polarized Congress

Center Forward Executive Leadership team will welcome participants and include a review of the coverage and outcomes of bipartisan legislation from the first session of the 119th Congress. This address will highlight areas of opportunity for consensus in 2026, including legislation related to energy, financial services, healthcare, innovation, trade, and more. Q&A included.

- Ava Bowman Thomas, Senior Program Manager, Center Forward
- Jen Daulby, Center Forward Advisory Board of Directors
- Nicole Vasilaros, Center Forward Advisory Board of Directors

**Saturday, March 28th, 2026**

**Conference Program**

**All sessions take place in the Middleburg Ballroom unless otherwise specified**

**Recommended Attire: Casual**

- 8:00 am - 9:00 am**      Conference Registration – Hamilton Room
- 8:00 am - 9:00 am**      Breakfast Buffet – Bluemont Room
- 9:00 am - 9:15 am**      Welcome Remarks and Introduction
- Cori Kramer, Chief Executive Officer, Center Forward
- 9:15 am - 9:45 am**      Opening Conversation – Understanding the Policy Preferences of Young Americans
- Kristen Soltis Anderson, founder of Echelon Insights, joins us to unpack the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors shaping millennial and Gen Z policy preferences. This conversation will explore the issues that young constituents care about, their perceptions of Congress, and how young constituents prefer to engage with their representatives. Named one of the 30 People Under 30 who are changing the world by *Time Magazine*, Anderson’s work has been featured in Politico and HuffPost.
- Kristen Soltis Anderson, Founder, Echelon Insights
- 9:45 am - 10:30 am**      Panel Discussion – The Influence of U.S Foreign Policy on Emerging Markets
- Panelists with extensive experience advising U.S. businesses investing abroad will discuss how U.S. foreign policy shapes corporate investment decisions in emerging markets. The conversation will explore opportunities and risks across African, South American, and South Asian markets, with a focus on how complex geopolitical dynamics influence where and how companies choose to invest.
- Dana Banks, Senior Advisor, U.S.-Africa Business Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
  - Gabrielle Trebat, Senior Managing Director, Brazil & Southern Cone, McLarty Associates
  - Katie Vlietstra Wonenberg, Center Forward Advisory Board of Directors (moderator)

**10:30 am - 10:45 am** Break

**10:45 am - 12:00 pm** Breakout Sessions – Balancing Competing Legislative Priorities

Conference participants will work in small groups through facilitated dialogues to review competing legislative priorities and find bipartisan agreement on key issues before the 119th Congress. In five separate breakouts, participants will work together and weigh the public policy impact of legislative decisions made by Congress. Facilitated by special guests:

- **Artificial Intelligence Breakout:** Austin Carson, Founder & CEO, SeedAI
- **Energy & Sustainability breakout:** Riley Kilburg, Executive Director, Center Forward
- **Health Security breakout:** Steve Morrison, Director of the Global Health Policy Center, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- **Housing breakout:** Dennis Shea, Executive Vice President, Bipartisan Policy Center
- **USMCA breakout:** Nasim Fussell, Vice President for Trade, Business Roundtable

**12:00 pm - 12:30 pm** Break and Lunch Buffet – Middleburg Foyer

**12:30 pm - 1:30 pm** Lunch Discussion – Building Bridges Between the Hill and Pennsylvania Avenue

Marc Short, former Director of Legislative Affairs for President Donald Trump, and Louisa Terrell, former Director of Legislative Affairs for President Joe Biden, join us for a fireside chat on how Congress can build stronger, more effective relationships with the White House. Drawing from their time working directly with both the legislative and executive branches, Short and Terrell will share lessons on how to foster constructive communication. Attendees will gain practical advice on navigating working with the executive branch to achieve tangible policy outcomes.

- Marc Short, Former White House Director of Legislative Affairs for President Donald Trump
- Louisa Terrell, Former White House Director of Legislative Affairs for President Joe Biden

- 1:30 pm - 2:15 pm** Panel Discussion – Governance Through the Lens of U.S. History
- This discussion will place today’s contemporary policy challenges within the broader context of U.S. history, providing valuable insights into the ongoing evolution of American governance.
- *Dr. Doris Kearns Goodwin (invited)*
- 2:15 pm - 2:30 pm** Panel Closing Remarks
- Riley Kilburg, Executive Director, Center Forward
- 2:30 pm - 4:00 pm** Policy Roundtable Discussions – The Library
- Perspectives from House offices on legislative progress made in 2025 and opportunities for collaboration in 2026.
- 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm** Break

## Conference Closing Reception and Dinner

### ***Recommended Attire: Business Casual***

**6:00 pm - 7:00 pm** Reception – Middleburg Foyer

Conference attendees will have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and discuss where they agreed and disagreed. These conversations will conclude with how conference attendees can utilize the new information learned and ideas generated upon returning to Capitol Hill.

**7:00 pm - 8:30 pm** Dinner – Middleburg Ballroom

*The 120th: The Legislative Implications of an Ever-Changing Congress*

Amy Walter delivers a keynote address to conference attendees on the legislative implications of an ever-changing Congress. As the policymaking environment becomes increasingly constrained and closely balanced, she will examine the challenges and opportunities for bipartisan cooperation, drawing on her widely respected, data-driven analysis.

- Amy Walter, Publisher & Editor-in-Chief, The Cook Political Report

**8:30 pm - 8:45 pm** Conference Closing Remarks

Cori Kramer shares her key takeaways from the 2026 Spring Issues Conference and discusses the importance of continued bipartisan collaboration to promote a healthy and productive Congress.

- Cori Kramer, Chief Executive Officer, Center Forward

**Sunday, March 29, 2026**

**Recommended Attire: Casual**

- 8:00 am - 10:00 am**      Breakfast Buffet – Middleburg Ballroom
- 9:00 am**                      Shuttle departs the Salamander en route to the Capitol South Metro station
- 10:15 am**                     Shuttle arrives at the Capitol South Metro station
- Capitol South Metro Station  
   355 First Street SE  
   Washington, D.C. 20003
- 11:00 am**                     Salamander Checkout

Michael Guest, Mississippi  
*Chairman*  
Mark DeSaulnier, California  
*Ranking Member*

Andrew R. Garbarino, New York  
Ashley Hinson, Iowa  
Nathaniel Moran, Texas  
Brad Knott, North Carolina

Deborah K. Ross, North Carolina  
Glenn F. Ivey, Maryland  
Sylvia R. Garcia, Texas  
Sahas Subramanyam, Virginia



ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

**U.S. House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

Thomas A. Rust  
*Staff Director and Chief Counsel*

Jordan Downs  
*Chief of Staff to the Chairman*

David Arrojo  
*Counsel to the Ranking Member*

1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6328  
Telephone: (202) 225-7103  
<https://Ethics.House.gov>

March 24, 2026

Ms. Katherine Sears  
Office of the Honorable Vince Fong  
243 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Sears:

Pursuant to House Rule 25, clause 5(d)(2), the Committee on Ethics hereby approves your and your fiancé's proposed trip to Middleburg, Virginia, scheduled for March 27 to 29, 2026, sponsored by Center Forward.

You must complete an Employee Post-Travel Disclosure Form (which your employing Member must also sign) and file it, together with a Sponsor Post-Travel Disclosure Form completed by the trip sponsor, with the Clerk of the House within 15 days after your return from travel. As part of that filing, you are also required to attach a copy of this letter and both the Traveler and Primary Trip Sponsor Forms (including attachments) you previously submitted to the Committee in seeking pre-approval for this trip. If you are required to file an annual Financial Disclosure Statement, you must also report all travel expenses totaling more than \$525 from a single source on the "Travel" schedule of your annual Financial Disclosure Statement covering this calendar year. Finally, Travel Regulation § 404(d) also requires you to keep a copy of all request forms and supporting information provided to the Committee for three subsequent Congresses from the date of travel.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Committee's Office of Advice and Education at extension 5-7103.

Sincerely,

Michael Guest  
Chairman

Mark DeSaulnier  
Ranking Member

MG/MD:nl

Michael Guest, Mississippi  
*Chairman*  
Mark DeSaulnier, California  
*Ranking Member*

Andrew R. Garbarino, New York  
Ashley Hinson, Iowa  
Nathaniel Moran, Texas  
Brad Knott, North Carolina

Deborah K. Ross, North Carolina  
Glenn F. Ivey, Maryland  
Sylvia R. Garcia, Texas  
Suhas Subramanyam, Virginia



ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

## U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

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Washington, D.C. 20515-6328  
Telephone: (202) 225-7103  
<https://Ethics.House.gov>

March 18, 2026

Ms. Katherine Sears  
Office of the Honorable Vince Fong  
243 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ms. Sears:

This responds to your request dated March 16, 2026, seeking permission for your fiancé, Mr. Chris Bien, to accompany you at private expense on an officially-connected trip to Middleburg, Virginia from March 27 to March 29, 2026. We note that you submitted a separate travel request to the Committee for approval to accept travel expenses for this trip. Subject to the guidance below, we grant your request for Mr. Bien to accompany you on this trip.

### FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The trip to Middleburg, Virginia is sponsored by Center Forward. According to the sponsor, the purpose of the trip is to “provide centrists with the information they need to craft common-sense solutions and provide support in turning those ideas into results.” You have separately requested that the Committee approve your request to participate in this trip at the sponsor’s expense. The sponsor made an unsolicited offer to pay for a relative’s expenses to accompany you. You would like to bring Mr. Bien, your fiancé.

### LEGAL BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The House gift rule generally permits a Member to be accompanied by a relative at the private sponsor’s expense when participating in privately-funded, officially-connected travel, but the provision does not permit the Member to be accompanied by anyone other than a relative.<sup>1</sup> This provision is enacted as § 403 of the Committee’s Travel Guidelines and Regulations, which were issued on April 1, 2021, to provide comprehensive guidance on the rules governing privately-funded, officially connected travel. Section 104(z) defines the term “relative” for purposes of the travel rules as being:

[a]n individual of at least 18 years of age who is related to the traveler as spouse, parent, child or step-child, grandchild, sibling or half-sibling, father-in-law, or mother-in-law. Fiancés/fiancées and

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<sup>1</sup> See House Rule 25, cl. 5(b)(4)(D).

unmarried significant others are not “relatives” for purposes of these [travel] regulations.

However, § 403.1 of the Travel Regulations permits travelers to seek advance, written permission from the Committee to be accompanied by a non-relative on such a trip at the sponsor’s expense. In addition, a provision of the gift rule also permits the Committee to grant a waiver of the rule’s restrictions in “an unusual case,”<sup>2</sup> provided “there is no potential conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety.”<sup>3</sup>

Having considered your request, it is our determination that Mr. Bien may accompany you on this trip to Middleburg, Virginia pursuant to Travel Regulation § 403.1. The Post-Travel Disclosure Forms that you are required to file with the Clerk following the trip must include the expenses incurred by the sponsor for Mr. Bien’s accompaniment on the trip. If you are required to file a financial disclosure report for calendar year 2026, you will also have to list the trip on Schedule H (“Travel”) of that report. You should indicate that your fiancé was included on the trip by answering “yes” to the question of whether a family member was included on the trip.

### LIMITATIONS

The response above constitutes an advisory opinion concerning the application of House Rule 25 and the Committee’s Travel Regulations. The following limitations apply to this opinion:

- This advisory opinion is issued only to Ms. Katherine Sears, the requestor of this opinion. This advisory opinion cannot be relied upon by any other individual or entity.
- This advisory opinion is limited to the current provisions and interpretation of the House rules and federal statutes specifically noted above. No opinion is expressed or implied herein regarding the application of any other federal, state, or local statute, rule, regulation, ordinance, or other law that may be applicable to the proposed conduct described in this letter.
- This advisory opinion will not bind or obligate any entity other than the Committee on Ethics of the United States House of Representatives.
- This advisory opinion is limited in scope to the specific proposed conduct described in this letter, the specific facts represented to the Committee, and the understanding of those facts to the extent indicated in this letter and does not apply to any other conduct or facts, including that which appears similar in nature or scope to that described in this letter. Should this letter misstate any facts in this matter, the opinion and advice may no longer apply, and you should inform the Committee as soon as possible to determine if the advice and opinion in this letter apply to the accurate factual basis.

The Committee will take no adverse action against you in regard to any conduct that you

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<sup>2</sup> House Rule 25, cl. 5(a)(3)(T).

<sup>3</sup> See House Rule 25, cl. 5(a)(3)(T); Comm. on Ethics, *House Ethics Manual December 2022 Print*, Gifts Chapter, III, <https://ethics.house.gov/manual/exceptions-to-the-gift-rule-for-permissible-gifts/general-waiver/>.

undertake, or have undertaken, in good faith reliance upon this advisory opinion, so long as you have presented a complete and accurate statement of all material facts relied upon herein, and the proposed conduct in practice conforms with the information you provided, as addressed in this opinion.

Changes or other developments in the law (including, but not limited to, the Code of Official Conduct, House rules, Committee guidance, advisory opinions, statutes, regulations, or case law) may affect the analysis or conclusions drawn in this advisory opinion. The Committee reserves the right to reconsider the questions and issues raised in this advisory opinion and to rescind, modify, or terminate this opinion if required by the interests of the House. However, the Committee will rescind an advisory opinion only if relevant and material facts were not completely and accurately disclosed to the Committee at the time the opinion was issued. In the event that this advisory opinion is modified or terminated, the Committee will not take any adverse action against you with respect to any action taken in good faith reliance upon this advisory opinion so long as such conduct or such action was promptly discontinued upon notification of the modification or termination of this advisory opinion.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Committee's Office of Advice and Education at extension 5-7103.

Sincerely,



Michael Guest  
Chairman



Mark DeSaulnier  
Ranking Member

MG/MD:nl