

Guide To Outfitting and Maintaining an Office of the U.S. House of Representatives

 cha.house.gov/handbooks/guide-outfitting-and-maintaining-office-us-house-representatives

Table of Contents

Services

Introduction

1. This Guide is issued by the Committee on House Administration and includes the regulations, policies, and procedures applicable to the acquisition, transfer, disposal, and maintenance of furnishings, equipment, software, and related services. This Guide and the regulations, policies and procedures contained herein are effective January 3, 2005.
2. Offices are reminded that the related regulations of the Committee on House Administration, included in the Members' Congressional Handbook and the Committees' Congressional Handbook, Rules of the House of Representatives, ethics rules adopted by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and/or Federal laws also apply. Offices should contact the Committee on House Administration at (202) 225-8281 (202) 225-8281 with any questions regarding the regulations of the Committee.

[Return to top](#)

Glossary

APPLICABLE OFFICE FUNDS

Applicable office funds are the respective allowances of each office. In the case of a Member, the Members' Representational Allowance; in the case of a Committee, the Committee's authorization, pursuant to the applicable committee funding resolution.

APPLICABLE ACCOUNTS (OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

Applicable accounts are the accounts for salaries and expenses of committees (other than the Committee on Appropriations), the computer support organization of the House of Representatives, and allowances and expenses of Members of the House of Representatives, officers of the House of Representatives, and administrative and support offices of the House of Representatives.

ARMS-LENGTH MARKETPLACE TRANSACTION

An arms-length marketplace transaction is an arrangement in which goods and/or services, including quality of and access to such goods and/or services, are acquired under the same terms and conditions as are available to the public.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (CAO)

The CAO is the elected officer of the House responsible for administrative, operational and financial functions of the House, as assigned by the Committee on House Administration.

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CMS)

A CMS is a software program designed to process constituent mail and store constituent information.

DOCUMENT DIRECT

Document Direct is a Financial Accounts reporting system maintained by the Office of Finance, a unit under the CAO. The system is accessible to offices via the House Intranet. The system provides an office read-only access to its account database, as maintained by the Office of Finance.

HOUSE INFORMATION RESOURCES (HIR)

HIR is the unit under the CAO that provides information system services and support to House offices.

HOUSE SUPPORT SERVICES (HSS)

HSS is the unit under the CAO that is responsible for the First Call Customer Service Center, Furniture Support Services, House Gift Shop, House Office Service Center, House Recording Studio, Mail List/Processing and Mass Mail Processing, Office Supply Service, Photography, Graphics Services, and Special Events.

HOUSENET

HouseNet is a collection of internal Web sites administered by HIR that provides information about and access to many of the resources and services available to House offices

ITEM

An item is a furnishing, piece of equipment, or software program.

LEASE PLAN

A lease plan is a system by which an office may acquire items for a specified term and for a specified rent. When the acquisition is made by a Member or Chair, the term of the lease may not exceed the current Congress, unless the lease allows for cancellation without penalty, when the Member/Chair leaves office.

MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

A maintenance contract is an agreement between a vendor and the CAO on behalf of the House to provide maintenance support and service for items.

MAINTENANCE VENDOR

A maintenance vendor is an individual or organization that has entered into a contract with the CAO to provide maintenance support and services for items. Such vendors include but are not limited to systems integrators, original manufacturers operating under warranty, and any other vendor operating under a contract with the CAO.

OFFICE

An office is a room or area assigned to a Member, Committee, or other office of the House as a location where official work is regularly performed.

OFFICE COORDINATOR (OC)

An OC is an employee of the House Office Support Center, a subunit of HSS, assigned to an office to provide assistance with requests for the acquisition, transfer, disposal, or repair of items; construction of wall mounted shelving and bookcases; stationery and special orders for office supplies; the maintenance of the inventories of items having an original purchase cost of \$500.00 or more assigned to an office; and office moves.

OFFICE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS (OT)

OT is a subunit of HIR and is responsible for the operations of the House's telecommunications systems.

ONE-TIME PLAN

A one-time plan is the system by which an office pays for the total purchase cost of an item at the time of the purchase or the balance due in one installment for an item acquired on the two-year plan.

ORIGINAL MANUFACTURER (OM)

An OM is the producer of an item.

PAYMENT PLANS

Payments plans are the authorized systems by which an office may pay for an item. The authorized plans are the one-time plan, two-year plan, and lease plan. Any item may be acquired on the one-time or lease plan. Only items costing over \$500 may be acquired on the two-year plan.

SITE LICENSE

A site license is a license acquired by an organization from a software manufacturer which allows the organization to install software governed by the license on multiple servers/computers at the organization's business site(s) as well as to make copies of the software for use by its offices.

STANDARD FOR NEW ACQUISITIONS

The standard for new acquisitions is a set of criteria established by the Committee on House Administration to ensure technical excellence and quality performance and to eliminate premature obsolescence. The details of this standard are available from HIR.

STANDARD FOR SUPPORT

The Standard for Support is a set of criteria established by the CAO to identify obsolete items. Maintenance Vendors are not required to provide support for items that do not meet this standard. The details of this standard are available from HIR.

Technical Support Representative (TSR)

A TSR is an employee of HIR assigned to an office to provide advice on information technology issues and acquisitions, and to serve as a liaison between the office and its vendors. TSRs provide technical solutions in support of desktop computers, software applications, personal digital assistant (PDA) devices, and local area networks.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS ADMINISTRATOR (TA)

A TA is an employee of OT assigned to an office to provide assistance with the acquisition, transfer,

disposal/deinstallation, or repair of communications equipment (telephone, cell phones, headsets, etc.), communication services (voice, cellular, data, and calling cards), and with reconciling telecommunication statements and inventories.

TWO-YEAR PLAN

A two-year plan is a system by which an office pays the total purchase cost of an item in 24 equal monthly payments. Only items costing over \$500 may be acquired on this plan.

[Return to top](#)

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Ordinary and necessary expenses related to the acquisition of items for use in offices are reimbursable from the applicable office funds. Items may only be acquired as the result of a bona-fide arms length, marketplace transaction. All items acquired must be for official purposes only and are, and shall remain, the property of the House. Official items may only be used with other official items, except where stated otherwise. Each office is assigned an OC, TA, and TSR to assist with the acquisitions, transfer, maintenance, and/or disposal of items.

The following expenses will automatically be charged to the applicable office funds of an office:

1. Expenses for equipment, furnishings, and related services assigned to an office's inventory; a detailed description of the expenses charged will appear on the office's monthly Inventory Statement Report as posted on Document Direct; and
2. Expenses for communications equipment and service acquired through HIR and OT; a detailed description of the expenses charged will appear on the office's monthly Telecommunications Statement of Charges as posted on Document Direct.

[Return to top](#)

FURNISHINGS AND EQUIPMENT

Acquisition, Transfer, and Disposal

Acquisition

In Washington, DC, HSS provides furnishings to each office at no charge to the office. Furnishings are selected from a catalogue of items established by the Committee on House Administration and posted on HouseNet. For additional information, contact the office's OC.

Joint Acquisition

Members/Chairs may jointly acquire equipment items, provided the offices have agreed in advance and in writing, to:

1. The allocation of the cost(s) of acquisition of the item, under whichever payment plan is chosen.
2. The allocation of any additional monthly fees.
3. The allocation of liability for damage or loss.
4. The conditions for termination of the agreement.
5. The location of the equipment.

Return Policy

Items may be returned in accordance with the return policy of the vendor. However, regardless of the vendor's policy, if after 60 days from the date of delivery (as indicated on the vendor's delivery ticket) an office has not signed the installation notice, the office will be liable, from the date of delivery, for 4.2% of the original price per month to be paid to the vendor as a rental fee. Vendors are authorized to send invoices for such rental fees directly to HSS. Such fees will be automatically charged to the applicable office funds.

Trade-In Policy

To reduce the cost of acquiring replacement equipment and district office furnishings, an office is authorized to take advantage of trade-in or exchange/sale programs offered by a vendor. The terms and conditions of the program offered to the office must be the same as those offered to the public at large and the value of the trade-in or exchange must be at the fair market value.

Transfer

Committee Offices

Committee Chairs may transfer equipment items to a Member or other Committee office.

Member Offices

Members may transfer equipment items between offices, including alternative (telecommuter) work site offices. Equipment items transferred from a Member's Washington, DC office to a district office (or alternative work site) shall be assigned to the district office inventory for one year and shall not be eligible for disposal until such year has expired.

Members may also transfer furnishings between their district offices.

Disposal

Requests to dispose of unwanted furnishing or equipment items are submitted to the office's OC; requests to dispose of unwanted telecommunications equipment are submitted to its TA. The OC or TA, as appropriate, will process the requests, update the office's inventory(s), and arrange for the physical removal of the items.

Note: Acquisition, transfer, or disposal requests must be submitted in advance to the office's OC. Requisition, Transfer, and Disposal (removal) Forms are available in the forms library on HouseNet.

[Return to top](#)

INVENTORY PROCEDURES

HSS shall maintain an inventory of all office equipment and district office furnishing items having an original purchase price of \$500 or more assigned to each office, except as noted below.

HSS shall perform a physical inventory of all office equipment items assigned to each Washington, DC office:

1. Whenever a Member or Committee office relocates; or
2. Whenever there is a change in the office holder (Member or Chair); or

3. At least once every six years.

GSA shall perform a physical inventory of all furnishing and office equipment items assigned to each district office:

1. Whenever there is a change in the office holder; or
2. At least once every six years.

Telecommunications Equipment and Service

OT shall maintain an inventory of all telecommunications equipment and service assigned to each office, regardless of purchase cost. OT shall annually conduct a physical inventory of all telecommunications equipment assigned to each Washington, DC office.

Members and Committee Chairs are personally responsible for all items on their office inventories and will be required to certify in writing that the results of each physical inventory are accurate.

Note: The official inventories maintained by HSS include only those items which have an original purchase cost of \$500.00 or more. However, offices are encouraged to maintain an in-office list of items with an original purchase cost of \$499.00 or less. Each item on the list should be documented with receipts showing the date of and amount of the purchase. Should an office be subject to a natural disaster, electrical fire or similar infrastructure deficiency, act of terrorism, etc., the list may be required to document lost or damaged items.

Location

Items on the inventory must remain in the office. Portable items (pagers, cellular telephones, laptops computer, etc.) may be located outside the Member's congressional office, as required to support the conduct of official business.

[Return to top](#)

LIABILITY

Members and Chairs are personally responsible for missing, damaged, or stolen equipment on their office inventories. Should an item become missing, damaged, or stolen, the Member/Chair must promptly notify the CAO, in writing, of the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of or damage to the item and attach any supporting documentation, including a police report if the item was stolen.

Upon receipt of the letter, the CAO will promptly send the Member/Chair a letter indicating the value of the item at the time it was discovered missing or stolen or, if damaged, the extent of the damage and the amount of the Member's/Chair's personal liability. The current value or repair cost shall be considered the amount of the Member's/Chair's personal liability.

The Member/Chair may request relief from personal liability by submitting an appeal, in writing, to the Committee on House Administration. Decisions regarding the personal liability of a Member/Chair will be based on the facts and circumstances of each case.

If the Committee relieves a Member/Chair of personal liability, HSS should pay any remaining obligation on the item from the appropriate House account, and remove the item from the office's inventory. If the Member/Chair is found liable, he or she should reimburse the US Treasury for the current value of the item, and any remaining obligation on the item will be charged to the applicable office funds.

In a circumstance beyond a Member's/Chair's control (natural disasters, electrical fires or similar infrastructure deficiencies, terrorism, etc.), the above procedures are waived. In such a circumstance, the Member/Chair should provide a written explanation to the Committee regarding the circumstances and provide a list of missing, damaged, or stolen items. The Committee will evaluate each case and make a determination regarding liability based on the supporting facts. Upon written notification from the Committee on House Administration, the CAO will remove, without penalty to the Member, items that are not economical for the House to repair. Any outstanding obligations on such items will be charged to the applicable office finds. To the extent possible, the CAO will replace such items at no cost to the office.

ELECTION-YEAR RESTRICTIONS

THE FOLLOWING ELECTION-YEAR RESTRICTIONS APPLY ONLY TO MEMBER OFFICES:

Acquisition

Effective June 1 of an election year, a Member seeking re-election may ONLY acquire items (equipment or district office furnishings) on the one-time payment or a lease plan.

- This restriction does not apply to Members who, after their primary election, are unopposed in the general election.
- After the general election, re-elected Members may resume acquisition on the two-year payment plan.

Transfer

Effective June 1st of an election year or the date a Member is defeated in an election or announces or takes steps evidencing intent to retire, resign, or run for another public office, whichever comes first, a Member may transfer equipment items from his/her Washington, DC to his/her district offices, including alternative (telecommuter) work sites, only if the condition and/or technical specifications of the items are below the Transition Standards or the items are replaced in the Washington, DC office by equivalent or better. Whenever computer equipment is transferred to the district, it must be replaced by equipment that meets the Standards for New Acquisitions. Replacement items must be purchased on the one time payment plan. In addition, a Member may transfer district office equipment and furnishings between district offices and/or alternative (telecommuter) work site offices.

Disposal

Effective June 1st of an election year or the date a Member is defeated in an election or announces or takes steps evidencing intent to retire, resign, or run for another public office, whichever comes first, a Member may request the disposal of equipment or district office furnishings only if the items to be disposed of are below the Transition Standard.

[Return to top](#)

TRANSITIONS

Committee Office

The succeeding Chair will inherit all the items assigned to the previous Chair's inventory. Standard inventory furniture items may be disposed of at any time. Modular and systems furniture items are not eligible for disposal except to make accommodation for a reduction in the number of required workstations.

Equipment items which have no remaining obligations may be disposed of at any time.

Member Office

In Washington, DC the succeeding Member will inherit the furnishings of the previous occupant of his/her assigned office suite. Furnishings for the Washington, DC office are provided by HSS at no charge to the office. Standard inventory furniture items may be disposed of at any time. Modular and systems furniture items are not eligible for disposal except to accommodate for a reduction in the number of required workstations.

In the district, the succeeding Member will inherit the district office furnishing items assigned to his/her predecessor's inventory. In addition, he/she will inherit all office equipment items assigned to his/her predecessor's inventory.

Any obligations associated with an inherited item will be charged to the Member's applicable office funds until such time as the obligation is satisfied or the item is disposed of.

Inherited district office furnishings and equipment items which have no remaining obligations may be disposed of at any time. Items with remaining obligations are eligible for disposal through June 30 of the first year of the Member's term (or within 180 days of the start of the Member's term if elected in a special election), regardless of whether or not the remaining obligations have been fully satisfied. Also see the section titled [Disposal](#).

Items eligible for purchase by a retiring Member

The Member's Washington, DC executive desk and chair

Prior to the end of his or her term, a retiring Member may submit a request to purchase his/her standard inventory desk and desk chair from the Washington, DC office. If the desk or chair is a special inventory item, it may or may not be available for purchase, subject to a determination to be made by the Chair of the Committee on House Administration. Contact the Committee for information regarding the purchase costs of these items. A request to purchase these items, if eligible for purchase, should be submitted in writing to the Committee, accompanied by a personal check or money order made payable to the US Treasury to cover the purchase cost of the items.

District Office Items

A retiring Member may purchase any district office furnishing and equipment items which his or her successor decides to dispose of. To exercise this option, the retiring Member must submit a request in writing, identifying the items that he/she is interested in purchasing, to HSS prior to the end of his/her term. Pricing will be determined by HSS. If there are outstanding obligations on an item, the obligations will be calculated into the price. Some software licenses may limit use of the software to offices, thus making them unavailable for purchase by retiring Members. HSS will provide written notice to the retiring Member of the availability and price of the requested items.

PDAs and cellular phones

A retiring Member may purchase the PDAs and cellular phones assigned to his/her office. To exercise this option, the retiring Member must submit a request, in writing identifying the items to be purchased, to OT prior to the end of his/her term. Pricing will be determined by OT. OT will provide written notice to the retiring Member of the price of the eligible items.

Payment for district office items, PDA, and cellular phone shall be made by the retiring Member via a personal check or money order made payable to the US Treasury.

The retiring Member is also personally responsible for the shipping costs of purchased items, including applicable inside shipping and storage charges. Shipping arrangements will be made by HSS and the retiring Member will be sent an itemized statement of charges for these services.

[Return to top](#)

SOFTWARE

All software installed on official computers must conform to House security and data format standards. The details of these standards are available from HIR.

The House has site licenses for certain software programs. These programs and the installation thereof are available to an office through HIR at no charge to the office. For a copy of the Site License List refer to HouseNet (<http://housenet.house.gov/site>) or contact the office's TSR.

The purchase cost of additional software necessary to support the official business of an office is reimbursable from the applicable office account. For information regarding the requirements applicable to the acquisition and installation of software, refer to the chart at the end of this document.

HIR provides technical support, at no charge, for a variety of software programs commonly used by House offices. For a copy of the Supported Software List refer to HouseNet (<http://housenet.house.gov/site>) or contact the office's TSR.

Note: HIR will not provide technical support for software that is not included on the Supported Software List or installed on other than House-owned computers. If you require assistance with a program not listed, contact the manufacturer of the product or your Systems Integrator who may provide such support on a time-and-materials basis.

Installation of House-owned software on a personally owned computer: Software acquired with official funds may be installed on personal a computer of personally owned by a Member/Chair or staffer, as long as such installation does not violate applicable license agreements. Such software may only be used for official purposes.

[Return to top](#)

SERVICES

COMMUNICATIONS

Data Services

HIR maintains the House data network which provides access to the Internet, House Intranet, and HouseNet. There is no charge for access to the network. To arrange for access to the House network, contact the office's TA.

The House provides 512k frame relay service between Washington, DC and one district office per congressional district at no charge to the office. Requests for the installation of this service and/or the installation and pre-qualification of additional or alternative data services (DSL/VPN, cable modem, satellite, etc.) at a district or alternative worksite office location are submitted to the office's TSR.

Charges for all House network frame relay services will appear on the office's monthly Telecommunications Statement of Charges as posted on Document Direct, and will be paid automatically from the applicable office funds. Offices are responsible for payment of expenses incurred for additional or alternative data services. Payment is made by submitting a completed voucher, with supporting documentation, to the Finance Office

Use of a House-owned portable, external modem on a personally owned computer:

Portable, external modems acquired with official funds may be used with a computer personally owned by a Member or staffer. Such a modem may only be used for official purposes.

[Return to top](#)

Telecommunication

Offices may arrange local service for the Washington, DC office and for cellular, long distance, and calling card services which are available through vendors participating in the House consolidated billing program by contacting their TAs. Charges for all of these services will appear on the office's monthly Telecommunications Statement of Charges as posted on Document Direct. For information regarding the services available through the participating vendors contact the office's TA.

Local service for the district office is arranged by contacting a local exchange carrier serving the area in which the district office is located. Offices are responsible for payment of expenses incurred. Payment is made by submitting a completed voucher, with supporting documentation, to the Finance Office.

Offices experiencing problems with domestic long distance service or calling cards should contact the MCI Legislative Help Desk directly at 1-800-388-86381-800-388-8638 for assistance. Offices experiencing problems with international long distance service or calling cards should contact ATT Customer Service directly. If calling from the within U.S., call 1-888-288-77981-888-288-7798; if calling from outside the U.S., call collect to 703-691-5260703-691-5260.

[Return to top](#)

INSTALLATION

Installation charges included on a purchase order for an item are added to the cost of the item and will be charged to the applicable office funds in accordance with the payment plan chosen for the item. Installation charges should be negotiated in advance and may be charged on an hourly or a piecework rate.

If installation charges are incurred, other than at the time of acquisition, they may be paid by the office from its applicable office funds by submitting a completed voucher, with supporting documentation, to the Finance Office.

[Return to top](#)

MAINTENANCE

The CAO is responsible for contracting with vendors for maintenance services required to support the operation of office equipment assigned to House offices. Such vendors have agreed to meet certain standards in performance of their services. Contact HSS for the specifics of these standards.

Maintenance services available under these contracts may include but are not limited to system integration, computer and software installation and support, preventive maintenance, general repairs,

replacement parts, and labor.

In most instances, an office may terminate its participation in a plan by giving 30 days notice in writing to HSS; the 30-day notice period begins on the date the vendor receives notification of the termination from HSS. Some plans apply a penalty fee for early termination.

For information regarding the available maintenance plans and the terms and conditions thereof, contact HSS.

Computer Systems: The Systems Integrator

A Systems Integrator is a maintenance vendor that provides service for computer systems. Each office is required to enter into a service agreement with a Systems Integrator, which shall include the terms and conditions governing the services to be provided in support of the installation of all computer-related equipment and software, maintenance, and the overall functioning of the system in accordance with specifications established by and available upon request from the CAO. Offices have discretion in determining which computer equipment will be covered under Systems Integrator agreements and selecting the level of coverage offered by the vendor (comprehensive, basic, time and materials, etc.). Offices may also enter into agreements with secondary vendors and utilize OM warranties in support of the operation of their computer systems. Systems Integrators may provide service for either the Washington, DC office, or both the Washington, DC and district offices.

Telecommunications Equipment

The CAO has entered into a contract with Avaya, Inc. to provide maintenance for all telephone equipment used in Washington, DC offices, as well as for all district office equipment acquired through an Avaya business partner that has been certified to be in acceptable working condition and supported by Avaya. Maintenance available includes equipment and related software installation and support, preventive maintenance, replacement parts, and labor. The vendor has agreed to certain standards of performance. Contact the TA for specifics.

If a district office's telephone equipment is acquired through other than an Avaya business partner, the CAO will enter into a maintenance agreement with a vendor designated by the office.

For a list of Avaya business partners, contact the Avaya Business Representative for the House: 703-310-3741/703-310-3741.

To place a service call, contact the Avaya National Service Assistance Center Hotline at 1-800-628-2888/1-800-628-2888. (To place a service call you will need the "Sold to Code," which is available upon request from OT at 202-226-4101/202-226-4101).

If a district office's telephone equipment is acquired through other than an Avaya business partner, the CAO will enter into a maintenance agreement with a vendor designated by the office.

For additional assistance with your telecommunications needs, contact your TA directly, or contact OT at 202-226-4101/202-226-4101.

[Return to top](#)

VENDOR DISPUTES

The CAO tracks and provides assistance to offices in resolving disputes between an office and a vendor.

To request assistance, contact the CAO at 202-225-8000/202-225-8000.

WARRANTIES

Offices may utilize (OM) warranties supplied or available for purchase either at time of acquisition or at a later date. There is no limit on the term of a warranty. Offices are responsible for placing service calls to the warranty service provider, unless warranty coordination arrangements have been made with their Systems Integrators or other maintenance vendors. Offices should be aware that some manufacturers require original receipts in order to honor warranties. To insure that the original receipt will be available if required to support a warranty service call, the office should always submit the original receipt to HSS for inclusion in the office's permanent file.

[Return to top](#)