

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Tom Graves
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
U.S. House of Representatives
HT-2 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz:

As you begin work on the fiscal year (FY) 2017 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, we urge you to take action to prevent members of Congress from flying first-class at taxpayer expense. Efficient travel to and from congressional districts contributes to effective execution of the constitutional and official duties of members of Congress. As with all federal spending, Member's Representational Allowance funds are taxpayer dollars. As such, the use of these funds must be exercised with the utmost efficiency and transparency. A loophole currently exists that allows members of Congress to fly first-class at taxpayer expense.

Accordingly, we write to request that the following language be added to the FY 2017 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill:

PROHIBITING USE OF FUNDS FOR FIRST-CLASS AIR TRAVEL BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

SEC. ____. (a) *PROHIBITION.*—*Except as provided in subsection (b), none of the funds made available in this Act for the official travel expenses of a Member of Congress (including a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress) may be used for airline accommodations which are not coach-class accommodations.*

(b) *EXCEPTIONS.*—*Subsection (a) does not apply—*
(1) in the case of a Member of Congress with a disability; or
(2) in the case of an emergency, as determined by the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the Majority Leader of the Senate (as the case may be).

(d) *DEFINITIONS.*—*In this section—*
(1) the term “coach-class accommodations” means the basic class of accommodation by airlines that is normally the lowest fare offered regardless of airline terminology used, and (as referred to by airlines) may include tourist class or economy class, as

well as single class when the airline offers only one class of accommodations to all travelers;
and

(2) the term "Member of Congress" means a Senator or a Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress.

Members of Congress are public servants of the people and shouldn't be considered a privileged class. As such, we must be judicious in the travel expenses that are paid for with federal funds. Luxury airfare accommodations utilizing taxpayer monies would seem inappropriate in any fiscal climate, but at a time of soaring deficits and with a federal debt in excess of \$19 trillion, such expenditures are especially wasteful. The requested language allows for reasonable exceptions like accommodating a disability or other substantiated medical need.

The requested language seeks to codify language that is in line with requirements for travel by employees in the Executive Branch. If federal restrictions prohibit members of our military from traveling first-class, this same standard should also apply to Members of Congress.

We thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your leadership on the committee.

Sincerely,



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress




Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress



Rod Blum
Member of Congress



Gwen Graham
Member of Congress



Brad Ashford
Member of Congress



Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress



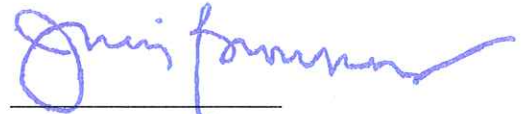
Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress



Frank Guinta
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Esty
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress



David Loebsock
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress



Pete Olson
Member of Congress