

PAGE ONE

House boosts benefit for its top-paid staffers ; Says student-loan subsidies needed in hiring market

Stephen Dinan, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

863 words

26 August 2009

The Washington Times

WATI

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English

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A month after they voted to punish some corporate executives for taking hefty bonus payouts, members of the **House** of Representatives quietly gave their own staffers a new potential bonus by making even their top-earning aides eligible for taxpayer dollars to repay their student loans.

The change, which took effect in May, means **House** employees earning up to \$168,411, or the top level, are now eligible for government-funded subsidies to help pay down their student loans.

House officials defend the change as a job-related benefit necessary to keep the government competitive in the hiring market - the same argument corporate chieftains used to defend their own pay scales.

"There's still a tremendous demand for high-end Hill talent even in this current job market. Expanding eligibility for the benefit allows us to retain valued and seasoned personnel who might otherwise be lured away to more financially lucrative pursuits," said Kyle Anderson, a **spokesman** for the **House** Administration Committee.

The committee, which has jurisdiction over internal **House** employment, salaries and expenses, directed **House** officials to make the change.

But taxpayer advocacy groups said that straightforward salary increases - not new perks and bonuses - are the best way to attract and retain talent. Offering bonuses to some of the best-paid Capitol staffers just feeds into popular resentment toward Washington, said Thomas A. Schatz, president of Citizens Against Government Waste.

"It's another example of the imperial Congress and setting themselves aside from the rest of the country," Mr. Schatz said. "It goes along with the congressional jets, the executive jets. It goes along with the travel. It fits in with all the concerns about spending generally in Washington."

Although widely used in the federal work force, the job-related perk of paying off an employee's college bills is rarely offered in the private sector, employment analysts say.

The move to boost the income cap was made just a month after the **House** voted 328-93 in March to slap a 90 percent tax on bonuses for executives from companies that took bailout money from the Troubled Asset Relief Program. The Senate never followed suit, and the bill didn't become law. The salaries and dollar amounts involved in those bonuses were far higher than what's at stake in the **House** program.

The **House** program is expected to cost \$12.6 million this fiscal year. As of August, it was making payments for 2,251 staffers. The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, the branch of the **House** that administers the program, is unable to estimate how many of those staffers are taking part under the new, higher-income limits, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

Mr. Ventura said that, with members of the **House** up for election every two years, job security is uncertain and the student loan program helps attract talent.

"We regard this benefit as a major job recruitment and retention tool," he said. "Even in a bad job market, we compete with the private sector for the kind of talented employees government work today demands."

The **House** program pays up to \$10,000 a year, with a maximum lifetime benefit of \$60,000. Staffers making any salary are now eligible, though their total compensation - including the loan repayment - cannot exceed the 2009 cap of \$168,411. From 2008 through May of this year, the cap was \$145,159.

Each representative decides which of his or her staffers can receive the benefit. The funds do not come out of each congressional office's budget, but there is a cap on how much each office can spend on the repayments. That cap was also boosted by 75 percent in May.

Student loan repayments are not limited to the **House**. The Senate offers a far less generous program than the **House**, while many executive branch agencies offer a similar program.

The Senate income eligibility cap for its program is \$146,500 this year, which is about \$23,000 less than the maximum a staffer could make. The Senate caps lifetime payments at \$40,000 - \$20,000 less than the **House**.

A spokeswoman for the secretary of the Senate, who administers the program, said the program will cost \$4.7 million this year. That's up from \$1 million in 2002, when the program began, but down from 2003, the peak year, when the Senate spent \$6.8 million.

The spokeswoman would not give details about who participates in the program and referred questions to the committees with oversight over the program.

Executive branch agencies, meanwhile, provide an extensive annual accounting of their student loan benefit program, and it appears to be just as popular as the **House** program.

In 2008, federal agencies spent more than \$51 million to repay loans for 6,879 employees, at an average benefit of \$7,511. The 2008 figure is a 22 percent jump over the previous year.

Like **House** staff members, executive branch employees are limited to \$10,000 per year and \$60,000 over their lifetimes. The loan repayments are taxable.

Document WATI000020090826e58q00005

SPOTLIGHT | LIGHT SPAT\

A SECTION

Capitol energy plan taking heat

Richard Simon, Tribune Newspapers

300 words

25 August 2009

Orlando Sentinel

ORSE

FINAL

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English

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WASHINGTON -- How many lawmakers does it take to change a light bulb?

You may soon find out, thanks to an effort under way to illuminate the U.S. Capitol dome with more energy-efficient lighting.

The project stems from a push by **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., to make Congress a shining example of environmental responsibility. But like many projects in Washington, it is not without controversy. Republicans say the \$1 million-plus price tag is too costly at a time of record budget deficits.

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer, said the lighting project has "far less to do with saving money in the short term on our energy bill. ... but has everything to do with setting a bold energy-saving example for the rest of the country."

But doing so isn't as simple as changing the bulbs. A lighting consultant was hired, at a cost of \$671,900, to come up with system that would not only save energy but also celebrate the Capitol's "unique identity" and "enliven the visual experience" of all those who view it.

Some Republicans, however, have questioned whether the lighting project is worth the cost. **House** Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, claimed it would take 50 years to generate enough energy savings to recoup the costs.

PHOTO: The Capitol dome's exterior currently is lighted by 38 1,000-watt metal halide lamps that were installed 20 years ago. They will be replaced by 128 lighting fixtures. But with the new bulbs ranging from 35 watts to 210 watts, and with newer technology, the project's designer expects the lighting to use 70 percent less energy.\

KAREN BLEIER/ GETTY-AFP PHOTO

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The Boston Globe

National

Capitol Dome may soon be more eco-friendly

Richard Simon

Richard Simon, Los Angeles Times

456 words

23 August 2009

The Boston Globe

BSTNGB

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English

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Jeff Ventura, a spokesman for the **House** chief administrative officer, said the lighting project has "far less to do with saving money in the short term on our energy bill . . . but has everything to do with setting a bold energy-saving example for the rest of the country."

It was also critical, he said, to put "what is arguably one of the best-known international symbols of democracy in the best light possible - one that uses modern, energy-efficient . . . technology to honor the grandeur and splendor of the building's architecture and history."

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The dome's exterior is currently lighted by 38 1,000-watt metal halide lamps that were first installed 20 years ago. They will be replaced by 128 lighting fixtures. But with the new bulbs ranging from 35 watts to 210 watts - and with advancements in technology - the project's designer expects the lighting to use 70 percent less energy.

Helen Diemer, president of the Lighting Practice, the Philadelphia-based consultant hired for the dome project, said: "We were asked to look at the other monuments and design the lighting of the Capitol in a way that would be in keeping with the hierarchy of buildings and monuments on the mall, with the Capitol being the most prominent."

Replacing the dome's lighting system is the centerpiece of Pelosi's Green the Capitol initiative, which has introduced biodegradable utensils and compostable containers in the **House** cafeterias. The menus in the **House** members' dining room are printed on recycled paper.

Some Republicans, however, have questioned whether the lighting project is worth the cost.

House minority leader John Boehner, Republican of Ohio, complained that it would take 50 years to generate enough energy savings to recoup the costs and make the project worthwhile.

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Front

Environmental plan intends to put Capitol in a better light

RICHARD SIMON

BY RICHARD SIMON

441 words

22 August 2009

The Virginian-Pilot & The Ledger-Star

NFLK

VP - The Virginian-Pilot

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English

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By Richard Simon

Los Angeles Times

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House Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, complained that it would take 50 years to generate enough energy savings to recoup the costs.

And Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., said: "I fully support projects that actually result in greater energy efficiency within the Capitol complex. But I strongly believe at a time of record national debt, the people's **House** should prioritize (how it uses) the people's money."

The project, more than a year behind schedule, could begin next summer.

lighting the dome

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Los Angeles Times

Main News; National Desk

The Nation; Capitol could glow with efficiency; Democrats back a plan for low-energy bulbs. Republicans say the project is too costly.

Richard Simon

731 words

21 August 2009

Los Angeles Times

LATM

Home Edition

A-16

English

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WASHINGTON

How many lawmakers does it take to change a light bulb?

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The project stems from a push by **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) to make Congress a shining example of environmental responsibility. But like many projects in Washington, it is not without controversy. Republicans say the \$1-million-plus price tag is too costly at a time of record federal budget deficits.

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The top of the dome first was illuminated during the 19th century with gas lamps, according to the office of the Architect of the Capitol. Electric lighting arrived in time for President Wilson's second inauguration in 1917.

The Capitol was lighted every night during World War I to "inspire the patriotic sentiments of visitors and troops passing through the city," but the dome was blacked out during World War II.

The lights also were turned off briefly during the 1973 energy crisis.

Helen K. Diemer, president of the Lighting Practice, the Philadelphia-based consulting firm hired for the dome project, said: "We were asked to look at the other monuments and design the lighting of the Capitol in a way that would be in keeping with the hierarchy of buildings and monuments on the mall, with the Capitol being the most prominent."

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The project, more than a year behind schedule, could get underway next summer.

Previous efforts to make Washington more eco-friendly have met with mixed results.

For example, President Carter had solar panels installed on the White **House** roof. The Reagan administration had them removed.

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richard.simon@latimes.com

PHOTO: LOOK OF THE FUTURE? The U.S. Capitol is illuminated by low-wattage lights during an experiment with the energy-efficient bulbs. The plan is to replace the existing fixtures with 128 bulbs ranging from 35 watts to 210 watts, which the project's designer expects will use 70% less energy.;PHOTOGRAPHER:the Lighting Practice;PHOTO: CURRENT LOOK: The Capitol is lighted by 38 1,000-watt metal halide lamps that were installed 20 years ago. The overhaul could cost \$1 million.;PHOTOGRAPHER: the Lighting Practice

Document LATM000020090821e58I0000s

News Watch

Officials blame generic passwords for lawmakers' hacked sites

By REBECCA NEAL, rneal@federaltimes.com

404 words

17 August 2009

Federal Times

FDRLT

11

English

2009, Army Times Publishing

Weak passwords allowed a hacker or hackers to access at least 18 **House** members' Web sites the weekend of Aug. 1, according to the **House** chief administrative officer.

The hackers replaced text on the lawmakers' public sites with repeated lines stating, "H4ck3d by 3n_byt3 @ Indonesia H4ck3rs."

The defaced sites are all hosted by GovTrends, an Alexandria, Va., Web consulting company. The company's founder said the problem "was fixed immediately."

Congressional officials attribute the breach to employees not changing their initial generic passwords.

"GovTrends gave members' offices access to update Web sites remotely at home, to post a news story," said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for Daniel Beard, the **House** chief administrative officer. "They instituted a generically coded password and expected users to then go in and set something more personal."

Members whose pages were hacked are both Republicans and Democrats, from both rural and urban areas, including Reps. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill; Spencer Bachus, R-Ala.; and Russ Carnahan, D-Mo.

Am Emam, founder of GovTrends, said the company tightened security and set new passwords.

"It was fixed immediately. It's just passwords. It's not a big deal. Even Twitter was attacked - these things happen," he said.

The defacement did no permanent damage to the Web sites, Emam said.

Ventura said the hacks didn't threaten congressional computer security. Internal databases and e-mail systems are not contracted out.

Ventura said the chief acquisition officer is reviewing the **House's** relationship with GovTrends. **House** members can either use the free services of the **House** information technology department to host their Web sites or go with a vendor.

At least one **House** lawmaker was peeved to find out his office was notified of the incident only after GovTrends was informed.

In an Aug. 6 letter to Beard, Bachus asked how the hacking occurred and why policy is to notify the vendor first instead of the members' offices.

"It is my hope that your office will consider immediately informing member offices of cyber attacks in the future rather than relying on outside vendors," Bachus wrote.

Beard responded: "In situations where support is provided to a member by a third party, such as your agreement with GovTrends, we honor that relationship and provide the contractor the opportunity to contact their clients first."

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Document FDRLT00020090831e58h00005

US House's discarded leather finds new life as furniture for Tucson nonprofits

By PHIL VILLARREAL

Arizona Daily Star

792 words

16 August 2009

03:00

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) - The U.S. **House** of Representatives is cutting down on waste.

Instead of discarding thousands of pounds of leather as it usually does each year when it reupholsters furniture, the **House** has shipped a bunch of it to Tucson.

And in the spirit of belt-tightening, the charity that received the scraps had to pick up the tab for shipping and handling.

"I wrote (the **House**) a \$350 check for shipping," said Heather Robinson, who runs the home-furnishings recycling charity Refused Reused, which fixes up old furniture for nonprofits and schools. "That felt weird."

The **House** reupholsters furniture on an as-needed basis and had always thrown away the 40,000 square feet of scrap leather it goes through each year, said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. This year, it started recycling under the Green the Capitol program, which speaker Nancy Pelosi instituted in June 2007 to cut down on government waste.

"In a nutshell, what we're doing is lowering the **House's** overall carbon footprint and saving energy in any way we can," Ventura said.

Ventura would not provide the cost of the reupholstering or say how often each piece of furniture is reupholstered in the 6 million square feet of office space inside five **House** buildings.

"I've never had reupholstering done in D.C. or here," said Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz. "The fact that it's being circulated -- recycled -- is a good thing, and I'm glad they picked Tucson.

Through a **spokesman**, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords said her Washington office has not been reupholstered, either. She took office in 2007.

Beth Pence, director of work-flow management at the **House** chief administrator's office, said some pieces of furniture go 10 years or more between reupholstering. She said the furniture is being reupholstered with "green leather," which is biodegradable, unlike the leather the **House** has used before.

Hollywood designer Rick Rifle, a Refused Reused volunteer who is well-versed on the cost of raw furniture materials, estimated the value of the leather in the Tucson shipment at \$2,400.

Rifle, who has appeared on several episodes of "Trading Spaces," said there is good reason to reupholster leather furniture.

"Leather wears unevenly, and there can be sunlight on some pieces, making it break down faster. There's also a lot of rub factor," he said. "There has to be some dignity to the institution, otherwise why don't we just put folding chairs in there?"

Pence contacted Robinson about the leather on June 16 after reading about Refused Reused online. Pence told the Star that Refused Reused appeared to be the only operation of its kind that could handle the amount of leather the **House** intended to ship, and said she'd keep sending Refused Reused all its scrap leather as long as the Robinsons put it to its intended purpose.

Heather Robinson eagerly accepted and said she and her mother and business partner, Jan Robinson, could make good use of the scraps and cushions. One 200-pound box went to the Boy Scouts. One will go to Rifle and HGTV network designer Kristin Casey -- who will make a patchwork leather bedspread and auction it to benefit Refused Reused. Heather and Jan may use the rest to make dog and cat beds to donate to pet shelters.

Heather Robinson said she was inspired to start Refused Reused after meeting the Dalai Lama in 2006 at the Gathering of Hearts Illuminating Compassion event in San Francisco. Heather and Jan launched the charity in 2007. Together with Rifle and Casey, the Robinsons used recycled parts to remodel a kitchen at the New Beginnings for Women & Children shelter in February 2008.

The day the special delivery of leather arrived, Robinson said, she eyed the UPS freight truck as it rumbled down the road toward her grandmother's east side home.

The deliveryman lugged box after box onto the carport -- four in all, totaling 800 pounds.

And more is on the way. Robinson has been promised another shipment soon, this time five boxes with 1,000 pounds of leather.

"We're at the point where the little idea of ours has grown so much that we need a storage facility and a truck," Robinson said.

With the help of a dolly, the deliveryman hoisted the first of four square 42-inch crates and dropped it off under the carport, Robinson said.

Eyeing a label that read "U.S. **House** of Representatives," the UPS man asked her: "What have you got in there? Senators?"

Information from: Arizona Daily Star, <http://www.azstarnet.com>

7

Document APRS000020090816e58g001b9



News

E-MAIL FEVER GIVES HOUSE WEB SITE A HEADACHE

Charles Hurt, with AP

199 words

15 August 2009

New York Post

NYPO

6

English

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WASHINGTON - The health-care reform plan has knocked a congressional Web site into intensive care.

The Internet system serving the **House** of Representatives remained sluggish yesterday - as voters from around the country continued to flood members with impassioned e-mail about the overhaul legislation.

Technical support issued a warning to congressional staff that www.house.gov might be slow or even unresponsive because of the large volume of e-mails being sent to members.

"It is clearly health-care reform. There's no doubt about it," said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer, which maintains the site.

Sean Brown, a **spokesman** for Rep. Joe Barton (R-Texas), said the online traffic related to health care had exploded in recent weeks.

He said Barton's office had received 2,761 individual e-mails on the subject since the debate heated up five weeks ago. In the five weeks before that, he said, the office received just 368 on the topic.

And 90 to 95 percent of the latest batch, Brown estimated, were sent by people objecting to President Obama's plan.

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NEWS
WASHINGTON

263 words
14 August 2009
Press-Telegram
KRTL
MAIN
6A
English

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Chain e-mail used to counter critics: President Barack Obama's push to revamp health care got a boost Thursday as a new coalition of drugmakers, unions, hospitals and others launched a \$12 million pro-overhaul ad campaign.

Meanwhile, the administration sought to regain control of the health care debate by asking supporters to forward a chain e-mail to counter criticism that's circulating on the Internet. The e-mail by White **House** senior adviser David Axelrod offers reasons to support Obama's agenda - and myths to debunk.

Axelrod wrote that opponents are relying on tactics including "viral e-mails that fly unchecked and under the radar, spreading all sorts of lies."

"So let's start a chain e-mail of our own," he said, inviting supporters to forward a message countering claims that Obama's plans would lead to rationing, encourage euthanasia or deplete veterans' health care.

E-mails from the public overload **House's** Web site: Amid a boisterous debate on health care reform, people flooded members of Congress on Thursday with so many e-mails that they overloaded the **House's** primary Web site. Technical support issued a warning to congressional staff that the site, www.house.gov, may be slow or unresponsive because of the large volume of e-mail being sent to members.

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Lawmakers are in their home districts for the August recess.

There's no doubt about it. - The Associated Press

Document KRTL00020101014e58e00iwq

NEWS

ALSO ... ; REFORM TALK SCHEDULED

164 words

14 August 2009

The Oklahoman

OKC

CITY

4A

English

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NORMAN — A retired military physician who has worked in countries with nationalized health care systems will discuss health care reform in Norman. Dr. Katherine Scheirman will speak to Democrats in the 4th Congressional District about the current debate over a national health care system at 11:30 a.m. today at the Holiday Inn, 1000 N Interstate Drive in Norman. The event is free.

Julie Bisbee,

Capitol Bureau

E-mail flood hinders site

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Associated Press

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The Washington Post

A Section
Politics Digest

846 words
14 August 2009
The Washington Post
WP
FINAL
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English
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HEALTH CARE

Bill Clinton Criticizes

GOP Tactics in Debate

Former president Bill Clinton says Republicans have turned to terrifying people in the debate over health-care reform because the GOP has no political clout to fight it.

Clinton was president when the Democrats made their last major effort to change the system. The big difference now, he says, is that Democrats have a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate as well as control of the **House**.

The former president called "crazy" the charges that promoting living wills and other end-of-life planning is somehow promoting death.

He spoke Thursday night in Pittsburgh at the opening session of the Netroots Nation convention, a gathering of politically progressive bloggers and other online activists.

-- Associated Press

SOUTH CAROLINA

Attorney Gen. Seeks

Sanford Ethics Probe

South Carolina's attorney general said Thursday that he wants state ethics commissioners to review whether Gov. Mark Sanford improperly used state aircraft for personal and political trips.

The request from Attorney General Henry McMaster follows Associated Press investigations of the Republican governor's use of state aircraft and his flights on commercial airlines. McMaster, a fellow Republican who has said he plans to run for governor in 2010, made the request in a letter to Herb Hayden, executive director of the ethics panel, which enforces the state's ethics laws.

The request comes amid high scrutiny of Sanford's use of state resources following the revelation that he had an affair with a woman in Argentina. After the affair became public in June, Sanford reimbursed the state \$3,300 for part of an economic development trip he took there.

Records reviewed by the AP show that since Sanford took office in 2003, he has used state aircraft to travel to his children's sporting events, hair and dentist appointments, political gatherings and a birthday party for a campaign donor.

Sanford has called the characterization of some of his flights "misleading."

-- Associated Press

HEALTH CARE

E-Mail About Reform

Overloads **House** Site

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"It is clearly health-care reform," he said. "There's no doubt about it."

Lawmakers are in their home districts for the August recess, and a backlash has emerged in some quarters against efforts to overhaul the nation's health-care system.

A **spokesman** for Rep. Joe Barton (R-Tex.), said e-mail traffic related to health care has exploded in recent weeks. Sean Brown said the office has received 2,761 e-mails on the subject since the debate heated up five weeks ago. In the five weeks before that, the office received 368 health-care-related e-mails. He estimated that 90 to 95 percent of the messages were in opposition to President Obama's plan.

-- Associated Press

ANGRY PROTEST

Man Is Questioned

For Anti-Obama Sign

Law enforcement officials in Maryland on Thursday said the Secret Service questioned a 51-year-old man who had held up a sign that read "Death to Obama" at a forum on health-care reform in Hagerstown.

The man was part of a crowd of nearly 1,000 who turned out Wednesday for Democratic Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin's raucous town hall meeting. Washington County sheriff's deputies spotted him amid dozens of self-described reform opponents waving to motorists as they traveled along a thoroughfare leading to the city's community college, where the town hall meeting was held.

The homemade cardboard sign read, "Death to Obama Death to Obama, Michelle and 2 Stupid Kids," according to WHAG-TV, Hagerstown's NBC affiliate.

The Washington County Sheriff's Office said the man was detained and turned over to the Secret Service.

Darrin Blackford, a Secret Service **spokesman** in the District, said that he was aware of the incident and that a proper "follow-up investigation" is being conducted.

A law enforcement source said the man voluntarily agreed to go a sheriff's office and was not handcuffed. He remained there until agents arrived from Baltimore and questioned him. Agents determined that he was not a threat to himself or others and he was released, the source said.

The incident is not the first that has drawn national attention in Maryland. A cardboard cutout of Rep. Frank M. Kratovil Jr., a first-term Democrat who represents the Republican-leaning district on the Eastern Shore, was hung in effigy at a protest late last month. Outside the Hagerstown gathering, reform opponents also handed out fliers depicting Obama as Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

-- Aaron Davis

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The New York Times

HEAT OF SUMMER
National Desk; SECTA
An E-Mail Traffic Jam

By DAVID STOUT
203 words
14 August 2009
The New York Times
NYTF
Late Edition - Final
13
English

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Capitol Hill is supposed to be somnolent in August as members of Congress lay down the burdens of office, flee the heat of the capital and go home to reconnect with their constituents.

This August is different because of the debate over health care. People flooded members of Congress on Thursday with so many e-mail messages that they overloaded the **House's** primary Web site, causing it to be slow or unresponsive for a time.

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer, told The Associated Press that the spike in e-mail volume was a result of the health care controversy. "There's no doubt about it," Mr. Ventura said.

At the White **House**, President Obama's chief **spokesman**, Robert Gibbs, said the president still wants a bipartisan health care bill and remains optimistic. As for the heated town meetings in which lawmakers of both parties have been grilled by their constituents, Mr. Gibbs said, "The president, again, strongly believes that -- and has for years -- that it's better to address what people's concerns are and take them on head-on." DAVID STOUT

Document NYTF000020090814e58e0003e

Health Care Messages Clog House Web Site

Greg Vadala, CQ Staff

199 words

13 August 2009

CQ Today

CQTDAY

English

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** CQ Today **

* Health Care Messages Clog **House** Web Site * By Greg Vadala, CQ Staff

With the health care debate raging nationwide, a function of the **House** Web site that allows people to send e-mails to their representatives was overwhelmed today with messages.

Capitol Hill technical support warned that due to a spike in volume forms on the "Write Your Representative" section of the site, www.house.gov, "may be slow to process and content may be slow or unresponsive due to the heavy load of constituent messages being sent to members."

"It's been overtaxed, so it's slowing down," said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House** administrative office. He added that the huge increase in e-mail volume is likely due to the health care debate.

Ventura said the site experienced a similar problem in January, when the **House** passed its \$819.5 billion version of the economic stimulus bill (PL 111-5).

During the stimulus debate, Ventura said, the **House** installed new "load balancing" technology to help cope with surges in volume.

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

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House Web site overloaded as lawmakers flooded with e-mails amid health care debate

By ANNE FLAHERTY
Associated Press Writer
397 words

13 August 2009
19:31

Associated Press Newswires
APRS
English

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WASHINGTON (AP) - Amid a boisterous debate on health care reform, people flooded members of Congress on Thursday with so many e-mails that they overloaded the **House's** primary Web site.

Technical support issued a warning to congressional staff that the site, <http://www.house.gov>, may be slow or unresponsive because of the large volume of e-mail being sent to members.

Jeff Ventura, a spokesman for the **House's** chief administrative officer, which maintains the Web site, said traffic data was not available and could not be released without the lawmakers' consent.

"It is clearly health care reform," Ventura said. "There's no doubt about it."

Lawmakers are in their home districts for the August recess, where a populist backlash has emerged in some quarters against President Barack Obama's plan to overhaul the nation's health care system.

A **spokesman** for Rep. Joe Barton, a Texas Republican, said e-mail traffic related to health care has exploded in recent weeks.

Sean Brown said the office has received 2,761 e-mails on the subject since the debate heated up five weeks ago. In the five weeks before that, the office received 368 health care-related e-mails. He estimated that 90 to 95 percent of the e-mails were opposed to Obama's plan.

Democrats are trying desperately to regain control of the debate, with the White **House** posting a new Web site designed to dispel what it called "the misinformation and baseless smears that are cropping up daily." **House** Democratic aides have set up a health care war room out of Majority Leader Steny Hoyer's office. It is designed to help lawmakers answer questions about the legislation.

Ventura said the last time he saw such a significant slowdown in the system was in January, shortly before the **House** passed an \$819 billion bill to stimulate the economy.

Ventura said new technology called "load balancing" is in place to try to handle spikes in volume. So far, the **House** Web site remains available to the public.

In particular, people are heavily using a link on the site called "Write Your Representative," which helps a voter track down their representative by plugging in their ZIP code.

On the Net:

<http://www.house.gov>

7

Document APRS000020090813e58d002ap

Technology
Security Watch

By Daniel Wolfe
1,089 words
12 August 2009
American Banker
AMB
5

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A Scammer's Life

Online scammers in Nigeria are facing tough times because many of the Americans they target are broke.

Their financial woes have been somewhat offset because more Americans, motivated by their own financial issues, are more easily duped by scammers but even that is not enough, The Washington Post reported Friday.

One scammer, who identified himself to the Post only as Felix, said that in a good month he used to make \$30,000 from duped Americans, but his revenue has dropped by about 40%.

Another scammer, known as Banjo, told the paper that Americans "don't have money. And the money they don't have, we want."

These online con artists send emails about unclaimed money to lists of email addresses they buy online. People who respond to the ruse are told they must wire a processing fee to claim the larger sum, and their victims often comply.

"I'm selling greed," Felix told the Post. "You didn't apply for any lotto, and all of a sudden you just see a mail in your mailbox that you're going to win money? That means you have to be greedy."

Another variant of this scam is to mail a forged check and ask people to send a portion of the money back. The victims are often held responsible when banks later find that the check was fake.

The scam culture is so pervasive in Nigeria that it shows up in pop songs, though law enforcement agencies there are trying to crack down, the Post said, for example, by raiding cybercafes to head off scam emails as they are sent.

Online scammers are coping with the recession by posting fake want ads.

The bogus job postings work much like other common advancefee scams but are disguised as job listings on legitimate Web sites. The New York Times profiled one victim, Claude Vera, who was sent a fake check to buy supplies that scammers said he would need for a workfromhome job.

He dutifully wired close to \$8,000 to the purported vendors, but the funds really went to scammers, the Aug. 6 article said.

"If you are a con artist, having more people out of work to deal with increases your odds of finding a victim," Pam Dixon, the executive director of the nonprofit research group World Privacy Forum, told the Times.

Online job sites try to filter out scam listings, which typically are disguised as "workfromhome" opportunities or mystery shopper jobs, a technique that hides the fact that there are no actual offices that respondents can visit, the article said.

Exposures

The Social Security numbers of many bigshot business executives were exposed online by an Iowa government Web site.

More than 2,000 Social Security numbers belonging to top executives and directors were posted as part of corporate reports filed with the state before 2000, according to an article in The Des Moines Register Saturday.

The Web site, which the state shut down Friday, also included personal information on executives from outside Iowa. The state was notified about the exposure by the Register, which was told of the matter by privacy advocates.

Iowa's secretary of state, Michael Mauro, told the paper that the personal information was posted unintentionally. "There's nobody out there in the government sector, either the secretary or the governor, who is out there intentionally making information available to the public," he said.

The article noted that this is the second time in less than a year that Iowa has been caught posting Social Security numbers online. The earlier incident involved Social Security numbers found on the state's land records Web site.

The problem is primarily with older records, predating a state law that took effect in 2002, barring the use of Social Security numbers on government records. Before the law took effect, many businesses put Social Security numbers on forms voluntarily, in part because people were less concerned about identity theft then, the article said.

A laptop stolen from a government contractor has put 131,000 soldiers at risk of identity theft, the Bangor (Maine) Daily News reported Tuesday.

The affected individuals were enrolled in a bonus incentives program, and the laptop was stolen at a conference, Peter Rogers, the deputy commissioner of Maine's Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, told the paper.

"We have to assume that the information can be used to steal someone's identity," Rogers said.

The department is mailing letters to 766 members of the Maine Army National Guard, and more letters will be sent out as more affected soldiers are identified.

Sen. Susan Collins of Maine told the paper that government contractors should be aware that they are "stewards of large amounts of personal data on lawabiding citizens and that they must guard this information wisely or lose people's trust."

Hacked.Gov

The Web sites of at least 18 members of the **House** of Representatives were hacked into and altered this month.

The incident may serve as a lesson on password security the affected pages were assigned to representatives who never changed their default passwords, according to GovTrends, the Web design company that hosts the **House.gov** pages. Another possibility is that the sites were attacked through a flaw in the Web server configurations, The Washington Post's Brian Krebs reported Aug. 6 and Aug. 7 in his "Security Fix" column.

Parts of the members' pages were replaced with the message "H4ck3d by 3n_byt3 @ Indonesia H4ck3rs." Among those affected were Republicans Duncan Hunter of California and Spencer Bachus of Alabama; as well as Democrat Jesse L. Jackson Jr. of Illinois.

Ab Emam, the founder of GovTrends, said that the default passwords assigned to each page were not considered strong. "Most of these passwords could be guessed; they were obvious," he said.

However, Gary Warner, the director of research in computer forensics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, suggested that the Web server might have been attacked.

Jeff Ventura, a spokesman for the **House's** chief administrative officer, called the incident "digital graffiti" and said no sensitive data was exposed. "Over the last year the **House** has continued aggressively fortifying its security systems," he told the Post. "These improvements to our systems resulted in the swift identification of the site defacements."

Security Watch is a weekly roundup of news and developments in data security and their impact on financial services companies. Email comments, ideas and suggestions to Daniel.Wolfe@SourceMedia.com.

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NEWS

US House's scrap leather finds new life in Tucson

PHIL VILLARREAL

PHIL VILLARREAL, ARIZONA DAILY STAR

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English

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The U.S. **House** of Representatives is cutting down on waste.

Instead of discarding thousands of pounds of leather as it usually does each year when it reupholsters furniture, the **House** has shipped a bunch of it to Tucson.

And in the spirit of belt-tightening, the charity that received the scraps had to pick up the tab for shipping and handling.

"I wrote (the **House**) a \$350 check for shipping," said Heather Robinson, who runs the home-furnishings recycling charity Refused Reused, which fixes up old furniture for nonprofits and schools. "That felt weird."

The **House** reupholsters furniture on an as-needed basis and had always thrown away the 40,000 square feet of scrap leather it goes through each year, said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. This year, it started recycling under the Green the Capitol program, which speaker Nancy Pelosi instituted in June 2007 to cut down on government waste.

"In a nutshell, what we're doing is lowering the **House's** overall carbon footprint and saving energy in any way we can," Ventura said.

Ventura would not provide the cost of the reupholstering or say how often each piece of furniture is reupholstered in the 6 million square feet of office space inside five **House** buildings.

"I've never had reupholstering done in D.C. or here," said Rep. Raul Grijalva, D-Ariz. "The fact that it's being circulated - recycled - is a good thing, and I'm glad they picked Tucson.

Through a **spokesman**, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords said her Washington office has not been reupholstered, either. She took office in 2007.

Beth Pence, director of work-flow management at the **House** chief administrator's office, said some pieces of furniture go 10 years or more between reupholstering. She said the furniture is being reupholstered with "green leather," which is biodegradable, unlike the leather the **House** has used before.

Hollywood designer Rick Rifle, a Refused Reused volunteer who is well-versed on the cost of raw furniture materials, estimated the value of the leather in the Tucson shipment at \$2,400.

Rifle, who has appeared on several episodes of "Trading Spaces," said there is good reason to reupholster leather furniture.

"Leather wears unevenly, and there can be sunlight on some pieces, making it break down faster. There's also a lot of rub factor," he said. "There has to be some dignity to the institution, otherwise why don't we just put folding chairs in there?"

The online connection

Pence contacted Robinson about the leather on June 16 after reading about Refused Reused online. Pence told the Star that Refused Reused appeared to be the only operation of its kind that could handle the amount of leather the **House** intended to ship, and said she'd keep sending Refused Reused all its scrap leather as long as the Robinsons put it to its intended purpose.

Heather Robinson eagerly accepted and said she and her mother/ business partner, Jan Robinson, could make good use of the scraps and cushions. One 200-pound box went to the Boy Scouts. One will go to Rifle and HGTV network designer Kristin Casey - who will make a patchwork leather bedspread and auction it to benefit Refused Reused. Heather and Jan may use the rest to make dog and cat beds to donate to pet shelters.

The Boy Scouts were thrilled by the donation.

"We'll probably try to use it for our Cub Scout camp and craft little items," said Tom McVeigh, director of field services for Catalina Council Boy Scouts of America.

Heather Robinson said she was inspired to start Refused Reused after meeting the Dalai Lama in 2006 at the Gathering of Hearts Illuminating Compassion event in San Francisco. Heather and Jan launched the charity in 2007. Together with Rifle and Casey, the Robinsons used recycled parts to remodel a kitchen at the New Beginnings for Women & Children shelter in February 2008.

The day the special delivery of leather arrived, Robinson said, she eyed the UPS freight truck as it rumbled down the road toward her grandmother's east side home.

The deliveryman lugged box after box onto the carport - four in all, totaling 800 pounds.

And more is on the way. Robinson has been promised another shipment soon, this time five boxes with 1,000 pounds of leather.

"We're at the point where the little idea of ours has grown so much that we need a storage facility and a truck," Robinson said.

With the help of a dolly, the deliveryman hoisted the first of four square 42-inch crates and dropped it off under the carport, Robinson said.

Eyeing a label that read "U.S. **House** of Representatives," the UPS man asked her: "What have you got in there? Senators?"

Contact reporter Phil Villarreal at 573-4130 or pvillarreal@azstarnet.com

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Hill Getting Mini-Makeover in Aug.

Emily Yehle
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Members will return from their August recess to a renovated **House** chamber, a more acoustic Cannon Caucus Room and dozens of small improvements throughout the Capitol campus.

Congress' monthlong break always provides time for workers to give Congressional buildings mini-makeovers without worrying about disrupting votes or inconveniencing Members. Usually, they repaint walls, repair pipes, clean facades and check off a slew of small projects.

"It is a lot and we always have a lot," said Eva Malecki, spokeswoman for the Architect of the Capitol. "Most of the time, we're working during the night or on weekends."

The recess, she added, is "great for us to now knock out our bigger projects."

This year, the agency will help the Clerk of the **House** renovate the **House** chamber for the first time in almost a decade. Workers will install two new summary boards -- which give information on legislation and votes -- and a hydraulic lift to allow those with disabilities access to the rostrum.

The last comparable upgrade to the chamber was in 1999 and 2000, when workers replaced the wiring infrastructure, put down new carpets, installed smoke detectors and overhauled the chamber's sound system.

August's renovations, however, will probably be more apparent to Members who have spent years squinting at the chamber's summary boards.

Originally installed in 1973, the current boards only show a short -- and sometimes confusing -- description of legislation and a tally of the votes. The new ones, costing about \$500,000, will include more information.

The lift will also be a big change, allowing disabled Members to reach the rostrum. In September, Rep. James Langevin (D-R.I.), who is in a wheelchair, will be able to preside over a session for the first time in his more than eight years in office.

The chamber will also get new microphones to alleviate the interference from Members' BlackBerrys and cell phones, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman for House** Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard.

The **House** Recording Studio also will install cabling for a new camera, and the **House** floor broadcasting facilities will move from the Capitol basement to the Capitol Visitor Center. By September, floor proceedings will be recorded in high definition, Ventura said.

Other changes around the Capitol and Congressional buildings will be less obvious.

Workers will repair some concrete flooring in the parking garage of the Rayburn **House** Office Building, forcing some detours. They will replace a skylight in the Capitol that was damaged during preparations for the inauguration. The Cannon Tunnel will also get repairs for small leaks (but it will remain open).

Workers will also be taking on projects throughout the Capitol campus: replacing granite pavers at the CVC, reinstalling a historic trolley stop and restoring the Bartholdi Fountain.

The CAO's office will also use the time to facilitate the painting and renovation of more than 40 offices, Ventura said.

Many committees and Members opt to wait until August -- when fewer staffers are on the Hill -- to do the work, Ventura said.

"It's more convenient for them, so we always give them the option," he said.

Cafeteria hours in both the **House** and Senate will also be shorter during August, and the cafeteria in the Longworth **House** Office Building will be closed so workers can replace a drainage pipe.

In the **House**, the Rayburn Cafe, Cannon Cafe and Ford Cafe will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Ford Carryout will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Capitol Market from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; the Creamery from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Goodies from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In the Senate, the Dirksen Cafe will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. American Grill and the Hart Sundry will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Cups and Company's hours will be 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The shortened **House** hours began this week, while the Senate will begin the new schedule next week. Normal hours will resume when the **House** and Senate go back into session after Labor Day.

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GPO's Web Site Offers More Search Options
Computer Magazine Gives Kudos to FDsys

Emily Yehle
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30 July 2009
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English

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Locating Congressional records has always been hit or miss - some documents come only in print, while others are lost in the annals of unsearchable databases.

But the Government Printing Office is trying to make many federal documents searchable and accessible with a recently launched Web site called FDsys.

Costing \$30 million so far, the system includes bills, committee reports, Congressional calendars and other documents as far back as 1994. All of that information has been available for years on the GPO Access site, but a mediocre search engine meant that most of it was hard to find.

FDsys - which stands for the Federal Digital System - appears to be doing much better than its predecessor. It allows users to search by keyword, Member, committee, year, topic and dozens of other criteria. And this week, Government Computer News highlighted FDsys as one of 10 "Great Government Web Sites."

GPO Access, on the other hand, was cumbersome enough that other agencies and groups created their own narrow search engines for it - one of which is the Library of Congress' THOMAS.

"For those that were skilled at using the GPO Access site, it was just fine," Public Printer Robert Tapella said recently. "But for those of us used to Google searches, it was pretty difficult."

FDsys was launched in February, and GPO officials have been adding information to the site ever since. In the coming months, they hope to add the Congressional Record Index, the Congressional Directory and the History of Bills, among other things.

Tapella said the agency chooses what to put up by its importance and popularity, as well as the difficulty of making an electronic version. Documents before 1994, for example, are more cumbersome and expensive because they didn't originate electronically.

Some Congressional records are still absent - including the Statement of Disbursements, a document that details how Members spend their office budgets.

The GPO prints **House** and Senate statements, which are public but only available in large books stored near the Capitol. They include salaries as well as travel and office budgets. In the past, some Members have been apprehensive about posting that potentially controversial information online.

When asked why the statements aren't included on FDsys, Tapella said that decision is up to Congress.

"We are a disseminator of information for Congress," he said. "It is Congress who makes the decision of what is published, what is not published and how it is published."

The **House** plans to put its quarterly statements online in November. **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** Chief Administrative Officer, said the difficulty isn't making the statements available electronically.

Instead, it's "ensuring that the support is in place" so Members and staffers can answer questions. The CAO's office is now preparing informational documents and developing a training system for staffers.

Despite this omission from FDsys, however, the system will one day offer a wealth of government documents that are now spread throughout different institutions, if all goes according to plan. The eventual goal, Tapella said, is to "go back through the history of our nation" and put up electronic versions of important records.

Everything put up on the site is also authenticated and stored in an electronic preservation system. Tweaks will be made, Tapella said, but the infrastructure is mostly complete and the work ahead is primarily adding more documents.

It appears as though Congress is ready to provide the money to do so. The **House** and Senate passed spending bills that include about \$7 million for FDsys in fiscal 2010, though the bill has yet to go to conference.

Tapella, at least, is optimistic about the possibilities.

"Congress understands that FDsys is the future," he said.

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Gift Shop Reaps Campaign Rewards

Ben Geier
572 words
28 July 2009
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English

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All Congressional campaigns have many people to thank: donors, supporters and more donors. And in order to obtain the necessary thank-you gifts, many campaigns turn to a source close to home: the **House** Gift Shop.

According to Federal Election Commission reports, many campaigns racked up several thousand dollars' worth of purchases at the gift shop in the Longworth **House** Office Building throughout the course of the 2008 campaign cycle. Even though some campaigns totaled as much as \$21,000 in spending, most of the purchases were small items. In fact, one of the most popular items turned out to be the \$10 official Congressional Christmas ornament.

Jeff Ventura, spokesman for the Chief Administrative Officer, said the Christmas ornament is "absolutely a popular seller." Ventura said 15,000 copies of the 2008 ornament were ordered, and 14,558 have been sold to date. Ventura noted that it is impossible to know for sure who purchased the ornaments.

Rep. Mike Ross (D-Ark.) was an enthusiastic ornament buyer, according to his office. Press Secretary Brad Howard notes that Ross' campaign bought 500 of the ornaments last year.

Other popular items - all falling within FEC spending guidelines - include cookbooks, Congressional letter openers and the famed Space Pens that have the ability to write upside down.

These are perfect thank-you gifts for donors, according to Emily Emmett, the spokeswoman for Rep. Gene Taylor (D-Miss.). The items are "small tokens of appreciation to our supporters who give their time and money," she said. "At home, it really is unique to get these gifts."

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.), who dropped just more than \$6,000 at the gift shop during the 2008 campaign cycle, spent the money in a similar fashion.

"The Congressman's campaign purchased gifts for some of Rep. Aderholt's campaign supporters and volunteers from the **House** of Representatives Gift Shop; gifts that could only be purchased at a Congressional gift shop, such as special Congressional Holiday ornaments, Congressional glassware and other Congressional merchandise," Aderholt communications director Darrell Jordan wrote in an e-mail.

Another popular use of items from the gift shop was for prizes in various charity tournaments.

Rep. Rael Grijalva (D-Ariz.) spent almost \$1,500 on prizes for a bowling tournament. Other legislators held golf tournaments and gave out prizes such as wine glasses and cookbooks.

Some money spent by Members at the gift shop goes to charity fundraising in their home districts.

Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas) - who spent nearly \$21,000 at the gift shop in 2007-08 - donated some of the purchased goods to charities in his home district.

"Very worthy charities in East Texas are constantly seeking to have our campaign contribute items for their fundraising silent auctions, and I believe in supporting our deserving charities as much as possible," Gohmert said in an e-mail.

Gohmert said he also spent some of the money on gifts for those who help raise funds by holding fundraising events. He explained that sometimes money is better spent thanking people than buying advertising.

"These days, it takes tremendous amounts of campaign contributions to buy much advertising on television," he said in the same e-mail. "Yet the same money does buy significant numbers of items that do far more effective advertising all over the twelve counties in our district."

Alexander Comisar and Jeremy B. White contributed to this report.

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Smoking Rooms Still Open (for Now)

Emily Yehle
893 words
27 July 2009
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More than three months after deciding to close the **House's** smoking rooms, officials still do not know when or how they will ultimately banish the last refuge enjoyed by Congressional staffers who smoke.

The **House** Administration Committee decided in April to close the rooms in the Longworth and Cannon **House** office buildings, which serve as the only indoor smoking areas where staffers can still light up. But **House** officials have been slow to move forward with the plan.

Part of the reason appears to be the convoluted approval process.

The committee's order went to Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard, who must send a recommendation to the **House** Office Building Commission, which then would order the Architect of the Capitol to make the change. The commission is essentially **House** leadership: Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) sit on the panel.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the plan to close the smoking rooms is "being finalized" and the office will soon send a letter to the building commission.

"At this time, there is still no definitive date as to when said closures will happen," he wrote in an e-mail.

The closing of the rooms appears to be one of the last steps in Pelosi's ongoing effort to rid the **House** of secondhand smoke.

She began the trend soon after becoming Speaker in 2007, issuing an order to ban smoking in the Speaker's Lobby. For decades, Members had used the room -- located just off the **House** floor -- to relax in a leather chair with a cigarette or cigar.

Since then, smoking has slowly been edged out. Smokers now can't indulge within 25 feet of a **House** building's entrance, and **House** shops also stopped selling cigarettes more than a year ago.

Members can still smoke in their own offices, but almost 99 percent enact a smoking ban anyway, according to a 2006 survey commissioned by the CAO. Lawmakers who need a nicotine hit can also head to the balcony beyond the Speaker's Lobby.

But the enclosed rooms in the Longworth and Cannon basements represent the last smoking strongholds for **House** employees. Smoking is already prohibited at the cafeteria in the Rayburn **House** Office Building.

The rooms resemble exhibits in a museum: Smokers sit at tables behind a glass wall, separated from the rest of the lunch crowd.

Last week, both rooms were sparsely populated in the middle of the day. Across from Cannon Carryout, only a half dozen people sat inside the smoking area. In Longworth, employees from the Architect of the Capitol's office took up most of the occupied seats in a room at the back of the cafeteria.

Riff Lanier, a building inspector for the AOC, said closing the rooms will only lead to more smoking in unauthorized areas.

He recounted getting a call from a Rayburn office complaining of a smoke smell soon after **House** leaders began clamping down on smoking. Upon inspection, he found dozens of cigarette butts in the parking garage.

"Make it fair. If you don't want to take my smoke, that's fine, but give me a place to smoke," he said, after stubbing out his Salem cigarette. "I just think people are going to take negative action."

House officials say they are closing the rooms for two reasons: to gain more space for cafeteria seating and to promote a healthy environment.

After acknowledging the rooms' impending closure in April, a **spokesman** for the **House** Administration Committee said officials would develop a "transitional strategy" to address smokers' needs.

It's unclear what that means. The committee referred recent questions about the smoking rooms to the AOC, which in turn referred questions to the CAO.

The CAO's role, however, is limited to officially recommending the smoking ban to the **House** Office Building Commission. Ventura said the recommendation will not get into the specifics of what to do with the rooms after smoking is no longer allowed.

When the ban goes into effect, smokers assume, they will have to go outside; many of them already do. Though they are supposed to stand 25 feet away from doors, several Capitol Police officers acknowledged that such rules usually aren't enforced.

Richard Butler, who works in the AOC painting division, said he is concerned about having to stand outside in the cold or rain. A heavy smoker, he has been using the Longworth smoking room for years.

"I think they go a little far," he said. Smokers, he said, should be given at least one place to comfortably light up.

But efforts to limit smoking areas aren't new; they began in the **House** as far back as the 19th century, according to the Office of the **House** Historian. In 1871, for example, Members banned smoking in the **House** galleries.

Progress was slow until Pelosi's tenure. Several resolutions to limit smoking cropped up in the 1990s, only to never be brought to the floor.

More recently, then-Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) added a provision to **House** rules exempting the **House** from the Washington, D.C., smoking ban that went into effect on Jan. 1, 2007.

Pelosi had amended that rule by Jan. 10, removing the Speaker's Lobby from the exemption.

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Heard On The Hill
Mini-Meek

Emily Heil; Elizabeth Brotherton

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Roll Call

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Mini-Meek. Time will tell if Rep. Kendrick Meek is successful in his bid for a Senate seat, but it appears he's already grooming his replacement in the **House**.

The only problem? That replacement is just 12.

The Florida Democrat's son, Kendrick Meek Jr., has spent much of his summer on Capitol Hill, following dad around as he attends to official duties.

Looking like an identical (but younger) version of his dad, the mini-Meek "wears suits and ties to work and likes Congressional lapel pins, too," **spokesman** Adam Sharon told HOH.

Politics runs in the Meek family. The Congressman often recalls that when he was 12, he made campaign signs at the kitchen table for his mother, who was running for the state Legislature. And when his mother, former Rep. Carrie Meek (D-Fla.), retired from Congress, he ran for her **House** seat and won.

So is politics in the future for the next generation?

Perhaps -- the Congressman likes to joke that the only thing standing between his son and Congress is the Constitution, Sharon said.

Department of Pots and Kettles. Sen. Charles Schumer is considered to be one of Congress' biggest publicity hounds, so an HOH spy was amused to hear the New York Democrat complaining about a colleague's efforts to draw media attention.

Our tipster reports seeing Schumer hopping out of a white SUV on Wednesday morning and heading into the Dirksen Senate Office Building, all the while gabbing loudly on a cell phone. The press-savvy Senator could be heard carping about how angry he was that someone (the spy couldn't tell who) was holding a news conference on Wednesday. The event was "all about PR," our tipster says Schumer grouched into the phone.

And HOH thought Schumer had never met a press conference he didn't like.

It Does a Body Good. When the Longworth **House** Office Building cafeteria began offering \$5 lunchtime value meals a few weeks ago, it was touted as a way for staffers to grab a bite without breaking the bank.

But Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper didn't like what she saw.

It wasn't that the Pennsylvania Democrat didn't appreciate the value -- she just

didn't like that soda was the sole drink option for the meals.

So, Dahlkemper -- the first clinical dietitian ever elected to Congress -- successfully petitioned the cafeteria overseer, Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard, to offer milk as an alternative to soda in the value meals.

Beard happily obliged.

"Congresswoman Dahlkemper's request is udder-ly appropriate," CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** told HOH. "We absolutely value the health of our employees, and she raises a very valuable issue, and we are absolutely receptive."

Dahlkemper spent 25 years as a dietitian before joining Congress. Since taking office, she has introduced multiple bills designed to fight the obesity epidemic.

And while Dahlkemper's request for milk is the first she has made to the cafeteria, she didn't rule out asking for menu changes in the future.

"I got them to cave on milk," Dahlkemper said. "Next is flax seed and wheat grass."

Mmmm, thanks Congresswoman.

Issa Goes Martha Stewart. Who needs a fancy fete? Rep. Darrell Issa showed two colleagues that it's the little gestures that make a birthday special, as he presented two colleagues with candle-studded doughnuts during a hearing on Tuesday.

The California Republican dressed up the Dunkin' Donuts that were brought for committee members with b-day candles, and he gave them to **House** Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Edolphus Towns (D- N.Y.), who turned 75 on Tuesday, and committee member John Duncan (R- Tenn.), who turned 62.

Good thing there were doughnuts lying around the hearing room, or else Issa might have had to resort to far-less-festive celebratory bags of chips.

Baby News. Adam Sharon, **spokesman** for Rep. Kendrick Meek (D- Fla.), is used to issuing press releases and making statements on behalf of his boss. Now Sharon has some hot news of his own: He and his wife, Abigail, welcomed daughter Adele on Wednesday morning. Weighing 7 pounds, 6 ounces and measuring 19.5 inches long, Adele joins big sister Eden, Sharon tells HOH.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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Some House Classes Moving to Ford

Emily Yehle
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22 July 2009
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Part of the **House** Learning Center has moved out of the Longworth **House** Office Building to make room for the expanding Green the Capitol program.

More classes will now be offered a half-mile away in the Ford **House** Office Building, where the center has extra space for training.

The move provides the Green the Capitol staff with a "more accessible" location that also offers double the space of their current office, said **Jeff Ventura**, **spokesman** for Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard.

"Training on the other hand can happen anywhere," Ventura added in a statement, "and the Ford Building, which has always been a training site, offers the kind of space that supports large class sizes and the technology needed for effective learning."

The move has been rumored for months, gaining criticism from some Members and staffers who say centralized classes are more important than a centralized greening staff.

But Ventura said the Green the Capitol initiative has evolved into a program that needs to be more visible to staffers. The office recently began working directly with Members' offices to make them more environmentally friendly and, so far, 120 offices have signed up.

"Their role has expanded," he said, later adding: "It's about culture change now."

But Rep. Dan Lungren (Calif.), the top Republican on the **House** Administration Committee, questioned whether the move would marginalize the learning center's courses.

"The **House** Learning Center was appropriately placed in the basement of the Longworth **House** Office Building for the convenience of **House** staff attending the learning sessions," he said in a statement. "Relocating classes to the Ford Office Building -- several blocks away from the vast majority of Congressional offices - - would be inconvenient and likely to deter staff from taking advantage of the valuable training."

The moving of the Green the Capitol office will mean the loss of one of the learning center's three Longworth classrooms and two of its offices. Seven Green the Capitol staffers will move into the space, which is directly across from the Longworth cafeteria, this week. One learning center employee will also occupy the space.

The office now occupied by the Green the Capitol staff -- around the corner from the learning center in Longworth -- will soon **house** at least a half-dozen other CAO employees, most of whom manage the **House's** contracts.

The loss of a Longworth classroom will mean at least six courses will be moved to Ford, including: staff assistant and intern orientations, effective system administration orientation, Adobe Acrobat, document direct, money matters and CAPS accounting.

A few of those classes -- including the staff assistant and intern orientations -- are popular among Member offices. But Ventura said about 75 percent of classes will still be offered in Longworth; officials, he said, will also try to keep classes aimed at Member and committee staffers in Longworth.

Some staffers are also suspicious of the move because it comes in the wake of reports on Beard's plan to re-evaluate whether the **House** should offer classes at all. In an interview last month, Beard said his office would do a six-month investigation into the need for the classes.

"Suddenly we're in the education business, and I walk in the door and say, 'Why?' and nobody can give me a good explanation," he said at the time.

Ventura emphasized that the move is not related to that evaluation, which has not yet been completed.

The last study of the classes was in 2005, when Deloitte Development found that staffers "strongly affirmed" they were interested in attending more training courses, though the study also noted that many did not know what courses were being offered.

Some staffers are still vocally enthusiastic about the training. In March, Beard decided to cancel a contract with the Congressional Management Foundation for a few popular classes; staffer and Member criticism soon led him to reverse his decision.

One GOP chief of staff said he didn't think the relocation would decrease participation in the classes but that it would definitely be inconvenient.

"The biggest thing for us is obviously the convenience," he said. "We look for the accessibility in the buildings where we're operating, and the Ford Building is farther away."

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House Cafeteria Offers Farmers Market

Emily Yehle
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Lois Allensworth stood behind a table stacked with her tomatoes, cantaloupe and garlic on Wednesday, enthusiastically inviting staffers and visitors to try a cherry tomato or a slice of melon.

"This lady is serious. This is a serious sungold lady," Allensworth said as one woman picked out four packages of bright orange cherry tomatoes. Soon after, she turned her attention to a man who was squeezing the cantaloupes.

"They should not be soft," she promptly informed him, with a smile.

Allensworth, 58, is one of a few local farmers who occasionally bring their produce into the Longworth **House** Office Building's cafeteria. Restaurant Associates, the company that runs the **House's** cafeterias, started the program in May and hopes to continue it indefinitely.

The schedule is still a bit unpredictable; farmers come in when they can, and RA officials are in the process of persuading more to make the trip.

"We're still in the infancy of it," said Tom Green, the RA executive chef for the **House**. "But it's been well-received so far."

Indeed, Allensworth got a steady stream of customers in the crowded cafeteria Wednesday afternoon -- many of them were staffers stopping by on their lunch break.

"Ah, a repeat customer!" Allensworth exclaimed as Carol Ertel, the officer manager for Rep. Sander Levin (D-Mich.), approached the table.

Ertel bought her favorite: sungold cherry tomatoes. Her work schedule, she said, usually doesn't leave much time for trips to farmers markets.

"This offers us an opportunity to get local fresh produce," she said. "I really like it."

That convenience is one of the reasons that RA and **House** officials decided to start the program, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard.

The markets, he said, are "in line with not only the Green the Capitol Initiative in that if foods are purchased locally, there's less shipping involved, but also it's a very important employee benefit."

Since Beard became the CAO in 2007, he has overhauled the **House's** cafeterias, working with RA to offer biodegradable utensils, local food and more selection.

His moves haven't been without criticism: Both Republicans and Democrats have bemoaned the increase in food prices in the past couple of years (prompting the cafeterias to recently begin offering \$5 "value meals").

But Ventura said the use of local food

doesn't affect prices -- or at least minimally. Sometimes, he said, local food costs less because it doesn't need to be shipped or frozen.

Green said his staff tweaks the menu depending on what local produce is in season.

Right now, that means blueberry smoothies and fresh watermelon, cantaloupe and squash. Big tomatoes will come in soon, Green said, lasting for a couple of months.

Allensworth, who owns a 110-acre farm with her husband, Gary, is one of several midsize farms that provide the **House** with local produce.

"Local" is defined by RA as within 150 miles of Washington, D.C. Allensworth's farm -- called Lois' Produce -- is located near Leedstown, Va., and the lifelong farmer said she enjoys selling her produce at various markets.

She has now visited the Longworth cafeteria two or three times, making the two-hour drive to meet customers and spread the word about her farm.

"I like the one-on-one with the, uh, end user. That's a good way to put it," she said with a laugh. "I really do like this part of it."

Green said it's sometimes harder to persuade other farmers to make the trek to the **House**. The trip can be inconvenient, he said, and the idea of setting up in the **House** of Representatives is daunting to some.

But Green said he is optimistic that more farmers will begin to come. The cafeteria immediately buys any produce the farmers don't sell to visitors, he said, so none of it goes to waste.

Next Wednesday, staffers will get the opportunity to buy cheese with their vegetables, when a coalition of farms called Earth and Eats visits. And Allensworth is scheduled to come back the week after that.

"I really try to make it as easy as possible for them," Green said. "If we really want this thing to take off, we have to make it viable to the farmer."

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Access to Expenses Online Expected to be Popular

Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

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** CQ Today **

* Access to Expenses Online Expected to be Popular * By Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

The move in both chambers of Congress to post lawmakers' expenses online is proving challenging as officials grapple with a concern that potentially huge public interest in the reports could cause computers to crash and send staff members scrambling to explain office costs.

House officials recently decided to delay posting members' expenses online by several months to educate staffers on how to explain the arcane documents and ensure the computer system can handle a massive number of hits and e-mails.

Across the Capitol, the Senate on Monday approved an amendment to the Legislative Branch appropriations measure (HR 2918) that directs members' expenses be posted online. However, the amendment, sponsored by Sen. Tom Coburn, stipulates that the first expense posted electronically be the semiannual period of the 112th Congress, which does not begin until 2011.

Coburn **spokesman** Don Tatro said the future date for the expenses to go online was set "to allow time to get the system in place." However, he said "it had nothing to do with getting the senators up to speed."

"If it is up and running earlier. Great. We would be thrilled," he said.

Beth Provenzano, a spokeswoman for the Secretary of the Senate's office, which will implement the online posting, said that officials were looking at variety of solutions for meeting the directive.

"The large volume of complex data requires a well-planned system leveraging current technology and the time to implement it properly," she said. Asked if the implementation would involve training of Senate staffers on expense reports, she said they were "looking into all areas as we implement this."

Coburn's amendment states that the expense reports must be presented "in a searchable itemized format."

The Oklahoma senator did tone down the language in the amendment before it was adopted. The original version of the amendment as introduced by Coburn stated that its purpose was to "demonstrate to taxpayers that Congress has nothing to hide by requiring all expenditures by every Senate office be posted online for the public review." The final version did not include the language about showing "Congress has nothing to hide."

As for the **House**, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced earlier this year she was ordering that expenses be put online as soon as possible. At the time, **House** officials said it would be by Aug. 31. But now they say it will probably take until mid-November to have the information available on the **House** Web site.

A news release issued by the Administration Committee said that in consultation with the Chief Administrative Officer, officials had identified "several security and support issues which must be resolved" before the reports can be uploaded to the **House** Web site.

Among the issues identified is the need to educate **House** members and their staffs about the expense reports, which are difficult to interpret and currently only available in printed volumes stored in **House** office buildings and federal depository libraries around the country.

House officials believe posting the expenses will make it far easier for the media and general public to access the documents -- which could prompt an avalanche of calls and e-mails to lawmakers' offices.

"We want to make sure that all offices are fully trained in explaining the SOD (statement of disbursement) document," the committee said. To help staffers explain the expenses, **House** officials are planning to create a frequently asked questions list and a glossary of terms. They will also give members' offices guidance in explaining their expenses.

Steve Ellis, the vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense, a watchdog group that tracks earmarks and other congressional spending, said the fact that **House** officials now must educate themselves about their own office expense reports underscores how inaccessible they have been.

Congress is admitting "now that people may actually check our work, we have to do it better," he said. "Hopefully this will lead to more transparency."

The delay was also prompted by the need to ensure **House** servers can handle what might be a massive influx of hits and e-mails when expenses go online. Earlier this year, when the **House** released its version electronically of the economic stimulus package, the computers crashed because of intense public interest. Officials have since installed new technology, which still needs to be tested.

"The **House's** computer engineers must ensure the network can process a marked increase in Web and e-mail traffic," the committee stated.

The current book of **House** expense documents number about 12,000 pages. The **House** Chief Administrative Officer processes about 5,000 expense receipts a week.

The conversion to online posting should not mean additional costs, said **Jeff Ventura**, the **spokesman** for the Chief Administrative Officer. Ventura said the office was using existing staff and the computers had already been upgraded.

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

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Campus Notebook
Still Working for You

Emily Yehle
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6 July 2009
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English

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Still Working for You. Verizon has opened a store in the Longworth **House** Office Building to help staffers with their favorite obsession: BlackBerrys.

The storefront, in room B244, sells phones, accessories and data plans. Employees will also be able to help staffers with troubleshooting.

Usually, Member offices work with the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer to order phones and choose data plans. But with the store, staffers can go right to the source, getting their new devices in two days rather than a week.

"Having Verizon in-**house** will give our hard-working employees faster, more convenient access to the technology they need to help them communicate with the American people," CAO Dan Beard said in a press release.

Not all **House**-issued phones are on Verizon plans - a few use AT&T. But CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said all providers were asked whether they wanted a store; only Verizon accepted.

The store can also be used by the public and will be open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

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Heard On The Hill
Reid's Hangover

Emily Heil; Elizabeth Brotherton

944 words

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Reid's Hangover. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid doesn't drink (the hard stuff, that is), so we can only imagine that his outing on Saturday to take in "The Hangover" was an exercise in cultural anthropology.

The Nevada Democrat was spotted at the AMC Loews Georgetown movie theater watching the booze-soaked hit, an HOH spy reports.

Reid **spokesman** Rodell Mollineau reports that Reid enjoyed experiencing the aftermath of a drunken night in Las Vegas - vicariously, of course. "He liked it. ... It reminded him of a tamer version of his bachelor party," he tells us.

The Torch Still Can Singe. Nothing makes a party interesting like the possibility of running into an ex ... or an enemy. That's why an upcoming fundraiser could turn seriously awkward if one of the hosts happens to bump into the guest of honor.

A June 30 event benefiting the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee features Sen. Bob Menendez (N.J.), along with other unnamed Democratic Senators, as the draw. But it's one of the hosts - former Sen. Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) - whose prominently featured name on the invitation raised some eyebrows around town. Torricelli and Menendez notoriously dislike one another, with bad blood that goes back years.

The feud dates to at least 1999, when Torricelli (then the head of the DSCC) recruited an unknown Democrat, Jon Corzine, rather than back Menendez in the race to replace retiring Sen. Frank Lautenberg. And in 2001, when Torricelli was reportedly considering running for New Jersey governor, Menendez helped round up opposition.

And now it seems the two could come face to face at the fundraiser in New Jersey, which "the Torch" is co-hosting.

DSCC Communications Director Eric Schultz downplayed the Menendez- Torch rift as simply stale. "In other news from 2005, Brad and Jen are about to split up, and Apple says they're going to release some new technology called an iPhone," Schultz told us.

Maybe, but old though it might be, the Jen-Brad plotline still sells magazines.

Political Scoops. Those famous cones of frozen custard the Obama girls enjoyed with their dad, President Barack Obama, this weekend? There's a Congressional connection there.

When the first family stopped by popular Alexandria custard shop the Dairy Godmother on Saturday, they were visiting a business owned by Liz Davis, whose father was former Rep. Glenn Davis (R-Wis.). Davis tells HOH she tried to treat the girls like they were any other customers, not asking for photos or autographs. "My wish is for all the restaurants to treat them as normally as possible," she says.

Her own experience as the daughter of a Congressman (her father was in Congress for much of her childhood) might have influenced her desire for the Obamas to have normal girlhoods. "But back then, in the old days, it was different, and it wasn't anything like what those girls are going through," she says.

Come to a Full Stop. If you eat your lunch in the Longworth **House** Office Building cafeteria today, be warned - you might be treated to a bit of performance art.

An unknown number of mostly young people are planning to stage a "flash mob protest" (an orchestrated event in which people arrange to meet in a public place to simultaneously perform an unusual action) in the cafeteria at lunchtime today. At 12:15 p.m., participants will freeze in their tracks for 120 seconds, then drop ace playing

cards - some labeled with "the world needs better" - and quietly walk out, according to an advertisement posted Monday on Craigslist and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

HOH hears the protest is being staged to push Members to strengthen the provisions in the American Clean Energy and Security Act, climate change legislation known as the ACES bill, put forth by Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Ed Markey (D-Mass.).

Think of it as dinner, er, lunch, theater.

Mean Green Cleaning Machine. We've heard that D.C. is the new LA, what with all the new trendy cupcake shops and seemingly endless list of movies being filmed here. And although we're still skeptical, the **House** certainly is living up to the la-la-land hype.

Along with serving sushi in the cafeterias and giving its beauty salon a sleek makeover, the chamber is in the beginning stages of opening an eco-friendly dry cleaners.

Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard issued a preliminary notice seeking local vendors who can provide "environmentally- friendly service and environmentally-

friendly supplies" for the chamber's dry cleaning services.

And while a tree-hugging cleaners might sound trendy, it's just another step in the **House's** Green the Capitol Initiative. The cleaners would not use hydrocarbon solvents or the chemical perchloroethylene, which has been labeled as a possible carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The store would make its home in the Longworth **House** Office Building basement space now occupied by Annie's Dry Cleaners, whose contract is expiring in December, according to CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura**. **House** employees would drop off and pick up their clothing in Longworth, but the actual dry cleaning would be done off-site.

The CAO plans to release an official request for proposals in August, Ventura told HOH. Annie's Dry Cleaners is welcome to bid for the new contract, he added.

And while the new eco-friendly spot might have an LA feel, we're pretty sure the clothing dropped off will be a little less trendy.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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Heard On The Hill

What's Inside Their Wallets? Sure, Members' financial disclosure forms tell the public all kinds of important stuff about potential conflicts of interest and the like

Emily Heil; Elizabeth Brotherton

1,003 words

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Roll Call

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English

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What's Inside Their Wallets? Sure, Members' financial disclosure forms tell the public all kinds of important stuff about potential conflicts of interest and the like. But let's face it: HOH is only interested in the weirder tidbits tucked amid the stacks and stacks of documents.

Among the oddballs we fished out of the latest filings:

Yen Rep. Paul Tonko had a stroke of luck in 2008 -

the New York Democrat won \$2,500 in the New York lottery. **Spokesman** Beau Duffy tells HOH that in the early summer, the Congressman played a Win4 ticket, using the last four digits of his telephone number for the lotto entry.

Seems like that's a phone number Tonko should make sure he keeps.

Yen Financial disclosures also give HOH a chance to peek into Members' Christmas stockings - or at least see what kind of lovely presents they get.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) reported receiving a painting from noted artist Jamie Wyeth worth more than \$5,000, as well as two first edition books on "The Common Sense of Yacht Design." Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) got two presents that sounded lovely from nonpolitical family friends: a "glass pumpkin" worth \$675 and a "seahorse ruby and diamond brooch" worth \$2,250.

Clearly, HOH is hanging with the wrong crowd; we're usually happy to get a nice book or maybe some socks.

Yen Should Rep. Tim Walz ever decide to leave Congress, the Minnesota Democrat has a fallback career in place: Walz remains on leave without pay with the Mankato Area Public Schools. Walz, who worked as a teacher at Mankato West High School before coming to Congress, renewed his teaching license last year, spokeswoman Sara Severs tells HOH. The license is valid until 2013, and Walz successfully petitioned the board of education to place him on leave- without-pay status.

"This allows teachers to return to their teaching job if they choose and benefits students who can learn from their teacher's life experience," Severs says. "Teachers at Mankato West go on leave- without-pay status for a variety of reasons, whether it be to help raise a family, to complete a doctorate, to teach abroad, or even to serve in Congress."

You Can Hear Them Now. To Capitol Hill denizens, BlackBerry service is pretty much like oxygen. And if there's a single spot in the Capitol complex where service is slow, you can bet Members are all over it.

In the report accompanying the fiscal 2010 legislative branch appropriations bill, Members direct Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard to fix the spotty wireless access in the underground Capitol Visitor Center - and quickly.

"The CAO is directed to give the highest priority to expanding wireless and Blackberry service to the Capitol Visitor Center and the CVC **House** expansion space," the directive reads.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** tells HOH that officials already are working with provider Verizon Wireless to boost the wireless signal in the facility, where staffers and visitors often find themselves unable to receive phone calls or check their e-mail. The process should be completed within six months, he said.

Whew ... we can all breathe a little easier now.

Senate Book Club. Sen. Edward Kennedy might have received a nearly \$2 million advance for his upcoming autobiography, but the Massachusetts Democrat isn't the only Senator who will be hawking a book in the coming months.

B&H Publishers gave Sen. Jim DeMint a \$42,500 advance for his upcoming book "Saving Freedom: We Can Stop America's Slide into Socialism," the South Carolina Republican's financial disclosure report reveals.

B&H is best known for publishing Bibles and Christian-focused works, but the group also published Oliver North's action-adventure novels and Chuck Norris' autobiography, "Against All Odds."

"Saving Freedom" is set for release on the Fourth of July. According to the publishers, it is "DeMint's firsthand account of the unsettling socialist shift, backed by a complete action plan to reclaim America's freedom based on legislation that would reduce debt, fix Social Security, and provide a tax credit for every family."

Former Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), Fox News Channel personality Sean Hannity and moneyman Steve Forbes all have endorsed the book. DeMint's disclosure reveals he also earned \$5,000 in royalties for his 2008 book, "Why We Whisper: Restoring Our Right to Say It's Wrong," which he co-wrote with J. David Woodard.

And Sen. Bob Menendez also signed a book deal in 2008, according to his financial disclosure forms. The New Jersey Democrat and his co-author, Peter Eisner, will receive an advance of \$50,000 for the unnamed book, according to the agreement with the New American Library, which is a division of the Penguin Group.

In an agreement between the authors, Eisner will receive the first royalty advance, while Menendez will be paid the next \$50,000. Any additional money would be split evenly.

Overheard on the Hill. "All those in favor of the amendment say 'Aye.' All those opposed can leave the room."

- A teary Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.), calling for a vote on an amendment honoring her in the **House** Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces last week. Tauscher is leaving Congress to serve as undersecretary of State for arms control and international security.

"We're not going to saddle up that horse. That horse is going to stay in the barn."

- Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), quoted in CongressNow last week using equine imagery to describe how the GOP would oppose health care legislation if it taxes employee benefits but lets those under union contracts remain tax-free.

Jennifer Yachnin and Emily Yehle contributed to this report.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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Posting of Expense Statements Gets Bipartisan Praise; Readability at Issue

Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

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** CQ Today **

* Posting of Expense Statements Gets Bipartisan Praise; Readability at Issue * By Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

Even as Speaker Nancy Pelosi's move to put **House** members' expense reports online drew praise from Democrats and Republicans, officials warned that such postings, for the time being, would not be any easier to navigate than the current print reports.

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer, said expenses would be posted online in a PDF format that would replicate the Statement of Disbursements, copies of which are now stored in various locations on Capitol Hill and in Federal Depository libraries around the country.

The first quarterly reports will be made available electronically by Aug. 31.

"It will still be as hard as ever to read," Ventura said. The **spokesman** said that the office was aware of the difficulties of searching for information in the expense reports. The online versions will have search capabilities provided by Adobe.

Ventura said officials cannot design a more reader-friendly format until the next Congress, because they have to first put **House** financial data online.

"Right now we're very paper-based, with receipts and vouchers," he said.

Nevertheless, both Republicans and Democrats said the posting of expenses online represents a move toward more transparency that will be welcomed by constituents.

Minority Leader John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, said he told Pelosi he was supportive of her plan. "I've always believed in more transparency and accountability to help the American people get a better idea of what happens here and frankly make members more accountable," he said.

At her weekly news conference, Pelosi said she wasn't concerned that some constituents might take a dim view of spending by members' offices.

The Speaker said that voters will see that members "invest in resources that they have in serving their constituents, largely on staff and communication with their constituents."

She added that "whatever the downside might be for any individual [member], it's very much an upside in the interest of more openness for Congress."

Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said that posting expenses online may encourage lawmakers to be more prudent about their office spending. "Hopefully, it will alter some of the spending patterns of people," Brady said. He said currently the expenses are essentially hidden from the general public because they can only be accessed by viewing them in a basement of the Cannon **House** Office building.

Jared Polis, a Democratic freshman from Colorado, said that while he welcomed more transparency, the key to making the expenses more available to people was to present them in a format that is "easily digestible."

Even with the information online, the public will still rely on journalists to analyze the information for them, he said. Polis also said the expense data is used by congressional campaigns as part of their opposition research on rival candidates.

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* Scandals in the Numbers * The issue of lawmaker expenses has caused a major political scandal in Great Britain, where members of Parliament have been under attack after the publication of some of their expense accounts. One conservative member of Parliament submitted a claim for \$3,400 for the clearing of his country **house's** moat.

The Wall Street Journal recently published an article on the **House** of Representatives expense reports, in which it noted that **House** records could not be accessed electronically even as lawmakers and President Obama were promising more transparency in government. The story said that an analysis of print expense reports found lawmakers spending money on such things as leased cars and staff retreats at hotels.

The newspaper cited an analysis by the watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, which found that 130 lawmakers spent a total of \$82,000 each month leasing cars for their offices in 2007.

Ventura, however, said the story did not spur Pelosi to order the expenses be put online. "We've been discussing whether or not this is feasible to do for some time," he said.

But one leading congressional figure in formulating government information policy said that while he supports the electronic filing he thinks it could be used unfairly.

"I can see political opposition utilizing this information against incumbents by nitpicking over individual members' expenses," said William Lacy Clay, D- Mo., chairman of the **House** Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census and National Archives.

"But I guess it's a good idea," he said of the electronic filing. "Is it actually going to lead to more transparency or is it going to be counterproductive? Will it be used as a political tool to target us?"

Edward Epstein contributed to this story.

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

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Disbursements Set to Move Online

Emily Yehle
620 words
4 June 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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Public interest groups praised Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) decision Wednesday to put Members' official expenditures online, but they cautioned that the usability of such a system remains to be seen.

"The proof will be in the electronic pudding," said Pete Sepp, **spokesman** for the National Taxpayers Union. "The main question is how searchable will it be."

In a letter Wednesday, Pelosi directed **House** Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard to begin publishing the Statement of Disbursements online. The quarterly statements detail the budgets of Members and committees, including salaries, office expenses and travel.

For years, that information has been available only in large books, and each quarter produces thousands of pages of information. Though the books are open to the public, anyone interested in their contents has to trek to the Capitol complex or place an order with the Government Printing Office.

Nonprofits have been calling for the online release of disbursements for years, to no avail. But now, with Pelosi's decision, the CAO expects to have the information up by Aug. 31.

"We've been looking and working on this issue for a couple of months, and now we are assured that this can happen in the very near term," Pelosi **spokesman** Drew Hammill said.

Craig Holman, the legislative representative for Public Citizen, called it an "excellent move." With an online version of disbursements, the group will be able to continuously monitor Members' spending rather than spend days searching through physical files.

"These are public records, so they should not be tucked away in the basement," he said.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the office will make PDFs of the records available on a yet-to-be-determined Web site. The site will hold only future Statements of Disbursements, and the only search capability will be that which comes with Adobe software.

But in an e-mail, Ventura said the **House** will examine ways to enhance the search feature as officials implement a new financial processing system. That system is expected to be completed during the 112th Congress.

Public interest groups said the PDFs are far from ideal but will make it easier for outside groups to disseminate the information.

Jock Friedly's Web site, LegiStorm, was the first to take information from the disbursement books and organize it in a searchable online database.

However, so far the site has listed only Member and staffer salaries. Any expenditures beyond that would be too labor-intensive to include, since Friedly's staff has to enter everything by hand.

The PDFs will make the job a lot easier, he said, and they could make it possible to add more information to the site.

"We're definitely going to use this," he said. "No question about it -- this will allow us to add other expenditures."

With the Members' expenditures more accessible, all types of spending may be exposed and questioned.

In 2008, **House** Members got \$1.3 million to \$1.8 million office budgets, according to the Congressional Research Service.

All spending must be for official duties, but Members still enjoy flexibility. They can spend it on extensive travel, leases for luxury cars and expensive gadgets. Anything purchased, however, remains the property of the **House**.

The Senate works much the same way, though its budgets tend to be larger because Senators represent more constituents. The chamber's disbursements are not online.

John Wonderlich, policy director at the Sunlight Foundation, said the **House** has made an important step but still has a long way to go to be truly transparent.

"There's certainly a spectrum of the kind of disclosures they can do," Wonderlich said. "Up to today, they were one level above nothing."

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LOCAL & BUSINESS
HASTINGS DEFENDS TAXPAYER-AIDED LEASE ON LEXUS

By GEORGE BENNETT Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

346 words

2 June 2009

The Palm Beach Post

PMBP

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English

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Hastings and former U.S. Rep. Tim Mahoney are mentioned in a story about congressional spending.

U.S. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Miramar, is defending his use of \$24,730 in taxpayer money last year to lease a 2008 Lexus hybrid sedan.

The Wall Street Journal had highlighted Hastings' perk in a story Saturday about legal but "eye-catching" congressional spending.

"The lease of the vehicle in question has been approved by the U.S. **House** of Representatives," Hastings' chief of staff, Lale Mamaux, said in an e-mail Monday.

"It is an energy-efficient vehicle that the congressman feels safe driving throughout his district, which ... encompasses Palm Beach, Broward, Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie counties," Mamaux said. "He believes that the overall cost of the vehicle will decrease as he plans to keep it over the next six years for official business."

Mamaux didn't respond to a follow-up request for more detailed information about the lease, so it was unclear what period was covered by the \$24,730.

Because they serve two-year terms, **House** members cannot enter into lease agreements of longer than two years, said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrator's office, which approves members' spending.

A two-year lease on a Lexus GS 450h might cost \$1,000 to \$1,300 a month, one South Florida dealer said.

House members get annual allowances of about \$1.3 million apiece to pay staff salaries and travel costs and purchase office supplies and equipment. About 100 lawmakers use a portion of their allowances to lease vehicles for official use, the Journal reported.

Former U.S. Rep. Tim Mahoney, D-Palm Beach Gardens, who was defeated in his 2008 reelection bid, also was mentioned in the Journal story for spending \$11,000 to cover 13 trips during a two-month period last year.

~ george_bennett@pbpost.com

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Economy & Politics

Lawmakers bill taxpayers --- U.S. House, Senate track expenditures; discretion is allowed

By Louise Radnofsky and T.W. Farnam

990 words

1 June 2009

The Wall Street Journal Asia

AWSJ

9

English

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But as British politicians come under widening scorn for spending public money on everything from candy bars to moat-dredging, an examination of U.S. lawmakers' expense claims shows Washington's elected officials have also used public funds for eye-catching purchases.

U.S. politicians, unlike their counterparts in Great Britain, can't bill taxpayers for personal living expenses. The U.S. Treasury gives them an allowance to cover "official and representational expenses," according to congressional rules, and the lawmakers enjoy a fair amount of discretion in how they use the funds.

The Senate and **House** release volumes of the reimbursement requests for these allowances. A Wall Street Journal review of thousands of pages of these records for 2008 expenses showed that most lawmaker spending flowed to areas such as staff salaries, travel, office rent and supplies, and printing and mailing.

But it also turned up spending on an array of products, from the car leases and electronics to a high-end laptop computer and \$22 cellphone holder. Rep. Howard Berman expensed \$84,000 of personalized calendars, printed by the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, for his constituents. A spokeswoman for Mr. Berman, a California Democrat, didn't return requests for comment.

The records show that some lawmakers spent heavily in the final months of the year to draw down allowances before the end of December -- a time when U.S. households were paring their budgets and lawmakers were criticizing Detroit auto executives for taking private aircraft to Washington to plead their case for taxpayer funding.

Rep. Hastings, a Democrat, and Rep. Turner, a Republican, made their purchases in the third quarter. Rep. Faleomavaega, a Democrat, bought the TVs for \$1,473 apiece in mid-November. Representatives for the three didn't return requests for comment.

House members get a government expense allowance of \$1.3 million to \$1.9 million a year. Senators get \$2.9 million to \$4.5 million. The disparity is based on several factors, with lawmakers whose home states are far from Washington, for example, typically receiving more to cover their higher travel expenses.

If lawmakers don't seek reimbursement for all of their allowance money for the year, the remainder doesn't roll over to the next year, but stays with the Treasury. The review showed that the increased year-end spending went not only toward equipment but also to fund year-end "bonuses" to aides. The average **House** aide earned 17% more in the fourth quarter of the year, when the bonuses were paid, than in previous quarters, according to an earlier Journal analysis. Payments ranged from a few hundred dollars to \$14,000.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

US

Lawmakers Bill Taxpayers For TVs, Cameras, Lexus

By Louise Radnofsky and T.W. Farnam

1,384 words

30 May 2009

The Wall Street Journal Online

WSJO

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English

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This Old House Gets Some Needed Upgrades

Emily Yehle
504 words
13 May 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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Eco-friendly paint, recycled ceiling tiles and motion-detector light fixtures adorn the **House** Science and Technology Committee's hearing room and staff offices, reflecting the panel's focus on green initiatives.

The committee is one of 14 that has undergone a wholesale renovation in the past few years. In fact, it had been more than a decade since many chairmen were last able to choose new color schemes, furnishings and technology upgrades.

The Science Committee, for one, ended up with LCD screens (environmentally friendly, of course), individual timers for each Member and new digital audiovisual equipment. Others have chosen from a list of possibilities that include dropdown projector screens, data feeds on the dais, broadcast network feeds and new speakers.

The **House** Chief Administrative Officer has spent \$12 million on the effort since 2003, partnering with the Architect of the Capitol to make the upgrades that have also included rebuilt daises, plasma screens, new microphones, updated data feeds and other 21st-century improvements.

The next step: linking all committee hearing rooms to the **House** Recording Studio.

CAO Dan Beard is asking Congress for \$10.2 million to fund this next phase in fiscal 2010.

The effort, he said at a recent appropriations hearing, will allow Members "to clip from it for YouTube" and other Web sites.

"Such capabilities," he wrote in his testimony, "are essential in an era of heightened governmental transparency and accountability."

Some committees have been relying on audio technology installed in the 1970s, according to CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura**. There were no standards, he said, so audio and video were "independently installed to varying degrees and maintained by committees."

That meant cameras were sometimes rolled in on carts or hearings just never made it to a webcast. **House** officials - and their Senate counterparts - hope to eventually broadcast all hearings remotely, saving staff energy and cost.

They're also installing systems that make the lives of committee members easier.

For example, the hearing room for the Foreign Affairs Committee now has a screen that automatically displays the order Members show up to a hearing - allowing Chairman Howard Berman (D-Calif.) to more easily follow the rules of order on who can speak next.

Most committees have also installed timers that count down the seconds left for a Member's questions, replacing the long-standing green light/red light indicator.

With each upgrade, CAO officials have also installed "infrared assistive lighting systems," which allow the hearing-impaired to listen to committee proceedings. Using light-based technology, sound is enhanced and transmitted to a headset.

And as the CAO puts in such technology, the Architect of the Capitol has been taking advantage of the opportunity to install "dimnable ballasts" in every room, AOC spokeswoman Eva Malecki said.

The ballasts automatically adjust the light depending on the amount of natural light coming through the windows, she said, so "you don't have to have the lights on full when it's a sunny day outside."

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Wasserman Schultz Finds Prices at House's Cafeterias Difficult to Swallow

Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

462 words

6 May 2009

CQ Today

CQTDAY

English

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** CQ Today **

* Wasserman Schultz Finds Prices at **House's** Cafeterias Difficult to Swallow * By Bennett Roth, CQ Staff

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz has a beef with the **House** cafeterias.

At a Wednesday hearing of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee, which she chairs, the Florida Democrat griped that food prices were shooting up too fast at the eateries run by the **House** of Representatives.

Wasserman Schultz noted that the average check for **House** diners went up 31 percent between 2007 and the end of 2008. In particular, she noted the \$6.25 price tag on a Reuben -- a sandwich that costs \$4.75 at Star Deli in New York City, she said.

Staff and members are "paying some outrageous prices for food here," Wasserman Schultz told Daniel P. Beard, chief administrative officer for the **House**, who oversees the cafeteria contracts.

Beard said that food prices have escalated in recent years, in part because the **House** imposed demands on its vendor, Restaurant Associates, such as requiring all-natural foods and a union staff.

He said the only way to reduce prices would be for the **House** to subsidize the cafeterias.

In October, Beard's office announced a 10 percent increase in food prices at **House** eateries, citing the rise in wholesale food prices.

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for the Chief Administrator's office, said the prices are reasonable for fresh, high-quality ingredients. "The pricing in the **House** cafeterias is comparable or below many area restaurants," he said. "The quality of the food is superior to many area restaurants."

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* Ruminating Over Reubens * The congresswoman's **spokesman**, Jonathan Beeton, said she talked about Reuben prices because the proposed bids by various vendors included a projected price for the grilled deli sandwich, which includes corned beef, Swiss cheese, sauerkraut and Russian dressing. The cost for the Reuben in the **House** currently exceeds that projected price, Beeton said.

Nevertheless, the **House** tab for a Reuben is still a deal compared to some other places.

For example, the price of the Reuben is \$8.25 at Bagel Bar West, in Pembroke Pines, the South Florida municipality that lies partly in Wasserman Schultz's district. At Loeb's Deli in Washington, a favorite noshing spot in the capital, it is \$9.34, with tax.

The cost of food wasn't the only complaint lodged by lawmakers at the hearing. Robert B. Aderholt, R-Ala., the ranking member of the Legislative Branch subcommittee, said his pet peeve was the plastic utensils used in the cafeterias, which he said melt when stuck into hot food.

Beard said the utensils were designed to be biodegradable.

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

Document CQTDAY0020090512e5560008d

House May Get Big Boost For Election-Year Mailings

Emily Yehle

507 words

4 May 2009

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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The **House** wants to increase Members' office budgets next fiscal year by almost 15 percent, partly because 2010 is an election year and lawmakers anticipate a surge in franked mail.

In a recently released budget request, the **House** Chief Administrative Officer asked appropriators to raise the Members' Representational Allowances - which fund everything needed to run offices, including salaries, travel and supplies - by \$90 million, citing increases "due to the election year cycle."

"In an election year the expenditures increase and then decrease in a non-election year," the request reads.

Increases for most expenses are usually modest from year to year, accounting mostly for inflation and cost-of-living adjustments. But during election years, some accounts get a big bump.

The fiscal 2010 request includes an extra \$16 million for franked mail - an 80 percent increase from fiscal 2009. The stated reason: Members send more mail to their constituents during an election year.

"It's an incredibly naked admission that Members of Congress abuse the franking privilege for electoral purposes, even though the rules say they don't," said Pete Sepp, **spokesman** for the National Taxpayers Union. "This sends the worst possible message not only to the taxpayers, but to the electoral system as a whole."

But **House** officials contend that they use the phrase "election year" without meaning to draw a link to the election. The phrase is "generically used to reference the second year of a Congressional cycle," said **Jeff Ventura**, **spokesman** for CAO Dan Beard.

"The increase occurs because in the second year of any Congress, there is traditionally more legislative news to convey to constituencies as various bills evolve through the legislative process," he said.

Members, however, also have less time to send out official mail during the second session, thanks to **House** rules that prohibit any mass mailings 90 days before an election.

But they still manage to send a deluge of mailers. In fiscal 2008 - an election year - Members spent about \$33 million on franked mail; 2007, however, saw about \$17.5 million spent.

That fact has been a subject of debate for decades, with critics questioning whether incumbents get a leg up on challengers by showering their constituents with tax-funded mailers.

The request for fiscal 2010 would set aside about \$35 million for official mail, which Ventura said was based on "statistical trends that show a need for such increases in 'even' years."

However, once Members get their allowance, they have free rein to spend it on whatever office expenses they want. In 2008, the allowances ranged from \$1.3 million to \$1.5 million, according to the Congressional Research Service.

Because the **House** increases the franked mail appropriation every election year, they get a few thousand dollars more to spend in even- numbered years. But it disappears a year later.

In December, however, the **House** Administration Committee authorized a sizable boost to MRAs for 2009, and the fiscal 2010 request aims to keep them at that level.

Document RLCL000020090504e55400008

Class Cuts Worry Top Hill Aides

Emily Yehle
557 words
23 March 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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The president of the **House** Chiefs of Staff Association is worried that efforts to green the Capitol are eclipsing the services that they've come to expect from the chamber's Chief Administrative Officer.

The association met with Deputy CAO Ali Qureshi on Friday morning to discuss the cancellation of three popular classes at the **House** Learning Center: intern assistant orientation, staff assistant orientation and effective writing.

CAO officials have said they will replace the classes in the summer, but at Friday's meeting, none of those plans were concrete, said George McElwee, president of the **House** Chiefs of Staff Association and top aide to Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.).

"It was clear that greening the Capitol is the No. 1 priority for the 111th Congress, which is commendable," he said. "But I do believe Member services and how best Members can represent constituents should be the No. 1 priority, and I think staff training goes hand in hand with that."

Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard decided recently to end an agreement with the nonprofit Congressional Management Foundation, which has taught the classes for about eight years.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said last week that the move will save the CAO about \$90,000 a year. But, in a statement, he denied that the cut represents a shift in priorities, pointing out that the CAO's office oversees many programs, "all of which are top priorities for the organization."

It's at least the second budget-related cut that Beard has made in recent months, including his decision to cancel a \$100,000 **House** compensation survey.

But Beard will ostensibly be spending some money for another recent plan to move his "Green the Capitol" staff into the **House** Learning Center's basement office in the Longworth **House** Office Building so it can be more centralized and accessible.

Parts of the learning center will be moved somewhere else to make room and that could include moving the state-of-the-art equipment used in some classes. But Ventura said the office hasn't yet decided the costs or the new location.

"Logistical details and related costs associated with the proposed reconfiguration of various CAO Offices and staffing have not been solidified yet and are currently being evaluated," he said in an e-mail.

House Administration ranking member Dan Lungren (R-Calif) has called Beard's decision "troubling," and chiefs of staff on both sides of the aisle have said they are worried that canceling the classes will mean their junior staffers will be less prepared for Congressional work.

Stanley White, one of the association's board members, said Qureshi promised to relay the board's concerns to the CAO.

He declined to comment on his own concerns - other than to say he liked the classes - but characterized the meeting Friday as friendly.

"The board had some questions about the decision to modify the CMF contract, and a representative of the CAO's office was kind enough to meet with us," according to White, who is chief of staff to **House** Administration Chairman Robert Brady (D-Pa.).

Ventura called the meeting "very fruitful."

"Those in attendance from the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer plan on evaluating the feedback they received and assessing all of the various options discussed," he said.

Document RLCL000020090323e53n00007

Learning Center Cuts Its Classes

Emily Yehle
811 words
17 March 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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House offices will no longer be able to send their interns and staff assistants to orientation classes after Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard canceled an agreement with the Congressional Management Foundation.

The CMF has offered classes at the **House** Learning Center for about eight years, teaching hundreds of new staffers how to answer constituent mail, handle phone calls and work in a Congressional setting. In 2007, the CMF estimated that about 250 **House** offices sent at least one staffer to a class.

But Beard recently decided to scrap three popular courses: Intern Assistant Orientation, Staff Assistant Orientation and Effective Writing.

As of April 1, they will no longer be offered.

The move will save the CAO about \$90,000 a year, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said. To make up for any lost training, he said, CAO staff will offer "similar classes" this summer.

"After careful examination of current budgetary spending, the Office of the CAO decided to eliminate these courses and, instead, offer similar training 'in-house' conducted by CAO staff rather than by contractors," he said. "At this time, no other curriculum is being eliminated from the **House** Learning Center, which currently offers over 40 to 50 other courses per month to **House** staff."

Those courses include everything from HTML-Dreamweaver CS3 to Managing Your Emotions in the Workplace. But there's no introductory course specifically for staff assistants and interns.

CMF President Beverly Bell said the organization offered dozens of classes throughout the year. The nonprofit, nonpartisan group is dedicated to "promoting a more effective Congress," offering courses, conducting research and providing informational resources.

Private funding, rather than government contracts, pay for some of their work. But Bell said she wasn't sure that would spill over to the classes they offered at the Learning Center.

"We don't know," she said. "I don't think we would be able to attract outside funding for this."

Along with the class cuts, Beard is also moving part of the **House** Learning Center out of its Longworth basement office to make room for the Green the Capitol Office.

Former Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), then the chairman of the **House** Administration Committee, helped steer the center into the Longworth office in 2002. The state-of-the-art space was intended to be centrally located for easy staff access.

Beard wants the same for his Green the Capitol staff, who plan to work with Congressional offices to make them more energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

"It has been decided that the Green the Capitol Office needs to have a more visible position in the Longworth **House** Office Building," Ventura said.

He added that Beard doesn't anticipate the move will affect any of the remaining training courses, though he said the CAO "will continue to evaluate the efficacy of all courses offered."

Beard's decision means offices might have to train new junior staffers themselves - a task that can be time-consuming with the high turnover in such positions.

"I rely on these training resources to help prepare my staff for the demands of their daily work," said one Democratic chief of staff, who asked to remain anonymous in order not to involve his boss. "This loss means that Members of Congress will have ill- equipped staff to help them represent their constituents in Congress. That can't be the direction that we are heading. We need more staff training, not less."

The CMF began the classes in 2000 after the **House** Chiefs of Staff Association told the group that time spent on training took up a significant amount of office resources.

George McElwee, president of the association, said the classes filled a "void" and members will be eager to see how the CAO replaces them.

"If you look at the whole gamut of Congress, we all have the same issue - whether Republican or Democrat - with training staff," he said. "We're just trying to make sure that we're hiring and training staff that will be with us in the long term, and CMF has proven to do that in other lessons."

The decision to cancel the courses comes just months after Beard dropped another office tool - the biennial compensation survey. Produced every Congress for more than 20 years, the survey provided offices with information on the average salaries and duties of Congressional staffers.

Beard pulled out of a \$100,000 contract with ICF Consulting because of "budgetary concerns," paying about \$25,000 for the questionnaire the company had already completed.

House Administration ranking member Dan Lungren (R-Calif.) called the trend "troubling."

"Members depend on the valuable services provided by the Congressional Management Foundation at the Learning Center," he said in a statement. "If budget constraints are causing a precipitous decline in Member services at the CAO, then the CAO must reconsider operational priorities."

Document RLCL000020090317e53h00007

National

House misses green goal, but lightens carbon footprint; Bid to zero out impact is criticized

Dina Cappiello / The Associated Press

501 words

15 March 2009

The Grand Rapids Press

GRPR

All Editions

A4

English

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WASHINGTON -- It was a bold promise: The **House** of Representatives would "lead by example" to fight global warming, becoming the first legislative body in the world to zero out its carbon impact on the planet.

Too bold, perhaps.

The **House** quietly shelved the idea late last month, the word delivered in an e-mail to a couple of reporters. It turned out that the **House's** goal to become carbon neutral -- by removing as much carbon dioxide from the air as it releases -- could not be guaranteed.

"No one can really tell you if you are truly carbon neutral, and the lack of that standard bothered us," said **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer.

The **House** already had spent \$89,000 to cancel out 24,000 tons of emissions that it couldn't erase by turning out lights, buying better light bulbs and making the Capitol's power plant burn more natural gas.

The money bought "offsets," which fund projects that reduce greenhouse gases, such as capturing methane from farm manure ponds.

It also bought bragging rights for **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and other congressional leaders.

"The **House** must lead by example, and it is time for Congress to act on its own carbon footprint," Pelosi said in April 2007, when she announced the "Green the Capitol" initiative "to operate the **House** in a carbon-neutral manner at the earliest possible date," with a deadline of December 2008.

But since such carbon markets are unregulated in the U.S., it is difficult to prove their environmental benefits. It also is difficult to know whether the **House** accurately calculated the amount of carbon it produces.

Still, officials said the initiative reduced the **House's** carbon emissions by 74 percent by the end of 2008. The savings came from replacing more than 10,000 incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lights, purchasing wind power from the company that provides the **House** electricity and increasing the share of natural gas used to heat and cool its facilities.

The **House's** problems foreshadow what's ahead as Congress crafts national legislation that will limit emissions of the gases blamed for global warming. One key question is whether the legislation will allow companies looking to meet emissions targets to buy offsets as the **House** did, and what types of projects could generate offsets to be sold on the market.

Pelosi, who wants to have a bill in the **House** by summer, hopes legislation will clear things up so the **House** could purchase offsets again.

"It's now clear that there needs to be consistency across the board in the offsets market," said Drew Hammill, Pelosi's **spokesman**.

The **House** in the meantime is stuck with reducing the gases blamed for global warming the old-fashioned way: actually cutting pollution. But that won't be able to zero out emissions.

Document GRPR000020090317e53f00036

PROMISES, PROMISES: House pledge to be carbon neutral gets neutralized

By DINA CAPPIELLO
Associated Press Writer
657 words

10 March 2009

09:59

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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Meanwhile, the **House's** failed experiment has become a leading example for critics of carbon offsets.

In a hearing last week on the role of carbon offsets in future climate legislation, Rep. Joe Barton of Texas, the ranking Republican on the **House** Energy and Commerce Committee, couldn't resist a mention.

"I'm sure you know that the congressional purchase of offsets that Speaker Pelosi initiated several years ago has been suspended for the very reason that they can't guarantee that the offsets are really what they appear to be," Barton said.

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But that won't be able to zero out emissions.

"Any carbon we reduce is better than where we were at. We are going to do the best we can do," said Ventura. "It is a lot more than complicated and ambitious than people think it is."

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image/jpeg: e0a78882-dce0-48a3-9daf-662407b29dde

Document APRS000020090310e53a000w9

House fails to zero out carbon as promised

By DINA CAPPIELLO
Associated Press Writer
659 words

10 March 2009

02:40

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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On the Net:

Green the Capitol: <http://cao.house.gov/greenthecapitol/>

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Document APRS000020090310e53a000p2

QUESTIONING OFFSETS

462 words

9 March 2009

Carbon Control News

CARCON

Vol. 3, No. 10

English

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Posted March 2, 2009 at 06:38 PM ET

House Democrats are questioning the validity of carbon offsets, and as a result are canceling their one-year-old program to purchase offsets on the voluntary market to make the Capitol building's operations "carbon-neutral."

The move could be cited by **House** Republicans as a major victory after they launched an investigation into the chamber's efforts to purchase offsets last year.

The offsets, purchased from the Chicago Climate Exchange, are part of the "Green the Capitol" program, a series of proposals proposed by **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in 2007 that were meant to dramatically reduce the environmental impact of the U.S. Capitol complex.

But a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer said the carbon offsets program has been canceled, according to a March 1 Washington Post story. "Right now, there is no plan to purchase more offsets," the **spokesman**, **Jeff Ventura**, said.

Ventura went further: "Although original 'carbon neutrality' targets were achieved [in the last Congress], we recognize a widely accepted standard for 'absolute neutrality' does not exist, nor is there any formal accreditation process to certify an organization is carbon neutral. Therefore, the second phase of Green the Capitol will focus on the continued reduction of carbon and the saving of energy through operational improvements."

House Republicans have consistently raised concerns about the potential for fraud in the offsets market. Last year, Reps. Joe Barton (R-TX) and John Shimkus (R-IL) asked the Government Accountability Office to review the validity of carbon offsets, pointing to a January 2008 Washington Post story that questioned the **House** program.

The resulting GAO report declared "that the lack of standardization of offsets and fundamental problems assessing and verifying credibility, leave consumers in the dark and exposed to waste, fraud, and abuse" In a statement following the release of the report, Barton said, "I only hope we can find a way to create some clarity soon because carbon offset customers, including the **House** of Representatives' chief administrative officer, plainly don't know what they're buying."

But it's not just Republicans who have questioned carbon offsets. Joseph Romm, a former Clinton administration official and a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress has said "the vast majority of offsets are, at some level, just rip-offsets." Building on his previous offsets arguments, Romm looks to the prospects for a climate change bill in a March 1 blog following up on the **House** decision: "Now that the **House** leadership seems to understand what a pointless investment rip-offsets are, they need to make sure that rip-offsets don't become the basis of the big climate bill leaders are starting to put together."

Document CARCON0020090309e5390000p

It's Not Easy Being Green; House Flakes Out

1,508 words

5 March 2009

Aviation Today's Daily Brief

ATDB

Vol. 1; Issue 28

English

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It really is ironic that even as it crafts legislation which would slap industries with millions of dollars in cap-and-trade costs, the **House** of Representatives announced Friday that it was dropping a central part of its Green Capitol program - buying carbon offsets to achieve carbon neutrality. At least the **House** can be said to be hoisted on its own petard with this news.

The move comes as Aviation Today's Daily Brief suggested the federal government be included in any cap-and-trade regime, not only in an effort to make it carbon neutral but to make up for the fact that without NextGen, the aviation industry is forced to pay into the system for the estimated 10-15 percent an antiquated air traffic control system costs it in emissions. Related Story Hmm. Guess that's not gonna fly!

The Washington Post reported that **House** leadership, according to a **spokesman** for the chief administrative officer, dropped its ambitious plan to purchase carbon offsets to become carbon neutral. "Right now, there is no plan to purchase more offsets," **spokesman Jeff Ventura** told The Post, which reported the chamber coughed up \$89,000 in offsets the 2007/08 session.

"Although original 'carbon neutrality' targets were achieved [in the last Congress], we recognize a widely accepted standard for 'absolute neutrality' does not exist, nor is there any formal accreditation process to certify an organization is carbon neutral," Ventura said. "Therefore, the second phase of Green the Capitol will focus on the continued reduction of carbon and the saving of energy through operational improvements."

Isn't that part of what the industry has been saying all these years? It is ahead of the power curve and climbing, according to a report released this morning that Boeing, working with several airlines over a 12-month period testing tailored approaches has both saved fuel and cut emissions. Airlines, including United, Japan Airlines, Air New Zealand, Qantas and All Nippon, receive arrival guidance tailored to their given flight's aircraft performance as well as airspace, weather and air traffic. Singapore Airlines is set to join the program this year. Tests at San Francisco, with the 1,000 777 and 747, saved airlines 524 tons of fuel and 1,600 tons of CO2 emissions in a single year.

"The Tailored Arrivals project is a major step forward as it offers pilots the opportunity to fly the most fuel-efficient and timely flight paths within the bounds of safety," said Paul Steele, director of Aviation Environment at the International Air Transport Association.

Between 2000 and 2006, the U.S. industry cut its greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) by 13 percent just between 2000 and 2006, the largest decline of any sector, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. And, according to the Department of Transportation the industry flew 18 percent more miles during that period. While these numbers are not new, they bear repeating, especially since cars and trucks increased their GHGs by six percent at the same time.

And those were last year's stats with this year's statistics released just yesterday by the EPA. The draft report, about to be published in the Federal Register for comment, shows that overall emissions during 2007 increased by 1.4 percent from the previous year. Since 1990, U.S. emissions have risen 17.1 percent, the agency reported.

This trend, said the agency, owed much to an increase in carbon dioxide emissions associated with fuel and electricity consumption. The total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions were about 7,125 million metric tons of CO2 equivalent. Overall, emissions have grown by 17.1 percent from 1990 to 2007.

The EPA reported yesterday that all transportation activities accounted for 33 percent of CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion in 2007, some 60 percent of which resulted from gasoline consumption from personal vehicles. The remaining comes from other transportation activities, including the combustion of diesel fuel in heavy-duty vehicles and jet fuel in aircraft, the latter of which is widely accepted as being between 2 to 3 percent of worldwide emissions. Further breakdowns on the specifics results for aviation were not available at press time.

The inventory tracks annual greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2007 at the national level. The gases covered by this inventory include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride. The inventory also calculates carbon dioxide emissions that are removed from the atmosphere by "sinks," e.g., through the uptake of carbon by forests, vegetation, and soils. After responding to public comments, the U.S. government will fulfill its annual obligation to submit the final inventory report to the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Meanwhile the Associated Press reported yesterday that that the Obama Administration's envoy for climate change Todd Stern said that, ""The optimum would be legislation that is signed, sealed and delivered," ahead of the year- end global meeting in Copenhagen. However, he said getting such legislation passed this year would be a tall order.

"It's been a long time now that countries have been looking for the United States to lead and take action," he told AP as global leaders gathered at a Washington climate change symposium. "I think nothing would give a more powerful signal to other countries in the world than to see a significant, major, mandatory American plan."

During the meeting other envoys urged leadership from the United States, citing the eight-year hiatus in U.S. climate initiatives under the Bush Administration. Now if we can just get the **House** on board.

Overnight News

Delta buyouts may cost \$50 million

www.ajc.com/search/content//business/stories/2009/03/04/delta0304.html

Flight with faulty gear light lands safely in NYC biz.yahoo.com/ap/090303/plane_landing_gear.html?.v=1

Picks for Key Government Posts Play Long Waiting Game www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/03/AR2009030303970.html?wprss=rss_print

Man jumps out of taxiing airliner at Dallas/Fort Worth

www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/item.aspx?type=blog&ak=63629391.blog&csp=34

How Northwest 'Took Over' Delta (at TheStreet.com)

www.thestreet.com/_yahoo/story/10467663/1/how-northwest-took-over-delta.html?cm_ven=YAHOO&cm_cat=FREE&cm_ite=NA

Honey, they shrunk my plane! www.tripso.com/today/honey-they-shrunk-my-plane/

Superjet Deliveries To Aeroflot Delayed Again news.airwise.com/story/view/1236209774.html

Air France-KLM to launch tentative bid for Czech Air www.etravelblackboard.com/showarticle.asp?id=89271

AirAsia Says No Need For Rights Offer

news.airwise.com/story/view/1236208521.html

LAN To Issue Up To USD\$200 Mln In Bonds news.airwise.com/story/view/1236208372.html

Aegean Air Makes Surprise Bid For Olympic

E-Turbo News: US firm Chrysler Aviation made a bid of 210 million euros (263 million dollars) for ailing Greek state airline Olympic on Wednesday, in a surprise response to the government's last-ditch effort to rescue the debt-ridden carrier. Greece's conservative government is currently in negotiations with Marfin Investment Group and Swissport over the sale of Olympic Airlines and reports said the deal is expected to be finalized this week after years of failed privatization attempts. Marfin submitted a 45.7-million-euro bid for Olympic's flight operations and 16.7 million for its technical base, according to the government. Swissport, a subsidiary of Spain's Ferrovial, has bid for the ground-handling unit.

The government has spent years seeking private investors to take over the airline, but the process has been complicated by the European Commission's demand that the company repay unlawfully-distributed state aid. The last attempt to privatize the airline was September 2008, when the government launched a tender to split the loss-making airline into three units - flying, ground handling and aircraft maintenance - to facilitate a sale.

news.airwise.com/story/view/1236209158.html

WestJet Cuts Revenue Outlook Despite Solid Traffic news.airwise.com/story/view/1236208058.html

Gulf Air Says Will Break Even In 2010 news.airwise.com/story/view/1236208372.html

Report Cites Faulty Gauge in Fatal Crash of Turkish Jet

www.nytimes.com/2009/03/05/world/europe/05amsterdam.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper

Pinnacle Airlines Corp. Reports 2008 Full Year & Q4 biz.yahoo.com/iw/090305/0479642.html

Wizz Air seemingly immune to slowdown - aims for 28% increase in traffic in 2009

www.centreforaviation.com/news/2009/03/05/wizz-air-seemingly-immune-to-slowdown---aims-for-28-increase-in-traffic-in-2009/page1

Nok Air expects to clear cumulative losses by June; targeting 2 million passengers in 2009

www.centreforaviation.com/news/2009/03/05/nok-air-expects-to-clear-cumulative-losses-by-june-targeting-2-million-passengers-in-2009/page1

SkyEurope: Worryingly low cash balances as losses continue

www.centreforaviation.com/news/2009/03/05/skyeurope-worryingly-low-cash-balances-as-losses-continue/page1

Document ATDB000020090413e53500007

Salary Survey Is Off

Emily Yehle
915 words
5 March 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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House Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard has decided to forgo this year's compensation survey because of "budgetary constraints," leaving Congressional offices without a blueprint to set staff salaries, benefits and responsibilities.

Since 1984, Congressional offices have gotten some version of the survey at the start of each new Congress. But this year, they were left with old data - and many aren't happy about it.

"As vice-chair of the Appropriations Legislative Branch subcommittee, I'm disturbed and disappointed that the study itself was cancelled," Rep. Mike Honda (D-Calif.) said in a statement. "The study, which is an important tool for surveying salaries, was our road map to ensure fair hiring practices and competitive salaries for our staff."

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the CAO originally intended to fund the survey, bidding the project out in 2008 and awarding it to consulting group ICF Inc.

But soon after the contract was signed, the CAO pulled out and paid ICF \$25,626 for the work already done - mainly, development of the survey questions.

Ventura declined to say how much the project would have cost in total, but a budget request indicates that it would probably have been about \$100,000 out of the CAO's fiscal 2008 budget of \$114 million.

"The funds budgeted for the study were originally deemed necessary to fund other critical **House** operations, such as the transition to the 111th Congress," Ventura said in an e-mail.

What changed between the awarded contract and the CAO's decision to back out is unclear. Beard declined an interview request.

The survey's cost is small compared to the CAO's total budget, which includes everything from overseeing the **House** cafeterias to handling offices' technology needs.

The CAO also accepted new responsibilities at the start of the 110th Congress, when Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) charged the office with heading up the Green the Capitol Initiative.

Ventura said Beard plans to use the ICF-developed survey in future studies, thus recouping the \$25,000 spent on it. But before the CAO canceled ICF's contract, some staffers were already criticizing its content.

Last year, the "Tri-Caucus" - the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus - raised concerns that the survey didn't include any questions on the **House's** demographics.

The last survey to include such information was in 2004, when the Congressional Management Foundation developed the survey and provided information on staffers' age, race and gender alongside statistics on their salaries and benefits.

It showed, among other things, that almost 90 percent of chiefs of staff were white.

When ICF took over the contract in 2006, it dropped that section - and now the caucuses are left with data that is four years old.

Its removal is "deeply unfortunate," Honda said.

"Why? Because there is insufficient diversity in Congressional offices," he said. "[I]n the **House** of Representatives, of all places, we should be representing, as Members and staff, the American public."

Ventura said the CAO hopes to work with Members to "design an accurate and relevant survey that will be of assistance to all the Members of the **House**."

House Administration Committee **spokesman** Kyle Anderson said the panel was aware of "some concern" over the survey and echoed Ventura's promise.

"Given the current budgetary environment, we stand behind the CAO's general efforts to find savings in **House** operations," he said in an e-mail, "and will work with the CAO's office to develop more effective, meaningful compensation data to Members' offices."

Members, however, will probably have to wait until the 112th Congress for up-to-date data, since the CAO didn't include money for the compensation survey in this year's budget.

Until then, Congressional offices will have to do without what has proved to be a useful tool.

In the past, the survey provided an "industry standard," ensuring that an office was providing competitive salaries and benefits, said one Republican chief of staff, who asked not to be named to keep his boss out of the discussion.

"Are my bonuses right? Are my staff increases right? Is our staff number correct? Do we have the right structure?" he said. "It's nice to have that data."

Indeed, the CAO's biennial compensation survey is the only resource for **House**-specific data.

Salaries within Congressional offices are usually lower than other government employees, and the job descriptions of Congressional staffers are unique.

CMF, a nonprofit that promotes a "more effective" Congress, began the compensation survey back in 1984, using private donations to fund it.

In 2000, the **House** decided to pay for the survey, bidding it out as is required by federal agencies.

CMF hasn't won a bid since 2004. But Executive Director Beverly Bell said the group uses the information to help offices get set up and includes it in a "Setting Course" management guide distributed to every office at the beginning of each Congress.

When the new survey didn't come out as expected, the group got calls from staffers eager to get the data, she said.

So far, CMF has aided offices using the 2006 data.

But she didn't rule out a possible CMF compensation survey, if the private funds could be found.

"We serve the **House** offices," she said. "If we had offices ask us about doing it and request that we do it, we would consider it."

Document RLCL000020090305e53500004

ON THE HILL

GREEN CAPITOL; House Republicans applaud decision to drop carbon offsets

Robin Bravender, E&E reporter

496 words

4 March 2009

Environment & Energy Daily

ENEND

English

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House Republicans yesterday hailed an announcement that Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) "Green the Capitol" initiative would no longer purchase carbon offsets in an attempt to make **House** offices carbon neutral.

Under Pelosi's initiative, **House** Chief Administrative Officer Daniel Beard purchased \$89,000 worth of credits on the Chicago Climate Exchange in 2007 to offset the equivalent of 30,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide emitted by the **House** complex each year.

"I applaud the decision to stop investing tax dollars into the U.S. carbon offset market, which currently lacks the necessary levels of transparency and credibility required to justify use of taxpayer resources," Rep. Dan Lungren (R-Calif.), ranking member on the **House** Administration Committee, said in a statement.

Last year, **House** Republicans requested a report from the Government Accountability Office to assess the credibility of the domestic voluntary carbon offset market. The report found that the market's transparency is limited and retailers offer consumers little assurance of credibility (E&ENews PM, Sept. 26, 2008).

Republicans said the report validated their initial concerns about the offsets.

"Now it's all 'oopsies' and 'nevermind' from the Democrats, but nearly everybody else was suspicious of putting public money into getting rid of something you can't see, using methods that can't be explained," said Larry Neal, a **spokesman** for **House** Energy and Commerce Committee ranking member Joe Barton (R-Texas). Barton was among the lawmakers who requested last year's report.

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for Beard's office, said the CAO's office had voiced similar concerns about the market's credibility and supports more stringent regulatory intervention with regard to the market.

Drew Hammill, a **spokesman** for Pelosi, echoed those concerns. "It's now clear that there needs to be consistency across the board in the offsets market," he said in an e-mail. "The Speaker hopes to have climate legislation on the **House** floor this year that will better define offsets or direct the administration to do so, in order to ensure the continued effectiveness of their usage."

Still, Ventura noted, "We really weren't and are not afraid to buy offsets." Rather, he said, the office has decided to focus its efforts on "an aggressive, consistent reduction in carbon emissions."

The **House** achieved its carbon neutral goals in the last session, Ventura said, but decided not to declare neutrality due to the lack of a formal standard for "absolute neutrality."

And although the **House** has said it does not plan to purchase more offsets, the chief administrative officer still holds about \$25,000 worth of extra emissions credits from a 2007 overpayment to the Chicago Climate Exchange.

Ventura said the **House** office plans to cash in those credits, which were the result of an administrative error.

"We're not going to let them go to waste," he said.

Document ENEND00020090304e53400009

Protesters Claim Big Win Over Coal

Emily Yehle
643 words
3 March 2009
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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On Monday afternoon, as temperatures dipped into the 20s, thousands of energy activists crowded the Spirit of Justice Park armed with homemade signs, green hard hats and thick jackets.

They came to protest the Capitol Power Plant, a century-old facility that heats and cools the Capitol complex using a mixture of natural gas and coal. As the No. 1 polluter in Washington, D.C., it seemed like the perfect symbol of Congress' failure to force a change in energy policy.

But last week - just days before the scheduled protest - Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D- Nev.) announced their intention to switch the plant entirely to natural gas.

So before protesters had even marched to the plant to block the entrances and disrupt its operations, organizers were hailing the effort as a victory.

"Do you guys think it's a coincidence that three days ago they made the announcement about the plant?" Joshua Kahn Russell yelled to the bundled-up crowd. "That tells us we're powerful."

Within a couple of hours, though, the estimated 3,000 protesters had dwindled to a few dozen at each of the plant's entrances. Capitol Police made no arrests.

Apart from a few protesters who yelled for solar power, many in the crowd seemed pleased with Congress' decision.

"It's a symbol," said Paul Rogat Loeb, who has written several books on how activism can change energy policy. "It's good to green the Capitol. Now you need to green the country."

But Pelosi is still working to perfect that symbol of a green Capitol.

The Speaker and Reid's plan to switch the century-old plant to 100 percent natural gas will cost about \$7 million, according to past estimates from the Architect of the Capitol. And Pelosi's plans to continue with the less difficult greenings - using recycled paper, environmentally friendly cafeterias, energy-efficient light bulbs - will continue to cost money and time in the 111th Congress.

As protesters sat at the power plant, **House** Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard released a year-end report Monday on the progress made through the Speaker's Green the Capitol Initiative.

In the 110th Congress, the **House** reduced its carbon footprint by 74 percent - but fell short of declaring "carbon neutrality," the main tag line of the project.

All the original goals were met, according to CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** - including the purchase of about \$90,000 worth of carbon offsets to make up for the plant's emissions in 2007 and 2008.

But declaring carbon neutrality became a moving target, difficult to claim because no universally accepted definition exists, Ventura said.

It's the "idea of running your project as it relates to that zero goal when that zero number is so ill-defined."

Pelosi's plan to get to carbon neutrality also become controversial - particularly the purchase of carbon offsets. Republicans ridiculed the offset purchase as a waste, while reports from the Congressional Research Service and the Government Accountability Office questioned the reliability of private cap-and-trade markets.

Now, the CAO is switching gears. Beard has no plans to buy any more offsets, and his next focus will be on reducing the **House** carbon footprint through sustainable business practices.

That includes "reducing the amount of physical hardware used in offices across the Capitol complex."

In other words: getting rid of those individual servers in each **House** office and consolidating them in one place.

Beard's staff will also aim to make their office a model of sustainability.

"There is immense opportunity inherent in this endeavor," Beard's year-end report reads. "Because CAO employees quite literally touch every corner of **House** operations, a fully sustainable CAO, in effect, brings us all-the-closer to a fully sustainable **House** of Representatives."

Document RLCL000020090303e53300008

First Light: Another Bailout for AIG

Linda Cartwright, CQ Staff

695 words

2 March 2009

CQ Today

CQTDAY

English

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** CQ Today **

* First Light: Another Bailout for AIG * By Linda Cartwright, CQ Staff

The federal government is throwing a new lifeline to the insurance giant: \$30 billion more in taxpayer money, more lenient terms on a government investment in the firm's preferred shares and a lower interest rate on a government credit line, according to sources.

The details are to be announced on Monday when AIG is expected to report a fourth-quarter loss of about \$60 billion -- the biggest ever by any company in a single quarter. Reuters | The New York Times

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* No EU Bailout for Eastern Europe * The European Union rejected at an emergency summit on Sunday a request from Hungary for a \$228 billion bailout for Central and Eastern European nations.

The proposal was opposed by Germany -- the biggest contributor to the EU budget -- and other wealthy Western European countries. And nations such as the Czech Republic and Poland said their economies were fundamentally sound and didn't need rescue. The Financial Times (London)

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* Korea Talks * High-level military officials from North Korea and the U.S.-led U.N. Command met Monday for the first time in six years. The talks were suggested by the North, amid increased tensions in the region. The Associated Press

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* Afghans to U.S.: Send Scholars, Not Soldiers * A growing number of Afghans opposes the United States' planned troop increase, fearing, as one Afghan lawmaker put it, that "more troops won't bring more security, just an increase in the fighting."

"Send us 30,000 scholars instead. Or 30,000 engineers," says parliamentarian Shukria Barakzai. The Christian Science Monitor

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* Gates on the Difference Between Obama, Bush * The Defense secretary said on NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday that President Obama is "somewhat more analytical" than his predecessor and makes sure he hears from everyone in the room on an issue. CQ Transcript

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* Labor Vote * With a vote possible this spring on card check legislation that would enable labor unions to recruit new members on a massive scale, business is spending furiously to defeat the measure. CQ Weekly

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* Getting the Lead Out * There's been a "remarkable" decline in the number of children with elevated lead levels in their blood in the past 20 years, government researchers report in the journal Pediatrics. It's a testament to aggressive efforts to get lead out of paint, water and soil. The Associated Press

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* Electronic Cigarettes * China's battery-powered Ruyan V8 cigarette -- which produces a nicotine-infused mist absorbed directly into the lungs -- is one of a rapidly growing array of electronic cigarettes that are being marketed as a healthier alternative to smoking and a potential way to kick the habit. Health officials are skeptical. The Associated Press

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* Mother Nature's Little Joke on Climate Protestors * Activists who've planned a rally at the Capitol Power Plant on Monday to protest its burning of coal have said it would be the first big protest of the Obama era and the first mass civil disobedience against global warming in this country. But their numbers may be diminished as people think twice about a sit-in in the snow.

Meanwhile, **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid wrote on Thursday to the office of the Architect of the Capitol, which runs the plant, proposing that it be converted to run solely on natural gas.

And in a related development, a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer said last week that the **House** leadership had dropped the purchase of "carbon offsets" to cancel out emissions from its buildings.

"Although original 'carbon neutrality' targets were achieved [in the last Congress], we recognize a widely accepted standard for 'absolute neutrality' does not exist, nor is there any formal accreditation process to certify an organization is carbon neutral," said **Jeff Ventura**. "Therefore, the second phase of Green the Capitol will focus on the continued reduction of carbon and the saving of energy through operational improvements." The Washington Post | The Washington Post (opinion) | The Charleston Gazette (W.Va.)

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

Document CQTDAY0020090307e5320002t

Politics

HOUSE; Congress won't purchase more offsets

228 words

2 March 2009

Greenwire

GRWR

English

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The U.S. **House** of Representatives has abandoned a centerpiece of its plan to "Green the Capitol," with a **spokesman** saying last week that it will not purchase carbon offsets to cancel out emissions from its buildings.

Jeff Ventura, **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer, said "there is no plan to purchase more offsets" to cover the **House's** emissions. The body purchased \$89,000 in offsets in the last Congressional session as part of its Green the Capitol initiative, which was introduced in 2007.

"Although original 'carbon neutrality' targets were achieved [in the last Congress], we recognize a widely accepted standard for 'absolute neutrality' does not exist, nor is there any formal accreditation process to certify an organization is carbon neutral," Ventura said in a statement issued Friday. "Therefore, the second phase of Green the Capitol will focus on continued reduction of carbon and the saving of energy through operational improvements."

Observers say the move is a sign that Congress is struggling with addressing climate change even as it works to craft legislation on the issue.

"It's very easy to make glib promises and a heck of a lot harder to follow through with real action" on climate change, said Frank O'Donnell of the nonprofit Clean Air Watch (David A. Fahrenthold, Washington Post, March 1). -- AC

Document GRWR000020090302e53200005

Los Angeles Times

Main News; National Desk

THE NATION; House drops 'green' strategy

Washington Post

285 words

2 March 2009

Los Angeles Times

LATM

Home Edition

A-12

English

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WASHINGTON

The **House** of Representatives has abandoned a plan to make its offices "carbon neutral," a sign that Congress is wrestling with a pledge to become more green even as it crafts sweeping legislation on climate change.

The promise that the **House** would effectively reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to zero was a centerpiece of the Green the Capitol program in which the new Democratic leadership sought to use Capitol Hill as a kind of a national demonstration project.

But last week, a **spokesman** for the **House's** chief administrative officer said the chamber's leadership had dropped an essential part of the plan, the purchase of "carbon offsets" to cancel out emissions from its buildings. Offsets are a controversial commodity that promises that a certain amount of pollution was captured or avoided elsewhere.

"Right now, there is no plan to purchase more offsets," **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said. The **House** paid \$89,000 for offsets to cover the last session, in 2007 and 2008.

The decision comes as legislators also struggle with the future of the Capitol Power Plant.

Hundreds of demonstrators with Greenpeace, the Rainforest Action Network and other groups will protest today against the plant's use of coal.

The plant is burning more natural gas, which produces about half the greenhouse gas emissions of coal. But it continues to burn about 35% coal.

Last week, **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) wrote to the Architect of the Capitol, which runs the plant, proposing that it be converted to run only on natural gas. The conversion's estimated cost: \$7.78 million.

Document LATM000020090302e53200011

The Washington Post

A Section

House Is Abandoning Carbon Neutral Plan; Move Highlights Congress's Green Struggle [Corrected on 17 March 2009]

David A. Fahrenthold
Washington Post Staff Writer
1,058 words
1 March 2009

The Washington Post

WP

FINAL

A08

English

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PUBLISHED CORRECTIONS: In some March 1 editions, a woman in an A-section photograph showing the Capitol Power Plant was misidentified. Her name is Helen Hamlin. CLARIFICATION (Published 3/14/2009)

The U.S. **House** of Representatives has abandoned a plan to make its offices "carbon neutral," a sign that Congress is wrestling with a pledge to become more green even as it crafts sweeping legislation on climate change.

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"Right now, there is no plan to purchase more offsets," **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said. The **House** paid \$89,000 for offsets to cover the last session, in 2007 and 2008.

The decision comes as legislators also struggle with the future of the Capitol Power Plant: Hundreds of demonstrators with Greenpeace, the Rainforest Action Network and other groups will protest tomorrow against the plant's continued use of coal.

Both issues, the proper use of offsets and the right way to clean up old smokestacks, will probably come up in the national debate over climate change measures expected this year.

Congress is learning that even in its back yard, the weeds get pretty deep.

"It's very easy to make glib promises and a heck of a lot harder to follow through with real action" on climate change, said Frank O'Donnell of the nonprofit group Clean Air Watch. "In the cold light of reality, I guess, they're saying, 'Gee, it's not going to happen very easily.'"

The Green the Capitol program, announced in June 2007, has made major changes in the way the Hill moves, works and eats.

Four hybrid Zipcars are now available in **House** garages. The **House** supply store sells only 100 percent post-consumer recycled paper. And Capitol cafeterias have switched to biodegradable plates, locally grown foods and a composting system that has cut waste.

In addition, the **House** aimed to be the "World's First Carbon Neutral Legislative Body." Although the Senate promised to become greener, it not go that far.

The first step in the **House's** plan was to reduce energy use in its buildings. Workers replaced light bulbs in thousands of office lamps and made vending machines and air conditioners more efficient. And the **House** has paid Pepco extra for power from wind farms.

Still, planners said, emissions remain. For example, the **House** gets the steam for its heat from the Capitol Power Plant. In addition to burning coal, the plant uses natural gas.

So the **House** turned to offsets. In 2007, it paid a market, the Chicago Climate Exchange, for offsets equaling 30,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

But The Washington Post reported last year that although the money was funneled to projects that captured greenhouse gases or avoided their emission, many had been completed before the **House** paid a cent. Experts said those issues make it hard to say that the **House's** money had caused the environmental benefits the chamber paid for.

"Maybe they're admitting that what we did [in purchasing offsets] was actually nothing," said Rep. Dan Lungren (Calif.), the ranking Republican on the **House** administration committee, which oversees the office that purchased the offsets.

On Friday, Ventura issued a statement saying that carbon neutrality was no longer the **House's** goal.

"Although original 'carbon neutrality' targets were achieved [in the last Congress], we recognize a widely accepted standard for 'absolute neutrality' does not exist, nor is there any formal accreditation process to certify an organization is carbon neutral," Ventura said. "Therefore, the second phase of Green the Capitol will focus on the continued reduction of carbon and the saving of energy through operational improvements."

This will come up again. Democratic leaders say they want to have a bill ready for debate this summer that would create a "cap-and-trade" system for greenhouse gases.

In such a system, Congress might give polluters the option of buying offsets. A power plant might pay to plant trees elsewhere in the United States or around the world, for example, because the trees capture carbon dioxide as they grow.

"It is a complicated decision," said Katherine Hamilton of the analysis group Ecosystem Marketplace. "They're going to have to decide: What are the criteria that create a viable offset? [How should they] set out the rules on how people play the game?"

The Capitol Power Plant has also been a sticky issue -- and a more obvious one because its smokestacks are just blocks from the Capitol. After a request from the **House**, the plant is burning more natural gas, which produces about half the greenhouse gas emissions of coal.

But it continues to burn about 35 percent coal. At last count, it was the biggest single source of several air pollutants in the District, according to the D.C. Department of the Environment.

On Thursday, **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) wrote to the Architect of the Capitol office, which runs the plant, proposing that it be converted to run only on natural gas.

But the office has estimated that the conversion would cost \$7.78 million. And officials with the agency are unsure how long it would take. Lungren and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) say they still want to use the plant to find ways to burn coal more cleanly.

Tomorrow's protest will argue that a change at the Capitol Power Plant should be only the beginning of a national shift from coal power. Organizers say they plan to form human chains to block the plant's entrances, and accept arrest if they have to.

WP20090301CAPITOL1

Document WP00000020090301e53100037

A look at some of those killed in NY plane crash

By The Associated Press

2,221 words

13 February 2009

22:54

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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Alison Des Forges

Des Forges, of Buffalo, was senior adviser for Human Rights Watch's Africa division. Considered one of the world's leading experts on the genocide in Rwanda, Des Forges testified at 11 trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda as an expert witness. She was named a MacArthur Fellow in 1999.

Des Forges was returning home to Buffalo after a trip to Europe, where she briefed diplomats on the situation in Rwanda and Africa's Great Lakes region, said Emma Daly, spokeswoman for Human Rights Watch. She sent an e-mail to colleagues from the airport before boarding the plane.

"She was working till the end," Daly said.

Des Forges had a "tremendous commitment to human rights and her tremendous principles," Daly said.

"She made herself very unpopular with the Rwandan government by insisting that they be held responsible for the crimes they committed before the genocide," Daly said.

Daly called Des Forges "a thorn in everyone's side, which is a testament to her integrity."

Des Forges was born in Schenectady, New York, in 1942. In 1964, she married Roger Des Forges, a University of Buffalo historian specializing in China. She is survived by a daughter, a son, and three grandchildren.

Beverly Eckert

Eckert, of Stamford, Connecticut, was a Sept. 11 widow who became one of the most visible, tearful faces in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

Her husband, Sean Rooney, was on the phone in the World Trade Center telling her he loved her when suddenly there was a loud explosion and nothing more.

Eckert was heading to Buffalo, her hometown, for a celebration of what would have been her husband's 58th birthday, said Mary Fetchet, a 9/11 family activist.

Last week, she was at the White **House** with President Barack Obama as part of a meeting with relatives of those killed in the 2001 attacks and the bombing of the USS Cole to discuss how the new administration would handle terrorism suspects.

She was part of a small group of Sept. 11 widows, mothers and children who became amateur lobbyists, ultimately forcing lawmakers in 2004 to pass sweeping reforms of the U.S. intelligence apparatus.

When her work was done, she turned her energies to Habitat for Humanity, helping build homes for low-income families.

Ellyce Kausner

Kausner was a second-year law student at Florida Coastal School of Law in Jacksonville. Her sister, Laura Kausner, said Ellyce was flying home to be her nephew's date at a kindergarten Valentine's Day party on Friday.

Kausner was part of a group of about a half-dozen young women who had remained close friends since middle school, said one of the group, Candice Ciesla.

"Ellie was a crazy, out-there kind of girl, totally full of life," said Candice Ciesla. "This is a huge nightmare, the most surreal thing I've experienced."

Ciesla, who now lives in California, learned of Kausner's death when she got a call from a high school friend.

"I was in the grocery store when he called and I almost fainted right there," Ciesla said.

Madeline Loftus

Maddy Loftus, 24, of Parsippany, New Jersey, was headed to Buffalo for a reunion of the Buffalo State women's ice hockey team she played for in 2002 and 2003, said **Jeff Ventura**, the school's sports information director.

Loftus' 22-year-old brother, Frankie Loftus, said his sister never worried about flying because their father was a pilot for Continental. He said he dropped her off at the airport Thursday.

"She was an amazing person. She loved to make everyone happy," he said. "Everyone who met her loved her instantly."

Loftus transferred to St. Mary's University in Minnesota after her sophomore year, Ventura said.

Loftus "was one the greatest people who ever came out of Buffalo State hockey," said her former teammate, Carolyn Totaro. "She worked really, really hard to be where she was. Hockey was her passion, especially when it came down to competition. She was so driven to play hockey."

Loftus played for Buffalo State from 2002-04, finishing with 10 goals and three assists over 47 games. In two seasons at St. Mary's, the 5-foot-5 forward had 11 goals and 10 assists in 52 games.

Lorin Maurer

Maurer, 30, had worked raising money at Princeton University for its athletics department.

"We are heartbroken that someone so young and full of life could be taken from us so suddenly," Brian McDonald, the vice president of development at Princeton, said in a statement released by the university.

Maurer was traveling to New York to meet the family of her boyfriend, Kevin Kuwick, an assistant basketball coach at Butler University, The Buffalo News reported.

Maurer, who grew up in Sinking Spring, Pa., was a champion swimmer at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey, where she graduated in 2001. She received a master's degree from the University of Florida.

She had worked at Princeton since 2005.

Coleman Mellett

An accomplished jazz guitarist, Mellett was a touring member of trumpeter Chuck Mangione's band for the last several years. The group was scheduled to perform Friday night at the Kleinhans Music Hall with the Buffalo Philharmonic.

Mellett grew up near Washington, D.C., and moved to New Jersey to study at William Paterson University, according to his MySpace profile. After graduating he moved to New York and earned a master's degree at the Manhattan School of Music in 1998.

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"I listened to jazz records and mentally transcribed them. Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane," he told City Newspaper, a Rochester, N.Y., weekly in 2006.

In addition to Mangione, Niewood backed artists as diverse as Peggy Lee, Simon and Garfunkel, Judy Collins, Frank Sinatra and Sinead O'Connor, among others. He also played on the soundtracks of movies including "A Bronx Tale," "When Harry Met Sally" and "King of Comedy."

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The couple were engaged in December and had been planning a spring wedding.

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Renslow's family is "very proud of Marvin's accomplishments as a pilot," said Alan Burner, associate pastor of the First Baptist Church of Lutz. "They know that he did everything that he could to save as many lives as he could, even in the accident. Marvin loved to fly. He was doing what he loved to do. He was living his dream."

Friends said Renslow had a wife and two young children.

Jean Srnecz

Srnecz, 59, was a senior vice president of merchandising for Charlotte, North Carolina-based Baker & Taylor, a wholesale distributor of books and entertainment products.

She joined the company in 1975 and served on the boards of the Book Industry Study Group and Educational Paperback Association.

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"She absolutely loved to fly," said her mother, Lyn Morris.

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"As a woman in aviation, you have to be really sure of what you're doing and to be out there giving it everything -- and Becca certainly did that," said Amy Hoover, chair of Central Washington's aviation department.

Shaw leaves behind a husband, Troy.

Susan Wehle

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She also paid sick visits to hospital patients and worked to get other faiths involved in the region's religious community, he said.

Berghash said she was "loved by every congregant here and she will be sorely missed."

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"He didn't even like being on helicopters when he was in the Marine Corps," Ingram said.

Yarber, 62, was originally from Dayton, Ohio, and became a musician after the war, Ingram said. He played the guitar and sang and had several bands. His favorite type of music was rhythm and blues.

He lived in the Tampa Bay area for several decades, but recently moved to Riverside, California, to help his son pursue a music career.

Yarber was going to spend Valentine's Day with his girlfriend in New York before moving there in March, said his son, Chris Yarber, 22.

"He would bend over backward for anyone," said Chris Yarber, who described his father as a tall muscular man who would stop and help a stranger on the street if he or she dropped a bag or would break up a fight if he saw someone getting bullied. "He was just like John Wayne."

He said his father received two Purple Hearts.

Chris Yarber said his father hadn't touched a guitar in several months after he lost a finger in an accident.

Clay Yarber had four biological children, three daughters and a son, as well as an adopted daughter.

Joseph Zuffoletto

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He loved flying from an early age and earned his private pilot's license at 17. He also spent spare time at the Chautauqua County-Jamestown Airport, even when he wasn't flying.

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Document APRS000020090214e52e0001p

A look at some of those killed in plane crash

By The Associated Press

1,735 words

13 February 2009

17:56

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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Alison Des Forges

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Des Forges was returning home to Buffalo after a trip to Europe, where she briefed diplomats on the situation in Rwanda and Africa's Great Lakes region, said Emma Daly, spokeswoman for Human Rights Watch. She sent an e-mail to colleagues from the airport before boarding the plane.

"She was working till the end," Daly said.

Des Forges had a "tremendous commitment to human rights and her tremendous principles," Daly said.

"She made herself very unpopular with the Rwandan government by insisting that they be held responsible for the crimes they committed before the genocide," Daly said.

Daly called Des Forges "a thorn in everyone's side, which is a testament to her integrity."

Des Forges was born in Schenectady, New York, in 1942. In 1964, she married Roger Des Forges, a University of Buffalo historian specializing in China. She is survived by a daughter, a son, and three grandchildren.

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Her husband, Sean Rooney, was on the phone in the World Trade Center telling her he loved her when suddenly there was a loud explosion and nothing more.

Eckert was heading to Buffalo, her hometown, for a celebration of what would have been her husband's 58th birthday, said Mary Fetchet, a 9/11 family activist.

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When her work was done, she turned her energies to Habitat for Humanity, helping build homes for low-income families.

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Kausner was part of a group of about a half-dozen young women who had remained close friends since middle school, said one of the group, Candice Ciesla.

"Ellie was a crazy, out-there kind of girl, totally full of life," said Candice Ciesla. "This is a huge nightmare, the most surreal thing I've experienced."

Ciesla, who now lives in California, learned of Kausner's death when she got a call from a high school friend.

"I was in the grocery store when he called and I almost fainted right there," Ciesla said.

Madeline Loftus

Maddy Loftus, 24, of Parsippany, New Jersey, was headed to Buffalo for a reunion of the Buffalo State women's ice hockey team she played for in 2002 and 2003, said **Jeff Ventura**, the school's sports information director.

Loftus' 22-year-old brother, Frankie Loftus, said his sister never worried about flying because their father was a pilot for Continental. He said he dropped her off at the airport Thursday.

"She was an amazing person. She loved to make everyone happy," he said. "Everyone who met her loved her instantly."

Loftus transferred to St. Mary's University in Minnesota after her sophomore year, Ventura said.

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Loftus played for Buffalo State from 2002-04, finishing with 10 goals and three assists over 47 games. In two seasons at St. Mary's, the 5-foot-5 forward had 11 goals and 10 assists in 52 games.

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"We are heartbroken that someone so young and full of life could be taken from us so suddenly," Brian McDonald, the vice president of development at Princeton, said in a statement released by the university.

Maurer was traveling to New York to meet the family of her boyfriend, Kevin Kuwick, an assistant basketball coach at Butler University, The Buffalo News reported.

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A look at some of the people killed in the plane crash near Buffalo, NY

By The Associated Press

2,165 words

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18:54

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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Cornyn Plots Aggressive Strategy; Hello, Dolly! Country singer extraordinaire Dolly Parton on Tuesday was a welcome departure from the typical lineup of speakers at the National Press Club - after all, we're guessing Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, the club's next luncheon guest, won't wear four-inch heels and lead the audience in a singalong

John McArdle; Emily Heil; Elizabeth Brotherton

2,145 words

11 February 2009

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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After two straight election cycles in which Senate Republicans were mostly forced to play defense, National Republican Senatorial Committee Chairman John Cornyn (Texas) vowed things will be different in 2010, when he expects the GOP will be able to play offense.

In an interview at NRSC headquarters, Cornyn argued that recent appointments in states such as Delaware and Illinois have opened up new opportunities for Republicans to target next year. He also explained several methods he expects to employ to change the way the NRSC operates, especially when it comes to candidate recruitment and fundraising.

"It's a whole new dawn," he said.

Cornyn said that as part of the effort to ensure the party gets the best possible candidates, the NRSC will consider, on a case-by-case basis, taking an active role in GOP primaries.

"If in order to help Republicans win Senate seats that means using whatever influence the committee has to see that the strongest Republican is nominated, I think that's one of the things we will be looking at," he said.

He lauded Democrats' success in getting involved in primaries over the past two cycles - when Sen. Charles Schumer (N.Y.) headed the Democrats' campaign arm - and credited them for getting candidates that "fit their states."

Cornyn said Republicans need to "be better at picking candidates not that meet ideological tests but rather candidates that fit their states and that can be elected as Republicans in those states."

While hesitant to delve too deeply into early candidate recruitment efforts, Cornyn seemed optimistic about the GOP's chances in several heavily Democratic states. The Democratic fields are somewhat in flux in Illinois and Delaware because of the ascent of President Barack Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden. In Connecticut, Sen. Chris Dodd (D) may face his most difficult race in years and former Rep. Rob Simmons (R) is eyeing a bid.

Cornyn did go out of his way to praise the candidacy of former Rep. Rob Portman (R) in the open-seat race to replace retiring Sen. George Voinovich (R) in Ohio.

"I think he certainly stands head and shoulders above any other name I heard," Cornyn said. If the Ohio GOP field were to grow, "that might be an example where we'd consider getting involved."

Ohio is one of several states where early GOP retirement announcements have created wide-open battles for 2010. While those retirements have certainly complicated Cornyn's job, he said they also present an opportunity for the party to come up with "new, energetic, fresh-faced candidates who are articulators of the Republican message, and I like our chances."

One place where some Republicans insiders say they'd be more than happy to see a fresh face is in Kentucky, where Sen. Jim Bunning is facing a tough re-election. Bunning has been considered one of the most vulnerable Republicans of the 2010 cycle, and his dreary year-end fundraising numbers released last month did little to set strategists' concerns aside. Some Republicans are privately saying that the party would have a better chance at holding the seat if Bunning were to step aside.

Bunning has repeatedly insisted that he's running again in 2010, but Cornyn on Tuesday again made it sound as if there was still some question about the matter.

"Sen. Bunning has been through two very tough elections. I think he does understand that this is going to be another very tough election and my goal is to work with him to provide him the information he needs in order to make the best decision not only for himself, but for Republicans holding on to that seat," Cornyn said. "I know he wants that to happen whether he runs or not. I know he's determined to make sure it stays in Republican hands. ... All I can tell you about that is it's a work in progress and I don't know what will happen."

Cornyn said he has not talked to any other potential GOP candidates in Kentucky.

While candidate recruiting remains the top priority of the committee, Cornyn said the NRSC also has plenty of work to do to make sure that it doesn't face another steep financial disadvantage compared to its Democratic counterpart.

Last cycle, the NRSC raised some \$91 million compared with about \$154 million raised by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

Heading into 2010, Cornyn acknowledged that Democrats will probably have some advantages in terms of fundraising because they control the **White House**, but he said a new fundraising philosophy at the NRSC will go a long way toward helping Republicans make up the gap.

Cornyn said that he's encouraging GOP Senators to exchange lists of low-dollar donors and that the NRSC is working to communicate better with those donors on the Internet.

A major component of Cornyn's new strategy will be to motivate donors to contribute by giving them face time with Senators at various fundraising events.

"Primarily it's going to be emphasizing the importance of Senators showing up and participating in events," Cornyn said. "That's what donors want. They want to have somebody who will listen to their concerns and maybe even ideas ... and that can't happen without greater participation among Members."

Cornyn asked his colleagues to commit to that kind of participation at the weekly GOP policy luncheon at the NRSC on Tuesday.

Another request he made of his colleagues at the luncheon was to consider donating about \$30,000 to the NRSC. It's a significant amount but not quite the hundreds of thousands of dollars that Republicans Senators have been hit up for in the past.

Cornyn has said repeatedly this cycle that he plans to place less of an emphasis on Member transfers as a fundraising tool.

Schumer proved successful in appealing to his caucus colleagues for several million dollars in transfers during the 2006 and 2008 cycles when he headed the Democratic committee. But similar pleas from Sen. John Ensign (Nev.) to give to the NRSC fell largely on deaf ears in the 2008 cycle when he ran it. Cornyn said he would be following a different course.

By the end of the 2008 cycle, the DSCC benefited from almost \$16 million in transfers from Senators' re-election accounts and another \$1.3 million from leadership political action committees. The NRSC was able to garner only about \$3 million in transfers from campaign accounts and about \$1 million from leadership PACs.

"We know transfers are not popular among Republican Senators," Cornyn said on Tuesday. "We've tried that ... and it just is a point of friction. ... We're not going to depend on it, but we will welcome it when it happens."

Hello, Dolly! Country singer extraordinaire Dolly Parton on Tuesday was a welcome departure from the typical lineup of speakers at the National Press Club - after all, we're guessing Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, the club's next luncheon guest, won't wear four-inch heels and lead the audience in a singalong.

Parton, who came to the press club to tout her new role as an ambassador for

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, had the usually sedate crowd cracking up with her self-deprecating humor and one-liners, including a few on politics.

On Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's failed run for president: "It would be great to have a woman in the **White House** - every 28 days, those terrorists better run deeper."

On whether she'd ever consider running for high office: "I think we've had enough boobs in the **White House**."

But Parton did prove she's got at least one skill that would serve her well in politics: She has perfected the art of faking it - and not just when it comes to her famous cleavage. After making some opening remarks, Parton invited the audience to ask questions. "And if I don't know the answer I'm going to make it up and you'll never know the difference," she said.

Small Screen, Big Dreams. There's a casting call out for a new television show set in Washington, D.C. - and unlike the typical stuffy, buttoned-up depictions of our fair city, this one is comedic - and it's set in a local health club.

"The Gym" is an improvisation-based sitcom centered on 13 Washingtonians who work out at a dysfunctional exercise facility near the Capitol. While half the characters could be from "Anywhere, USA," the others are unique personalities found only in Washington, creator and executive producer Erika Grace Allen told HOH.

And "it's not going to be like 'The West Wing,' where everyone is portrayed as intelligent," Allen said.

Take Travis, a 20-something Capitol Hill intern from the Midwest who works at the gym. While his top motivation is to make extra money (Hill interns don't usually get paid, after all), he also wants to get in shape, meet cute girls and establish political connections.

"That doesn't mean that Senators are going to work out there, but he thinks that," Allen said. "You know, he's new. He's from the Midwest."

The rest of the cast also has its quirks. For example, there's Sienna, a girl-next-door type (and the subject of Travis' crush) who is into New Age health remedies; Max, a nerdy-but-wealthy guy who is trying (and failing) to get in tip-top shape; and "the boss," who owns the gym but appears to use it to fund outside activities (the mafia, perhaps?).

Allen, who has no prior experience producing a TV show, told HOH that she got the idea for the show from more than two decades working as an exercise psychologist in local gyms. Washingtonians are gym-goers, she said, although their primary motivation is overall health, not looks.

"You're not going to see L.A.-type bodies at the gym," Allen said. "You're going to see Washingtonian bodies."

Casting takes place at the end of the month, and the pilot episode is set to be filmed soon after. Allen will then submit the show to film competitions and network officials.

And she isn't sure how Washingtonians will respond to the show should it get picked up - "I'm curious to see if D.C. has relaxed enough now to embrace this sort of thing," Allen said - but is hopeful the city will treat it much as the City of Brotherly Love has embraced the dysfunctional "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia."

"I love D.C. I've been to the majority of other American cities, and while they're wonderful, there's no place like D.C.," she said. "We've got our own little thing going on."

Shining Up the Shoe Shine. The move to make the Capitol a greener place is soon to extend even to the tips of Members' toes.

HOH recently brought you the news that **House** officials are looking to give the chamber's barber shop and hair salon a full- fledged makeover. Now we hear that Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard is seeking a new environmentally friendly vendor to run the chamber's four shoe-shine stands.

The **House** of Representatives: the legislative body that handles all your grooming needs!

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** told HOH that the chamber actually has provided shoe shining since 1996, and the service has been a hit with Members, staffers and visitors. But with the current vendor's contract expiring this summer, the **House** now is seeking applicants - including the incumbent shoe-shiner - who can provide shoe-shine services using only products in line with Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D- Calif.) Green the Capitol Initiative.

"It's not that we're giving the current vendor the boot, we just want to give others the opportunity to shine," Ventura punned.

Overheard on the Hill. "You are going to find that [banks] are too big to fail, so the Fed is going to be in and other federal agencies are going to be in to bail them out. Just expect that."

- An eerily clairvoyant Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.), predicting the current bailout mess during the 1999 debate over deregulation of the financial services industry. The quote is included in H.Res. 140, which honors Dingell for becoming the longest-ever serving **House** Member.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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ON THE HILL

COAL; Protestors reignite dispute over Capitol Power Plant

Robin Bravender, E&E reporter

787 words

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A coalition of advocacy groups led by veteran environmental activists are planning a massive sit-in on Capitol Hill next month to protest the continued burning of coal at an aging plant owned by the federal government.

More than 40 advocacy groups have signed onto the cause, teaming up with environmental heavy-hitters such as NASA climatologist James Hansen, who has been warning Congress about global warming for more than 20 years, and activist and author Bill McKibben.

"It's a power plant that's in Congress' back yard operated by them," said Matt Leonard of Greenpeace, who is helping organize the March 2 sit-in. "This is an iconic symbol of the political stranglehold that coal has."

How to deal with the 98-year-old Capitol Power Plant, which sits three blocks south of the **House** office buildings, has been a thorny issue for years within Congress. Environmentalists and Washington, D.C., residents have continually called for the plant to stop burning the fossil fuel while lawmakers from coal-producing states have fought to symbolically keep the plant running.

Protesters are hoping Congress will set an example for the country by removing coal from the Capitol Power Plant.

"Coal is the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the country and that must change," Hansen said in a statement. "The world is waiting for the Obama administration and Congress to lead the way forward on this defining issue of our time. They need to start by getting coal out of Congress."

Attempts to cut coal face high costs, Senate opposition

Under the **House** Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) Green the Capitol initiative, the **House** of Representatives has shifted from burning coal to burning natural gas for the percentage of hot and cool air that the **House** uses.

"They're protesting coal in the power plant but we -- the **House** -- have eliminated the coal for our mix," said **Jeff Ventura**, director of communications for **House** Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard.

The Senate Rules Committee held a hearing last June about the possibility of reducing the use of coal even further, but the Senate has not yet eliminated the fossil fuel from the mix (E&E Daily, June 16, 2008).

Possible hurdles to halting coal burning at the plant include high costs and opposition from coal-state lawmakers who have staunchly opposed similar measures in the past. The Capitol Power Plant would need a \$7 million upgrade to allow it to burn more natural gas in place of coal, the acting architect of the Capitol told a Senate panel in June.

Plans to eliminate coal from the plant have also come under fire from coal state senators including Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

"Sen. Byrd has been a supporter of the use of coal at the Capitol Hill power plant, but has also been an advocate of efforts to 'green' the Capitol campus," **spokesman** Jesse Jacobs said in an e-mail. Byrd has pushed to install carbon capture and storage technologies at the power plant, but a study last year determined that the plant was not suitable for such technology because of its location, Jacobs said.

Activists plan to 'draw a line in the sand' against coal

The protesters are optimistic that the Obama administration will listen to their pleas to end the use of coal at the Capitol and issue a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants nationwide.

"This demonstration marks the beginning of a sustained effort to draw a line in the sand against this dirty and dangerous fuel," Leonard said.

"We have a window of opportunity with a new administration that promises to act, but it's up to social movements to ensure that these promises are followed through upon, and that they are of a measure adequate to solve the problems presented by global warming and our energy crises," Leonard added.

But National Mining Association **spokesman** Luke Popovich said the movement to eliminate coal from the nation's fuel mix could hurt consumers by escalating costs in the time of a deepening economic crisis. "Any attempt at civil disobedience, I think, will only call attention to how irresponsible this movement is at a time when Americans are obviously concerned about keeping their households from flying apart," he said.

"If the idea is to try to meet the nation's energy needs more responsibly, which we would certainly agree with, then the way to do this needs to be through technologies that make these fuels cleaner, not to take these fuels off the table," Popovich added.

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Heard On The Hill

Taxi, Please! In this age of anti-ostentation, it's all about rolling in a humble ride

Emily Heil; Elizabeth Brotherton

1,143 words

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Taxi, Please! In this age of anti-ostentation, it's all about rolling in a humble ride. Former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) was savvy enough to take a taxi to Capitol Hill on Monday to grovel for

forgiveness for failing to pay taxes on that luxe chauffeured Cadillac service. Big Three auto execs famously got grilled for taking private jets to hearings during which they

were asking for billions in bailout money.

That's why Nick Calio, the top lobbyist for Citigroup, raised eyebrows when he was spotted hopping into a chauffeured sedan (with dark-tinted windows, natch) outside the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Tuesday. Citigroup, after all, is getting a reported \$45 billion under the bailout bill, and the company recently announced it would lay off a staggering 75,000 workers.

Spending on fancy perks by bailout recipients isn't sitting so well with Members of Congress these days. And President Barack Obama already took a swipe at Citigroup for buying a private jet (the company subsequently canceled the order).

Of course, it's nothing new for uber-lobbyists to roll around town in plush hired cars. But at a time when shoppers at luxury stores are forced to seek plain paper bags to carry their Prada, don't we all have to sacrifice a bit?

Like, at least asking the driver to wait around the corner.

Way Better Than a Toaster. So what if they're in the minority party that's in the midst of an identity crisis? Members of the **House** Republican whip operation could be getting some pretty nice consolation prizes in the form of spanking-new iPods.

The whip team is considering buying the nifty devices to allow whippers to listen to podcasts on GOP messaging and other topics, HOH hears. And hey, if they want to download a little music, too, well, who's to stop them?

If you couldn't identify the 40-plus Republicans who make up the in-crowd before now, you'll soon know them by the telltale little ear buds they'll be sporting.

Brad Dayspring, **spokesman** for **House** Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R- Va.), said the iPods could function as a modern version of the influential cassette tapes former Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) once distributed to spread his GOPAC message - and there's an enviro- boon to them, too.

"Years ago, GOPAC tapes galvanized Republican candidates and activists, and in 2009 the whip team will use these as a sort of 'GOPOD' to the same function as they travel to and from their districts," Dayspring said. "Not to mention, putting all of their briefing material into podcast and video form will save a bunch of trees."

Staffers are still working out the details, like how to properly pay for the things. HOH is certain that won't be the only hang-up: We're pretty sure some of these guys (who may have just mastered cassette decks) are going to need some technical assistance with the newfangled machines.

Makeover at the Beauty Shop. Ah, the hectic life of a Congressional staffer. Help draft legislation, dash to committee hearings, visit the salon for a trendy blowout ...

OK, so most staffers don't actually do the latter (at least during work hours) but Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard is hoping more will soon.

Beard's office is looking to spiff up the **House's** oft-ignored beauty salon, issuing a Feb. 1 procurement request that seeks vendors capable of managing the salon and nearby barbershop.

The two beauty establishments have been Capitol Hill mainstays for decades, with the salon in the Cannon **House** Office Building and the barbershop in the basement of the Rayburn **House** Office Building. In 1995, **House** officials privatized the facilities, with the idea that outside vendors would offer more services and the latest hairstyling trends.

Since then, the **House** barbershop has maintained a steady, loyal clientele, but the beauty salon "has been a lesser-known quantity," CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

So the thought is that a revitalized salon would offer the same services it already does - hair cuts and coloring, shampooing, manicures, even waxing - but employ stylists who stay up on the fashions, thus luring in more overworked, underpaid staffers for some much-needed pampering. "We are hoping to bring a new vendor in who will re-energize the salon concept and get people excited about having a 'cutting-edge' stylist, pun intended, in the **House**," Ventura said.

That Daschle Ad, Plucked From Obscurity. While Washington, D.C., reacted on Tuesday to the news that former Sen. Tom Daschle was withdrawing his nomination to be Health and Human Services secretary, plenty of Congressional staffers were busy chuckling at an old campaign advertisement featuring the South Dakota Democrat.

And while the ad was an Internet sensation on Tuesday, it wasn't always so notable.

Dating from Daschle's 1986 race to take then-Sen. James Abdnor's (R) seat, the ad features then-Rep. Tom Daschle driving to the Capitol in an ugly, rusty, old Pontiac. "Sure, it's rusted and it burns a little oil, but after 15 years and 238,000 miles, Tom Daschle still drives his old car to work every day," a narrator says. It's funny now, of course, since Daschle got into trouble for failing to report taxes on a fancy-schmancy car service.

But in its day, the ad actually was one of the least extraordinary of a very negative campaign. Daschle (described back then by the Washington Post as a "shrewd, well-organized campaigner") tried to depict Abdnor as being out of touch with the needs of his constituents, while Abdnor depicted Daschle as "a left-wing activist who is out of touch," the New York Times noted at the time. (Hence the "I drive my old car" campaign ad.)

And it actually was Abdnor who produced the most infamous ad of the contest. Often laughed at for a speech impediment, the South Dakota Republican put out an ad - produced by future Fox News President Roger Ailes - in which he said: "So, I'm not a great speaker. Heck, I'm not a great dancer, either. But I'm a great fighter for South Dakota."

Well, it was the most memorable ad of the campaign until now, anyway.

Clean as a Whistle. At least he takes care of his own dirty laundry. Sen. David Vitter (R-La.) was spotted on Tuesday leaving the Hart Senate Office Building with a passel of dry cleaning bags.

Guess the scandal-scarred Senator really has cleaned up his act.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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Reports Obscure House Expenses

Paul Singer
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The massive reports published each quarter by the **House** Chief Administrative Officer detailing the expenses incurred by each Congressional office may not be a reliable guide of how the offices actually spent their budgets, according to documents reviewed by Roll Call.

Since Congressional offices are not required to release any information on their own expenses - and dozens refused Roll Call's request to do so - there is no way to confirm the veracity of the reports published by the CAO, but Roll Call's review provides ample reason to doubt that they are reliable.

When a Congressional office incurs an official expense - for example, a D.C. staff member staying in a hotel while visiting the district office - the expense is documented with a receipt. To get reimbursement for that expense, the staff member completes a form called a voucher that describes the expense and the date it was incurred, then submits the receipt and voucher to the CAO.

The CAO staff reimburses the aide and enters the expense into its database, but changes the description of the expense to one of several predetermined categories to keep its coding consistent. This is how the entry appears in the quarterly "Statement of Disbursements," widely known as the "beige books."

According to **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the CAO, "The Member's office submits an expense voucher and receipts and the expense is then coded under the category that best defines the expense using a predefined code. This is done to ensure uniformity in the Statement of Disbursements." Ventura said the categories "are standard classifications throughout the Federal Government."

But that process both eliminates details from the reporting of the expense and introduces human error that results in some expenses being reported incorrectly, according to sources familiar with the process.

Over the past several months, Roll Call has asked dozens of **House** Members to provide access to the vouchers for their offices, and nearly every office declined.

The offices that did participate did so only on the grounds that Roll Call not reveal their names, for fear of retribution from other Members. As one staff member said in declining to provide vouchers from his office, "We don't want to be 'that guy'" who creates an uncomfortable situation for other Members of Congress.

The vouchers Roll Call reviewed indicate that much of the information included in the beige books is not the same as the information included on the vouchers, and in many cases it is less specific, and in some cases it is simply incorrect.

For example, one voucher Roll Call reviewed indicated a \$445 payment to Verizon Wireless for one month of service for the "Member phone," suggesting that the Member is logging significant cell phone bills every month. But the payment for that bill was listed in the Statement of Disbursements as "telecommunications charges," eliminating the detail about whose phone was being used.

Another telephone charge in the same office was apparently miscoded by the CAO staff, and it appeared in the beige books as "janitorial and related services."

In another Congressional office, a voucher was submitted for reimbursement of a staff member's travel expenses, but the disbursement books list the payment as going to a different staff member.

The office receipts indicate that the Member hired an outside consultant to run an office strategic planning retreat for \$4,200, but those expenses are published by the CAO as "temporary space rental."

Vouchers for taxis, parking and car service are all reported as "local transportation"; vouchers for utilities such as phone and cable television that provide the address of the district office being served are revised to eliminate those details.

Some line items in the disbursement books say only that a staffer was reimbursed more than \$1,000 for "travel subsistence," but the vouchers for that entry include receipts for hotel bills, valet parking, meals and other items, none of which is public information.

Some vouchers submitted by Members' offices did not appear at all in the disbursement books for that period.

The CAO office told Roll Call that it could not release vouchers or receipts for any Congressional office without permission of the Member, and most Members refused to grant permission, so there is no way to confirm entries in the books.

The disbursement books are also not available electronically, so there is no way to search the expenditures to look for discrepancies in how payments to specific vendors are categorized.

Kyle Anderson, **spokesman** for the **House** Administration Committee, which oversees the CAO's office, defended the disclosure process.

"The Statement of Disbursements is widely distributed and easily available for constituent review. Through the SOD, the **House** provides more public access to information on its expenditures than any other institution in government," Anderson said.

But Anderson also said that "options for providing the SOD in an online format are currently under consideration." The only way to review **House** office expenditures is to obtain a copy of the three- volume set of beige books.

Nadeam Elshami, **spokesman** for Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), told Roll Call in an e-mail: "The **House** discloses more financial information, and in a more timely fashion, than any other government agency. Every dime spent is publicly indexed and disclosed in a quarterly Statement of Disbursements available in Depository Libraries throughout the country."

In addition, Elshami said, "To assure compliance with the strict **House** rules on use of **House** funds, each expenditure is examined by a Financial Counselor in the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer before it is paid.

"Furthermore, the **House** IG conducts an annual financial audit to ensure compliance."

In December, Roll Call reported that because of an accounting error, the disbursement books printed for the third quarter of 2008 incorrectly reported that many Members had already exceeded their budgets for the year.

Ventura said at the time that "the year-to-date totals in the Statement of Disbursements are not accurate because the third- quarter results were counted twice, giving an inaccurate picture of the Members' accounts."

Bill Allison, senior fellow at the Sunlight Foundation, said that even if the discrepancies between the disbursement books and the vouchers are minor, "It is public money and it should be accounted for."

Allison said that since "there is no way to cross check to be able to see whether they are actually reporting accurately ... you are in a situation where you just have to take their word for it and that kind of situation is a breeding ground for dishonesty."

Jennifer Yachnin contributed to this report.

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Local & State

Maine's new member of Congress set to get working ; With training done and staffers hired, Chellie Pingree looks forward to being sworn in Tuesday.

Anonymous

By DIETER BRADBURY Staff Writer --

710 words

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Portland Press Herald

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Chellie Pingree says she has had enough orientation.

As a freshly minted member of Congress, the Democrat from North Haven has spent most of the two months since Election Day trying to absorb the nuts and bolts of her new position. She has gone to workshops and orientations on everything from hiring office workers to finding a parking spot.

She says that once she takes the oath of office on Tuesday, she will be eager to make the transition from hiring her staff and choosing office decor to tackling the economy and other issues facing her constituents.

"It's going to be a very exciting day, and I can't think of a more challenging or exciting time to be working on solving some of our problems," said Pingree, who will bring three family members - including her 4-year-old grandson - to the swearing-in ceremony.

She said she expects that the **House** will immediately wade into a debate about economic stimulus packages, so President-elect Obama can have a plan to consider after his inauguration on Jan. 20.

Pingree, one of 54 freshmen in the 435-member **House**, said she has spent much of her time recently in Washington.

She attended orientations run by the **House**, as well as by private advocacy groups, including The Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank.

Pingree said she believes she was one of only two Democrats who attended the foundation's event, which attracted about 15 Republicans who are more closely allied with the organization's political philosophy.

"I found it really very interesting and actually think there will be places where we can agree and work together," she said.

Her **House** orientation included a seniority-based lottery for office space, in which incumbents get the first crack at vacancies and freshmen divide up the leftovers.

Pingree's ticket was good for space in the Longworth Building, which is across Independence Avenue from the Capitol and one of three buildings for congressional offices outside the Capitol itself.

Workers have slapped a fresh coat of paint on the walls, and Pingree said she'll get the keys on Monday.

"It will be more exciting than opening a Christmas present, to tell you the truth," she said.

Jeff Ventura, communications director for the **House** administrative office, said insiders refer to the Longworth Building, where Pingree will set up shop, as "Main Street," because the payroll and benefits office, the largest cafeteria and other administrative functions are clustered there.

"It's sort of like the student union of our buildings," he said.

Rep. Mike Michaud, the Democrat from Maine's 2nd Congressional District, also has an office in the Longworth Building.

Ed Gilman, **spokesman** for Michaud, noted that the congressional campus is so large that walking from one end to the other can take 20 minutes - so accessibility is a priority. Gilman said Michaud decided not to trade up for the coming session, even though he has seniority.

"Our office is in a location we think is easy to get to and accommodates our needs well," he said.

In Maine, Pingree will initially have an office at 97 Exchange St. in Portland, the same location used by Tom Allen, a six-term Democrat from the 1st Congressional District who lost the U.S. Senate election to incumbent Republican Susan Collins.

Pingree said she also hopes to open a second office in her district but is awaiting information from **House** administrators on her budget.

Ventura, the **House** administrative **spokesman**, said **House** members each get a \$1.2 million annual budget and can hire as many as 22 staff members.

Pingree said she is awaiting more specific numbers, because there has been discussion of administrative budget cuts.

Pingree has already named Lisa Prosienski, who was her campaign manager, as chief of staff, and Willy Ritch, who was her campaign **spokesman**, as communications director.

She said she hopes to announce other staff appointments next week.

Staff Writer Dieter Bradbury can be reached at 791-6329 or at:

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Caption: Rep. Chellie Pingree

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Members' Office Accounts Misstated

Jennifer Yachnin
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In a scene that echoes the **House** Bank scandal of the early 1990s, recently released quarterly spending records show dozens of Members with office accounts - covering staff salaries, supplies and travel expenses - in the red by thousands of dollars three months before the close of the 110th Congress.

Only it's all a mistake.

An accounting error in the Statement of Disbursements of the **House**, the record of how **House** Members use their annual office budgets, inflated the running totals of each office by as much as hundreds of thousands of dollars in the third quarter of 2008.

"The year-to-date totals in the Statement of Disbursements are not accurate because the third-quarter results were counted twice, giving an inaccurate picture of the Members' accounts," said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. The CAO compiles information in the three-volume report.

"The error is being corrected and a reprinting will occur," Ventura said.

An immediate estimate on the cost of the reprinting was not available, although in 2004 the Government Printing Office spent an estimated \$18,000 to reprint the disbursement books after an index was omitted from the publication.

Nonetheless, at least one **House** Member actually is keeping a keen eye on the bottom line in the final months of the session.

Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) reported spending more than 80 percent of his Congressional office budget in the first six months of 2008 - a rare occurrence among **House** offices - forcing him to make administrative cuts to finish out the year without exceeding his budget.

Each **House** lawmaker is provided with a Members' Representational Allowance to provide for items such as staff salaries, official travel and office supplies.

According to the **House** disbursement records, each office received at least \$1.1 million in 2008 for their MRA, with many budgets, including Broun's, listed at \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million.

At the end of the third quarter in late September, Broun's records indicate the office has about \$152,000 in the bank remaining from its \$1.38 million allowance.

Among the notable expenditures, the Georgia lawmaker spent more than \$250,000 on franked mailings to constituents, a policy that he defended earlier this year.

"My office budget has reflected my focus on communicating directly with constituents. That is as it should be, and I make no apology for putting the people first," Broun said in August.

A Broun **spokesman** declined to offer details last week, asserting the office's records were inaccessible in the midst of an office move.

Spokesman Bryan Partridge did state, however, that the office would come in under budget for 2008.

Broun indicated earlier this year that he would make "administrative adjustments" in light of the budget challenges.

He did not offer details, but spending records indicate that at least eight aides left the office in late July or early August. In addition, four more staff members do not appear on payroll documents after June.

Spending records indicate six people remained employed in one of Broun's offices in late September, when the quarter ended.

Partridge confirmed that the office now employs 10 people on a full- or part-time basis between the Washington, D.C., and three district offices. That total is half of the 20 full- or part-time workers listed in records ending in June 2008.

At least two aides listed at one time on Broun's **House** payroll also appear on his campaign payroll: Jordan Chinouth, listed only as a "part-time employee" on **House** records, and Jessica Morris, listed as "part-time" and press secretary. It is not unusual for **House** aides to take unpaid leave to participate in a campaign.

According to other Georgia **House** offices, Broun has not sought any assistance with constituent services or other needs, despite operating with a skeleton staff. Although **House** Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) had also offered assistance to Broun, there is no indication that the Georgian has opted for that help.

If a Member exceeds the office's annual MRA, no other funds are available to the office and any overdraft may be taken out of a Member's Congressional salary.

Document RLCL000020081208e4c800007

Campus Notebook
Driving, Sans Influence

Alison McSherry and Emily Yehle

691 words

17 November 2008

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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Driving, Sans Influence. D.C. shadow Sen. Paul Strauss (D) repeatedly showed his Senate ID when he was stopped for drunken driving last month, according to court records.

An affidavit recently filed in D.C. Superior Court - and signed by the arresting officer - recounts the arrest in detail, describing Strauss as "very unsteady on his feet" and "swaying from side to side." Later, the officer noticed that Strauss had food stains on his shirt and pants.

He also made repeated efforts to present his Senate ID to arresting Officer Jose Rodriguez.

"While handing Officer Rodriguez his license, that he had difficulty retrieving, he displayed his US Senate ID with his right hand," the affidavit reads. Strauss "continued to hold the US Senate ID the entire time until Officer Rodriguez asked him to step out of the car."

A later test revealed that Strauss' blood alcohol content was about 0.16 - twice the legal limit. Last week, he pleaded not guilty, and a status hearing is set for Nov. 19.

As a shadow Senator, Strauss is unpaid and unrecognized by Congress, though he does have an ID for access into some Member- only areas. He is technically part of the D.C. government and acts as an ambassador on the city's behalf, spending much of his time fighting for voting representation.

On Nov. 4, he overwhelmingly won a third term, despite his Oct. 1 arrest. The D.C. Republican Party has repeatedly asked for him to step down after news of the arrest became public.

Strauss was pulled over because he was speeding, driving 49 miles per hour when the speed limit was 25. Rodriguez asked him to complete sobriety tests after smelling alcohol on his breath and noticing that he had "a blank stare, blood shot eyes and appeared confused."

Strauss and his lawyer did not return calls for comment Friday.

Witnessing History, Expensively. As area hotels fill up with tourists eager to attend the inauguration, Washingtonians are renting their houses for a pretty penny. Craigslist is awash with ads for apartments, condos and houses in the metropolitan area, many of which are going for more than \$1,000 a night.

For instance, a 3,000-square-foot loft in Logan Circle is being offered for \$15,000 for the week of Jan. 16-23. The ad says the **house** sleeps six people and will allow visitors to be close to the action and avoid Washington traffic.

Compare this to a two-bedroom in the same neighborhood that sleeps eight and is going for \$6,000 for five nights.

Chantal Wienecke is advertising her newly renovated home on East Capitol Street for \$12,500 for the week. Wienecke says that business was good at first, but as the idea of home rental gets more attention, the market is becoming more competitive.

"It started out really good," she says. "There has been interest, and I think it'll only get better. I think we're going to get what we're asking at the end of the day." Wienecke says her family plans to use the money to pay off renovation fees and take a trip to Disney World.

In addition to the Craigslist posts, a new Web site, inaugurationhousehunters.com, has popped up offering rentals. The company states that its goal is "to provide affordable housing to families during the 2009 President Barack Obama inauguration." The site claims to have many rental properties available for inauguration week ranging from one bedroom to seven. It also includes information about limousine services and area restaurants.

Catching Up Online. **House** staffers can now update their tax withholdings, sign up for direct deposit and check their earnings statements online.

The office of Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard launched the system **House**-wide Thursday after testing it out among **House** officers, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

Staffers can access the system, called MyPayLinks, through the internal **House** intranet at any time of the day. It's a big step up from what was previously available: nothing at all.

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

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'Fire Hose' Training For New Members

Emily Yehle
545 words
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English

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Being a Member isn't all about party politics and floor speeches - it's also about buying a printer, setting a budget, sifting through constituent e-mail and finding your way through the labyrinth of the Capitol.

This week, Members-elect will attempt to absorb it all in a marathon of lectures, dinners and caucus meetings.

"There is so much to absorb for them that week, and we just expose them to so much new information, some folks on our transition staff say it's like we hook them up to a fire hose," said **Jeff Ventura**, the **spokesman** for the **House** Chief Administrative Officer.

By the time they leave on Friday, the soon-to-be Members will not only have a pile of how-to guides on managing a Congressional office, they will have participated in the first major decision of the 111th Congress: the election of leadership.

With every Member-elect voting, those ballots can get contentious.

In 2002, then-Rep. Bob Menendez (N.J.) won his bid for chairman of the **House** Democratic Caucus by just one vote - a vote by a possible Member-elect who ended up losing his then-uncalled election. However, **House** leaders haven't indicated whether those in contested elections will vote this year.

This year, like every election season, those **House** Members whose races are still up for grabs will attend orientation.

They'll only deviate from the pack in Friday's infamous housing lottery, where Members vie for the best offices. The Clerk of the **House** will reserve an office for whoever eventually wins the seat unless the contested election includes an incumbent, who would take part in the lottery.

Still, much of the week is dedicated to the details: Does the Member want to buy new office equipment? Where will they set up their district offices? What are the rules for hiring staff?

In the **House**, new Members begin the week with a long day of orientation sessions that cover everything from "security and emergency preparedness" to "leasing and outfitting your district office."

The Senate will host a lecture by Senate Historian Richard Baker on the history of the Senate, with a session on Senate procedures set for Tuesday.

One staffer for each Member-elect will attend another orientation hosted by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Chiefs of Staff Association.

Wednesday's daylong session will include panels on four topics: How to staff an office, how to manage the transition period, how to handle constituent mail and how to manage the first-year budget.

Every chief of staff essentially has to create an office from the ground up, said Tim Hysom, **spokesman** for the Congressional Management Foundation, a nonprofit that promotes a more effective Congress.

But as they try to build an office, those staffers won't yet have permanent office space.

So the CAO office sets up a "New Member Center," where each Member-elect gets a cubicle in the Rayburn **House** Office Building basement with a laptop and some office supplies.

"Getting a Congressional office off the ground is a really unique experience," Hysom said. "We try to equip them with a lot of the information that they'll need to make key decisions."

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House Servers Operate From Backup Facility

Emily Yehle
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4 November 2008
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When a power outage disabled **House** e-mail and BlackBerry services about three weeks ago, a backup power supply should have taken up the slack.

Instead, Members and staffers were without official e-mail for almost a day, while **House** officials waited for a California company to send a replacement part.

In a recent internal report, the Architect of the Capitol's office pinpoints an overloaded circuit breaker as the problem.

Employees of the Chief Administrative Officer connected new equipment to one power panel without ensuring it could handle the extra load, according to the report.

But the incident also reveals a bigger issue: The **House's** primary servers are run out of the backup computer facility. That means that when the facility has a power outage - or a blown circuit breaker - there's no second location to run services such as e-mail while the problem is fixed.

It wouldn't be an issue if the primary facility, housed in the Ford Building, was fully functional. But it's undergoing renovations, according to several sources.

On Monday, the ranking member of the **House** Administration Committee called for those renovations to be sped up.

"The CAO must work to expedite the restoration of redundant IT services in Ford, which are currently behind schedule so that we have a fail-safe system that ensures critical **House** services remain available without interruption," Rep. Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.) said in a statement.

The Alternate Computer Facility was acquired after Sept. 11, 2001, to ensure continuity if an emergency or power outage shut down servers at the primary location.

But at some point, some of the main **House** servers were moved to the ACF - transforming it into a primary facility and eliminating the only backup option.

CAO officials wouldn't comment on the Ford renovations or where servers are housed, citing security concerns. **House** Administration spokesman Kyle Anderson also declined to talk about the situation, only stating that the committee "is strongly focused on ensuring that **House** Information Systems are secure and uninterrupted."

But CAO spokesman **Jeff Ventura** said the Oct. 9 outage did reveal that the main circuit breaker did not have "electrical redundancy," or a backup power supply.

CAO officials say that problem is fixed, at least for the moment.

"We have engineered a short-term solution to the problem, one which provides increased fail-safe integrity to our electrical systems," Deputy CAO Ali Qureshi said in an e-mail. "And we are now going to work on the longer term solution with the AOC."

The AOC's report seems to lay the blame on the CAO's IT staff, though not overtly.

Addressing the "root causes," AOC officials wrote: "The **House** Data Center did not communicate with AoC when new equipment was added, which did not permit an analysis to determine if the circuit could handle the load."

As a result, the new equipment pushed one of three circuit breakers over its limit. That main breaker was handling 635 amps, when it was designed to handle only 600.

The AOC is in charge of the physical building, meaning it measures the power being used. But the CAO handles what's inside the building, such as the equipment that uses that power.

The two didn't communicate.

"The AoC had no prior knowledge of what equipment was being installed and or tied in the **House** data center," the report says, adding that **House** Data Center staff has previously "denied AoC's requests to perform the needed preventive maintenance on any of the data center electrical systems."

Qureshi said he disagrees with the report's findings.

"We are not in complete agreement with the AOC's findings, which is why we are scheduled to discuss the issue with them this week," he said. "We do feel, however, that as a result of this upcoming meeting, we will ultimately come to an agreement about what caused the problem and, together, make sure it does not happen again."

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Campus Notebook
The Hungry and Outraged

Emily Yehle
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28 October 2008
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The Hungry and Outraged. At least one staffer is still fighting against Friday's price increases in the **House** cafeterias, recently sending a petition signed by 227 people to Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard.

Brian Diffell, a policy adviser to Minority Whip Roy Blunt (R- Mo.), created the petition after learning Restaurant Associates was raising its food prices by an average of 10 percent (with some items costing as much as 40 percent more).

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the office hadn't seen the petition Monday afternoon and had no comment.

Beard announced the price increase earlier this month, citing high food and gasoline prices. But the petition questions that explanation.

"The official reasoning provided by the vendor, the increase in global gasoline and food prices, strikes us as insincere," the petition reads. "Are we to believe that prices will be adjusted downward should such pricing ease?"

It goes on to ask Beard to "work with Restaurant Associates to reverse its decision and work to ensure that Capitol Hill staff and visitors to the complex have an opportunity to continue to dine at affordable prices."

It's unclear how many Democrats and Republicans signed the petition - or how many of the signatories are staffers - because Diffell did not require that they give such information.

Ready to Launch, Finally. The Capitol Visitor Center is ready to open its cafeterias and gift shops after President Bush signed a bill that sets up the CVC's operational structure.

The bill was long in coming: After the **House** passed it in March, the chambers took six months to negotiate changes.

CVC officials planned for a Dec. 2 opening without knowing who was officially in charge of things such as making hires and setting a budget.

Much of the discussions between the **House** and Senate focused on whether the center's chief executive officer or the Architect of the Capitol was ultimately responsible for hiring, spending and contracts, among other things.

In the bill, the AOC makes the final decision with a recommendation from the CEO.

One Step at a Time. The Government Accountability Office's first- ever union has overwhelmingly ratified an "interim agreement" with the agency's management.

Since GAO employees voted to form the union more than a year ago, their efforts have been focused on organizing the group and obtaining back pay for hundreds of workers denied cost-of-living increases in 2006 and 2007.

Congress recently passed a law ensuring their back pay. Now, with the interim agreement ratified, union members are on their way to accomplishing their organizing goals.

The agreement covers only the basics, such as when employees have the right to be represented by union officials and how grievances are handled. About a third of the union's bargaining unit voted, and 89 percent voted to ratify the agreement.

After it's official, the union can begin to form a permanent structure, electing officials and establishing a paying membership. Already, the union has ratified a constitution in the same vote as the interim agreement.

GAO acting Comptroller Gene Dodaro has 30 days to sign it, which he is expected to do. In a press release last month, Dodaro said he was pleased with the agreement.

"We have worked hard to build and maintain union and management relations here at GAO," he said, "and I am very pleased we were able to reach a good agreement and reach it quickly."

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

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Campus Notebook
An Apple a Day

Emily Yehle
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An Apple a Day. The iPhone may be on every gadget-lover's Christmas list, but Members could be stuck for a while using their BlackBerrys for **House** business.

The reason: The **House**'s secure server won't allow the iPhone to access official e-mail, and changing that infrastructure would take significant time and money.

But the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer still tested out a few iPhones recently -- sans e-mail. Now, if Members decide they want to forgo a BlackBerry for a **House**-issued iPhone, they can get the pros and cons of the phone from CAO employees.

If they do get an iPhone, however, they won't be able to check their e-mail without physically plugging the phone into their **House** computer, CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

"Quite honestly, we have not had an outcry of demand on the Member level," he said, but they decided to test a few because "it's sort of the phone du jour."

It's uncertain whether Members will ask in the future for the CAO to take the necessary steps to connect the phones to the **House** servers -- such as preparing a cost estimate and studying the phone's security.

But as the go-to place for **House** technology questions, the CAO's office will be able to offer advice on the iPhone and its compatibility for **House** work.

"If a Member asked the CAO today, 'Hey I want an iPhone,' well, clearly we'd get them an iPhone," Ventura said. "But in order for us to roll this out as an option to the **House** community, there are so many steps that have to be taken."

Mysterious Threats. The Capitol

Police were still investigating bomb threats to five Senate offices as of Wednesday evening.

Police spokeswoman Sgt. Kimberly Schneider wouldn't give specifics on the threats or name the offices that received them, citing the ongoing investigation. Most were calls, with at least one e-mail.

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

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Campus Notebook
Boycott, Via Facebook

Emily Yehle
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Boycott, Via Facebook. Outraged at the thought of a \$4 grilled cheese or a \$5 BLT, some staffers are using Facebook to protest the upcoming price increases in the **House** cafeterias.

At least two Facebook groups have popped up since Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard announced last week that food prices would be going up an average of 10 percent (with some items costing as much as 40 percent more). Restaurant Associates, the private company that runs the **House** cafeterias, will enact the price hike Friday.

"Such an increase in prices is upsetting, if not disturbing," reads one Facebook group called Boycott the **House** Cafeteria. "This has prompted some to consider buying a George Foreman Grill, simply so they have a cost-effective means of consuming grilled cheese sandwiches."

Boycott the **House** Cafeteria boasted 92 members as of press time Monday, while Hill Staffers United Against Restaurant Associates had 149.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** downplayed the boycott.

"I'm going to start a Facebook group, too, titled: 'People Who Haven't Been to a Grocery Store in the Last Year,'" he said. "Or maybe, 'People Who Haven't Heard of the Consumer Price Index.' I mean, really."

Meanwhile, several staffers have taken the protest one step further -- by setting up a Web site, www.stopthepricehike.com, which asks visitors to sign a petition.

The petition is a letter to Beard questioning Restaurant Associates' explanation that higher food and gasoline prices nationwide have forced the increase. Beard, the letter says, should "work with Restaurant Associates to reverse its decision" or risk staffers going to establishments that "treat us with greater respect."

Old-Timey Twine. **House** officials are turning the clock back a few decades to be environmentally friendly by bundling internal mail with cotton twine, rather than polypropylene ties.

With the purchase of a new tying machine, Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard hopes to save 6,000 pounds of material that would go to a landfill, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

The change comes just weeks after the **House** switched the cafeterias' plastic water bottles for biodegradable corn-based ones.

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

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Save Your Pennies: House Cafeteria Prices Are Going Up

Emily Yehle
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High gasoline prices and an unstable economy have hit the **House** cafeterias, driving up the price of most food items by 10 percent to 20 percent.

On Oct. 24, the chamber's cafeterias will increase the price of everything from french fries to salads, with some items costing as much as 40 percent more.

For example: A grilled cheese will soon cost \$3.95, up from \$2.75; a main course will set you back \$6.25, instead of \$5.95; and an 8-ounce cup of soup will jump from \$1.70 to \$2.

Made-to-order sandwiches will vary in their price increases, with a club sandwich rising by less than 1 percent and a BLT costing about 41 percent more.

House officials say profits of Restaurant Associates, the private company that runs the **House** cafeterias, are shrinking because of rising gas and food prices. The company's contract with the **House** allows it to raise its prices once a year in response to market conditions.

And the past year, according to Restaurant Associates, has seen the price of wholesale foods skyrocket, averaging a 7.6 percent increase nationwide. The cost of products such as flour, eggs and cooking oil, meanwhile, have risen by 50 percent since January.

Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard, who oversees the cafeterias, said in a statement that the average increase for food in the **House** will be about 10 percent - a symptom, he said, of a "dramatic" price increase nationwide.

"Unfortunately, the **House** food operations are not immune to what everyone is experiencing in supermarkets throughout America," he said. "While most increases are slight and will be barely noticeable, other items are more affected by the rise in wholesale food prices, and some consumers in our cafeterias will notice the increase, as they already have in grocery stores and restaurants all over the country."

The move is bound to be an unpopular one. When the **House** first awarded the contract to Restaurant Associates last year under the promise of fresher food and more environmentally friendly practices, staffers worried that the cafeteria's notoriously low prices would rise.

Indeed, for some new menu additions, food was more expensive. Restaurant Associates buys some of its food from farms within a 150-mile radius of Washington, D.C., and stocks always-pricier items, such as sushi.

But Restaurant Associates kept prices constant for menu items that were stocked by the previous vendor.

Now Beard says those prices were too low at the outset. In an Oct. 9 memo to **House** Administration Chairman Robert Brady (D-Pa.), Beard wrote that those prices were unrealistic and thus will be subject to a larger price increase.

"They started with prices that did not match the economic situation of that time, and unquestionably do not match the current economic situation," he wrote in the memo. "In addition, RA is using all natural and fresh products, compared to the previous contractor, which did not. RA started with higher costs to produce the same item."

In an e-mail, CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the company kept the low prices "in anticipation that wholesale food costs may stabilize."

"They did not," he added. "Once prices started to severely cut into their profit margins they were forced to request price increases."

However, compared to area restaurants, the prices are hardly extreme. For example, a made-to-order club sandwich in a **House** cafeteria will cost \$6, while a similar sandwich at Corner Bakery in Union Station costs \$7.

Right now - before the price increase - the average purchase at a **House** eatery for lunch is \$6, Ventura said. Based on the 10 percent average increase, the same purchase would cost \$6.60 (though it would depend on the food). The average breakfast purchase of \$3.30 would increase to about \$3.65.

The **House** Administration Committee, which oversees Beard's office, hopes those prices won't rise again.

"While we continue to encourage RA to find ways to mitigate price increases, we also recognize that, over the past year, prices have increased on many of the food staples that go into RA's meal preparation," the committee's Democratic Members said in a statement. "We urge RA to find creative solutions to ensuring that **House** restaurant facilities remain affordable for Members, staff and visitors to the Capitol complex."

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Energy Policy & Markets

ENERGY EFFICIENCY; Capitol launches new conservation campaign

Hallie D. Martin, Greenwire reporter

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The Capitol is one step closer to reducing its carbon footprint without having to return for a lame-duck session, call a vote or even fret over the cost.

Power to Save, an educational program launched last week by the Architect of the Capitol, will provide tools and tips to encourage the Hill's 10,000 staffers to be more energy efficient by reminding them to turn off electronics and lights.

The initiative was launched to coincide with Energy Awareness Month.

"It's a public awareness campaign to let people know there are simple things people can do to save energy on Capitol Hill in an interesting and entertaining way," said AOC spokeswoman Eva Malecki. "Congress has wanted to be the leaders of a national effort to reduce energy consumption, so we're stepping up."

Malecki said the AOC has been working on a number of environmentally friendly projects such as replacing old light bulbs with compact fluorescent ones, tuning up elevators to be more energy efficient, insulating windows and installing modern heating and cooling systems, she said.

Power to Save will use e-mail and the AOC's Web site to remind staffers to turn off the lights, computers, monitors and coffeemakers, put printers and copiers in sleep mode and use those machines only when necessary.

Instead of passing around brochures that have tips, facts and myths about conserving energy, AOC published a glowing green interactive one on its Web site that reminds staffers, "When not in use, turn off the juice." It also has downloadable PDFs with information on compact fluorescent lightbulbs, more tips and posters.

The AOC will put up posters in some break rooms, as well, Malecki said.

The biggest challenge won't be reaching out to the staffers, it will be reminding the AOC's own staff, said Malecki.

"Most of our work force doesn't sit at desks; they are maintaining [the] complex," she said, whereas with congressional staff, the AOC can go from desktop to desktop and e-mail links and downloadable fact and tip sheets.

Power to Save is a separate program from Green the Capitol, a similar initiative that was launched last year by the **House** of Representatives, though the two programs are working together.

"We're working with the Greening of Capitol and congressional leaders to augment what they've been doing to reduce energy consumption," Malecki said.

Green the Capitol aims to reduce the **House's** carbon footprint, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer.

In 2006, the **House** side of the Capitol emitted 91,000 metric pounds of carbon. Since then, it has taken some eco-friendly steps to make the **House** carbon-neutral, and a report is due out after Congress comes back for a session.

The Senate side of the Capitol does not have a carbon-reduction program.

Power to Save won't cost the government anything. Unless, of course, a staffer forgets to turn off the lights.

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Executive Summary
The bailout's cyberstorm

ELISE CASTELLI; ecastelli@federaltimes.com

Illustration by Bryan Smith

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Federal Times

FDRLT

3

English

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1 COLOR ILLUSTRATION. SEE

It wasn't just lawmakers and Wall Street investors who lost a lot of sleep last week.

So did the Web site staffs on Capitol Hill.

After the text of the proposed \$700 billion financial bailout package was posted on the **House** Financial Services Committee Web site on Sunday evening, Sept. 28, millions of Americans stormed congressional Web sites to read the bill and tell their congressmen how to vote on it.

The result: **House** Web sites crashed faster than the stock market after the **House** rejected the bill.

"It was really the perfect storm of conditions," said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** Chief Administration Officer.

The problem: The bailout bill was released only hours before a **House** floor vote Monday, denying the media, lobbyists, congressional staff and the public a chance to digest the legislation. So they all rushed to the **House** Web sites at the same time.

Adding to the problem, constituents began e-mailing their representatives about the bailout using Web-based feedback forms at nearly quadruple the usual rate, Ventura said.

And the pressure never let up as the bailout package continued its trek through the congressional approval process and the public continued to weigh in.

Visitors to congressional sites encountered the Internet equivalent of a rolling brownout, Ventura said. Site administrators limited traffic to the Web-based feedback forms to prevent further outages, he said. Constituents accessing those pages got messages asking to check back later.

"We know now that this is a legislative hurricane," Ventura said. The **House** sites have been hit by a Category 5 storm of citizen participation, when it was only prepared for a Category 3, he said.

To beef up its preparedness, the **House** is testing new load-balancing software, which distributes Web traffic volumes across the organization's servers. The **House** is also installing caching tools, which store copies of static information accessed on the Web to the constituents' computers. By creating locally stored copies of static pages, the computer doesn't have to talk to **House** servers every time the user wants to view a page, reducing the load.

The Senate, also experienced unusually high traffic last week. But it avoided the meltdown experienced by the **House**, said Kimball Winn, assistant sergeant at arms and chief information officer for the Senate. The Senate's load-balancing software appeared to handle the traffic, though some users experienced slow load times and error messages at times, Winn said.

Neither **House** nor Senate IT officials would divulge Web traffic numbers, even in approximate terms, for security reasons.

98285818.xml

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Emergency CAO Truck A Big Hit In La., Texas ; But Some Question Capitol Police Escort

Emily Yehle
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Last month, Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard deployed a multimillion-dollar communications truck to help **House** district offices get up and running after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike hit Louisiana and Texas.

The **House** Emergency Response Communications Vehicle was a resounding success in the districts, providing more than 200 laptops and phones for constituents to file Federal Emergency Management Agency claims or call relatives.

But some Republican staffers argue that the two Capitol Police officers who escorted the vehicle and CAO staffers to Texas were there in violation of **House** rules.

Police, they say, violated a 2005 provision that requires the department to first get approval from the **House** and Senate Appropriations committees.

"This should have been cleared through the Appropriations Committee," said Jennifer Hing, spokeswoman for **House** Appropriations ranking member Jerry Lewis (R-Calif.). "We would expect that it would, given that a law requires it."

The Capitol Police kept silent on the issue; spokeswoman Sgt. Contricia Sellers said the department does not comment on operational issues.

But an e-mail sent to appropriators and obtained by Roll Call points out that the statute provides an exemption for "responding to an imminent threat or emergency."

Who declares that emergency is uncertain. In this case, Beard decided the hurricanes constituted an emergency and consequently sent seven staffers and the vehicle on a three-week journey.

It's the first time the vehicle has been used since it was purchased in 2003 as a safeguard to keep Congress running in an emergency.

The truck is designed to provide Members with satellite communications for Internet and telephone in cases when the normal power grid is not available.

The decision to send the officers was made on Sept. 12, the e-mail reads, and the officers and an unmarked vehicle left on Sunday, Sept. 14. Hurricane Ike hit on Sept. 13.

Jonathan Beeton, **spokesman** for Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), said the committee isn't questioning the Capitol Police's decision.

"It is not our intention to be second guessing decisions in an emergency situation," he said. "We just want to be kept informed of expected costs as a result of these extraordinary circumstances."

On Wednesday, CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** declined to answer questions about the vehicles' exact price tag, their specific capabilities or the number of vehicles owned by the **House** - although he did refer to "vehicles" in the plural - citing that information as part of the "umbrella of security."

But he was eager to point out the vehicle's positive impact on the districts. In Texas, seven Members came together in the one office set up by the CAO, helping a total of 6,000 constituents use the Internet and phones.

It's unclear if there is a protocol for when and how the vehicles should be used. Ventura said the CAO has a loose "playbook," but that the office had to respond day-to-day.

In Baton Rouge, La., for example, Rep. Don Cazayoux's (D) district office regained power less than 24 hours after the vehicle arrived. But the CAO staff stayed a few days longer at the district office and used the equipment to instead serve area residents.

Ventura said that it is mostly up to Members when the vehicle is used, and he noted that in emergencies, Members' offices need to be able to handle the constituents coming to them for help.

"Most turn to their Congressman for guidance on what to do," he said. "You can't have a district office shuttered, with a sign that says, 'Sorry, no power.' That's unacceptable."

The CAO's office has written a report detailing the trip and will study the lessons learned, Ventura said.

The price tag for the trip is not yet known, he said, but only includes food, gas and "cheap hotels" for the CAO staffers who went.

The seven Texas Members - Reps. Ted Poe (R), Kevin Brady (R), Al Green (D), Sheila Jackson Lee (D), Nick Lampson (D), Gene Green (D) and Ron Paul (R) - sent Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and **House** Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) a letter of thanks.

"The CAO's Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery team made it possible for our staffs to lend a helping hand to our constituents, to listen to them, and help them navigate FEMA's red tape," the letter reads. "The BC/DR team helped us give our constituents a means to call loved ones just to say, 'I am okay; we're safe.'"

Document RLCL000020081002e4a200007

Experts Debate How Congress Can Handle E-Mail Overflow

Andrew Noyes
592 words
2 October 2008
CongressDaily/P.M
CNGD
English
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An avalanche of e-mails to Capitol Hill this week underscored the need for Congress to devote more money and resources to technologies, a communications expert warned Wednesday. The **House's** "Write Your Rep" application, which lets the public identify and contact their representatives in Washington, was so overwhelmed as members battled over the \$700 billion financial rescue plan that administrators had to impose limits on the Web-based program. A memo sent to **House** members from the Chief Administrative Officer stated that during hours of peak demand, "some constituents attempting to use the system may receive a message asking them to try back at a later time, when demand is not so extreme." The restrictions were necessary to ensure that congressional Web sites were not completely disabled by the millions of e-mails flowing into the system.

CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said new software and hardware were installed to mitigate the issue but warned it would take several days for the system to recover.

"Congressional offices are struggling to keep up, and this scenario highlights that fact," the Congressional Management Foundation's Tim Hysom said. "More planning for bandwidth and resources is required to help the **House** and Senate manage what will ultimately be communication volumes like this in the future." That advice will be a cornerstone of a report that the foundation, which has studied how citizens communicate with Congress, will release in December. There have been peak moments of communication in the past, Hysom said, pointing to the controversy over President Bill Clinton's 1998 impeachment as the first time Capitol Hill offices grappled with e-mail overflow. More recent spikes have occurred during debates over the Iraq war, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, and interrogation policy. "When there are these big spikes, communication volumes never really go back to the previous levels," he said.

A June report by the foundation found that twice as many citizens who contact Congress do so via the Internet rather than by postal mail or the telephone. According to the study, 73 percent of staffers said their offices spent more time on constituent communications than they did two years before, and about half said they had to reallocate resources to cope with the surge. "It's difficult for one office to engage in hundreds of thousands of conversations," Hysom said.

But David Almay, who left his post as White **House** Internet director last year to join the public relations firm Waggener Edstrom, downplayed the problem. "To invest millions of dollars in infrastructure that would enable millions of e-mails to come in at any given time would be an overreaction," he said. System failures occur only when a particular issue reaches a heightened level of public interest. "99.9 percent of the time, services are up and running, but the system is not designed for situations like the one they faced this week," Almay said.

Some members dealing with the constituent e-mail crisis took matters into their own hands. Rep. Sam Johnson, R-Texas, urged his constituents to either keep trying the Write Your Rep application or call one of his two office phone numbers to register their opinion. In a message posted on his Web site, Johnson thanked those who wanted to share their thoughts on the rescue package. In the past week, more than 2,300 constituents contacted Johnson about the bailout. He noted that the only time he recalled such constituent feedback was when the Senate debated immigration.

Document CNGD000020081002e4a200006

A SECTION
CONFUSION REIGNS FOR CONSTITUENTS

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Palm Beach Post-Cox News Service

590 words

1 October 2008

The Palm Beach Post

PMBP

FINAL

5A

English

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WASHINGTON

Public opinion is a fickle thing.

In the days before Monday's vote on a \$700 billion bailout for the financial industry, U.S. Rep. Robert Wexler's offices in Washington and Boca Raton were bombarded by comments from constituents.

Josh Rogin, a **spokesman** for the Democrat, said they received more than 2,000 e-mails and hundreds of phone calls, most opposing the bill.

"They don't mince words," he said.

Wexler, however, voted for the proposal created by the Bush administration and modified by Congress. The bill went on to fail, and the Dow Jones industrial average dropped 777 points, the biggest single-day point drop in history.

Then, as people watched their investments shrink before their eyes, the opinions clogging phone lines shifted.

"They said, 'We didn't support this bailout, but now we're really worried,'" Rogin said.

The responses that Wexler and other **House** members received represent some of the widespread confusion and animosity over a controversial proposal that supporters hoped would free up the credit the economy desperately needs.

The quick-yet-tortured negotiations over the bailout have left constituents scrambling to digest a complex financial issue that has been the subject of intense political rhetoric.

"Public opinion out there is still bouncing all over the place," said Stephen Craig, chairman of the University of Florida's political science department.

Monday's vote inspired a record amount of feedback. The **House** was forced Tuesday to limit e-mails to representatives after unprecedented volume threatened to crash the Web site.

Jeff Ventura, communications director for the Chief Administrative Office, said millions of e-mails were sent through the Web site in the past two days, and he doesn't expect traffic to slow anytime soon.

"We're right in the eye of the storm," he said.

A recent Gallup poll showed that **House** members could not hope to please everyone with Monday's vote.

Almost 80 percent of Americans favored congressional action and 74 percent said the economy would worsen if legislators did nothing. But only 22 percent wanted a plan similar to the one proposed by the Bush administration.

Richard Conley, a political science professor at the University of Florida, said hikes in gas and food prices have made Americans disdainful of efforts to rescue big-ticket Wall Street firms.

"I think that's where some of the anger is from," he said. "Nobody is calling in supporting this thing."

Rogin said the government and the media failed to educate people on how passing the proposal was crucial for all segments of the economy, not just Wall Street.

Page 132 of 178 © 2012 Factiva, Inc. All rights reserved.

"They let it be labeled a bailout. Who wants that? No one wants that," he said. "The terminology is important."

The looming election also may have played a role in how legislators voted. Only three of 18 **House** members facing what the Cook Political Report considers tough reelections voted for the bailout.

Jason Barabas, a political science professor at Florida State University, said major votes before big elections are rare because they place politicians in the hot seat. With the election only five weeks away, "I would say it weighs heavily on their decision," Barabas said.

All four congressmen who represent Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast -- Democrats Wexler, Tim Mahoney, Alcee Hastings and Ron Klein --supported the bailout. Mahoney's district is the only one not rated "solidly Democratic" by the Cook Political Report.

~ cmegerian@coxnews.com

Document PMBP000020081106e4a10001m

Bailout Creates Web Surge That Could Last

Emily Yehle
859 words
1 October 2008
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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The financial bailout bill - and the public's overwhelming interest in it - may have lasting effects on the number of people who visit **House** Web sites and how the chamber handles that Web traffic.

As the **House** considered the bailout bill on Monday, constituents rushed to Member Web sites, overloading servers and slowing down access. Most affected was **House.gov**, which was almost impossible to load during the **House's** vote.

That phenomenon, experts say, could herald a new era of increased Web traffic.

"What we've kind of seen historically is that when communications increase for some specific reason, they never really go back down to the level prior to that big event," said Tim Hysom, **spokesman** for the Congressional Management Foundation.

One government information technology expert, who could not be quoted by name, compared the situation to when constituents overloaded the Senate's e-mail system in 2001 during John Ashcroft's confirmation hearings for attorney general. E-mail levels never dropped back to their previous levels, he said, and the event ushered in an increasingly popular way to contact Members.

The recent server overload may hint that the public has "a real-time need in sending and receiving information," he said. "It could be a predictor on what they are going to do in the future."

The increased traffic, and the threat of a future surge of interest, means the **House** may have to add another server or get the help of an outside company during times of such high demand, according to computer experts.

Indeed, **House** officials said the servers are being used at 100 percent capacity. Much of that is due to constituents e-mailing their Member through a form on that Member's Web site.

For this week, they will just "ride it out," said **Jeff Ventura**, **spokesman** for Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard, whose office handles the **House** computers.

Beard's office has devised a stopgap measure to help: During peak demand, the **House** servers will turn some visitors away from the "Write Your Representative" function on Member Web sites, directing them to a message asking them to try back at a later time.

Ventura likened this to a "traffic cop" on a crowded highway.

"Imagine a tunnel entrance," he said. "Although you may have several lanes of traffic available inside, the problem we're having now is the entrance to the tunnel can't have 10 lanes rushing all at once."

The tactic was first used Tuesday morning, and computer technicians are working long hours to come up with a long-term solution, Ventura said.

"Obviously, this is a sort of a Band-Aid on the problem, and we understand that," Ventura said, adding that only hardware or software changes would enable the servers to handle the increased Web traffic.

"What you don't want to do is make sweeping changes to the computer architecture during this time. It's not the right time to be fiddling with fundamentals of the system," Ventura said.

Hysom called this a "common-sense approach."

"I think the **House** is dealing with it in the best way that they can," he said. "There's never a way to anticipate that this would happen."

But not all **House.gov** sites are having this problem. Dozens of Member sites are hosted by outside companies, which keeps their servers inside the **House** firewall.

Adfero, a public relations company that provides targeted e-mail services, hosts about 75 Member sites, including the site of Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio).

Boehner's Web site has seen a four-fold increase in traffic "without any noticeable effect," Boehner **spokesman** Kevin Smith said. In fact, phone calls almost seem more cumbersome: The office estimates it has a call on the bailout every 15 seconds.

None of Adfero's other sites crashed, either, despite a three- fold increase in traffic, Vice President Ken Ward said. New servers contributed to the ability to keep things running, he said, but those servers also didn't have the same load as the **House** ones.

"To be fair, we host a lot of sites, but usually a constituent goes to **House.gov** before they go to a Member's site," he said, adding that **House.gov** and other main sites are on **House** servers. "In some ways, it's comparing apples to oranges."

Whatever the reason, some constituents will be turned away from those **House** sites on the chamber's servers. The possibility worries some staffers, especially since most of the e-mail seems to be individuals writing on their own, rather than interest groups organizing mass mailings.

"It puts the Member into an uncomfortable position because our constituents are going to blame us. They don't know what the CAO is nor should they," said Brian Robinson, **spokesman** for Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-Ga.), whose office has gotten about 1,200 e-mails in the past week.

"I think people already feel faceless and nameless, and when they get a message saying they can't even e-mail a Member, that makes it worse," Robinson said.

Document RLCL000020081001e4a10000b

Heard On The Hill
Warner's Roving Eye

Emily Heil and Elizabeth Brotherton

1,404 words

1 October 2008

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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Warner's Roving Eye. Sen. John Warner, you old dog you! The Virginia Republican - who was once married to film star Elizabeth Taylor - is quite the connoisseur of the fairer sex, and on Tuesday he confessed to letting his "wandering eye" roam the scenic Senate.

Warner was responding on the Senate floor to a tribute from Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), who lavishly praised the retiring Virginia gentleman. Warner reciprocated with

a mash note of a speech to Collins, calling her a "fighting lady." Then he went on to marvel at the number of women now serving in the Senate, recalling how when he first took office (back in 1978) there weren't any ladies in the chamber. Then along came Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (also in 1978), followed by a veritable flood of Senators of the female persuasion.

"From that beginning ... commenced the transformation of the Senate in many ways, from one lady to where today we have many," he announced. "As a matter of fact, we don't count them, because they have gotten into the full fabric of the Senate."

Warner added that although others might not notice the now fully assimilated womenfolk in the chamber, he still does. "Everybody is totally unconscious, except people like myself with a wandering eye," Warner said.

And more from what turned into a bit of an impromptu roast of Warner on the Senate floor: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D- Nev.) revealed a few little-known facts about Warner, namely that Warner's son once dated the late Paul Newman's daughter, and that the Majority Leader has long coveted Warner's thick mane of (all natural!) white hair.

"I'm so envious of your hair," Reid confessed. Warner replied that over the years, many women have called his office on behalf of their husbands to inquire where he gets his wigs.

Cafeteria Crisis. Saving the U.S. economy is tough work, but just try doing it on an empty stomach.

HOH has heard the gripes from exhausted Capitol Hill staffers who worked over the weekend on the now-defeated bailout bill. Not only did many of them have to show up on Saturday and Sunday, but the office-building cafeterias weren't even open, causing further stress for hungry Hill aides, who were too busy trying to salvage the economy to venture out - in the rain, no less!

HOH has gotten to the bottom of Cafeteriagate, and it seems that, coincidentally, the struggling economy was to blame.

A **spokesman** for Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard, who oversees cafeteria operations, explained to HOH that although officials knew closing the cafeterias would be an inconvenience to staffers, the cost of keeping them open was too high.

So Beard's staffers and officials at Restaurant Associates - the outside vendor that runs the cafeterias - decided to keep open the Members' Dining Room, Capitol Carryout and Capitol Market but close everything else, CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

"At the end of the day, Restaurant Associates is still a business, and they need to have the guarantee that the demand will be there," Ventura said. "We can't expect a company like that to incur a loss when we know that the demand for food isn't there."

Not all staffers were convinced, arguing that at least one office building cafeteria remained open in past weekend sessions. (The Longworth **House** Office Building food court remained open during a July 2006 weekend session, for example.)

But Ventura defended the decision, saying CAO officials hoped that staffers had interns available to grab lunch or were able to order food.

"People were extremely busy. It was tough, and we understand the frustration that people had," Ventura said. "But that's why there's pizza delivery - and people did that."

Still, try telling that to those burned-out staffers.

"Instead of arranging to keep **House** food services open for Members and staff ... the new CAO snidely suggests we order pizza? Somehow I don't think they understand," one **House** staffer complained.

For the Pregnant Teen Who Has Everything. Wondering what to get your favorite offspring of a vice presidential candidate in honor of her shotgun wedding?

A wedding-gift wish list - which includes kitschy American-flag- printed platters, camouflage-patterned bed linens and maternity- sized lingerie - on retailer J.C. Penney's Web site labeled "Bristol and Levi's Registry" is making the e-mail rounds among snickering Capitol Hill types. Of course, it refers to Bristol Palin, the pregnant high-school-aged daughter of vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin, and her boyfriend/classmate/father-of-baby Levi Johnson.

The registry is doubtless a fake, since the wedding date is listed as Election Day, (um, the mother of the bride is going to be kind of busy) and the items on the list are just too over-the-top to be believed (Precious Moments figurines, really?). And the campaign of Palin's running mate, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), has been staying mum about the details of the expected (and expectant) teen wedding.

Still, that doesn't stop us from pondering whether the happy couple would prefer the red, white and blue deviled-egg holder or the shooting-range game.

Decisions, decisions ...

New Eatery Gets Pelosi Stamp. Art and Soul, the swanky new restaurant in the Liaison Capitol Hill hotel, opened its doors just last week - but already it has attracted a celeb clientele.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is among the Members who have stopped by the restaurant, Executive Chef Ryan Morgan tells HOH. Pelosi came to the hotel for a daytime Democratic event last week and then returned in the evening to dine, Morgan said.

Also making an appearance: former "Bachelor" Andrew Firestone, a good friend of chef Art Smith, the restaurant's namesake who served as a personal chef to Oprah Winfrey and former Sen. Bob Graham (D- Fla.).

"It was a D.C.-Hollywood moment," Morgan recalled. "Chef Art was helping someone carry something to their car, and ran into [Firestone] on the street."

Celeb sightings might help Art and Soul cultivate its desired image as Capitol Hill's hippest dining destination. With a modern d[142]cor, plenty of fancy cocktails and a prime location (it sits a few blocks north of the Capitol on New Jersey Avenue Northwest), the place is hoping to become a happy hour hot spot.

But at heart, Art and Soul is a restaurant, offering up Southern- influenced dishes like "hoe cakes," which are essentially cornmeal pancakes covered with topping combos such as blue crab, braised beef and brie.

"We really kind of found the niche that a lot of folks aren't doing," Morgan said. "We're surrounded with Bistro Bis and Charlie Palmer Steak. We're really kind of out there in terms of what we're doing."

Popcorn With Your Free-Market Policy? He's not a terrorist, he just plays one in the movies. Actor-director Robert Davi plays a terrorist hell-bent on bombing filthy Americans in the conservative comedy "An American Carol," which is screening at the right-leaning American Film Renaissance Festival in Washington this week.

But playing bad guys isn't his only gig. Davi, whose own political leanings are conservative, will be in town to promote "An American Carol" and his film "The Dukes," which also is part of the festival, in which he makes his directorial debut - and plays a much more sympathetic character. Davi is the only star of the "American Carol"

cast set to appear at the festival, unlike during the film's screening at the Republican National Convention, when director David Zucker, comedian Kevin Farley (brother of the late "Saturday Night Live" funnyman Chris), and actor Jon Voight mingled with political types. This time, the rest of the "talent" is in LA for the premier, HOH hears.

That film lampoons lefty Hollywood types, with a plot that follows a Michael Moore-based character as he tries to abolish the Fourth of July holiday, only to be visited by three ghosts who persuade him to give up his U.S.-bashing ways.

"The Dukes," which tells the story of washed-up doo-wop musicians, screens on Wednesday night, and "An American Carol" shows on Friday.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

Document RLCL000020081001e4a100006

NWS; NEWS

NOTEBOOK: HOUSE LIMITS E-MAIL AFTER VOTE DELUGE

Free Press staff and news service

319 words

1 October 2008

Detroit Free Press

DFP

METRO FINAL

4A

English

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WASHINGTON - An unprecedented number of hits on the U.S. **House** of Representatives' Web site has forced a limit to be placed on the number of e-mails coming into the system in the wake of Monday's vote rejecting a \$700-billion rescue bill for the nation's financial institutions.

Jeff Ventura, spokesman for the **House** chief administration officer's office, said the pressure on the system has been building since the weekend when the text of the bailout bill was placed on the system and touched off worldwide interest.

By Monday's vote, millions of people had accessed the part of the Web site allowing users to write their representative - so many that it was difficult or impossible to get onto the system.

It continued Tuesday and led to the decision to limit the number of e-mails coming in. If too many e-mails are coming in, a link kicks in that asks people to try again later.

The decision to put a limit in place was first reported Tuesday by the Washington newsletter the Hill.

"We've never had anything like this," Ventura said.

He said he could not tell for sure how many hits have come through the **House** Web site over the last three days but said they are certainly in the millions.

Bush signs auto loans bill

President George W. Bush signed into law Tuesday legislation providing the auto industry with \$25 billion in federal loans, lifting an offshore oil-drilling ban and funding the government until the next administration.

The auto loans were sought by General Motors Corp., Ford Motors Co., Chrysler LLC and others who said they needed taxpayer help to finance a shift to building more fuel-efficient cars.

MEMO: ECONOMIC TURMOIL

DISCLAIMER: THIS ELECTRONIC VERSION MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY FROM THE PRINTED ARTICLE

Document DFP0000020081002e4a10000a

BUSINESS
InBusiness

Staff Reports
332 words
30 September 2008
Tulsa World
TUL
FINAL
E1
English

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Triarc buys Wendy's

Triarc Cos. Inc. completed its \$2.34 billion takeover of Wendy's International Inc. on Monday, making way for new sandwiches and drinks at the No. 3 hamburger chain and a renewed focus on its "fresh, not frozen" square burgers.

The deal -- in the works for years -- combines Wendy's with Arby's, which is owned by Atlanta-based Triarc and is known for its shaved roast beef sandwiches.

The deal adds Wendy's to billionaire Nelson Peltz's empire. He owns Triarc.

Triarc will change its name to "Wendy's/Arby's Group Inc." and will trade under the "WEN" symbol on the New York Stock Exchange beginning Tuesday.

House site flooded

The **House** Web site was overwhelmed Monday as millions of computer users sought information about the financial bailout bill rejected by the **House**.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer.

Ventura said the Web site, tulsaworld.com/house, is working, but many computer users are getting the equivalent of a busy signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

Storms hurt earnings

Halliburton says disruptions from hurricanes Gustav and Ike in the Gulf of Mexico will probably cut into third-quarter earnings.

The oilfield services company, which has corporate offices in Houston and Dubai, said Monday the impact of the two storms will likely reduce revenue by about \$80 million in the July-September period, and earnings by 4 cents a share.

Halliburton says the late-summer hurricanes caused minor damage to some of its facilities along the Gulf Coast and interrupted operations in the Gulf and parts of Louisiana and Texas.

Shares fell \$3.71, or 11 percent, to \$30.29 on trading Monday.

Document TUL0000020081006e49u0004m

Chicago Tribune

News

House Web site flooded

Associated Press

86 words

30 September 2008

Chicago Tribune

TRIB

Chicagoland Final

19

English

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WASHINGTON

The **House** Web site was overwhelmed Monday as millions of computer users sought information about the financial bailout bill rejected by the **House**.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. "We're being overwhelmed with Web traffic about the bill."

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

WALL STREET CRISIS

Document TRIB000020080930e49u0003n

NEWS

Public reaction to bailout failure jams Internet in D.C.

MARIA GIORDANO

424 words

30 September 2008

The Tennessean

TNNS

ONLINE

English

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By MARIA GIORDANO

Staff Writer

Online Feedback

Reaction to the **House** vote rejecting a \$700 billion financial bailout plan jammed the Internet in the nation's Capitol Monday as constituents turned to the Web to voice their opinions.

The high volume of e-mail and other postings essentially shut down the U.S. **House** of Representatives system for receiving constituent comments. The same happened to the Library of Congress Web site, which posts the roll call votes for the **House** and Senate.

"This continues a trend that we have seen all week," said Claude Chafin, communications director to U.S. Rep. Marsha Blackburn of Brentwood.

"The congresswoman has received above 1,600 e-mails, and 80 percent are against the bailout. It's rare that an issue on the floor of the **house** has such a direct and immediate impact on constituents."

As the votes were tallied in the **House** on Monday, the e-mail system slowed and then stopped, Chafin said. In Blackburn's office, staff continued to take calls and receive in-**house** e-mails.

The issue is hitting close to home as people feel the credit market tightening, Chafin said.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. "We're being overwhelmed with Web traffic about the bill."

Ventura said the Web site is working, but many computer users are getting the equivalent of a busy signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

Contact Maria Giordano at 615-2659-8048 or email mgiordano@tennessean.com. The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Reach your U.S. representatives

Once on the Web site, locate contact forms and phone numbers. If it doesn't work, keep trying.

U.S. Senators from Tennessee:

- Sen. Lamar Alexander – www.alexander.senate.gov
- Sen. Bob Corker - www.corker.senate.gov

U.S. **House** of Representatives from Tennessee:

- David Davis, 1st District – www.daviddavis.house.gov
- John Duncan, 2nd District - www.house.gov/duncan/
- Zach Wamp, 3rd District – www.house.gov/wamp/

- Lincoln Davis, 4th District – www.house.gov/lincolndavis/
- Jim Cooper, 5th District – www.cooper.house.gov/
- Bart Gordon, 6th District – www.house.gov/bart
- Marsha Blackburn, 7th District – www.blackburn.house.gov
- John Tanner, 8th District – www.house.gov/tanner/
- Steve Cohen, 9th District – www.cohen.house.gov/

Document TNNS000020081001e49u00025

News

Curiosity kills Web site with data on bailout bill; Close Up

Stephen Ohlemacher

The Associated Press

272 words

30 September 2008

The Seattle Times

SETL

Fourth

A3

English

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Ventura said the Web site is working, but many computer users are getting the equivalent of a busy signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

Ventura said the slowdown is expected to last until Tuesday. In the meantime, technicians planned to work through the night to fortify the system.

"Our computer people aren't going anywhere," Ventura said.

The **House** on Monday defeated a \$700 billion emergency rescue for the nation's financial system, and the Dow Jones industrials plunged nearly 800 points, the most for a single day.

Ventura estimated that millions of computer users went to the Web site to e-mail their representatives and to learn about the bill. He was unable to provide a more precise estimate.

The computer slowdown is affecting all **House**-member Web sites, he said. The site has an application that enables computer users to send e-mails to their representatives.

"It's all tied into one system that is clearly being overloaded at this point," he said.

Document SETL000020090124e49u001xw

NEWS

the economic bailout; BITTER PILL DRAWS BIPARTISAN REFUSAL

MITCH ANDERSON; STAFF WRITER

845 words

30 September 2008

Star-Tribune

MSP

METRO

6A

English

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WASHINGTON

Geography and philosophy may have mattered more than party Monday in determining how individual U.S. **House** members voted on the ill-fated \$700 billion financial rescue package. Minnesotans in the **House** were just as divided as their peers -- and just as bipartisan in rejecting the plan.

Four members of the state's eight-member delegation voted no. Two were rural Democrats, and two were suburban Republicans. Three Minnesota Democrats and one Republican voted to approve the plan.

As a result, the state's breakdown exactly matched the **House** as whole, where two-thirds of all Republicans and 40 percent of all Democrats joined in voting no.

In the impassioned debate before the vote, some members candidly spoke about fears of voter reaction to the plan. "We're all worried about losing our jobs," declared Rep. Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "Most of us say, 'I want this thing to pass, but I want you to vote for it -- not me.'"

After the bill's rejection, **House** Minority Leader John Boehner, R-Ohio, acknowledged that "Americans are angry, and so are my colleagues. They don't want to have to vote for a bill like this. But I have concerns about what this (vote) means for the American people."

The **House** website was overwhelmed as millions of computer users left messages for their representatives or sought information about the bill.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 Commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer.

Real frustration

Conservatives in the **House** saw too much government interference in free markets and too high a price. Liberals thought it provided too much help for Wall Street and not enough for distressed homeowners.

"There's a real sense of frustration. People see their tax dollars spent bailing out financial institutions, and they themselves are not doing well," said Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-Md., who represents a predominantly black Baltimore district. He voted no.

From the opposite end of the political spectrum came conservatives such as Rep. Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas.

"This Congress ... did not adequately discuss or investigate potential alternatives that would have constituted a workout and not a bailout," he said.

Minnesotans voting against the rescue plan voiced similar complaints.

Democratic Rep. Tim Walz, who represents the largely rural First Congressional District along the state's southern border, said the bill didn't offer enough protection to homeowners.

"When (the bill) talks about foreclosures ... it talks about how it `encourages' them (officials) to reduce foreclosures," Walz said. "Well, `encourages' is a pretty vague word."

"Because this bill was considered in such haste, without adequate hearings or debate, nobody knows what this complex financial scheme will produce," said Republican Rep. Jim Ramstad from the west-suburban Third District. "The final cost to taxpayers is uncertain."

Ramstad advocated a plan for Congress to provide insurance to mortgage-backed securities.

Rep. Michele Bachmann from the Sixth District north and east of the Twin Cities criticized the proposal as "rushed, unworkable and short-sighted," instead advocating for a plan that suspends business and capital-gains taxes and requires firms to insure their own troublesome assets.

"I support a plan that would have Wall Street bail itself out, not hardworking taxpayers," she said.

Democratic Rep. Collin Peterson of the Seventh District, representing the state's northwest quadrant, also voted no.

Flawed but urgent

Minnesota members who backed the legislation agreed that it was flawed, but pointed to the urgent need for action.

"If this bill fails to pass, the American economy and every family's financial future will be in the hands of the global markets -- at which point Congress will lose the opportunity to prevent a collapse," said Fourth District Democratic Rep. Betty McCollum, who represents St. Paul and its first-ring suburbs.

"Every American with a job, a pension or bank account has a stake in seeing this crisis resolved," she added.

Democratic Reps. Keith Ellison, from the Minneapolis-centered Fifth District, and Jim Oberstar, the dean of the delegation representing the state's northeast, joined McCollum in voting yes.

"The result was imperfect, but it was a bipartisan solution that I believed was in the best interest of Americans," said Rep. John Kline of the south suburban Second District, the only Minnesota Republican to vote for the package.

House leaders plan to further negotiate and reconvene Thursday, saying the need for action has only increased.

"I think that we need to renew our efforts to find a solution that Congress can support," said Boehner.

The Associated Press and McClatchy Newspapers contributed to this report. Mitch Anderson - 202-408-2723

HOW THEY VOTED

The 228-205 vote by which the **House** rejected a \$700 billion emergency bailout of the nation's financial system.

Minn.	Yes	No
Walz, D		X
Kline, R	X	
Ramstad, R		X
McCollum, D	X	
Ellison, D	X	
Bachmann, R		X
Peterson, D		X
Oberstar, D	X	

CHART;PHOTO

Document MSP0000020081006e49u00044



News

Site swamped after bill fails

AssociatedPress

164 words

30 September 2008

The Knoxville News Sentinel

KXVL

5

English

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WASHINGTON — The **House** Web site was overwhelmed Monday as millions of computer users sought information about the financial bailout bill rejected by the **House**.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer.

"We're being overwhelmed with Web traffic about the bill," he said.

Ventura said the Web site is working, but many computer users are getting the equivalent of a busy signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

Ventura said the slowdown was expected to last until today.

The computer slowdown is affecting all **House**-member Web sites, he said. The site has an application that enables computer users to send e-mail messages to their representatives.

Document KXVL000020081029e49u0008k

InBusiness: Triarc buys Wendy's

Tulsa World, Okla.

McClatchy-Tribune Regional News

363 words

30 September 2008

Tulsa World (MCT)

KRTTU

English

Distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

Sep. 30--Triarc Cos. Inc. completed its \$2.34 billion takeover of Wendy's International Inc. on Monday, making way for new sandwiches and drinks at the No. 3 hamburger chain and a renewed focus on its "fresh, not frozen" square burgers.

The deal -- in the works for years -- combines Wendy's with Arby's, which is owned by Atlanta-based Triarc and is known for its shaved roast beef sandwiches.

The deal adds Wendy's to billionaire Nelson Peltz's empire. He owns Triarc.

Triarc will change its name to "Wendy's/Arby's Group Inc." and will trade under the "WEN" symbol on the New York Stock Exchange beginning Tuesday.

House site flooded

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"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer.

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signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

Storms hurt earnings

Halliburton says disruptions from hurricanes Gustav and Ike in the Gulf of Mexico will probably cut into third-quarter earnings.

The oilfield services company, which has corporate offices in Houston and Dubai, said Monday the impact of the two storms will likely reduce revenue by about \$80 million in the July-September period, and earnings by 4 cents a share.

Halliburton says the late-summer hurricanes caused minor damage to some of its facilities along the Gulf Coast and interrupted operations in the Gulf and parts of Louisiana and Texas.

Shares fell \$3.71, or 11 percent, to \$30.29 on trading Monday.

To see more of the Tulsa World, or to subscribe to the newspaper, go to <http://www.tulsaworld.com>.

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Document KRTTU00020080930e49u0008j

InBusiness: InBusiness

Tulsa World, Okla.
McClatchy-Tribune Regional News
364 words
30 September 2008
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House Web site overwhelmed by e-mails

Stephanie Condon

425 words

30 September 2008

CNET News.com

CNEWSN

English

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This post was updated at 11:55 a.m. PDT with a graphic and more details.

The [Web site](#) for the **House** of Representatives has been overwhelmed this week by a deluge of visitors trying to e-mail their congressmen and download the financial bailout bill the **House** rejected Monday.

```
function pollPop() {  
pollwin=window.open("",'pollwin','width=400,height=220,status=no,scrollbars=no,resizable=no,toolbar=no');  
document.forms["myForm"].submit(); } News.com Poll Bailout bombshell Was the House right to vote down the  
$700 billion bailout plan?
```

Yes No

[View results](#)

The site on Monday saw three to four times its normal traffic, according to **Jeff Ventura**, a **spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. The traffic has slowed down the site and made it inaccessible to some, a problem that continued into Tuesday morning.

"It's extraordinary--the highest level of Web traffic we've seen," Ventura said Tuesday. "This doesn't even compare to the release of the 9-11 Commission Report."

After the financial bailout bill was defeated in the **House** Monday, the number of people trying to download the bill diminished, he said, but the number of people using the **House's** standard e-mail form to contact congressmen continues to rise.

"We received millions of e-mails last night," Ventura said. "It was pretty staggering."

Keynote Systems, which measures Internet performance, has been tracking the availability and performance of the **House** site. It has found that for the past week, the problems have persisted from early in the morning on the East Coast through the business day on the West Coast. The graph below shows the site's performance was temporarily back to normal over the weekend.

The **House** has implemented measures to limit the amount of e-mails flowing through to congressmen during high-traffic periods. If a person is tries to e-mail his representative during one of those periods, he may receive a mechanized response indicating the system is overwhelmed and to try later. Ventura said the problem could last through the week.

"We had people working on it all night, and we still do," he said.

The **House** site is not the only government site that has been affected. The Library of Congress' legislation database, [Thomas](#), has posted a notice on its front page: "Due to a high volume of traffic, some Thomas users have reported problems running searches. We are working on this issue." It also provides a direct link to the bailout bill.

Document CNEWSN0020081001e49u00009



Ailing US House website limps back to life

269 words

30 September 2008

15:26

Agence France Presse

AFPR

English

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The US **House** of Representatives website limped back to life on Tuesday after succumbing to a flood of email to members of Congress and heavy interest in the financial bailout bill.

Traffic to the www.house.gov website was "at least four times normal" on Monday, when the **House** rejected the bailout package for Wall Street, said **Jeff Ventura**, **spokesman** for the office of the **House** Chief Administrative Officer.

The heavy traffic made the web site inaccessible for many visitors for most of the day on Monday and it remained sluggish on Tuesday.

"We'd never seen anything like it since we put up the 9/11 Commission report," Ventura told AFP. "There was a rush to the digital door, so to speak.

"There was enormous interest in the bill," he added. "We also had a huge, tremendous spike of e-mails to members of Congress asking them how they were going to vote."

Things didn't get any better after the **House** rejected the bill.

"After the vote there was this tremendous backlash -- of support, of outrage -- and the website really reflected that," Ventura said, adding that the number of e-mails received was in the "millions."

"We were worried that the **house.gov** website was in jeopardy of possibly shutting down completely and installed stop-gap measures," the **spokesman** said

"We hoped today would be a lot less crazy but in fact the traffic is just as heavy," he added. "It's very difficult but today people are at least getting in."

cl/adp

US-finance-banking-Congress-Internet

Document AFPR000020080930e49u007hn

GAO Report Examines House Carbon Purchase

Emily Yehle
726 words
29 September 2008
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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Last November, **House** officials spent about \$90,000 to buy carbon offsets in an attempt to make the **House** carbon-neutral by the end of the 110th Congress.

But a new report from the Government Accountability Office finds that such carbon offsets are unregulated and hard to validate.

In an interview, the report's author said it's premature to use offsets to claim carbon neutrality.

Such claims can only be made "if the carbon offsets can be validated. Right now, that's questionable," said John Stephenson, director of the GAO's Natural Resources and Environment division. "I mean, there's no standard system for doing those validations."

It's welcome news to Republicans, who have widely criticized Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard for buying the offsets and argue that the purchase was a waste of taxpayer money.

Beard has consistently defended the purchase, pointing to the reputation of the Chicago Climate Exchange and the approval of oversight committees.

On Friday, **House** Administration ranking member Vernon Ehlers (R- Mich.) - a vocal opponent of Beard's offset purchase - called again for a stop to any future offset purchases.

"While increased oversight of the U.S. offset market clearly merits consideration, the **House's** further participation in this market does not," Ehlers said in a statement. "The GAO report demonstrates that the rapidly growing offset market currently lacks necessary quality assurance mechanisms and consumer protection."

Buying offsets is touted as a way for companies, agencies or even individuals to mitigate the environmental damage of their carbon emissions without physically reducing them.

For example, a company may emit 50,000 tons of carbon a year; to offset that, it could pay for projects that trap methane or reduce carbon in the atmosphere. Or it could pay for another company to keep its emissions below normal.

The **House** bought its offsets from the Chicago Climate Exchange, which Stephenson says is the most transparent and structured exchange in the nation (though he stressed that he had not studied the merits of the offsets themselves).

Those offsets addressed the emissions that couldn't be reduced through other measures, such as using renewable energy and buying efficient light bulbs.

Beard has not yet claimed that the **House** is carbon-neutral, and it's unclear if he ever will. **Spokesman Jeff Ventura** said the CAO office is "evaluating our status with regard to carbon neutrality at this time."

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) directed Beard to make the **House** carbon-neutral by the end of the 110th Congress as part of her Green the Capitol Initiative. The plan has a three-pronged approach: purchase renewable electricity, use natural gas for heating and cooling, and buy carbon offsets for any remaining emissions.

Beard has followed through with it all. But he's had obstacles along the way, which are outlined in the GAO report.

Officials first ran into the problem of finding out how much carbon the **House** emitted. No new data was available, so they relied on data from 2006.

Then Beard bought too many offsets, spending about \$24,000 more than was necessary. This resulted from an administrative error that confused a short ton, equal to 2,000 pounds, and a metric ton, equal to about 2,200 pounds. Beard purchased 30,000 metric tons, but the **House** only needed 24,000 short tons.

Ventura said the difference will be pushed forward to next year.

But Beard took another hit in February, when an investigation by the Washington Post found that some of the credits purchased by the **House** went to fund projects that had already ended or weren't effective.

Whether and how offsets will be purchased next year is uncertain; Ventura said the CAO's office intends to read the GAO report.

"Certainly we're going to consider everything in the report," he said, "but it's just too soon. We haven't had time to analyze it."

Stephenson said offset markets will have to be part of any nationwide effort to reduce carbon emissions and applauded those who got into the market early. But he warned that it was a risky venture.

"I think getting into that market is a good idea," he said, "but it's a buyer-beware situation right now because of a lack of controls in the market."

Document RLCL000020080929e49t00009

House Web site overwhelmed as millions seek information on rejected financial bailout bill

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER

Associated Press Writer

275 words

29 September 2008

17:16

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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WASHINGTON (AP) - The **House** Web site was overwhelmed Monday as millions of computer users sought information about the financial bailout bill rejected by the **House**.

"We haven't seen this much demand since the 9/11 commission report" was posted on the site in 2004, said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the **House** chief administrative officer. "We're being overwhelmed with Web traffic about the bill."

Ventura said the Web site is working, but many computer users are getting the equivalent of a busy signal when they try to visit the site. Once users are on the site, it works at reduced speed.

"You have to keep trying and eventually you get in," he said.

Ventura said the slowdown is expected to last until Tuesday. In the meantime, technicians planned to work through the night to fortify the system.

"Our computer people aren't going anywhere," Ventura said.

The **House** on Monday defeated a \$700 billion emergency rescue for the nation's financial system, and the Dow Jones industrials plunged nearly 800 points, the most for a single day.

Ventura estimated that millions of computer users went to the Web site to e-mail their representatives and to learn about the bill. He was unable to provide a more precise estimate.

The computer slowdown is affecting all **House**-member Web sites, he said. The site has an application that enables computer users to send e-mails to their representatives.

"It's all tied into one system that is clearly being overloaded at this point," he said.

7

Document APRS000020080929e49t002uz

Campus Notebook
House Food Cost Could Rise

Emily Yehle
316 words
23 September 2008
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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House Food Cost Could Rise. Food at the **House** cafeterias may soon cost more because of the nationwide rising price of fuel and food.

"Possible price increases are being reviewed at this time," **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the Chief Administrative Officer, wrote in an e-mail. "However no decisions have been made and no dates for such potential increases have been determined."

But a CAO press release did give one hint: A bottle of water now costing \$1.25 could cost \$1.50 - a 20 percent increase.

The news came out after the CAO's office announced that, starting today, **House** staffers will only be able to buy biodegradable water bottles at the chamber's cafeterias.

The cost of those bottles is \$1.60, which is 35 cents more than a bottle now. But, a press release noted, only "\$.10 more than a proposed price increase."

The corn-based bottles are made at the Iowa-based company Naturally Iowa and filled with water from the Virginia-based Grand Springs. They replace Dasani water bottles.

The move is the latest effort to make the cafeterias more environmentally friendly. Already, Restaurant Associates - the company that runs the cafeterias - offers local food, biodegradable cups and corn-based utensils.

The cafeterias also have recycling bins for plastic water bottles. But Ventura said many of the more than 100,000 bottles sold every year never end up in recycling bins. Instead, staffers and tourists take them on the go, and many likely just throw them in the trash.

The corn-based bottles, even if thrown in the trash, will biodegrade much more quickly than their plastic counterparts. Or they can be thrown into compost receptacles for an even quicker breakdown.

The **House** won't have to pay Restaurant Associates for the change, Ventura said.

Please send tips to notebook@rollcall.com.

Document RLCL000020080923e49n00007

House Salary 'Gamble' Fails ; Extra Funds Not Forthcoming

Emily Yehle
924 words
15 September 2008
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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House appropriators plan to take millions of dollars from various legislative branch projects - including the Capitol Visitor Center - to help pay for the raises they gave to **House** staffers about seven months ago.

In January, appropriators gave Members' office budgets a 2.5 percent increase for the pay hikes by pulling about \$14 million from the account that pays for employees' health care and life insurance.

That account is now \$11 million short.

Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard said the original plan was to gain back the \$14 million through a Congressional supplemental, a "gamble" that never materialized.

Now he's looking to take millions from accounts for the CVC and Disaster Recovery fund, among others, a plan which must be approved by the **House** Appropriations Committee.

"We knew we'd have to replenish that account, but we couldn't have predicted at that point that there would be this stalemate between the president and Congress about appropriations," Beard said. "That's the reality we're living in. There wasn't a supplemental, there won't be a supplemental, and we're going to deal with that funding shortage."

Appropriators assert that such "reprogramming" is a common budgetary practice that occurs throughout the year. Some budgets fall short and some prove too generous, they say, so money is constantly moved from one office to the other.

However, much more money is being moved around than in past years.

At the end of fiscal 2008, about \$2 million in the legislative branch budget was reprogrammed. This year, that number is \$17 million - \$11 million of which is the direct result of January's increase to Members' office budgets.

At that time, appropriators and **House** Administration Committee officials decided to raise Members' Representational Allowances after some Members complained that the original budget wouldn't cover the annual cost-of-living increases for their staffers.

MRAs fund everything related to Members' official duties, with three main components: salaries, franked mail and expenses such as travel and district office rent. They have stayed mostly stagnant for years, constrained by a tight legislative branch budget.

But this fiscal year, the increase for MRAs in the original budget was particularly bad, not even topping 1 percent. So in January, Members raised the MRAs by taking the needed \$14 million from Government Contributions, an account that funds staffers' health care and life insurance.

That was "a big no-no," according to a former GOP appropriations staffer who agreed to speak on the condition of anonymity.

Borrowing from one account to pay for another is a common enough practice, the former staffer said, but \$14 million is a significant chunk for the relatively small legislative branch budget and "you don't dip into employees' health care."

Now, to replenish that account, Beard is gathering surpluses from about a dozen accounts, including one that funds the CAO's construction costs for the CVC.

The CVC is almost complete, and Beard said money was left over after his office installed wiring and completed other projects for the massive underground building. He hopes to take about \$3.1 million from that account.

But in recent oversight hearings, CVC officials have said that a continuing resolution would leave them short on cash for the center's Dec. 2 opening. The center, which cost about \$621 million to build, now needs to be staffed.

Appropriators have said that Congressional leadership has promised adequate funding, and Beard said the money being reprogrammed is in a different account and will eventually be replenished by next year's budget.

"At this point, it doesn't look like we need these funds," he said. "We certainly won't need these funds to open up the CVC on time."

Of the \$17 million Beard needs to reprogram, about \$6 million is surplus - meaning that if it isn't used by Oct. 1, it would disappear into the treasury. That includes \$500,000 from both Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) and Minority Leader John Boehner's (R-Ohio) offices.

But about \$11 million is from accounts that can roll over indefinitely and exist for specific purposes.

For example, Beard plans to take \$5 million from the Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery account, which was established after Sept. 11, 2001, and pays for projects that ensure the legislative branch's survival in an emergency. Future budgets will restore those funds, he said.

Some Republican aides, however, are grumbling that such decisions were made without the minority. They weren't kept in the loop, they say, and pointed out that Beard did not put his own office budget on the chopping block.

Beard is not a GOP favorite; in July, Boehner called for Beard's removal because of his "recklessly partisan manner."

"Our office will end up being OK but that's not the point," Boehner **spokesman** Kevin Smith said in an e-mail. "If Dan Beard spent more time paying attention to his own budget rather than promoting himself and wasting taxpayer dollars, we wouldn't be in this position."

But **Jeff Ventura**, Beard's **spokesman**, said the minority was kept up-to-date throughout the "consultative, collaborative process."

"With regard to reprogrammed funds affecting the Minority, Minority Leadership was CC'd throughout the entire reprogramming process," he wrote in an e-mail, "and if they had an issue with the reprogramming they had ample opportunity to raise those concerns with the Committee or with the Office of the CAO, and they did not."

Document RLCL000020080915e49f00001

The Washington Post

MARY ANN AKERS AND PAUL KANE

A Section

Help on the Way for Lawmakers Cut Off by Gustav

Mary Ann Akers And Paul Kane

1,264 words

4 September 2008

The Washington Post

WP

FINAL

A13

English

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Hurricane Gustav knocked the wind out of Louisiana members of Congress this week -- or at least out of their district offices -- but help is on the way.

Recently elected Rep. Don Cazayoux (D) of Baton Rouge reported a loss of power, phones and Internet access, leaving him helpless as he tried to respond to constituents after the Labor Day storm, said **Jeff Ventura**, **spokesman** for **House** Chief Administrative Officer Daniel P. Beard.

But a **House** office set up after the 2001 terrorist attacks to ensure continuity of operations for lawmakers sent a team of 10 technicians yesterday that will set up a free-standing mobile district office when it arrives on the Gulf Coast late this morning.

A multimillion-dollar truck -- called a HERCV, or **House** Emergency Response Communications Vehicle -- will make the trip, backed up by a second truck of repair equipment for Cazayoux's office, Ventura said. The HERCV is packed with satellite-enabled communications gear that can support 250 telephone and Internet connections.

Rep. Charlie Melancon (D), who represents hard-hit coastal parishes, and others also may plug into the mobile office, which requires no external power or communications link, he said.

The response is part of millions of dollars of "continuity of operations" upgrades the legislative branch has bought for itself since the terrorist strikes. It is the first use of the communications truck outside the Washington area, where it was activated briefly in a different form after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Ventura said.

Floor Show Running Strong

Back in Washington, Republicans who stayed behind to continue staging their "energy speak-in" on the **House** floor are pounding away at the one issue they feel could save them from a Democratic landslide in November.

Even though cameras are off during the recess protest, Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (Mich.), who is running the show this week, says lawmakers are on their best behavior. They're wearing suits and ties, sticking to formal parliamentary jargon and biting their tongues.

"No profanity, nothing off color," says McCotter, who is prone to off-color jokes and antics himself.

Of the nine Republicans who participated in yesterday's mock session, Rep. Steven LaTourette (Ohio) bonded most with the handful of tourists who watched the strange proceedings from the visitors gallery. "They love LaTourette. I cannot figure it out for the life of me," McCotter joked in a telephone interview.

Apparently, LaTourette got big laughs for his chart listing some of the more notable "accomplishments" of the Democratic-led **House** over the past year and a half, correlating the date of each measure's passage with the cost of gasoline on that particular day.

According to the chart, a resolution congratulating the UC-Santa Barbara soccer team was approved on January 29, 2007, when gas cost \$2.22 a gallon. In February, **House** members approved a resolution commending the Houston Dynamo soccer team -- when a gallon of unleaded gas cost \$3.03. The Great Cats and Rare Canids Act

passed the **House** on May 20, when gas had risen to \$3.84 a gallon. And on June 17, when Americans were paying an average of \$4.14 a gallon to fill up their tanks, the **House** approved the Monkey Safety Act.

LaTourette told his newfound fans that he loves "furry little monkeys," but that he thought lowering the price of gas was more important at this point.

The congressman's improvisational stand-up act got a boost yesterday from an unexpected development. As McCotter told On the Hill: "Today is the first day the lights have been on. We can't figure out why." (Every other day so far, the **House** sergeant at arms has left the lights dimmed.)

McCotter says running the **House** floor show is more fun than being at his party's convention in St. Paul. But the local fun is relative, compared with the late-night party circuit at the convention.

"I'm eating soup out of a can in my basement apartment, missing my wife and kids," McCotter said.

It's an Alaska Thing

The relationship between Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and Gov. Sarah Palin has been one of the more difficult ones to figure out since she was introduced as Sen. John McCain's running mate.

Upon accepting McCain's invitation to join him on the Republican national ticket, Palin touted her role in standing up to the "good ol' boys network" of Alaska. That was widely interpreted by McCain supporters as Palin's decision to nix a controversial bridge in a remote corner of Alaska that Stevens and Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska) had been supporting.

In addition, Palin has criticized the senator's son, former state senator Ben Stevens, for remaining a member of the Alaska Republican Party's central committee despite court documents that allege he received more than \$240,000 in payments from an energy services company for legislative favors.

But Palin, while running for governor in 2006, accepted an endorsement from the 84-year-old Ted Stevens and turned it into a last-minute campaign commercial. And now, even as McCain backers cite Palin standing up to Stevens, her image is displayed proudly on the senator's campaign Web site. The two are seen laughing next to each other at a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 3 for the opening of a new trail in Alaska.

On July 29, Stevens was indicted on charges he did not report more than \$250,000 worth of gifts. At the time, Palin told statehouse reporters that the indictment "rocks the foundation of our state" and that she shared "Alaskans' concern and dismay over the turn of events."

A month later, she was introduced as McCain's running mate -- and Stevens quickly endorsed her. "It's a great day for the nation and Alaskans. Governor Palin has proven herself as a bright, energetic leader for our State and will bring the same energy to the vice presidency," Stevens said in a statement.

Can't Leave the **House**

When Rep. Rob Andrews (N.J.) challenged Sen. Frank Lautenberg (N.J.) in the Democratic primary last spring, Andrews was unequivocal on one subject: It was the Senate or nothing for him.

Andrews told anyone who asked, including his home state media and The Washington Post, in several interviews that he would not try to take back his **House** seat if he lost to Lautenberg.

"I'm not running for the **House**," he told us in an April interview.

Well, that was then. Lautenberg beat Andrews by an almost 2 to 1 margin in June, and on Wednesday the New Jersey press reported that Andrews would indeed make a move to secure his **House** seat again. "It's my very specific understanding that this is the decision he's made," Michael Murphy, an Andrews adviser, told the Newark Star-Ledger.

A news conference is scheduled for today, at which Andrews is supposed to announce his intentions.

The move is possible because Andrews's wife won the Democratic primary to succeed him in the heavily Democratic district around Camden. Party insiders were abuzz last spring that the switch would happen, with her stepping aside and allowing local party bosses to select her replacement: her husband. But Andrews's denials were so absolute that some thought he would go into political retirement. Reports even surfaced that he was close to landing a private-sector job.

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Rep. Broun short on cash after spending more than \$500k on mailings leading up to July primary

By BEN EVANS

Associated Press Writer

735 words

20 August 2008

17:20

Associated Press Newswires

APRS

English

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WASHINGTON (AP) - Republican Rep. Paul Broun of Athens spent more than \$500,000 on publicly funded mailings, automated phone calls and advertisements leading up to his July primary election -- so much that his office is on pace to run out of money before year's end.

The flurry of spending -- which comes out of Broun's congressional office budget -- has forced the self-described fiscal hawk to overhaul his operations. According to his latest report, Broun had less than \$300,000 remaining of his roughly \$1.4 million annual budget, with six months left to go. His chief of staff recently resigned, and his communications director has taken a leave.

Jeff Ventura, a spokesman for the **House** Chief Administrative Officer, said for a lawmaker "to go so low so early in the year is something we have not observed in recent institutional memory."

Broun declined an interview request. But in a written statement he said he accepts "ultimate responsibility" for the money and has "taken necessary actions to make sure that ... there will not be a repeat of those issues."

"I assure you that in the final analysis there will be no shortfall," the statement said, adding that Broun's offices in Washington and Georgia "are adequately staffed to continue providing excellent constituent casework and to fulfill the legislative duties most important to the citizens of Georgia's 10th District."

Most of Broun's budget problems stem from extraordinary spending on communications with constituents, including the use of franking. The practice lets members of Congress send mail with just a signature where the postage would normally go, with the postage cost charged to their office.

On franking alone, Broun reported spending \$251,486 from January through June. That's more than any congressman spent in all of 2006.

The first-term congressman paid another \$310,756 for printing and copying.

It is illegal to spend tax dollars for campaign purposes, and Broun's communications were approved for public funding by a congressional commission charged with overseeing the spending.

Nonetheless, his mailings often closely mirrored his campaign rhetoric -- including his frequent criticism of wasteful government spending.

"Spending in Washington is out of control," he wrote in a letter dated March 24. "Enough is enough."

In another mailing, he sent constituents a DVD recording of four speeches he delivered on the **House** floor, including one on the commemoration of National Bible Week. Other letters focused on his disdain for child pornographers, his opposition to illegal immigration and his work to protect gun rights.

"My hunting background and my core Constitutional beliefs have compelled me aggressively to advance hunting and gun owners' rights during my first six months in office," he wrote in a letter dated March 10.

Broun also placed advertisements in newspapers touting "grand opening" events at his field offices and made repeated automated phone calls notifying constituents of coming "town hall" meetings.

Broun won his seat in 2006 after the death of longtime Republican Rep. Charlie Norwood.

He has never been embraced by the GOP establishment, however, and faced a strong Republican primary challenge this year from state Rep. Barry Fleming of Harlem.

During a nasty campaign, Fleming accused Broun of abusing his congressional mailings, saying voters were receiving repeated letters and calls. But Broun said he was simply keeping voters informed.

Although his fundraising lagged behind Fleming's, Broun easily won the July 15 race. Much of Broun's mail went out in March and April, just before a deadline kicked in that bars lawmakers from sending franked mail within 90 days of an election.

Bobby Saxon, a Democrat and Iraq war veteran challenging Broun in the November general election, called on the incumbent to repay the government.

"Congressman Broun ran as being a fiscally responsible candidate ... yet when it comes to spending his office budget to get his name out there he didn't hesitate to spend half a million dollars or so of taxpayer money," Saxon said.

Although lawmakers aren't supposed to use franking for political purposes, spending often spikes during election years, particularly for vulnerable members. According to tallies compiled by The Associated Press, the single largest franking bill for a member of Congress in 2006 was \$177,706, from Rep. Henry Brown, R-S.C.

7

Document APRS000020080820e48k001tu

No Recess For AOC, CVC Teams

Emily Yehle
585 words
4 August 2008
Roll Call
RLCL
English

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As staffers relax after a hectic and contentious few weeks, other employees in the Capitol will be busy removing windows, restoring artwork and renovating committee rooms.

August recess is one of the few times each year that such work can be done without the constant interruption of a busy **House** and Senate. And with the Capitol Visitor Center set to open on Dec. 2, the Architect of the Capitol has a long list of chores.

But perhaps the biggest changes will be the installation of a "green ceiling" in the Rayburn Building subway and renovations in the Senate Daily Press Gallery.

Not only will the subway have high-

efficiency light bulbs, but the ceiling tiles will be replaced with ones made from recyclable materials, said AOC spokeswoman Eva Malecki.

The press gallery will get modular furniture and telecommunications upgrades, she said.

Despite these projects, officials are still mainly focused on the CVC, which recently got its temporary certificate of occupancy.

Workers are bringing in the furnishings for offices and the equipment for the center's operations. But staffers will have to wait awhile until they can crawl out of their cramped quarters and move into the state-of-the-art, underground space.

That move will have to wait until the temporary certificate is permanent, Malecki said.

"We're waiting to see how that will proceed" before setting a schedule, she said.

Instead, in the next few weeks workers will begin to return the Capitol to its pre-CVC-construction state.

They will remove the "acoustical windows," that were put on the Capitol's East Front in 2002 to shield offices from construction noise.

The landscape also will get more plants and the temporary parking lot on the East Front's north side will be restored to a grassy area, CVC **spokesman** Tom Fontana said.

CVC officials also will be conducting an "internal public relations campaign," sending e-mails and letters to Members' offices with information on what to expect from the center.

Most of the information will be on the CVC's restaurant, gift shops and other amenities that will be available to visitors starting on Dec. 2, said Sharon Gang, the center's communications manager.

"We're going to use this time to bring them up to speed with as much detail as we can," she said. "But it's going to be a continuing effort."

The **House** Chief Administrative Officer will also begin work on a public relations campaign, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said. Posters will soon go up heralding the CAO's new "Wheels 4 Wellness" program, which allows staffers to check out bikes from racks near the **House** side of the Capitol. Ideas include showing staffers how far they can travel on a bike compared with walking.

But overall, Ventura said, "it's a lot of business as usual" for the office over recess.

In the Senate, meanwhile, workers will continue updating committee rooms with new audio-visual systems. Other renovations include a new marble landing at the Cannon **House** Office Building's northeast entrance and repairing the New Jersey Avenue sidewalk near the entrance to the Cannon Building.

The Rayburn **House** Office Building's barber shop also will get a few touch-ups: Workers will install new hardwood floors and cabinets. Other projects include testing the fire alarm system in the Capitol, beginning conservation on the Capitol's Constantino Brumidi murals and building a new exit in the Longworth **House** Office Building.

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Document RLCL000020080804e48400009

Boehner Calls Upon Pelosi to Remove CAO Beard

Emily Yehle and Elizabeth Brotherton

845 words

31 July 2008

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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House Republicans' long-standing distrust of Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard came to a head Tuesday with Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) calling for his immediate removal.

In a lengthy letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Boehner asked the California Democrat to immediately fire Beard, citing his "complete disregard for the interests of American taxpayers" and "recklessly partisan manner."

But Pelosi had fired back by Wednesday afternoon, writing back to Boehner that "Beard has embodied the kind of innovation [at] the CAO's office that was needed."

"I reject your mischaracterizations of Mr. Beard's leadership and particularly object to your unwarranted accusations of partisanship or political involvement," Pelosi wrote. "These attacks are unjustified by the facts and unfairly impugn Mr. Beard's record of accomplishment."

Beard's tenure has been controversial since the start. Pelosi hand-picked Beard for the post when she became Speaker, deviating from the typical process of vetting applicants through a bipartisan task force.

Ever since, Republicans have painted Beard as a partisan who abuses his position for Democratic ends. Democrats, meanwhile, point to his success in implementing greening initiatives in the **House**.

In a statement, **House** Administration Chairman Robert Brady (D- Pa.), who oversees the CAO's office, said Beard acts with "efficiency, fairness and an unwavering commitment to the best interests of this institution."

"Under his guidance, we have implemented a world class greening program, greatly enhanced the quality of food service in the **House** and improved our overall operational infrastructure," Brady said. "He has acted honorably and in a non-partisan manner that compares favorably with his predecessors."

During his 18 months as CAO, Beard has taken on several projects, including a revamping of the **House** cafeterias and a slew of energy- efficiency projects.

But he's also sometimes deviated from **House** procedure, most recently by neglecting to get Congressional approval to cover the costs of some greening efforts in the **House** cafeterias.

In his letter, Boehner characterized Beard as a CAO who repeatedly exceeds his authority. He writes that Beard launched an "unprecedented personal image promotion campaign," pointing to an expanded communications staff and numerous speeches around the country. He also accused Beard of improperly firing **House** employees.

"Clearly, we disagree with the concerns raised in Mr. Boehner's letter and we await the Speaker's response to the letter, given it was addressed to her," CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

One Democratic leadership aide called the letter "a politically motivated stunt," adding that if Boehner had real concerns, he wouldn't have waited until the end of the session to raise them.

Beard will have to be reapproved by the **House** at the beginning of the 111th Congress, and several Republican aides have said their Members likely will put up a fight should Beard be renominated.

But apparently Boehner does not wish to wait. His letter asks for Beard's immediate removal and the convening of a bipartisan task force to hire a replacement. Beard's predecessor, Jay Eagen, was selected that way, with help from an outside search firm.

Boehner has the support of **House** Administration ranking member Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.), who said in a statement that "it is imperative that the Chief Administrative Officer is an individual that both parties can stand behind with great confidence."

"As a result of the closed appointment process, subsequent partisan behavior and questionable management actions taken by the Chief Administrative Officer, a considerable amount of bad feeling has been generated and a substantial number of my colleagues have lost confidence in the CAO," Ehlers said.

Most notable among the number of controversial projects Beard has led is Pelosi's Green the Capitol Initiative. Republicans repeatedly have criticized the project, including the 2007 purchase of \$90,000 worth of carbon offsets from the Chicago Climate Exchange and the \$700,000 allocated to design a new, energy-efficient lighting system for the Capitol Dome.

"Mr. Beard claims that this effort will save money on lighting costs, but in reality it will take the **House** more than 50 years to generate enough energy savings to finally recoup the cost of Mr. Beard's misguided design effort," Boehner wrote.

But in her letter, Pelosi defends the initiative, writing: "The Green the Capitol initiative, which I charged Mr. Beard to implement, is recognized throughout the country as a far-reaching initiative to make the **House** complex carbon neutral by the end of this Congress."

Boehner also wrote that Beard has used his position to advocate for Democratic policy initiatives, including extension of the Family and Medical Leave Act. (Beard served as a Democratic staffer on the then-**House** Interior Committee in the 1990s, a fact Republicans have pointed to in the past when alleging that the CAO was engaging in partisan behavior.)

"From the mismanagement of his office, to his penchant for partisan attacks and waste of taxpayer-funded resources, the case for dismissing Mr. Beard is clear," Boehner wrote. "I encourage you to do this immediately."

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Document RLCL000020080731e47v00008

ON THE HILL

GREEN CAPITOL; Boehner wants House CAO fired for 'wasteful projects'

Robin Bravender, E&E Daily reporter

468 words

31 July 2008

Environment & Energy Daily

ENEND

English

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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) defended Chief Administrative Officer Dan Beard yesterday after a top Republican said he should be fired for wasting taxpayer money and running the office in a "recklessly partisan manner."

In a letter to Pelosi on Tuesday, **House** Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio) accused Beard of being unfit for his office. Among his chief complaints: Beard has advocated Democratic policy objectives instead of remaining nonpartisan and has "sought endless opportunities to throw money into a bottomless pit of wasteful projects."

Pelosi fired back yesterday, claiming that Boehner is mischaracterizing Beard's tenure. "Changing the inefficient and staid management style of any organization is bound to generate resistance from those who remain wedded to the ways of the past, however inefficient, wasteful or dated," Pelosi said yesterday in a letter to Boehner.

As chief administrative officer, Beard was charged with overseeing Pelosi's Green the Capitol Project, with the goal of making the **House** carbon-neutral by the end of the 110th Congress. Some of the **House's** efforts so far have involved purchasing offsets for its carbon emissions, installing more efficient lighting in the Capitol Dome and revamping the **House** cafeterias.

Some of Beard's more "questionable financial dealings" include spending \$90,000 on the offsets and spending \$700,000 on the Capitol lighting study that will save a maximum of \$13,000 per year, according to a statement from Boehner's office.

"We obviously disagree with the issues raised in that letter," said **Jeff Ventura**, director of communications in Beard's office.

Boehner's letter sparked an outcry from some **House** Democrats.

"I'm disgusted by Mr. Boehner's childish assaults on the Speaker's initiatives to green the Capitol," Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) said in a statement. "Dan Beard is a dedicated public servant who has saved taxpayer dollars by making Capitol operations more efficient. If I were John Boehner, I would be reluctant to point a finger at Dan Beard; it just calls attention to the lack of initiative under Republican management."

Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), chairman of the **House** Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, also threw his support behind CAO.

"Dan Beard is the most dedicated, creative, and engaged chief administrator I've worked with during my 32 years in Congress," Markey said in a statement. "His commitment to public service and the people's **House** is unrivaled."

Michael Steel, Boehner's **spokesman**, said that most Republican members shared Boehner's desire to see Beard step down from his position. "He was applauded at conference by most, if not all, of our members when he announced it," Steel said in an e-mail.

Document ENEND00020080731e47v00008

Metro News

Political Insider: Wanted: Congressional chief of staff with lower-than-usual salary requirements

JIM GALLOWAY

Staff

278 words

30 July 2008

The Atlanta Journal - Constitution

ATJC

Online

0

English

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Wednesday, July 30, 2008, 08:42 AM

The chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Paul Broun (R-Athens) has resigned --- two weeks after his boss' impressive win in the GOP primary, and one week after news broke that the same boss has already spent most of his yearly budget allowance.

This comes from The Hill

(<http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/brouns-chief-of-staff-quits-amid-budgetary-debacle-2008-07-29.html>) in Washington, a newspaper that covers Congress:

J. Aloysius Hogan, Broun's chief of staff, was in charge of the Member's Representational Allowance (MRA), which was depleted because of franked mail, according to sources. The franked mail, which was sent to constituents, may have helped Broun in his recent primary win.

Earlier this month, sources said that Broun's MRA was so low that the lawmaker would have to cut staff. At the time, Broun's office said it was unaware of any possible cuts.....

Jeff Ventura, a **spokesman** for the **House** Chief Administrative Officer, said, "Although we have seen MRAs dip this low before, what makes this situation unique is that it went so low so early in the calendar year."

It was unclear at press time what the office planned to do in order to pay staffers, who could be furloughed if the problem is not resolved quickly.

http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/shared-blogs/ajc/politicalinsider/entries/2008/07/30/wanted_congressional_chief_of.html

Document ATJC000020080816e47u0001h

House GOP Leader Calls For Firing Of Capitol Administrator

Molly K. Hooper, CQ Staff

339 words

30 July 2008

CQ Today

CQTDAY

English

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** CQ Today **

* **House** GOP Leader Calls For Firing Of Capitol Administrator * By Molly K. Hooper, CQ Staff

Speaker Nancy Pelosi should fire the administrator she put in charge of "greening the Capitol" because he is spending too much time and money on his environmental assignment, **House** Minority Leader John A. Boehner said Wednesday.

The Ohio Republican said Chief Administrative Officer Daniel P. Beard, is playing a partisan role in a position that should be non-partisan.

"The CAO has a duty to American taxpayers to ensure that the money they provide to run this institution is spent in a fiscally responsible manner. ... Mr. Beard has shown reckless disregard for this charge," Boehner said in a letter to the Speaker.

Pelosi, D-Calif., appointed Beard and assigned him the task of making the **House**-controlled portion of the Capitol and office buildings carbon neutral by the end of the 110th Congress.

House Republicans criticize the way Beard has gone about fulfilling that mandate.

"During his year-and-a-half in office, Mr. Beard has taken numerous taxpayer-funded trips to promote himself and the Democratic majority," Boehner said, adding that Beard "has been personally involved with questionable financial dealings with regard to \$90,000 worth of controversial carbon offsets' . . . and a \$700,000 Capitol dome lighting study, which will save, at most, \$13,000 per year."

Boehner also objects to the creation of a new position, CAO communication director.

That **spokesman, Jeff Ventura**, didn't rebut the points in Boehner's letter, saying, "Since it was addressed to the Speaker, we respectfully await her reply."

Several **House** Democrats issued supportive statements on Beard's behalf.

"I share Dan's passion for the greening initiative and his efforts should be commended, not criticized. This is just another example where differing priorities have led to attack instead of conversation," Democratic Rep. Sam Farr of California wrote.

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Source: CQ Today Round-the-clock coverage of news from Capitol Hill.

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News

Paper: Broun busting budget

Blake Aued; blake.aued@onlineathens.com

548 words

24 July 2008

Athens Banner-Herald

ATHENSBH

English

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"Is it affordable?" is one of four questions U.S. Rep. Paul Broun says he asks himself before voting on a bill.

Broun, R-Athens, may not be asking the same question when it comes to his office's spending.

The first-term congressman has spent nearly his entire budget for 2008 halfway through the year and may have to lay off staff or cut back other expenses, a Washington newspaper reported Wednesday.

But Broun denied that his office is going broke.

"The office is operating within budget and will continue to do so for the remainder of the year," spokeswoman Jessica Morris said in an e-mail. "There are hundreds of thousands of dollars available for salaries and business expenses."

The Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call, though, quoted several anonymous sources as saying Broun is about to run out of money to staff and operate his offices in Washington, Athens, Augusta and Toccoa. He spent half of his \$1.38 million budget on letters, telephone messages and other communications, Roll Call reported.

Broun used his franking privileges to send out letters and flyers to 607,000 district residents prior to April 16 at a cost of \$110,000, more than any other congressman, according to another Washington newspaper, The Politico. Congressmen are barred from mailing such legislative updates 90 days before an election.

All the franked letters passed muster with a bipartisan commission that signs off on taxpayer-funded mailings, according to Broun's chief of staff, Aloysius Hogan.

Broun's GOP opponent in the July 15 primary, state Rep. Barry Fleming of Harlem, accused Broun during the campaign of abusing his franking privileges. Fleming also criticized Broun for filing for bankruptcy and owing back taxes in the 1970s and 1980s, saying those incidents and the excessive franking showed he is fiscally irresponsible.

Broun's Democratic opponent, Bobby Saxon of Nicholson, said Wednesday that reports of Broun's budget problems raise questions about his ability to manage taxpayer money.

"Congressman Broun's inability to manage his Congressional office budget is an indication of his willingness to use taxpayer money for his personal gain," Saxon said in a written statement. "Georgians need a Congressman who will be responsible in the use of the privileges granted to him by the voters of this district."

Morris declined to release records of Broun's office's recent spending until a quarterly report is published by the **House** of Representatives, likely in mid-August.

Broun also would not reveal in April, before the first-quarter records were published, how much he spent on mail to constituents or "tele-town hall" conference calls with district residents.

The **House** Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for tracking congressional office spending, but leaves it to individual congressmen to decide whether to release that information, **spokesman Jeff Ventura** said.

"All I can say is if they are running low on funds ... we do alert them so it doesn't come as a surprise," Ventura said.

Congressmen's budgets vary, but are usually between \$1.3 million and \$1.5 million, Ventura said. That money can be spent on staff salaries, rent for offices, travel, supplies, printing and other expenses at congressmen's discretion, he said.

Metro News

Lawmaker's funds dwindling fast

JULIA MALONE

Cox Washington Bureau

646 words

24 July 2008

The Atlanta Journal - Constitution

ATJC

Main

D7

English

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Washington --- U.S. Rep. Paul Broun of Athens already has spent most of his annual office allowance, chiefly for mass mailings to constituents before his July 15 primary, his office acknowledged Wednesday.

The Georgia Republican's fast-spending rate has raised concerns within the **House** of Representatives that he could exhaust his estimated \$1.38 million budget before year's end.

Broun is "the first who has dipped this far down this early in the year," said **Jeff Ventura, spokesman** for the chief administrative officer in the U.S. **House** of Representatives, the overseer of member expenses.

Aides to Broun insisted the congressman was in no danger of running out of cash for his offices either on Capitol Hill or in his district in Athens, Augusta and Toccoa.

"We are within budget now and will remain so throughout the year," said chief of staff Aloysius Hogan. "There are no lay-offs," he said.

The aide was responding to the newspaper Roll Call report that Broun's funds are so low that the **House** Minority Leader, Rep. John Boehner, an Ohio Republican, was looking for ways to help.

Boehner **spokesman** Michael Steel confirmed in an interview Wednesday that the GOP leadership was aware of the situation but declined to discuss specifics.

"That's going to be a private matter between us and Mr. Broun," Steel said. The **spokesman** added, "There are a number of options" for assisting the congressman if his office runs short of cash.

Broun did not respond to requests for an interview.

A statement released by his press secretary said the congressman "has put a priority on communicating with constituents."

"Those official communications have all been done in compliance with the rules of the **House** and were all approved" by the **House** bipartisan office on mailing standards, the e-mailed statement added.

The use of official funds for mass mailings, or "franking" as the privilege has been called for centuries, has long been controversial. Critics, especially conservatives such as Republican strategist Grover Norquist, have said it gives incumbents an unfair advantage at the taxpayers' expense.

Little known in Georgia politics before pulling an upset victory in a special election last year, Broun has established a reputation as a hard-line foe of big federal spending. But he also made full use of the tools --- and budget --- of his incumbency to establish ties with his new constituents.

With his congressional allowance, he was able to send 10 mass mailings and pay for extensive automated telephone messages until mid-April, 90 days before the July 15 primary.

Broun's effort appeared to pay off when he bested his primary opponent, state Rep. Barry Fleming, with 71 percent of the vote.

Roll Call reported that Broun had spent \$109,559 on mass mailings during the first quarter of this year, making him the second-highest spender in the **House**, just behind Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.).

Broun's second-quarter office finances won't be disclosed until mid-August.

Asked for "ballpark" estimates, Hogan said the office had "hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars" for the last six months of the year.

In the few cases where members have overspent office allowances, they have had to reimburse Congress out of pocket.

However, campaign finance experts said that members routinely use campaign dollars to offset some official expenses, such as travel to and from the district, normally paid through the member's annual allowance.

ID: 0006912029 Type: Photo Name: broun.0729-004 Date: 07/24/2008 Page: D7 Edition: Main Pub: AJC Caption: LINDA SPILLERS / Associated Press From left, Rep. Jack Kingston (R-Ga.), Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) and Broun aide Joshua Evans chat in Washington in 2007.

Document ATJC000020080724e47o0005y

Broun's Office Funds Run Low

Jennifer Yachnin

625 words

23 July 2008

Roll Call

RLCL

English

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Having nearly expended his annual office budget by midyear, sources said on Tuesday that Rep. Paul Broun (R-Ga.) may be forced to seek assistance to manage the office's day-to-day functions. At the same time, Broun's office said it was unaware of any problems.

A Broun spokeswoman denied that the office will furlough or otherwise reorganize staff.

"We're not laying off anybody," spokeswoman Jessica Morris said. In a separate interview she said the office's annual budget remains intact, stating: "It's not been depleted that I'm aware of."

But according to a Republican consultant familiar with the matter, Broun -- who sends out prodigious amounts of constituent mail -- has spent nearly half of his \$1.38 million annual budget on letters, telephone messages and other communications with nearly six months left in the calendar year.

Michael Steel, a **spokesman** for **House** Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio), said Tuesday: "We're aware of the situation, and are willing to offer whatever assistance we can."

Morris, who is based in Georgia, said she was not aware of any help the office was receiving. Broun's chief of staff, Aloysius Hogan, did not return a telephone message Tuesday afternoon.

The Georgia lawmaker's office declined to provide detailed information on its mailing costs or budget, noting those figures are available in the quarterly expenditure statements published by the **House**, which detail lawmakers' spending in a line-item format.

"All of that will be public information," Morris said. Records are currently available only for the first quarter of 2008, however, and second-quarter records are not expected to be made publicly available until mid-August.

According to **House** records, Broun spent \$109,559 on mass mailings in the first quarter of 2008, making him the second-highest spender behind only Rep. Pete Stark (D-Calif.), who recorded \$111,122 in mailings.

A review of Broun's mailings, copies of which are maintained by the Clerk of the **House**, shows a flurry of activity leading up to April 2008. Broun faced a July 15 primary challenge and was prohibited from sending mail within 90 days of that election.

Leading up to that contest -- in which he defeated state Rep. Barry Fleming with 71 percent of the vote -- Broun signed off on 10 mass-mailed letters, along with two first-class mailings, a newspaper ad, seven e-mail newsletters and a telephone survey.

"Everything that's gone has been approved," Morris said, referring to the franking commission, formally known as the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards, which must approve the content of such mailings.

Each **House** Member is provided with an annual base budget of about \$875,000 and receives additional funds based on the distance between the lawmaker's district and Washington, office space rental rates in each district, and an "official mail" allowance determined by variables including residential addresses and postage rates.

According to the quarterly **House** disbursement records, each office received at least \$1.1 million in 2008 for their Members' Representational Allowances, with many budgets, including Broun's, listed between \$1.3 million and \$1.4 million.

The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer oversees the annual budgets and monitors account balances for each office, according to CAO **spokesman Jeff Ventura**.

"When they go too low, too fast, we give them a heads-up," Ventura said. He declined to disclose current balances for individual offices, stating that is up to the discretion of individual lawmakers.

One knowledgeable GOP aide, who asked not to be identified citing the sensitive nature of the subject, said: "We're not aware of any Member whose account has completely depleted," adding, "The emphasis is on completely."

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Letters
Poor Word Choice

336 words
14 July 2008
Roll Call
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English

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It's really a shame that the new improvements in the **House** cafeterias have been called a "scheme" and your newspaper used that word, without quotes, in your headline as if it were a point of fact ("Greening Scheme Evokes Criticism," July 10).

Anyone who walks into our cafeterias, where we serve 240,000 meals every month, can plainly see that this "scheme" is really an unquestionable "success."

But, there's an old saying in politics: "If you can't beat them on the facts, complain about the process."

And that's what is happening here. Our critics are not seeing the forest through the trees. Choosing to focus on the nuances of our contract with Restaurant Associates, and portraying the Chief Administrative Officer as someone who is nefariously "squandering millions of dollars," is simply a disrespectful distortion, an unfortunate distraction and completely not the point.

Improving the cafeterias was a much-needed investment and a universally welcomed change. Period.

Nothing was "squandered." We deftly managed a difficult, fast-moving contract negotiation that resulted in a nationally recognized waste reduction operation in our cafeterias, of which all 7,000 employees of the **House** and the millions of visitors who dine with us every year can be proud.

The **House** Administration Committee's minority **spokesman** said "at this point the greening of the cafeterias is irrelevant." We don't feel that Speaker Nancy Pelosi's (D-Calif.) initiative is irrelevant at all. In fact, being environmentally responsible is never irrelevant. We are also proud that the **House** has become a model of sustainability for the rest of the nation to follow.

And, rest assured, nobody eating in our cafeterias today will be fretting over contract details obscured through the lens of partisanship. Republicans and Democrats will instead dine together, swiping their QuickPay cards and settling into a satisfying lunch. And they can thank the CAO staff for that common ground.

Bon appetit.

Jeff Ventura

Director of Communications, Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

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Heard On The Hill
Mixin Up the Medicine

Emily Heil and Elizabeth Brotherton

1,218 words

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Mixin' Up the Medicine. The kookiness that is Rep. Thaddeus McCotter (Mich.) just keeps rolling. McCotter, a music lover and chairman of the **House** Republican Policy Committee, has filmed a brief video modeled on Bob Dylan's iconic "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and posted the clip -- which apes Dylan's video in which the vest-wearing troubadour holds and discards handwritten signs -- on YouTube.

McCotter's video protests the moves by **House** Democrats to limit where Members can post official videos online. Under the Democrats' proposal, Members would have to clear outside Web sites that host Members' content -- such as YouTube -- through the **House** Administration Committee. Advocates say the policy would keep Members' messages free from advertisements and partisan leanings, but Republicans are crying foul, claiming it would abridge free speech.

So in protest (surely, the 1960s-era Dylan would approve), McCotter, joined by GOP Reps. Steven LaTourette (Ohio) and Lee Terry (Neb.), filmed the video, in which they denounce "Stalinist Democrats" and "Nancy's Apparatchiks," an apparent reference to Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), and, um, communism. McCotter wears a vest, a la Dylan, and LaTourette and Terry linger in the background, just like two men in the original Dylan video.

HOH spies saw the clip being filmed on Wednesday in an alley near the RNC headquarters. Dylan chose the alley behind New York's famed Savoy Hotel as his setting.

And McCotter, with his balding pate, might not resemble the shaggy-haired Dylan, but he did have one thing in common with the music legend: He certainly was, as the song's original lyrics go, "on the pavement, thinking about the government."

Gimme a W! Staffers who work for the **House** Administration Committee have something to cheer about (other than the Green the Capitol initiative, of course): Their colleague Kristie Muchnok just landed a coveted gig on the Washington Wizards cheerleading squad. The results of the hypercompetitive auditions were announced July 1.

Muchnok, who HOH hears has a background in theater and dance, will have to balance her Congressional duties with the demands of being a Wizards Girl. Muchnok's day job entails acting as a liaison between the committee, the **House** restaurants and the greening initiative, a position that we're sure involves almost as much flexibility and nimbleness as do those courtside dance moves.

Rough Reading. Most memoirs by Members of Congress are safe, tepid retellings of hardscrabble upbringings (here's looking at you, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid) or glossing-over of troubled pasts (hiya, former **House** Majority Leader Tom DeLay).

Not so the candid new book by Rep. Barbara Lee, which delves into raw emotional territory from the California Democrat's past, including a secret marriage, a clandestine abortion, an abusive marriage and even an LSD trip forced upon her by her violent ex- husband. In "Renegade for Peace & Justice," Lee chronicles not just her legislative accomplishments, but her darker moments as well.

The earlier chapters of her life provide the most fodder on that front: She describes marrying her boyfriend while in high school and keeping the marriage a secret; her first teen pregnancy ended in miscarriage and the second in an abortion administered in Mexico. She divorced her first husband and ended up in an abusive second marriage to a man who not only beat her violently but administered LSD to her, telling it was a pill to calm her.

Still, the story ends with triumph, and Lee remembers her career in the **House** and the support, both public and private, that she's gotten for her controversial stance as the sole Member of Congress who voted against the use of force after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

We do love a happy ending.

Salad Days, in a Tossup. Since HOH is your go-to source for all the hot developments on the topic of the **House** cafeteria's beloved institution, Taco Salad Wednesdays, we bring you this fast-breaking news: Taco Salad Wednesday will soon be Taco Salad Tuesday or Taco Salad Thursday.

Visitors to the cafeteria located on the **House** side of the Capitol basement are being asked to vote on paper ballots whether they would prefer to enjoy their cult-favorite chips and toppings on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

All of that might sound trivial, but HOH knows that **House** staffers take their cherished taco salad ritual seriously.

Jeff Ventura, spokesman for the office of the Chief Administrative Officer, which oversees the cafeteria, tells HOH the special is moving because the establishment also offers a popular fried-chicken special on Wednesdays and decided it was best to spread the "culinary blockbusters" throughout the week.

Voting will continue through the week of July 28, when the ballots will be tallied.

"The only thing more important than the November elections is the vote on taco day," Ventura cracked.

A Mass-ive Clash. Even the return of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D- Mass.) to the Senate this week wasn't enough to give his office softball team, the Ted Sox, an edge. The Sox lost 8-2 in their annual game with the rival team from the office of fellow Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry on Thursday.

Kerry's team, which this year shook things up by changing their name from the Chowdah to Sweet Kerry-line, were gracious, conceding that the Ted Sox won in the spirit division.

An attendee tells HOH that highlights include Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee staffer Jeremy Marcus starting things off with a solo homer in the first inning, and intern Jake Falby ending the game with a dramatic last out he caught while back-pedaling into a group of nearby kickballers.

"We knew we were going to win when they didn't discover the John Kerry jersey we buried under their dugout," Kerry spokeswoman Whitney Smith tells HOH. "It was just nice to see two teams of great ballplayers, and none of them are dating Madonna."

A First in the Senate. Barriers are shattering all around. On Thursday, the Senate saw the first black woman act as guest chaplain and administer the Senate's opening prayer.

Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) nominated the Rev. Patricia Bryant Harris, who is the pastor of the Marshallton United Methodist Church, to lead the chamber in prayer.

Harris told Wilmington, Del. newspaper The News Journal that she didn't realize when she faced the Senators -- and the C-SPAN cameras -- that that she was making history. "I'm from the First State," she told the paper. "I'm the first African-American female to present the prayer. It was an awesome experience."

A Carper spokeswoman says the Senate Chaplain's office alerted them that Harris was indeed a first.

You go, Reverend!

Briefly Quoted. "They've taken away Christmas! This is awful. Can't they think of people like me?"

-- Anti-earmark crusader Rep. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.), channeling poor little Cindy Lou Who from "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Flake was responding to reports that **House** Democrats are considering not bringing any appropriations bills to the floor -- possibly ruining Flake's plans to introduce hundreds of amendments striking earmarks.

Please send your hot tips, juicy gossip or comments to hoh@rollcall.com.

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