



CRS Report for Congress

Pages of the United States Congress: Selection, Duties, and Program Administration

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Summary

For more than 175 years, messengers known as pages have served the United States Congress. Currently, approximately 100 young men and women from across the nation serve as pages at any given time. Pages must be high school juniors and at least 16 years of age. Several incumbent and former Members of Congress as well as other prominent Americans have served as congressional pages.

Senator Daniel Webster appointed the first Senate page in 1829. The first House pages began their service in 1842. Women were first appointed as pages in 1971.

Pages are appointed and sponsored by a Representative or Senator for one academic semester of the school year, or a summer session. The right to appoint pages rotates among Members pursuant to criteria set by the respective chamber leadership. Academic standing is one of the most important criteria used in the final selection of pages. Prospective pages are advised to contact their Senators or Representative to request consideration for a page appointment. For additional discussion of the page system, see CRS Report RL33685, *Pages of the United States Congress: History, Background Information, and Proposals for Change*, by Mildred Amer.

Duties

Pages serve principally as messengers. They carry documents between the House and Senate, Members' offices, committees, and the Library of Congress. They also prepare the House and Senate chambers for each day's business by distributing the *Congressional Record* and other documents related to the day's agenda, assist in the cloakrooms and chambers; and when Congress is in session, they sit near the dais where they may be summoned by Members for assistance. In the House, pages also raise and lower the flag on the roof of the Capitol.

House Pages¹

There are 72 House page positions, 48 of which are allotted to the majority party and 24 to the minority party. The House page program is administered by the Office of the Clerk and supervised by the House Page Board, which is composed of two Members from each party, including the chair, as well as the Clerk and the Sergeant at Arms of the House, a former House page, and the parent of a House page.² The chair of the Page Board, currently Representative Dale Kildee (D-MI), is chosen by the Speaker of the House.

House pages are paid at the annual rate of \$20,181.³ Automatic, monthly deductions are taken from their salaries for federal and state taxes, Social Security, and a residence hall fee of \$400, which includes five breakfasts and seven dinners per week.⁴ The pages are required to live in the supervised House Page Dormitory near the Capitol. They are responsible for the cost of their uniforms — navy jackets, dark grey slacks or skirts, long sleeve white shirt, and black shoes — and transportation to and from Washington, DC.⁵

During the school year, they are educated in the House Page School located in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. The page school, which is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, offers a junior-year high-school curriculum, college preparatory courses, and extracurricular and weekend activities. Classes are usually held five days a week, commencing at 6:45 a.m., prior to the convening of the House.

Any questions regarding the operation of the House page program should be directed to the Office of the House Clerk, H-154, U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC 20515.

Senate Pages

There are 30 Senate page positions, 16 for the majority party and 14 for the minority party. The office of the Sergeant at Arms supervises the Senate page program.

Senate pages are paid at the annual rate of \$20,491.⁶ Automatic deductions are made from their salaries for taxes and Social Security as well as the \$600 residence hall fee, which includes breakfast and dinner seven days a week.⁷ Pages must pay their

¹ For further information, please refer to [<http://pageprogram.house.gov>].

² 2 U.S.C. 88b-3(a), as amended by P.L. 110-2.

³ House pages are now paid pursuant to P.L. 91-510, Section 491(e), 84 stat. 1198.

⁴ “Establishing A Revolving Fund For the Page Residence Hall and The Page Meal Plan” (H.Res. 64), *Congressional Record*, Vol 129, Feb. 8, 1983, p. 1878.

⁵ U.S. Congress, House, Office of the Clerk [<http://pageprogram.house.gov>], visited May 6, 2008.

⁶ Senate pages are now paid pursuant to P.L. 91-510, Section 491(e), 84 stat. 1198.

⁷ “Senate Page Withholding” (S.Res. 78), *Congressional Record*, vol. 129, Mar. 2, 1983, p. 3526.

transportation costs to Washington, DC, but their uniforms are supplied. The uniforms consist of navy blue suits, white shirts, dark socks, and black shoes.⁸

The Senate provides its pages education and supervised housing in the Daniel Webster Page Residence near the Hart Senate Office Building. The Senate Page School is located in the lower level of Webster Hall. Pages who serve during the academic year are educated in this school, which is also accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The junior-year curriculum is geared toward college preparation and emphasis is given to the unique learning opportunities available in Washington, DC. Early morning classes are held prior to the convening of the Senate. Questions regarding the Senate page program or Webster Hall should be directed to Director, United States Senate Page Program, Webster Hall, Washington, DC 20510-7248.

⁸ Information provided by the director of the Senate Page Program.