



# House Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program and House Gold Star Family Fellowship Program: Background Information

## House Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program

### Overview, Origin, and Purpose

The House Wounded Warrior Program was established in 2008 by the leadership of the House of Representatives and the Committee on House Administration. According to House publications from that time, the goal of the program is to assist wounded veterans in the transition to the civilian workforce and to “make the House a model for other federal, state and municipal agencies to employ these talented, patriotic Americans to whom we are all greatly indebted” (annual budget justifications; see also press release announcing the program, issued February 27, 2008; and H.Rept. 110-924).

The program provides two-year paid fellowships within the House of Representatives for disabled veterans. Fellows may work in House Member offices either in Washington, DC, or in district offices, with the majority located in district offices. The specific job duties may vary by office and are determined by the Member, although many fellows serve as caseworkers in district offices and focus on military and veterans’ issues.

The program is operated through the House of Representatives Chief Administrative Officer’s (CAO’s) office.

Funding for fellows’ salaries is separate from office budgets provided to Members through the Members’ Representational Allowance (MRA). Fellows do not count against the employment ceiling for Member offices. Employment beyond the two-year fellowship is not guaranteed, although some fellows have transitioned to full-time employment with the House.

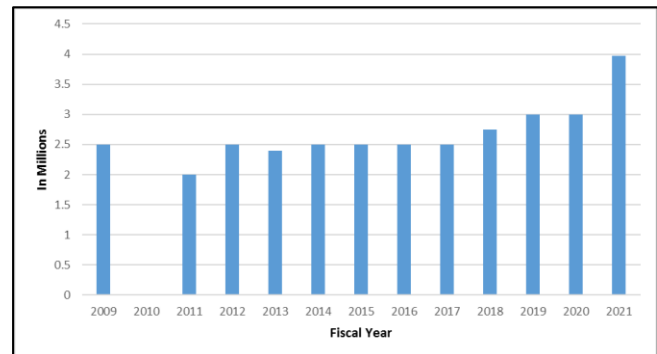
The program provides up to 120 two-year fellowships.

### Funding

The House Wounded Warrior Program is funded in the “allowances and expenses” portion of the appropriation for the House of Representatives in the annual legislative branch appropriations acts. Funding since inception in FY2009 is listed in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1. Appropriations for the Wounded Warrior Program by Fiscal Year**

in millions of dollars



**Source:** CRS analysis of legislative branch appropriations acts.

**Notes:** Includes any rescissions and sequestration. For an explanation of the planned use in FY2010 of prior year unobligated funds, see the report accompanying the FY2010 legislative branch appropriations bill (H.Rept. 111-160).

The House requested \$9.3 million for FY2022 for the Wounded Warrior Program and Gold Star Family Fellowship Program.

Additional support for the program may be provided through other House accounts. For example, as with other House employees, any government contributions for employee benefits are paid through the “Government Contributions” line in the “Allowances and Expenses” portion of the appropriation for the House of Representatives, and not through the line-item for the Wounded Warrior Program.

All House Wounded Warrior Program expenditures are reported online in the quarterly *Statement of Disbursements of the House*.

### Qualifications for Eligibility

The House may establish criteria for participation in the program.

The CAO’s website states:

Candidates must meet *all four* of the following requirements:

- Honorably discharged veteran; and
- Released from active duty within the last five years; and
- Terminal pay grade at or below E-5 (for enlisted) or O-3 (for officers); and

- 20% or greater service-connected disability rating OR Purple Heart recipient.

For additional information on disability ratings and programs generally, see CRS Report R44837, *Benefits for Service-Disabled Veterans*, coordinated by Heather M. Salazar, and CRS Report RL34751, *Military Retirement: Background and Recent Developments*, by Kristy N. Kamarck.

### Pay for Wounded Warrior Fellows

The Wounded Warrior Program website states:

Salaries range from \$41,134 to \$54,324 depending on the duties assigned and recommendations by the office or Congressional Member hosting the Wounded Warrior.

Salaries for fellows follow the House Employees Schedule (HES), which is a classification system that applies to many employees of officers of the House. The HES, including revisions to the pay scale and position standards and descriptions, is subject to the oversight of the Committee on House Administration.

### Selection and Placement of Wounded Warrior Fellows

Available positions are listed on the House Wounded Warrior website and on <https://www.usajobs.gov/>. Positions are allocated equally between majority and minority House Members.

Applicants may send the application and required documentation (including a current resume, last DD214 form and a Disabled Veteran Civil Service Preference letter indicating 20% or greater service-connected disability rating) to the House at [housewoundedwarriors@mail.house.gov](mailto:housewoundedwarriors@mail.house.gov).

Applicants do not need to be residents of the Member's district. Relocation expenses, however, cannot be reimbursed.

### Additional Congressional Actions

Periodically, the House Appropriations Committee and the Committee on House Administration have examined the operations of the Wounded Warrior program.

Of particular interest has been assessing the program's success in assisting participants' transition to civilian

employment, either with the House of Representatives or elsewhere (for example, see H.Rept. 111-160, H.Rept. 112-148).

Additionally, the overall number of authorized participants has increased over time. The Committee on House Administration approved an expansion from 50 positions, which was the authorized level since the program had begun, to 54 positions (H.Rept. 114-901), in October 2015. Language in House Appropriations Committee reports indicated that the program received funding that could provide for up to an additional 31 positions in FY2018, for a total of 85 positions (H.Rept. 115-199); up to 25 additional positions in FY2019, for a total of 110 positions (H.Rept. 115-696); and up to 10 additional positions in FY2020, for a total of 120 positions (H.Rept. 116-64). The new 120-position cap was mentioned in the FY2021 House Appropriations Committee report (H.Rept. 116-447).

### House Gold Star Family Fellowship Program

The SFC Sean Cooley and SPC Christopher Horton Congressional Gold Star Family Fellowship Program was established pursuant to H.Res. 107 (116<sup>th</sup> Congress), which was agreed to on October 29, 2019 (and amended by H.Res. 812, agreed to on February 5, 2020, which modified eligibility to include parents). The Committee on House Administration promulgated regulations for the program (Committee Resolutions 116-15 and 116-17).

This program is also implemented by the House CAO. Fellowships are for one year. Funding for fellows' salaries is separate from office budgets provided to Members through the Members' Representational Allowance (MRA). Fellows do not count against the employment ceiling for Member offices. The program may have up to 40 fellows, with positions allocated equally between majority and minority House Members.

Available positions are listed on the House Gold Star Family Fellowship Program website and at <https://www.usajobs.gov/>. For additional information, see <https://cao.house.gov/gold-star>.

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**Ida A. Brudnick**, Specialist on the Congress

**IF10652**

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