



USMC CONGRESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1: What is the Congressional Fellowship Program (CFP)?

A1: The Department of Defense (DoD) authorizes legislative fellowships to provide select service members and civilian employees firsthand, senior-level experience with the workings of the U.S. Congress. Fellows' experience working for a Member of Congress helps them develop skills, relationships, and knowledge, that enables them to return to DoD and provide institutional understanding of how congressional actions affect the DoD's budget, roles and missions, force structure, programs, military projects, and quality of life.

Q2: What orders can I reference to learn more about the CFP?

A1: Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 1322.06 governs legislative fellowships and other fellowships.

Q3: Which ranks and MOSs are eligible for the CFP?

A3: The CFP is open to all MOSs. OLA's priority is to select the right Marine, with the right mix of experience and personality, to represent the Marine Corps and communicate effectively with Members of Congress, Professional Staff Members, and the public. Information on rank eligibility will be published in the relevant MARADMIN for each year. Generally speaking, from the active component, officers in the grades of O-2 through O-4 and SNCOs in the grades of E-7 through E-9 are eligible. The active reserve components vary by year.

Q4: Do you have to be PME complete in your current grade to apply for and be selected for the fellowship?

A4: No. If you are not PME-complete in your current grade before completing the Fellowship, it is recommended that you plan to complete your non-resident PME during your two-year utilization tour following your fellowship year on Capitol Hill. Of note, participation in the Fellowship is not considered a valid excuse for not completing your PME on time.

Q5: I am currently applying for other external billets. If selected for both, would the congressional fellowship take precedent over the other?

A5: Generally speaking, the CFP takes precedence over other selection boards occurring at the same time. Contact your PMOS Monitor and the Graduate Education Manager (MMOA-3) if you have specific questions regarding applying for multiple programs/billets.

Q6: What does the application consist of? Does the application vary from year to year?

A6: Even before the MARADMINs are released, past year application guidance is available on the website. Application requirements do not typically vary significantly from year to year. Applications are typically due to OLA roughly 30 days after the MARADMIN is released. Candidates concerned with the timeline might choose

to use the past year's application guidance to get a head start, but should be prepared to update their application pending current-year guidance.

A7: How do I apply for the USMC Congressional Fellowship Program (Officer)?

A7: Wait for the CFP MARADMINs (typically released in April/May). Review the CFP Application Guidance link on [the webpage](#).

Q8: What happens after I apply?

A8: MMOA conducts a selection board in coordination with OLA to review all applications and select members to interview in person or via MS Teams. Interviews are typically conducted in late July to early August. Applicants should ensure any dates of interview non-availability, or any limitations on VTC capability, are noted on the Administrative Action Form. The names of personnel successful in interviews will be endorsed and forwarded to MMOA/MMEA for final consideration. Successful applicants will be informed via MARADMIN. OLA will consult with MMOA/MMEA to select candidates with consideration for individual career progression and the needs of the Marine Corps.

Q9: How many Marines are selected each year for the CFP?

A9: The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs (OSD (LA)) establishes a minimum number of Congressional Fellows based on individual Service requirements and requests. DoDI 1322.06 requires a minimum of 13 Marine Corps Fellows. HQMC OLA typically selects 11-12 Officers and 3-5 SNCOs each year.

Q10: How long is the Congressional Fellowship Program?

A10: 42 months, plus 12 months of obligated service within your PMOS.

- Development Tour (July-Dec): Fellows typically report to OLA in June/July of the year following application and selection. Officers and eligible SNCOs begin study in a Master's in Public Policy (MPP) from George Mason University's Schar School of Public Policy and Government. SNCOs that are not eligible to or do not desire to earn an MPP will participate in professional development programs, including familiarization courses conducted by the Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University.
- DoD Hill Fellowship (Jan-Dec): Fellows receive their Member of Congress office assignment at the completion of their development tour and report in January, at the start of the congressional session, to serve as a personal staff member on Capitol Hill in the office of a Member of Congress. This assignment is one calendar year and may be with a Representative or Senator.
- Utilization Tour (two years): At the completion of their initial training, per DoDI 1322.06, Fellows will complete a mandatory 24-month utilization billet designed to leverage the experience gained from working on Capitol Hill and apply their legislative knowledge within HQMC. These utilization tour billets are typically in either Quantico, the Pentagon, or the Capitol.
- Additional 12 months of Obligated Service: Per DODI 1322.06, the one-year Fellowship incurs a three-year service obligation. Two of these three years are the utilization tour. The final 12 months of obligated service is executed IAW orders per your PMOS monitor (i.e. back to your 'normal' career track).

	2026				2027				2028				2029				2030			
	JAN- MAR	APR- JUN	JUL- SEP	OCT- DEC	JAN- MAR	APR- JUN	JUL- SEP	OCT- DEC	JAN- MAR	APR- JUN	JUL- SEP	OCT- DEC	JAN- MAR	APR- JUN	JUL- SEP	OCT- DEC	JAN- MAR	APR- JUN	JUL- SEP	OCT- DEC
Master’s Degree Participation			Full Time Student	Part Time Student (Night School) (18 Cr.)																
Fellowship Program			Education / Professional Development	DoD Hill Fellowship (Full Time Marine)				<u>DoD Fellowship Legislative Payback 24 Months</u>												
36-Month Obligated Service											36 Payback – 24 Month Utilization Tour / 12 Month Obligated Service									

Q11: What type of work can Congressional Fellows expect in a Member's Office?

A11: Marines are assigned to a Member of the House or Senate for twelve months from January through December. Each Member's office is a unique environment and experiences will vary considerably according to the needs and desires of the Member. Fellows may expect to work on multiple portfolios (defense, veteran's affairs, trade, foreign affairs, homeland security, intelligence, transportation, environmental/space science, technology, and/or welfare/ Social Security), coordinate travel, draft correspondence or proposed legislation, prepare Members and staff for meetings and hearings, and meet with constituents and concerned interests in their portfolio areas. Additional duties may include greeting visitors, answering constituent phone calls, and staffing members for meetings and committee hearings.

Q12: Who is my RS and RO while I'm in the CFP?

A12: You can expect the first 18 months of the program will be non-observed time.

- During your development tour (initial six months) you will receive a non-observed report with the Congressional Fellowship Program Manager as your RS and the Deputy Legislative Assistant as your RO..
- When you are on the Hill, you will receive a non-observed report where your Member will be the RS, and the Director of the House or Senate Liaison Team (Colonel) will be your RO.
- During your utilization tour, you will receive observed reports IAW the PES. Your RS will be your direct supervisor, and your RO will be the Deputy Legislative Assistant unless an exception is approved.

Q13: How does the three-year service obligation work with the Fellowship and follow-on two-year utilization tour?

A13: The two-year utilization tour and three-year service obligation are concurrent obligations. The duration of the service obligation does not prevent a Fellow from PCSing at the completion of their two-year utilization tour.

Q14: In my application do the two letters of recommendation and personal statements need to specifically mention my interest in the master's program or do they just need to address my interest in the Congressional Fellowship Program in general?

A14:

- The first personal statement for the CFP Board should focus on why you want to be a Congressional Fellow. The second personal statement for GMU should focus on why you want to earn a Master's in Public Policy (MPP) from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.
- The second statement for GMU is required for all offices. For SNCOs, only those eligible/willing to earn an MPP are required to submit this second statement.
- If you are an officer or a SNCO that is eligible/willing to complete the MPP program, the two letters of recommendation should mention your potential to earn a MPP from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. They may also describe characteristics or skills that make you a good fit for the CFP.
- For SNCOs that are not eligible or willing to earn an MPP, the LoRs should focus on characteristics and skills that make you a good fit for the CFP.

Q15: (Officers) When and how do fellows complete the master's degree?

A15: Most Fellows will complete 18-24 credits during six months of dedicated study prior to starting on Capitol Hill. The Fellows must complete the additional required credits to earn an MPP before the end of the two-year utilization tour. Fellows can decide for themselves how to space out the remaining courses. GMU offers evening and virtual classes that facilitate completing the degree part-time.

Q16: How are fellows assigned follow-on billets (two- year utilization), and do I have any input in that process?

A16: OLA maintains a list of billets that will be available and after receiving input from the Fellow, will work to assign the right Marine in the right billet. Utilization tours may be assigned to billets in Quantico, the Pentagon, or the Capitol.

Q17: Are there any financial costs associated with participating in the Congressional Fellowship Program?

A17: Yes. All Marines are required to have business/professional civilian attire for their fellowship year on Capitol Hill. Officers attending GMU will have their tuition covered and will receive a one-time book stipend, but the costs of books and other academic materials exceed what the stipend covers. SNCOs will receive an allowance of professional clothing.

Q18: Why is the CFP sometimes referred to as an FY26 program, and sometimes as a CY27 Program?

A18: Fellows applying and being selected during the summer of 2025 will be assigned to USMC Office of Legislative Affairs during FY26. Their one year fellowship on Capitol Hill will be during CY27.