



USMC CONGRESSIONAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

The Department of Defense (DoD) authorizes legislative fellowships in order 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 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: Which ranks and MOSs are eligible for the CFP?

The CFP is open to all MOSs. The priority of the OLA staff 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 general 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.

Q3: Do you have to be PME complete in your current grade to apply for and be selected for the fellowship?

No, 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.

Q4: I am currently applying for other external billets. If Selected for both, would the congressional fellowship take precedent over the other?

Generally speaking, the CFP takes precedence over other selection boards occurring at the same time.

Q5: What does the application consist of? Does the application vary from year to year?

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.

Q6: How do I apply for the USMC Congressional Fellowship Program (Officer)?

Wait for the CCLEB/CPIB MARADMINs (typically released in April)
See the CFP Application Guidance link on [the webpage](#).

Q7: What happens next?

OLA will review all applications and select members to interview in person or via SVTC. Interviews are typically conducted in mid-to-late August. Applicants should ensure any dates of interview non-availability, or any limitations on SVTC 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 at the conclusion of the boards. OLA will consult with MMOA/MMEA to select candidates with consideration for individual career progression and the needs of the Marine Corps.

Q8: How can I prepare for the Interview Panel?

Nominees for the CFP are not expected to be experts in legislative affairs. Personality and the ability to effectively communicate and represent the Marine Corps are essential components of a successful Congressional Fellow; applicants should prepare as they would for a professional civilian interview. Marines selected for interviews are encouraged to become familiar with key Marine Corps policies and programs, to

include such topics as Force Design, the F-35, ACV, Pacific Realignment, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, Social Media policy, and MAGTF operations.

Q9: What does the Congressional Fellowship Interview Board look for in a Candidate?

Effective communication and building relationships with Members, office staff, and Professional Staff Members are essential for a successful assignment. The Interview Board focuses on those Marines who can use their background and experience to speak about the Marine Corps writ large, but also have their own personal interests that contribute and shape the overall individual.

Q10: How many Marines are selected each year for the CFP?

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

Q11: How long is the Congressional Fellowship Program?

Officers:

	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029					
	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					DoD Hill Fellowship (Full Time Marine)				DoD Fellowship Legislative Payback 24 Months													
36-Month Obligated Service													36 Payback – 24 Month Utilization Tour / 12 Month Obligated Service									

SNCOs:

	2025				2026				2027				2028				2029			
	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
Fellowship Program			Education / Professional Development		DoD Hill Fellowship (Full Time Marine)				DoD Fellowship Legislative Payback (Full Time Marine)											
36-Month Obligated Service													36 Payback – 24 Month Utilization Tour / 12 Month Obligated Service							

Fellows usually report to OLA in June of the year following application/selection. Officers begin study in a Master's in Public Policy (MPP) from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. SNCOs participate in professional development programs that include work with the Congressional Research Service and legislative familiarization courses conducted by the Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University.

At the completion of this initial training, Fellows will receive their member assignment and report in early 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 will last for one year. This assignment may be with a Representative or Senator.

At the conclusion of this year, Fellows will complete a 24 month utilization billet designed to leverage the experience gained from working on Capitol Hill and apply their legislative knowledge within HQMC.

Q12: What type of work can Congressional Fellows expect in a Member's Office?

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. As a member of the Congressional Office, Fellows may expect to work

on multiple portfolios (Defense, Veteran's Affairs, Trade, Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Intelligence, Transportation, Environmental/Space Science, Technology, or Welfare/ Social Security), coordinate travel, draft correspondence or proposed legislation, and meet with constituents and concerned interests in their portfolio areas. Additional duties include greeting visitors, answering constituent phone calls, and staffing members for meetings and committee hearings.

Q13: Who serves as the RS and RO of those within the fellowship?

During the six-month period before you start on the Hill, you will get a not-observed report. The Program Manager will be the RS, and the Deputy Legislative Assistant to the Commandant will be the RO. When you are on the Hill, you will receive a not-observed report where your Member's office will be the RS, and the Director of the House or Senate Liaison Team (Colonel) will be your RO.

Q14: How does the three-year service obligation work with the Fellowship and follow-on two-year utilization tour?

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 PCS'ing at the finality of their two-year utilization tour.

Q15: (Officers) Do the two letters of recommendation and two 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?

The first personal statement should focus on why you want to be a Congressional Fellow, and the second statement should state why you want to earn a Master's in Public Policy (MPP) from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government.

The two letters of recommendation should focus on your potential to earn a MPP from George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government. The MPP program at George Mason begins in June the year before fellows are assigned to the hill.

Q16: (Officers) When and how do fellows complete the master's degree?

Most Fellows will complete 18-24 credits during six months of dedicated study prior to starting on Capitol Hill. The Fellows have to complete the additional required credits 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.

Q17: How are fellows assigned follow-on billets (2 year utilization), and do I have any input in that process?

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.

Q18: Are there any financial costs associated with participating in the Congressional Fellowship Program?

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.

Q19: Why is the CFP sometimes referred to as a FY25 program, and sometimes as a CY26 Program?

Fellows applying and being selected during the summer of 2024 will be assigned to USMC Office of Legislative Affairs during FY25. Their one year fellowship on Capitol Hill will be during CY26.