



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: What ranks are eligible for the CFP, and how do they apply?

Officer. After release of the CCLEB/CPIB MARADMIN, board eligible officers in the rank of First Lieutenant (O-2) through Major (O 4) are eligible to submit application packets directly to Office of Legislative Affairs (OLA) OLA with consent of their monitor. Application packets are screened and vetted by OLA, and interviews are scheduled to assess suitability for success in the Congressional Fellowship Program. More detail below.

Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs). In the rank of Gunnery Sergeant (E-7)/ Master Gunnery Sergeant (E-9) may be eligible to apply. Enlisted applicants must possess an undergraduate degree and meet all requirements established by their monitor for career progression. Interested SNCOs should coordinate with their MMEA career monitors for guidance and updated eligibility requirements. OLA will release a MARADMIN soliciting applications the summer of the year before fellows would report to start their fellowship tour. Eligible SNCO candidates will prepare and submit their application in accordance with the MARADMIN. Application packets are screened and vetted by OLA, and interviews are scheduled to assess suitability for success in the Congressional Fellowship Program.

Civilian. Applications are nominally processed through the Lejeune Leadership Institute with final interviews and approval administered by OLA.

Q3: Which 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.

Q4: 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.

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

The Commandant's Board takes precedent over other billets you may apply for.

Q: 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 late May/early June)
See the CFP Application Guidance link on the webpage.
Submit to: HQMC_OLA_RSVP@usmc.mil;

Q7: What happens next?

Officers: OLA will review all applications and select Officers to interview in person or via SVTC prior to the convening of the CCLEB/CPIP. Officer 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 officers successful in interviews will be endorsed and forwarded to MMOA-3 for final consideration. Successful applicants will be informed via CCLEP/CPIB results MARADMIN at the conclusion of the boards.

SNCOs: OLA will review all applications and select SNCOs to interview. SNCO interviews are typically conducted in August. Applicants should ensure any dates of interview non-availability, or any limitations on SVTC capability, are noted on the Administrative Action Form. OLA will consult with MMEA to select candidates with consideration for individual career progression and the needs of the Marine Corps. The names of SNCOs selected for the program will be announced via MARADMIN.

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 Officers and 3-5 SNCOs each year.

Q11: What happens if I am selected to interview but not accepted into the CFP?

If a Marine Officer is not selected for the CFP, then MMOA will assign these Marines to either an appropriate level resident PME, or a FAO/RAO billet if eligible.

Q12: How long is the Congressional Fellowship Program?

Officers:

	2023				2024				2025				2026				2027							
	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				
Masters Degree Participation			Full Time Student (18 Cr.)		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:

	2023				2024				2025				2026				2027			
	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 report to OLA in May or 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 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.

Q13: 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.

Q14: 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 and the Program Manager will be the RS, and the Deputy Legislative Assistant 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 (Colonel) will be your RO.

Q15: 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.

Q16: 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? (Officers)

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.

Q17: When and how do fellows complete the master's degree?

Most Fellows will complete at least 24 credits during six months of dedicated study prior to starting on Capitol Hill. The Fellows have to complete the additional 12 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.

Q18: 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, works with the monitors and the projected offices to place the right Marine in the right billet.

Q19: 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. Enlisted fellows receive a clothing allowance, officers do not. The clothing allowance is rarely sufficient for all that is required. 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 exceeds what the stipend covers.

Q20: Why is the CFP sometimes referred to as a FY22 program, and sometimes as a CY23 Program?

Fellows applying and being selected during the summer of 2022 will be assigned to USMC Office of Legislative Affairs during FY24. Their one year fellowship on Capitol Hill will be during CY24.