

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2000 Session

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 269 (Delegate Howard. *et al.*)

Rules and Executive Nominations

General Assembly - District Office Allowance - Postage Expenditures

This bill allows a member of the General Assembly to charge the cost of certain mailings to constituents and community organizations to the member's district office allowance.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Potential minimal increase in State expenditures resulting from charging additional mailings to a legislator's district office account.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Legislative Policy Committee has adopted the *Guidelines for Compensation and Expenses for Legislators* which were approved by the presiding officers. While the guidelines are not in statute, they are adhered to by members of the General Assembly.

Based on these guidelines, members may charge the cost of mailings to constituents and community organizations to the district office allowance. However, these mailings may only be with respect to a specific issue or a response to a constituent inquiry on a specific issue, including the member's position on that issue. Other types of mailings cannot be charged to the member's postage allowance. **Exhibit 1** shows the types of mailings that are currently prohibited based on the *Guidelines for Compensation and Expenses for Legislators*.

Exhibit 1
Types of Mailings Permitted Under Current Guidelines

Type of Mailings	Currently Permitted
Comments with respect to specific issues or responses to constituents' inquiries on specific issues.	Yes
Letters to constituents on bills introduced by the member.	No
Letters to constituents that provide an overview of the member's or the Governor's activities or actions on an issue or series of issues.	No
Letters asking for positions on bills and legislative issues.	No
Letters on the general responsibilities of the members.	No
Newsletters and questionnaires, excluding the <i>Annapolis Report</i> .	No

State Fiscal Effect: Members of the General Assembly are entitled to \$1,000 per year for district office postage expenses and \$2,600 per year per district for postage expenses for the *Annapolis Report*, without prior approval of the presiding officers.

Altering the current legislators' guidelines and providing for additional types of mailings that can be charged to a member's district office allowance could increase the amount of mailings generated by members of the General Assembly. This could result in additional State expenditures if members request and receive additional funding from the presiding officers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source: Department of Legislative Services

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