



# House Wounded Warrior Program: Background

## 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, 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.

Patricia Orsini, a retired Master Gunnery Sergeant who served in the United States Marine Corps, was the first director of the program, and served from February 2008 until September 2016. In December 2016, John McIntyre (Mac) Tolar, a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, was announced as the new director.

According to a report from the House CAO, from its inception through December 2016, the program hired 183 fellows. Of these fellows, according to this report, “79% have accepted full-time positions or returned to school after completing their fellowship.”

## 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 **Table 1**.

**Table 1. Appropriations for the Wounded Warrior Program by Fiscal Year**  
in millions of dollars

| 09  | 10             | 11  | 12  | 13  | 14  | 15  | 16  | 17  |
|-----|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2.5 | 0 <sup>a</sup> | 2.0 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 |

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

**Notes:** Includes any rescissions and sequestration.

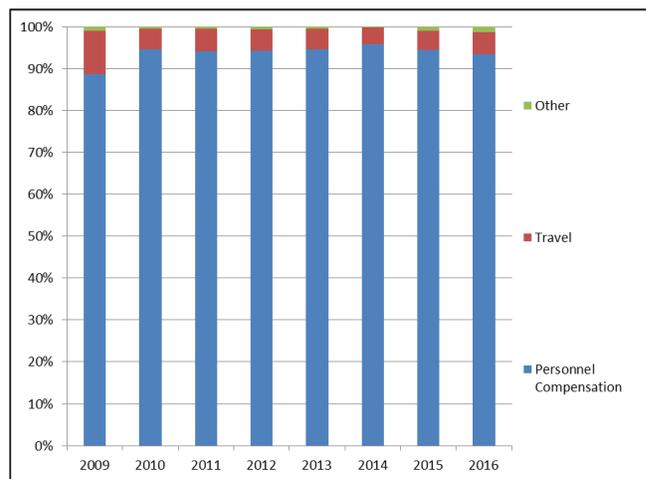
a. For an explanation of the planned use in FY2010 of prior year unobligated funds, see the report accompanying the FY2010 legislative branch appropriations bill (H.Rept. 111-160).

## Expenses

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

According to the *Statements*, personnel compensation is by far the program’s largest category of expense, ranging between 89% and 96% of expenses between FY2009 and FY2016. It is followed by travel. No other category of expense exceeded 1% of program spending in a fiscal year.

**Figure 1. Wounded Warrior Program Expenditures**  
FY2009-FY2016



**Source:** CRS calculations based on the *Statements of Disbursement of the House*.

**Notes:** The *Statements of Disbursement of the House* are available at <http://disbursements.house.gov/>. “Other” includes expenses in the following categories: “rent, utilities, and communications”; “printing and reproduction”; “other services”; “supplies and materials”; and “equipment.”

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.

### Qualifications for Eligibility

The House may establish criteria for participation in the program.

The CAO's website currently states:

Any disabled veteran who has served on active duty since September 11, 2001, has fewer than 20 years of military service, and has received either a Memorandum Rating of 30 percent or greater from their service Physical Evaluation Board or a VA service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or greater is eligible to apply for positions with this program. Candidates for employment must have been honorably discharged and possess a high school diploma or GED certificate.

For additional information on disability ratings and programs generally, see CRS Report R44837, *Benefits for Service-Disabled Veterans*, by Benjamin Collins, Scott D. Szymendera, and Libby Perl 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 will vary from job to job, depending on the duties and recommendations from the office or Congressional Member that hires the Wounded Warrior.

Salaries for fellows follow the House Employees Schedule (HES), which is a classification system that applies to many employees of House officers. 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. 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 proof of a minimum 30% disability rating for a service connected condition) 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 was increased in October 2015. 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).

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