

An hourglass-shaped graphic with a globe in the top bulb and another globe in the bottom bulb. The hourglass is light blue and has a dark blue top and bottom. The globe in the top bulb is dark blue, and the globe in the bottom bulb is light blue. The text is centered within the hourglass.

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February 2, 2009

Congressional Research Service

Report RL33685

*Pages of the United States Congress: History, Background
Information, and Proposals for Change*

Mildred Amer, Government and Finance Division

Updated June 3, 2008

Abstract. This report provides a brief history of the congressional page programs, background information, and proposals for change.

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CRS Report for Congress

Pages of the United States Congress: History, Background Information, and Proposals for Change

Updated June 3, 2008

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Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Pages of the United States Congress: History, Background Information, and Proposals for Change

Summary

For more than 175 years, messengers known as pages have served the United States Congress. Currently, approximately 100 young men and women from across the nation are allowed to serve as pages at any given time. Pages must be high school juniors and at least 16 years of age. Several incumbent and former Members of Congress as well as other prominent Americans have served as congressional pages.

Pages are appointed and sponsored by a Representative or Senator, and may serve for one academic semester of a school year or a summer session. The right to appoint pages rotates among Members pursuant to criteria set by the respective chamber leadership. Academic standing is among the most important criteria used in the final selection of pages.

Over the years, there have been areas of concern about having young pages serve Congress. In the 1800s and early 1900s, some House pages were as young as 10 and Senate pages as young as 13. Most of the concerns and subsequent congressional actions addressed the lack of supervised housing, as well as issues such as age, tenure, selection, education, and overall management of the pages. Far-reaching reforms in the page system occurred in 1982 and 1983, following press reports of insufficient supervision, alleged sexual misconduct, and involvement in the trafficking of drugs on Capitol Hill. Most reports of misbehavior were later found to be unsubstantiated.

In the 109th Congress, an investigative subcommittee of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct conducted an investigation following allegations involving the exchange of inappropriate e-mail messages between a Member of the House and former House pages. The committee did not recommend disciplinary action, but did make suggestions to improve the operations of the House page program, including changing the makeup of the House Page Board. In the 110th Congress, at the request of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Leader John Boehner, the House inspector general (IG) conducted an inquiry into the supervision and operation of the House Page Residence Hall and subsequently issued a confidential report recommending changes.

In the 110th Congress, the House implemented new policies to enhance the safety and supervision of the pages. These policies included expansion of the Page Board to include two Members from each party, the parent of a page, and a former page; new written directives regarding a code of conduct for staff in the page residence hall; guidelines for Member interaction with pages; and creation of a deputy clerk position, under the Clerk of the House, with the sole responsibility for management of the House page program. These changes followed investigations of allegations about the page program and of misbehavior by a few pages in the 109th and 110th Congresses.

This report provides a brief history of the congressional page programs, background information, and proposals for change. It will be updated as needed.

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Pages of the United States Congress: History, Background Information, and Proposals for Change

History

Serving Members of the United States Congress is a group of young adults known as pages. Pages have been employed since the early Congresses. Ten Members of the 110th Congress are former pages. Today, the pages include males and females who are juniors in high school and who may come from all areas of the United States and its territories.

The term “page” is of Middle English origin. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term dates from the 15th century when it meant a youth employed as a personal attendant to a person of rank. In the 16th century, the term also applied to a boy or lad employed as a servant or attendant.

The page system is formally provided for in law (2 U.S.C. 88; P.L. 91-510), although the rationale for the page service or for using high school students is not. Since the earliest accounts of pages, it has been widely noted in debates and writings within Congress that pages provide needed messenger services:

From the origin of the present government, in 1789, to the present time, they [messengers] have been under the orders and resolutions of the House, and experience has attested to the necessity of their services. The use of boys or pages, was introduced at a later period; but from the first session of Congress held at the city of Washington [1800], they have continued to be employed by the House, with the approbation of the House.¹

Being a page also provides a unique educational opportunity for the select few chosen. The page program offers young adults an opportunity to learn about Congress, and contributes to the development of their leadership qualities.

Over the years, there has been concern of having young pages serve Congress. In the 1800s and early 1900s, some House pages were as young as 10 and Senate pages as young as 13. Later, they were as old as 18. Over the years, congressional

¹ U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on Contingent Expenses of the House, *Contingent Expenses of the House*, 27th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Rept. 27-30 (Washington: 1842), p. 6. Although the Senate employed older messengers starting in 1789, it is believed that Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts arranged for the appointment of the first Senate page in 1829. See Robert Dole, “The First Senate Page,” in *Historical Almanac of the United States Senate*, S. Doc. 100-35, 100th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1989), pp. 72-73.

actions related to employing pages have addressed the lack of supervised housing as well as pages' ages, tenure, selection, education, and management. Far-reaching reforms in the page system were implemented in 1982 and 1983, following press reports of insufficient supervision, alleged sexual misconduct, and involvement in the trafficking of drugs on Capitol Hill. Most reports of misbehavior were later found to be unsubstantiated.²

As a consequence of the allegations, however, both the House and Senate for the first time provided supervised housing for their pages; established separate page schools and took over the education of the pages, which had been provided under contract by the District of Columbia school system;³ and developed more educational and recreational opportunities for their pages. Additional changes were made in more recent Congresses, which are discussed later in this report.⁴

Pages are not unique to the United States Congress. A majority of state legislatures and some foreign legislative assemblies employ messengers with roles similar to congressional pages.

Duties

Pages serve principally as messengers. They customarily report to their respective party cloakrooms in the House and Senate for their work assignments. They carry documents between the House and Senate chambers, Members' offices, committees, other congressional offices, and the Library of Congress. They also prepare the House and Senate chambers for each day's business by distributing the *Congressional Record* and other documents related to the day's agenda, assist in the cloakrooms and chambers, and, when Congress is in session, sit near the dais where they may be summoned by Members for assistance.

² U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Report by the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct Pursuant to H.Res. 518, 97th Cong., 2nd sess.*, H.Rept. 97-965 (Washington: GPO, 1983); U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Report of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct on the Inquiry Under House Resolution 12, 98th Congress, 1st Session Into Certain Narcotics Investigations by the United States Capitol Police*, 98th Cong., 1st sess., H.Rept. 98-205 (Washington: GPO, 1983); U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Report of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct on the Inquiry Under House Resolution 12, 98th Congress, 1st Session*, 98th Cong., 1st sess., H.Rept. 98-297 (Washington: GPO, 1983); U.S. Congress, Speaker's Commission on Pages, *Report to the Speaker*, committee print, 97th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1982); and "Congressional Pages," in *Congress and the Nation, 1981-1984*, vol. VI (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1985), pp. 809-810.

³ P.L. 601, §243; 60 Stat. 839.

⁴ For additional information on the history of the page program, see U.S. House of Representatives Page Program, "Page Program History," at [<http://pageprogram.house.gov/history.html>], visited April 8, 2008.

House pages also raise and lower the flag on the roof of the House side of the Capitol, and operate the House bell and light signals. Senate pages perform special duties every four years when they take part in the congressional joint session and ceremony for counting the electoral votes after a presidential election: two pages, usually one from each party, carry the wooden boxes containing the ballots from the Senate to the House chamber, where the votes are tallied.

House Pages⁵

There are 72 House page positions, 48 for the majority party and 24 for the minority party. Not all positions are filled. All pages must be at least 16 and juniors in high school,⁶ and sponsored by a Member of the House.⁷ Prospective pages contact their Representative to learn about the application process. If that Member is not eligible to sponsor a page, a prospective applicant may ask another Member from his or her state to be a sponsor.

The application process may differ according to individual Members and party procedures. The House leadership has final approval of all students selected for their party for the program.⁸

The House page program is administered through the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives. It is supervised by the House Page Board, composed of four Members of the House, the Clerk and Sergeant at Arms of the House, and a former page and the parent of a page, both of whom are appointed jointly by the Speaker and minority leader.⁹ Representative Dale Kildee (D-MI), chair of the Page

⁵ For further information, refer to [<http://pageprogram.house.gov>], visited April 8, 2008.

⁶ House pages are limited to those at least 16 years of age who have completed their sophomore year in high school but have not yet begun their senior year.

⁷ U.S. House of Representatives Page Program, “Page Program Fact Sheet,” [<http://pageprogram.house.gov/factsheet.pdf>], visited April 12, 2008.

⁸ *Ibid.*, and U.S. House, Office of the Clerk, *Information on the House Page Program* (available from the author of this report).

⁹ For appointments to the House Page Board, see *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 153, January 24, 2007, p. H915; Rep. John Boehner, Republican Leader, U.S. House of Representatives, “Boehner Appoints Bishop, Foxx to House Page Board,” press release (unpublished), March 7, 2008 (copy available from the author of this report); and *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 154, March 14, 2008, p. H1761.

The Page Board was expanded in the 110th Congress with the enactment of P.L. 110-2, the House Page Board Revision Act of 2007, which added two public members and made other changes. For House debate on H.R. 475, see *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 153, January 19, 2007, pp. H764-H768.

The Page Board originally comprised two majority-party Members appointed by the Speaker, one minority-party Member appointed by the minority leader, the Clerk of the House, the Doorkeeper of the House, the Sergeant at Arms of the House, and the Architect of the Capitol. H.Res. 611, agreed to in the House November 30, 1982; made permanent law by P.L. 97-377, §127; 96 Stat. 1914.

Board in the 110th Congress, serves with Representatives Diana DeGette (D-CO), Rob Bishop (R-UT), and Virginia Foxx (R-VA).

Prior to 2004, all House page applicants were required to (1) be U.S. citizens, (2) have a 3.0 grade point average at their local schools, (3) write a short essay, and (4) submit with their applications an official scholastic transcript, a completed medical form, and letters of recommendation.

To more closely screen page applicants and eliminate potential disciplinary problems, in the 108th Congress (2004), the House Page Board established additional criteria for the appointment of House pages. These criteria included (1) requiring Members to select applicants from their home states, (2) limiting page service generally to one semester, and (3) for the first time, requiring an interview with the then-newly created admissions panel (composed of the Clerk of the House, staff from the Page School and dormitory, and floor staff representing both parties).¹⁰ In addition, some Members have additional requirements for prospective pages, and many have links on their website to the page application process.

House pages are paid at an annual rate of \$20,181. Automatic deductions are taken from their monthly salaries for federal and state taxes, Social Security, and a residence hall fee of \$400, which includes five breakfasts and seven dinners per week. The pages are required to live in the supervised House Page Residence Hall near the Capitol. They are responsible for the cost of their uniforms — navy blue wool or acrylic jackets, dark grey slacks or skirts, long-sleeved white shirts, standard-issue ties (navy with red and white stripes), and black shoes and socks. Pages also must cover the cost of transportation to and from Washington, DC.

During the school year, they are educated in the House Page School located in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress. The page school, which is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, offers a junior-year high school curriculum, college preparatory courses, and extracurricular and weekend activities. Early-morning classes are usually held five days a week prior to the convening of the House.

Senate Pages

There are 30 Senate page positions, 16 for the majority party and 14 for the minority party. Not all positions are always filled. Senate pages must be sponsored by a Senator. Patronage requests are managed by the offices of the two party secretaries. All Senate pages must (1) be U.S. citizens, (2) be juniors in high school (age 16 or 17 before the date of appointment, and for summer pages, having completed their sophomore year), (3) have a 3.0 grade point average in school, and (4) provide a general health assessment form completed by a licensed physician.

¹⁰ U.S. House of Representatives Page Program, “Page Program Fact Sheet,” [<http://pageprogram.house.gov/factsheet.pdf>], visited April 12, 2008; and Jennifer Yachnin, “House Page Board Beefs Up Scrutiny,” *Roll Call*, May 18, 2004, pp. 1, 16.

Some Senators have additional criteria for page applicants, including an essay, letters of recommendation, and information on extracurricular activities.¹¹

The Senate page program consists of four quarters, two academic year sessions and two shorter summer sessions. It is administered by the Senate Sergeant at Arms, the Senate page program director, and the principal of the Senate page school.

Senate pages are paid at an annual rate of \$21,978. Automatic deductions are made from their twice-monthly salaries for taxes and Social Security as well as the \$600 residence hall fee, which includes breakfast and dinner seven days a week. Pages must pay their transportation costs to and from Washington, DC, but their uniforms are supplied. The uniforms consist of navy blue suits, white shirts, plain navy-blue ties for boys, dark socks, and black shoes.¹²

The Senate provides its pages supervised housing and education in the Daniel Webster Page Residence. Pages who serve during the academic year are educated in this school, which is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. The junior-year curriculum is geared toward college preparation. Early morning classes are held prior to the convening of the Senate. There are also supervised weekend activities.

Changes and Reforms, 1981-2001

House of Representatives

In mid-July 1982 (97th Congress), following unfavorable press reports involving congressional pages, the Speaker and the Republican leader of the House of Representatives appointed a Page Commission to study all aspects of the House page system, including whether it should be continued, the need for supervised housing, and the need, if any, for improved education.¹³ The commission was directed to report its recommendations as soon as possible.

The commission held hearings in July and August 1982, during which some Members of Congress, current and former pages, and congressional officials testified.¹⁴

¹¹ Information obtained from the internal Senate website and the Senate page program director.

¹² Formerly, all pages wore knickers. See Charles Hurd, "Senate Gets Play on Opening Day," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1947, p. 3.

¹³ "Speaker's Commission on Pages," *Congressional Record*, vol. 128, July 20, 1982, p. 17041. This bipartisan, five-member commission included two Members of the House, the Doorkeeper (who was in charge of the pages at that time), a former Member of the House, and a former congressional staff member.

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, House Speaker's Commission on Pages, *Hearings Before the Speaker's Commission on Pages*, part 1, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., July 22-24 and August 4, 1982 (continued...)

In mid-August 1982, the commission delivered its report to the Speaker, recommending continuation of the House page system with modifications. These modifications included requiring pages to be juniors in high school and at least 16 years of age;¹⁵ placing responsibility for the page program with a page board; developing a code of conduct for pages; centralizing housing for the pages with supervision by resident counselors and security provided by the U.S. Capitol Police;¹⁶ improving the page education and recreation program; developing generally standard selection criteria; and prohibiting employees of Members or committees from serving in the page system.¹⁷

In November 1982, the first House Page Board was established.¹⁸ On June 29, 1983, the House adopted H.Res. 234.¹⁹ This resolution authorized some of the decisions of the then-new House Page Board, including allowing the board to provide by contract or otherwise for the education of pages and limiting eligibility for the page program to juniors in high school (those who had completed 10th grade and had not begun their 12th grade).

By September 1983, the House had cancelled its contract with the District of Columbia Board of Education and hired its own teachers to operate a new school for its pages.²⁰ By the end of 1983, many of the other recommendations of the Speaker's Commission on Pages had been implemented through action by the House leadership. By August 2001, the House had moved its pages from temporary supervised housing into a residence facility newly renovated for them.²¹

¹⁴ (...continued)
(Washington: GPO, 1982).

¹⁵ Pursuant to the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, House pages could be 16-18 years old. P.L. 91-510, §491; 84 Stat. 1198.

¹⁶ Pages previously made their own housing arrangements.

¹⁷ U.S. Congress, House Speaker's Commission on Pages, *Report to the Speaker*, committee print, 97th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1982).

¹⁸ "House of Representatives Page Board," *Congressional Record*, vol. 128, November 30, 1982, p. 20831.

¹⁹ "Appointment and Education of House Pages," *Congressional Record*, vol. 129, June 29, 1983, pp. 18149-18151. The provisions of H.Res 234 were enacted into permanent law in the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 1985 (P.L. 98-367, 98 Stat. 479), which was later amended by the House of Representatives Administrative Reform Technical Corrections Act (P.L. 104-186, 110 Stat. 1735-1736).

²⁰ Rick Burkhardt, "Page Board Cancels D.C. School System Operating Contact," *Roll Call*, June 23, 1983, pp. 1-2.

²¹ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations for 2002*, hearings, part 2, 107th Cong., 1st sess., June 27, 2001 (Washington, GPO, 2001), pp. 352-353.

Senate

Early in the 97th Congress (1981-1983), the-then Senate Management Board — composed of the Secretary of the Senate and the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate, the Architect of the Capitol, and the staff directors of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee and the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee — directed its staff to conduct an extensive review of the Senate page program in an effort to identify elements of the program that could be improved. The likely impetus was the unfavorable publicity at the time about alleged House page misconduct and lack of supervision of congressional pages.²²

In July 1982, the Management Board recommended to the joint Senate leadership certain changes in the Senate page program, including limiting page appointments to high-school juniors;²³ a more innovative academic program with better facilities; encouragement of Senators to appoint as pages individuals with outstanding academic credentials; a supervised single housing unit for Senate pages;²⁴ and consolidation of responsibility for Senate pages.²⁵

On July 29, 1983, with the passage of S.Res. 184, the Senate voted to limit pages to 11th grade students and formalized the longstanding practice of having the Sergeant at Arms and the two party secretaries administer the page program.²⁶ By the end of 1983, through actions by the joint Senate leadership, most of the other recommendations of the Senate Management Board had been implemented. Senate pages were required to live in the same supervised facility as the House pages and were provided better overall supervision, meal service, and organized recreation.

In 1995, the Senate pages moved into their own supervised housing (separate from the House pages), the Daniel Webster Page Residence (also referred to as Webster Hall).²⁷ At the same time, in 1995, the Senate cancelled its contract with the

²² See, for example, “Congressional Pages,” in *Congress and the Nation, 1981-1984*, vol. VI (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1985), pp. 809-810 and 813-814; “The Congressional Pages” (editorial), *The Washington Post*, July 7, 1982, p. A18; Robert Pear, “Authorities Meet on Capitol Sex and Drug Inquiry,” *The New York Times*, July 8, 1982, p. B9; and Marjorie Hunter, “The Page System: Reformed but Still Vulnerable,” *The New York Times*, August 4, 1983, p. B10.

²³ Pursuant to the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, Senate pages could be 14-18 years old. P.L. 91-510, §491; 84 Stat. 1198.

²⁴ Pages previously made their own housing arrangements.

²⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate Management Board, *Memorandum*, July 14, 1982 (copy available from the author of this report); and Martin Tolchin, “Senate Panel Asks Changes in System of Capitol Pages,” *The New York Times*, July 9, 1982, p. A10.

²⁶ “Senate Page Program,” *Congressional Record*, vol. 129, July 29, 1983, p. 21646.

²⁷ Kevin Merida, “Where Senate Pages Turn In,” *The Washington Post*, July 12, 1995, p. A17.

District of Columbia school system and opened its independent page school in Webster Hall.²⁸

Recent Developments

There were no significant changes in the House or Senate page program in the first part of this decade other than the opening of the new House residential facility in 2001 and the 2004 changes in the House page nomination and length of service requirements discussed above. Developments in Congress affecting pages since 2006 have occurred in the House.

Near the end of the 109th Congress (2006), after reports of alleged improper communications between a Member of the House and former pages, the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct voted unanimously to “establish an Investigative Subcommittee regarding any conduct of House Members, officers, and staff related to information concerning improper conduct involving Members and Current and Former pages.”²⁹ The House Clerk also established a toll-free hotline for current or former pages and their parents to report any tips related to the investigation or the page program,³⁰ and the chairman of the House Page Board announced his continued commitment to the safety and protection of the pages and his intention to work with the board and others inside and outside of Congress to maintain the integrity of the House page program.³¹

The Investigative Subcommittee issued its report on December 8, 2006. Although expressing concern over the conduct of some Members, officers, and employees of the House, it concluded that “no current Members or employees of the

²⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, *Legislative Branch Appropriations, 1996*, report to accompany H.R. 1854, 104th Cong., 1st sess., S.Rept. 104-114 (Washington, GPO, 1995), pp. 18-19; and Mary Jacoby, “Senate Fires DC Teachers,” *Roll Call*, May 15, 1995, pp. 1, 27.

²⁹ “Bipartisan Ethics Committee Launches Investigation of House Page Program Allegations,” press release, at [http://www.house.gov/ethics/Press_Statement_Page_Subcomm.htm], visited February 28, 2008; and Charles Babington, “Police Find No Report of A Foley Dorm Incident,” *The Washington Post*, October 6, 2006, pp. A1, A4. In addition, the Justice Department and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement also investigated the allegations. See U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Investigation of Allegations Related to Improper Conduct Involving Members and Current or Former House Pages*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Rept. 109-733 (Washington: GPO, 2006), pp. 9-10.

³⁰ “Speaker Hastert Announces Page Program Tip Line Number,” press release (unpublished), October 5, 2006 (copy available from the author of this report); and Susan Davis, “Boehner Asked By Ethics To Testify on Foley,” *Roll Call*, October 12, 2006, pp. 1, 18.

³¹ John McArdle, “Page Board Members Promise Quick Action,” *Roll Call*, October 3, 2006, p. 15.

House had violated the House Code of Official Conduct.”³² Although the subcommittee recommended no further investigative proceedings to determine violations of House rules or standards of conduct, it noted that its report —

should serve as a strong reminder to Members, officers, and employees of the House that they are obligated to pursue specific and non-specific allegations of improper conduct between a Member or House employee and a participant in the House Page Program.... The failure to exhaust all reasonable efforts to call attention to potential misconduct ... is a present danger to House pages and to the integrity of the institution of the House.³³

The report also contained recommendations for reforming the operation of the page program.

In addition, the Investigative Subcommittee suggested (1) a review of the current House page program to ensure the safety and well-being of the pages, (2) regular meetings of the Page Board to ensure proper management of the program, (3) necessary resources for the Clerk and others who oversee the program to address unforeseen issues, and (4) consideration of equal representation by both parties on the Page Board.³⁴

Shortly after the subcommittee issued its report, then Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi announced that she would support legislation to require the Page Board to meet regularly, have equal party representation, and add a parent of a current page to the board.³⁵

Early in the 110th Congress, legislation sponsored by Members of the House Page Board was enacted to enlarge the board to include equal representation from the majority and minority parties — two Members of each party — as well as a former page and the parent of a current page.³⁶ The House Page Board Revision Act of 2007 also requires regular meetings of the Page Board on a schedule established jointly by the House leadership.³⁷

³² U.S. Congress, House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Investigation of Allegations Related to Improper Conduct Involving Members and Current or Former House Pages*, 109th Cong., 2nd sess., H.Rept. 109-733 (Washington: GPO, 2006), pp. 2-3.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁵ “Pelosi Set to Take Steps to Protect House Pages,” *The Washington Post*, December 12, 2006, p. A6.

³⁶ P.L. 110-2, 121 Stat. 4, February 2, 2007. See also Associated Press, “House Votes to Reshape Page Board,” *The Washington Post*, January 20, 2007, p. A6. On March 20, 2007, the first parent of a page and the first former page were appointed to the House Page Board. See “Appointment of Members to House of Representatives Page Board,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 153, March 20, 2007, pp. H2718-H2719.

³⁷ “Revising the Composition of the House of Representatives Page Board,” *Congressional Record*, daily edition, vol. 153, January 19, 2007, pp. H764-H768; P.L. 110-2, 121 Stat. 4, (continued...)

On December 12, 2007, following new allegations surrounding the House page program, including alleged misbehavior by several pages, Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Republican Leader John Boehner ordered an investigation by the House inspector general (IG).³⁸ At that time, the two leaders also announced they would “select a highly regarded, independent entity to conduct a thorough review of the Page Program’s organization and operation, and make recommendations concerning its long-term future.”³⁹

On February 11, 2008, Speaker Pelosi and Republican Leader Boehner announced, in a letter to the chair of the House Page Board, the completion of an investigation by the House IG into the operation and supervision of the House Page Residence Hall.⁴⁰

In the February 11th letter, the House leaders reported the IG had concluded “that the supervision of the Residence Hall personnel needs significant improvement.” In announcing their support for the IG’s findings, which were not made public, Speaker Pelosi and Republican Leader Boehner urged the Page Board to take immediate action to implement these recommendations and “establish a clear written policy for the Residence Hall that identifies visitors allowed and visitation hours.” The leaders also reiterated their intention to select an outside entity to “conduct a thorough review of the entire page program.”⁴¹

On February 14, 2008, the House Page Board adopted “in full” the recommendations in the House IG’s confidential report. This action included support for a proposal from the IG to create a new House deputy clerk position under the House Clerk to oversee and manage the page program.⁴² The Board also “approved

³⁷ (...continued)
February 2, 2007.

³⁸ Speaker Nancy Pelosi, press release, December 12, 2007, [<http://speaker.house.gov/newsroom/pressreleases?id=0447>], visited February 28, 2008; and “Statement from the Clerk of the House,” December 7, 2007, [http://clerk.house.gov/about/press/12072007_01.html], visited January 30, 2008. This is the first time the House IG has been publicly involved in the page program. He was instructed by the two House leaders to gather facts and make recommendations for corrective House action.

³⁹ Speaker Nancy Pelosi, press release, December 12, 2007, [<http://speaker.house.gov/newsroom/pressreleases?id=0447>], visited February 28, 2008.

⁴⁰ “News from House Leaders, Pelosi and Boehner Joint Letter to Kildee on the House Page Program,” press release (unpublished), February 12, 2008 (copy available from the author of this report); and Emily Yehle and Elizabeth Brotherton, “IG Releases His House Page Report,” *Roll Call*, February 15, 2008, pp. 3, 14.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Statement of House Page Board Chair Dale Kildee,” press release (unpublished), February 14, 2008 (copy available from the author of this report). On April 3, 2008, the House Page Board announced that “the Clerk of the House is in the process of hiring a Deputy Clerk whose sole responsibility will be to supervise all aspects of the House Page
(continued...)

the new written policy directives issued by the Clerk of the House to the [Page Residence Hall] staff regarding a staff code of conduct and access to the Residence Hall.”⁴³

On March 17, 2008, in testimony before the House Appropriations Legislative Branch Subcommittee, House Clerk Lorraine Miller announced improved security at the Page Residence Hall, including the updating of the Prox Card Access System, additional windows to improve the staff’s visual awareness around the entrance to the Residence Hall, and the purchase of GPS enabled cell phones that pages can use when they leave the dorm.⁴⁴

On April 3, 2008, the House Page Board issued “Guidelines for Communications and Interactions with House Pages” as part of efforts to improve the overall effectiveness of the House page program.⁴⁵ The 12 guidelines included recommendations on Member contact with pages and a prohibition on the exchange of gifts with pages in excess of a value of \$50.

On April 18, 2008, Speaker Pelosi and Representative Boehner announced an independent review of the House page program.⁴⁶ The review, which is to ensure that the page program effectively supports the operations of the House and serves the interest of the pages, will be conducted by a former congressional staff member and a consultant on education issues.⁴⁷

Proposed Changes and Reforms

The page program’s value and importance has consistently been lauded, particularly by those Members of Congress who served as pages and by other former pages. These individuals as well as others in and out of government have said that being a page is a rewarding chance for high-school students to view government in

⁴² (...continued)

Program.” See U.S. Congress, House Page Board, “Guidelines for Communications and Interactions with House Pages,” “Dear Colleague” letter, April 3, 2008 (available from the author of this report).

⁴³ “Statement of House Page Board Chair Dale Kildee,” press release (unpublished), February 14, 2008 (copy available from the author of this report).

⁴⁴ U.S. Congress, House Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee, “Statement of the Honorable Lorraine C. Miller” (unpublished), March 17, 2008 (copy available from the author of this report); and Elizabeth Brotherton, “Appropriators Examine House Budget,” *Roll Call*, March 17, 2008, pp. 3, 18.

⁴⁵ See U.S. Congress, House Page Board, “Guidelines for Communications and Interactions with House Pages,” “Dear Colleague” letter, April 3, 2008 (available from the author of this report).

⁴⁶ Speaker Nancy Pelosi, press release, April 18, 2008, [<http://speaker.house.gov/newsroom/pressreleases?id=0612>], visited April 23, 2008; and Elizabeth Brotherton and Emily Yehle, “Campus Notebook,” *Roll Call*, April 21, 2008, p. 3. This is the first independent study of the page system.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

action and participate in a leadership-building experience.⁴⁸ Many of the sentiments expressed are similar to that of one Senator who stated, “Of one thing we may be certain, as we watch our young friends go about their daily tasks here: the Senate could not function very well without them.”⁴⁹

As a consequence of the 2006 allegations of improper conduct involving pages, some Members of Congress called for a suspension of the House page program until a full evaluation was completed.⁵⁰ This sentiment prompted one Representative, also a former page, to say, “...the pages aren’t responsible for this scandal. Members of Congress are. And any reforms that go forward ought to have primary focus on our behavior, not that of the pages.”⁵¹

Another Member suggested the assistance of outside congressional scholars to review the program.⁵² Still another proposed creating a process for investigating alleged misconduct involving a minor and having retired Members of Congress chair the House Page Board.⁵³

Most of the discussion, following the allegations in 2006 that were investigated by the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, focused on needed changes in the House Page Board as well as the necessity for the pages to have an advocate separate from Congress when there is a problem.

One former page recommended in 2006 and again in 2007 “that Congress should get out of the page business” and that a single congressional page board composed primarily of former pages should be established.⁵⁴ The board would have offices in

⁴⁸ Rep. Tom Davis, “Don’t Punish Our Pages — They Are Not the Problem” (editorial), *Roll Call*, October 6, 2006, p. 10; Jonathan Turley, “Get Congress Out of the Page Business,” *The New York Times*, October 4, 2006, p. A27; and “Pages — Get It Right” (editorial), *Roll Call*, December 12, 2007, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate, 1789-1989, Addresses on the History of the United States Senate, Volume Two (Bicentennial Edition)*. S. Doc. 100-20, 100th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington: GPO, 1989), p. 390.

⁵⁰ John McArdle, “LaHood: Send The Pages Home,” *Roll Call*, October 5, 2006, pp. 1, 23; Steve Tetreault, “Porter Urges Suspension of House Page Program,” *Las Vegas Review Journal*, October 4, 2006, p. 4A.

⁵¹ Davis, “Don’t Punish Our Pages — They Are Not the Problem,” p. 10.

⁵² McArdle, “LaHood: Send the Pages Home,” pp. 1, 23.

⁵³ Rep. Mark Kirk, “Congress Must Remember Kids Come First,” *Roll Call*, October 10, 2006, p. 8. Rep. Kirk has also posted on his website suggestions for the House page program. See [http://www.house.gov/list/speech/il10_kirk/houserules.html], visited February 7, 2008.

⁵⁴ Jonathan Turley, “Get Congress Out Of The Page Business,” p. A27. After problems with the page program resurfaced in the 110th Congress, former page and George Washington University law professor Turley again suggested that “Congress cede most of the control [of the program] to an outside group ... an independent corporation, with a board consisting of former pages that would provide a much more steadfast level of supervision.” See Kathleen (continued...)

the House and Senate, and have the ability to report any wrongdoing involving the pages directly to the two congressional ethics committees, which would be required to investigate the complaints. According to this former page, "... the greatest resource and protection for the page academy can be found in its alumni. Former pages now hold considerable power throughout the legal, business and media worlds."⁵⁵

Other recent proposals, as reported in the press, have called for the creation of a United States Page Foundation to help fund the page program and offer support to current and former pages,⁵⁶ transferring oversight from the House Clerk to the House Sergeant at Arms, or splitting the responsibility for the program between the House majority and minority leaders.⁵⁷

When earlier Congresses discussed possible changes in this system, the dialogue often centered on the appropriate age range for these young messengers as well as improving their supervision, housing, and education.

Prior to limiting the ages of pages to high school juniors in 1983, Congress had last discussed the page age issue between 1966 through 1970, when it was considering other internal reforms. In 1966, the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress recommended limiting congressional page appointments to those individuals who had completed high school and were not over 21.⁵⁸ The House took no action on this recommendation, but the next year the Senate voted to limit all page appointments to those who had completed the 12th grade and were not over age 22.⁵⁹

In the 91st Congress, when the House Rules Committee reported the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970, it contained a provision limiting House and Senate pages to those who had completed the 12th grade but were not over age 21.⁶⁰ When the House took up this portion of the legislation, it voted to keep the then-existing age limit of 16-18.⁶¹ When the Senate took up its version of the Legislative

⁵⁴ (...continued)

Hunter and Edward Epstein, "After Latest Uproar, More Changes Floated for Congressional Page Program," *CQ Today*, December 10, 2007, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Jonathan Turley, "A Page Protection Act: The Path to Saving a Historic Program," *Roll Call*, October 5, 2006, p. 13.

⁵⁶ Rep. Davis, "Don't Punish Our Pages — They Are Not the Problem," p. 10; and Turley, "A Page Protection Act: The Path to Saving a Historic Program," p. 13.

⁵⁷ Kathleen Hunter and Edward Epstein, "After Latest Uproar, More Changes Floated for Congressional Page Program," p. 9.

⁵⁸ U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, *Report Pursuant to S. 2, 89th Cong., 2nd sess.* (Washington: GPO, 1966), p. 51.

⁵⁹ *Congressional Record*, vol. 112, March 7, 1967, p. 5683.

⁶⁰ U.S. Congress, House Rules Committee, *Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970*, report to accompany H.R. 17654, H. Rept., 91-1215, 91st Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1970), p. 128.

⁶¹ "Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970," *Congressional Record*, vol. 116, September 16, (continued...)

Reorganization Act of 1970, it voted to keep 14 to 18 as the age range of its pages.⁶² As already noted, the final provisions of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 established these different ages for pages.⁶³ Since 1983, page eligibility has been limited to juniors in high school.

When the Speaker's Commission on Pages studied the page system in 1982, it addressed the age and term of service of pages, both with concerns for the moral and legal responsibilities of Congress.⁶⁴ The Members considered using senior citizens or retired military personnel as pages. This alternative was rejected because the nature of page work and the sometimes strenuous duties would make messenger duties inappropriate to the age and experience of this age group, and these individuals have other opportunities for public service.⁶⁵ The use of college students was also rejected because of questions raised about their level of enthusiasm for page work and their desire for more substantive work.⁶⁶

The Speaker's Commission also considered several possible alternatives to the services rendered by pages.⁶⁷ These included maintaining some form of the present system; assigning the duties to augmented staffs of Members, officers, and committees; contracting for the page services with outside firms; or a combination of all these alternatives. The commission rejected the augmentation of existing staffs because it was felt that approach would not be cost effective and Congress would have less control over the system. Contracting with outside messengers was also rejected because of the potential expense and potential problems presented by the irregular congressional schedule and the security requirements of Congress. The commission concluded that, while improvements were needed, the "present system ... has worked satisfactorily for nearly 200 years."⁶⁸

Issues and Alternatives

As noted in this report, the House investigations in the 109th and 110th Congresses have been the impetus for Members of Congress and others in and out of government to reexamine the page system. These discussions have centered more on the oversight of the page program rather than on its retention.

⁶¹ (...continued)
1970, pp. 32229-32233.

⁶² "Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970," *Congressional Record*, vol. 116, October 6, 1970, pp. 35014-35016.

⁶³ P.L. 91-510, §491; 84 Stat. 1198. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005 (P.L. 108-447, 118 Stat. 3170), the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 was amended to change the range of ages for Senate pages to 16 to 18 rather than 14 to 18.

⁶⁴ U.S. Congress, Speaker's Commission on Pages, *Report to the Speaker*, committee print, 97th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1982), pp. 6-7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Speaker's Commission on Pages, *Report to the Speaker*, pp. 5-8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

The changes in the 110th Congress to the House Page Board and the other changes to the oversight and well-being of House pages appear to be evidence of the House's commitment to a safe environment for pages. The Page Board was created to be a foundation for ensuring in a coherent and comprehensive manner the safety and positive experience of pages. The addition of a parent and former page to the board and the requirement for regular meetings was intended to have a positive impact on the public's perception of the oversight of the page system and to be a major step toward restoring confidence in the program. Having a parent and former page as a board members was also expected to improve communication between those with authority for the program and the parents of pages.

Raising the age of pages is something Congress could again consider. In doing so, it would face the issue of whether older persons would be willing to perform the page duties and work at the current salary levels of pages. The disposition of buildings currently used to house and educate the pages would likewise need to be assessed.

Through the years there have been periodic discussions about altering or replacing the page system. Any major changes that would suspend or replace the page system could have an impact that reaches beyond the program itself. The necessity of the duties currently performed by the pages, as well as who would perform those duties in their absence, and at what cost, would also have to be addressed. Eliminating the program could reflect negatively on Congress.

In considering retaining high school age pages or having an outside group manage their supervision, Congress could look to established programs such as the Close-Up Foundation and Presidential Classroom. For a fee, these organizations have brought thousands of middle-school and high-school students to Washington, DC, over the years to promote informed participation in government through educational programs. These organizations supervise the students while they are in Washington and provide them housing as well as meals.⁶⁹

If a foundation independent of Congress were to manage the page program, it would likely have to be done vis-à-vis the congressional codes of conduct that prohibit "in-kind" contributions of services to support the activities of a congressional office.⁷⁰ The House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct and the Senate Select Committee on Ethics would likely have to be involved even though they have given approval over the years to certain privately funded intern programs.

⁶⁹ [<http://www.closeup.org/>] and [<http://www.presidentialclassroom.org/>].

⁷⁰ "In-kind" contributions are the private supplementation of official expenses. See Senate Rule 38; U.S. Congress, "Unofficial Office Accounts," in U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee on Ethics, *Senate Ethics Manual*, 108th Cong., 1st sess., S.Pub. 108-1 (Washington: GPO, 2003), p. 105; House Rule XXIV; U.S. Congress, Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *Ethics Manual For Members, Offices, and Employees of the U.S. House of Representatives*, [<http://www.house.gov/ethics/ethicschap6.html>], visited February 7, 2008.