



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE

August 27, 2014

The Honorable Richard Nugent
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Rules and organization of the House
The Committee on Rules
H-312, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Nugent,

Thank you for soliciting comment on potential improvements to the Rules of the House for the 114th Congress. I respectfully request that I be afforded an opportunity to testify at your upcoming hearing in September. I have identified a few improvements to the rules, outlined in further detail below, that I wish to formally request of the Subcommittee.

Rule XXI

As you know, Clause 9 of Rule XXI concerns rules placing limits on Member-directed projects and spending. Clause 9(e) defines these provisions in an overly broad manner that limits Member prerogative and hamstrings the constitutional powers of Congress, abdicating our responsibilities to the Executive branch. For example, the definition in 9(e) is not merely restricted to appropriations or other direct spending, but rather has caused great difficulty in authorizing as well. Such legislation could include settlements for Native Americans, water rights, or a variety of other pursuits that are well within the constitutional role of the Congress, and many times are unable to be remedied without congressional action.

While there are many ways to remedy this situation by improving the definition of what constitutes congressionally directed spending. I propose maintaining many of the limits of the existing rule, such as those requirements relating to disclosure, but initiating reforms such as excluding from the definition provisions or report language where the recipient is the Federal Government, a State, federally recognized tribe, or a unit of local government. Further, spending associated with these provisions should fall within the 302(a) budget allocations.

Rule XXIII

Clause 15 of Rule XXIII places certain limitations, and exceptions to these limitations, on the use of aircraft for Member travel. I propose an exception to these rules that would allow for travel on a privately owned aircraft within one's own district. Specifically, this exception would not require preapproval by the Committee on Ethics, provided that the aircraft is privately owned for personal use, and the travel costs are not reimbursed by any corporation or other entity. Travel would have to be directly connected to a Member's official duties.

A similar exception already exists for vehicular travel. The House Ethics Manual states, "The Committee has determined that a Member or staff person does not violate House Rule 24 by accepting, while on official travel, certain incidental, privately provided transportation. Specifically, a Member or staff person may accept local transportation, outside the District of Columbia, provided by the management of a site being visited in the course of official duties, between the airport or other terminus and the site (Pg. 114-115)."

Under the current rules regulating air travel, Members who represent large expansive districts are at a disadvantage when trying to connect with their constituents. Those who represent areas with limited road access, like me, are at an even greater disadvantage and must usually charter planes at great expense to visit a sliver of our constituency. Whereas most Members can climb into a vehicle and travel to a number of events in different cities in one day, a host of other Members and I are unable to do so. As currently written, the Rules do not take into account geographical challenges of individual districts. As a result, I am unable to efficiently and economically serve my constituents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Don Young", written in a cursive, flowing style.

DON YOUNG
Congressman for All Alaska