

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5690.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA JUDICIAL FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4419) to update the financial disclosure requirements for judges of the District of Columbia courts, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4419

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "District of Columbia Judicial Financial Transparency Act".

SEC. 2. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR JUDGES OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS DESCRIBED.—Section 11-1530, D.C. Official Code, is amended to read as follows:

"§ 11-1530. Financial statements

"(a) Pursuant to such rules as the Commission shall promulgate, each judge of the District of Columbia courts shall, within one year following the date of enactment of the District of Columbia Court Reorganization Act of 1970 and at least annually thereafter, file with the Commission a report containing the following information:

"(1)(A) The source, type and amount of the judge's income which exceeds \$200 (other than income from the United States government and income referred to in subparagraph (C)) for the period covered by the report.

"(B) The source and type of the judge's spouse's income which exceeds \$1,000 (other than income from the United States government and income referred to in subparagraph (C)) for the period covered by the report.

"(C) The source and type of income which consists of dividends, rents, interest, and capital gains received by the judge and the judge's spouse during such period which exceeds \$200 in amount or value, and an indication of which of the following categories the amount or value of such item of income is within—

"(i) not more than \$1,000,

"(ii) greater than 1,000 but not more than \$2,500,

"(iii) greater than \$2,500 but not more than \$5,000,

"(iv) greater than \$5,000 but not more than \$15,000,

"(v) greater than \$15,000 but not more than \$50,000,

"(vi) greater than \$50,000 but not more than \$100,000,

"(vii) greater than \$100,000 but not more than \$1,000,000,

"(viii) greater than \$1,000,000 but not more than \$5,000,000, or

"(ix) greater than \$5,000,000.

"(2) The name and address of each private foundation or eleemosynary institution, and of each business or professional corporation, firm, or enterprise in which the judge was an officer, director, proprietor, or partner during such period.

"(3) The identity and category of value (as set forth in subsection (b)) of each liability of \$10,000 or more owed by the judge or by the judge and the judge's spouse jointly at any time during such period.

"(4) The source and value of all gifts in the aggregate amount or value of \$250 or more from any single source received by the judge during such period, except gifts from the judge's spouse or any of the judge's children or parents.

"(5) The identity of each trust in which the judge held a beneficial interest having a value of \$10,000 or more at any time during such period, and in the case of any trust in which the judge held any beneficial interest during such period, the identity, if known, of each interest in real or personal property in which the trust held a beneficial interest having a value of \$10,000 or more at any time during such period. If the judge cannot obtain the identity of the trust interest, the judge shall request the trustee to report that information to the Commission.

"(6) The identity and category of value (as set forth in subsection (b)) of each interest in real or personal property having a value of \$10,000 or more which the judge owned at any time during such period.

"(7) The amount or value and source of each honorarium of \$250 or more received by the judge and the judge's spouse during such period.

"(8) The source and amount of all money, other than that received from the United States government, received in the form of an expense account or as reimbursement for expenditures from any source aggregating more than \$250 during such period.

"(9) The source and amount of all waivers or partial waivers of fees or charges accepted by the judge on behalf of the judge or the judge's spouse, domestic partner, or guest during such period.

"(b) For purposes of paragraphs (3) and (6) of subsection (a), the categories of value set forth in this subsection are—

"(1) not more than \$15,000;

"(2) greater than \$15,000 but not more than \$50,000;

"(3) greater than \$50,000 but not more than \$100,000;

"(4) greater than \$100,000 but not more than \$250,000;

"(5) greater than \$250,000 but not more than \$500,000;

"(6) greater than \$500,000 but not more than \$1,000,000;

"(7) greater than \$1,000,000 but not more than \$5,000,000;

"(8) greater than \$5,000,000 but not more than \$25,000,000;

"(9) greater than \$25,000,000 but not more than \$50,000,000; and

"(10) greater than \$50,000,000.

"(c)(1) Reports filed pursuant to this section shall, upon written request, and notice to the reporting judge for purposes of making an application to the Commission for a redaction pursuant to paragraph (2), be made available for public inspection and copying within a reasonable time after filing and during the period they are kept by the Commission (in accordance with rules promulgated by the Commission), and shall be kept by the Commission for not less than three years.

"(2) This section does not require the public availability of reports filed by a judge if upon application by the reporting judge, a finding is made by the Commission that revealing personal and sensitive information

could endanger that judge or a family member of that judge, except that a report may be redacted pursuant to this paragraph only—

"(A) to the extent necessary to protect the individual who filed the report or a family member of that individual; and

"(B) for as long as the danger to such individual exists.

"(d) The intentional failure by a judge of a District of Columbia court to file a report required by this section, or the filing of a fraudulent report, shall constitute willful misconduct in office and shall be grounds for removal from office under section 11-1526(a)(2)."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to reports filed under section 11-1530, D.C. Official Code, that cover periods beginning during or after 2016.

SEC. 3. AUTHORITY OF PROBATE DIVISION TO USE MAGISTRATE JUDGES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 11-1732(j)(5), District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking "Family Divisions" and inserting "Probate Divisions, and the Family Court."

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 11-1732(j)(4)(A), District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking "Family Division" and inserting "Family Court".

SEC. 4. AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS TO ACCEPT CERTAIN TYPES OF PAYMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 11-1748. Authority of courts to accept certain types of payments

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the term 'electronic funds transfer'—

"(1) means a transfer of funds, other than a transaction by check, draft, or similar paper instrument, that is initiated through an electronic terminal, telephone, or computer or magnetic tape for the purpose of ordering, instructing, or authorizing a financial institution to debit or credit an account; and

"(2) includes point of sale transfers, automated teller machine transfers, direct deposit or withdrawal of funds, transfers initiated by telephone, and transfers resulting from debit card transactions.

"(b) AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS AND ELECTRONIC FUNDS TRANSFERS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The District of Columbia courts may accept payment of fines, fees, escrow payments, restitution, bonds, and other payments to the courts by credit card or electronic funds transfer.

"(2) USE OF VENDORS AND THIRD PARTY PROVIDERS.—The Executive officer—

"(A) may contract with a bank or credit card vendor, or other third party provider, for purposes of accepting payments by credit card or electronic funds transfer; and

"(B) shall make every effort to find the lowest cost vendor for purposes of accepting such payments.

"(3) RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAYING FEES.—Under any contract entered into under paragraph (2), the person making the payment shall be responsible for covering any fee or charge associated or imposed with respect to the method of payment.

"(4) COMPLETION OF PAYMENT.—If a person elects to make a payment to the District of Columbia courts by a method authorized under paragraph (1), the payment shall not be deemed to be made until the courts receive the funds.

"(c) AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT CHECKS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The District of Columbia courts may accept payment of fines, fees, escrow payments, restitution, bonds, and other payments to the courts by check.

"(2) USE OF CHECK GUARANTEE VENDOR.—The Executive Officer—

“(A) may contract with a check guarantee vendor for purposes of accepting payments by check; and

“(B) shall make every effort to find the lowest cost vendor for purposes of accepting such payments.

“(3) **RESPONSIBILITY FOR PAYING FEES.**—Under any contract entered into under paragraph (2), the person making the payment by check shall be responsible for covering any fee or charge associated or imposed with respect to the method of payment.

“(d) **LIABILITY FOR NON-PAYMENT.**—If a check or other method of payment, including payment by credit card, debit card, or charge card, so received is not duly paid, or is paid and subsequently charged back to the District of Columbia courts, the person by whom such check or other method of payment has been tendered shall remain liable for the payment, to the same extent as if such check or other method of payment had not been tendered.”

(b) **TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections for subchapter III of chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“11-1748. Authority of courts to accept certain types of payments.”

SEC. 5. INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT IN CONTROVERSY PERMITTED FOR CASES UNDER JURISDICTION OF SMALL CLAIMS AND CONCILIATION BRANCH OF SUPERIOR COURT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 11-1321, District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking “\$5,000” and inserting “\$10,000”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to any case filed in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 6. AUTHORITY TO APPROVE COMPENSATION OF ATTORNEYS IN EXCESS OF MAXIMUM AMOUNT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—

(1) **CRIMINAL DEFENSE APPOINTMENTS.**—Section 11-2604(c), District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by striking the last sentence and inserting the following: “Each chief judge may delegate such approval authority to an active or senior judge in the court in which the chief judge sits.”

(2) **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT APPOINTMENTS.**—Section 16-2326.01(f), District of Columbia Official Code, is amended—

(A) by striking “(f)(1)” and inserting “(f)”;

(B) by striking paragraph (2); and

(C) by adding at the end the following: “Each chief judge may delegate such approval authority to an active or senior judge in the court in which the chief judge sits.”

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any case or proceeding initiated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 4419, the District of Columbia Judicial Financial Transparency Act, which was introduced by my colleague from the District of Columbia, Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. H.R. 4419 would provide a more robust and open disclosure of judicial finances in the District.

Currently, District judges are required to meet disclosure requirements that are less rigorous than those mandated for Federal judges. H.R. 4419 will help to close this disclosure gap. This bill will require judges to disclose sources of income for themselves and their spouses. This increased disclosure will help to strengthen an important pillar of our judicial system: the public's trust in an impartial judicial system.

In order to ensure that those before the District's judicial system can be confident in its impartial nature, the bill also requires that the disclosures be made publicly available.

The bill will require that disclosure reports be made available to the public for 3 years after they have been filed. H.R. 4419 will ensure compliance by making a failure to file or filing a fraudulent report an offense that is punishable by removal from office. This legislation will help to protect the public's faith in the integrity and impartiality of the District's judicial branch.

H.R. 4419 is a good government bill, and I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I thank the gentleman from Georgia for bringing this bill forward. I thank, especially, Chairman CHAFFETZ for his support in moving this bill through the Oversight and Government Reform Committee and now to the floor for consideration. I am also grateful to Ranking Member ELIJAH CUMMINGS for his vital assistance as this bill moves forward. I thank Senator JAMES LANKFORD, who once served with us on this committee and who introduced the companion bill in the Senate, which was already reported favorably by the Senate's Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee in May of this year.

My bill, the District of Columbia Judicial Financial Transparency Act, as amended, will provide much-needed transparency to the District of Columbia's local courts by enhancing financial disclosure requirements for D.C. court judges to make them more similar to the disclosure requirements that are already in place for Article III Federal judges. District of Columbia judges are Article I Federal judges.

Although current law requires D.C. Superior Court and D.C. Court of Appeals judges to file annual financial reports, there was no requirement that all of this information be made public. For example, while judges are required to submit information about their in-

comes, investments, liabilities, and gifts—and we have no reason to believe that they have failed to do so—current law only makes public judges' connections to charities, private organizations, businesses, as well as honorariums that are more than \$300. My bill would make all of this information, except for the judges' personally identifiable information, available for public inspection.

This bill is particularly necessary because a 2014 survey by the Center for Public Integrity, which took a comprehensive look at each State's judicial financial disclosure rules, gave the District a failing grade. D.C. court judges already submit enough financial information to improve the District's standing. My bill would simply make it public.

Like Senator LANKFORD's bill, my bill also includes provisions that will give D.C. courts new authorities to improve their operations. These provisions would authorize magistrate judges to serve in the probate division, which would help address the increasing number of adult guardianship cases; allow the courts to accept payments by credit card and check—imagine how late we are in getting to that—which would reduce administrative costs and increase efficiency; increase the maximum amount in controversy for small claims from \$5,000 to \$10,000, which would be the first increase in 20 years, would ensure access to the courts for plaintiffs with limited means; and authorize the chief judges to delegate their authority to approve reimbursements to court-appointed attorneys.

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Currently the chief judges must personally approve these reimbursements, which adds to their administrative workload and diverts attention and resources away from more critical issues facing our courts.

Congress has the jurisdiction over our court system because, as I have indicated, it has jurisdiction over all Article I courts and, therefore, the authority to make the necessary improvements.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4419, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS
AND PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE
VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCEN-
TIVE PAYMENTS ACT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5037) to authorize the establishment of a program of voluntary separation incentive payments for nonjudicial employees of the District of Columbia courts and employees of the District of Columbia Public Defender Service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5037

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act”.

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION FOR PROGRAM OF VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAYMENTS FOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COURTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by inserting after section 11-1726 the following new section:

“§ 11-1726A. Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments

“The Joint Committee on Judicial Administration may, by regulation, establish a program substantially similar to the program established under subchapter II of chapter 35 of title 5, United States Code, for nonjudicial employees of the District of Columbia [courts] courts, except that the maximum amount of the payment made under the program to any individual may not exceed the amount referred to in section 3523(b)(3)(B) of title 5, United States Code.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of chapter 17 of title 11, District of Columbia Official Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 11-1726 the following new item:

“11-1726A. Voluntary separation incentive payments.”.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION FOR PROGRAM OF VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAYMENTS FOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICE.

Section 305 of the District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act of 1970 (sec. 2-1605, D.C. Official Code) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) The Director may establish a program substantially similar to the program established under subchapter II of chapter 35 of title 5, United States Code, for employees of the [Service] Service, except that the maximum amount of the payment made under the program to any individual may not exceed the amount referred to in section 3523(b)(3)(B) of title 5, United States Code.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all

Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 5037, the District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act, introduced by my colleague from the District of Columbia, Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON.

Voluntary separation incentive payments provide agencies an effective and efficient tool for reducing the size of their workforce, cutting costs in the process.

As stewards of taxpayers’ dollars, it is important that every agency ensure it is staffed only to the extent that their work requires. H.R. 5037 will provide authority for the District of Columbia to offer buyouts for employees of the D.C. courts and public defenders.

This legislation would authorize the District to set up a substantially similar system to that already used by Federal agencies. Utilizing a voluntary separation incentive payment program will assist the D.C. court and public defender systems in reducing cost.

When compared to other force reduction efforts, the Government Accountability Office found voluntary separation incentive payments result in greater cost reductions and savings. The GAO review found that voluntary separation payments generate greater savings than direct workforce reductions because the payment encourages higher paid staff to depart.

H.R. 5037 will allow the District to decrease the cost and increase the efficiency of administering the judicial system.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5037.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) and especially Chairman CHAFFETZ and Ranking Member CUMMINGS for working together and with me to move this bill to the floor today.

This bill, the District of Columbia Courts and Public Defender Service Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments Act, as amended, would make a minor change to the authorities of the District of Columbia courts and the Public Defender Service by placing these entities in the same position as their Federal counterparts for more effective management and operation.

The bill would give the D.C. courts and PDS the same authority Federal agencies and Federal courts already have to offer voluntary separation incentive payments, or buyouts, to their

employees. The fiscal year 2016 omnibus bill already gives D.C. courts buyout authority. But my bill would make this authorization permanent—so I don’t have to keep coming back to this floor on such a minor administrative matter—and it would extend it to PDS, in addition to the courts. Buyouts would allow the D.C. courts and PDS to respond to their future administrative and budget needs and would provide the flexibility to extend buyout offers to their employees.

The U.S. Government Accountability Office has determined that voluntary separation incentive payments may be made only where statutorily authorized. While Federal agencies and Federal courts have the statutory authority to offer buyouts, PDS and the D.C. courts have not been expressly permitted to permanently provide them to their employees. PDS and the D.C. courts seek the same buyout authority in order to manage their workforce as budget conditions and needs change.

I yield back the balance of my time.
Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.
The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5037, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

MODERNIZING GOVERNMENT
TRAVEL ACT

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5625) to provide for reimbursement for the use of modern travel services by Federal employees traveling on official Government business, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5625

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Modernizing Government Travel Act”.

SEC. 2. FEDERAL EMPLOYEE REIMBURSEMENT FOR USE OF MODERN TRAVEL SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of General Services shall prescribe regulations under section 5707 of title 5, United States Code, to provide for the reimbursement for the use of a transportation network company or innovative mobility technology company by any Federal employee traveling on official business