

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 398

BY REPRESENTATIVE ZERINGUE

PUBLIC OFFLS/EMPS: Prohibits payment for meals and incidental expenses for state public officials and employees from exceeding amounts for such expenses established by the U.S. General Services Administration

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 39:231(A) and (C) and to enact R.S. 13:6, R.S. 24:16, and R.S.  
3 39:231(E), relative to travel by state government officers and employees; to provide  
4 a maximum for payments by the state for meals and incidental expenses; to provide  
5 for applicability; to provide for an effective date; and to provide for related matters.

6 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

7 Section 1. R.S. 13:6 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

8 §6. Maximum payment for meals or incidental expenses for certain agencies and  
9 entities in the judicial branch

10 Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no court  
11 authorized by Article V of the Constitution of Louisiana or any state entity in the  
12 judicial branch shall pay more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or  
13 employee than the rates established by the United States General Services  
14 Administration for such expenses.

15 Section 2. R.S. 24:16 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

16 §16. Maximum payment for meals or incidental expenses for the legislative branch  
17 Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no agency or

18 entity in the legislative branch shall pay more for meals or incidental expenses for  
19 any officer or employee than the rates established by the United States General  
20 Services Administration for such expenses.

1 Section 3. R.S. 39:231(A) and (C) are hereby amended and reenacted and R.S.  
2 39:231(E) is hereby enacted to read as follows:

3 §231. Commissioner to prescribe rules governing travel and traveling expenses; use  
4 of state aircraft and other vehicles by statewide elected officials; minimum  
5 and maximum prices allowed for meals ~~to state employees~~

6 A. Except as otherwise provided in ~~Subsection B, Subsection C, and~~  
7 ~~Subsection D~~ this Section, the commissioner of administration, with the approval of  
8 the governor, shall, by rule or regulation, prescribe the conditions under which each  
9 of various forms of transportation may be used by state officers and employees in the  
10 discharge of the duties of their respective offices and positions in the state service  
11 and the conditions under which allowances will be granted for traveling expenses.

12 \* \* \*

13 C.(1) The commissioner of administration shall not establish meal  
14 allowances for state employees at a price below two dollars and seventy-five cents  
15 for breakfast, three dollars and twenty-five cents for lunch, and five dollars for  
16 dinner.

17 (2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, no agency  
18 or entity in the executive branch shall pay more for meals or incidental expenses for  
19 any state officer or employee than the rates established by the United States General  
20 Services Administration for such expenses.

21 \* \* \*

22 E.(1) Notwithstanding any provision of this Section to the contrary, during  
23 a state of disaster or emergency declared by the governor pursuant to R.S. 29:724,  
24 the maximum allowable reimbursement for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses  
25 for state public officials and employees who are performing duties directly related  
26 to the declared emergency or disaster may exceed the amounts established by the  
27 United States General Services Administration by not more than seventy-five percent  
28 of the applicable rate established by the United States General Services  
29 Administration for the locality in which the expenses are incurred.

1           (2) The increased reimbursement rate authorized by Paragraph (1) of this  
2           Subsection shall apply only to expenses incurred:

3           (a) Within the designated emergency area as identified in the governor's  
4           executive order or proclamation, or in any area to which state personnel are deployed  
5           in direct response to the declared emergency or disaster.

6           (b) During the period beginning on the date of the governor's declaration of  
7           a state of disaster or emergency and ending on the date of the termination of the  
8           declared state of disaster or emergency, or thirty days after the date of the  
9           declaration, whichever occurs first. If the governor renews the declaration pursuant  
10          to R.S. 29:724(B)(1), the increased reimbursement rate shall continue for the  
11          duration of the renewed declaration.

12          (3) Each budget unit claiming reimbursement at the increased rate authorized  
13          by this Subsection shall maintain documentation sufficient to demonstrate that the  
14          expenses were incurred in direct connection with the declared emergency or disaster  
15          and shall submit such documentation to the commissioner of administration within  
16          sixty days after the termination of the declared state of disaster or emergency.

17          Section 4. This Act shall apply to expenses for meals and incidental expenses  
18 incurred on and after July 1, 2026. Reimbursements for such expenses incurred prior to July  
19 1, 2026, but submitted after that date shall be at the rate in effect for the paying organization  
20 at the time the expense was incurred.

21          Section 5. The provisions of this Act shall become effective July 1, 2026.

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#### DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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HB 398 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Zeringue

**Abstract:** Prohibits payment by any state agency or entity for meals and incidental expenses for any officer or employee in excess of amounts established by the U.S. General Services Administration (USGA).

## JUDICIAL BRANCH

Present law (R.S. 13:1 et seq.) establishes general provisions governing the judicial officers and employees of the state court system. Proposed law prohibits any court authorized by present constitution (Art. V) or any state entity in the judicial branch from paying more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the rate established by the USGA for such expenses.

## LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Present law (R.S. 24:1 et seq.) establishes general provisions governing the operations of the legislature. Proposed law prohibits any agency or entity in the legislative branch from paying more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the rate established by the USGA for such expenses.

## EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Present law (R.S. 39:231) authorizes the commissioner of administration, with the approval of the governor, to prescribe the conditions that state officers and employees may be granted travel expenses. Proposed law prohibits any agency or entity in the executive branch from paying more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the rate established by the USGA for such expenses.

Proposed law provides that during a gubernatorially declared state of disaster or emergency, the maximum allowable reimbursement for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses for state public officials and employees who are performing duties directly related to the declared emergency or disaster may exceed the amounts established by the USGA by not more than 75% of the applicable USGA rate. Applies only to expenses incurred within the designated emergency area or in any area to which state personnel are deployed in direct response to the declared emergency or disaster and only during the established period of the state of disaster or emergency, or 30 days after the date of the declaration, whichever occurs first. If the governor renews the declaration, the increased reimbursement rate shall continue for the duration of the renewed declaration.

Proposed law requires each budget unit claiming reimbursement at the increased emergency rate to maintain documentation sufficient to demonstrate that the expenses were incurred in direct connection with the declared emergency or disaster and submit such documentation to the commissioner of administration within 60 days after the termination of the declared state of disaster or emergency.

Proposed law applies to expenses for lodging and meals and incidental expenses incurred on and after July 1, 2026. Reimbursements for these expenses incurred prior to July 1, 2026, but submitted after that date are to be at the rate in effect for the paying organization at the time the expense was incurred.

Effective July 1, 2026.

(Amends R.S. 39:231(A) and (C); Adds R.S. 13:6, R.S. 24:16, and R.S. 39:231(E))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs to the original bill:

1. Removes provisions limiting the amount of reimbursement for lodging.
2. Adds provisions regarding the maximum allowable reimbursement to executive branch employees and public officials for lodging, meals, and incidental expenses during a gubernatorially declared state of emergency.