

HOUSE SUMMARY OF SENATE AMENDMENTS

HB 398

2026 Regular Session

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

Synopsis of Senate Amendments

1. Prohibit the reimbursement, rather than payment, of certain expenses.
2. Provide that reimbursement shall not exceed the *maximum daily* U.S. General Services Administration rate.
3. Provide for costs associated with agency-hosted conferences or meals during working meetings.

Digest of Bill as Finally Passed by Senate

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 reimbursing more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the maximum daily rate established by the U.S. General Services Administration (USGA) for such expenses. Provides that proposed law shall not prohibit reliance upon provisions for agency-hosted conferences or meals during working meetings that are equivalent to those that apply to executive branch employees.

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 reimbursement more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the maximum daily rate established by the USGA for such expenses. Provides that proposed law shall not prohibit reliance upon provisions for agency-hosted conferences or meals during working meetings that are equivalent to those that apply to executive branch employees.

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 reimbursing more for meals or incidental expenses for any officer or employee than the rate established by the USGA for such expenses, unless authorized in writing by the commissioner of administration when acting in accordance with an issued policy and procedure manual.

Proposed law provides that during a gubernatorially declared state of disaster or emergency, the maximum allowable reimbursement for 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 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))