

Supreme Court of Nevada

Topic: **Official Business Travel Policy**

Policy Statement: The Supreme Court recognizes that its judicial members, staff, and others acting on the Court's behalf must travel to and from locations other than their primary workstations and outside normal working hours in order to accomplish the work of the Court and should be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred.

Part I. Purpose

A. Primary Goals and Objectives

1. The primary goals and objectives of this policy are to:
 - a. Provide the Appellate Justices and Judges, Court staff, and others performing duties for the benefit of the Court with current information and support in an effort to reduce or eliminate the use or loss of personal funds expended for business travel or business purposes.
 - b. Clearly define what expenses may be incurred in travel and the responsibilities for processing claims for reimbursement.

B. Application

1. Unless otherwise provided herein, the Travel Policy applies to members of the Supreme Court of Nevada, including the Court of Appeals Judges, Appellate Court staff, judges serving in the general jurisdiction/family and limited jurisdiction courts, judges and justices commissioned pursuant to Supreme Court Rules 10 and 12, current members of Court commissions and committees, outside contractors, and other persons designated by the Court to be traveling for Court business.
2. Current information concerning the procedure for requesting the approval to incur travel expenses for business reasons and for submitting claims for reimbursement, including all forms referenced in the procedures, may be found at: https://nvcourts.gov/aoc/administration/budgets_and_accounting/travel

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Part II. Definitions

1. *Accounting Unit*: The unit under the direction of the CFO of the Administrative Office of the Courts responsible for processing travel documents and requests for reimbursement for payment consistent with this policy and the Travel Procedures.
2. *Court per diem*: The maximum allowable reimbursement rate for lodging and meals as established by the Supreme Court of Nevada as referenced in this policy and in the Travel Procedures. Court per diem may also be referred to as judicial branch per diem or per diem.
3. *Court staff*: Individuals employed by the Supreme Court of Nevada, including those in the Court of Appeals, and not otherwise referenced herein.
4. *Department Head*: Appellate Justices and Judges and individuals serving as State Court Administrator and Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, Clerk of the Court, Chief Counsel, and the Supreme Court Law Librarian.
5. *Division Director*: Individuals serving as a Division Director under the supervision of the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts.
6. *Host*: A judge or court staff member who is part of a conference or training and who agrees to serve as a “host” to work with the Court in preparing, staffing or presenting the conference or training, and who is approved to serve as host by the Director or the Director’s designee.
7. *Chief Financial Officer (CFO)*: The individual serving as CFO for the Administrative Office of the Courts under the direction of the Director or the Director’s designee.
8. *Official business travel*: Authorized travel that is necessary and required in order to conduct the business of the Court, including, but not limited to, attendance and/or participation at conferences, meetings, and job-related training. Business travel may be within the state of Nevada or out-of-state.
9. *Primary workstation*: The physical location where the traveler is assigned to work on regular basis. Each employee may have only one primary workstation.
10. *Travel Procedures*: Addendum I under MAS Procedures established by the Administrative Office of the Courts for processing requests for travel and requests for reimbursement of travel expenses.
11. *Travel status*: The period during which a person is traveling to and from the destination at which court business is conducted. The period normally begins upon departure from the traveler’s home or office and ends upon return to the traveler’s home or office.
12. *GSA per diem*: Rates that the U.S. General Services Administration has established for per diem based upon the state of destination, the area within the state, and the time of year. Current rates may be found at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Part III. Official Business Travel – General Rules

A. Fiscal Responsibility

1. When making travel arrangements, the traveler must consider the financial cost that will be incurred by the Court.
2. The traveler should use the least expensive and most cost-efficient method(s) of travel, taking into consideration the time in travel status, the number of persons traveling to the same location, flex-time hours that may be incurred, safety, and the Court's Travel Policy and Travel Procedures.
3. Sharing travel costs when traveling to the same event is allowed. When submitting the travel claim(s), all travelers must identify their traveling companions, who will be reimbursed by the AOC, and outline who was responsible for the various travel costs. The traveler may only claim expenses that they paid directly for ground, lodging, airfare, etc. Any agreements between travelers does not impact who may be reimbursed. All travel claims must be received before processing to ensure shared costs are only claimed by the traveler who incurred the expense.
4. The use of videoconferencing and/or teleconferencing from the primary workstation is encouraged in lieu of actual travel and must be considered when determining whether to travel to an event or not. The decision to use videoconferencing and/or teleconferencing or other similar technology should be made by considering the primary goals of this policy, and how best to accomplish Court business effectively and efficiently.

B. Rates of Reimbursement

1. Travelers will be reimbursed at the applicable per diem rates for the period of time they are in official travel status.
2. When an event is held out of state, per diem will only be paid for travel no more than 24 hours before the start of and no more than 24 hours after the completion of the training, conference, or other event for which business travel was made. The applicable time may be increased depending upon the distance or particular travel issues involved upon approval of the department head or designee. The time in travel status must be reasonable. Travelers may not be eligible for the full 24 hours depending on the destination.

C. Personal Convenience or Combination of Work and Personal Time

1. The primary workstation for members of the Appellate Courts and Court staff is the assigned office in either Carson City or Las Vegas. If a member or employee of the Court chooses to work from the Court office where he/she is not assigned, or to continue working at the alternate Court office for his/her own personal convenience, no Court per diem reimbursement will be paid during the period of personal convenience. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis by a department head or designee.
2. Travelers may choose to take personal time off before or after completing Court required business travel or to have a spouse or other person accompany them on the travel. Particular care must be taken in submitting any claims under the Travel Procedures to ensure that reimbursement is sought only for travel and expenses directly related to the official business of the Court.

D. Travel Procedures

The traveler must follow the Travel Procedures and must utilize the forms provided on the [Appellate Court Intranet](#) or at [Courts internet page](#) when planning travel or requesting reimbursement for travel from the Court.

E. Non-Reimbursable Expenses

The Court will not reimburse costs or expenses that are not directly related to the Court's business. Examples of such non-reimbursable costs (not an inclusive list) are:

- Interest charges incurred on credit cards used during travel or for travel-related expenses;
- Losses related to theft, casualty loss, or disappearance of personal effects including cash, credit cards, luggage, and airplane tickets;
- Fines and penalties assessed for actions or inactions that were within the control of the traveler.
- Usage of third-party booking sites is at the risk of the traveler when it comes to being fully reimbursed. These websites, such as Travelocity, Orbitz, or certain airlines that offer packages, generally do not break out costs for nightly hotel rates, airfare, and car rental, particularly when travel packages are booked. This is problematic as hotel rates need to be compared to GSA nightly rates to determine appropriateness, and airfare fees also need to be matched up with policy requirements. When third party websites aggregate the expenses, matching those expenses to policy compliance is not possible. Any usage of third-party booking services that do not provide sufficient detail to determine daily rates for hotel stays or other expenses will be reduced to reasonable comparable rates as determined by the AOC Accounting Unit. In the absence of sufficient and easily accessible information to find comparable rates, the travel package may be removed from the claim in its entirety. Additionally, any fees charged by the third-party website (e.g. booking fee, service charge, convenience fee, etc.) for the booking are unallowable, regardless of any perceived savings as a result of using that website.

With many ground transportation options available in most locations, the following are generally unallowable expenses, except when allowed under specific instances as noted under Part IX. Official Business Travel - Cap on Certain Expenses; Funding:

1. Limousine and private car services are not allowable and will be removed from travel claims in their entirety, even when the car is shared by multiple people. Ride shares, taxis, or shuttles should be used instead.
2. While there may be certain circumstances when the traditional, lowest cost, ride share will not suffice, upgraded ride share services such as Uber Black or Lyft Lux are not allowable without additional justification as to why using such upgraded services was necessary. Without additional acceptable justification, such requests for upgraded ride shares will be reduced by half, not including the allowable \$5 tip.

F. Deadlines

All claims for reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days after the last day in travel status. Claims submitted after 30 days may be returned unpaid unless written explanation showing good cause for the delay is submitted with the claim. Claims submitted after the fiscal period closes may be returned unpaid due to the expiration of available funding.

Part IV. Official Business Travel – Air Travel

1. Airline tickets may be purchased utilizing the Court’s travel credit card accounts by the Appellate Justices and Judges or, following approval of travel by the department head or designee, if applicable, by Court staff under the Travel Procedures. Extra costs for “business select,” preferred coach seating or expedited check-in, or other premium services cannot be charged to the Court’s travel credit card.
2. Any business credits available should be applied before purchasing a new flight using the Court’s travel credit card.
3. Coach fare is required for all air travel, both in-state and out-of-state. Travelers are strongly encouraged to choose the least expensive mode of travel, taking into consideration any likely potential of cancellation and the costs of such cancellation. Extra costs for “business select,” preferred coach seating, or other premium fares will not be reimbursed. If an upgrade to a refundable ticket is required to enable the traveler to exchange the ticket for scheduling purposes, the traveler may seek reimbursement of the extra costs using the Travel Procedures.
4. The Court will not reimburse any cancellation fees for unused or cancelled air reservations charged to a personal credit card unless the Court has caused the cancellation and that the traveler is unlikely to use the carrier’s unused travel funds for future court related business trips. In any case, written explanation demonstrating good cause for the cancellation or non-use must be submitted with the claim.
5. Court staff must purchase airlines tickets using the processes identified in the Travel Procedures.
6. Travelers other than Appellate Justices and Judges, and Court staff, must purchase their own air tickets and request reimbursement from the Court utilizing the Travel Procedures. Extra costs for “business select,” preferred coach seating or expedited check- in, or other premium services will not be reimbursed.

Part V. Official Business Travel – Ground Travel

Use of any ground travel not explicitly outlined below will not be reimbursed.

A. Public Ground Travel

1. Ground transportation only includes travel by taxi, ride sharing (uber or lyft only), airport shuttle, or bus. In most cases, ground transportation is the most cost-efficient method of travel for those attending an event where lodging is procured. Limo and private car services will not be reimbursed.
2. Whenever possible, and considering other costs such as staff time and convenience, travelers should take advantage of opportunities to share vehicles or use a low or no cost method of travel to and from the designated location, such as the airport shuttle, hotel courtesy transportation, etc.
3. When ground transportation is readily available, travelers must obtain advance approval by the department head or designee, if applicable, when utilizing a State Motor Pool vehicle or incurring the cost for a rental vehicle if the cost of the ground transportation is less than these two alternatives.
4. Gratuities (tips) paid for ride sharing will be reimbursed up to \$5.00 per trip.(Paid receipt required)

B. State Motor Pool

1. The State Motor Pool offers vehicles to employees traveling on Court business and may be utilized if the traveler chooses to do so.
2. Individuals not traveling on Court business may not travel in State Motor Pool Vehicles.

C. Rental Vehicles

1. Rental vehicles are only authorized for business purposes and not for the personal convenience of the traveler. If a conference or training is located at a full-service facility (a facility with a hotel and restaurants), the traveler should utilize available ground transportation to and from the airport and the facility, unless the cost of the ground transportation is more than the cost of the rental vehicle.
2. Only rental car companies approved by the Court and under contract with the State may be utilized. If a traveler uses any other rental car company, reimbursement will be limited to that which would have been charged by the contractual and approved agencies. Travelers are cautioned that if they utilize a rental car company not approved by the Court, they are not covered by the State comprehensive insurance policy. As insurance is included as part of the negotiated rate with the approved rental car companies, travelers will not be reimbursed for payment of additional insurance coverage offered by any rental car companies.
3. The Travel Procedures must be followed when using rental vehicles or the Court will not reimburse the costs of the rental.
4. The traveler should rent either a compact or midsize vehicle. Request for reimbursement for vehicle upgrades must include an explanation that justifies the higher cost for the larger vehicle in the email when submitting the travel claim.
5. Travelers must refuel the rental car before returning it to avoid additional costs charged by the rental companies for refueling. The cost of the fuel will be reimbursed according to the Travel Procedures. Except in an emergency justified under the Travel Procedures, additional costs for fueling the vehicle by the rental company will not be reimbursed.

D. Mileage Reimbursement Rules

1. In most instances, travelers will be reimbursed for use of their own personal vehicle for official travel at Court mileage reimbursement rates as found in the Travel Procedures, which are consistent with the IRS standard mileage rates normally followed by the GSA. The IRS and the GSA review the mileage reimbursement rates annually, or as needed, thus mileage reimbursement rates are subject to change.
 - a. Travelers should always seek to travel at the most economic means possible. Travel between distant locations such as between the Carson City/Reno area and the Las Vegas area, or driving to remote rural areas, can be expensive from a mileage reimbursement standpoint. Driving a personal vehicle between such distant locations is cost prohibitive. Travelers should consider rental cars or State Fleet Service rentals (motor pool) to keep costs down. Unless there are mitigating circumstances previously approved in writing by the CFO, when a traveler drives their personal vehicle for such a distant trip, mileage reimbursement will be paid at a maximum of no more than \$300 per trip regardless of the number of miles traveled.

2. For travel, the traveler may rely on the odometer reading. The accounting unit may rely upon mileage information obtained through Google Maps at <http://www.maps.google.com>; or other reputable sources to verify the reasonableness of the mileage claimed. Travel to various locations within the city of destination will be reimbursed although if excessive, the traveler may need to provide written justification with the Travel Claim.

E. Parking

Parking and vehicle storage fees associated with the use of a vehicle while traveling on Court business are reimbursable at the actual cost. Airport parking fees are reimbursable if the traveler must leave his/her vehicle at the airport while traveling on Court business. The traveler must utilize the long-term airport parking. Receipts are required.

Part VI. Official Business Travel – Meals

A. General Rules

1. Except as provided in Section B below, meals may be claimed and will be reimbursed up to the GSA rate for the destination traveled if the meal expense was incurred by the traveler and can be reasonably charged as a business expense related to the travel event. Rates may be found at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

B. Meal Reimbursement When Meal Provided (memo required)

1. In some cases, the Court may provide a meal to accommodate those attending or participating in an event. If the traveler attends an event where a full breakfast, lunch, or dinner is served, the traveler may not claim reimbursement for the meal(s) unless he/she was unable to take advantage of the meals. In that case, a traveler is entitled to claim the meal(s) at the applicable per diem rate as long as the traveler includes an explanatory memo for not eating the provided meal.
2. In many cases, a “continental breakfast” is served at an event. A continental breakfast usually consists of coffee, tea, pastries, and fruit. If a continental breakfast is provided as described herein, and the traveler chooses to purchase a traditional breakfast meal instead, the traveler may claim the breakfast meal at the applicable per diem rate, provided that the traveler includes an explanatory memo with a reasonable justification for claiming breakfast.

Part VII. Official Business Travel - Lodging

A. General Rules

1. Except as otherwise provided in subsection “G” below, overnight accommodations or lodging costs incurred for a standard room will be reimbursed if the traveler is in travel status and in route to or at a location at least 50 miles from his or her primary workstation.
2. Overnight accommodations may be reimbursed for travel or expenses not fitting within the normal policy when exceptional circumstances exist [see Section XI of this policy]. Exceptions that provide sufficient justification for reimbursement outside the normal policy are subject to the advance approval of a department head or designee whenever possible and may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a. Pending/existing inclement weather conditions making travel difficult or unsafe;

- b. Poor road conditions making travel difficult or unsafe;
- c. Required meetings held late or early in the day;
- d. Court employee is acting as conference host;
- e. A host at a conference pre-approved as necessary for the conference presentation;
- f. Travel time for Judges attending an AOC-sponsored annual or semi-annual judicial conference that exceeds half an hour each direction under normal driving conditions in the area.

3. Reimbursement for lodging will be paid consistent with the Travel Procedures.

B. Lodging Reimbursement at GSA Rate (receipt required)

1. Travelers can seek reimbursement for either in-state or out-of-state lodging expenses up to the maximum amount allowed and as established by the GSA for the destination. The average nightly rate is used to determine the allowance for reimbursement. Current rates for lodging allowances may be found at <http://www.gsa.gov>.
2. When making a claim for reimbursement of lodging expenses, the traveler must include an itemized receipt that clearly sets forth the specific lodging cost(s) attributed to him or her. Applicable taxes and non-negotiable add-on fees (e.g., resort fees) claimed will also be reimbursed.

C. Lodging at Home Sharing or Room Rental properties (e.g. AirBnB, VRBO) (receipt required)

There may be times when staying at an alternative lodging location, such as through independent home/apartment owners who advertise on websites like AirBnB or VRBO are more convenient, or even cost effective, than staying in traditional hotels. When staying in such a location, reimbursement will be made according to the allowable GSA rates for nightly lodging plus tax and reasonable fees. Other than the taxes, fees incurred at these types of properties will be reimbursed up to \$50 per day, if incurred by the traveler.

D. Lodging at Contractual Rate for Court-Sponsored Conference or Seminar

If lodging has been arranged at an event such as a Judicial Education seminar under a contract with the Court at a set amount, the traveler will not be reimbursed more than the contracted-for rate. A receipt is required in order to be reimbursed unless otherwise stated in the brochure.

E. Lodging Reimbursement at Other Rate (receipt required)

1. Conference lodging rates higher than the GSA rate: A traveler may be reimbursed for a lodging expense incurred that is higher than the maximum GSA rate when the lodging is procured at a hotel where a Court-sponsored or organization event will be held and when documentation shows the group rate that was established for the event. A receipt is required.
2. Rates that are higher than GSA rate (such as when the conference venue is sold out or GSA rates are not available nearby): In exceptional cases, a traveler may be reimbursed for a lodging expense incurred that is higher than the maximum GSA rate. A department head or designee may authorize the higher amount when the lodging could not be obtained at or below the maximum GSA rate and when accompanied by an explanation and cost-comparison of available rates as described in the Travel Procedures.

F. Non-Reimbursable Lodging Expenses

1. Gratuities (tips) paid to lodging/hotel staff are not an allowable lodging expense and are not reimbursable. See Section VIII.A.
2. If the traveler was not financially responsible for the payment of the lodging, no reimbursement will be paid. If sharing a room, one traveler is responsible for requesting reimbursement and all claims will be held until all travelers submit confirming the expense is claimed by the payee of the room only.
3. If the traveler is accompanied by a non-employee or person not traveling on court business, the Court will only reimburse the cost of single room occupancy.
4. Costs incurred because of cancellations or no-shows will not be paid by the Court unless the Court is responsible for the cancellation.
5. Charges for in-room movies, hotel facilities such as the exercise room, etc., are not reimbursable.

G. Reimbursement for Judicial Conferences

Overnight accommodations or lodging costs incurred for a standard room for Judges attending an AOC-sponsored annual or semi-annual judicial conference will be reimbursed if the traveler is in travel status.

Part VIII. Official Business Travel - Incidentals and Out-of-Pocket Costs

A. Incidentals at Court Per Diem

Travelers may claim the Court per diem incidental expense in the amount set forth in the Travel Procedures for each day in travel status. This reimbursement is provided to cover the traveler's costs for payment of tips, parking meters, carts, toll charges, etc. A receipt is not required.

B. Other Out-of-Pocket Costs

1. Travelers may incur other out-of-pocket expenses directly related to the purpose of the trip with justification. Receipts are required. The reimbursable costs include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Internet connectivity charges, if connection is needed for Court business and an AOC loaner air card was not available to the traveler;
 - b. Computer, fax, scanner, or printer use charges;
 - c. Photocopies;
 - d. Airline baggage fees; and
 - e. Costs associated with rebooking or rescheduling flight times if delay is court or weather related and not caused because of personal reasons.

Part IX. Official Business Travel - Cap on Certain Expenses; Funding

A. Court Sponsored Events/Training

1. The Court may limit the amount of reimbursement for a particular expense or event when sponsoring an event or providing individual training. For example, if the Court has negotiated a special lodging rate of \$50.00 per night, the traveler may only claim up to the negotiated rate (plus taxes and applicable fees, if any). The limits on the rate of reimbursement must be applied equally to all

travelers. Ground transportation will be handled on an event-by-event basis to determine a reasonable cap.

2. The Court will provide advance notice to attendees, participants, and staff of any limitation on the amount of reimbursement for a particular expense or event. The notice may be in the form of a letter, email, event brochure, website posting, a request to encumber funds, or other documentation distributed in connection with the event.

Part X. Official Business Travel - Reimbursement of Travel Claims for Services Performed by Others

A. General Rule

Reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by outside consultants, contractors, and vendors who perform professional services for the Court will be paid if authorized.

B. Conditions for Reimbursement for Services Performed by Others

1. Reimbursement for travel expenses for outside consultants, contractors and vendors as described herein may be paid as long as all the following conditions have been met:
 - a. The particular service and travel expense is specified, authorized and approved in advance under a signed contract, a professional services agreement, a letter of agreement, or a preauthorization for travel form;
 - b. The expenses are consistent with this Travel Policy or are otherwise specified under the Travel Procedures or contract;
 - c. The request for reimbursement of travel costs complies with the Travel Procedures; and
 - d. Receipts are provided when required.

Part XI. Exceptions

The Court recognizes that there may be times when an expense does not fit exactly within the Travel Policies stated above. This may include times when a host is needed at a conference or when staff needs to be present at a conference or training without the travel required to place them in travel status.

Any such exceptional circumstances must, whenever possible, be approved in advance by a Department Head or Division Director.

All exceptions to the Travel Policy must be justified in writing, signed by a Department Head or Division Director, and supported by receipts. Approval will be made on a case-by-case basis.