



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 3/17/2026

File #: 26-160

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Clerk of the Board

Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Consider Adjusting Supervisor Travel Reimbursement Budgeted Amount to Accommodate a More Accurate Reflection of Expenditures and Set Appropriate Guidelines for Implementation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Review the current travel funds per district; and
2. Review of travel budget options for improvement; and
3. Direct the Clerk of the Board to take appropriate action.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Core Services/Other

Strategic Plan Category: 9999 - Core Services/Other

DISCUSSION:

Each fiscal year (FY), individual Board members are allocated a distinct budget line item for reimbursement of travel and related expenses. The current allocation is \$10,300 per Supervisor. These expenses are reported monthly as an agenda item in accordance with Government Code Section 53232.3(d).

During the mid-year budget review process, each Supervisor is informed of their travel budget balance by the Clerk of the Board. The Clerk of the Board manages the budget for all Board of Supervisors staff and has the ability to adjust funding availability between districts as needed using unspent funds. In prior years, there has been flexibility to adjust individual Supervisors' travel line items to allow for reimbursement beyond the originally budgeted \$10,300 amount.

At the mid-year budget review for the current fiscal year, District 2 travel reimbursements were projected to exceed the budget by approximately \$5,500. Supervisor Bushnell has requested that this item be brought before the Board to discuss potential changes to the travel budget and to establish a clearer and more consistent process moving forward. This discussion could inform improved budget development for the FY 2026-27 budget cycle and create a more transparent and accountable process for managing travel expenditures.

Background

In 2006, the Board allocated \$6,000 per district for travel expenses. That amount was increased to the current level of \$10,300 per district and has remained unchanged for approximately ten years.

It should also be noted that in 2016 the mileage reimbursement rate was \$0.57 per mile and the per diem rate for Sacramento travel was \$89 for lodging and \$51 for meals per day. Currently, those reimbursement rates have increased to \$0.725 per mile, \$150 for lodging, and \$86 for meals per day. While reimbursement rates have increased significantly, the individual travel allocations for Board members have remained unchanged.

After reviewing travel policies in similarly sized counties and consulting with other Clerk of the Board offices, several potential options have been identified for the Board's consideration:

1. **Increase each Supervisor's travel allocation** to a not-to-exceed amount of \$15,000 per district. The Clerk of the Board would monitor expenditures and notify Supervisors when the limit has been reached. Any expenses beyond the approved limit would not be reimbursed.
2. **Redistribute the existing total allocation of \$51,500** based on the geographic size of each district. This approach would allocate travel funds proportionally using a formula based on each district's share of the county's total square mileage.
3. **Limit reimbursements** to travel associated with Boards, Commissions and Committees meetings or conferences directly related to a Supervisor's annual appointments. All other travel would either be denied or require approval by the full Board of Supervisors through an agenda item.
4. **Maintain the current \$10,300 allocation per district** and deny reimbursement for any expenses incurred beyond that amount.
5. **Require Board approval** for any conference travel estimated to exceed a specified expense threshold.
6. **Limit reimbursement to in-county travel only**, requiring any out-of-county travel to be approved by the Board of Supervisors through an agenda item.

While the overall Board of Supervisors/Clerk of the Board budget has been under allocation in several previous years, last year's overall budget exceeded the adopted allocation by approximately \$25,000. This increase was not solely attributable to travel costs, as departmental liability expenses have also increased significantly.

Direction from your Board regarding how travel expenditures should be managed would allow for a more equitable, transparent and consistent process, supported by a shared understanding among all members of the Board.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There may be a financial impact associated with this item depending on the direction provided by the Board. Increasing the travel allocation for each district to \$15,000 would result in a total budget increase of \$23,500.

If the Board elects to maintain the current practice of allowing districts to exceed their allocated travel budgets, the total fiscal impact would be uncertain and would vary based on actual reimbursement requests.

STAFFING IMPACT

Tracking expenditures is already a function of the Clerk of the Board, therefore there would be no additional staffing impact. If the Board chooses to implement an option that requires agenda item per individual travel, it would impact staff time.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS:

None

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: NA

File No NA

