
DIGEST

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HB 398 Reengrossed

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, 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))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

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

1. Remove provisions limiting the amount of reimbursement for lodging.
2. Add 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.

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Authorize executive branch agencies to pay more for meals and incidental expenses than the rates established by the USGA if authorized in writing by the commissioner of administration when acting in accordance with an issued policy and procedure manual.
2. Remove lodging from provision regarding the maximum allowable reimbursement during a gubernatorially declared state of disaster or emergency.