



The Discretion to Save

A Review of Congressman Mike Castle's
Personal Office Budget Expenditures, 2007-2008

In 2007 and 2008 Congressman Mike Castle's congressional office budget, like the budgets for other members of Congress was over \$1.3 million each year.

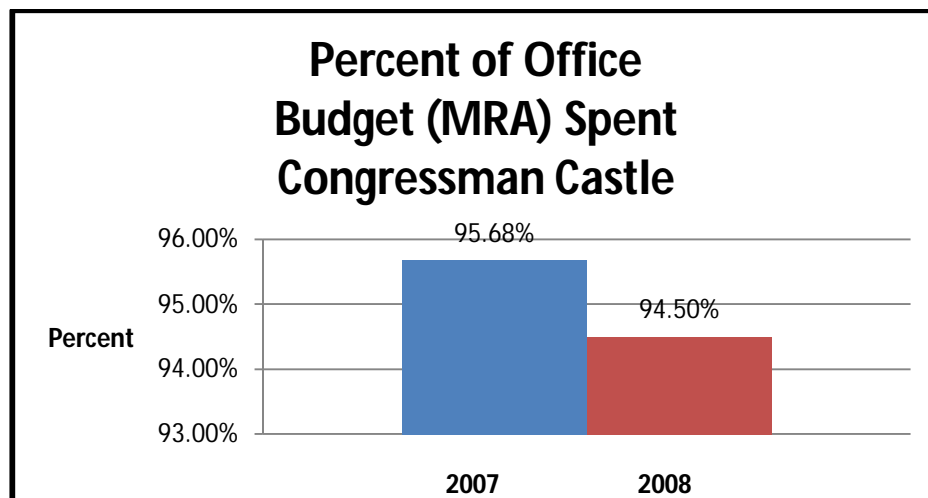
Each member of Congress can use these funds at his or her discretion. The funds are used to cover staff salaries, transportation to and from Washington, DC, rent, office supplies and constituent communications. Given the ongoing fiscal nightmare in the federal budget, it is informative to look into members' discretionary budgets to see how much they are spending, what they are purchasing, and how much of their allocated budget they are using.

The information on how the discretionary budget is spent was only posted online recently. Prior to the creation of <http://disbursements.house.gov/>, the public was required to obtain a paper document entitled "Statement of Disbursements of the House" published by the Chief Administrative Office of the House. The document is published quarterly. The new online spending portal increases transparency for congressional spending beginning in the third quarter of 2009 enabling further scrutiny of how Members of Congress are spending their discretionary MRA dollars.

As one of 435 members of Congress, Castle has only one vote when it comes to spending decisions made by the legislature. However, like other members of Congress, he has complete discretion over his personal office budget.

This report is a summary of Castle's discretionary expenditures for 2007 and 2008.

In 2007 and 2008, Castle spent 95.68 percent and 94.50 percent of his "Member Representational Allowance" (MRA), respectively. Member budgets are "use it or lose it." Any money not spent at the end of the year stays in the United States Treasury. The less a member spends, the more money that is saved.



Congressman Castle MRA Expenditures	
2007 MRA	\$1,357,566.00
2007 Spending	\$1,298,910.40
Balance	\$58,655.60
Percentage spent	95.68%
2008 MRA	\$1,394,793.00
2008 Spending	\$1,318,075.11
Balance	\$76,717.89
Percentage spent	94.50%

The expenses within the MRA are divided into eight categories: franked mail, personal benefits, travel, rent/communications/utilities, printing & reproduction, other services, supplies and materials, and equipment.

Using Connecticut's Congressional delegation for comparison, Castle's MRA spending appears to be on par with the spending levels of other members. However, the population of Castle's district is 864,764 – 149,055 higher than Connecticut's most populous congressional district.

MEMBER	2007 MRA	2007 SPENDING	BALANCE	% SPENT	DISTRICT POPULATION
Larson	\$1,320,943.00	\$1,246,124.70	\$74,818.30	94.3	700,635
Courtney	\$1,324,268.00	\$1,314,375.90	\$9,892.10	99.3	715,709
DeLauro	\$1,333,284.00	\$1,193,614.75	\$139,669.25	89.5	690,290
Shays	\$1,335,029.00	\$1,322,561.23	\$12,467.77	99.1	685,254
Murphy	\$1,298,876.00	\$1,253,583.08	\$45,292.92	96.5	709,364
MEMBER	2008 MRA	2008 SPENDING	BALANCE	% SPENT	DISTRICT POPULATION
Larson	\$1,358,170.00	\$1,307,012.32	\$51,157.68	96.2	700,635
Courtney	\$1,361,495.00	\$1,357,062.24	\$4,432.76	99.7	715,709
DeLauro	\$1,370,511.00	\$1,250,900.99	\$119,610.01	91.3	690,290
Shays	\$1,372,256.00	\$1,345,468.99	\$26,787.01	98	685,254
Murphy	\$1,336,103.00	\$1,288,147.72	\$47,955.28	96.4	709,364

Further comparisons were made to spending levels of New Hampshire's Congressional Delegation.

Member	2007 MRA	% SPENT	BALANCE	2008 MRA	% SPENT	BALANCE
Hodes	\$1,357,029.00	96.3	\$49,871.49	\$1,394,256.00	97.8	\$30,036.54
Shea-Porter	\$1,341,789.00	99.7	\$4,424.68	\$1,379,364.00	96.2	\$52,901.49

Compared to the spending of New Hampshire's Congressional Delegation, Castle's MRA spending is lower for both 2007 and 2008.

Franking Privileges

Members of Congress send mail using the franking privilege, which allows them to use using their signature in lieu of standard postage. This mail includes form letters to constituents and other mass mailings. The use of franking privileges for mass mailings is prohibited within 90 days of an election. This prohibition is a clear acknowledgement of the political benefit of sending such mailings.

Castle spent \$6,112.02 on franked mail in 2007 and \$8,812.80 in 2008, totaling \$14,924.82 over two years.

This contrasts greatly with other members for whom data was reviewed. Members of Congress from New Hampshire and Connecticut spent on average \$129,151 combined in 2007 and 2008. This average climbs to \$179,256 if Congressmen Christopher Shays and John Larson are removed. Shays and Larson spent \$1,806.80 and \$5,972.86, respectively, on franked mail between 2007 and 2008 – levels far more similar to what Castle spent over the same period. Compared to the average amount spent on franked mail by New Hampshire and Connecticut's delegation, Castle spent \$114,226 less than his colleagues in the northeast.

How much is spent on franked mail is important because such mailings are, in many cases, taxpayer funded campaign literature. Former Connecticut Congressman Christopher Shays said as much when he stated, "They're clearly advised that it helps them in re-election. That's what they're told," in response to a question asking whether new congressmen might spend more of their MRA on franked mail to become better-known and to "enhance their re-election chances."¹

Travel

Part of the MRA budget is categorized as "personnel benefits." In 2007 and 2008, Castle spent \$5,335.02 and \$2,962.41 on items classified as personnel benefits. All of these expenses were described as "transit benefits" in the Statement of Disbursements.

The transit benefits are above and beyond travel expenditures for congressional staff. Castle's office spent \$36,130.99 on travel in 2007 and \$35,356.74 on travel in 2008. These expenses cover travel for the Congressman and his staff. Travel expenses are classified as cab fare, local transportation, air fare, train fare, lodging, meals, and mileage.

For comparison, Congressman Paul Hodes (NH) spent \$90,943 over the same period. New Hampshire's other member of Congress, Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter spent \$130,891.

Rent, Communications and Utilities

In 2007, Castle spent \$99,443.05 on rent, communications and utilities from his MRA budget. This amount increased to \$127,178.37 in 2008, totaling \$226,621.42 over the two-year period. This set of expenses includes items such as phones, parking, cable television and rent, among other office related expenses.

Again, using New Hampshire for comparison, Hodes spent \$207,636 on rent, communications and utilities over this same time period, while Shea-Porter spent \$189,955.

¹ Lender, Jon. "Loose Rules for Congress' Mass Mailings." *The Courant*. July 12, 2009.

Other Categories

In addition to the specific expense categories noted above, Castle's office spent the following:

Category	2007	2008
Printing & Reproduction	\$14,646.75	\$15,597.33
Other Services	\$9,127.94	\$33,551.84
Supplies & Materials	\$41,347.35	\$82,819.28
Equipment	\$41,206.95	\$76,931.90

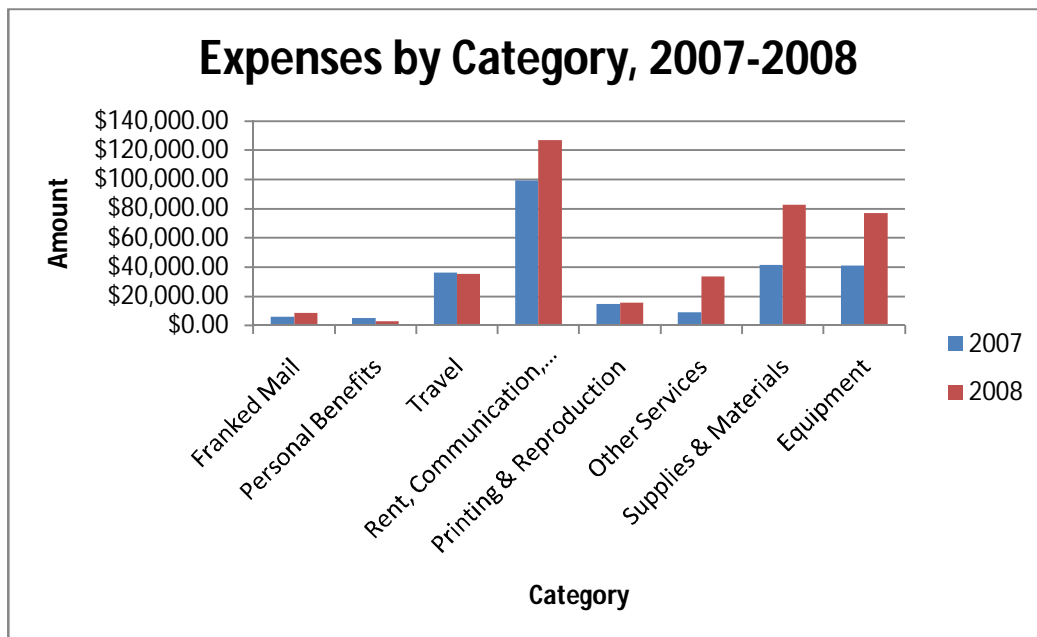
To provide context, New Hampshire's Hodes and Shea-Porter spent the following:

Category	Hodes		Shea-Porter	
	2007	2008	2007	2008
Printing & Reproduction	\$52,933.00	\$172,737.00	\$4,191.00	\$158,170.00
Other Services	\$25,842.00	\$37,345.00	\$12,654.00	\$44,547.00
Supplies & Materials	\$34,834.00	\$32,069.00	\$41,610.00	\$52,765.00
Equipment	\$54,411.00	\$48,788.00	\$33,617.00	\$41,630.00

A Note on Senate Expenditures Information

The data for the United States Senate is more difficult to obtain. Senate reports are less detailed than House reports and are published less frequently (twice annually) than House reports. As such, the personal office budgets for Delaware's two United States Senators are not included in this analysis. Further, as Delaware has only one member of Congress, there is no in-state comparison that can be made to provide additional context to this analysis.

A complete chart of expenses by category can be viewed below.



Conclusion

The Yankee Institute for Public Policy, based in Hartford, Connecticut, has suggested five points for improving transparency in congressional office spending.²

1. Provide greater specificity and transparency for travel expenses. All travel expenses should be tied to a specific person, be it for staff or the member him or herself.
2. Eliminate vague expense categories such as “habitation expense.”
3. Make the purposes of the expenses more uniform and consistent across offices to make it easier to compare expenses across the board.
4. Prohibit the disguising of expenses by passing them through third parties, reimbursements or credit cards.
5. Shorten the delay between incurring an expense and disclosing that expense.

The Yankee Institute also suggests that, “more comprehensive reform would include abolishing unsolicited franked mail and mass mailings. At a minimum, unsolicited, personally addressed mail – which can be abused by targeting certain politically-desirable constituents – should be banned.”

This suggestion is not without merit. In Delaware, local legislators pay out-of-pocket for much of their mass mailings. While some members have in the past used the internal mail house for such mailings, recent internal policy changes, at least in the House, have required legislators to pay out-of-pocket for legislative updates and similar mailings. The full extent to which taxpayer funded mail still exists at the local level within Delaware is unknown.

If you would like to review the information, please contact the Caesar Rodney Institute for an itemized listing of expenses. Additional information can be found at www.SunlightFoundation.com and <http://disbursements.house.gov>.

² Cullen, Fergus. “The Care and Feeding of Connecticut’s Congressman.” The Yankee Institute for Public Policy. August 4, 2009.

Appendix 1: Payroll

The “Statement of Disbursements of the House” includes members’ office payrolls. Congressman Castle’s total staff payroll in 2007 was \$955,611; in 2008 the payroll totaled \$1,008,867, a 5.2 percent increase.

Congressman Mike Castle Office Payroll 2007 & 2008			
Name	Title	2007 Payroll	2008 Payroll
Quaranta, Michael	Chief of Staff	\$150,437.68	\$155,349.88
Dayton, Jeffrey	District Director	\$103,769.88	\$114,344.46
Dickens, Kathryn	Legislative Director	\$92,144.43	\$99,364.81
Rohrer, Katherine	District Coordinator	\$72,496.47	\$80,369.40
Huxhold, Kristy	Caseworker	\$57,390.14	\$62,816.67
Catella, James	Legislative Asst / Sr Legislative Asst	\$58,164.99	\$61,991.68
Kurtz, Olivia	Legislative Asst / Sr Legislative Asst	\$52,999.00	\$61,172.24
Gross, Jessica	Legislative Assistant	\$37,047.20	\$53,694.45
Crooks, Christina	Part Time Emp / Staff Asst / Leg Corr	\$23,526.68	\$40,222.26
Sullivan, Meredith	Manager of Event Plan. & Comm	\$29,226.38	\$39,569.46
Prince, Helen	Shared Employee	\$31,647.03	\$33,716.67
Innes, Erin	Staff Assistant	\$10,105.56	\$32,355.57
Vasant, Jenna	Staff Assistant	\$2,175.00	\$30,191.64
Fitzpatrick, Stephanie	Staff Assistant / Press Assistant	\$17,488.88	\$28,408.35
Sarsfield, Daniel	Staff Assistant	\$9,799.99	\$25,750.02
Hill-Davis, Ariel	Staff Assistant	\$0.00	\$25,558.11
Stevenson, Ian	Staff Assistant / District Rep	\$38,533.33	\$24,344.43
Perkins, Todd	Staff Assistant	\$265.77	\$18,805.55
Oates, Kendra	Paid Intern	\$3,594.94	\$7,514.45
Jenkins, Camilla	Staff Assistant	\$0.00	\$2,775.00
Wolfe, Kelly	Legislative Correspondent / Part time emp	\$17,377.77	\$2,621.69
Hoffman, Colleen	Part-time employee	\$0.00	\$2,104.99
Wilson, Tymira	Paid Intern	\$0.00	\$1,922.84
Huxster, Elizabeth	Part-time employee	\$0.00	\$1,709.40
Cronin, Mary	Shared Employee	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Eckman, Katherine	Paid Intern	\$24.59	\$713.41
Beard, Morgan	Staff Assistant	\$0.00	\$480.00
Brown, Alison	Assistant	\$8,900.01	\$0.00
Dupont, James	Staff Assistant	\$2,200.00	\$0.00
Fink, Matthew	Staff Assistant	\$14,800.01	\$0.00
Hoffman, Kaitlin	Deputy Press Secretary	\$13,108.34	\$0.00
Rittling, Sarah	Education & Workforce Couns	\$14,833.34	\$0.00
Salisbury, Michael	Temporary Employee	\$3,192.00	\$0.00
Spence, Stephen	Staff Assistant	\$4,350.00	\$0.00
Todorovich, Lauren	Legislative Assistant	\$31,272.26	\$0.00
Wenk, Elizabeth	Deputy Chief of Staff / Communications	\$39,400.86	\$0.00
Yeomans, Hugh	Staff Assistant / Legislative Co	\$14,338.91	\$0.00
TOTALS		\$955,611.44	\$1,008,867.43