

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING PAPERS **Instructions and Template for Agencies** **110TH CONGRESS, 1ST SESSION, 2007 (for FFY 2008 Budget)**

Important Note to Agencies:

This Communication is a part of four documents:

- General and item-by-item instructions
- Lists of congressional committees that handle earmarks and other money decisions
- A Schedule/Timeline of Target Dates
- A template to be used for writing the narrative/briefing papers

General:

1. ***Due Date 10/9:*** Agency submissions of briefing paper drafts are due to the Secretary's office by Close-of-Business on Monday, October 9, unless agencies are given an earlier date by their Secretary's office.
2. ***Products to Be Submitted:*** Submit to the Secretary's Office only one consolidated document for all the requests suggested by your agency.
3. ***Naming Convention:*** Please use the following naming convention at the top right hand corner on the briefing paper documents, where "Xxxx" is your secretariat's abbreviation and "Yyyy" is the abbreviation for your agency:

For briefing paper: FY 2008 Cong Brief, Xxxx – Yyyy.doc

4. ***Questions:*** For technical questions about format and presentation, you may contact Carol Bell at the Department of Planning and Budget, 786-7575. For all policy questions, consult your Cabinet Secretary's office.
5. ***Ordering Multiple Requests:***
 - a. All earmark requests ("E") should go first, ordered by priority, from highest (1) to lowest (5) – no more than one request may be ranked (1), (2), (3)... and so on. You may suggest no more than five earmarks.
 - b. Virginia projects ("VA") and policy/budget requests ("P") should follow. These should also be prioritized by number and should follow the list of earmarks. It is fine to include a Virginia-specific policy or administrative issue with no direct

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

fiscal impact.

6. ***Use of Template:*** We suggest that agencies maintain a clean copy of the template for each new paper they want to write. For every briefing paper, type over the “x-es” and other existing comments, without changing the format. Keep in 12 point Times New Roman text and try to maintain the same kinds of bullets, indentation, and bold-facing in all parts of the document.
7. ***Margins:***
 - a. Don’t change the margins unless you **MUST** expand them in order to fit a table on the page or decrease them to handle a long quotation (rare).
 - b. If you must change the margin, use the altered margins only for the section where it’s needed and return to the standard margins for all the rest of the text.
8. ***Bulleting:*** In general, use bullets to highlight distinct points and make it easy for the reader to follow the argument.
 - a. Try to leave a line of white space between bullets so the text is not too crowded.
 - b. **B**ullet points should begin with a capital letter and, unless really needed, should not end with commas or semi-colons (that helps to avoid a sometimes awkward mix of punctuation).
 - c. For consistency, bullets should also begin with the same part of speech, for example, all begin with nouns or gerunds, or all begin with verbs.
9. ***Time and Money:*** When mentioning time and money, especially in earmark requests:
 - a. Distinguish between federal fiscal year (FFY) and state fiscal year (SFY).
 - b. Specify CY for “calendar year” or PY for “program year,” if that’s what is meant. If there’s no specification we’ll have to assume FY.
 - c. Use the full year, for example, “2008” rather than “’08”
 - d. Specify money in millions (for example, “\$2.6 million”) or, if smaller than one million, in specific amounts (for example, “\$875,350” or “\$875,000”).
 - e. Distinguish between the amount of money needed over the life of a project (specify the period) and the amount of money needed in a single fiscal year (for example, “\$2.6 million for FFY 2008 as part of a total of \$10 million in federal funds over five years” or “\$10 million in federal funds over five years, including \$2.6 million for FFY 2008).

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

- f. Where relevant, distinguish between total project costs and federal and state shares. Many requests are made in a context involving many sources of money. When such requests mention specific amounts of money without specifying either period of time OR the federal share specifically, then the request is not actionable.
 - g. Always identify whether dollar figures mean spending, appropriation (federal appropriations usually carry-forward more than one year), or authorization. The distinction between authorization and appropriation is VERY meaningful at the federal level.
 - h. If federal money has already been devoted to the project, specify the amount, when, the source of authorization/appropriation, and the sponsor. Be specific!
- 10. *Bills, Laws, and Agencies:*** When talking about bills, bill number, laws, and agencies, distinguish between Federal and Virginia.
- a. The standard federal practice is to designate House bills as, for example, “H.R. 236” and Senate Bills as, for example, “S. 2405.” At the federal level, there is no such thing as an “HB or an SB.”
 - b. It is advisable when referring to a law’s title to provide the actual Public Law number (for example, “P.L.” 109-603) or Act of Assembly (state) number, if it is available.
- 11. *Samples:*** Secretaries’ offices may send agencies an electronic copy of briefing papers provided last year.
- a. Feel free to use them as a model for project description language, if appropriate.
- 12. *Delegation Initiatives:*** If you are critiquing something promoted by a member (or members) of the Virginia Congressional Delegation, please so state in the first sentence in the “Background” section. Make sure the discussion is factual and that it has a respectful tone.
- 13. *Extent of Narrative:*** Please fill in all sections. If you do not need a section, just enter “N/A.”

Directions for Specific Sections:

1. ***“Title”:*** The wording in the “Title” section should use title capitalization. Begin the subject with a noun, if at all possible.
2. ***“Secretariat”:*** *List your Secretariat*
3. ***“Agency”:*** *List your Agency*

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

4. “Secretariat Priority”:

- a. For earmarks (“E”), limit the number requested to five and suggest an agency priority, 1 through 5, with 1 as the highest: The Secretary’s office will select their top priorities from among all the agencies in the secretariat.
- b. Virginia projects (“VA”) and policy/budget requests (“P”) should follow. These should also be prioritized by number and should follow the list of earmarks. It is fine to include a Virginia-specific policy or administrative issue with no direct fiscal impact.

5. “Category”:

Use one of three categories:

“E” -- An earmark, a specific amount of federal money for a specific project that would be set aside from an existing or likely federal budget and that needs to be specified in an appropriation or a comparable congressional document

“VA” -- A specific Virginia project that doesn't have a direct impact on the federal budget. Two main types of actions fit this code:

- A legislative or executive branch action that would make us eligible for money that's already budgeted or likely to be budgeted, so we are not asking for money. An example is "Get Tidewater Virginia put on the UASI list so we are eligible for anti-terrorism grants based on threat assessment."
- A purely administrative action that is already legal and doesn't involve a budget change, but that Virginia needs from an executive branch agency, such as "Ask DHHS to issue a decision, by July 1, on Virginia's appeal to Xxxx."

“P” -- A policy or budget change that might affect a program nationwide and, in so doing, help Virginia, but we’re not asking for a specific earmark for Virginia.

- 6. “Federal \$ Requested in FY 2007”:** List what, if an, amount of money was requested in FFY 2007. If no money was requested – then please write 0.
- 7. “Federal \$ Requested in FY 2008”:** List what, if any, amount of money will be requested in FFY 2008. If no money was requested – then please write 0.
- 8. “Comments”:** Mention amounts earmarked in the past (i.e. In FFY 2005 \$1 million was earmarked for this project by the Department of Justice.)
- 9. “Committee and Subcommittee”:** Using the list in the back of this packet – indicate what Committees and Subcommittees should be targeted for this request. This information is

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

important to enable the Congressional Delegation to contact the right people.

- a. Enter the relevant congressional committee(s).
 - For most earmark requests, there is a responsible subcommittee of the Appropriation Committee. Highways and Social Security Act programs in the human services are exceptions to this rule, however.
 - For an authorization bill, however (most policy provisions are in the authorization bills), enter the standing committee.
 - For some issue briefs, you might want to enter both the relevant appropriations subcommittee(s) and the relevant policy committee(s).
- b. See the attached list of appropriations subcommittees and related committees.
- c. If NO action is required by any Congressional committee, enter “N/A.” Don’t just leave blank.
- d. If you need to find the correct names for other standing committees, just go to www.senate.gov or www.house.gov and click on “Committees” or “Committee Offices.” Congress is very particular about accuracy in naming the committees, because the committee structure is fairly complex and isn’t the same in both houses.

10. “Project Summary”: Provide a short synopsis of the project – one or two lines will suffice.

11. “Virginia Goal”: Try to state Virginia’s goal by starting with a verb, preferably an active verb, such as “provide” or “increase.”

12. “Request Details” Section: Use the “Request Details” section to detail what actions are being recommended to achieve the goal. The Delegation needs to know what you want them to do.

- a. State your most important point in the first sentence, and try to describe the nature of the action you need, e.g., funding increase, new funding, restored funding, change in the allocation formula.
- b. Be explicit. If you want to request an earmark, say so explicitly. Do you request an increase in the nationwide appropriation that will automatically benefit Virginia? Do you request administrative intervention? A policy change requiring legislative modification? Program re-authorization? Program re-authorization, plus an earmark?
- c. Try to keep this request section to one, two or three paragraphs.
- d. When more than one clear action is expected, treat these components separately, bulleting each part of the request so that it’s obvious when you are asking for more

CONFIDENTIAL GOVERNOR'S WORKING PAPERS

than one action.

13. “Background” Section: If you are critiquing something promoted by a member (or members) of the Virginia Congressional Delegation, please so state in the first sentence in the “Background” section. Make sure the discussion is factual and that it has a respectful tone.

Use this section:

- a. To provide historical, national, or regional information that puts the request in context and
- b. To describe the need, differences between the President's proposals and existing budget, etc.

Unless the issue is exclusively a Virginia issue with no nationwide impact, try to keep this section focused on the national picture, reserving any discussing of impact on Virginia for the next section.

14. “Virginia Impact” Section:

- a. Use this section to explain specific impacts on Virginia. Use numbers to buttress your case, if you can.
- b. Be specific about what constituency groups, demographic groups, agencies, and programs, etc., are affected, how much they will be affected, and when.
- c. Dollars should correspond with the dollar amounts mentioned on the spreadsheet. Any conflicts should be explained, because congressional staff will not take time to guess our intent.

In an effort to further streamline the process, the VLO has been working with the DPB to create an easy-to-use, password protected website for Secretariat staff to use when drafting their request priorities. From this website the VLO and the DPB will be able to more effectively create the final request documents. The website should be completed in three weeks.