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ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

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MEMORANDUM TO ALL HOUSE MEMBERS, OFFICERS, AND EMPLOYEES

FROM: Committee on Ethics 
Jo Bonner, Chairman
Linda T. Sánchez, Ranking Member 

SUBJECT: Purchase of Tablet Computers with Principal Campaign Committee Funds

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify that a Member may use principal campaign committee funds to pay for tablet computers (e.g., the Apple iPad, Samsung Galaxy, and other similar devices) to be used by the Member and employees of the Member's personal office for both official and campaign purposes ("combined use device"). House Rule 24 permits the use of such funds to purchase "handheld communications devices." The Committee has determined that tablet computers are handheld communications devices for purposes of the rule.¹

All costs for purchase of a combined use device, as well as any associated costs for maintenance, repair, operation, and use, including any network access or connection fees, must be paid using principal campaign committee funds. No appropriated House funds may be used for these purposes either directly or to reimburse the campaign committee for all or part of these costs. Likewise, use of funds from a leadership PAC or a campaign committee other than a Member's principal campaign committee is also prohibited.

The Committee reminds you that various laws and rules still prohibit campaign use of official resources, as well as performing campaign work on House property or during official hours, even when using combined use devices. These important restrictions are detailed on pages 175-176 ("Expenses of a Cell Phone or Blackberry That Is Used for Official House Business") of the 2008 *House Ethics Manual* and should be reviewed prior to employing a combined use device.

Finally, Members are reminded that other House committees and offices may restrict usage of handheld communications devices. Members should contact CAO Technical Support at 5-6002 for technical requirements and other information on connecting any handheld communications device to the House infrastructure. Similarly, the Sergeant-at-Arms is charged with the strict enforcement of comportment with decorum rules set by the Speaker for activity in the Hall of the House, which have generally approved the unobtrusive use of tablet devices on the House floor.

¹ While it appears that the use of campaign funds as described here is permissible under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 ("FECA"), Members should nevertheless consult with the FEC on any questions that arise under FECA, including questions on how payment of any congressional expense is to be disclosed on the reports that a Member's campaign committee files with the Federal Election Commission.