

RE-2 Employee Post Travel Disclosure of Travel Expenses

Post Travel Filing Instructions: Complete this form within 30 days of returning from travel. Submit all forms to the Office of Public Records in 144 Hart Building. **This form is a public disclosure. The form and all attachments will be made publicly available.**

Date/Time Stamp

RECEIVED
SECRETARY OF THE SENATE
PUBLIC RECORDS

2026 SEP 24 PM 5:02

Certification: In compliance with the Regulations Governing Privately Sponsored Travel, Senate Rule 35, and the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, I certify that I accepted the following gift of privately sponsored travel:

Private Sponsor(s):

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations

Travel Dates:

September 18-19, 2026

Name of accompanying family member (if any):

Relationship to Traveler:

Total Expenses

Transportation Expenses	Lodging Expenses	Meals Expenses	Other Expenses (Amount & Description)
\$0	\$160	\$100	\$175 (coffee breaks, wifi, meeting froms)

I also certify that attached to this form are all required documents for post travel disclosure, including:

- The final **Employee Pre-Travel Authorization** (Form RE-1)
- The final **Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form** with all attachments
- The final invitation
- The final approved itinerary

Finally, I certify that all trip information reflected in the attachments above accurately reflects the travel that I accepted. If there were any changes to the trip after I received approval from the Committee, the changes are described in ATTACHMENT 1.

9/24/2026

Michelle Benecke

Date

Printed Name of Traveler



Signature of Traveler

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISING MEMBER/OFFICER

I have made a determination that the expenses set out above in connections with travel described in the Employee Pre-Travel Authorization form, are necessary transportation, lodging, and related expenses as defined in Rule 35.

9/24/2026

Date



Signature of Supervising Senator/Officer

ATTACHMENT 1 – CHANGES FROM APPROVED PRE-TRAVEL

Note: Material changes to a trip that occur after the Committee has issued an approval letter may invalidate the Committee's approval. Please contact the Committee with any questions regarding changes to an approved trip.

Were there any changes to the pre-approved travel expenses? (Transportation, Meals, Lodging, Other)?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Expense Change	Revised Amount	Explanation
Travel	\$0	Paid for my own travel, no reimbursement

Were there any changes to the pre-approved itinerary?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Explanation:

Were there any additional changes to the pre-approved trip?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Explanation:

RE-1 Employee Pre-Travel Authorization

Date/Time Stamp

Pre-Travel Filing Instructions: Complete and submit this form at least 30 days prior to the travel departure date to the Select Committee on Ethics in SH-220. Incomplete and late travel submissions will not be considered or approved.

Name of Traveler:

Michelle Benecke

Employing Office/Committee:

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Private Sponsor(s):

National Committee on U.S. - China Relations

Destination(s):

Airlee Conference Center, Warrenton, VA

Travel Dates:

September 18-19, 2026

NOTE: If you plan to extend the trip for any reason you must notify the Committee.

Explain how this trip is specifically connected to the traveler's official or representational duties.

This is the capstone activity of the Fellowship on U.S. - China Relations. In my position, I am often called upon to draft, manage, and review legislation concerning U.S.-China relations, particularly as they relate to artificial intelligence policy and, additionally, procurement policy (both of which I lead for HSGAC minority).

Do you have an accompanying family member or spouse on this trip? Name and Relationship to Traveler:

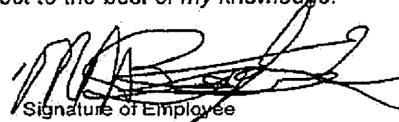
☐

(signify "yes" by checking box)

I certify that the information contained in this form is true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

8/19/26

Date



Signature of Employee

TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISING MEMBER/OFFICER

(President of the Senate, Secretary of the Senate, Sergeant at Arms,
Secretary for the Majority, Secretary for the Minority, and Chaplain)

Christopher Mulkins

(Print Senator's/Officer's Name)

hereby authorize

Michelle Benecke

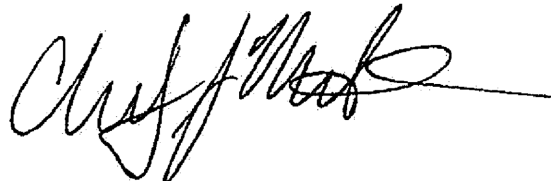
(Print Traveler's Name)

an employee under my direct supervision, to accept payment or reimbursement for necessary transportation, lodging, and related expenses for travel to the event described above. I have determined that this travel is in connection with his or her duties as a Senate employee or an officeholder, and will not create the appearance that he or she is using public office for private gain.

I have also determined that the attendance of the employee's spouse or child is appropriate to assist in the representation of the Senate.

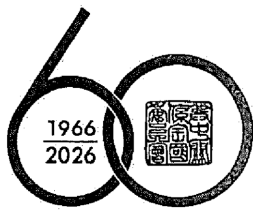
☐

(signify "yes" by checking box)



Date

Signature of Supervising Senator/Officer



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

From: Aaron Nicholson <anicholson@ncuscr.org>
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2026 1:03 PM
To: Benecke, Michelle (HSGAC) <michelle_benecke@hsgac.senate.gov>;
marcos_ibarra@cortezmasto.senate.gov <marcos_ibarra@cortezmasto.senate.gov>;
maddy_libbey@schiff.senate.gov <maddy_libbey@schiff.senate.gov>; Wheeler, Mattie
(Finance) <mattie_wheeler@finance.senate.gov>
Subject: Action Required by Aug 18: Ethics Filing for NCUSCR Capstone Conference (Sept 18-19)

Dear Senate Fellows,

We are pleased to invite you to attend NCUSCR's September 18-19, 2026, capstone conference at Airlie in Warrenton, VA, a culminating activity of the Fellowship on U.S.-China Relations you started in March 2026.

Designed to bring you and subject matter experts together for deep analysis, peer learning, and relationship-building, this conference will provide an opportunity to build on earlier conversations and engage in collaborative problem-solving, and interactive exercises with colleagues from across the House and Senate.

You have already indicated to us your intention to attend. Now you will need to follow all Senate Ethics Committee procedures for privately sponsored travel, including the requirement to submit pre-authorization paperwork *at least 30 days prior to travel*. With the conference commencing on September 18, that means **you must file with Ethics no later than next Tuesday, August 18**.

The Senate Ethics form you need to complete and submit can be found online [here](#). Additional materials needed for your filing — the Primary Trip Sponsor's Ethics form, the conference's draft agenda, invitee list, and other supplemental materials — can all be found attached to this message.

If you have any Ethics questions/concerns, please feel free to contact counsel at Senate Ethics, (202) 224-2981. (Any attorney may assist, but you may want to ask for Shaunda Cobbs, as she is the staffer most familiar with our capstone activity.) Other questions can of course be directed to us.

Please also take a moment to let us know the following:

1. Dietary restrictions
2. Whether you will use our transportation (chartered coach) or will get yourself to/from Airlie

Once you have submitted your Ethics paperwork, please also send us a response to this email so that we may check you off for having filed. Until that time, we will send you a series of reminder emails.

Best,
NCUSCR Government Engagement Team

Trip Name: NCUSCR Congressional Staff Fellowship Capstone Conference

Organization Information

Organization Name:

National Committee on U.S.-China Relations

Is your organization classified as a §501(c)(3)?☒ Yes ☐ No**If Yes, §501(c)(3) Organization Type:**☒ Private Foundation ☐ Public Charity**Address:**

52 Vanderbilt Ave., 16th Fl

City, State, Zip:

New York, NY 10017

Phone Number:

212-645-9677

Organization URL:

www.ncuscr.org

History of Congressional Travel

Describe your organization's history of sponsoring congressional travel.

Having taken the first-ever delegation of Congressional staffers to the PRC in 1976, NCUSCR has a long history of organizing delegation visits for Members of Congress and their staffs. Between 2005 and 2019 (when the pandemic made travel impossible), NCUSCR organized and accompanied nine privately sponsored Member delegations from the House of Representatives, as well as more than 30 MECEA Senate and House staff delegations. All of these delegations have visited the PRC; Member delegations have also on occasion made extensions stops in

Educational Activities

Describe the educational activities performed by your organization other than sponsoring congressional travel.

See attached: Exhibit A

Lobbyist and Foreign Agent Registration Information

Lobbyist Registration Status (Select one):☒ I certify that the sponsor is not a federally registered lobbyist and does not retain or employ a federally registered lobbyist.☐ I certify that the sponsor is not a federally registered lobbyist but does retain or employ one or more federally registered lobbyists.**Foreign Agent Registration Status (Select one):**☒ I certify that the sponsor is not an agent of a foreign principal and does not retain or employ an agent of a foreign principal.☐ I certify that the sponsor is not an agent of a foreign principal but does retain or employ one or more agents of a foreign principal.

Foreign Government Involvement

Foreign Agent Registration Status (Must select all):☒ I certify that the sponsor is not a foreign government.☒ I certify that the sponsor is not an entity that is owned or operated by a foreign government.☒ I certify that the sponsor does not receive funding from a foreign government.

Purpose and Details

Provide a brief description of the trip.

The capstone conference is designed to bring the Fellowship cohort together with a team of experts for deeper analysis, peer learning, and relationship-building. Leading up to the capstone, Fellows have examined key issues shaping U.S.-China relations through expert-led discussions. The 1½-day conference will provide an opportunity to build on those conversations through extended discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and interactive exercises with colleagues from across the House and Senate.

Explain how the purpose of the trip relates to your organization's mission.

See attached -- Exhibit B

Is your organization the only sponsor for this trip?

☒ Yes ☐ No

If No, describe your organization's role in planning the trip.

If there are multiple sponsors, each sponsor must submit Organization Information (Page 1 of the Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form) and a Signature Page Form.

Grantmaking Organizations (Optional)

If you have a Grantmaking Organization, you must attach a Grantmaking Organization Certification Form.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

With or Without Regard to Congressional Participation (Select one):

- ☐ The trip is arranged or organized without regard to congressional participation.
- ☒ The trip is arranged or organized with regard to congressional participation.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Involvement in Planning, Organizing, Requesting or Arranging

- ☒ The trip will not in any part be planned, organized, requested, or arranged by a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal, other than de minimis involvement.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Financing (Must select all):

- ☒ The trip will not be financed in any part by a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal.
- ☒ No funds or in-kind contributions were earmarked directly or indirectly for the purpose of financing this specific trip from a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal or from a private entity that retains or employs one or more registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal.

Lobbyist/Foreign Agent Accompaniment

Complete if all sponsors are §501(c)(3) organizations (Select one):

- ☒ The trip is limited to three days (for trips inside the continental United States) or seven days (for trips outside the continental United States), and no lobbyist or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee at any point throughout the trip
- ☐ The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and one overnight stay) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip
- ☐ The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and two overnight stays) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip

Complete if any of the sponsors is not a §501(c)(3) organizations (Select one):

- ☐ No sponsor retains or employs a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principle, the trip is limited to three days (for trips inside the continental United States) or seven days (for trips outside the continental United States), and no lobbyist or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee at any point throughout the trip
- ☐ The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and one overnight stay) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip
- ☐ The trip is limited to a one-day event (exclusive of travel time and two overnight stays) and no registered lobbyists or agents of a foreign principal will accompany the Member, officer, or employee on any segment of the trip

Required if selecting the third option in either column - Please explain why the second overnight stay is practically required and necessary to accomplish the purpose of the trip.

Certification of No Recreational Activity and No Alcohol (Must select all):

- ☒ Travel expenses paid for will not include expenditures for recreational activities.
- ☒ Travel expenses paid for will not include expenditures for alcohol, except as permitted by the Regulations Governing Privately Sponsored Travel.

Invitees list

- ☒ A list of all Senate invitees is attached to this form (required).
- ☒ Members and staff from the House of Representatives will also receive invitations.

Travel Details (Submit additional pages as needed)

Trip Start Date/Time:
September 18, 2026



Trip End Date/Time:
September 19, 2026

Will the traveler be accompanied by a family member for whom the sponsor will pay travel expenses?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Transportation (Member/Officer/Employee: \$ 80 Accompanying Family Member: \$ 0)

Transportation Type	Class	Amount
coach bus	chartered	\$80

Details (optional)

This is a good faith estimate. We plan to charter a coach bus from Chariots for Hire, a Reston,

Lodging (Member/Officer/Employee: \$ 160 Accompanying Family Member: \$ 0)

Check-In	Check-Out	Facility	City	State	Country
9/18/26	9/19/26	Airlie Conference Center	Warrenton	VA	USA
Nights	Cost/Night	Cost Exceed Per Diem (Yes/No)	If Yes, please explain why expenses over the per diem rate are reasonable and necessary.		
1	\$160	Yes	higher costs due to seasonal variance and		

Check-In	Check-Out	Facility	City	State	Country
Nights	Cost/Night	Cost Exceed Per Diem (Yes/No)	If Yes, please explain why expenses over the per diem rate are reasonable and necessary.		

Check-In	Check-Out	Facility	City	State	Country
Nights	Cost/Night	Cost Exceed Per Diem (Yes/No)	If Yes, please explain why expenses over the per diem rate are reasonable and necessary.		

Meals (Member/Officer/Employee: \$ 100 Accompanying Family Member: \$ 0)

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals	Total	City	State	Country	Cost Exceeds Per Diem (Y/N)
9/18/26			48		48	Warrenton	VA	USA	
9/19	22	30			52	Warrenton	VA	USA	

If costs exceed the federal per diem, please explain why expenses over the per diem rate are reasonable and necessary.

The higher costs are due to seasonal variance (September is still part of high season) and atypically high inflation.h

Reasonable Miscellaneous Expenses

(Member/Officer/Employee: \$ 175 Accompanying Family Member: \$ 0)

Expense Type	Amount	Notes
Conference and function space rentals	\$70	rooms for plenary meetings,
standard A/V package	\$40	HD Data Projector with
Additional Meeting Package inclusions	\$35	coffee breaks and Airlie
Amenity fees + Welcome reception	\$30	including wifi, self-parking

Additional Details (optional)

Welcome reception to include a cash bar for staffers to purchase beer and wine.

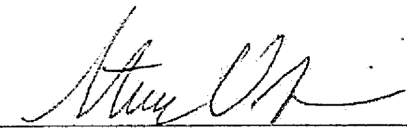
PRIVATELY SPONSORED TRAVEL

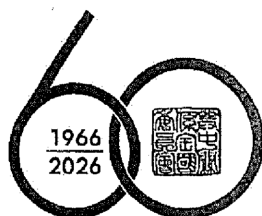
SPONSOR SIGNATURE PAGE

I hereby certify that the information submitted in connection with the trip listed below is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Trip Name: NCUSCR Congressional Staff Fellowship Capstone Conference
Travel Date(s): Sept 18-19, 2026
Travel Destination(s): Airlie Conference Center, Warrenton, VA

Sponsor: National Committee on U.S.-China Relations

Stephen A. Orlins*(printed name of sponsor representative)*President*(title)**(signature of sponsor representative)*8/5/26*(date)*



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

NCUSCR U.S.-China Relations Congressional Staff Fellowship Capstone Conference

September 18-19, 2026

Airlie Conference Center, Warrenton, VA

MISSION GOAL: The goal of this offsite conference, entirely underwritten and programmed by the 501(c)(3) National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, is to immerse Congressional staffers ("Fellows") in an intensive set of briefings on U.S.-China relations — the most consequential bilateral relationship shaping U.S. national security, economic, trade, and technology policy. At the same time, the conference's casual setting will provide and encourage candid, off-the-record exchange, and ample opportunities for the Fellows to engage formally and informally with some of the field's top thinkers.

Friday, September 18

2:15pm	Depart [U.S. Capitol Visitor Center]
2:15-4:00pm	Travel by charter coach to Airlie
4:00-4:30pm	Check-in at Airlie
4:30-5:15pm	Conference registration and review of conference materials
5:15-6:00pm	Reception
6:00-7:00pm	Dinner
7:00-8:15pm	Upcoming Trump-Xi Summit – A Fireside Chat with Sarah Beran <i>Description: Xi's visit to the White House, his first since President Barack Obama received him there in September 2015, is expected to build upon the Trump-Xi summit in May 2026 in Beijing, where both sides agreed to "constructive strategic stability" as the defining principle of the relationship, a framework for managed competition rather than confrontation.</i> <i>This briefing will unpack what U.S. experts anticipate when President Donald Trump hosts President Xi Jinping for a state visit on September 24, 2026, and equip staffers to assess the summit's successes. Following the moderated discussion, Fellows will have ample time for Q&A with the two experts.</i>

Sarah Beran, Incoming President, National Committee on U.S.-China Relations (NCUSCR); former Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Beijing; former Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs, White House National Security Council.

Robert Daly, Visiting Professor of the Practice and Founding Director of the Program on China and the United States, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland; NCUSCR Board Director (*moderator*)

- Overview of bilateral relationship dynamics and current perceptions in Beijing and Washington
- Progress/contention since last summit
- Unpacking “Constructive Strategic Stability”
- Points of leverage and structural sticking points
- Importance of U.S.-China-Taiwan relations

Saturday, September 19

9:00-12:00

Taiwan Embargo Tabletop Exercise, Led by Mark Christopher

Description: Fellows are introduced to a fictitious scenario which begins with China circulating a bureaucratic customs notice in early 2028 asserting that all shipping companies arriving in and embarking from Taiwan must clear China Customs.

Divided into country/territory teams potentially affected by these actions — tentatively set as the United States, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Russia, and the Philippines, with China roleplayed by NCUSCR staff and/or its invited subject matter experts — Fellows roleplay as their respective government’s leadership, deciding how to respond.

We anticipate having time for each country to make three moves (one per hour). A fourth round, in which the China team describes what China’s next move would plausibly be, based on how the Fellows’ teams left things at the end of round three, will be announced to close the tabletop exercise.

Explicitly not a Pentagon-style force-on-force modeling exercise, the exercise is built around a deliberately small-scale premise, meant to illustrate a realistic (non-invasion) risk to Taiwan. It is designed to surface the sometimes hard tradeoffs — deterrence vs. escalation, alliance coordination vs. unilateral action — that any change in the status quo ante might force onto decision-makers in days, not months.

Mark Christopher, co-author, *America’s Taiwan Dilemma*, and President, MC Global Risk Consulting

Country Team Advisors:

Sarah Beran, incoming President, NCUSCR

Robert Daly, Founding Director of the Program on China and the United States, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland

Isaac Kardon, former Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Kendra Schaefer, Director of Tech Policy Research, Trivium China

12:00pm-12:15pm

Break and move into lunch

12:15-1:15pm

Working Lunch with Tabletop Debrief: What did the group learn?
Mark Christopher will lead the discussion.

1:15pm-1:30pm

Break and move back to conference room

1:30-3:45pm

Expert-Led, Round-Robin Discussions

Divided into four groups, Fellows rotate through experts, spending 30 minutes with each. Rather than formal presentations, each expert briefly frames a set of issues before leading an informal discussion, encouraging Fellows to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and explore policy implications.

Discussions will delve into such topics as U.S. export controls, AI policy, and industrial competitiveness, including ways the United States might re-shore high value manufacturing; CFIUS reform, foreign ownership of U.S. farmland and infrastructure, potential national security concerns for the United States, its allies, and trading partners, and related legislation; and China's evolving strategic and economic overseas interests that have contributed to a shifting bilateral relationship.

We will take a 15-minute coffee/bathroom break after the first hour.

Table One: The Future of U.S.-China AI Competition

Kendra Schaefer, Director of Tech Policy Research, Trivium China

- Hardware versus software competition
- Chips, models, data, and talent
- Export controls
- Open versus closed models
- China's AI strategy
- How Congress should think about offensive and defensive competitiveness

Table Two: Chinese FDI and Strategic Infrastructure

Isaac Kardon, former Senior Fellow, Asia Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

- Ports and logistics networks
- Critical infrastructure
- CFIUS
- Dual-use concerns
- Rightsizing national security risks

Table Three: China's Industrial Policy

Sarah Beran, incoming President, NCUSCR

- China's macroeconomic realities
- Firm behavior and incentives
- Role of outbound investment
- Global overcapacity
- Effective U.S. policy responses

Table Four: How Congress Thinks About China

Robert Daly, Founding Director of the Program on China and the United States, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland

- Common misconceptions about China in Washington
- Where bipartisan consensus exists, and where it does not
- How Members and staff can become better consumers of China analysis
- The changing U.S.-China relationship over the past 25 years
- Balancing competition, deterrence, and engagement

3:45-4:30pm

Reflection, Wrap-up, and Closing

4:30-5:00pm

Final pack-up and checkout. Load luggage onto bus

5:00pm

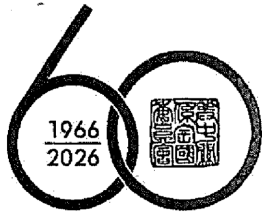
Depart Airlie to return to DC

5:00-6:45pm

Travel by charter coach to Capitol Hill

6:45pm

Arrive at [U.S. Capitol Visitor Center]



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Exhibit A

NCUSCR U.S.-China Relations Congressional Staff Fellowship Capstone Conference

September 18-19, 2026
Airlie Conference Center, Warrenton, VA

Invited Senate Staffers

Michelle Benecke

Chief Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor
Senate Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs Committee

Michael Perez

Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Marcos Ibarra

National Security Advisor
Office of Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto

William Sirotkin

AI Policy Fellow
Office of Senator Jim Banks

Madeline Libbey

Foreign Policy Fellow
Office of Senator Adam Schiff

Joshua Sizemore

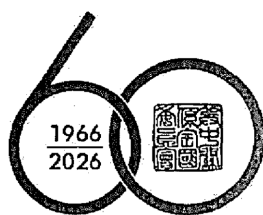
Senior Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Steve Daines

Bowen Peard

Policy Advisor
Office of Senator Chris Murphy

Mattie Wheeler

Senior International Trade Counsel
Senate Finance Committee



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS
NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON
U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Exhibit B

Purpose and Details. Explain how the purpose of the trip relates to your organization's mission.

NCUSCR is a nonpartisan, educational nonprofit whose mission is to foster communication and exchange between the United States and China in support of productive bilateral relations and U.S. national interests. A core part of that mission is equipping current and future American leaders — including Members of Congress and their staff — with the U.S.-China context and to separate misinformation and disinformation from data-driven analysis, so that policymakers and those who advise them can shape U.S. policy toward China on the basis of informed expertise.

The Congressional Staff Fellowship is one of NCUSCR's vehicles for advancing this goal. It gives House and Senate staffers sustained, direct engagement with leading China experts, building both substantive knowledge and the professional relationships that inform their day-to-day legislative and oversight work. The capstone conference — the trip in question — is the culminating event of the Fellowship, bringing the cohort together for extended, in-depth discussion, collaborative exercises, and relationship-building with House and Senate peers, and cultivating a bipartisan, cross-chamber understanding of China policy.

NCUSCR has organized this kind of programming for Congress since taking the first-ever delegation of Congressional staffers to the PRC in 1976. Between 2005 and the pandemic-driven halt to travel in early 2020, NCUSCR organized and accompanied more than 30 Senate and House staff delegations to China under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (MECEA), and privately sponsored, organized, and accompanied nine Congressional Member delegations. This trip continues that history: it is squarely within NCUSCR's long-standing, mission-driven work of equipping Congress with the expertise to engage China policy effectively.