RE-2 Employee Post Travel Disclosure of Travel Expenses

Date/Time Stamp
RECEIVED
SECRETARY OF THE SENATE
PUBLIC RECORDS
2026 OCT -2 PM 1:50

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.**

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 Democratic Institute

Travel Dates:
08/22/2026 to 08/29/2026

Name of accompanying family member (if any):

Relationship to Traveler:

Expenses

Transportation Expenses	Lodging Expenses	Meals Expenses	Other Expenses (Amount & Description)
$2,582.55	$738.00	$301.00	$220.00

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.

October 2, 2026
Date

PHILIP OKE-THOMAS
Printed Name of Traveler

Philip Oke-Thomas
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.

October 2, 2026
Date

Jeanne Shaheen
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
Transportation	$2,582.55	The on-the-ground transport costs were slightly lower than anticipated.
Lodging	$738.00	Hotel offered a lower rate than originally anticipated.
Meals	$301.00	Actual meal cost was lower than expected.
Misc. Expenses	$245.00	Visa cost was slightly higher than expected. The Gambian government also had an entry/exit fee that was not anticipated.

Were there any changes to the pre-approved itinerary?

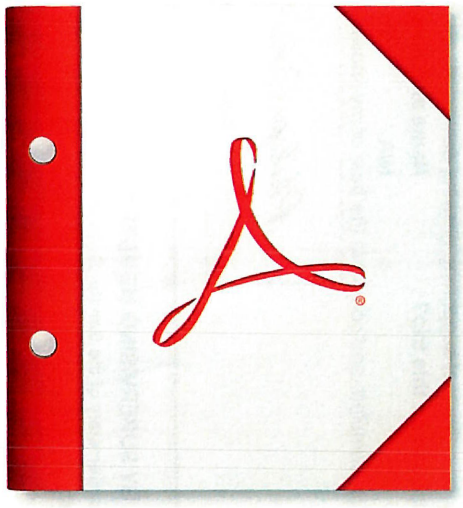
○ Yes ☑ No

Explanation: There were no changes to the pre-approved itinerary.

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

○ Yes ☑ No

Explanation: There were no additional changes to the pre-approved trip.



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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:
Philip Oke-Thomas

Employing Office/Committee:
FOREIGN RELATIONS DEM

Private Sponsor(s):
National Democratic Institute

Destination(s):
Banjul, Gambia

Travel Dates:
08/23/2026 to 08/29/2026

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.

As a Professional Staff Member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who cover Africa, attending NDI's pre-election mission to the Gambia aligns with my committee duties. As the lead on Democracy, Rights and Governance on the continent of Africa, observing the pre-election space in the Gambia will help advance committee action ahead of The Gambia's general election in December 2026. With the recent nomination of a U.S. Ambassador to the Gambia, it also aligns well with understanding U.S. priorities with The Gambia and the importance of supporting growing democracies in West Africa.

Do you have an accompanying family member or spouse on this trip?
No

Name and Relationship to Traveler:
N/A

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

07/23/2026
Date

Philip Oke-Thomas
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)

I Senator Jeanne Shaheen
(Print Senator's/Officer's Name)

hereby authorize Philip Oke-Thomas
(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)

07/23/2026
Date

Jeanne Shaheen
Signature of Supervising Senator/Officer

National Democratic Institute: Pre-Election Observation Mission in The Gambia August 2026

PHILIP OKE-THOMAS

Title:
None

Employing Office/Committee:
FOREIGN RELATIONS DEM

Duty Station:
WASHINGTON,DC

Destination(s):

Banjul, Gambia

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

As a Professional Staff Member on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who cover Africa, attending NDI's pre-election mission to the Gambia aligns with my committee duties. As the lead on Democracy, Rights and Governance on the continent of Africa, observing the pre-election space in the Gambia will help advance committee action ahead of The Gambia's general election in December 2026. With the recent nomination of a U.S. Ambassador to the Gambia, it also aligns well with understanding U.S. priorities with The Gambia and the importance of supporting growing democracies in West Africa.

Name of accompanying family member (if any):
Not Entered

Name and Relationship to Traveler:
None

Organization Information

Organization Name
National Democratic Institute

Is your organization classified as a §501(c)(3)?
(●) Yes ( ) No

§501(c)(3) Organization Type
Public Charity

Address
455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 8th Floor

Address 2 (Optional)

City, State Zip
Washington, District Of Columbia 20001 United States

Phone Number
(202) 728-5500

Organization URL
www.ndi.org

History of Congressional Travel

For this trip, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is organizing an independent pre-election observation mission for the Gambia's 2026 election in line with NDI's mission. NDI will determine the participants, agenda, and meetings for the trip, as well as handle all logistics for the trip. NDI has organized numerous congressional trips for international observations, including for past observation missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Honduras, Georgia, Kenya, and Nigeria.

Educational Activities

NDI is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that believes in a world rooted in freedom — where people have a say in how they're governed and with leaders who are accountable to their people — fosters more stability, security and prosperity for everyone. Since its founding in 1983, NDI has worked with local partners in 156 countries and territories, bringing together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries.

Lobbyist and Foreign Agent Registration Information

Lobbyist Registration Status: *I certify that the sponsor is not a federally registered lobbyist and does not retain or employ a federally registered lobbyists.*

Foreign Agent Registration Status: *I certify that the sponsor is not an agent of a foreign principal and do not retain or employ an agent of a foreign principal.*

Foreign Government Involvement

Foreign Agent Registration Status:

- ☑ 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.

Comments

Signature Page

The signature page is below.

Purpose and Details

Provide a brief description of the trip.

NDI will be bringing a high level delegation of international experts in democracy, governance, and international politics for a pre-election assessment mission as part of its overall election monitoring mission for The Gambia 2026 elections. This trip will include briefings on Gambian political developments, and involve meeting with members of the ruling party, opposition parties, opposition politicians (not in office), election officials, independent domestic observers, local media organizations, and members of civil society.

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

The delegation will assess the overall electoral environment and the ability of both politicians and citizens to conduct independent and fair political campaigns. This trip will play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy. NDI's programming in the region is designed to support freedom in the region to foster more stability, security and prosperity for everyone. This mission will serve these objectives as it will allow experts with diverse backgrounds and experiences to oversee the general environment and to report on such activity to allow transparency and freedom in the election process.

Is your organization the only sponsor for this trip?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

Grantmaking Organizations (Optional)

1. National Endowment for Democracy

With or Without Regard for Congressional Participation

The trip is arranged or organized without regard to congressional participation.

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

- [x] 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

- [x] The trip will not be financed in any part by a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal.
- [x] 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

- [x] 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.

- [ ] 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

Certification of No Recreational Activity and No Alcohol

- 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

- Members and staff from the House of Representatives **will not** receive invitations.

The list of invitees is below.

Travel Details

Trip Start Date/Time:
08/22/2026 @ 09:20 PM

Trip End Date/Time:
08/29/2026 @ 07:30 PM

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

○ Yes ● No

Itinerary

The itinerary is below.

Transportation (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $2,641.00 | Accompanying Family Member: $0.00)

Transportation Type	Class	Amount
Airfare	Coach	$2,264.00
Note Estimed round trip airfare from Washington DC to The Gambia		
Ground Transportation	N/A	$377.00
Note Estimated ground transport to/from airport and while in The Gambia. This includes hired driver in The Gambia that will be shared with other mission participants. Cost is pro-rated based on expected participants and expected costs.		

Lodging (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $858.00)

Check-In	Check-Out	Facility	City	State	Country	Nights	Cost/Night	Cost Exceed Per Diem
08/23/2026	08/29/2026	Expected either the African Princess or Bakadaji Hotel	Banjul		Gambia	6	$143.00	No

Meals (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $434.00)

Date	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Incidentals	Total	City	State	Country	Cost Exceeds Per Diem
08/23/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/24/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/25/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/26/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/27/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/28/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No
08/29/2026	$9.00	$16.00	$25.00	$12.00	**$62.00**	Banjul		Gambia	No

Reasonable Miscellaneous Expenses (Per Member/Officer/Employee: $220.00)

Expense Type	Amount	Notes
Other (Malaria Prevention)	$20.00	Recommended per CDC and other health experts for travel to The Gambia
Visa Fees	$200.00	Required by The Gambia for entry.

Additional Attachments All additional attachments are below.

Document Name
NDI 501 C 3 Certificate

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: Pre-Election Observation Mission: The Gambia August 2026

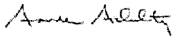
Travel Date(s): August 22 - 29, 2026

Travel Destination(s): Banjul, The Gambia

Sponsor: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)

Sander Schultz — *(printed name of sponsor representative)*

CFO — *(title)*



(signature of sponsor representative)

07/20/2026 — *(date)*

Grantmaking Organization Certification Form

Instructions: If a sponsor receives funds from a grantmaking organization, the sponsor must disclose this on the *Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form*, and the grantmaking organization must complete the *Grantmaking Organization Certification Form.* The completed *Grantmaking Organization Certification Form* must be submitted to the Senate Select Committee on Ethics by the trip sponsor at least 30 days prior to the travel departure date.

Grantmaking Organization: National Endowment for Democracy

Private Sponsor: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Trip Name: Pre-Election Observation Mission to The Gambia

Travel Date(s): August 22 to 29, 2026

Destination(s): Banjul, The Gambia

In compliance with the *Regulations Governing Privately Sponsored Travel*, I certify the following:

- ☑ The grantmaking organization is a § 501(c)(3) organization.
- ☑ The grantmaking organization is not a lobbyist, lobbying firm, or foreign agent, nor an entity that retains or employs a lobbyist or foreign agent.
- ☑ The grantmaking organization provides funds under an established grant program, or in a manner that is otherwise consistent with the mission and practices of the organization.
- ☑ The grantmaking organization is not involved, directly or indirectly, in organizing and conducting the trip. This includes selecting participants for a trip.
- ☑ The grantmaking organization does not directly pay or reimburse travel expenses for any Senate Member, officer, or employee.

Stacey Pirtle — *(Printed name of grantmaking organization representative)*

Senior Manager, Cores Strategy and Engagement — *(Title)*

(Signature of grantmaking organization representative)

July 21, 2026 — *(Date)*

0000000010982 RECEIVED BY: SECRETARY OF THE SENATE Date: October 02, 2026

NDI
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2621
P: 202-728-5500 F: 888-875-2887
www.ndi.org

Invitation List

NDI's Pre-Election Observation Mission (PEAM) to The Gambia

NDI invited two Senate staff to the PEAM.

1. Philip Oke-Thomas, Staff Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
2. Samantha Schifrin, National Security Advisor, Senator Cory Booker (NJ)

Mr. Oke-Thomas was invited given his role in the Foreign Affairs Committee. Ms. Schifrin was invited given her role in security and international matters.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE
PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION TO THE GAMBIA
AUGUST 23-28, 2026
AGENDA[1]

Delegation Members:

- **Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield,** former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
- **Professor Attahiru Jega**, former Chairperson, Nigeria Independent National Electoral Commission
- **Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh**, Senior Associate for Africa and Special Advisor to the President, NDI
- **Dr. Sophia Moestrup**, Deputy Director for Central and West Africa, NDI
- **Enrique Bravo Escobar**, Senior Program Officer, Global Team, National Endowment for Democracy

Observer:

- **Philip Oke-Thomas**, Professional Staff Member, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

NDI Accompanying Staff:

- **Killa Zadva**, Program Officer for Central and West Africa

Saturday, August 22, 2026

21:20 Flight Ethiopian Air 517, departs Washington, DC, to Lome, Togo

Sunday, August 23, 2026

11:40 Arrival in Lome

12:30 Flight Ethiopian Air 1042, Lome to Banjul, The Gambia

[1] Specific times and participants are subject to change based on availability. If an individual is named, their participation is expected but subject to changes given that participant may have last-minute scheduling changes.

18:20 Arrival in Banjul

18:20-20:00 Customs/Immigration and transfer by NDI[2] to hotel

Monday, August 24, 2026

7:30-8:30 Breakfast
Location: Hotel breakfast room

9:00-9:15 **Welcome and Agenda Overview**
Chris Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Special Advisor to the President, NDI
Sophia Moestrup, Deputy Director for Central and West Africa, NDI
Location: Hotel meeting room

This overview will orient the delegation and observer to the mission's objectives, schedule, and standards for engagement. It will clarify the purpose of the election observation's role in reinforcing democratic processes in Gambia and its relevance to governance and regional stability policy work, as well as providing norms of engagement for the delegates and observers.

9:15-10:00 **The Gambia Political and Electoral Context Background Briefing**
Lala Touray, Deputy Executive Director, National Youth Service Scheme, and former Senior Program Officer, NDI

Location: Hotel meeting room

Delegates/observers will receive an in-depth briefing on the political context from Experts who are well informed on Gambian politics and election standards. This will provide delegates/observers with the knowledge of international and national election standards needed to understand the electoral environment and how the electoral environment in Gambia is in line with those standards.

10:00-10:30 Allowance for Extra Time for Prior Meeting/Executive Time

10:30-12:00 **The Gambia Electoral Context and Public Opinion Findings**
Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies (CepRass)
Center for Research and Policy Development (CRPD)
Location: Hotel meeting room

[2] For all transport, the other delegates or NDI staff may be in the car. The NDI-contracted driver will be driving the car. No other individuals are expected to be present during the transportation once in Banjul.

Delegates/observers will receive a briefing on survey findings regarding public sentiments on the elections and the political context from non-partisan groups conducting public opinion polling and other research. This briefing will help delegates/observers understand public opinion trends, voter confidence, and perceptions of the 2026 electoral process as part of their broader mission to understand the overall electoral environment.

12:00-13:30 **Working Lunch -Political Party Landscape and Inter-Party Relations**
Hon Saikou Bah, Co-Chair, Inter-Party Committee, and National Assembly Member for Basse
Mr Samba Baldeh, Co-Chair, Inter-Party Committee, and Senior Administrative Secretary, Gambia Democratic Congress
Location: Hotel

Delegates/observers will meet with representatives of the Inter-Party Committee (IPC) to learn about relations among The Gambia's political parties, codes of conduct governing party interactions, and prospects for peace pledges among parties for the electoral period. This meeting will allow delegates/observers to assess whether party competition is likely to remain peaceful, credible, and rules-based during the campaign period.

13:30-15:00 **Civil Society Engagement in the 2026 Electoral Process**
Elections Watch Committee
Gambia Participates
The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in the Gambia (TANGO)
West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)-The Gambia
Location: *Hotel meeting room*

This is an opportunity for delegates/observers to obtain additional information about the electoral process from the perspective of leading Gambian civil society groups conducting citizen election observation and voter education. This session will provide the delegates/observers with independent civil society assessments of voter education, citizen observation, and public trust in the electoral process.

15:00-15:30 Allowance for Extra Time for Prior Meeting/Executive Time

15:30-17:00 **Constitutional and Electoral Reform Context**
Madi Jobarteh, Founder and Director, Edward Francis Small Centre
Emmanuel Joof, Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission
Awa Gai, Law Hub Gambia/ Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa
Bar Association of The Gambia
Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG)
Location: Hotel meeting room

The meeting will provide an overview of constitutional and electoral reform priorities and the status of such reform efforts. This meeting will help the delegates/observers to

understand how constitutional and electoral reform efforts may affect the fairness, inclusiveness, and legitimacy of the 2026 elections.

18:00 **Working Dinner**

Delegates/observers will discuss the prior meetings and meetings for the next day, including discussing possible questions to pose at meetings.

Tuesday, August 25, 2026

7:00-8:00 Breakfast

8:00-9:00 Travel to State House
NDI driver will transport delegates/observers to the State House, taking approximately 25 minutes. Security to enter the building will take approximately 20 minutes.

9:00-10:30 **Meeting with President Adama Barrow**
Location: *State House*

Delegates/observers will discuss President's perspective on the overall political, security and social context around the election. This meeting will provide the delegates/observers with the incumbent government's assessment of the political, security, and social context surrounding the election. The information, obtained from a variety of different political perspectives, contextualizes governance, electoral integrity, and stability issues relevant to the election.

10:30-11:00 Travel to United Democratic Party (UDP) Headquarters
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the UDP headquarters, taking approximately 25 minutes.

11:00-12:30 **Main Opposition Party Perspectives**
Ousainou Darboe, Leader and Secretary General, UDP
Aji Yam Secka, Deputy Party Leader, UDP
Location: UDP Headquarters

Delegates/observers will meet with opposition candidate Ousainou Darboe and other UDP party leaders. The meeting will cover the UDP's role as a major political force, their stance on constitutional and electoral issues, and their assessment of the December 2026 electoral process. This meeting will provide the delegates/observers with the principal opposition party's perspective on campaign conditions, constitutional and electoral issues, and confidence in the 2026 process. The information, obtained from a variety of different political perspectives, contextualizes governance, electoral integrity, and stability issues relevant to the election.

12:30-13:00 Travel to the hotel
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the hotel, taking approximately 10 minutes.

13:00-14:30 **Working Lunch: Election Access and Participation**
Women in Liberation and Leadership (WILL)
Think Young Women
The Gambia Federation of the Disabled
National Youth Parliament
Hannah Forster, Executive Director, African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
Location: TBD

The delegates/observers will hear civil society perspectives on the election and assess the level of engagement by different groups in electoral processes. This discussion will help the delegates/observers assess whether women, youth, persons with disabilities, and other civic actors can participate meaningfully in the electoral process.

14:30-15:00 Travel to Supreme Court
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the Supreme Court, taking approximately 20 minutes.

15:00-16:30 **Elections Dispute Processes**
Hon. Justice Hassan B Jallow, Chief Justice of The Gambia
Location: Supreme Court

The meeting will allow delegates/observers to understand the election dispute process and the role of the judiciary in the electoral process. This meeting will help the delegates/observers understand how electoral disputes are adjudicated and whether legal remedies are accessible, timely, and impartial in line with international and national norms and laws.

16:30-17:00 Travel to Unite for Nation Integrity Transformation and Equality (UNITE) Headquarters
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the UNITE headquarters, taking approximately 20 minutes.

17:00-18:30 **Perspectives from Youth-led Emerging Political Party**
Talib Ahmed Bensouda, UNITE
Location: UNITE Headquarters

Delegates/observers will meet with likely opposition candidate Talib Ahmed Bensouda and other UNITE party leaders. The meeting will cover the UNITE party's assessment of the December 2026 electoral process. This meeting will provide the delegates/observers with insight into youth-led political mobilization and the conditions facing emerging parties. The information, obtained from a variety of different political perspectives, contextualizes governance, electoral integrity, and stability issues relevant to the election.

18:30-19:00 Travel to hotel
NDI driver will return delegates/observer to the hotel, taking approximately 20 minutes.

19:00 Dinner

Wednesday, August 26, 2026

6:30-8:30 Travel to Soma

9:00-11:00 **Election Administration, Legal Framework, and Logistical Preparations**
Chairman Joseph Colley and colleagues, Independent Electoral Commission
Location: Soma

Delegates/observers will meet with the IEC to assess the technical and legal preparedness for administering the December 2026 elections, including voter registration, logistics, and security. This meeting will help the delegates/observers assess the Independent Electoral Commission's technical, legal, logistical, and security preparedness for administering the 2026 elections compared to international and national laws and norms, as well as issues mentioned in previous meetings.

11:00-13:00 Travel back to Banjul

12:30-13:00 Travel back to hotel
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the hotel, taking approximately 20 minutes.

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:00-15:30 **Media Landscape around the Elections**
Gambia Press Union
West Africa Democracy Radio
Location: Hotel meeting room

Delegates/observers will meet with representatives from several media outlets in The Gambia. Delegates/observers will evaluate the media landscape's fairness and accessibility and discuss the media environment in the pre-election period. This meeting will help delegates/observers assess whether the media environment allows voters to receive credible information and parties to communicate freely during the pre-election period.

15:30-16:00 Travel to Office of National Security
NDI driver will transport delegates/observer to the Office of National Security, taking approximately 25 minutes.

16:00-17:30 **Election Security and Prospects for Peaceful Polls**
Seedy Muctarr Touray, Inspector General of Police
Location: The Gambia Police Headquarters

The delegates/observers will hear about efforts to ensure peaceful polls, potential flash points, and the role of the police during the elections. This meeting will provide the delegates/observers with information on election-security planning, potential flash points, and police roles during the campaign and polling periods. This information will help delegates/observers assess risks to peaceful political participation, citizen safety, and regional stability priorities.

17:30-18:00 Travel to hotel
NDI driver will return delegates/observer to the hotel, taking approximately 25 minutes.

18:30-20:00 **Working Dinner: International Community Perspectives**
Representatives from:
United Nations Development Program
Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
International IDEA
European Union
Location: TBD

Meeting with members of the international community for a discussion centered on assessing the overall security and political risks to the electoral process, and sharing perspectives on the implementation of electoral laws. This discussion will help the delegates/observers understand how international partners assess political, security, and legal risks to the electoral process to consider in their own observation of the electoral environment.

Thursday, August 27, 2026

7:30-8:30 Breakfast

8:30-9:00 Travel to National Assembly
NDI driver will transport delegates/observers to the National Assembly, taking approximately 20 minutes.

9:00-10:30 **Ruling Party Perspective**
Hon. Seedy Njie, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly
Location: National Assembly

The meeting will cover the ruling party's position on constitutional and electoral reforms and their assessment of the December 2026 electoral process. This meeting will provide delegates/observers with the ruling party's perspective on constitutional and electoral reforms and its assessment of the 2026 process. The information, obtained from a variety of different political perspectives, contextualizes governance, electoral integrity, and stability issues relevant to the election.

11:00-12:30 **Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Constitutional Matters**
Hon. Suwaibou Touray, Committee Chair, and colleagues
Location: National Assembly

The meeting will provide an opportunity to hear from the Parliamentary Committee in charge of reviewing a revised constitution regarding the status of the constitutional reform process, challenges and opportunities. This meeting will help the delegates/observers understand the National Assembly's role in constitutional reform and the legislative challenges affecting the electoral framework.

12:30-13:00 Travel to hotel
NDI driver will return delegates/observer to the hotel, taking approximately 20 minutes.

13:00-14:00 Lunch

14:30-16:00 **Smaller Political Parties Panel**
Hamat K. Bah, Secretary General, National Reconciliation Party
Borrie L.S.B. Kolley, 1st Deputy National Chairman, Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction
Suwaibou Touray, Secretary General, People's Democratic Organization for Independence and Socialism
Location: Hotel meeting room

This meeting will provide an opportunity for delegates/observers to hear perspectives on the electoral process from other opposition parties with representation in the National Assembly. This panel will provide the delegates/observers with additional opposition-party perspectives on electoral access, political competition, and representation in the National Assembly. The information, obtained from a variety of different political

perspectives, contextualizes governance, electoral integrity, and stability issues relevant to the election.

17:00-18:00 **Statement Drafting**
Location: Hotel meeting room

The delegates will have a final debrief to discuss findings from the week and determine areas of focus for the statement. Mr. Oke-Thomas will observe but not provide input into the statement. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

18:00-19:00 **Working Dinner**
Working dinner to continue discussing the final PEAM statement. Mr. Oke-Thomas will observe but not provide input into the press conference or statement. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

19:00 **Finalize Statement**
Delegates will collaborate to draft the final pre-election assessment mission statement, including recommendations for stakeholders. Mr. Oke-Thomas will observe but not provide input into the press conference or statement. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

Friday, August 28, 2026

7:30-8:30 Breakfast

9:00-11:00 **Statement Review**
Location: Hotel meeting room

Delegates will conduct a final review of the PEAM statement ahead of the press conference. Mr. Oke-Thomas will observe but not provide input into the press conference or statement. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

11:00-12:30 **Press Conference Preparations**
Location: Hotel meeting room

Delegates finalize and adopt mission statement and prepare for the press conference. Mr. Oke-Thomas will observe but not provide input into the press conference or statement. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

12:30-13:30 Lunch

14:00-16:00 **Press Conference**[3]
Location: Hotel conference hall

Delegates present final PEAM statement to the press, including recommendations for stakeholders. This will allow Mr. Oke-Thomas to have a better understanding of the electoral assessment process and how it can support independent and fair political campaigns which play a pivotal role in both observing and reinforcing the democratic processes for Gambian democracy.

17:00-18:00 **Wrap-up Session**
Location: Hotel meeting room

Delegates/observers will share their feedback on the mission and key take-aways. This session will allow delegates and the observer to identify key takeaways from the mission and clarify any remaining factual context. The discussion will support improvements to similar trips in support of election integrity, democratic governance, and stability and freedom in the region.

Saturday, August 29, 2026

6:10 Flight Ethiopian Air 1043, Banjul to Lome

11:50 Arrival in Lome

12:35 Flight Ethiopian Air 516, Lome to Washington, DC

19:30 Arrival in Washington, DC

[3] Congressional staff will observe but not participate in the press conference.

Internal Revenue Service
District Director

Depar[illegible]t of the Treasury

SEP 20 REC'D

Date: September 10, 1984

Employer Identification Number:

Accounting Period Ending: September 30

Form 990 Required: [X] Yes [ ] No

Person to Contact: R. D. Morris

Contact Telephone Number: 488-3100

National Democratic Institute for Int'l. Affairs
Suite 200, 2000 L Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Applicant:

Based on information supplied, and assuming your operations will be as stated in your application for recognition of exemption, we have determined you are exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

We have further determined that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code, because you are an organization described in section 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

If your sources of support, or your purposes, character, or method of operation change, please let us know so we can consider the effect of the change on your exempt status and foundation status. Also, you should inform us of all changes in your name or address.

As of January 1, 1984, you are liable for taxes under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (social security taxes) on remuneration of $100 or more you pay to each of your employees during a calendar year. You are not liable for the tax imposed under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA).

Since you are not a private foundation, you are not subject to the excise taxes under Chapter 42 of the Code. However, you are not automatically exempt from other Federal excise taxes. If you have any questions about excise, employment, or other Federal taxes, please let us know.

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

The box checked in the heading of this letter shows whether you must file Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax. If Yes is checked, you are required to file Form 990 only if your gross receipts each year are normally more than $25,000. If a return is required, it must be filed by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of your annual accounting period. The law imposes a penalty of $10 a day, up to a maximum of $5,000, when a return is filed late, unless there is reasonable cause for the delay.

You are not required to file Federal income tax returns unless you are subject to the tax on unrelated business income under section 511 of the Code. If you are subject to this tax, you must file an income tax return on Form 990-T, Exempt Organization Business Income Tax Return. In this letter, we are not determining whether any of your present or proposed activities are unrelated trade or business as defined in section 513 of the Code.

You need an employer identification number even if you have no employees. If an employer identification number was not entered on your application, a number will be assigned to you and you will be advised of it. Please use that number on all returns you file and in all correspondence with the Internal Revenue Service.

Because this letter could help resolve any questions about your exempt status and foundation status, you should keep it in your permanent records.

If you have any questions, please contact the person whose name and telephone number are shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

District Director

CAVEAT: Grant-making procedures for scholarships, fellowships and such other support should be submitted to the Internal Revenue Service for approval prior to the making of any such grants.

cc: Deborah T. Ashford
H. Todd Miller
Hogan & Hartson
815 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

0000000010995 RECEIVED BY: SECRETARY OF THE SENATE Date: October 02, 2026

JAMES LANKFORD, OKLAHOMA, CHAIRMAN
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE, VICE CHAIRMAN

JAMES E. RISCH, IDAHO
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

SHANNON HAMILTON KOPPLIN, CHIEF COUNSEL AND STAFF DIRECTOR
WILLIAM B. CABLE, CHIEF CLERK

HART SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 220
SECOND AND CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6425

TELEPHONE: (202) 224-2981
FACSIMILE: (202) 224-7416

United States Senate

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

August 19, 2026

Philip Oke-Thomas
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Oke-Thomas:

This responds to your recent correspondence requesting approval from the Select Committee on Ethics (the Committee) to accept an invitation you received to travel to the *Pre-election Assessment Mission to The Gambia,* on August 23-28, 2026, sponsored by the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Provided that you adhere to the guidance set forth below, it is permissible for you to accept necessary expenses from NDI for this trip.

Background

Based on your communication with the Committee, the background in this matter is as follows.[1] You are employed as a Professional Staff Member for the Committee on Foreign Relations, and Senator Jeanne Shaheen is your supervising Senator. NDI invited you to travel to the *Pre-election Assessment Mission to The Gambia,* on August 21-28, 2026. NDI certified to the Committee that it will pay the necessary expenses related to the travel,[2] and NDI is not a lobbyist, lobbying firm, agent of a foreign principal, or otherwise acting as a representative or agent of a foreign government. NDI has also certified that it does not retain or employ a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal and that no registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal will accompany you at any point throughout your trip.[3]

Discussion

Privately sponsored travel includes any gift of travel and travel-related expenses for travel outside the Senate duty station, including transportation, lodging, food and refreshments, and conference fees and materials, whether paid for directly, reimbursed, or provided directly, from a private individual or entity, in connection with a Member's, officer's, or employee's

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[1] If this letter does not correctly recite the facts, contact the Committee immediately.

[2] The term "necessary expenses" has a specific definition. *See Select Committee on Ethics Regulations and Guidelines for Privately Sponsored Travel* at 10-13.

[3] The term "any point throughout your trip" has a specific definition. *See Select Committee on Ethics Regulations and Guidelines for Privately Sponsored Travel* at 15.

official Senate duties. Incorporating reforms from the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007 (HLOGA), Pub. L. 110–81 (2007), Senate Rule 35.2 permits Members, officers, and employees to accept privately sponsored travel only with the prior written approval of the Committee.

The Committee's approval process is governed by the *Regulations and Guidelines for Privately Sponsored Travel* (*Travel Regulations*). The *Travel Regulations* contain detailed requirements regarding who may sponsor travel; time limits for trips; and the type and amount of expenses that can be reimbursed.

Entities that do not retain or employ a lobbyist or foreign agent and all non-profit organizations designated as tax-exempt organizations under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, regardless of whether they retain or employ a lobbyist or foreign agent, may sponsor foreign trips for up to seven days. The seven-day limitation means seven 24-hour periods, calculated from the time of arrival in the trip location to the time of departure from the trip location. With very limited exception, lobbyists and foreign agents are prohibited from accompanying a Senate invitee at any point throughout the trip.[4] This means that neither lobbyists nor foreign agents may accompany Senate invitees at any point to and from the event, at the event itself, or at the location being visited.[5]

The Committee has determined that § 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations that are classified as private foundations, as opposed to public charities, may not pay for transportation from the United States to a foreign country.[6] However, NDI represented to the Committee that it is a § 501(c)(3) public charity, as opposed to a private foundation, pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code.[7]

Under Senate Rule 35, Senate staff must receive advance authorization signed by the Member or officer under whose direct supervision the individual works in order to accept payment or reimbursement for necessary expenses related to fact-finding travel. Further, such authorization and expenses must be disclosed to the Secretary of the Senate by filing the completed *Employee Pre-Travel Authorization* and the *Employee Post-Travel Disclosure of Travel Expenses* (Form RE-1 and Form RE-2), along with a copy of the *Private Sponsor Travel Certification Form,* and all relevant attachments (e.g., the private sponsor's invitation and itinerary) **within 30 days of the conclusion of Privately Sponsored Travel.**

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[4] The term "*de minimis*" has a specific definition. *See Select Committee on Ethics Regulations and Guidelines for Privately Sponsored Travel* at 6-8.

[5] *See Select Committee on Ethics Regulations and Guidelines for Privately Sponsored Travel* at 6-10 for a discussion on the de minimis contact exception.

[6] *See* 26 U.S.C. § 4941 et seq. Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code broadly defines non-profit, charitable, tax-exempt organizations. These § 501(c)(3) organizations are then further defined or designated as "public charities" and "private foundations."

[7] 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3).

Consistent with these standards, Committee precedent, and NDI's factual representations, it is permissible for you to accept necessary expenses from NDI in connection with this trip, provided that the actual travel and travel-related expenses conform to the information you provided, and the travel and all required documents are disclosed to the Secretary of the Senate (Office of Public Records).

Please be advised that the United States Constitution prohibits the acceptance of any gift, including a meal, from a foreign government without the consent of Congress. In the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act (FGDA), Congress consented to the acceptance by federal government officials of: (1) gifts of minimal value and (2) travel or the expenses for travel taking place entirely outside the United States, from a foreign government (which includes those acting as a representative or agent of a foreign government).[8] The Senate has defined minimal value as $100 or less. Further, pursuant to FGDA, there are certain reporting and procedural requirements that are imposed upon Members, officers, and employees who accept gifts from a foreign government. Please review the Committee's "Dear Colleague" letter of January 11, 2019, setting forth the items to be included in filing that report.

Finally, federal law and Senate Rule 34 require a reporting individual,[9] on their financial disclosure report, to make an annual disclosure of the receipt of payments or reimbursements under Senate Rule 35 from a private sponsor for officially-related travel expenses where, in the aggregate, travel expenses exceed $525 from that sponsor during a calendar year. However, if a Member, officer, or employee properly reports the receipt of necessary expenses for such travel to the Secretary of the Senate within 30 days of the travel, as discussed above, the travel expenses need not be disclosed a second time on their financial disclosure report.

I hope you find this information helpful. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee.

Sincerely,



Shannon Hamilton Kopplin
Chief Counsel and Staff Director

Enclosure: Employee Privately Sponsored Travel Checklist

[8] 5 U.S.C. § 7342.

[9] A reporting individual is someone whose salary equals or exceeds 120% of the basic rate of pay for GS-15 ($151,661 for CY 2026) or is a political fund designee and is required to file financial disclosure reports.