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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

February 14, 2014

RICHARD J. KESSLER, STAFF DIRECTOR  
KEITH B. ASHDOWN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

### Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Scott S. Dahl  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Labor  
200 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Inspector General Dahl:

I write to you regarding a news article detailing alleged wasteful spending practices among other issues at the U.S. Department of Labor (Department/DOL).<sup>1</sup> It is disturbing to hear of these activities at a time when the country continues to face high unemployment and a labor participation rate that continues to fall.

The article is based off discussions with current and former Department employees who allege Obama appointees conduct activities that “have nothing to do with helping U.S. workers.”<sup>2</sup> Some of these activities include wasting time and resources with public-relations busy work, weird morale-boosting exercises, book clubs, hiring of a local sports team mascot, among other activities.

One of the alleged wasteful spending practices included a Department book club that was spearheaded by the DOL’s public-affairs senior adviser Carl Fillichio. According to Mr. Fillichio, this book club was “part of the commemoration of the department’s centennial” and was put into motion by Secretary Perez.<sup>3</sup> Former Secretaries of Labor works were some of the books recommended to read. Most disturbing, is the allegation that the Department hired an outside public relations firm to promote this book club. My office has been told that a firm, Concept Communications, allegedly received a potential no bid contract to the tune of \$100,000 to assist in promoting the Department’s book club.

Also, the Department allegedly used funds to hire the mascot of the Washington Nationals.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the mascot was former president William Howard Taft, which Mr. Fillichio argued was brought in to celebrate the Department’s centennial.<sup>5</sup> Others believe it was in an effort to boost employee morale when sequestration began.

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<sup>1</sup> Quin Hillyer. “Wasteful High Jinks at the Labor Department.” Feb. 6, 2014. *National Review Online*. Accessed at: <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/370433/wasteful-high-jinks-labor-department-quin-hillyer>

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

Further, it is disturbing to hear of the current work atmosphere at the Department. Individuals describe the environment as "a pretty hostile environment." Individuals argue that this work place hostility comes to the detriment of career employees and in the end the public for which the Department serves.

As the Inspector General for the Department, I hope the individuals mentioned in this article, who requested anonymity for fear of retaliation, can trust in your office to investigate these claims. Along with the alleged wasteful spending highlighted in this letter, the article presented a list of additional alleged wasteful spending practices, including:

- 1) Controversial posters displayed in Department elevators. If true, what is the cost for each of these poster displays?
- 2) Instructions from Department political appointees to vote in online polls. Did this occur? And what individual at the Department requested this action?
- 3) The use of staff time and funds to do communications-industry award applications. If true, what is the cost to do this work?

I am requesting that your office investigate each of the issues included in this letter along with any others that may arise during the investigation.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.  
Ranking Member