AMENDMENT NO. 3529

Purpose: To establish transparency in the conference process of the Department of Agriculture, to ensure that conferences do not become luxury junkets with unjustified costs, and to limit conference funding to not more than $15,000,000.


(to) HR 2419

AMENDMENT No. 3529

To: Amdt. No. 3500

Refer ad

AMENDMENT intended to be proposed by Mr. COBURN

Viz:

1 At the appropriate place in title XI, insert the following:

2 SEC. 11. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE TRANSPARENCY.

3 (a) REPORTS ON CONFERENCE EXPENDITURES.—

4 For fiscal year 2008 and each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture quarterly reports that describe
the costs and contracting procedures relating to each conference or meeting held by the Department of Agriculture during the quarter covered by the report for which the cost to the Federal Government was more than $20,000.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include, for each conference and meeting covered by the report—

(1) a description of the number participants attending, and the purpose of those participants for attending, the conference or meeting;

(2) a detailed statement of the costs incurred by the Federal Government relating to that conference or meeting, including—

(A) the cost of any food or beverages;

(B) the cost of any audio-visual services;

(C) the cost of all related travel; and

(D) a discussion of the methodology used to determine which costs relate to that conference or meeting; and

(3) a description of the contracting procedures relating to that conference or meeting, including—

(A) whether contracts were awarded on a competitive basis; and

(B) a discussion of any cost comparison conducted by the Department of Agriculture in
evaluating potential contractors for any conference or meeting.

(e) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

(1) DEFINITION OF CONFERENCE.—In this subsection, the term "conference" means a meeting that—

(A) is held for consultation, education, awareness, or discussion;

(B) includes participants who are not all employees of the same agency;

(C) is not held entirely at an agency facility;

(D) involves costs associated with travel and lodging for some participants; and

(E) is sponsored by 1 or more agencies, 1 or more organizations that are not agencies, or a combination of those agencies or organizations.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than September 30 of each fiscal year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate, and post on the public website of the Department of Agriculture in a searchable, electronic format, a report on each
conference for which the Department of Agriculture paid travel expenses during the fiscal year covered by the report, including—

(A) a description of—

(i) the itemized expenses paid by the Department of Agriculture, including travel expenses and any other expenditures to support the conference;

(ii) the primary sponsor of the conference; and

(iii) the location of the conference; and

(B) in the case of a conference for which the Department of Agriculture was the primary sponsor, a statement that—

(i) justifies the location selected;

(ii) demonstrates the cost efficiency of the location;

(iii) specifies the date or dates of the conference;

(iv) includes a brief explanation of the ways in which the conference advanced the mission of the Department of Agriculture; and
(v) specifies the total number of individuals whose travel or attendance at the conference was paid for, in whole or in part, by the Department of Agriculture.

(d) LIMITATION ON FUNDING FOR CONFERENCES.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, not more than $15,000,000 of amounts made available to the Secretary pursuant to this Act and the amendments made by this Act shall be used for expenses relating to conferences, including for conference programs, conference travel costs, and related expenses.