

## **Amendment 1596 – To reduce nonessential Government travel costs.**

The federal government's annual travel budget is \$15 billion,<sup>1</sup> and has seen significant growth in the last decade. Non-defense travel grew from \$3 billion in 2001 to over \$5 billion in 2007.<sup>2</sup>

This amendment would reduce the travel budgets of federal agencies by 50 percent for the years 2013 and 2014 and by 25 percent for 2015.

The proposal would also require agencies to hold ten percent of their travel budget in reserve until the last month of each fiscal year.<sup>3</sup>

### **This Amendment Would Help Prioritize Federal Spending By Eliminating Wasteful and Unnecessary Federal Travel Expenses.**

The President's Fiscal Commission noted that web-based training and teleconferencing makes it much easier for agencies to perform their mission without travel. While this reduction may seem severe, state and local governments are cutting back even more when it comes to travel.

California for example, has banned all travel "unless it is mission critical or there is no cost to the state."<sup>4</sup> Several Maryland counties have reduced or eliminated travel to out-of-state conferences. One Maryland county executive was quoted as saying "Traveling out-of-state to conferences, and in this economic climate ... I'm not going to allow that to occur."<sup>5</sup>

This amendment would help prioritize federal spending by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary federal travel expenses. Agencies should have high fiscal standards with regard to their travel expenditures and taxpayers should not be asked to pay for non-essential travel. By reducing nonessential government travel costs, taxpayers will realize billions of

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<sup>1</sup> This includes both civilian and DoD travel budgets.

<sup>2</sup> The National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, \$200 billion in Illustrative Savings, November 12, 2010,

[http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/Illustrative\\_List\\_11.10.2010.pdf](http://www.fiscalcommission.gov/sites/fiscalcommission.gov/files/documents/Illustrative_List_11.10.2010.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Progressive Policy Institute, Return to Fiscal Responsibility II, April 2007,

[http://www.dlc.org/documents/Fiscal\\_Responsibility\\_04302007.pdf](http://www.dlc.org/documents/Fiscal_Responsibility_04302007.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Office of Governor Edmund Brown, "Governor Brown Bans Non-Essential Travel

[http://dl5.activatdirect.com/fs/distribution:w1/ze7pzanwmhlzgt/znteu3vaczt2a3/daid/zntlmxqkfk6b1s?\\_c=d%7Cz](http://dl5.activatdirect.com/fs/distribution:w1/ze7pzanwmhlzgt/znteu3vaczt2a3/daid/zntlmxqkfk6b1s?_c=d%7Cz)

<sup>5</sup> Maryland Association of Counties, "Counties Reducing Travel and Training Budgets", May 14, 2010,

<http://conduitstreet.mdcounties.org/2010/05/14/counties-reducing-travel-and-training-budgets/>.

dollars in a savings and ensure that agency travel spending does not grow even further beyond the government's means.

## **USDA Employees Went to Vegas and Hawaii and to Vegas and Hawaii Again**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approximately 112,000 employees and in 2006 the agency sent 20,959 employees to as many as 6,719 conferences and training activities across the nation and around the world.<sup>6</sup> The agency saw a 191 percent increase in conference spending since the year 2000.

Some of these expenditures included sending employees to Las Vegas for “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” conferences, to resorts in Australia for conferences on mushrooms and crawdads, and to Disney resorts to discuss competitive intelligence.

In 2006, one entity within USDA, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) sent 47 people (44 of whom were employees) to 10 conferences in Hawaii at a cost of \$71,412. The conferences took place on the Islands of Maui, Oahu, Honolulu, and Molokai.

One Hawaii conference was a “Congressional” seminar to educate attendees on the U.S. Congress, though the event location — the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort and Spa— is 4,500 miles from Congress. The USDA spent \$13,475 to send six USDA employees to this “Congressional Seminar” conference in Hawaii.<sup>7</sup>

According to data submitted to a U.S. Senate oversight subcommittee, in just 2006 alone:

- 213 USDA employees attended approximately 94 separate conferences in Las Vegas at a cost of \$254,755;

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<sup>6</sup> “For the Farmers or for Fun: USDA Spends Over \$90 Million in conference Costs: The first in a multi-part review of how federal agencies have spent billions of dollars on conferences over the last six years,” Oversight Report by the Office of Senator Tom Coburn, M.D., Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services and International Security, May 2008, <http://coburn.senate.gov/public/files/USDAConferenceTravelReport0.pdf>. Information is based on USDA’s February 5, 2007 response to Ranking Member Senator Tom Coburn regarding “FY2006 Conference and Training Activity,” pages 1 through 254.

<sup>7</sup> USDA response to Chairman Coburn’s follow-up questions, December 4, 2006.

- 64 USDA employees (and 3 non-employees on USDA's dime) traveled to Hawaii to attend approximately 28 separate conferences for a total cost of \$130,600;
- 713 USDA employees attended 235 Sacramento conferences, at a cost of \$560,000;
- 144 USDA employees attended 38 San Francisco conferences, at a cost of \$144,000;
- 270 USDA employees went to approximately 59 separate conferences in Orlando, Florida — home to Disney World — at a cost of \$282,656;
- 112 employees went to 34 conferences in Anchorage, Alaska at a cost of \$227,000;
- 247 employees went to approximately 89 conferences in Phoenix, Arizona at a cost of \$321,000; and
- 141 employees went to approximately 46 conferences in Tucson, Arizona at a cost of \$132,700.<sup>8</sup>

### **CDC Conference Expenditures Equaled \$45 Million Over Six Years**

In response to congressional inquiry, HHS reported that from FY2000 through FY2005, the CDC spent a total of \$44.7 million on conferences, which includes its HIV/AIDS conference costs.<sup>9</sup> CDC has spent millions on conferences, sending more than 500 CDC employees to international HIV/AIDS conferences, including 157 employees to Vancouver, 90 to Barcelona and 20 to Thailand (down from the 48 originally scheduled to attend).

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<sup>8</sup> USDA's February 5, 2007 response to Ranking Member Senator Tom Coburn regarding "FY2006 Conference and Training Activity," pages 1 through 254

<sup>9</sup> "CDC OFF CENTER: A review of how an agency tasked with fighting and preventing disease has spent hundreds of millions of tax dollars for failed prevention efforts, international junkets, and lavish facilities, but cannot demonstrate it is controlling disease," Oversight Report by The United States Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security Minority Office, Under the Direction of Senator Tom Coburn Ranking Minority Member, June 2007, <http://coburn.senate.gov/public/ files/CDCOffCenter1000.pdf>. October 4, 2005 letter from HHS to Senator Coburn, signed by Assistant Secretary Charles Johnson, CDC "Conference Support Expenditures/Projections by OPDIV/STAFFDIV," FY2000: \$8,558,352; FY01: \$6,982,795; FY02: \$7,642,681; FY03: \$6,926,825; FY04: \$7,056,486; FY05 Projections: \$7,577,478; for a total of \$44,744,647 (Note: CDC Off Center includes later conferences not reflected in these totals).

HIV/AIDS conferences supported by and attended by the CDC, its employees, and its grantees have been described as “boisterous political circuses” for the AIDS industry, and those in it that make a living off HIV and AIDS.<sup>10</sup> Some examples of CDC attended and funded conferences include:

- A 2002 Barcelona conference that cost U.S. taxpayers \$3.6 million (in HHS costs alone, not including expenditures by USAID and the State Department), where the U.S. Secretary of HHS was shouted down by protestors during his speech. Also in the audience were 236 HHS attendees, including 90 CDC attendees, though the Vatican, which through its Catholic facilities runs 26 percent of all AIDS treatment centers in the world and treats one-in-every-four AIDS patients, was not invited to attend.<sup>11</sup>
- A 2004 Thailand conference attended by 17,000 delegates included more than 130 U.S. federal employees, 20 of whom were CDC employees (not including employees stationed in Asia).<sup>12</sup> The event also featured Brazilian dresses made of condoms, a drag show, art shows, and fashion parades.
- A 2006 Toronto conference, attended by 26,000 people, including 78 HHS employees (of whom many were CDC employees), which cost U.S. taxpayers \$315,000.<sup>13</sup> The conference included presentations from researchers who said countries must recognize prostitution as “legitimate legal work.”<sup>14</sup> One convention center exhibit featured three prostitutes lying on a satin-covered bed, which was designed to “look like a typical workplace.”<sup>15</sup> One prostitute from Thailand was described as “standing amid pillows and sex toys in the [conference’s Stiletto] Lounge. To cheers from a crowd of around 200 people, she demanded health insurance, paid vacation and job security.”<sup>16</sup> The conference also featured a workshop on finding a woman’s erotic

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<sup>10</sup> “A Political Circus Is Part of the AIDS Meeting,” op-ed, *The New York Times*, July 20, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> “AIDS Conference Excludes Vatican,” *ZENIT News Agency*, July 11, 2002, [www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org).

<sup>12</sup> “Scientists rip US for cutbacks to global AIDS summit,” *NATURE MEDICINE*, July 2004.

<sup>13</sup> May 16, 2006 letter to Rep. Scott Garrett (R-NJ) from HHS, signed by William Steiger, Special Assistant for the Secretary of International Affairs.

<sup>14</sup> “Legalizing sex trade key to cutting HIV, activists tell AIDS conference,” *The Canadian Press*, August 17, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> “Legalizing sex trade key to cutting HIV, activists tell AIDS conference,” *The Canadian Press*, August 17, 2006.;

“Sex workers march for rights at AIDS conference,” *Reuters Health*, August 16, 2006; “Sex workers are part of the solution” workshop, <http://www.aids2006.org/PAG/PSession.aspx?s=961>, accessed January 2007.

<sup>16</sup> “Sex workers march for rights at AIDS conference,” *Reuters Health*, August 16, 2006.

zone, one on how to apply condoms through “sex stunts,” and a display of explicit artwork, all of which were described as “hugely popular” at the 16<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference.<sup>17</sup>

- A fall 2006 conference in Hollywood, Florida, drew 3,500 people, of whom 92 were federal employees, including 67 from the CDC. The HIV/AIDS prevention conference cost U.S. taxpayers over \$410,000 and, among other things, included a session on lobbying, a Latin Fiesta featuring a “sizzling fashion show,” and a beach party that included a 15-foot-high sand sculpture of the CDC-funded sponsor’s logo.<sup>18</sup> The executive director of the conference’s sponsor, NMAC (a group that in 2004 received \$3.9 million in government funds and spent \$1.4 million on conferences and \$1 million on consultants),<sup>19</sup> questioned the government’s commitment to HIV/AIDS funding.

### **How Travel Costs May Actually Cost Lives: Funds for Three International Trips to Talk About HIV Could Have Spared 150,000 Infants from HIV**

If the funds CDC spent to register 20 employees for a Thailand conference and to send 90 employees to a Barcelona conference to talk about HIV/AIDS, had instead been used to buy and administer Nevirapine (a retroviral drug that costs less than \$4 a dose and has proven to prevent HIV transmission from mother to child with the administration of just two doses), more than 115,000 infants around the world could have been spared from HIV infection.

This does not count the more than 40,000 infants that could have avoided HIV infection if HHS had not sent 78 employees (including an undetermined number of CDC employees) to Toronto to talk about

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<sup>17</sup> “Sex sells AIDS prevention message at conference,” *Agence France Presse*, August 15, 2006; “Where is the Pleasure in Safer Sex?” workshop, <http://www.aids2006.org/PAG/PSession.aspx?s=815>, accessed January 2007.

<sup>18</sup> “US Conference on AIDS,” Housing Works AIDS Issues Update, September 29, 2006, [http://www.hwadvocacy.com/update/archives/2006/09/us\\_conference\\_o.html](http://www.hwadvocacy.com/update/archives/2006/09/us_conference_o.html), accessed October 2006; October 2006 HHS response to an inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office reporting that: 5 employees from HRSA, 14 employees from SAMHSA, 67 employees from the CDC, 5 employees from NIH, and one NIH contractor were scheduled to attend and that HRSA spent \$5,827 and CDC spent \$405,000 on the conference; NMAC website, [http://www.nmac.org/conferences\\_trainings/usca/agenda/3893.cfm](http://www.nmac.org/conferences_trainings/usca/agenda/3893.cfm), accessed October 2006; and e-mailed reports from attendees sent to Senator Tom Coburn’s office.

<sup>19</sup> 2004 National Minority AIDS Council IRS form 990, <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2004/521/578/2004-521578289-021e9463-9.pdf>. Note: the form does not distinguish between federal, state, or local government funding; “AIDS activists urge more funds for treatment,” *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, September 23, 2006.

HIV/AIDS at a cost to the federal taxpayers of over \$300,000. For the cost of these three international conferences alone, more than 150,000 newborns could have been treated with Nevirapine and prevented from contracting HIV.

UNAIDS estimates that 1,800 children worldwide become infected with HIV each day, the vast majority of whom are newborns.<sup>20</sup> UNAIDS estimates that in 2005, just less than eight percent of pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries had access to services that could prevent the transmission of HIV to their babies.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Amendment Would Exempt Travel Costs Related to DOD, National Security, and Public Safety**

While this amendment would reduce nonessential government-wide travel, it specifically exempts travel costs related to the Department of Defense, national security, and other public safety.

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<sup>20</sup> “2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic,” UNAIDS, [http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV\\_data/2006GlobalReport/default.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/HIV_data/2006GlobalReport/default.asp), accessed November 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.