

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

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July 15, 2019

Pat A. Cipollone
Office of White House Counsel
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Cipollone,

I write to follow-up on the letter I sent you on May 21, 2019. I respectfully requested that the White House provide more clarity around the way in which the public is reimbursed for political travel, including aboard Air Force One. The letter provided a deadline for response of June 20, 2019. However, the White House and the Trump campaign have not responded to my request for more information.

Since my letter, the president has continued to use Air Force One for political travel including his recent campaign kick-off in Florida on June 18, 2019.¹ The president himself questioned the use of Air Force One for political travel when then-President Obama used Air Force One, and today I ask a similar question: When the president makes a political trip, “Who pays?”² Despite an active travel schedule the president has reimbursed the public at a rate less than half of what President Obama had reimbursed through the first two years of his administration.³ This is especially troubling since, as noted in my initial letter, President Trump often mixes official travel with campaign-related political events.

In addition, since my last letter, the president has mixed official and campaign activity again on Independence Day. The press has reported that as part of the July 4th celebration on the National Mall, the president gave out VIP tickets to top RNC donors and used Air Force One for a theatrical flyover.⁴ This raises questions about whether the Trump campaign should reimburse the public for a portion of the event costs.

¹ John T. Bennett, “Trump kicks off re-election bid that could extend key legal protections into 2025,” Roll Call, June 18, 2019, <https://www.rollcall.com/news/trump-kicks-off-re-election-bid-that-would-extend-key-legal-protections-into-2025>.

² Tweet from @realDonaldTrump, July 4, 2016 at 6:30pm, <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/750094399456026624>.

³ David Jackson and John Fritze, “Donald Trump slammed Obama for using Air Force One for election campaigning, now he does the same,” USA Today, May 29, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/05/29/donald-trumps-use-air-force-one-mixes-business-and-campaigning/3405405002/>.

⁴ Brian Everstine, “B-2, F-22, Air Force One to Fly Over DC on July 4,” Air Force Magazine July 2, 2019, <http://airforcemag.com/Features/Pages/2019/July%202019/B-2-F-22-Air-Force-One-to-Fly-Over-DC-on-July-4.aspx>; S.V. Date, “RNC Giving Out Tickets To Trump’s Hijacked Fourth Of July Celebration,” Yahoo News, July 1, 2019, <https://www.yahoo.com/huffpost/trump-fourth-hijacking-rnc-tickets-220558654.html>.

The Committee on House Administration has oversight jurisdiction over the Federal Election Commission and compliance with relevant election laws. Furthermore, the Committee has a constitutional responsibility to ensure taxpayers do not illegally foot the bill for political events.

I again request that you provide the Committee with the following information no later than August 15, 2019:

1. Any documents, communications, and records that provide guidance concerning how expenses are apportioned for official and non-official (including political) travel, including mixed-purpose trips. Please include the formula and/or policy documents that the White House uses to classify presidential travel as political.
2. A list of all events that the White House determined required payment from the president's campaign committee to cover travel expenses, a breakdown of associated costs, and any associated records concerning payment.
3. A list of all events that the White House determined required payment from another political committee, including a national party committee, to cover travel expenses, a breakdown of associated costs, and any associated records concerning payment.
4. Any guidance from the Department of Justice or the Federal Election Commission concerning presidential travel, including travel by the Vice President.

Additionally, I request that you provide the Committee with the following information no later August 15, 2019:

5. A breakdown of all expenses incurred for the July 4th event on the National Mall.
6. Any documents, communications, and records that provide guidance concerning the use of Air Force One for non-presidential travel.

If the White House continues to obstruct our attempts at legitimate oversight the Committee will have no choice but to take further action including, but not limited to, a subpoena for the requisite records.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Chairperson