

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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September 27, 2017

Arthur Elkins, Jr.
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Elkins:

We are writing today to request that you expand your ongoing audit of Administrator Pruitt's travel to also investigate the Administrator's use of private planes and government aircraft at significant expense to taxpayers. Administrator Pruitt's reported use of private aircraft is just the latest example of repeated and blatant abuse of taxpayer funds by the Trump Administration.

This request follows a troubling report by *CBS News* that Administrator Pruitt on August 4, 2017, traveled by private plane from Denver to and from Durango, Colorado.¹ The Governor of Colorado reportedly offered Administrator Pruitt a seat on his government aircraft for this trip, but EPA instead chartered a separate private aircraft.² EPA has explained that use of the private aircraft was a result of a commercial flight being significantly delayed.³ However, according to reports this evening, Administrator Pruitt also flew on a private plane for travel to Oklahoma in July at a cost of more than \$14,285 to taxpayers.⁴ Additionally, in June, Administrator Pruitt reportedly traveled from Cincinnati to New York City on an Air Force jet, at a cost to taxpayers

¹ *3 Cabinet Officials Under Fire for Taking Costly Flights*, CBS News (September 26, 2017).

² *Id.*

³ *Delays Led to Pruitt's Charter Flight – Official*, E&E News (September 27, 2017).

⁴ Twitter Account of CBS News Correspondent Julianna Goldman
(<https://twitter.com/juliannagoldman/status/913164025986502656>).

of \$20,000.⁵ It is unclear why Administrator Pruitt would require such costly travel in instances where more economical options were readily available.

Our Committee has a longstanding interest in ensuring effective Agency controls regarding leadership and staff travel and reducing the risk of fraud, waste, and abuse. Therefore, in light of these recent reports, we ask that you expand your ongoing review to determine whether Administrator Pruitt's travels were in compliance with all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures. We request that your expanded review include a determination of the following:

1. On how many occasions to date did Administrator Pruitt utilize government aircraft or privately chartered aircraft?
2. For each occasion, please determine the purpose of the trip and whether the trip was solely dedicated to the official government purpose. If any trip was not solely for official government purposes, please list the other purpose of the trip. Specifically, we request you review Administrator Pruitt's June trip to Italy where he reportedly flew to Italy for an international summit that did not start until three days later.⁶
3. To what extent were all applicable federal travel regulations and Agency travel policies and procedures appropriately followed for all of Administrator Pruitt's travels to date?
 - a. In each of the instances in which a government aircraft or privately chartered flight was used, were the appropriate travel authorizations, cost estimates, justifications, and approvals performed?
 - b. In each of the instances in which a government aircraft or privately chartered flight was used, what justification was provided for not flying commercially? Were these justifications approved according to Agency policies and procedures?
 - c. For each of the government aircraft or privately chartered flights taken by Administrator Pruitt to date, what was the total cost of travel for Administrator Pruitt and all other individuals onboard? Who were the other passengers on board each flight? What was the cost for each individual onboard for each government aircraft or privately chartered flight?
 - d. For each of the government aircraft or privately chartered flights taken by Administrator Pruitt to date, who was in charge of booking the flights? Were all relevant policies and procedures followed for each of the passengers onboard and by anyone involved with booking or planning the travel? Were the appropriate

⁵ See note 1.

⁶ *Id.*

policies and procedures followed for any passengers who were not federal government employees?

- e. In any instances in which regulations, policies, or procedures were not appropriately followed, what was the approximate cost incurred to the government as a result?
 - f. Is there a mechanism for Administrator Pruitt to reimburse taxpayers for the costs incurred?
4. Did any EPA personnel raised concerns internally about Administrator Pruitt's repeated use of government aircraft or privately chartered flights? If so, how were such concerns addressed?
5. To what extent has EPA conducted oversight of executive travel, including Administrator Pruitt's travels by government aircraft or privately chartered flight? Have any violations been identified, and if so, what actions were taken in response?

American taxpayers deserve assurances that their tax dollars are not wasted by the government's highest officials. We appreciate your prompt and thorough review of these issues.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Paul D. Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

Cc: The Honorable Greg Walden