

June 12, 2008

Inglis heads to Galapagos Islands

By Doug Abrahms
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Bob Inglis and his wife set off Thursday for the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador as part of a congressional fact-finding trip.

Inglis, R-Travelers Rest, and six other members of the House Science Committee travel to the Galapagos to check on a U.S.-funded climate change project. He will spend several days there as well as a day in Quito, Ecuador, to meet with government officials.

"The Science Committee is funding some significant research there," he said. "I do think it's important to visit " where U.S. taxes are being spent.

The Washington Post on Wednesday referred to the trip as a taxpayer-funded "splendid journey," to view exotic plants and animals.

Advocacy groups such as Public Citizen say a problem with these types of trips is Congress often fails to disclose information about its official travel, including what information the lawmakers will gain, said Craig Holman.

"Otherwise, people can make fun of it," especially when going to places like the Galapagos, he said.

Inglis said he's taking his Wife, Mary Anne, because she often picks up additional perspectives from trips.

He said he's paying more than \$1,000 to take her -- the additional cost the government spends to take a non-employee on the trip. The group will travel on a military jet, and the cost is the same regardless of the number of people carried, he said.

Inglis has taken trips to Antarctica to look at global warming projects and Iraq and Afghanistan because of the wars. Traveling is part of the job of being in Congress, he said.

"What I find is there's no substitute to being there," Inglis said.
