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*Office of Inspector General*  
***Audit Report***

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**Interim Report on Travel Policies  
And Practices of Political Appointees**

*Department of Transportation*

*Report Number: FI-2001-005*

*Date Issued: November 9, 2000*





**U.S. Department of  
Transportation**

Office of the Secretary  
of Transportation

The Inspector General

Office of Inspector General  
Washington, D.C. 20590

November 9, 2000

The Honorable Fred Thompson  
Chairman, Committee on Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In response to your request of February 29, 2000, the Office of Inspector General initiated a Departmentwide review of policies and practices regarding political activities and travel by Department of Transportation (DOT) employees. Your request posed seven questions pertaining to DOT and asked for interim responses every 60 days. The DOT political appointees have been forthright and open in providing the information requested by the Committee. We appreciate their cooperation with our office.

This letter is our fourth interim response to your request. On May 1, 2000, our initial response included complete answers to four of your seven questions. The four questions requested: (1) DOT's policies and guidelines regarding political activity by employees; (2) the process within DOT to review claims for official travel; (3) DOT policy on combining official travel with political travel; and (4) a description of the systems in place to ensure that employees are abiding by the Hatch Act. The policies and procedures did not change since May 1, so no updated information is necessary.

On July 14 and September 8, 2000, our second and third interim responses provided answers to the remaining three questions concerning political travel and campaigning between April 1, 1998, and July 31, 2000. The three questions requested: (1) the number of trips taken by DOT employees or officials involving a mix of official and political travel; (2) whether any staff, including but not limited to protective details or advance personnel, have accompanied political appointees on travel involving a political component; and (3) how much time those employees who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate spent campaigning over the last 2 years. This response provides answers to the same three questions covering the period August 1 through September 30, 2000.

For the period August 1 through September 30, 2000, DOT employed 83 political appointees (3 were new hires and 3 departed during this period). Of the 83 appointees, 16 were appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate (PAS officials), 30 were noncareer Senior Executive Service (SES) officials, and 37 were Schedule C officials.

***Committee Question: How many trips taken by DOT employees or officials included a mix of official and political travel?***

### **PAS Officials**

For the 16 PAS officials, we reviewed all 74 of their travel vouchers and any corresponding travel itineraries for travel from August 1 through September 30, 2000. We also reviewed information provided from their certified responses to our questionnaires. We found that the Secretary of Transportation took three trips that included a mix of official and political travel, and were subject to the Hatch Act requirements. On one of these trips, he was accompanied by one PAS official (the Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs), but the PAS official did not attend any of the political functions.

The Hatch Act requires an employee to apportion the cost of mixed travel based on the time spent on political activities and the time spent performing official duties. For the Secretary's three trips, we reviewed DOT's cost allocations for the political portions and found them to be reasonable. DOT has already received the appropriate payments from the sponsoring organizations for all three trips. Since the PAS official who accompanied the Secretary on one trip did not attend any of the political functions, no allocation of his travel expenses was necessary. As requested by the Committee staff, we also verified that four PAS officials (including the Secretary) attended the Democratic National Convention in August, but none of them claimed or were paid any travel expenses by the Government.

### **Noncareer SES and Schedule C Officials**

For the 67 noncareer SES and Schedule C officials, we reviewed all 90 of their travel vouchers and corresponding travel itineraries for the period August 1 through September 30, 2000. We found that three noncareer SES and Schedule C officials accompanied the Secretary on three trips that included a mix of official and political business. Through our questionnaires and interviews, the three employees stated they did not participate in the political events.

***Committee Question: Have any staff, including but not limited to protective details or advance personnel, accompanied political appointees on travel involving a political component?***

There were three trips involving political events between August 1 and September 30, 2000. Eight DOT employees accompanied the Secretary on the part of these trips that involved political components. The eight employees consisted of one PAS official, one noncareer SES official, two Schedule C officials, and four career employees. The four career employees were members of the Secretary's security detail. The two Schedule C officials were the advance personnel on these trips. The duties for security personnel can include attendance at political events while traveling with the Secretary; however, security personnel may not participate in political events during normal duty hours. Through our questionnaires and interviews, we found that the four security personnel and the other four employees stated they did not participate in the political activities. We found no violations of the Hatch Act.

***Committee Question: How much time have those employees who are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate spent campaigning over the last 2 years?***

In our prior responses that covered the 28-month period from April 1, 1998, through July 31, 2000, we reported that 13 of the 20 PAS officials who were employed by DOT during that period did not perform any campaigning. The Secretary, during that period, spent 412 hours campaigning or at political events, of which 280 hours were after normal work hours. The remaining six officials estimated that the time they spent campaigning ranged from a few hours to 5 days and totaled about 100 hours. Only one of the six officials campaigned during normal work hours and that was for 2 hours. The other five officials campaigned on their own time and at their own expense. The Hatch Act allows the Secretary and other PAS officials to participate in political events while on duty.

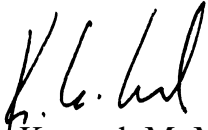
For the period from August 1 through September 30, 2000, we reviewed travel vouchers and travel itineraries for the 16 PAS officials onboard during that time. We also obtained certified responses to questionnaires from all 16 PAS officials.

Of the 16 PAS officials, 11 did not perform any campaigning. The Secretary spent 133 hours campaigning or at political events, of which 85 hours were on his personal time and 48 hours were during normal work hours. The four remaining officials (the Acting Deputy Administrator for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, the Associate Deputy Secretary, and the Research and Special Programs Administrator) reported that they spent 96 hours on their personal time campaigning during this period.

As you requested, we are continuing our review, and we will provide interim reports every 60 days. Our next report will cover the period from October 1 through November 30, 2000.

If I can answer any questions or be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact me at (202) 366-1959, or my Acting Deputy, Todd J. Zinser, at (202) 366-6767.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. M. Mead". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

Kenneth M. Mead  
Inspector General

cc: DOT Acting General Counsel