

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 21, 2018

The Honorable David J. Shulkin
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin,

We have read the Inspector General's (IG) report related to your international trip in the summer of 2017 and want to be clear about our disappointment in what was clearly a considerable lack of judgement. Further, we are troubled by the overly defensive response from you and Deputy Secretary Bowman as published in the report, which indicates a lack of understanding or appreciation for the high standard to which you are held as a Cabinet official. To restore the trust of veterans, taxpayers, and Congress, it is absolutely critical that you officially respond to the IG and confirm your immediate intention to comply with all five recommendations, to the fullest extent possible.

While we appreciate your subsequent commitment to repay the Government for your wife's plane ticket and your time at Wimbledon, we request that you provide us with the total amount that was reimbursed for these purposes. Related to this specific trip, it would also be instructive for you to provide the committee with the roles, responsibilities, and justifications for each individual who participated in this trip. This may include programs from any official events demonstrating speaking roles or other presentations.

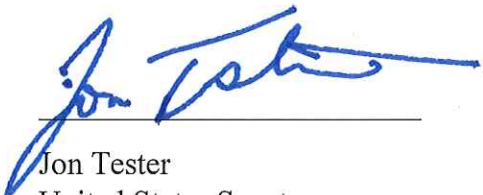
We further urge you to engage in a full and complete audit of all the travel expenses, authorizations, and other required documentation associated with this trip. Supporting documentation must be reviewed, and inappropriate reimbursements must be recouped. In addition to the audit recommended by the IG, we expect you to task the Deputy Secretary with conducting a review of all travel approvals, processes and procedures, and review any rules, directives, or policy guidance that governs the appropriateness of such things as:

- Receiving per diem and hotel costs for days on which there are no official events and no travel for official events
- Requiring review and approval for any travel changes or reimbursements that exceed a certain high dollar amount.
- Requesting Ethics Office approval without any supporting documentation
- Providing appropriate justification for the roles and responsibilities of each individual participating in travel

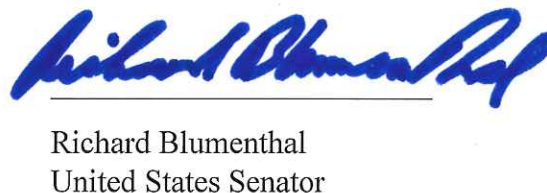
If these policies are found to be lacking, we expect that clarifying guidance will be issued, and updated training will be provided. If, however, there were appropriate policies in place that were not followed, we expect that administrative action be considered against any and all levels of employees who did not comply with guidelines, or who may have pressured others not to comply. We expect a report to be issued to the Committees at the conclusion of this top-to-bottom review of travel policies.

We look forward to receiving a full and complete accounting of this trip as well as of the Department's travel approval policies.

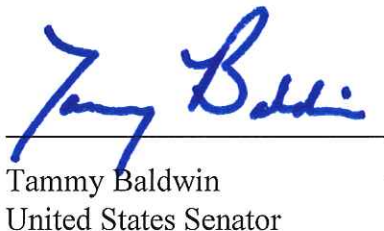
Sincerely,



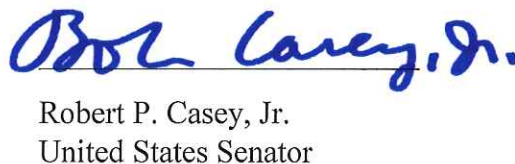
Jon Tester
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator