



State of Idaho
Legislative Services Office

Special Report

A communication to the Legislative Council

LEGISLATOR TRAVEL INVESTIGATION

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Idaho Legislative Services Office
Legislative Audits Division

LEGISLATOR TRAVEL INVESTIGATION

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SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

At the request of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and President Pro Tempore of the Senate (Pro Tem), we conducted an investigation of all travel expenses reimbursed by the State of Idaho for Representative Christy Perry and Senator Jim Guthrie for the period of September 1, 2013 through August 1, 2016. The investigation focused on State funds used to reimburse travel expenses to determine if those payments were made for verifiable State business purposes.

INITIAL ALLEGATION

It was alleged that two legislators, Senator Jim Guthrie and Representative Christy Perry, improperly used State travel funds for activities unrelated to their duties as legislators.

INVESTIGATION RESULTS

Representative Christy Perry

We identified five payments made during the period under review, with three of those payments for normal session per diem that were not further investigated. The remaining two payments were for travel expense reimbursement. We determined that the travel expenses claimed were for allowable activities with a verifiable State business purpose as a member of the House of Representatives.

Senator Jim Guthrie

We identified 56 payments made during the period under review, 35 of which were payments for reimbursement of travel expenses subject to this investigation. We noted 1 payment out of the 35 transactions reviewed that did not have a verifiable State business purpose identified for a portion of the travel dates in which expenses were claimed. A committee meeting was held for the entire day on the second day of a four-day trip to Boise, but we were unable to verify that there was any other State business purpose for the final night claimed on the travel voucher. This resulted in a potential over-reimbursement of up to \$121.14.

We found that the travel expenses claimed for the remaining 34 payments were for allowable activities with a verifiable State business purpose; such as interim meetings, working groups, board or association meetings, and attendance at special or regular legislative sessions that would be standard duties as a member of the Senate.

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INITIAL ALLEGATION

It was alleged that two legislators, Senator Jim Guthrie and Representative Christy Perry, improperly used State travel funds for activities unrelated to their duties as legislators.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF INVESTIGATION

Based on the request of the Speaker of the House and the Senate Pro Tem, our scope was limited to travel expenses claimed for reimbursement by Senator Guthrie and Representative Perry. Our investigation focused on determining if those claims were for allowable expenses incurred for travel related to a verifiable State business purpose.

To investigate the allegation, we gathered all payments with either legislator identified as the vendor (excluding payroll payments) during the time period of September 1, 2013 through August 1, 2016. Payment information was obtained through two information systems; transactions processed through the Statewide Accounting and Reporting System (STARS) and travel vouchers processed through Travel Express (a statewide travel processing system), which feeds into STARS. Each transaction from STARS was analyzed to determine if it was a reimbursement for claimed travel expenses. Only those payments related to a travel claim were included for further evaluation.

Once we established the population of transactions for review, each STARS transaction was compared to the supporting voucher on Travel Express to determine that the payments were for allowable travel expenses such as mileage, flights, meals, hotels, parking, etc. We also reviewed the stated purpose and dates for the trip included on the voucher to determine if it was for a verifiable State business purpose that is part of a legislator's normal duties. Verification was accomplished through review of committee assignments, meeting agenda dates and minutes, legislative calendars, and other information to determine that the meeting occurred and the legislator attended.

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

Representative Christy Perry

We did not identify any payments processed through Travel Express by the House of Representatives for Representative Perry. However, during our evaluation of all payments made to these vendors (regardless of payor) through STARS, we identified two payments for reimbursement of travel expenses paid during the period under review. These payments were not made by the House of Representatives, but rather paid by other State agencies. We found that the travel expenses claimed and reimbursed were for allowable activities with a verifiable State business purpose as a member of the House of Representatives.

Senator Jim Guthrie

We identified 56 payments made to Senator Guthrie during the period under review. The Senate recorded 34 payments through Travel Express, 19 payments were paid by the Senate as reimbursement for per diem and lodging during the session and do not require a Travel Express voucher, and 3 payments were made by other State agencies, of which 1 was identified as a travel reimbursement. This analysis resulted in 35 total payments selected for review as part of this investigation.

We noted one payment for which a verifiable State business purpose was not identified for a portion of the travel dates where expenses were claimed. A Committee on Employee Compensation meeting, of which the Senator is a member, was held for the entire day on the second day of a four-day trip to Boise. This supports the expenses claimed for mileage, meals, and two nights of lodging. However, we were unable to verify that there was any other State business purpose for the third night of lodging claimed on the travel voucher. Additionally, documentation was inadequate to support the lodging cost claimed of \$100.57 for the second and third nights. This resulted in a potential over-reimbursement of up to \$121.14 based on additional information gathered.

We found that the travel expenses claimed for the remaining 34 payments reviewed (33 paid by the Senate and 1 paid by another State agency) were for allowable activities with a verifiable State business purpose; such as interim meetings, working groups, board or association meetings, and attendance at special or regular legislative sessions as a member of the Senate.