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February 28, 2019

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney:

In the wake of a government shutdown that disrupted travel for so many Americans, I am writing to learn the cost to taxpayers of travel taken by senior federal officials during the partial government shutdown.

Over the first two years of the Trump Administration, numerous high-level officials have been embroiled in scandals involving extravagant and often unnecessary travel. As a result of Congressional inquiries, persistent media attention, and watchdog reports that identified hundreds of thousands of dollars in wasteful spending,¹ at least four Cabinet-level officials have resigned in part due to their lavish travel spending.² While I am hopeful that the Administration has taken steps to control travel costs, I remain concerned that a culture of wasteful spending persists.

On January 25, 2019, the longest government shutdown in the history of the United States finally ended after nearly 35 days. During this time, taxpayers across the nation were forced to adjust their own travel plans due to delays at major airports, a direct result of the shutdown.³ Ultimately, the shutdown is expected to cost the U.S. economy \$11 billion.⁴ Although senior federal officials adjusted some travel plans during the shutdown,⁵ new trips were also scheduled—for instance, a trip to Camp David for senior White House staff.⁶ The full scope of travel at taxpayer expense during the shutdown remains unclear.

As public officials, it is critical that we act as responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars, particularly when government employees and other taxpayers suffered as a direct result of a

¹ Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General, *The Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Services Did Not Comply with Federal Regulations for Chartered Aircraft and Other Government Travel Related to Former Secretary Price (A-12-17-00002)* (July 2018) (<https://oig.hhs.gov/oas/reports/region12/A121700002.pdf>).

² *Interior Secretary Zinke resigns amid investigations*, The Washington Post (Dec. 15, 2018) (https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/interior-secretary-zinke-resigns-amid-investigations/2018/12/15/481f9104-0077-11e9-ad40-cdfd0e0dd65a_story.html).

³ *Flights delayed at 4 major airports due to 'staffing' issues as government shutdown ends*, USA Today (Jan. 25, 2019) (<https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/flights/todayinthesky/2019/01/25/government-shutdown-flight-delays-3-airports-due-staffing-new-york-new-jersey-philadelphia/2676807002/>).

⁴ Congressional Budget Office, *The Effects of the Partial Shutdown Ending in January 2019* (Jan. 28, 2019) (<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/54937>).

⁵ *White House delegation cancels Davos Trip*, CNN (Jan. 17, 2019) (<https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/17/politics/white-house-davos-cancel/index.html>).

⁶ *President Trump heads to Camp David as shutdown enters third week*, The Denver Post (Jan 6, 2019) (<https://www.denverpost.com/2019/01/06/trump-shutdown-camp-david/>).

government shutdown. Given this Administration's record of wasteful travel spending, I am concerned about the extent of travel at taxpayer expense during the government shutdown, and whether funds were being used appropriately. To this end, I am requesting the following information regarding official travel by senior federal officials, as defined in the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR),⁷ at your agency during the partial shutdown of the federal government:

1. Did your agency issue any guidance to executive agencies or internal to OMB pertaining to travel during the shutdown? If so, please provide this guidance. Please also indicate how this guidance pertained to travel by senior federal officials and how the shutdown impacted procedures and personnel responsibilities regarding travel by senior federal officials.
2. Please outline the process by which travel was approved, disapproved, or cancelled and the officials responsible for making decisions regarding the need to travel during this period.
3. Please provide the number of trips senior officials took (including by air, rail, or rental vehicle), the cost of each trip, and why the trip was necessary. Please also include any travel by agency employees traveling in support of the senior federal official.
 - a. Of trips by senior federal officials, how many took place on commercial flights and, of these, how many involved premium-class travel (e.g. first-class or business-class)? How many took place aboard government aircraft, as defined in the FTR?⁸
 - b. For each trip by a senior federal official or employee acting in support of the official, please provide the purpose, itinerary, mode and class of travel, whether travel was on a government or commercial vehicle, and an accounting of all expenses incurred.
 - c. Please include comprehensive records for each trip by a senior federal official or employee acting in support of the official, including, but not limited to, travel vouchers without redactions, cost estimates for travel aboard government aircraft, memorandums related to premium-class or government aircraft travel, and any other documents related to costs not captured by these documents.
4. How many pre-scheduled trips involving senior federal officials or employees acting in support of the official were canceled during the partial government shutdown? Please provide the total cost of each such trip, including any reimbursement or cancellation charges, as well as a comparison to the estimated cost had these trips not been canceled.
5. It was reported that the Administration canceled a planned trip by the President and other senior federal officials to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.⁹ For all agency employees, please provide records and costs for any completed or canceled travel pertaining to this trip, including any travel undertaken in preparation for the Forum.

⁷ FTR §300-3.1.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ CNN, *supra* note 5

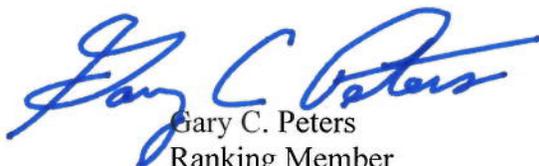
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I request that you respond to the above questions on or before March 20, 2019. Please have your staff contact Yelena Tsilker of the Minority staff of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee at Yelena_Tsilker@hsgac.senate.gov or 202-224-8707 with any questions and with any official correspondence related to this request.

Sincerely,



Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs

CC: The Honorable Russell Vought, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget