

EPA Responds to OIG Travel Audit

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Contact Information

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The EPA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released its audit of former Administrator Pruitt's travel costs. Among many findings, the OIG recommends that EPA evaluate recovering \$123,941 in travel costs, an amount the OIG acknowledges is an estimate. Half of that figure the OIG directly attributes to former Administrator Pruitt and represents the estimated difference between a coach-class fare and a first-class fare. The other half of that figure the OIG attributes to the personal security detail (PSD) which it assumes flew with former Administrator Pruitt on each trip without checking vouchers and actual fares purchased by PSD agents ([LINK 1 \(pdf\)](#)).

The basis for the recovery of these funds rests on OIG contesting whether there was a proper delegation within EPA to approve first-class travel and whether that travel was justified. Federal Travel Regulations provide that an agency can authorize travel in multiple levels of accommodation ([41 CFR 301-10.123](#)). The FTR further allows that an agent on protective detail of a protectee approved for other coach-class accommodations may also be approved for those accommodations ([41 CFR 301-10.123](#)).

EPA had a longstanding delegation to allow staff to approve travel other than coach-class ([LINK 2 \(pdf\)](#)). The EPA Office of General Counsel provided a legal opinion to OIG analyzing the Agency's delegation and found that the Acting Controller had authority to grant first class exceptions ([LINK 3 \(pdf\)](#)). Therefore, in evaluating the delegation EPA believes that the trips were authorized by an appropriate official, making cost recovery inappropriate. Additionally, at the OIG's suggestion, EPA recently updated its delegation and provided retroactive approval of each trip ([LINK 4A \(pdf\)](#)) ([LINK 4B \(pdf\)](#)).

The OIG's basis for recovery of funds also rests on the allegation that EPA did not have adequate justification to meet the security exception in the FTR. EPA is providing the memo from the PSD on flights ([LINK 5 \(pdf\)](#)) and the memos from EPA Comptroller General on how to implement

that memo within the Federal Travel Regulations ([LINK 6A \(pdf\)](#))([LINK 6B \(pdf\)](#)). EPA has evaluated the costs the OIG attributes to the PSD and, while finding them inaccurate, EPA believes it has also complied with Federal Travel Regulations making cost recovery inappropriate.

The OIG audit contains the EPA's response which can be found on page 51. EPA is also providing further information detailing EPA's explanation of its delegation of authority to approve travel ([LINK 7 \(pdf\)](#)), cost comparisons for travel ([LINK 8 \(pdf\)](#)), and vouchers on each trip containing justifications and purposes for travel ([LINK 9 \(pdf\)](#)).

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