



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on January 15, 2013

Former Presidents Reap Millions in Taxpayer Dollars

Capitalizing on a little-noticed component of the federal budget, a number of former U.S. presidents are enjoying the retirement benefit of millions of taxpayer dollars, including expenses for rent, postage, phone, and office staff, and even their satellite television bills.

"Bill Clinton is a multimillionaire, but you're paying for the Cinemax in his office," the Daily Caller [reported](#), after filing a Freedom of Information Act request for thousands of pages of e-mails and documents chronicling how taxpayer dollars are spent on former presidents each year. "That's just one eyebrow-raising expense a former occupant of the White House has been allowed to put on the taxpayer tab every year, even though every living ex-president is quite wealthy."



In 2011, Clinton used his nearly \$1-million post-presidency allowance for expenses such as rent, travel, personnel, and postage. He also used the money to install at least 10 televisions in his offices equipped with a top-tier suite of content from DirecTV. The \$184 a month taxpayers dished out for his television entertainment desires provided Clinton with his DVR Service, 145 satellite channels, and 32 high-definition "Entertainment Unlimited" channels, including premium offerings such as HBO, Showtime, and Cinemax.

But, as the Daily Caller notes, Clinton is not the only former president living large off the \$3.7 million doled out in taxpayer dollars in 2011. In that year, \$1.3 million in government funding was dished out to former President George W. Bush, \$835,000 to George H.W. Bush, and more than \$500,000 to Jimmy Carter.

According to an [ABC News article](#) last May, in 2010, taxpayer-financed expenses included \$15,000 for Jimmy Carter's postage, \$80,000 for George W. Bush's phone bills, and a whopping \$579,000 for Bill Clinton's rent.

These allowances do not include the cost of Secret Service protection, which they are now guaranteed to enjoy for the rest of their lives, as allocated by new legislation signed last week by President Obama. In addition to satellite TV programming, Clinton and Carter's offices both use taxpayer funding to subsidize subscriptions to the *New York Times*, running bills of \$322.40 (for the digital version) and \$415.58 (for the paper version), respectively.

Dan Cruz, deputy press secretary for the General Services Administration (GSA) — the agency that oversees the post-presidency allowances — assured the Daily Caller that all of these expenses are legally administered through the current law. "By law, the General Services Administration is responsible for providing former U.S. Presidents with office allowances," Cruz wrote in an e-mail to the Daily Caller. "Each of these offices determines which services they need, and the General Services



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Administration pays allowable expenses and services under the law.”

The law that Cruz cites, the Former President’s Act, was passed in 1958 — largely inspired by Harry Truman’s poverty-stricken post-presidency — which provides ex-presidents and their widows with the allowances. Of course, no such post-presidency pay is authorized by the Constitution. As to the president’s pay, the Constitution says: “The President shall, at stated times, receive for his services compensation, which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that period any other emolument from the United States, or any of them.”

Considering the luxurious lifestyles of most former presidents, some lawmakers are striving to halt the payment of these extravagant expenses. Rep. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah), for example, has sponsored a bill, called the [Presidential Allowance Modernization Act](#), that would exclude a dollar of taxpayer funding for every dollar a former president earns over \$400,000 a year. “Nobody wants our former presidents living the remainder of their lives destitute,” Chaffetz asserted in February, when unveiling the legislation. “But the fact is none of our former presidents are poor.”

“Presidents should get a compensation package. They should get a retirement, and they should get some expenses,” Chaffetz continued. “But if they’re going to go out on the trail, and they’re going to give speeches, write books and make money, then there comes a point where you say, okay, the taxpayer shouldn’t be responsible for also footing the bill for the office expenses, and the telephone paper, and the personnel, and those offices.”

Indeed, President George W. Bush has raked in more than [\\$15 million](#) for nearly 140 speeches — averaging about \$110,000 per speech — since he left the White House in January 2009. Even more staggering, Clinton has earned a whopping \$65 million in speaking fees, which included \$7.5 million for 36 speeches in 2009 alone. And by 2011, thanks in part to the 14 books he has written, Carter was worth approximately \$7 million.

Shown are (from left) Presidents H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter: AP Images



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