



Justice Official's Romantic Junkets Cost Taxpayers Thousands

Added to the expanding catalog of federal embarrassments, such as gunrunning scandals and bankrupt green energy companies, are taxpayer-funded trips taken by a Justice Department official to "facilitate a physical relationship with a woman in Florida." Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa, left), the ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee, wrote U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder on September 28, asking why a federal official, Darryl Foster, was not required to reimburse the government for money he spent visiting an unidentified woman in Miami, including expenses for hotels and rental vehicles.



Grassley wanted to know why Foster, a supervisor in the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division at the time, was able to squander thousands of taxpayers dollars for wining and dining in Florida without ever paying the money back even though the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General (OIG) found out about the romantic excursions in late 2007 or early 2008. It has been reported that Foster took more than 10 taxpayer-funded trips to Miami in 2008 alone.

Further, Grassley claims taxpayers also paid for one of Foster's friends to travel from the U.S. Virgin Islands to Las Vegas including both airfare and hotel costs to meet "largely for recreational purposes." The Senator unveiled email correspondence between Foster and the male friend including messages such as, "Make sure you leave me some golf time!!" and "Thought we were going to the Grand Canyon on Saturday??"

According to the *Washington Times*, Grassley asserted that Foster's punishment was anything but severe:

The Iowa lawmaker wants to know why Mr. Foster was neither fired nor apparently demoted after the OIG caught him misusing thousands of dollars of taxpayer money on airfare, hotels and car rentals to travel around the country. He said Mr. Foster continued to use his government credit card and make personal charges on it including cash advances even after the OIG investigation ended.

Mr. Foster was suspended for seven days and reassigned to a different job in the Civil Rights Divisions Voting Section. Mr. Grassley said the transfer was ordered despite "his egregious misuse of travel funds" and that Mr. Foster remains eligible for a \$25,000 buyout for early retirement.

Expense-paid romantic getaways and recreational tours are generally not found in conventional, non-government jobs. In fact, such behavior would undoubtedly get a private-sector employee fired and surely without a retirement package. "At a time when many Americans cannot find work, the prospect



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on October 7, 2011

that employees like Foster might be able to take his retirement package with hardly any consequences resulting from their abuse is disturbing,” Sen. Grassley asserted, adding, “With the economic realities our country is facing, permitting waste and abuse at the department is inexcusable.”

Grassley alleges that Foster was not demoted, and that he has “received no indication from the OIG that the department required Foster to repay the funds he abused.” The Senator also noted that the OIG was unable to document “countless other occasions” when Foster extended his travel for other recreational trips.

When questioned about Grassley’s allegations, Foster simply replied, “I am not interested in discussing that.” The OIG echoed Fosters response, citing the Privacy Act and the Justice Departments confidentiality policy. Critics have noted that apparently the departments confidentiality policy extends to denying taxpayers the right to know where their dollars are being spent.

At the time of Fosters taxpayer-funded junkets, his job was to administer various tests and investigate housing providers to ensure compliance with the Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and other federal laws relating to civil rights. Ironically, Darryl Foster was [presented](#) the “Excellence in Legal Support Award” from the Department of Justice in 2007 for his “outstanding leadership” in a fair housing testing program.



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