



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 28, 2012

Obama Family and Staff Cost Taxpayers \$1.4 Billion in 2011

For all his talk about cutting the deficit, President Barack Obama has been anything but shy about spending taxpayers' money lavishly — and not just on favored political constituencies. According to the [Daily Caller](#), last year taxpayers had to fork over a whopping \$1.4 billion just to pay the expenses of the president, his family, and his staff.



British taxpayers, meanwhile, were soaked for a relatively trifling \$57.8 million to keep the House of Windsor in tea and crumpets.

While Obama is only the latest in a long line of chief executives to enjoy the high life at taxpayer expense, “the amount of money spent on the first family ... has risen tremendously under the Obama administration and needs to be reined in,” Robert Keith Gray, author of *Presidential Perks Gone Royal*, told the Daily Caller.

The \$1.4 billion, Gray said, represents the “total cost of the presidency,” including the tab for the “biggest staff in history at the highest wages ever,” a 50-percent rise in the number of appointed “czars,” and an Air Force One “running with the frequency of a scheduled air line.”

Gray knows whereof he speaks. He has served in various Republican administrations, most notably that of President Dwight Eisenhower, where he rose to the post of Secretary of the Cabinet. If he thinks presidential expenses are getting out of hand, he just might be onto something.

The president's salary accounts for \$400,000 of that \$1.4 billion. In addition, he has a \$50,000 annual expense account, a \$100,000 travel account, a \$19,000 entertainment budget, and another \$1 million for “unanticipated needs,” according to Gray. (How many taxpayers can get any amount of money, let alone \$1 million, from their employers on demand?)

Among the other perks of the Obama presidency:

- Appointed staff not requiring Senate confirmation, including 226 senior staffers (of 469 total) making over \$100,000 a year and 43 “czars”
- Free vacations at Camp David, estimated to cost \$295,000 per night when transportation and personnel costs are included
- A movie projectionist who lives and sleeps at the White House to be available at the president's beck and call — a position that has not been eliminated despite the existence of cable TV, DVDs, and streaming Internet video
- Many paid travel and security expenses during vacations, such as the [\\$75,000-a-day](#) tab for First Lady Michelle Obama's five-day trip to Spain in 2010 (in the span of one year she took [42 vacation days](#))
- A dog handler who reportedly earned \$102,000 in 2011

The thing that bothers Gray the most, however, “is the use of taxpayer funds to abet [Obama's] re-



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election,” he told the Daily Caller. Every time Obama hops aboard Air Force One to attend a campaign event, taxpayers take it on the chin. The president’s campaign pays the equivalent of a first-class commercial airline ticket for certain passengers; the remaining costs are borne by taxpayers. And those costs are considerable: [ABC News](#) reports that Air Force One runs up a bill of almost \$180,000 per flight hour.

“When the United States’ billion-dollar air armada is being used politically, is it fair to taxpayers that we only be reimbursed by the president’s campaign committee for the value of one first-class commercial ticket for each passenger who is deemed aboard ‘for political purposes?’ ” Gray asked in his book.

“And is that bargain-price advantage fair to those opposing an incumbent president?”



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