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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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July 17, 2007

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to request documents relating to efforts by White House officials to direct you or other officials in your Department to travel at taxpayer expense to events with Republican candidates for political office.

The Committee has obtained an e-mail written by Douglas Simon, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) liaison to the White House, that describes a political briefing given by Karl Rove after the 2006 elections. According to this e-mail, Mr. Rove commended the efforts of ONDCP and the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, and Agriculture for "the work that went into surrogate appearances by Cabinet members and ... the 72 Hour deployment." Mr. Simon wrote:

Karl Rove opened the meeting with a thank you for all of the work that went into the surrogate appearances by Cabinet members and for the 72 Hour deployment. He specifically thanked, for going above and beyond the call of duty, the Dept. of Commerce, Transportation, Agriculture, AND the WH Drug Policy Office. This recognition is not something we hear everyday and we should feel confident that our hard work is noticed. All of this is due to our efforts in preparing the Director and Deputies for their trips and events. Director Walters and the Deputies covered thousands of miles to attend numerous official events all across the country. The Director and the Deputies deserve the most recognition because they actually had to give up time with their families for the god awful places we sent them.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E-mail from Douglas A. Simon to Michael F. Bishop, *et al.* (Nov. 21, 2006) (Simon-22).

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To assist the Committee in investigating whether this use of taxpayer funds is appropriate, I request that you provide the Committee with all documents that relate to the involvement of White House officials in scheduling, suggesting, coordinating, or directing events with Republican elected officials or Republican candidates for office for any official at the Department of Agriculture during calendar year 2006.

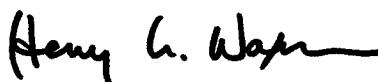
I also request that you provide the Committee with a list of all events with Republican elected officials or Republican candidates for office that you and/or Deputy Secretary Charles F. Conner attended outside of Washington, DC, in an official capacity during 2006. For each event, please provide the date and location of the event, a brief description of the purpose of the event, the identity of the Republican elected officials or Republican candidates for office attending the event, and a statement whether taxpayer funds were used to travel to the event.

The Committee may hold a hearing with Sara Taylor, the former Director of the White House Office of Political Affairs, on July 30, 2007. Because the documents I am requesting are likely to be relevant to this hearing, I ask that you provide the documents to the Committee by July 24, 2007.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the House of Representatives and has broad oversight jurisdiction as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information on how to respond to the Committee's request.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me or ask your staff to contact David Leviss or Susanne Sachsman of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5420.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman  
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Tom Davis  
Ranking Minority Member