

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

February 12, 2020

James M. Murray
Director
U.S. Secret Service
950 H Street N.W., Suite 7800
Washington, D.C. 20223

Dear Director Murray:

The Committee requests documents and information regarding disturbing reports of exorbitant charges to the U.S. Secret Service at President Donald Trump's private clubs and resorts, as well as the Trump Administration's apparent refusal to disclose exactly how much taxpayer money has been spent at the President's personal properties.

On February 7, 2020, the *Washington Post* reported that the Trump Organization charged the Secret Service rates as high as \$650 per night, according to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and personal accounts. At President Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club alone, the Secret Service reportedly "was charged the \$650 rate dozens of times in 2017, and a different rate, \$396.15, dozens more times in 2018." The Trump Organization also charged the Secret Service \$17,000 per month to use a three-bedroom cottage on President Trump's property in Bedminster, New Jersey, "an unusually high rent for homes in that area." This report detailed nearly \$500,000 in payments by the Secret Service to the President's companies during only a fraction of the President's time in office.¹

A recent report from the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office (GAO) raised similar concerns. GAO found that federal agencies spent at least \$13.6 million for just four trips to Mar-a-Lago in early 2017. Of those expenses, the Secret Service incurred about \$1.6 million to provide support. GAO also found that the Secret Service did not consistently report its costs as required by the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976.²

¹ *Secret Service Has Paid Rates as High as \$650 a Night for Rooms at Trump's Properties*, Washington Post (Feb. 7, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/secret-service-has-paid-rates-as-high-as-650-a-night-for-rooms-at-trumps-properties/2020/02/06/7f27a7c6-3ec5-11ea-8872-5df698785a4e_story.html).

² Government Accountability Office, *Presidential Travel: Secret Service and DOD Need to Ensure That Expenditure Reports Are Prepared and Submitted to Congress* (Jan. 17, 2019) (GAO-19-178) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/700/696512.pdf).

These troubling reports come amid the Committee's own investigation of taxpayer spending at the President's businesses, including the Department of Defense's expenditure of nearly \$200,000 at President Trump's Turnberry resort in Scotland between August 2017 and July 2019.³

Such steep spending of taxpayer funds stands in stark contrast to statements made by Trump Organization officials regarding how the President's business charges the government. Eric Trump, the President's son and Executive Vice President of the Trump Organization, claimed in an interview that when the President's entourage stays at a Trump property, "they stay at our properties for free—meaning, like, cost for housekeeping ... it saves a fortune because if they were to go to a hotel across the street, they'd be charging them \$500 a night, whereas, you know we charge them, like \$50."⁴

The Secret Service has not disclosed the full scope of its payments to the President's businesses or its expenses for presidential travel to his own properties. For example, for the first year-and-a-half of the Trump presidency, the Secret Service failed to submit to the Committee semiannual reports on expenditures to protect the President that are required by law.⁵ According to an explanation from the Secret Service to Committee staff, the official responsible for preparing the reports simply failed to do so.⁶

The Secret Service has provided to the Committee only the three most recent reports.⁷ However, even these reports fail to account for certain properties, such as Mar-a-Lago, and they lack the level of granularity needed for the Committee to fulfill its responsibility to conduct effective oversight.

In addition, the Secret Service has not included the amounts of its payments to the President's businesses in public databases detailing federal spending.⁸

³ Letter from Chairman Elijah E. Cummings, Committee on Oversight and Reform, and Chairman Jamie Raskin, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, to Secretary Mark T. Esper, Department of Defense (Sept. 18, 2019) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/documents/2019-09-18.EEC%20Raskin%20to%20DOD-Esper%20re%20Turnberry-Followup%20to%206-21%20Request.pdf>).

⁴ *G-7 at Trump Golf Resort Saves the US Money: Eric Trump*, Yahoo Finance (Oct. 17, 2019) (online at <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/g-7-at-trump-golf-resort-saves-the-us-money-eric-trump-192655739.html>).

⁵ See Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976, P.L. 94-524, as amended (18 U.S.C. 3056 note).

⁶ Phone Call with Assistant to the Special Agent-in-Charge, Congressional Affairs, Secret Service, to Staff, Committee on Oversight and Reform (Jan. 22, 2020).

⁷ Secret Service, *Expenditures Pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976*, Report to Congress for April 1 to September 30, 2018 (Aug. 2, 2019); Secret Service, *Expenditures Pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976*, Report to Congress for October 1, 2018 to March 21, 2019 (Nov. 20, 2019); Secret Service, *Expenditures Pursuant to the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976*, Report to Congress for April 1 to September 30, 2019 (Feb. 7, 2020).

⁸ *Secret Service Has Paid Rates as High as \$650 a Night for Rooms at Trump's Properties*, Washington Post (Feb. 7, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/secret-service-has-paid-rates-as-high-as-650-a-night-for-rooms-at-trumps-properties/2020/02/06/7f27a7c6-3ec5-11ea-8872-5df698785a4e_story.html).

The payment of rates far above government rates and the Trump Administration's lack of transparency raise serious concerns about the use of taxpayer dollars and raise questions about government spending at other Trump properties. These concerns are heightened since President Trump has spent a third of his presidency at his private clubs and hotels, and his Treasury Secretary has attempted to shield Secret Service expenses from public scrutiny.⁹

For these reasons, the Committee requests that you produce by February 25, 2020, the following documents for the time period from January 20, 2017, to the present:

1. All documents or communications between the Secret Service and the Trump Organization, or any subsidiary or affiliate of the Trump Organization, referring or relating to the estimated or actual expenditures by the Secret Service for any rental of rooms or other accommodations at properties owned or branded by the Trump Organization;
2. All documents referring or relating to the expenditure of government funds made or reimbursed by the Secret Service to provide security or any other services to President Donald Trump or his family members at properties owned or branded by the Trump Organization; and
3. All contracts between the Secret Service and the Trump Organization referring or relating to the rental of rooms or other accommodations at properties owned or branded by the Trump Organization.

Requests above for documents concerning "the Trump Organization" include all documents concerning any subsidiary or corporate affiliate of the Trump Organization (e.g., Trump Old Post Office LLC). Request for communications include all internal and external communications, including between the Secret Service, the White House, the Trump Organization, other federal agencies, or any other party.

In addition, please provide written responses to the following questions:

1. What expenditures are included in the semiannual reports submitted by the Secret Service under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976?
2. What expenditures relating to protecting the President are not included in the semiannual reports submitted by the Secret Service under the Presidential

⁹ See *Mnuchin Seeks Delay of Proposed Disclosure of Secret Service Spending on Presidential Travel Until After Election*, Washington Post (Jan. 8, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/mnuchin-seeks-delay-of-proposed-disclosure-of-secret-service-spending-on-presidential-travel-until-next-year/2020/01/08/8769ea28-30da-11ea-91fd-82d4e04a3fac_story.html) (reporting that Secretary Mnuchin recently informed the Senate Judiciary Committee that he plans to delay any disclosure of the Secret Service's travel expenses until after the 2020 presidential election). See also *Secret Service Has Paid Rates as High as \$650 a Night for Rooms at Trump's Properties*, Washington Post (Feb. 7, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/secret-service-has-paid-rates-as-high-as-650-a-night-for-rooms-at-trumps-properties/2020/02/06/7f27a7c6-3ec5-11ea-8872-5df698785a4e_story.html).

Protection Assistance Act of 1976, such as temporary duty travel, overtime hours, or other costs?

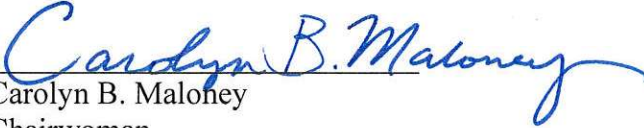
3. Why do the three most recent semiannual reports that the Secret Service provided to Congress fail to account for Secret Service expenditures at the President's properties at Mar-a-Lago and Bedminster, New Jersey?
4. When will the Secret Service submit to Congress the full set of semiannual reports for the time period of the Trump presidency, as required under the Presidential Protection Assistance Act of 1976?

The Committee's requests for documents and written responses seek information concerning the expenditure of government funds made or reimbursed by the Secret Service at properties owned or branded by the Trump Organization. The Committee does not seek sensitive information relating to the security of the President.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. In addition, House Rule X, clause 3(i) specifically charges the Committee with conducting oversight of "the operation of Government activities at all levels, including the Executive Office of the President."

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the Committee's request. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,


Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform


Jackie Speier
Committee Member

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform