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June 11, 2014

The Honorable Phyllis K. Fong
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Ms. Fong:

It has been brought to my attention that the Department of Agriculture has failed to comply with the law requiring executive agencies to disclose luxury travel accommodations. Federal regulations (CFR Title 41 under 5 U.S. Code 5707) make it clear that agencies must report to the General Service Administration (GSA) any federal employees' use of transportation accommodations other than coach class on official business no later than 60 days after the end of each fiscal year. However, GSA records show that the Department of Agriculture has failed to file a report for the past four years.

As you know, American taxpayers pay for the travel of all federal agencies. The government has a responsibility to use that money wisely – particularly at a time when our nation is over $17 trillion in debt. Furthermore, taxpayers have a right to know how their money is being spent. Considering these facts, I request a response to each of the following questions within 21 days:

1. Why has the Department of Agriculture not filed a report with the GSA detailing luxury travel costs for the past four years?
2. When do you expect the department to file this report for both the current year and past years for which this information is missing?
3. When was the last time you conducted an audit for compliance with the luxury travel reporting regulations?

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this request, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Walter B. Jones

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress