

**Bob Dole**



**NEWS**

**U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS**

**FROM:**

**SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Wednesday, October 6, 1993

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## **TRAVELGATE AMENDMENT**

### SENATE ADOPTS LEGAL DEFENSE RELIEF FOR FIVE VICTIMS OF TRAVELGATE

Washington -- The U.S. Senate today unanimously adopted an amendment offered by Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) and Senator Kit Bond (R-MO) that would appropriate \$150,000 for a Travelgate Legal Defense Fund to reimburse appropriate legal expenses of the five former White House travel office employees who have been reinstated to government service. The amendment to the Department of Transportation Appropriations Bill is paid for by offsetting cuts in the Transportation Department budget. A statement made by Senator Dole on the amendment follows:

The White House tried gamely to ground the so-called Travelgate affair when it prepared its own "management review" last July. But, in the final analysis, this internal report offered few answers and raised even more troubling questions--questions about conflicts of interest, and about the political manipulation of the F.B.I. and perhaps the I.R.S.

The exhaust fumes from Travelgate linger even today.

#### Interim GAO Report

Since July, calls for congressional hearings have gone unheeded. Deputy Attorney General Philip Heymann has flatly rejected my request for the appointment of a Special Counsel. And the General Accounting Office, which was directed by Congress to initiate its own Travelgate investigation, has issued an interim report that is short on findings and long on the bureaucratic obstacles encountered by GAO investigators.

Perhaps "cover-up" is too strong a word, but it appears that both the White House and the Justice Department are giving the GAO something close to the stiff-arm treatment.

#### Remember the Victims of Travelgate

For a moment, let's forget about cover-ups and culprits, and remember the real-life victims of Travelgate.

The victims of Travelgate are the five travel office employees who woke up one May morning only to hear their good reputations smeared on national television by an incompetent White House staff. After the slanderous TV attack, the employees were summarily fired from their jobs, accused of "gross mismanagement," and told they were the subject of an FBI criminal investigation.

As it turned out, the only ones guilty of gross mismanagement were the White House staffers themselves, who tried to hide their own misconduct by pinning the blame on the very people whose livelihoods they were jeopardizing.

Five of the travel office employees have since been placed on paid administrative leave. They are in the process of being reassigned to other jobs in the federal government. And they have been told by the Justice Department that they are no longer the subject of an FBI investigation at this time. Their good names have been restored.

#### Legal Bills

The story, unfortunately, does not end here. Like most Americans who have had the discomfiting experience of being targeted by the FBI, the travel office employees immediately sought legal help...and as most of us know, hiring a good lawyer can be expensive.

News reports indicate that each of the five travel office employees has incurred a legal bill of \$30,000 or more, for a combined total bill of approximately \$150,000. This \$30,000 bill is nearly half of each employee's annual salary.

(more)



News reports also indicate that White House Chief of Staff Mack McLarty had considered paying the legal bills from a Justice Department fund for litigation-related settlements, but declined to do so when he learned that certain legal requirements had not been met.

Small Gesture

Now, this amendment can never make the travel office employees completely whole...nor should we expect them ever to forget the unforgettable Travelgate experience.

But, by appropriating \$150,000 for a Travelgate legal defense fund, this amendment would relieve some of the financial burden imposed on the employees and their families.

The fund would be administered by the office of the General Counsel in the Department of Transportation. Payment would only be made for "appropriate" legal expenses and upon presentation by each of the five employees of a valid claim for reimbursement. Payment to each employee would also be contingent on notification by the Justice Department that the employee is no longer a subject of an investigation. As an offset, the amendment reduces by \$150,000 the appropriation for the Transportation Department's office of public affairs.

This amendment won't clean the Travelgate slate entirely. But it is a small gesture of goodwill to those five American citizens who have experienced government at its very worst.

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Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 11:30 AM EDT.