

There was no objection.

TRUMP CABINET'S SPENDING HABITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGO) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, this weekend, millions of Americans will stop procrastinating and sit down and do their taxes.

Nobody likes paying taxes, but what people really hate is when their tax dollars are wasted or, worse, when the money they have worked so hard to earn, money that could have gone to paying for their mortgage or the rent, or money that could have gone to pay our troops or rebuild our roads instead ends up in the pockets of corrupt politicians.

When that happens, when a public official takes your hard-earned money and uses it to pay, for example, for a first-class flight or a fancy hotel, the American taxpayer has a right to know. That is why, today, we have written a letter to every worker in this country who pays taxes. You can find it posted on our websites or on medium.com.

Our letter simply lists, for the benefit of everyone who will be sending in a return before April 17, some of the ways that the Trump administration has been spending your money. The American taxpayer has a right to know where those dollars are going.

With the help of the gentleman from California (Mr. TED LIEU), my good friend, I would like to share with you a quick accounting of the Trump Cabinet's spending habits. We think a pattern will quickly emerge.

While Lincoln had his "Team of Rivals" and Kennedy assembled the "Best and the Brightest," Donald Trump is running a "Cabinet of Corruption." So let's get started.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, Mr. GALLEGO and I both served in the Active Duty U.S. military because we believe America is an exceptional country, the best in the world. But what really bugs us is the fraud, waste, and abuse of taxpayers' funds and taxpayers' money, and the culture of corruption in this administration starts at the top with the President. So I am just going to go through some numbers—these are facts—of how much Donald Trump has wasted of taxpayers' money.

He has spent over \$58 million on 95 trips to golf clubs, including Mar-a-Lago, Bedminster, and other Trump-owned properties. Every time he takes one of these trips, according to *The Washington Post* and *Politico*, it costs about \$3 million, with all the staff and everyone that has to go and travel with him. In addition, \$137,000 was used for golf carts for the Secret Service between January and October 2017 alone.

At least \$190,000 of taxpayers' money was used for Trump brothers' business trips in the first 3 months of 2017; \$17,000 for custom rugs in the Oval Office; over \$12,000 on a custom conference table for the West Wing of the White House from, by the way, the same company used by President Nixon.

So this corruption starts at the top, and now you are going to see, as you go along through the Cabinet, the fraud, waste, and abuse of taxpayers' money.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, another example, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, nearly \$1 million on seven military flights, instead of flying commercial like his predecessors, including a day trip to Ottawa with his fiancée, a \$26,900 military flight to Kentucky in August—coincidentally, while at the same time there is a solar eclipse, a trip that is still under investigation by the investigator general.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, and then we have Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who spent \$139,000 of taxpayers' money to renovate some office doors; \$39,000 for a helicopter tour of national monuments in Nevada; \$12,000 on a private jet from Las Vegas, Nevada, where he spoke to a hockey team owned by a major donor, to his home in Montana; as well as a taxpayer-funded security detail that also accompanied him and his wife on their personal vacation to Greece and Turkey at considerable taxpayer expense.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, let's talk about HUD Secretary Ben Carson: for a mahogany dining set for his office, \$31,000.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, and now we have Veterans' Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, who spent over \$122,000 of taxpayer funds with his wife to go to Europe for their primary purpose of sightseeing. David Shulkin has been fired.

I shall also note that Secretary Tom Price, who was also in the Trump Cabinet, spent huge amounts of taxpayers' dollars on first-class flights. He was also fired.

Mr. GALLEGO. That is, actually, they were personal planes that he took that cost a total of \$500,000, Congressman LIEU.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Oh, that is correct. Sorry. I took your spot.

Mr. GALLEGO. That is all right. All is forgiven.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Well, there are just so many folks.

The next person we have is former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who also was fired. He spent \$12 million of taxpayers' money in fees to consultants in an attempt to downsize and restructure the State Department.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, we have our favorite cause, or celebrity nowadays, the EPA Administrator, Scott Pruitt, who, so far, has spent \$800,000 for around-the-clock security, nearly twice the cost of security for Pruitt's two immediate predecessors; \$105,000 in

first-class commercial airline tickets during his first year in office, including a \$40,000 trip to Morocco to promote the use of natural gas, which doesn't even fall under the EPA mission. He spent \$1,600 on a first-class plane ticket from Washington to New York in order to make two brief television appearances defending the decision to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement.

You could take a train that will take you just as long and will end up being, privately, one-tenth of that price if you wanted to go with everyday Americans instead of trying to live it up.

□ 1215

He also did an \$84,000 trip to Italy to meet with G7 Environment Ministers and took a private Vatican tour; more than \$58,000 on chartered flights, including a \$36,068 flight from Cincinnati, where Pruitt appeared alongside Trump at an event to New York, where he caught a flight for his Italy trip; a \$5,719 intra-State flight from Denver to Durango, Colorado—I have done this trip before. It does not cost you \$5,719—despite Governor Hickenlooper's offer of a State plane ride, which would have been free; \$120,000 for a right-leaning PR firm, known for its campaign-style opposition research that may have been used to target career EPA employees; and another \$43,000 on a sound-proof phone booth for Pruitt's office and \$6,000 on biometric fingerprinting locks for that booth.

Pruitt also bypassed the White House in order to grant raises to two of his aides worth tens of thousands of dollars. Pruitt's former deputy chief of staff reports that Pruitt far outspent the \$5,000 decorating allowance for his office, frequently stayed in luxury hotels that exceeded even the 300 percent per diem government rate cap for exceptional circumstances, and directed staff to find official reasons for Pruitt to fly home to Oklahoma or to various cities he wished to visit at taxpayer expense.

I would like to point out that we haven't even fully done 2 years in the Trump administration and we are talking about so many of his own Cabinet members who are creating waste, fraud, and abuse. Had any of this occurred during the time when President Obama occupied the White House, we would have a Congress—specifically, the Republican-led Congress—talking about this every day. They would have oversight hearings. They would actually be trying to keep the Presidency in check. Instead, with very few exceptions, what we have is a Republican Congress that is part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GALLEGO. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, but wait. There is more on Scott Pruitt.

In addition to his waste of taxpayers' money, he also got a sweetheart deal

from lobbyists in Washington, D.C. He was able to get a lease for just \$50 a night—something you can't really get anywhere near Capitol Hill—and he only had to pay on the nights that he was there, even though the lease said that the landlord had to keep it open for 6 months—it was on demand and he could go there any time—oh, and, by the way, his daughter could also basically stay as well. When you put out the numbers, that agreement was two to three times less than what any ordinary citizen could have gotten.

This culture of corruption has now led to a Cabinet of corruption. I don't care whether you are a Republican or a Democrat or an Independent, this is just not acceptable. It is time that the American taxpayer speak out and tell the Trump administration: We have had enough. You need to start firing these officials who are wasting taxpayers' money and getting sweetheart deals for lobbyists.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, when the President ran for office, he ran on a saying: drain the swamp.

Does this look like you are draining the swamp?

Does the list of people and the list of corruption we have seen, does that look like you are draining the swamp?

No, it seems like you are just adding it. All you are doing is adding more and more to the culture of corruption and creating that swamp.

If the President was serious about it, if my colleagues were also serious about draining the swamp, then they need to keep their own party and their own Cabinet members in check because, right now, that is not happening.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GALLEGO. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, in fact, this administration has fertilized the swamp. It is tremendously, bigly huge right now. We have lobbyists who have inappropriate deals with Cabinet officials, we have Cabinet officials spending a lot of taxpayers' money to live up their luxury lifestyle of first-class jets, of luxury hotels, and of trips they don't need to take. This is simply not acceptable. This is exactly the opposite of what the President ran on, and the voters are going to know this this November.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, in closing, if you wonder why these Cabinet members feel that they can get away with this, if you wonder why some of these lifelong career politicians and executives think that this is a good idea, it is because they look at the top. They look at the top and they say: Well, my leader, President Trump, is allowed to do this, why can't I also take part?

It is the leadership at the top that is creating this culture. It is the leadership at the top that is not draining the swamp, but only making it swampier.

That is why you see Secretary Mnuchin, that is why you see Pruitt,

that is why you see all of these people basically acting like the President: wasteful with our tax dollars, abusing our tax dollars, and not even trying to explain why, or feeling bad about why they did it.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GALLEGO. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Speaker, Congressman GALLEGO and I are writing an open letter to the American taxpayers that is going to contain all of these facts, with the sources cited, so that the American people can see for themselves the huge waste of taxpayers' money from the Cabinet of corruption.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, while you are filling out your taxes—I already did mine. I did not procrastinate this time, thank God. I am sure Congressman LIEU is a lot more organized and probably got it done 3 months ago—but when you are doing your taxes, and when you pay your taxes, just remember, some of that money has gone into the pockets of some politicians who did not need it. It could have gone somewhere else. It could have gone to your favorite issue. It could have gone to our troops. It could have gone to some of our more important causes. Instead, it was because one Cabinet member decided that he needed to take a first-class trip instead of sitting in coach like the rest of us.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind Members to direct all remarks to the Chair and to formally yield and reclaim time when under recognition.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting week here. I always appreciate following people speaking who want to limit waste in our Federal Government.

I only heard a little snippet, but it caught my ear. I heard something mentioned about EPA Director Scott Pruitt gave a raise to two people who shouldn't have gotten them.

Actually, I can elaborate a little bit on that.

One of his staff had recommended a raise to two people without the Director's permission, and they didn't get the raise. It didn't happen.

He is one of the most effective people in that job. He is one of the reasons the economy is doing well. And jobs for minority members are at an all-time high record-setting. So I can understand when a Cabinet member like Scott Pruitt is doing an incredible job and the economy is exploding as a result doing

so well, people being employed, and making more.

Mr. Speaker, I can also report, having spent 2 weeks in my district a week before and a week after Easter—I am hearing it from people in jobs you wouldn't even think of that—that the economy is doing well. It is pretty typical for people telling me, who are in retail, whatever it is, their sales are up 30, 40, or 50 percent from where they were after the first quarter, even last year.

I really don't believe we would ever have gotten a tax bill if we had not had the undying commitment to get something done that we had from President Trump. So it is a good thing. It is going to be a good year. When the economy is going good, it is a good thing. I have been here 13 years, but I have noticed that if Republicans are in the majority and the economy is being turned around—I know President Obama had said we will never see 3 percent growth in the economy again, it would take a magic wand, Trump would have to have a magic wand to get the economy growing by 3 percent ever again—and another piece of good news is we have found out that President Trump, as President, has already made enough changes, through people like Scott Pruitt and others, so that the economy has already hit 3 percent growth; and we hope by the end of the year it will be much better. So good news.

My friend is concerned about waste. It is not what was initially reported, but I am thrilled to see the concern about waste. I know that is one thing that both sides of the aisle now will be concerned about.

But it is interesting. When the economy gets to going so well, that is when I usually see my friends across the aisle get more concerned and start using the term "corruption."

And why not?

I know back in 2005 and 2006, when there were Democrats being arrested and there was trouble across the country with corruption on both parties, and we started hearing the term "corruption, corruption, corruption," it was a huge help to the Democrats. They won the majority. Then, as soon as people saw how bad the corruption had become under the Democratic majority, we were able to get the majority back.

Now the key is to do something with it. Obviously, we saw yesterday that it is not enough to just bring a balanced budget bill to the floor that doesn't have a spending cap that would have forced taxes to go up. That is not going to be enough to convince Americans that we are serious about cutting waste in our spending. We are going to have to actually avoid things like that outrageous omnibus that passed with over 60 percent of Democrats voting for it and over 60 percent, apparently, of Republicans voting for it.

There is another bit of good news. I do think this part of the news is a help