

# UG Commission spends more than \$100k on travel

Written by Mary Rupert Thursday, 10 June 2010 10:59

The Unified Government Commission spent more than \$100,000 on travel in the past five years, according to a legislative auditor's report.

In 2009, when the Unified Government had to slash departmental budgets, cut services, cancel raises and furlough workers, the commissioners spent \$16,755.19 on travel. In 2010, so far, they have spent \$12,005.41, the report stated.

The report was requested by Commissioner Mike Kane after a disagreement among commissioners on whether Commissioner Ann Brandau Murguia should receive funding for a trip. Kane, defending Murguia, pointed out there was funding left in the travel budget.

At issue was whether Murguia should travel to an International Council of Shopping Centers Conference in Las Vegas, Nev., at an estimated cost of \$600. Commissioner Mark Holland said the commission had received a memo that it was supposed to be cutting back on travel requests. The commission split 5-4 on the issue, and then Murguia withdrew her request after Commissioner Pat Pettey asked to vote again.

Murguia said recently that she went to the conference anyway. A resident paid for her trip after hearing about the commission's actions. She said the commission had approved other travel requests a few weeks before. Two of her travel requests now have run into opposition, and it is unusual for the commission to deny a travel request, she said.

Murguia said she has been actively meeting with developers and grocery store executives to identify new businesses that might locate in her district, the Argentine area, and she thought the trip to the retail conference might help.

## Who spent the most money on travel?

Commissioner Pat Pettey spent \$23,308.55 during the five years on trips, according to the auditor's report, with \$3,872.25 in 2009 and \$2,267.13 so far in 2010.

Commissioner Nathan Barnes' travel totaled \$23,143.28 during the five years, the report stated.

Commissioner Tom Cooley spent \$20,932.04 on travel during the five years, the report stated.

Other travel expenses: Commissioner John Mendez, \$10,909; Commissioner Bill Miller, \$8,060.67; former Commissioner Don DeSeure, \$5,114.13; Commissioner Mike Kane, \$3,453.57; Commissioner Ann Murguia, \$2,541.79; Commissioner Mark Holland, \$1,254.35; and Commissioner Butch Ellison, \$250. Commissioner Mark Mitchell did not have any travel expenses.

The most expensive trip on the list was Commissioner Tom Cooley's March 2007 trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the National Association of Counties legislative conference, at \$2,718.10.

The longest trip on the list may have been Commissioner Pat Pettey's trip to Honolulu, Hawaii, in 2005 to attend the National Association of Counties annual conference.

The National League of Cities had a conference in Orlando, Fla., the home of DisneyWorld, in 2008 that was attended by three UG commissioners, Pettey, Don DeSeure and Nathan Barnes.

The report does not include any trips that commissioners paid for themselves, just UG-funded travel.

## Total spending on travel:

In 2005, \$22,000.84

In 2006, \$14,884.92

In 2007, \$14,844.03

In 2008, \$26,860.44

In 2009, \$16,755.19

In 2010, so far, \$12,005.41

Total is \$107,350.83.

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