

Federal Travel Transparency Act

Endorsed By: *The Sunlight Foundation*

Problem – Extensive Violation of Travel Rules:

Recent reports reveal a widespread failure to comply with the letter and spirit of the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) by agency leaders. Administered by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), the FTR provides guidance on conducting official government travel. Wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars on questionable or inappropriate official travel appears to be a compliance problem, rather than a result of deficient travel regulations.

How the Federal Travel Transparency Act Addresses the Problem:

This good government legislation does not seek to reinvent the wheel on travel rules and would avoid establishing new bureaucracies or offices. Rather, it would simply mandate, on a quarterly basis, additional public online disclosure of the official air travel activities of agency leadership:

- GSA would be required to publicly disclose information concerning the duration, destination(s), travel party, justification and costs of official travel for agency leaders.
- Travel information would be published using an existing website, such as USASpending.gov, and the data would be machine-readable and in an open format.
- Consistent with existing travel reporting rules, classified trips would be exempt from online disclosure, and each agency would be authorized to protect national security sensitive travel information, subject to oversight by Offices of Inspectors General.

Objectives:

The goal of this legislation is to shine light on the official travel of agency leaders, in the hope that greater transparency will result in greater compliance with Federal travel regulations.

By providing increased government transparency, the Federal Travel Transparency Act would incentivize agency leaders to make better official travel decisions and posting this information online would enable crowd-sourced oversight of how taxpayer dollars are being spent.

Proactively mandating enhanced online disclosure would also eliminate wasting agency resources handling numerous FOIA requests for agency leadership travel information, and make clear that such information should be easily accessible to the taxpayers who funded it.

This bill avoids a one-size-fits-all ban on certain types of travel. Instead, it would empower taxpayers to review the travel spending habits of agency leaders, and determine for themselves whether individual travel spending by an agency leader was reasonable and appropriate.