

Thursday, July 13, 1989

Study reveals cost to taxpayers for officials' travels

WASHINGTON (AP) — Texas congressmen criss-crossed the globe at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$400,000 over the past two years, according to a study released Wednesday.

While Rep. Kika de la Garza took the most overseas trips at taxpayer expense, Rep. Solomon Ortiz outdistanced the rest of the 29-member Texas delegation in the number of countries visited.

The study, however, did not list the cost for each of the 74 trips taken by Texas congressmen, making it impossible to determine whose travel was the most expensive.

De la Garza took nine trips to 13 countries, returning to Mexico five times, for a reported cost of \$24,677, while Ortiz's seven trips took him to 27 countries at a cost of \$42,966, the study by the congressional watchdog Public Citizen said.

On one trip alone for the Select Commit-

tee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, the study said Ortiz was in nine countries — Mexico, Belize, Jamaica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Trinidad, Tobago and Venezuela.

During another fact-finding mission on narcotics, the Corpus Christi Democrat touched down in five more countries — Korea, Thailand, Burma, Singapore and Indonesia — at a cost of \$18,878.

"Trips are important and not junkets," Ortiz said. "They are designed to give congressmen a first hand view of the problems and developments abroad."

The nine trips taken by De la Garza, the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, put him in fourth place among all members of Congress in the number of separate overseas outings, Public Citizen said.

Rep. Martin Frost, a member of the

House Rules Committee, which has no role in drafting legislation, took two of his three trips with the panel. One journey took the Dallas Democrat to Spain, Portugal, Morocco and the Ivory Coast, the second to Spain, Malta, Turkey, Kenya and Senegal.

A third trip with the House Budget Committee took him to economic conferences in Madrid, Paris and Milan — locations, he said, not of his choosing.

Frost also argues that the influential Rules Committee decides which bills go to the floor and whether they can be amended, meaning the members are asked to make important foreign policy decisions.

"As a general proposition," he said, "it is very helpful for members (of Congress) to gain exposure to other parts of the world."

Rep. Mickey Leland, a Houston Democrat who heads the Select Committee on

Hunger, took five of his seven trips with the panel.

"Mickey's trips have been working, grueling trips — non-stop in terms of meetings and on-site visits. They're hot and sweaty and substantive," his spokesman, Alma Newsom, said.

Leland also visited Taiwan with the Energy and Commerce Committee and, at the speaker's request went to Spain, the Soviet Union, and Germany.

Several other Texans also ventured behind the Iron Curtain, with Rep. Jack Brooks of Beaumont traveling to Poland, and Sen. Phil Gramm and Reps. Jake Pickle and Jim Wright also going to the Soviet Union.

Others ventured into countries on the fringes of war or torn by strife. Rep. Tom DeLay's only trip was to Nicaragua. Rep.

Charlie Wilson returned three times to Pakistan.

The study said only a handful of the state's congressmen took no overseas trips in the last two years — Republican Reps. Steve Bartlett of Dallas, Joe Barton of Ennis, Larry Combest of Lubbock and Lamar Smith of San Antonio, and Democrat Henry B. Gonzalez of San Antonio.

However, Bartlett's spokesman said he took one short trip on a regularly scheduled Defense Department flight to Europe.

Public Citizen said globetrotting members of Congress took a total of 1,053 overseas trips in 1987-88 at a cost to taxpayers of at least \$13.5 million.

The information on members of the 100th Congress, who served in 1987 and 1988, was compiled from figures furnished by committees and from military records.

Several areas of campus to remain under construction for rest of year

Construction at several areas of campus will continue for the remainder of 1989, said Tom Williams, Texas A&M Director of Parking, Transit and Traffic Services and Keith Chapman, director of Facilities, Planning and Construction for the A&M System.

• **Ross and Spence streets:** Construction of the Computer Science/Aerospace Engineering (CSAE) Building and the Richardson Petroleum Engineering Building should be completed by December 1989. The surrounding sidewalks and roads will be cleaned up within the next few weeks. A walkway is scheduled to be built between the Chemistry Building and the CSAE Building, permanently closing that section of Spence Street.

• **Bolton Hall:** The completion date of Bolton Hall renovation is August.

• **Moses Hall and Davis-Gary Hall:** The restoration of the two Corps-style residence halls on the north side of campus should be finished in August, in time for occupation this fall.

• **Goodwin Hall:** Goodwin Hall, located between the Coke Building and Bizzell Hall, and across from the Drill Field, is supposed to be demolished in September 1989 due to a weak foundation. No decision has been made about a building replacement.

• **Lubbock and Nagle streets:** The large hole in front of Heldenfels Hall and the Quadrangle should be repaved by the end of July, allowing Lubbock Street to be reopened.

• **Satellite Utility Substation:** In December, the new cooling plant next to the Mil-

itary Sciences Building on the corner of Joe Routh Boulevard and Coke Street should be completed. Construction along Joe Routh Boulevard will continue to cause traffic delays during fall while new pipes are laid between G. Rollie White Coliseum and the new substation.

• **Parking Area 24:** The completion date for the parking area behind south side residence halls is set for August 1990.

• **New residence halls:** The new halls, one across from Sbis Dining Hall, and four behind the Commons, are finished. The street between the recently completed dorms and Mosher will remain closed. A new move-in policy for the fall is being considered by Student Affairs and Parking Administration since no vehicles will be allowed near the area.

• **The Commons Dining Facility renovation:** The scheduled completion date for the addition of two new wings to the Commons dining hall is November. Until then, students should be cautious of construction equipment driving between Aston and Dunn halls and Krueger and Mosher halls.

• **University Center Expansion:** Additions to the MSC and Rudder Tower will begin January 1990. A chain-link fence will block the mall between the two buildings, detouring pedestrians through the MSC. A parking garage and an L-shaped building will be built across from the Rudder Complex in Lot 60. The contractor will store equipment on the Spence Park jogging trail, causing the relocation of Mt. Aggie. Joe Routh Boulevard and Houston Street also will be blocked until the project's completion.

Reported agreement could mean end of workers' comp deadlock

AUSTIN (AP) — Legislative leaders said Wednesday they have reached a tentative agreement on reforming the workers' compensation system, signalling a possible break in the impasse that has deadlocked lawmakers since January and forced a special session.

"Everybody has signed off on the points that had been holding up some of the negotiations," House Speaker Gib Lewis, said.

A House and Senate conference committee was expected to begin voting late Wednesday on some of the major issues in overhauling the system that compensates workers who are injured on-the-job.

Sen. John Montford, author of a Senate workers' comp proposal, said he hoped the conference committee could produce a bill by Thursday for consideration of both chambers.

The major obstacles between the House and Senate were over how to resolve disputed workers' comp claims, how to calculate benefits and whether to require employers purchase workers' comp insurance.

The House, backed by business, supported reducing litigation of comp claims, computing injury

awards based on a specific benefits schedule, and had rejected proposals to mandate comp insurance coverage.

The Senate, supported by trial lawyers and labor, favored retaining the right to a jury trial, basing comp awards on lost wages, and requiring

employers to buy comp insurance.

Under the proposed agreement, disputed comp claims could be appealed to state district court, but any settlement before the trial began would have to be approved by the administrative workers' compensation commission.

Dallas sponsors 'official welcome' for scientists

DALLAS (AP) — Two weeks after a criticized "ribbon-cutting" sponsored by Sen. Phil Gramm, the city of Dallas plans an "official welcome" for scientists of the superconducting super collider.

The event on Friday, which has been planned for months, will feature some officials who missed the earlier ceremony, said Barbara Lusk of Trammell Crow Co., which owns the space where the 120 scientists will design and manage the \$5.9 billion atom smasher.

On June 27, Gramm, a Republi-

can, sponsored a ribbon-cutting at the offices that was criticized by some Democrats because it coincided with the House vote on super-conductor funding.

Gramm's ceremony was planned in about four days, Lusk said.

Many local officials from the area around Waxahachie, where the project will be centered, attended Gramm's ceremony.

Friday's welcome, however, will include Dallas Mayor Annette Strauss, who was out of the country on June 27, and Rep. Martin Frost, a Democrat from Dallas.

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*this list is subject to change

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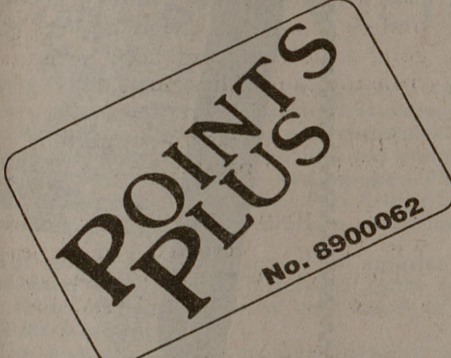
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