

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 23, 2009

Mr. Gene Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW, - Room 7125
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Recently, it was reported that several federal departments have issued a directive banning government meetings and conferences in specific U.S. cities out of concern that these destinations are viewed by the public as too leisurely or resort-oriented. If true, these serious allegations call into question federal agency decision making concerning travel and locations of off-site meetings and conferences. Such "blacklisting" of specific destinations could result in a waste of taxpayer dollars and is counterproductive to ongoing efforts to strengthen the American economy.

We write to you to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake a review of the policies and practices that federal agencies, including the Department of Justice and the General Services Administration, use to determine city locations for convening meetings, seminars and conferences within the United States.

Specifically, we request that GAO's investigation, at a minimum, include the following:

- A review and evaluation of the criteria each federal agency uses to determine in which U.S. city to convene a national, regional or local meeting, seminar or conference;
- Information regarding written or unwritten orders that direct agency personnel to avoid convening or attending a national, regional or local meeting, seminar or conference in a specific U.S. destination;
- Information regarding any list of cities that are purposely being avoided as destinations to host national, regional or local meetings, seminars and conferences;
- An analysis of the request for proposals issued and proposals accepted by each agency in order to determine if any U.S. city is being purposely excluded from hosting a national, regional or local meeting, seminar or conference.

Government travel for meetings, conferences and seminars is an important source of economic activity for many communities throughout the United States, and every destination should have an equal and fair opportunity to host federal meetings and events. The federal government should make meeting location decisions based on factors such as overall cost, appropriate meeting facility space, and the quality of services provided in a particular city, convention

facility or hotel. We respectfully request that you investigate this matter and provide the result of your review to us no later than February 1, 2010.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

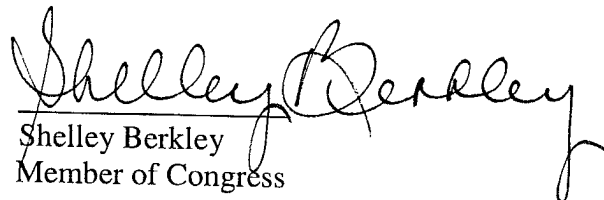
Sincerely,




Suzanne M. Kosmas
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Shelley Berkley
Member of Congress



Dean Heller
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Alan Grayson
Member of Congress

John Mica
Member of Congress