DEPARTURE STATEMENT, UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATION TO OBSERVE THE HAITI ELECTIONS

JUNE 26, 1995, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI

Yesterday's elections represent a step in the building of democracy in Haiti. A peaceful balloting process occurred in a country where violence has so often marked past elections. This feat is truly impressive when one considers that but nine months ago Haiti was under the yoke of a military dictatorship. However, the process was affected by irregularities and administrative flaws that need to be addressed for the second round and the future.

Members of the presidential delegation visited five of Haiti's nine departments and more than 300 polling sites. We observed a complicated balloting procedure, involving elections for more than 2100 legislative, mayoral and local council offices. Dedicated polling officials and pollwatchers representing 25 political parties surmounted various obstacles in allowing the Haitian people, in most localities, to choose their representatives.

Procedural and administrative problems before and on election day, nonetheless, prevented citizens in several municipalities from expressing their voting preferences. The failure to include the names of certain approved candidates on the ballots contributed to the cancellation of elections in seven communities and created disquiet in other areas. We also have received critical reports regarding the failure to follow proper procedures during the initial counting phase, with most serious consequences in the Department of the West, which covers the Port Au Prince area.

Despite repeated misunderstandings over the actions of election officials at all levels, the delegation saw little evidence of any effort to favor a single political party or of an organized attempt to intentionally subvert the electoral machinery. At many points, the Provisional Electoral Council's actions and public statements raised questions about the credibility of the process. The most significant of the problems was the failure to explain the reasons candidates were rejected. Political parties raised these and other concerns relating to the transparency of the elections in their contacts with the delegation.

President Aristide and his government performed a positive role in repeating often the theme of reconciliation. In meeting with some rejected candidates and in a public statement on the eve of the elections, the President demonstrated his concern over the controversies surrounding the process and underscored his desire to be President of every Haitian citizen.

We wish to emphasize that this electoral process is far from over and thus a definitive evaluation is premature. The counting of ballots and the adjudication of electoral complaints are pending. There may even be a need to rerun elections in certain jurisdictions. We will remain in close contact with other observer delegations, most notably the Organization of American States, which has organized coverage of these elections throughout the country.

A determined effort is required to remedy the most significant problems affecting the electoral process before the next round of elections. Sincere consultations with a broad range of political parties and transparent decisionmaking by the electoral authorities should have occurred and are indispensable to strengthening Haiti's democratic institutions. The government also should consider carefully the recommendations of the United Nations, various observer delegations and technical election experts who have worked closely with their Haitian counterparts in assisting the electoral process. In this context, we note the very positive role that the United Nations Mission played in Haiti during the entire transition period.

Despite the problems associated with the pre-election period and observed on election day, the Haitian people voted freely and seemingly without fear. Haiti is now one step closer to establishing a functioning parliament and viable local government.

It is our firm belief that further steps to correct the identified problems will encourage a perception of fairness about this process, despite the inevitable difficulties of conducting an election in Haiti. The Haitian people have demonstrated that they have earned the respect associated with participating in the individual act of casting a ballot. For our part, we will continue to work with the government and people of Haiti in supporting the strengthening of democratic institutions in this country.

PRODIGIOUS TRAVEL BY ENERGY SECRETARY O'LEARY

HON. MARTIN R. HOKE

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, as you may remember, 1 month ago I asked the General Accounting Office and the chairmen of the House Commerce, House National Security, and House Government Reform and Oversight Committees to initiate investigations into the Secretary of Energy's prodigious travel.

I am happy to report that the General Accounting Office has initiated an investigation into Secretary O'Leary's travel. This is especially important in light of the Monday, June 26, front page story in the Los Angeles Times reporting that Secretary O'Leary's travel expenditures far exceed those of all other Cabinet officers.

When I made my May 25 statement about the Secretary's travel habits, I was under the impression that she had transferred $100,000 from various program accounts to finance her travel. Imagine my surprise when it actually turned out that Secretary O'Leary had transferred in excess of $400,000 from other accounts, including accounts used by scientists and technicians in the Department's nuclear safeguards and security program, to pay for her globe-trotting.

According to the L.A. Times, Secretary O'Leary believes in traveling first class all the way, spending approximately $815 per trip for a total of nearly $50,000 on her domestic travels. But that does not include the costs associated with her entourage that has included as many as 10 staff members. I ask unanimous consent that the Los Angeles Times article be inserted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD after my statement.

I now understand that Secretary O'Leary has demanded that DOE program offices cough up additional funds for her planned boondoggle to South Africa. I suppose that a safari to South Africa would be grand this time of the year, but I cannot believe that this trip is more important than safeguarding our nuclear deterrent. As I have said before, the Department of Energy seems to have become nothing more than a travel service to satisfy the Secretary's wanderlust.

For that reason and in order to gain a handle on DOE travel expenditures, I plan to offer an amendment to the Energy and Water Appropriations bill that would require Secretary O'Leary to report to Congress every time the Secretary authorized the payment of travel expenditures in excess of the amount appropriated for fiscal year 1996.

[From the Los Angeles Times/Washington edition, June 26, 1995]

O'LEARY: ENERGY SECRETARY LOGS CABINET'S HIGHEST TRAVEL COSTS

(By Alan C. Miller and Dwight Morris)

WASHINGTON.—Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary defends her department against budget-cutting proposals to dismantle it by portraying herself as a master economizer in government—reducing her work force, boosting efficiency and saving taxpayers' money.

But when she hits the road in her job, as she often does, O'Leary apparently is no bargain hunter.

Traveling in a style that is unusual, if not unique, among her Cabinet colleagues, O'Leary is the jet-setter of the Clinton Administration.

On longer trips, the former corporate executive frequently upgrades her airline flights to business class or first class—and sometimes authorizes staff members accompanying her to do so as well. And she routinely stays at expensive hotels, such as the Ritz-Carlton and the Four Seasons, in contrast with more cost-conscious fellow Cabinet members.

The travel habits are apparent on the bills for all trips, other than flights on military or Energy Department aircraft, that she submits to the government. For her first two years on the job, the median cost of O'Leary's 61 domestic official trips was 58% higher than it was for EPA Administrator Carol Browner's trips, 73% higher than for travel by Housing Secretary Henry G. Cisneros and 90% higher than Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala's trips, according to travel documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

In a written response to questions, O'Leary said her travel costs and practices are entirely appropriate and that, in fact, she had spent nearly $14,500 of her own money on official travel. On most domestic flights, she upgrades to business class at no cost to the government, even though she is on duty 24 hours a day and does considerable work en route, a spokeswoman said.

''Secretary O'Leary is an activist secretary who believes that most of the work of the government is beyond the Beltway,'' said Barbara Semedo, the Energy Department's press secretary. ''She is responsible for supervising a nationwide network of sites, many of which are former nuclear weapons facilities located in remote areas of the western United States, where transportation is sometimes time-consuming and expensive.''

Two practices in particular put O'Leary at the top of the travel-expense list. The government has ceilings on the amount it will repay officials for meals and accommodations but citing special circumstances, O'Leary routinely seeks hotel reimbursement at as much as 150% of the maximum level. Other Cabinet members usually find lodging for considerably less.

And most other agency heads rarely, if ever, upgrade from coach class on commercial flights.

The figures cited for O'Leary do not reflect one additional area in which the Energy Department outspends other agencies: travel by staff members. The energy secretary usually takes a larger retinue of aides with her on trips than do her Cabinet colleagues.

O'Leary, 58, a lawyer, oversees a $17.5-billion agency and one of the largest federal bureaucracies, with 17,000 federal employees and another 140,000 who work for the government through contracts with private companies. Its responsibilities include cleaning up thousands of sites that were radio-actively contaminated through the nation's nuclear weapon program.

O'Leary was executive vice president for corporate affairs at Northern States Power Co., a gas and electric utility based in Minnapolis, before Clinton made her the first woman and first African American to head the Energy Department. A multimillionaire, her annual salary is now $148,400.

She won early plaudits for revealing information about government-sponsored atomic experiments and has led high-profile overseas trade missions to India, Pakistan and China, where U.S. energy firms signed deals that the Energy Department said were worth at least $19.2 billion.

While battling Republican-led efforts to eliminate her department in recent months, O'Leary has announced plans to close offices and reduce staff, as well as cut back on overall department travel.

An extensive review by The Times of the travel itineraries and vouchers of eight senior Clinton officials found that O'Leary's travel habits stood out. The median cost of her trips, which means that half her trips cost more and half less, was $671. The median duration of the trips was three days.

Among those surveyed, only Veterans Affairs Secretary Jesse Brown recorded similar costs. His traveling style is not comparable to O'Leary's, but he tends to take longer trips.

The figures for O'Leary and her counterparts appear low, in part because they include inexpensive trips, some of which involved only ground transportation and no overnight stays. In other cases, political campaign committees picked up some of the tab if the trip entailed a political appearance.

Moreover, government officials can be reimbursed no more than a certain amount for meals and lodging, with those maximums determined on a city-by-city basis. In addition, hotels and airlines often offer discount rates to government workers.

Overall, O'Leary spent $49,857 on her 61 domestic trips, a figure that does not include travel by her aides.

That amount was $11,088 less than Cisneros' cumulative cost, although he took nearly twice as many trips. Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich took only three fewer trips than O'Leary but charged taxpayers slightly more than half as much.

The seven times that O'Leary upgraded to business class or first class at public expense were generally on overseas or cross-country trips. She cited on her travel vouchers that she needed to do so to perform work during the flight, to arrive at her destination fresh enough to conduct business and because of periodic back spasms. Federal travel regulations require such justifications for flying via any class other than coach.

On other trips, Semedo said O'Leary upgraded by using frequent-flier miles accumulated before she came to the Energy Department or by paying the difference herself.

The spokeswoman said O'Leary considers it cost-effective for aides to upgrade so they can work with her in flight. Unless otherwise necessary, just a single seat is upgraded, with staff members moving back and forth from coach class to consult with the secretary.

But the practice can multiply the cost. During an October, 1993, flight from Chicago to London, three staff members upgraded to business class with O'Leary. The additional charge to the government for the secretary was $3,198, and the added amount for the three aides was $7,067.

The lodging choices of O'Leary and her Cabinet colleagues are also a study in contrasts.

When Browner traveled to Boston in late 1994 for the EPA, she stayed at the Charles Hotel on Harvard Square at a cost of $83 a night. O'Leary stayed at the Four Seasons for $335 a night when she flew to Boston in November, 1993.

When Reich went to New York for the Labor Department in April, 1993, he stayed at the Sheraton Manhattan for $125. Three weeks later. O'Leary flew to Manhattan and checked into the Ritz-Carlton for $195.

Federal travel regulations permit officials to seek approval to claim up to 150% of the maximum per diem cost if one of the several ''special or unusual circumstances'' applies. In Boston, O'Leary sought the higher rate in her travel authorization because she required lodging close to where she was scheduled to appear. She also did so in New York, citing high costs and her schedule.

The government maximum for New York accommodations is $140, or $210 at the higher reimbursement level. In Boston, however, even at the higher reimbursement rate, the secretary was able to put in for only $171 for lodging. O'Leary paid the balance herself.

Overall, O'Leary billed the government for expenses that exceeded the maximum standard reimbursement rate on 61 of the 71 occasions when she stayed at a hotel in the United States, records show. Other agency heads took advantage of the higher cap far less often.

O'Leary is usually joined by seven or more aides on foreign trips and by several aids on domestic journeys, through that number has been as high as 10 on occasion. She almost always travels with her director of scheduling and logistics and a security officer, Semedo said. Other staff members ''may be assigned if their expertise is needed'' in such matters as nuclear weapons cleanup or international trade, she added.

By comparison, Cisneros traveled alone on a quarter of his domestic trips, with one aide on nearly half of his trips and with as many of four staff members only once. U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor traveled alone or with one aide on two-thirds of his trips that included domestic destinations and with no more than five on any trip.

''I don't travel with a large number of aides because I usually spend my travel time catching up on important reading that I can't get to in the office, or sketching out ideas,'' Cisneros said. ''Likewise, I find coach seating very satisfactory for my needs.''

One O'Leary destination had nothing to do with official Energy Department business.

In February, 1994, the secretary and two staff members traveled from Los Angeles to Boca Raton, Fla., where she participated in a weekend conference of the Democratic National Committee's Business Leadership Forum, a group of corporate executives who each gave at least $10,000 to the Democratic Party.

During her stay at the Boca Raton Resort & Club, O'Leary's schedule consisted primarily of attending a Democratic leadership forum lunch and dinner, as well as recreational and personal appointments. O'Leary did not seek reimbursement from the government for any of her expenses in Boca Raton. The Democratic National Committee repaid the Energy Department for the added cost of her flight from Los Angeles, where she had gone on government business.

But the two staff members who accompanied her did bill taxpayers for their flights to and from Florida and for some of their expenses during their midwinter stay at the oceanfront resort.

Chief of Staff Richard H. Rosenzweig was reimbursed for three nights at $125 a night and the daily per diem of $34. Johannah M. Dottori, O'Leary's director of scheduling and logistics, put in for the full resort rate of $257 for two nights and per diem for two days. Both sought the higher ceiling on their lodging because of ''extraordinary expenses associated with accompanying the secretary,'' according to their travel records.

Even so, Dottori exceeded the 150% limit by approximately $100. Semedo said Friday that this was ''an oversight'' by department auditors and that Dottori will probably have to reimburse the government for the excessive charge.

During the cross-country flight, Semedo said O'Leary worked on official business and consulted with her staff. Wherever O'Leary is, Semedo said, she spends ''a major portion of her time'' on departmental matters.

Asked to explain why Rosenzweig and Dottori were reimbursed for their expenses, the department cited a 1990 White House memorandum which said, in part, that travel can be charged to the government for individuals ''whose official duties require them to be with a Cabinet member, whether or not the Cabinet member himself is on official business.''

The two aides accompanied O'Leary ''to perform official functions, including preparation for upcoming work, policy discussions and providing a communications link to the department headquarters,'' Semedo said. ''They did not take part'' in partisan activities.

FLAG AMENDMENT IS THE PEOPLE'S WILL

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 27, 1995

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the comments of one of our colleagues in the House, the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. JEFFERSON. His column entitled, ''Flag Amendment Is the People's Will'' was published in the recent edition of the American Legion Magazine in support of the constitutional amendment protecting our flag. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this constitutional amendment will be coming before us on the floor this Wednesday, June 28. I would ask all my fellow Members to heed Mr. JEFFERSON's sound advice and keep faith with the American people by supporting this constitutional amendment and sending it to the States and the people for ratification.

[From the American Legion]

FLAG AMENDMENT IS THE PEOPLE'S WILL

(By Representative William Jefferson)

In April, a proposed constitutional amendment that would permit the individual states to enact legislation banning physical desecration of the flag was introduced in the Congress.

After much careful deliberation, I became an original cosponsor of the amendment. My decision came not without considerable anguish, particularly over the principle of amending the Constitution.

In the final analysis, however, it came down to this: If we are not willing to stand up for our flag, what will we stand up for?

To those who say this is a First Amendment issue—an issue of free speech—let me remind them that there are several restrictions and limits on speech already. One cannot libel or slander another without fear of