

conference participation and related expenses, which increased from \$10.781 million in fiscal year 2000 to \$17.296 million in fiscal year 2006.

Conference attendance for Federal employees in many, if not most, cases is discretionary, meaning that it is up to Federal agencies to determine to what conferences agency employees should go and how many employees should go. Some conferences provide valuable educational or agency-related information in a format unavailable in a normal office setting. Many conferences, by the sponsors' design, are held in locations chosen to attract attendees.

That being said, it is the responsibility of the U.S. Congress and the managers within Federal agencies to exercise due diligence in performing oversight over an area of Federal spending that has cost taxpayers over \$2 billion on conferences from 2000-2006. This spending has increased over 95 percent, from over \$200 million a year in fiscal year 2000 to almost \$400 million a year in fiscal year 2006. In addition to the financial cost of these trips, oversight hearings I held as the chair of the Federal Financial Management Subcommittee highlighted the lost productivity of government employees when they are out of the office on non-essential travel.

The EPA is just one among many Federal agencies that I believe has overspent on nonessential conferences and travel. In my research I found numerous instances where EPA showed questionable judgment in this regard.

In September 2006, EPA sent 23 employees to Paris, France, for the International Society of Exposure Analysis Meeting, at a cost of \$56,000. This conference featured a gala dinner cruise on the River Seine and a cast of presenters that consisted primarily of Americans.

The agency's employees attended an annual National Beaches Conference in Niagara Falls, NY. The 2006 conference was attended by at least seven EPA employees, at a cost to taxpayers of \$52,500.

One EPA employee attended a December 2006 GSA Small Business Conference in Palm Springs, CA, at a cost of \$4,100, with his or her travel costs alone listed at \$1,800.

A Cancun, Mexico, meeting attended by two EPA employees cost \$4,200, with travel costs listed at \$2,900.

A March 2007 Waste-to-Energy Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico cost taxpayers \$48,000 for nine EPA employees and two taxpayer-funded non-employees to attend.

A 2006 "Beyond Translation Forum" sponsored by the EPA in Texas to "engage the Hispanic community in becoming environmental stewards" costs \$52,100 for the attendance of 20 EPA employees and 85 taxpayer-funded non-employees.

Over 2 years, EPA also spent \$2.6 million in grants and contracts and over \$300,000 in travel and related expenses

for brownfields conferences in Oregon and Missouri.

EPA spent \$235,000 in grants and \$25,000 in travel costs for the National Tank Conference in Memphis. Costs included events at BB King's and seeing the Memphis Grizzlies basketball team play.

EPA spent \$355,000 in grants and contracts and \$167,000 in travel costs for the Community Involvement Conference in Milwaukee.

In February of 2007, EPA spent \$150,000 to sponsor the "Measuring Program Results" Conference, to which it sent one EPA employee and paid for the attendance of four nonemployees.

Instead of specifically capping the amount EPA could spend on conference travel, Senator CARPER has graciously modified his amendment to transfer \$2 million from the EPA's Environmental Programs and Management account to fund this study of black carbon emissions. This EPA account "provides personnel compensation, benefits, and travel and other administrative expenses for all agency programs."

It is my hope that this transfer in funds will help EPA better manage the funds it is entrusted with by Congress and limit questionable expenditures and unnecessary conference travel and related expenses.

I am pleased that the Senate has agreed to this offset and hope that Congress can begin to prioritize funds for its priorities with real offsets.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING JOSEPHINE PEREZ

• Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, on August 28, 2009, Colorado and the Nation lost a champion for justice and equality, Josephine Marie Varela-Perez. Josie, as she was known by all, surmounted the daunting challenges life brought her to become an exemplary voice for minority students in Denver. Her courage and conviction created a better future not only for Denver students but for countless kids across the country.

Josie's humble beginnings never held her back from achieving her dreams. When faced with adversity, she overcame.

School year after school year, Josie would show up on the first day to be counted among her classmates and then return to working in the beet fields, never attending class past the fourth grade. But Josie—a strong believer that education was the key to success and should be available to all children no matter their race or creed—taught herself English and Spanish and earned her GED.

Josie's commitment to education and minority rights thrust her into the center of the civil rights movement as a party to the landmark desegregation case, *Keyes, et al v. School District No. 1, Denver, Colorado*. She also marched with Cesar Chavez and the United

Farm Workers and was a voice for the less fortunate. Her strength and courage in standing up for the rights of minority students and the less fortunate is an inspiration to all.

Josie's strong spirit extended far beyond her activism. Josie worked tirelessly to support her six kids—Ricardo, Patricia, Lou, Carlos, Terry, and Sheila so that they could have the future they deserved.

I join Coloradans and Americans across the country in grieving the loss of this civil rights champion. Josie's legacy will continue to inspire Americans for generations to come.

My thoughts and prayers are with her family.●

RECOGNIZING FIFTY YEARS OF ICBMS

• Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I wish today as cochair of the Senate ICBM coalition along with my friend from Wyoming to recognize and pay tribute to 20th Air Force as the Air Force celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first nuclear-tipped ICBM on alert, and to honor the heritage and accomplishments of the ICBM mission and people—past and present—who acquire, develop, operate, maintain, and secure this combat capability for our Nation.

In July 1954, the Air Force established the Western Development Division in response to the growing Soviet missile threat. It developed the first-generation ICBMs—the Titan that is housed in underground silos as well as the above-ground Atlas.

In October 1959, the first alert of a nuclear warhead-equipped Atlas D occurred at Vandenberg Air Force Base, CA. Immediately thereafter, the Air Force started working on a solid-fueled, second-generation ICBM called the Minuteman. Ten Minuteman I ICBMs were already on alert at Malmstrom Air Force Base, MT, by the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Just three years later, the first-generation ICBMs were replaced with the larger and more accurate Minuteman II.

By January 1970, the Air Force had deployed the Minuteman III. Throughout the 1970s, in response to the Soviet Union's buildup of multiwarhead ICBMs, the Air Force started work on the Peacekeeper. In 1987, 50 Peacekeepers were deployed in existing Minuteman III silos at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, WY. At the height of the Cold War, the Air Force maintained an ICBM fleet of more than 1,200 missiles on alert as a counterforce to the approximately 1,400 Soviet ICBMs poised against the United States.

Currently, the Air Force maintains a fleet of 450 on-alert Minuteman III ICBMs, spanning the missile fields in Colorado, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Wyoming. In August 2009, the Air Force activated a new major command—Air Force Global Strike Command—committed solely to the nuclear deterrence mission. This December, 20th Air Force and the ICBM