

May 17, 2012

The Hon. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz – Chair
Democratic National Committee
430 South Capitol Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Reince Priebus – Chairman
Republican National Committee
310 1st Street, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairman Priebus & Chair Wasserman-Schultz:

In Washington it is difficult to find any area of agreement these days, so I was encouraged both political parties issued statements this week calling for serious limits on government junkets and meetings paid for with taxpayer funds.

While the outlandishness of the GSA conference in Las Vegas continues to captivate headlines, years of oversight has revealed travel and meetings paid for by the government has become an expected perk and leisure.

Can we agree once and for all the party is over when it comes to travel and meetings paid for by the taxpayers?

If you agree, I would urge you to reject the millions of dollars of public financing for your 2012 party convention provided by the federal government through the Presidential Election Campaign Fund (PECF) and to return the money to the federal government.

The Republicans and Democrats each received a \$17.7 million check from taxpayers through the PECF to pay for the costs of political conventions in Tampa, Florida and Charlotte, North Carolina.

These events will be weeklong parties paid for by taxpayers, much like the highly maligned GSA conference in Las Vegas. At a time when confidence in Washington has dropped to all time lows and the federal debt is growing by more than \$1 trillion a year, we need more than election year rhetoric and political posturing. Taxpayers expect leadership demonstrated by action.

Surely our parties will respond by saying this money was given by taxpayers voluntarily for this purpose when they filed their tax returns. No one disputes that you are legally allowed

to use these funds, but some may question whether using them this way is best for the country. To demonstrate that both of our parties are committed to fiscal discipline, it would be a great act of statesmanship to return these funds.

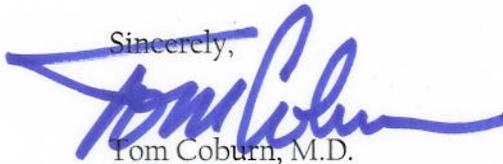
According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), federal law places relatively few restrictions on how PECF convention funds are spent as long as purchases are lawful and are used to defray expenses incurred with respect to a presidential nominating convention.¹ Besides funding the event itself, the money is used to pay for entertainment, catering, transportation, hotel costs, production of candidate biographical films, and a variety of other expenses.

For example, in 2008, it is likely then that taxpayers covered the Democrats bill at the Ritz Carlton and six-figure cost for housing convention staff and the Republican bill for \$32,250 bill for speech coaching services at their convention.²

The \$15.6 trillion debt cannot be eliminated over night. But refusing PECF funds for the political conventions will show strong leadership to getting our budget crisis in control. The nation's taxpayers are waiting to see this type of leadership in Washington.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Tom Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator

¹ "Federal Funding for 2012 Presidential Nominating Conventions," *Congressional Research Service*, October 21, 2011, report provided to office of Senator Coburn, page 2.

² Carney, Tim P. "GOP and Dems Get Taxpayer Subsidies for Conventions," *Washington Examiner*, June 22, 2011, <http://washingtonexaminer.com/politics/2011/06/gop-and-dems-get-taxpayer-subsidies-conventions>, accessed December 1, 2011.