Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

December 16, 2005

The Honorable Richard Cheney
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

We are writing to express our concern over the fact that you and your staff have declined to disclose your travel records as required by the Ethics Reform Act of 1989 and to ask that you provide Congress and American taxpayers with those records. The American public has the right to know where their elected officials travel while they are in office, and whether taxpayer dollars are being used or outside interests have paid for the travel.

It is disturbing that you have apparently exempted yourself and your staff from long-standing, and well understood, travel disclosure rules that are obeyed diligently by members of the United States Congress and the President of the United States.

According the Center for Public Integrity, you made 275 speeches and appearances between 2001 and June 1, 2005, including 23 speeches to think tanks and trade organizations, and 16 at colleges and universities. Before your term in office, the cost associated with travel, lodging and food for the Vice President and his staff to attend such events was routinely reimbursed by the sponsor and reported to the Office of Government Ethics, which collects and distributes travel disclosure reports for the executive branch.[1]

During the Clinton administration, former Vice President Al Gore's office disclosed more than $180,000 in outside-funded travel from 1997 to 2000. The Ethics Reform Act covers the thousands of trips by government officials each year that are sponsored by outside groups such as trade associations, academic institutions and many other organizations. The law requires officials to disclose where they went, how much it cost and who paid for it.[2]

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[1] The Center for Public Integrity - http://publicintegrity.org/report.aspx?aid=760
[2] Ibid.

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Your reporting on travel is but one example in a series of troubling moves by you and your office to keep the public in the dark about your contacts and meetings. We are concerned not just because we believe in openness in government and accountability in spending, but because we believe it is important to understand what private entities have benefited from your activities. Those concerns are highlighted by your failure to disclose the facts about your secret energy task force and the current controversy involving your office and the leak of a CIA agent's name. You have consistently suggested that the public does not have a right to know of your activities or how its money is being spent. We disagree with your behavior.

At a time when the nation is running record deficits, when the War in Iraq is costing billions of dollars a week, when the Gulf Coast is dealing with the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, and when the Republican budget reconciliation package is proposing to cut food stamps, healthcare, and student aid, the public deserves to know the costs of your travel. We therefore ask that you submit a complete accounting of you and your staff's travel, including all federal monies spent, from which account those funds come, and any outside funds used to pay for travel costs of you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Henry Waxman
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Carolyn C. Kilpatrick
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Sherrod Brown
Member of Congress

Lois Capps
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Diane Watson
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone
Member of Congress

Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress

Michael Honda
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

Lynn Woolsey
Member of Congress

Hilda Solis
Member of Congress

Tom Allen
Member of Congress

Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress

Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Mark Udall
Member of Congress