



October 20, 2009

## House's policy on acceptable travel saved Del. \$70,000

Sunday's article about legislative travel by Ginger Gibson highlighted an issue of concern of past practices in the General Assembly, but several meaningful changes already have been put into motion since I became Speaker of the House 10 months ago – including a ban on all legislative travel reimbursements.

Upon taking over the majority in the House, I was shocked to learn that we did not have any clear-cut policies or procedures in place for travel, nor did we have any real record-keeping policy.

Since hiring a new House support services officer earlier this year, we have followed the state's regulations for keeping records and are implementing new financial controls to increase transparency and accountability.

One of the first things I did as Speaker was immediately ban all reimbursements for House legislative travel. Given our financial crisis, we cannot justify these reimbursements at this time. By doing this, we were able to save more than \$70,000 in the House alone that was used to help with our revenue shortfall.

That travel ban – which does not prevent legislators from attending conferences at their own expense – will continue until we deem it prudent to lift the prohibition.

Before the ban is lifted, we will have in place a comprehensive travel policy outlining the procedure for requesting reimbursements, and what is an acceptable reimbursement – meaningful conferences with a relevant agenda dealing with issues that affect the state.

Robert F. Gilligan  
Speaker of the House  
19th District

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