

Travel

Effective Date: 8-JUL-11

Effect on Previous Actions: Originally adopted 13-JUN-91; amended 12-NOV-92; amended 08-JUL-11.

Source of Authority: 5 U.S.C. 7351, 7353; 5 U.S.C. App. (Ethics in Government Act of 1978); E.O. 12674, 54 FR 15159, 3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 215, as modified by E.O. 12731, 55 FR 42547, 3 CFR, 1990 Comp., p. 306; 12 U.S.C. 2242 (Section 5.8 of the Farm Credit Act of 1971, as amended), 41 C.F.R. Part 301.

THE FCA BOARD HEREBY ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING POLICY STATEMENT:

Members of the Farm Credit Administration (FCA or Agency) Board are not subject to the same requirements regarding allowances for travel and subsistence that generally apply to officers and employees of the United States (§ 5.8 of the Farm Credit Act of 1971, as amended). Nevertheless, it is the general policy of the FCA Board (Board) that Board members will travel on official business in the most economical fashion reasonable under the circumstances.

FCA Board members are subject to Federal laws, rules, and Executive Orders relating to conflicts of interest that may result from accepting gifts, including travel related expenses, from outside sources. Generally, Board members may not accept anything of value from:

- A person seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the FCA, or
- A person whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of our official duties.

Such persons are *prohibited sources*. (See Executive Order 12674, as amended; 5 U.S.C. 7353; and 5 CFR Part 2635, the Executive Branch-wide standards of ethical conduct issued by the Office of Government Ethics.) An organization is also a *prohibited source* if more than half of its members are *prohibited sources*.

The gift rule under the standards of ethical conduct and the Agency's gift acceptance authority at 31 U.S.C. § 1353 outline the limited circumstances in which government officials may accept gifts and the payment of travel expenses from outside sources. Unless an exception applies, ethics rules prevent Board members from accepting gifts offered because of their official positions. Under no circumstances may Board members accept anything of value in return for being influenced in the performance of an official act. The aim of these rules is to prevent an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict and to uphold public confidence in the integrity of the Government and the Agency.

Except as noted above, third parties may not pay for official Agency expenditures. Because the Agency is responsible for the cost of conducting official business, Board members will ensure that the Agency is

billed directly for travel expenses whenever possible (for example, by using a Government issued credit card for travel expenses). On those occasions when direct Agency payment is impossible or impractical (for example, a large group business dinner arranged and paid for in advance by the organizer), Board members will promptly notify the Agency of the obligation and ensure that the payer is promptly reimbursed. Board Members recognize that it is important not to create the impression that a third party, particularly a prohibited source, is paying for their expenses.

TRAVEL

Transportation

Board members will use less than first-class accommodations for all modes of transportation except in circumstances where:

1. A Board member must use first-class accommodations because no other space accommodations are reasonably available or where other practical considerations exist (such as to accommodate a disability or other special need);
2. Exceptional security circumstances require it;
3. The conduct of Agency business requires it; or
4. A Board member receives first-class travel benefits on an unsolicited basis from a carrier (such as free first-class coupons) and the benefit cannot be used by the Agency either in the present or the future, cannot be redeemed for cash value, and does not require the redemption of official miles. Under these circumstances, Board members can use the first-class benefit for either official or personal travel.

Board members will use a commercial charter flight at Agency expense only when no commercially scheduled flights are available in time to meet the requirements of the travel or when the charter flight would be more economical than a commercial flight. Board members will avoid the use of private aircraft whenever possible and use them only where commercial or charter flights are not reasonably available or would impose undue hardships. When reporting travel expenses, Board members must adequately justify the use of a commercial charter flight, private aircraft, or first-class accommodations.

Lodging

When available and practical, Board members will book lodging at the Government rate or another available reduced rate at hotels and motels. When attending a convention, meeting, or other official activity, Board members will ordinarily obtain lodging at the hotel or motel holding the activity even if reduced rates are available elsewhere. Board members may also book more than one room when necessary for the conduct of official business on the premises.

The Agency will not ordinarily reimburse Board members for lodging in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. However, lodging may be necessary to take full advantage of a conference.

Other Expenses for Official Activities

The FCA will reimburse Board members for the usual and reasonable expenses incurred as a

consequence of official activities in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and in other locations. The Agency will allow the repayment of expenses for:

1. Transportation costs;
2. Meal costs;
3. Registration fees or other fees assessed for attendance or participation;
4. The cost of miscellaneous supplies needed to participate in a particular function or activity; and
5. Other costs we incur by participating in official activities.

The Agency will *not* allow reimbursement of expenses for official activity incurred on behalf of other persons, including relatives, except as provided in the Board policy on Official Function (Representation and Reception) Expenses.

Form of Payment

Board members will arrange for official travel using the Agency's travel management system whenever possible. Although Board members may use cash to pay for official travel expenses and seek repayment from the Agency afterwards, whenever possible, the preferred method of payment will be the use of the Government-issued credit card for all official travel expenses.

Receipts

When filing claims for reimbursement of travel expenses, Board members will provide receipts for expenses as normally required of other FCA employees under the Federal Travel Regulation, which currently requires receipts for all lodging and travel expenses over \$75. However, failure to provide a receipt as normally required is not grounds for denial of a claim. If a receipt is not available, Board members will provide a statement explaining the nature and amount of the expense and the reason for not having a receipt.

COMBINING OFFICIAL BUSINESS TRAVEL WITH PERSONAL ACTIVITIES

Although it is permissible to engage in personal activities while on official travel, the purpose of the trip must always be the need to conduct official business. The Agency pays for travel and related expenses incurred in performing official business. However, the Agency may *not* pay for personal expenses incurred while on official travel. Therefore, it is important to record and allocate expenses carefully to ensure that official expenses are clearly differentiated from personal expenses. Proper handling of Agency expenses is always important, but particularly so when engaging in personal activities while on official Agency business.

The Board is aware that, in certain circumstances, engaging in personal activities while on official travel could create an appearance that personal activities, not official business, prompted the trip. When Board members take a trip to conduct official business, it is usually clear from the nature of the business that the trip is proper and necessary. If there are concerns that personal activities during the trip might suggest otherwise, Board members will consult the DAEO to avoid a possible appearance of impropriety. The Board understands that engaging in official travel that involves a given destination (for example, our

home state) on a disproportionate basis may raise questions about whether the travel truly is necessary. Again, Board members will consult with the DAEO about such concerns.

DATED THIS 8th DAY OF JULY, 2011

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

Dale L. Aultman
Secretary to the Board