United States
**Office of Government Ethics**
1201 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005-3917

August 7, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

Thank you for your inquiry into the travel and conference location policies of the Office of Government Ethics (OGE). When approving employee travel and choosing conference locations, OGE's primary goal is to ensure that public funds are used in a manner that is most beneficial to the Government. Neither employee travel nor conference locations are prohibited merely because the destination may be considered a resort or vacation destination.

In the past year, OGE employees have provided ethics training in places such as Denver, CO; San Francisco, CA; Baltimore, MD; Charleston, SC; and Glynco, GA. OGE employees have also conducted in-person reviews of agency ethics programs in Ft. Lee, VA and Boston, MA.

OGE hosts a National Government Ethics Conference approximately every 18 months. To ensure that public funds are used most efficiently, OGE selects the location of OGE meetings, conferences or similar functions through a competitive process. When determining the location for the conference, OGE solicits proposals through hotel national sales offices and convention and visitors bureaus without prejudice regarding location. OGE's primary criteria in selecting the location of the National Conference are: 1) capacity (can the property accommodate our conference/meeting space requirements), 2) cost (includes room rates offered, charge for meeting space, food and anticipated travel expenses), and 3) available dates. In the past, OGE has hosted conferences in various locations including Virginia Beach,VA; Orlando, FL; and New York, NY. OGE's next conference will be in Chicago in May 2010.

I trust this information addresses your inquiry about OGE's travel policies. If you have additional questions for OGE, please contact Karena Dees, Acting Congressional Liaison, at 202-482-9275.

Sincerely,

Robert I. Cusick
Director