



Capitol Network News

Today's news from Oklahoma's best government information resource

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WHO PAYS, WHO DOESN'T FOR GOVERNOR'S POLITICAL PLANE TRIPS

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Governor Frank Keating will ask as many as 10 legislative candidates and one political action committee to repay the state for the costs of fundraising trips to which the governor used a state airplane.

According to information prepared by Keating's communications director, Dan Mahoney, the governor has made a handful of trips in a state airplane this year for solely political purposes. In other cases in which the governor's office will seek reimbursement, the state plane was diverted during a state business trip to a political event, Mahoney said.

The governor's office, according to Mahoney, will ask the following candidates for reimbursement:

✓ Rep. Mike O'Neal, R-Enid: En route from a Feb. 2 Tulsa Chamber of Commerce meeting to Oklahoma City, the governor flew to Enid for an O'Neal fund-raiser at an approximate cost of \$40.

✓ Sen. Carol Martin, R-Comanche: Keating flew from Oklahoma City to Duncan for a March 1 fund-raiser at an approximate cost of \$80.55.

✓ Sen. Jerry Smith, R-Tulsa: The governor flew to Tulsa for a May 14 fund-raiser at an approximate cost of \$160.

✓ Senate candidate Sandra McIlnay, R-Stillwater: On the morning of July 24, the governor flew to Woodward for a tour of Mutual of Omaha's claims processing center and Woodward Hospital and Health Center and attended an afternoon cabinet meeting and town hall meeting in Woodward. While en route from Woodward to Oklahoma City, the governor stopped in Stillwater for the fund-raiser. McIlnay will be asked to reimburse for the cost of diverting the Woodward-to-Oklahoma City flight to Stillwater at an approximate cost of \$50.

✓ House candidate Carla Smalts, R-Keyes: Keating flew from Oklahoma City to Fairview to attend an Aug. 21 rural economic summit in Watonga; After the summit, the governor flew from Fairview to Guymon to meet with representatives of the local media and for the Smalts' fund-raiser. Approximate cost of the flight which Smalts will be asked to reimburse was \$160.

✓ House candidate Terry Ingmire, R-Stillwater: Keating flew to Stillwater for a

Sept. 9 Ingmire fund-raiser at an approximate cost of \$80. After the fund-raiser, the governor flew to Kansas City for a 7:30 a.m. meeting of the Southern Growth Policies Board the following morning.

✓ House candidate Chris Smith, R-Canton, Senate candidate Owen Laughlin, R-Woodward, and three or four other unnamed Republican candidates: On Sept. 28, Keating flew to Lawton for a fund-raiser for the Comanche GOP Committee. Later that day, the governor flew to Woodward for a fund-raiser for Laughlin, Smith and other unnamed Republican candidates. The day-long campaign trip cost approximately \$473, which will be divided three or four ways, according to Mahoney.

✓ House candidate Curt Roggow, R-Enid: Keating flew to San Antonio for an Oct. 3 luncheon for the Council of Growing Companies. En route home, the governor visited Enid for a radio interview and fund-raiser for Roggow, who will reimburse the

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A BIG 'WELCOME' TO OKLAHOMA

By Gerry Cherry
Staff Writer

■(GIT) At a cost of more than \$300 per square foot, the Welcome to Oklahoma center on the Cherokee Turnpike (Hwy. 412) near Kansas, Oklahoma may be too expensive, one Tourism and Recreation commissioner said at the Commission's monthly meeting, Monday.

Jonathan Helmerich questioned the prohibitive cost, asking, "Are we being prudent with taxpayers' money?"

As part of a long range plan to provide information in an attractive atmosphere to those driving into the state, information centers are already open along major thoroughfares near Oklahoma's borders—at Sallisaw, Miami and Oklahoma City. Funding for the centers was mandated by general obligation bonds in 1993, including \$2.5 million for the construction of welcome centers, Kathleen

Marks said. She is director of the travel and tourism division and a six-year veteran with the tourism and recreation department.

Walters, OK has a new center under construction adjacent to its former site and Colbert and Thackerville are replacement sites. Miami, Kansas, Catoosa, Colbert and Walters were each funded at \$500,000, Marks said. An additional half-million dollars was added for Catoosa's facility after the 1992 tornado blew the old one away.

Low bid on the Kansas, Oklahoma facility along the Cherokee Turnpike was \$640,000, part of which will pave parking lots and provide utilities. The site for the welcome center is farm land, Marks said. All utilities will have to be brought in and all drives and paving will be brand new.

Helmerich questioned the feasibility of building on the site near Kansas, Oklahoma,

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