

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



director Greg Sawyer, examines not only the governor's use of state-owned and state-leased aircraft for political purposes, but also examines the use of such aircraft by others not employed by the state and by the governor and his family members, among other things.

According to the report, "The average actual fuel cost of operating the Governor's aircraft is \$202.24 per hour. This is based upon the information in the logs for actual flights of the KingAir new aircraft from July 19, 1996, through Sept. 28, 1996," Sawyer wrote in a four-page report to Roach. "Secondly, a commercial charter firm quoted staff a price of \$820.94 plus \$40 per hour ground time for a round trip to Lawton (approximately 1 hour round trip) on aircraft identical to the Governor's. Therefore, it appears that the Governor's quoted operating cost of \$175 is understated. Moreover, his reimbursement rates also appear to be less than sufficient to cover actual costs."

Sawyer cautions that additional information, some of which has been requested but not provided by the Department of Public Safety or the governor's office, "is needed to ascertain the appropriate reimbursement costs."

Keating put the \$175 per hour price tag on the cost of operating the state-owned aircraft earlier this month when he admitted that he used state-owned aircraft to travel to 23 GOP candidates' fund-raisers. According to the governor and his staff, as many as 10 of those candidates and one county political group will be asked to reimburse the state for the fuel costs associated with traveling to the events because the events were "strictly political."

An Aug. 6 memorandum from the Department of Public Safety's executive security division, on which the governor's office indicated it will base its reimbursement requests after the Nov. 5 general election, states, "The cost of fuel for the new state plane could be calculated at \$168 per flying hour. Use this amount when determining reimbursement for plane usage."

The date of the memorandum coincides with Keating's trip to San Diego to attend the Republican National Convention, a trip for which the state was reimbursed, according to the governor's office.

Other conclusions of the report include:

- There were at least nine instances of

non-state officials being on the aircraft, including one particular flight when the governor was not present;

- There were seven flights that included only members of the governor's family and for which flight logs have not been provided to House staffers by the Department of Public Safety;

- The governor's wife has used the aircraft alone at least 17 times;

- On more than 45 occasions, the plane was flown without passengers, including trips where the sole purpose appears to have been to pick up either the governor or his wife; and

- There were several instances where the airplane was flown very short distances to provide transport services, such as flying from Wiley Post Airport to Will Rogers Airport, Tulsa Riverside to Tulsa International, Sand Springs to Tulsa Riverside and Tulsa to Claremore.

Roach is one of several lawmakers who have been critical of the governor's use of state-owned or leased aircraft and has pledged to propose legislation to set guidelines for the aircraft's usage.

In a modification of his previous position, Keating said last week that he would be willing to meet with the legislative leadership to set what he called "a fair compensation schedule" for the plane's usage on political trips.

On Friday, Senate Speaker Pro Tempore Stratton Taylor, D-Claremore, voiced his concern about the trips, saying, "I haven't seen all the facts in the case, but I must admit I was surprised to learn the state plane was being used to transport Governor Keating to partisan political events."

Like Roach and other lawmakers, Taylor said he believes the governor should have a plane for official business trips, "but clearly there need to be some specific ground rules in place to ensure the transportation privileges aren't abused. I'm eager to meet with Governor Keating as soon as possible to discuss this matter."

—SHAWN ASHLEY
10/28/96

"Talents are best nurtured in solitude: character is best formed in the stormy billows of the world."

Goethe

ATTORNEY GENERAL, AUDITOR ASKED TO PROBE PLANE'S PURCHASE, USE

■(GIT) Oklahoma's attorney general and its state auditor and inspector were asked Tuesday to investigate the state's purchase of an airplane for the governor's office and the governor's use of that aircraft.

Rep. Russ Roach, D-Tulsa, made the request after nearly a month of criticism leveled against Governor Frank Keating and his use of a recently purchased state airplane.

"After a tip last Thursday, we uncovered and confirmed evidence which indicated that the bidding process for the airplane was highly suspicious and apparently deceptive, if not illegal," said Roach.

Roach has asked Attorney General Drew Edmondson to:

- Examine the administrative process by which the Department of Public Safety bought a Beech 1990 King Air 350 for the governor in a \$2.9 million lease/purchase that appears to have been manipulated; and

- Determine whether personal and political flights Keating has taken aboard the plane were improper.

Of State Auditor and Inspector Clifton Scott, Roach asked that a fair and equitable reimbursement rate that Republican candidates should pay for flights Keating has taken this year to GOP fund-raisers throughout the state be determined and whether the first family should reimburse the state for personal trips aboard the aircraft.

Roach's so-called "tip" may have originated from Keating's press conference last week. Following a question from *Capitol Network News* concerning a civilian pilot who either piloted or co-piloted the state-owned plane on at least five occasions this year, Keating said, "I know a number of the people" affiliated with the company from which the plane was purchased, TulsAir Beechcraft, identifying the company's president, Tom G. Clark, by first name.

Clark, Roach said citing Ethics Commission reports, contributed at least \$2,450 to Keating's gubernatorial campaign in 1994, including cash and air travel in-kind services. Additionally Roach said, state ledgers show the company has been paid almost \$12,500 this year by the state, including at least \$4,000 of business prior to the state's purchase of the airplane and \$8,488 of business since the plane's purchase.

Continued on next page