

# STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED

Roach takes particular issue with the specifications in the Department of Public Safety's invitation to bid, saying they "were written so tightly that they obviously referred to one particular airplane owned by one particular company."

An inspection procedure performed on the plane was word-for-word with the one demanded in the bid specifications and the plane's inventory of avionics equipment was identical to that required in the specifications, Roach said.

According to Roach, a Department of Public Safety official reportedly told a House staffer, "The governor knew what airplane he wanted, and we got it for him."

Such actions, if true, Roach said, seem to have violated the spirit if not the letter of the law.

By comparison, Roach added, an easily accessible Internet home page lists more than two dozen similar planes that were on the market for sale last week. One of those planes, a 1990 King Air 350, similar to the one purchased by the state, was priced at \$2,450,000, one-quarter of a million dollars less than the \$2.9 million the state paid for its new aircraft.

The plane was offered for sale to the state, Roach noted, but was rejected.

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
10/29/96

## ATTORNEY GENERAL WAITS, AUDITOR BEGINS WORK ON PLANE PROBE

■(GIT) Additional information is needed by Oklahoma's attorney general before the office can consider launching a probe into the governor's use of a state-owned airplane for political and personal trips. Meanwhile, the state auditor said his office will begin limited work on calculating a reimbursement rate for such usage of the plane.

In letters to Attorney General Drew Edmondson and State Auditor and Inspector Clifton Scott, Roach wrote, "This letter will be followed with a more detailed request."

It is that "more detailed request," attorney general's office spokesman Gerald Adams said, which will help to determine whether an investigation is launched and a formal legal opinion rendered.

Whether the attorney general's office proceeds with its review of the matter may also affect the state auditor's work.

"We'll do this, but before we crunch those many numbers," explained Scott, "the legal-

ity of all this is going to have to be determined. It's hard to hold someone accountable for something which may or may not be enforceable."

According to a Sept. 12 legal memorandum prepared by the governor's deputy chief counsel, Keating can use the state-owned airplane and other means of transportation to attend political events, as well as to make personal trips, because "... the law requires that the governor be provided with state transportation, no matter where he goes."

Keating, who has maintained the position expressed in the memorandum, has said he set a new ethical standard by requiring that candidates to whose events he traveled be required to reimburse the state for the fuel cost associated with the trip.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Department of Public Safety said the agency will cooperate with any investigation into that agency's handling of the plane's purchase.

Department of Public Safety Spokesman Lt. Gerald Davidson said, "The department is confident that we conducted a fair process. We were not pressured by anyone. We made our selection on the basis of the lowest and best bid."

In a related development, Sen. Charles Ford, R-Tulsa, criticized Roach for his tactics on Wednesday, saying his fellow Tulsan was locked in a campaign designed to draw attention away from his race for reelection.

Joining Ford in his criticism of Roach was Rep. Wayne Cozort, D-Tulsa, who urged his fellow lawmaker "to get serious."

"It sure smells like politics because Rep. Roach, a Democrat, has focused all his energy on Governor Keating's travel," said Cozort. "There is plenty of room for criticism throughout the state for its liberal travel policy."

Cozort said that he and House GOP leader Larry Ferguson, R-Cleveland, revealed in July 1995, and again in December that state travel claims were climbing. Expenditures soared to \$55 million in fiscal year 1995, ledgers in the Office of State Finance show.

Ironically, it was Cozort who joined with Roach in August to criticize the amount of

state funds spent for travel. At that time, Cozort noted, Roach said putting reasonable restrictions on state travel "is not a partisan issue."

On Wednesday, Cozort said, "Russ Roach by himself turned state travel into a partisan issue."

—SHAWN ASHLEY  
10/30/96

## REPS. WANT WATCHDOG ON TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR LEGISLATURE

■(GIT) The real problem, Reps. Wayne Pettigrew, R-Edmond, and Jim Reese, R-Nardin, said, isn't the governor's travel expenses. The real problem, they said, is the travel expenses of the House of Representatives.

Pettigrew and Reese will author legislation, they said, to require state legislators to report travel and other expenses annually in much the same way campaign contributions are reported.

The bill would require all travel and other "perks" legislators receive be submitted annually and open to public inspection. Reports would be submitted to the Ethics Commission, in a similar way that campaign reports are submitted.

Asked if this legislative initiative was a way to take the heat off the governor's airplane, Reese and Pettigrew said the governor has made no attempt to conceal the truth.

A meeting of legislative leaders is expected after the Nov. 5 election to discuss guidelines for new legislation concerning travel by public officials.

—GERRY CHERRY  
10/31/96

## CHURCHES AND POLITICS DON'T MIX, IRS SAYS

■(GIT) Religious groups are treading where the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) says they cannot go, Jim Huff, spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Oklahoma Interfaith Council, said at a press conference at the Capitol Thursday.

"Churches cannot draw a position on candidates or parties," Huff said. "If they get into politics, they give up their tax exemption."

"Religious groups are not prohibited from taking positions on moral or spiritual issues," Huff continued, "but they cannot act as PACs."

Voter's guides being prepared by the  
*Continued on next page*

*"With luck on your side, you can do without brains."*

*Giordano Bruno*