

Bush Watch

Charging Taxpayers for Politics and More

Charging taxpayers for election-related trips, rewarding political patrons with millions of dollars in bonuses, targeting a firefighter because of his union affiliation and allowing federal agents to listen in on lawyer-client talks—these are only a handful of actions in which the Bush administration has used taxpayer funds to pay for politics and deny individuals their rights.

Charged Taxpayers for Combination Government and Campaign Trips

A June 2003 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report revealed President Bush attended at least nine Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) events that coincided with his appearance at rallies and campaign fund-raisers across the country between January 2001 and January 2003. As of May 2003, the Bush administration had charged HHS for five of the nine events, totaling \$181,122. Agreements between the Bush administration and HHS would allow the administration to charge as much as \$117,000 in total for the four remaining HHS events coinciding with Bush's attendance at same-day campaign events.



Paid More Than \$1 Million in Bonuses to Political Appointees

The Bush administration handed out more than \$1.4 million in bonuses to 470 Bush political appointees in 2002, a July 2003 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) report revealed. That was the same year the Bush administration sought to limit pay raises for federal workers, pushed for privatization of federal jobs and took away the bargaining rights of tens of thousands of federal employees. The Clinton administration halted the bonus system in 1994 after questionable payments were made to some outgoing aides in the final days of the administration of President George H.W. Bush. The current Bush administration renewed the bonus system for political patronage jobs in March 2002 but made no public announcement. News reports in December 2002 revealed the political payments.

Denied Airline Workers Due Process in Security Checks

The Bush administration issued new rules in January 2003 that allow the Transportation Security Administration and Federal Aviation Administration to revoke an aviation worker's certification without basic due process protections. The new rule was issued and took effect without any public comment period. It allows the government to revoke or deny needed federal certification for pilots, mechanics, flight instructors and other aviation workers if the govern-



ment—under secretive and arbitrary procedures—concludes a worker is a “security threat.” The rule denies an employee the right to an impartial review of the facts and does not require workers be shown the evidence or be told the specific reasons behind a security-risk finding.

Removed Firefighter from Valor Commission Because of Union Membership

The Bush White House booted Prince Georges County, Md., Fire Fighters Local 1619 President Thomas McEachin from its Medal of Valor Commission because of his union membership. He was first asked to resign from the commission, which recognizes firefighters and other public safety officers for service above and beyond the call of duty, but refused. So in October 2002, the administration unilaterally removed him. McEachin says the White House asked him to resign because IAFF lead-

ers criticized the Bush administration’s opposition to important fire safety and emergency response legislation and the Bush administration’s refusal to approve funding to monitor the health of firefighters who responded to the World Trade Center. “My removal smacks of retribution and pettiness on the part of the administration,” McEachin said.

Repealed Federal ‘Responsible Contractor’ Rule

The Bush administration in December 2001 repealed a federal “responsible contractor” rule that linked the awarding of federal contracts to a company’s record of compliance with federal labor, civil rights, workplace safety, environmental and other laws. Under the rules, a company with a track record of repeatedly violating the law could be denied a federal contract on that basis. The responsible contractor rule also prohibited contractors from using government funds for activities that discourage employees from seeking a voice at work by forming a union.



RALPH ALSWANG

“President Bush’s priorities are disturbingly out of order, and unless we get someone in the White House who understands the needs and problems facing the American worker, I can only imagine the devastation we will face in the future.”

—Natasha Humphries
Santa Clara, Calif.

Read more about the Bush record on using taxpayer funds at

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