

Washington, D.C. (Oct. 14, 2011) — Today, Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings, joined by all seven Subcommittee Ranking Members, [sent a letter](#) to Chairman Darrell Issa objecting to his new policy preventing the minority from using its own travel budget.

The Members wrote: “Your new policy continues an unfortunate pattern of attempting to control the actions of Democrats, including dictating which witnesses we request, which motions we make, and even which questions we ask at hearings.”

[On March 25](#), Issa attempted to restrict the minority’s ability to request witnesses at hearings, instituting a new policy that any Administration witness invited by Republicans would be “designated” as the Democratic witness.

[On July 14](#), Issa attempted to prevent Ranking Member Cummings from offering a valid motion to subpoena mortgage servicing companies that engaged in illegal foreclosures against U.S. servicemembers.

[And on June 15](#), Issa attempted to prevent witnesses from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives from answering valid questions by Rep. Carolyn Maloney regarding inadequate federal laws to address firearms trafficking.

Issa’s new policy banning minority travel contradicts the Committee’s policy when he was Ranking Member and it is not the policy of any other House Committee.

The full letter follows.

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October 14, 2011

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are writing to request that you reverse your recent decision to prevent Committee Democrats from spending their own portion of Committee travel funds under the Committee budget. Your new policy continues an unfortunate pattern of attempting to control the actions of Democrats, including dictating which witnesses we request, which motions we make, and even which questions we ask at hearings.

This issue arose because you rejected a request to reimburse travel expenses for two minority staff to attend a forum in Chicago on October 17, 2011, that will be hosted by Rep. Danny Davis, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives. The Subcommittee has jurisdiction over the nation's drug control policy, and the Director of National Drug Control Policy, R. Gil Kerlikowske, has agreed to participate. Although there is no requirement to do so, Ranking Member Davis invited all Committee Members to attend this forum, which is integral to the Committee's core legislative and oversight jurisdiction.

Your new policy appears to be that travel by Democratic staff is not for "official Committee business" unless a Republican joins them. This interpretation is unprecedented and contradicts the Committee's policy when you were in the minority. According to Committee records, in December 2010—when you were still the Ranking Member of the Committee—you were accompanied by four minority staffers on a trip to attend unidentified "[m]eetings with technology companies." You were reimbursed thousands of dollars even though no majority Committee Members or staff joined you.

Moreover, after you became Chairman in January 2011, press reports indicated that you traveled to an electronics convention in Las Vegas where your company, Directed Electronics Inc., was promoting "the Viper SmartStart, a mobile-phone app that starts your car."

Committee records confirm that you sought and received reimbursement for Republican staff to accompany you at “the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, NV for official Committee business.”

Finally, your new policy appears to contradict assurances you made to the House Committee on Administration. In answers you provided to written questions prior to testifying before the Committee on March 1, 2011, you confirmed that the Ranking Member would be “allowed control” over one-third of the Committee’s total budget, including the travel budget. You stated: “The minority received 1/3 of the committee budget for the 110th and 111th Congress,” and “[t]he same allocation will be maintained in the 112th Congress.”

For all of these reasons, we urge you to immediately abandon this misguided policy, approve the minority staff travel request for Rep. Davis’ forum in Chicago, and stop attempting to control how Committee Democrats spend our own travel funds.

Sincerely,

Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Edolphus Towns, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Organization, Efficiency and Financial Management

Danny K. Davis, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care, D.C., Census, and the National Archives

Gerald E. Connolly, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and Procurement Reform

Stephen F. Lynch, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy

John Tierney, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security, Homeland Defense, and Foreign Operations

Dennis J. Kucinich, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs, Stimulus Oversight and Government Spending

Mike Quigley, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on TARP, Financial Services and Bailouts of Public and Private Programs