

RECKLESS SPENDING LANDS GSA OFFICIALS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE



A spending controversy is headed for a spate of confrontational and acrimonious hearings as lawmakers try to divulge how the General Services Administration spent \$820,000 on a Las Vegas conference. The first hearing is scheduled for Monday afternoons and on line for testifying are some of the top GSA officials and former officials. It is believed that one of the officials is expected to invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to answer questions. Jeffrey Neely, the head of the GSA western region, who organized the conference, has said through his attorney that he plans to invoke the Fifth Amendment. His attorney says, that in view of his decision, Neely does not need to come to Washington, but Issa is insisting on his presence. House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) served a subpoena to require Jeff Neely to appear before the committee. "We're looking at getting to the truth and to how widespread this is. Our questions for Neely and others will have to do with not just this one event, but about the culture at the GSA and how we change it. And we believe Neely should be able to answer at least some of those questions, and we're hoping he will," Issa said. Although the prime expenditure under the lens will be the 2010 conference, lawmakers will also be looking into other areas of imprudent money spending, such as employee incentive programs. The hearings are certainly going to be very heated and give rise to debate as new details emerge about the reckless spending habits at the top-levels of the GSA. Amongst those summoned to testify are GSA Inspector General Brian Miller and former GSA Administrator Martha Johnson. The latter had resigned following the inspector general's report on the conference. The agency was hugely embarrassed and exposed when videos showed employees flaunting their spending habits. The videos showed that thousands of dollars were spent on "commemorative coins, expensive suites and pricey catering." The Obama administration has strongly condemned the imprudent conduct of the GSA officials and has come down hard on those who are involved. Following the report two officials were fired and five were placed on administrative leave. The GSA inspector general has also asked the Justice Department to investigate the matter for possible criminal charges.

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