



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

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B-212634

October 12, 1983

The Honorable Mike Synar  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Environment,  
Energy, and Natural Resources  
Committee on Government Operations  
House of Representatives

Released

Dear Mr. Chairman:

By letter dated August 2, 1983, you requested our views regarding the propriety of a reception hosted by the Secretary of the Interior at his office on July 4, 1983. We conclude that the Secretary was authorized to use his discretionary fund for official reception and representation expenses to pay for this party.

We have been informed by Interior officials that the Secretary invited approximately 800 people to his office for a party on the evening of July 4 to celebrate Independence Day. Among the invited guests was a select group of Interior employees and their families and/or friends, and congressmen and congressional staff aides and their families and/or friends. The guests were served hot dogs, soft drinks and an assortment of snack foods. Also, the guests were able to observe the traditional fireworks display on the Mall from the roof of the Interior Department.

The total cost of this party was \$3112.82. Of the total amount, \$1614.95 constituted the payroll costs of the 15 Interior employees who assisted in the preparation and the cleanup of the party. The remaining \$1497.87 spent included the cost of the food, kitchen supplies, chair rental and other items purchased for the party. We have been informed by our audit staff that this entire amount either was initially or subsequently charged against the Secretary's discretionary fund.


In 1983, the Office of the Secretary of the Interior was appropriated \$10,000 for official reception and representation expenses. Interior Department and Related Agencies, Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1983, Pub. L. No. 97-394, 96 Stat. 1880 (1982). In a previous decision, B-206173, February 23, 1982, we noted that "agency heads have traditionally been accorded a great deal of discretion by the Congress in the expenditure of this type of fund." As such, any event which is hosted by an agency head and which relates to the function of the agency, can be funded from this type of account. Accordingly, we held that expenses attributable to an agency Christmas party which was hosted by the Secretary of the Interior were chargeable to the Secretary's discretionary account.  
Id.

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We conclude that the July 4 party hosted by the Secretary of the Interior for Interior employees and other invited guests was properly chargeable to the Secretary's discretionary fund. This affair, hosted by the Secretary, was within the discretion accorded the Secretary with respect to the use of the Department's official reception and representation fund, in our view. Therefore, we will not object to the Secretary's use of his discretionary fund in this instance.

Sincerely yours,

*for*   
Comptroller General  
of the United States

APPROPRIATIONS

Interior Department

Availability

Official reception and representation expense fund

Agency discretion

Independence Day party

APPROPRIATIONS

Availability

Refreshments

Government interest objective

ENTERTAINMENT

Refreshments

ENTERTAINMENT

Appropriation availability

Specific statutory authorization requirement