

DECISION

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

FILE: B-220479

DATE: March 10, 1986

MATTER OF: George W. Mackson - Second Househunting
Trip

DIGEST:

Employee who was permanently transferred from Cincinnati to Cleveland, Ohio, seeks reimbursement for costs of second househunting trip. The claim is denied since an employee may be reimbursed travel and transportation expenses for only one round trip between the localities of the old and new duty stations for the purpose of seeking residence quarters. 5 U.S.C. § 5724a(a)(2) (1982); Federal Travel Regulations para. 2-4.1a (Supp. 4, August 23, 1982).

This decision is in response to a request by Ms. Bonnie Mathews, Authorized Certifying Officer, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Department of the Treasury, for a determination as to whether the costs of a second househunting trip by Mr. George W. Mackson, an employee of the agency, are reimbursable. The claim was disallowed by IRS. Mr. Mackson has submitted a reclaim travel voucher requesting reimbursement of the costs incurred during his second round trip to seek residence quarters at his new duty station. For the reasons stated later, only one round trip by the employee may be reimbursed, and his claim is denied.

In November 1984, Mr. Mackson was authorized a permanent change of official station from Cincinnati to Cleveland, Ohio. He was authorized a househunting trip for the period November 14 through November 23, 1984. Mr. Mackson signed an application to lease a residence in Cleveland on November 16, 1984. Four days were required to process the application. The employee elected to return

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to Cincinnati to await the approval or disapproval of the lease. The lease was approved on November 20, 1984. The date of occupancy of the new residence was November 27, 1984. The execution of the lease was required prior to his transfer. Mr. Mackson therefore made a second round trip to Cleveland to sign the lease.

Mr. Mackson states that had he remained in Cleveland during the period the lease was being approved, the cost of per diem for 4 days at \$50 per day would have totaled \$200. The cost of his second trip to Cleveland was \$175. He therefore contends that he effectuated a savings to the Government of \$25.

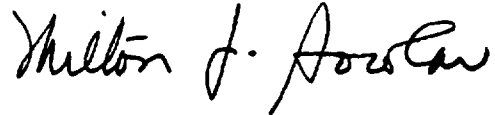
Section 5724a(a)(2) of title 5, United States Code, 1982, provides that the expenses incurred in seeking permanent residence quarters at a new official station may be allowed "only for one round trip in connection with each change of station of the employee." The implementing regulation, paragraph 2-4.1a, Federal Travel Regulations, FPMR 101-7 (Supp. 4, August 23, 1982) (FTR), incorp. by ref., 41 C.F.R. § 101-7.003 (1985), provides for payment of travel and transportation expenses of the employee for "one round trip between the localities of the old and new duty stations for the purpose of seeking residence quarters."

In our recent decision, Riva Fralick, et al., B-217519, April 18, 1985, 64 Comp. Gen. 472 (1985), we affirmed our earlier interpretation of the statutory provision, and the predecessor regulatory provision, to mean that only one round trip, not several round trips, between the localities of the old and new duty stations to seek residence quarters is contemplated.

Here, the fact that Mr. Mackson may have effectuated a savings to the Government by returning to Cincinnati during the period his application to lease a residence in Cleveland was being processed, and his required return to Cleveland to sign the lease prior to his transfer, does not establish a basis for derogation or waiver of the express provisions of the statute and regulations or create additional entitlement to reimbursement. Fralick, supra.

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Accordingly, the reclaim travel voucher submitted by Mr. George W. Mackson, for reimbursement of the costs of a second househunting trip in connection with his change of official station from Cincinnati to Cleveland, Ohio, may not be certified for payment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Milton J. Rowland".

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States