

No seats left on the government jet for cheapskate spendthrift

Tom Price

[John Kass](#)



If there's one thing worse than some smirking federal bigwig arrogantly wasting tax dollars on fancy charter flights, it's an arrogant cheapskate spendthrift.

What is a cheapskate spendthrift? I just made it up.

Think of (former) Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, who reportedly wasted at least \$400,000 on fancy chartered flights billed to taxpayers — even taking his wife along — when he could easily have used cheaper commercial carriers.

The rest of us suffer in coach, subject to the terrors of random sweat transfer

from the fat guy next to you, or the talking nervous lady who breaks wind and pretends to care, while the cheapskate spendthrift flies unsullied like a lord of the skies.

And then, when caught by Politico, the cheapskate spendthrift announces he will reimburse taxpayers to the tune of \$52,000.

Sadly for Price, his feeble repayment gesture came too late. By Friday, political sepsis had set in and he "resigned."

Still, the corpse had to be burned, so President [Donald Trump](#) could feed the ravenous talking heads during the weekend cable news cycle.

By my figures, Price still owes us about eight times that offered \$52K, since he's the boss and his staff went along.



But now he's politically dead, burnt so that he can't rise again, and so I can't very well ask him about the \$52K in the immortal words of Mike Ditka, "Who you crappin'?"

He's crappin' nobody, now.

Price even took a fancy chartered flight to a "conference" allowing for a long lunch with his son. I bet the kid had to pay. Or maybe we did. I'd wager my left pinky toe that they didn't have lunch at Sonic.

"You say in a statement the 'Taxpayers won't pay a dime for my seat on those planes,'" Fox News anchor Bret Baier said to Price in an interview. "You are

writing a check, we understand for, \$51,887. The total cost is estimated at more than \$400,000 for the 26 flights since May.

"Is that OK?"

By sheer force of will, Price kept his face smooth, a talent of federal cheapskate spendthrifts when caught in the act.

"There is an ongoing review done by the inspector general," Price said. "I think it's important to wait for that."

No, dude. Let's not wait. Pay up, you cheapskate. Let's see some cash on the table now!

Naturally, "the liberal media" were outraged by Price's weaselly ways. But there are many such cheapskate spendthrifts in all levels of government, nonpartisan, and are fungible in their lust for perks.

What they share in common is the smirk of the courtiers of Versailles.

One legendary cheapskate spendthrift was the sainted [Leon Panetta](#) — sainted because he was a Democrat and worked for the vestal Barack Obama (oh blessed be his name) — while racking up a huge number of fancy flights.

In just one story by The Washington Post, it was reported that Panetta regretted going home on the weekends to his California nut farm, on military jets that cost taxpayers \$800,000 over a few months.

I mean it. A real nut farm.

Under a rule set up under former President George Bush, Panetta, as defense secretary, had to fly military so he could communicate with the White House at all times.

He did have to pay a little bit when he jetted to visit his nut farm, but only what a commercial seat might cost — about \$630 each round-trip flight, an

Associated Press report at the time estimated.

And Panetta, in a Homeric act of cheapskate spendthriftery, never offered to pay the rest back.

"For 40 years that I've been in this town, I've gone home because my wife and family are there and because, frankly, I think it's healthy to get out of Washington periodically just to get your mind straight and your perspective straight," Panetta was quoted as saying.

I'd like to think of Panetta getting his mind straight, among his glorious nuts, wearing a cardigan, surveying his vast lands won through decades of public service, sipping an 18-year-old scotch, a bowl of salted Panetta walnuts at his elbow and a pack of Washington reporters at his feet, wagging their tails.

But taxpayers have to get home on their own dime, driving through the night in the beater "dad car" that dads often drive. Others fly coach, exhausted after a week of trying to sell stuff people didn't want, and forced to suffer indignities.

Like strangers touching their arms. Oh, how I hate the touching thing.

You're stuck in coach when you begin the Fight for Primacy of the Armrest with your seatmate, as if you're insects on some PBS nature programme, only the other guy is perspiring and he slimes you with his sweat in a random sweat transfer.

I've mentioned RST before, because it drives me insane and is the reason I avoid public transportation, lest I go crazy, and get dragged off the plane screaming, "Whyyyyy!?" as gleeful passengers capture my disgrace on their cellphones and I'm fired for conduct unbecoming a columnist.

And the guy coughing behind you, and those snotty kids, the fumes, and the certainty that if a cat lady were near, I'd suppress my sneezes by pinching my nose until I blew out either my sinuses or my brain.

Now that I think of it, being a government bigwig cheapskate spendthrift isn't such a bad deal, if you can get taxpayers to pay for it.

But some just get Priced out.

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