

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 14, 2009

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Leader:

Thank you for conveying your concern about any suggestion that federal policy, explicitly or implicitly, prohibit government meetings and conferences in prominent American cities such as Las Vegas or other communities known for attracting vacationers. I agree that federal policy should not dictate the location where such government events are held.

You are as aware as anyone of the toll that the current economic downturn is having on working families and communities nationwide. Your leadership in passing the Economic Recovery Act earlier this year speaks to your commitment to, and effectiveness in, helping communities like Las Vegas and industries like tourism rebound.

Our view on the issue of government travel is not focused on specific destinations, but rather on the justification for and the cost/benefit ratio of the individual exercise. There is no doubt in my mind that the Federal government should lead by example in tightening its belt and justifying its expenditures as we meet the priority challenge of reducing the national deficit and the debt. For me, the test of government travel is what will be accomplished by that travel and whether the cost to the government is reasonable as opposed to other options.

Again, thank you for raising this important issue. I hope this letter helps clarify our view of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rahm", with a large, sweeping flourish that loops back to the left.

Rahm Emanuel