

September 6, 2023

Chairman Christopher A. Coons  
Vice Chairman James Lankford  
U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics  
220 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Coons and Vice Chairman Lankford,

We respectfully request that the Senate Select Committee on Ethics (“Ethics Committee”) investigate Senator Tammy Baldwin for possible serious violations of Senate standards involving the misappropriation of taxpayer dollars for her personal and campaign travel.

### I. Background

Recent public reporting indicates that Senator Tammy Baldwin “billed taxpayers \$630 to fly from Madison to New York City.” She has allegedly reimbursed the federal government for the cost of that travel, but only after facing media inquiries as to the personal of the trip.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, since 2018, Senator Baldwin has made nine officially-connected trips to New York City—eight of which were paid for by her official Senate office—all expensed to the tune of thousands of dollars for simply the flights alone. It remains unknown if these trips were also made for personal reasons, and as such, also require investigation.<sup>2</sup>

### II. Law

Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a) and the Senate Ethics Manual, official funds may be used only for the purposes appropriated.<sup>3</sup>

2 U.S.C. § 6314(e) provides that a Senator shall be reimbursed for travel while traveling for official business within the United States.

Expenses for mixed-purpose trips may be pro-rated on a reasonable basis to accurately reflect the purposes of the trip.<sup>4</sup>

A campaign committee may not benefit from the use of the government rate, which applies only where appropriated (i.e., taxpayer) funds are used.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Bice, [Bice: Tammy Baldwin Said to ‘Stay Home’ in 2020. She’d Just Taken A Personal Trip with Tax Dollars](#), Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Aug. 28, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Bice, *supra* note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 196 (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 120 (2003).

<sup>5</sup> Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 120 (2003).

### III. Analysis

Federal law and the Select Committee on Ethics make it clear that the expenditure of public funds must occur only for appropriated purposes.<sup>6</sup> Here, public reporting indicates that Senator Baldwin has run afoul of these prohibitions by expending taxpayer dollars for exclusively personal travel to New York—a geographic location well outside of Wisconsin, and far from the constituency that she represents.<sup>7</sup> In fact, recent reporting confirms that she has claimed sufficient justification for eight trips to New York at Wisconsin taxpayers' expense.<sup>8</sup> Such frequent official travel to a location that is neither in Wisconsin nor the District of Columbia—and that travel's predominate purpose, especially if personal or campaign in nature—warrants significant advanced and in-depth scrutiny.

Furthermore, Senator Baldwin's insinuation that reimbursing the federal government for just one personal trip somehow exonerates her from explaining her additional taxpayer-funded trips to New York is wholly and completely unpersuasive. Senator Baldwin only took corrective action once she had been questioned about her potentially illegal flight, and her campaign claims that the trip was simply "misabeled."<sup>9</sup> If the attention to detail in her office is such that hundreds of dollars of taxpayer funds can be "misabeled," then a comprehensive audit of her schedule, travel, events, per diem, and any other costs outflowing from her Senate office are relevant, warranted, and necessary to any investigation undertaken by the Ethics Committee.

The Senate has long recognized that "public office is a public trust."<sup>10</sup> In accordance with this ironclad tradition, Senators are prohibited from securing a government rate for non-taxpayer funded expenses.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, an accounting of any reimbursement to the federal government should examine whether Senator Baldwin has inappropriately benefited by securing a government rate for travel that is either predominately personal or campaign in nature.

### IV. Request for Action

Senator Tammy Baldwin has placed herself squarely at odds with federal law and the standards outlined by the Senate Ethics Manual. We therefore implore the Senate Select Committee on Ethics, as it is best positioned to investigate and enforce violations of the standards of the Senate, to undertake an immediate investigation to halt any present and future instances of Senator Tammy Baldwin's use of public office for personal benefit and ensure and safeguard the public trust.

Sincerely,



Caitlin Sutherland  
Executive Director

---

<sup>6</sup> 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a); Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 196 (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Bice, *supra* note 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bice, *supra* note 1.

<sup>9</sup> Bice, *supra* note 1.

<sup>10</sup> Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 21 (2003).

<sup>11</sup> Select Committee on Ethics, [Senate Ethics Manual](#), 120 (2003).