



OFFICE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

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Public Auditor Responds to Guam Daily Post Article on Travel

OPA Compliant with Local, Federal Regulations

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As the Public Auditor, I am compelled to respond to the Guam Daily Post article on government travel because it casts a negative pall over the integrity of the office. As the attached Excel spreadsheet shows, since I assumed office in September 2018, the OPA has complied with the fiscal year 2019 budget prohibition against the use of local funds for travel. The Office of Public Accountability (OPA) has been very fortunate to belong to regional and international organizations such as the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) and Intosai Development Initiative (IDI) that have sponsored most of the office travel.

The very capable staff of the OPA has also successfully applied to the Department of Interior Office of Insular Affairs for a \$76K grant that specifically underwrites the professional development of the staff. The grant pays for registration at on-island training and travel expenses for off-island training. The grant does not authorize payment of the Public Auditor's travel. The recent trip to an IDI Conference in Tokyo was personally paid for by the Public Auditor. An upcoming trip of two staff members to the "Lakewood Experience" is required and funded by the DOI grant.

In late August, the Guam OPA will be hosting the 30th Association of Pacific Island Public Auditor's (APIPA) Conference. The grant will pay for the registration fees of the entire office to attend this training to assure receipt of 80 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits required by Government Auditing Standards, commonly referred to as the "Yellow Book", as well as local law. This will assure the entire staff will attend, as opposed to only three that attended last year's APIPA conference in Palau.

The people of Guam should take pride in the fact that regional and international organizations like PASAI and IDI have recognized the excellent caliber of staff we have at the Guam OPA, and have selected them to be "Resource Persons" to train other offices throughout the world. All their travel and expenses are underwritten by IDI or PASAI. The only "local funds" used by this office in the last two years for travel was by the previous Public Auditor since the grant does not allow for expenses for elected officials, only for the professional development of the staff. All other travel in FY2018 was underwritten by the DOI grant.

We welcome a full review of all OPA travel records submitted quarterly to the Guam Legislature as required by law. I am confident all travel is justified and required for the sustainability, personal, and professional growth of this office. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Benjamin J.F. Cruz
Public Auditor