Text as published on gao.gov, https://www.gao.gov/products/b-77613, archived 2026-07-10. GAO published no original file for this decision. Rendered by Comptroller Desk.

B-77613 June 23, 1948

Number: B-77613

Date: 1948-06-23

B-77613 June 23, 1948

Administrator, Housing and Home Finance Agency.

My dear Mr. Foley:

I have your letter of June 21, 1948, as follows:

"Your decision of April 13, 1948, B-75014, raises a doubt as to whether the PHA is authorized to pay the travel expenses of its employees to attend a meeting of the National association of Housing Officials to be held at Savannah, Georgia, on June 24 and 25.

"The Public Housing Administration is charged with the responsibility of economical operation of Federally-owned war housing projects pursuant to the Lanham Act (42 U.S.C. 1521 et seq.), and of paying to local housing authorities organized under State laws, the minimum annual contributions necessary to meet cost of operation of housing projects owned and operated by them for low-rate purposes pursuant to the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.). The Federally-owned war housing projects are generally operated by local housing authorities pursuant to lease agreements under which income from the projects is used for expenses of operation and the net is returned to the Federal Government, as authorized by sections 303 and 304 of the Lanham Act. Reductions in operating costs are reflected directly in reduced annual contributions payments on the low-rent projects and in greater net return on the war housing projects.

"In order to reduce operating costs and to advise and instruct the local authorities with respect to changes in accounting procedures, amount of reserves, and other requirements, it is necessary for PHA employees to visit such local housing authorities from time to time and advise and consult with their officials.

"We have been advised that the Savannah meeting will be attended by housing officials of the Georgia and Florida local housing authorities. This meeting would provide a convenient opportunity for us to emphasize the need for and methods of reducing operating costs and improving maintenance techniques, and to discuss with these housing officials the details of changes in accounting procedures recommended by your office, and of changes in policy governing reserves which we have recently discussed the appropriation committees of the Congress. We have determined that it would be much more economical to send the employees who are charged with the duties of carrying out the function covered by the above-mentioned subjects to Savannah than to send such employees to each

individual housing authority represented at the meeting. We do not believe that your decision of April 13 was intended to prohibit the payment of expenses of an employee in the discharge of his official duties, as is the case here, where attendance at the meeting is advantageous to the Government because it affords the opportunity to reduce the expenses of travelling to various points.

"In view of the fact that the meeting is taking place in a few days, an early reply would be appreciated. "

The decision of April 13, 1948, B-75014, 27 Comp. Gen. 62, to which you refer, considered the act of June 26, 1912, 37 Stat. 184, and the Joint Resolution dated February 2, 1935, 49 Stat. 19, so far as those acts provide that appropriated moneys are not available for expenses of attendance of any person at any meeting or convention of members of any society or association, unless such expenses are expressly authorized by Congress. That decision concluded that the expenses of attendance of Bureau of Reclamation personnel scheduled meeting of the International Congress on Large Dams properly could not be charged to the appropriations of the Bureau of Reclamation at meetings or conventions of members of societies or associations concerned with their work, contained in section 4 of the Interior Department Appropriation Act, 1948, approved July 25, 1947, 61 Stat. 460, 491.

That decision properly applied the 1912 statute, supra, to the facts there under consideration. However, there is nothing on the facts there under consideration. However, there is nothing the 1912 statute, or in the 1935 statute, supra, which would prohibit the payment of traveling expenses incurred in connection with attendance at a meeting or convention where the purpose of such attendance was strictly for the transaction of Government business.

It is understood that the employees who would attend the meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials are to perform strictly governmental duties, such as they ordinarily are required to perform and which otherwise would have to be performed at considerable greater expense to the Government. If that understanding be correct, the incurring of expenses in connection with attendance at the meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials is not within the prohibition of the statutes, supra.

Respectfully,

Lindsay c. Warren Comptroller General of the United State