



Kerry's Daughter Traveled On Taxpayers' Dime To Get Government Contracts

Ethan Barton

October 23, 2016

U.S. Senator John Kerry waves as he escorts his daughter Vanessa. (Reuters/John Schults)

Secretary of State John Kerry's daughter and her staff traveled around the world on the taxpayers' dime to secure more than \$9 million in Department of State-funded contracts, according to a Daily Caller News Foundation investigation.

The Peace Corps authorized an estimated \$46,000 for 20 international and domestic trips for Dr. Vanessa Kerry and her staff, agency documents obtained by TheDCNF show. The purpose of the travel was to form the Global Health Service Partnership (GHSP) – a Peace Corps-run and State Department-funded program Kerry proposed.

The Peace Corps ultimately gave Kerry's nonprofit – Seed Global Health – \$9 million in contracts for the program, which were bankrolled by the State Department and awarded without competition between 2012 and 2015, TheDCNF previously revealed.

“Certainly, the taxpayer funding of 20 globe-trotting trips for Vanessa and her team even before they had a federal contract smacks of cronyism and nepotism,” libertarian think tank Cato Institute's federal spending expert Chris Edwards told TheDCNF.

Adam Andrzejewski, founder and CEO of the nonprofit government watchdog Open The Books, agreed, saying “every dollar the Peace Corps spent to fly Vanessa Kerry around the globe was a dollar not available to promote the Peace Corps' goals of providing clean water to impoverished communities, combatting HIV/AIDS and promoting education for young girls. The least Kerry could do for a program combatting extreme poverty is pick up the tab for her own travel.”

In fact, three Seed officials, including Kerry, traveled to Washington, D.C., to announce the nonprofit's partnership with the Peace Corps in March 2012 – six months before the first contract was signed, records show.

The Peace Corps provided more funds for additional GHSP-related travel not included in TheDCNF's analysis. These trips included Peace Corps officials and members of the medical community. Some of these trips included Peace Corps officials traveling to Seed's Boston headquarters.

The Peace Corps paid at least nearly \$28,000 for Kerry and her staff's travel between 2011 and 2012, according TheDCNF's analysis of travel documents, but the agency's poor record-keeping suggests this is an underestimate.

TheDCNF only obtained reimbursement forms for 12 of the 20 documented trips. It's possible Seed staff members were reimbursed for some or all of the remaining eight trips, given evidence that Peace Corps records are likely missing, but the records were either not retained or not created.

Additionally, Peace Corps officials readily funded Kerry's travel, email records show.

"If you could cover the flight, it would be a huge help," Kerry wrote to Peace Corps official Travis Johnson in a Nov. 2, 2011 email. Johnson is also the federal employee who created the travel documents.

Johnson replied: "No problem! Just let me know the rough times (and days if you'd like to arrive earlier or stay through the weekend) you'd like to fly in and out of DC and I'll start working on it."

The purpose of the travel was to meet with Peace Corps officials "and other government and private partners collaborating on the Global Health Service Partnership" in Washington, D.C.

Kerry also brought a Massachusetts General Hospital coworker and a Department of State official to the meeting.

"I would like to include Pat Daoust and Tom LaSalvia at the meeting," Kerry wrote in a Nov. 7, 2011, follow-up email to Johnson and two additional Peace Corps officials. "They will take care of their own travel." Daoust became Seed's chief nursing officer.

The Peace Corps later funded travel for Daoust and at least seven other Seed officials. Daoust, in fact, had the most expensive trip among the Seed employees, an overseas jaunt for which the Peace Corps shelled out more than \$6,000, though the agency authorized more than \$7,000.

That travel included trips to Uganda and Tanzania as a Massachusetts General and Seed representative at GHSP formation meetings.

Kerry has drawn an at least \$140,000 salary in recent years, tax forms show, and budget documents obtained by TheDCNF show her pay will likely increase. Seed was founded in her father's luxurious Boston home.

"John Kerry is one of the richest public officials in Washington, worth \$200 million or more," Edwards told TheDCNF. "Kerry could have personally funded his daughter's health initiative, without imposing the cost on taxpayers."

The Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust recently requested the State Department's inspector general to investigate what it called "preferential treatment," TheDCNF previously reported.

Neither the Peace Corps nor Seed responded to TheDCNF's requests for comment.

