

The Washington Times

Obama's army of PR staffers costs taxpayers \$500 million per year

Stephen Dinan

October 5, 2016

President Obama has swelled the ranks of government PR, adding hundreds of new public relations specialists to the federal payroll during his time in office, costing taxpayers a half-billion dollars a year, the government's chief watchdog said Wednesday.

That doesn't include the more than \$100 million the administration spends annually for help from private sector spinmeisters, nor does it account for the \$800 million spent on contracts for advertising in 2015, according to the Government Accountability Office.

"Spending \$1.5 billion on government PR activities is a huge waste of money. That sort of spending should be drastically scaled back," said Chris Edwards, a federal budget scholar at the Cato Institute.

The administration added some 667 PR staffers between 2008, the last full year under his predecessor, and 2011, when public relations staffing across federal agencies peaked at 5,238 people. That's a jump of 15 percent during those years.

The number has since slipped, but there were still nearly 5,100 PR staffers in the administration in 2014, the final year for which the GAO had figures.

The median salary for PR employees was \$90,000 in 2014 — up from \$77,000 in 2006, the auditors said.