



THIS IS HOW YOU SEAL THE DEAL.

# SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

START HERE



- > Sign-Up for the MN Daily Newsletter
- > Apply for an upcoming Hosted Buyer Program
- > Get a Free Subscription

search sponsored by



- Best Practices
- News
- Media
- Destinations
- Events & Education
- Pinnacle Awards
- Partner Content
- Meeting Jobs
- Facilities

HOME / NEWS / PRODUCTS & SERVICES

Share This Print FREE Subscription

Text size: A | A | A

## Products and Services

Share View Comments

# GSA Chief Resigns Over Lavish Conference

By Matt Alderton  
April 3, 2012

Just six months after "Muffingate," the federal government is bubbling over yet another meetings misfire: General Services Administration (GSA) chief Martha Johnson resigned yesterday over reports of "excessive" spending at a Las Vegas conference in 2010. She didn't leave alone, either: According to *The Washington Post*, two of her top deputies were fired and four managers were placed on leave.

"On April 2, 2012, I submitted my resignation as the Administrator of the General Services Administration to President Obama and he has accepted it," reads Johnson's resignation letter. "I take this action with great sorrow. GSA holds a special place in my heart ... The Agency, however, has made a significant mis-step. Reports of an internal conference in which taxpayer dollars were squandered led me to launch internal reviews, take disciplinary personnel action and institute tough new controls to ensure this incident is not repeated. In addition, I feel I must step aside as Administrator so that the Agency can move forward at this time with a fresh leadership team."

Johnson's resignation came just hours before GSA Inspector General Brian D. Miller released a [report on the controversial event](#), which was a training conference for 300 West Coast employees of the GSA's Public Buildings Service. Held in October 2010 at the M Resort Spa Casino, the event cost \$823,000, according to Miller's report, which said the GSA spent \$130,000 on travel expenses for six scouting trips and \$146,527 on food and beverage catering. According to *The Washington Post*, the conference also featured "lavish" expenditures on entertainment, including a clown and a mindreader.

"GSA spending on conference planning was excessive, wasteful and in some cases impermissible," reads Miller's report, which says the GSA violated federal limits on conference spending. "GSA failed to follow contracting regulations in many of the procurements associated with the [meeting] and wasted taxpayer dollars."

The Obama Administration, which in the past year has led a campaign against wasteful government spending — [including spending on meetings and events](#) — was "outraged by the excessive spending, questionable dealings with contractors and disregard for taxpayer dollars," White House Chief of Staff Jacob Lew told *The Washington Post*.

Lawmakers expressed similar outrage, according to the paper. Sen. Joseph Lieberman (I-Conn.), for instance, called the event "a stupid and infuriating waste of taxpayer dollars," while House Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) said it's an indication of the "waste that exists in a bloated federal government."

This meeting was particularly troubling, according to Miller, because the GSA serves as the federal government's administrative core, handling much of its procurement and cost-cutting measures.

"The excessive pre-conference planning, catering and other costs, as well as the luxury accommodations and overall approach, show that GSA's planning and expenditures for the [meeting] were incompatible with its obligation to be a responsible steward of the public's money," Miller concluded in his report. "As the agency Congress has entrusted with developing the rules followed by other federal agencies for conferences, GSA has a special responsibility to set an example, and that did not occur here."

This page is protected by [Copyright](#) laws. Do Not Copy

Share This Print FREE Subscription

Text size: A | A | A

## Comments



blog comments powered by Disqus

## More Articles

- [CityPASS Offers Discounts for Meetings Groups Throughout U.S.](#)
- [IMEX Frankfurt Wraps](#)
- [David Williams Named Global Meetings Executive of the Year](#)
- [PCMA Forms Global Partnership with IAPCO](#)
- [IMEX in Frankfurt Off to Strong Start with More, Expanded Booths](#)
- [PCMA Announces AIBTM Education Program](#)

FREE NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBE

Successful Meetings' How-To Tip of the Day  
 Down to the Wire  
 Successful Meetings Top 10 Newsletter  
 Meeting News

[Click here for our Terms and Privacy Policy.](#)

From basic concepts to advanced strategies, here is the indispensable knowledge—the insider tips and industry essentials—that any professional charged with planning a meeting needs in order to organize valuable, productive and inspiring events.

[Click Here To Subscribe](#)

Stay Connected to SM

**SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS**

## FACILITIES SEARCH

GET DETAILED INFORMATION ON  
50K HOTELS & FACILITIES IN  
14K CITIES WORLDWIDE  
900+ CONVENTION CENTERS  
700+ CVBS  
& SUBMIT YOUR RFPS

[click here](#)