

For additional information: Bill Winter, Director of Communications ♦ (202) 333-0008 Ext. 226

Congressmen in tax-funded Cadillacs make taxpayers carsick, say Libertarians

They're tax-guzzlers in gas guzzlers — and you're paying for it

WASHINGTON, DC — You probably aren't driving a luxury car, complete with a cellular phone, that costs more than \$1,000 a month. But numerous politicians *are*, and you're paying for it, the Libertarian Party noted today.

In fact, at least 100 House Republicans and Democrats are leasing automobiles at taxpayer expense — including Cadillac Sevilles and Mercury Grand Marquis.

"Talk about taking taxpayers for a ride," said Steve Dasbach, the party's national chairman. "While hardworking taxpayers struggle to finance their own cars with their own paychecks, rich politicians are riding around in luxury cars — and we're picking up the tab."

According to a new study by the Congressional Accountability Project, nearly a quarter of all members of Congress funneled money in 1996 from their Congressional office expense funds to pay for automobile leases.

Taxpayers also picked up the tab for car phones, gas, car washes, parking, and tolls.

"Congressional perks have shifted into high gear," said Dasbach. "Who would have dreamed that a Congresswoman earning \$130,000 a year would force taxpayers to pay \$721.95 a month so she can cruise around in a Cadillac Seville — like Rep. Eddie Johnson (D-TX) is doing?"

"And how about Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), who is paying \$989 a month to drive around in a \$27,000 Mercury Grand Marquis — a car that costs more than the median annual household income in her district?"

"It's time to slam the brakes on these tax-guzzlers in gas guzzlers," said Dasbach. "Congressmen drive around in luxury, while taxpayers are being driven to the poor house."

Dasbach conceded that the money squandered on luxury car leases for Congressmen is relatively small, compared to the overall federal budget. "But this latest scandal shows why Americans hold their government and politicians in such low esteem," he said.

How low? The number of Americans who trust Congress has plunged to just 6%, according to a poll taken last month by the Pew Research Center.

"As they cruise around in their Cadillacs, maybe these Congressional autocrats should try to figure out why 94% of Americans no longer trust them," suggested Dasbach. "The answer is simple — just when we thought that Congress couldn't get any worse, the politicians have figured out a way to literally make taxpayers *carsick*."

#