

Ninth Circuit Heading for Sun and Surf – On Our Dime

☒ Call me naive. That's okay. But I had no idea that individual Circuit Courts held conferences. Well, they do.

It's been reported that the famously liberal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals' 2010 conference cost the taxpayers more than \$657,000 in travel costs alone for 700 attendees. Taxpayers were billed a combined \$860,000 for travel to the 2008 and 2009 conferences.

They enjoyed themselves, no doubt, at the La Costa Resort and Spa in Southern California, in August of 2011.

This year they're all hopping a plane for Hawaii. Sens. Jeff Sessions and Chuck Grassley wrote to Chief Judge Alex Kozinski "to ensure that the courts are using their current funding allocation effectively." "We are concerned about the overall cost of this conference and do not believe that discussions about the administration of justice would be less successful were they held somewhere other than a spa and resort in Hawaii," the Senators wrote.

According to the report I read, "although the conference starts on a Monday, registration opens Saturday. Sport fishing and golf are scheduled for Sunday. According to the letter, other activities during the week will include yoga, surfing lessons, stand-up paddle board lessons, Zumba (a latin-inspired dance program), a tennis tournament, a tour of Upcountry Maui, a snorkel trip and an event called "The Aloha Experience."

Other Circuits are holding conferences in less luxurious places, or canceling their annual conferences entirely. The Eighth Circuit will convene for a three-day conference in Kansas City, the Seventh Circuit will go to Chicago and the

Sixth Circuit will hold its event in Lexington, KY. Districts covering New England, the Rocky Mountains and the mid-Atlantic have cancelled their conferences.

I've been to multiple-day conferences to comply with the continuing education requirements of my State Bar, and I've had to sit in windowless overcrowded rooms listening to countless boring speakers from early morning to late-afternoon. I've been provided with tasteless coffee and even more tasteless pastries and fed unappetizing sandwiches for lunch. After being bored to tears, I seldom had energy to do much afterwards except get ready for the same the next day.

So when exactly do these 700 attendees actually do any work? Sounds like a whole lot of sun and surf and not much discussion about the administration of justice. After the recent scandal regarding the outrageous Las Vegas spending of taxpayer money at the GSA conference, you'd think those in charge of spending our tax money would be a little bit more frugal – but nooooo.

I don't get it, but if you do, God bless you.