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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Spent $85.7 Million on Travel in Fiscal Year 2016-17

Columbia, S.C. – State entities spent $85.7 million on travel during the fiscal year that ended June 30, state Controller Richard Eckstrom announced in issuing the 2017 State Travel Report. Total travel spending increased $4.6 million over the $81.1 million that state entities spent a year earlier (increased 5.7 percent), while the state's general fund revenues increased by only 4.3 percent.

Compiling and reporting statewide travel expenditures is part of Eckstrom's commitment to increasing government's financial transparency in South Carolina.

The Travel Report details all travel-related expenditures for each agency that received money in the state's 2017 budget, and it separately discloses in-state travel and out-of-state travel for each agency. The report also ranks all agencies in descending order based on their total travel spending, and it identifies the names, job titles, and amounts spent by the top 25 travelers in each agency.

According to Eckstrom:

> "We produce this report each year in the interest of increasing financial transparency for state government. The purpose is not to assess the merits of an agency's travel spending, but to simply let citizens see how public funds are being spent and then ask questions if they have any.
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> "To that end, state agencies and state-supported colleges and universities should be prepared to answer questions and provide more details if requested. In fact, I'd encourage all agencies – particularly colleges and universities – to make their own detailed spending reports available on their websites. Of the nearly $86 million total the state spent on travel last year, colleges and universities spent nearly $58 million of that total (that's two-thirds). Major spending like that can contribute to driving the cost of tuition beyond reach for many students and their families.
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> "I want to emphasize that this report includes only state agencies and colleges and universities. <u>It does not include local governments. However, I strongly encourage cities, counties, and local school districts to compile their own travel spending reports and make them publicly available online</u>.

"There's great public interest in travel spending at all levels of governments, and taxpayers should be given full access to whatever information they need to evaluate whether or not their tax dollars are being wisely spent.

"Producing this report is one way to shine light on this major category of government spending. Government leaders and managers should constantly evaluate all spending on travel to ensure that it's necessary, reasonable, and serves a legitimate public purpose. Government serves the best interests of taxpayers by limiting travel to only the essentials. In doing so, agencies need to consider the actual benefits they receive when spending on travel, and then weigh those benefits against those financial costs."

The 2017 State Travel Report is available on the Comptroller General's Office website at: http://www.cg.sc.gov/publicationsandreports/Pages/travelreports.aspx. Travel reports dating back to fiscal year 2004 are available at that link.

For more information on how state and local governments spend taxpayer money, visit the S.C. Fiscal Transparency Website, which Eckstrom's office launched in 2008. This information is conveniently available at: http://www.cg.sc.gov/fiscaltransparency/Pages/default.aspx.

For more information please contact Eric Ward, public information director, at 803-734-2538; 803-206-6293 or eward@cg.sc.gov.

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