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NEWS RELEASE

November 3, 2022

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Spent \$47.0 Million on Travel in Fiscal Year 2022

Eckstrom Challenges Agency Directors to Cut Travel Spending at least 5%

State agencies collectively tripled their spending on travel in fiscal year 2022 compared to amounts spent a year earlier. After spending \$16.2 million on travel in fiscal year 2021 -- a year when travel was voluntarily reduced because of COVID -- spending increased to \$47.0 million during fiscal year 2022.

Included in the \$47.0 million of travel spending by the 130 state entities listed in the Comptroller General's recently released *Annual Travel Report*, the State's four-year higher ed institutions accounted for \$21.9 million (or 47%) of state government's total travel spending for the year. Of this \$21.9 million, the share spent by the University of South Carolina and its satellite campuses was \$5.9 million (or 27%) and Clemson's share was \$7.4 million (or 34%).

This \$21.9 million in travel spending by higher ed increased five-fold in fiscal year 2022 compared to the \$4.1 million higher ed spent in fiscal year 2021. The combined spending on travel by all other state agencies in fiscal year 2022 totaled \$25.1 million, accounting for 53% of State government's total travel spending. Collectively these other agencies doubled their travel spending in fiscal year 2022 (\$25.1 million) compared to fiscal year 2021 (\$12.1 million).

In connection with publishing the fiscal year 2022 *Annual Travel Report*, Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom stated:

“Agency directors need to closely monitor travel spending. They also need to bear in mind that some travel might be less necessary than other travel. During the COVID pandemic our state clearly demonstrated that it's possible to sharply reduce travel. One way that was

done was by participating in meetings online through video conferencing capabilities made possible by the state's sizable investment in computer technology.

“Admittedly, there’ll be instances when online meetings won’t work well, but during COVID we demonstrated that some meetings can be conveniently attended online -- or not at all. Because travel is already so expensive and it’s rapidly becoming even more expensive because of inflation, we’ve got to consider all reasonable alternatives.

“I challenge all agencies to reduce their travel spending by at least five percent in fiscal year 2023. That will save state government more than \$2.3 million this year.”

The 2022 *Annual Travel Report* is available on the Comptroller General’s Office website at: cg.sc.gov/financial-reports/travel-reports. Travel reports dating back to fiscal year 2004 are available at this 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: cg.sc.gov/fiscal-transparency.

(For questions contact Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom at (803)734-2588 or reckstrom@cg.sc.gov)

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