

Board of Contract Appeals
General Services Administration
Washington, D.C. 20405

December 6, 2000

GSBCA 15393-TRAV

In the Matter of THOMAS L. LAUGHLIN

Thomas L. Laughlin, Office of Finance and Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, Washington, DC, Claimant.

R. J. Dominic, Director, Finance Office/Comptroller, Office of Finance and Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, Germantown, MD, appearing for Department of Commerce.

DeGRAFF, Board Judge.

When an employee travels by a circuitous route and combines official and personal travel, the agency should reimburse his costs, but only up to the amount that it would have paid if he had traveled by a direct route. The employee's costs may include a penalty paid in order to reschedule personal travel that is combined with official travel.

Background

Thomas L. Laughlin is an employee of the Department of Commerce in the Washington, DC area. In March 2000, Commerce asked Mr. Laughlin to travel to Norway for a conference to be held on June 19-21. Mr. Laughlin and his family had already made plans to travel to England on June 21, and had purchased non-refundable, discount airline tickets for their trip. After several discussions with Commerce, Mr. Laughlin arranged to travel from Washington to Norway (changing airplanes in England) on June 17, from Norway to England on June 22, and from England back to Washington on July 7. Mr. Laughlin had to pay a \$178.80 penalty in order to change his departure date from Washington, and Commerce has not reimbursed Mr. Laughlin for this amount. According to Commerce, the cost of a round trip airline ticket between Washington and Norway would have been \$1326.

Discussion

If Mr. Laughlin had separated his official travel from his personal travel, it is unlikely that Commerce would be able to reimburse him for the \$178.80 penalty because it would

have been part of the cost of his personal travel, and not part of the cost of his official travel. Alexander Baumgarten, B-252599 (Aug. 5, 1993). Mr. Laughlin, however, did not separate his official travel from his personal travel. He traveled from his permanent duty station to his temporary duty station in Norway. From Norway, he went to England for personal travel and returned to his permanent duty station from there.

The \$178.80 penalty is part of the cost of Mr. Laughlin's having taken a circuitous route, which combined official and personal travel, between Washington and Norway. According to the regulations and decisions applicable to employees who travel by circuitous routes, Commerce should reimburse Mr. Laughlin's costs, but only up to the \$1326 that it would have paid if he had traveled by a direct route between Washington and Norway. 41 CFR 301-2.4, 301-10.8 (2000); Patrick T. Klever, GSBCA 14304-TRAV, 98-2 BCA ¶ 29,862; Susan Reed, GSBCA 13993-TRAV, 97-2 BCA ¶ 29,303; Arthur F. Sampson, B-178535 (June 21, 1973). The cost of Mr. Laughlin's travel includes the \$178.80 penalty, whatever amount he paid out of his own pocket for his discount airline ticket, and whatever amount the agency paid out of its funds for his transportation costs.

Commerce can reimburse Mr. Laughlin's costs up to \$1326.

MARTHA H. DeGRAFF
Board Judge