

## FERGUSON GETS HER 38 BUCKS BACK (#30028)

FOR RELEASE: May 25, 1993                      CONTACT: John Barclay  
(202) 208-3983

### INTERIOR EMPLOYEE GETS APOLOGY... AND HER 38 BUCKS BACK (#30028)

President Clinton asked all Americans to make contributions, but Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt says making government employees pay their own travel expenses isn't what he meant. Consequently, the Interior Department employee who lost \$38 in her effort to save the government \$331 got her money back this week after she took her case to Secretary Babbitt and Vice President Al Gore.

Edythe Ferguson of the Minerals Management Service (MMS) earned headlines last week during a Monday "Town Hall" meeting of Interior employees with Gore and Babbitt. When Gore asked for examples of bureaucratic inefficiency, Ferguson said she'd used a free, frequent flier ticket for government travel rather than buying a new, \$331 fare. The free ticket required her to stay at her destination an extra day, but the government refused to reimburse her \$38 per diem allowance. When Gore asked why, Ferguson told him, "You got me!"

Babbitt promised Gore that Ferguson would get her money, even if it had to come out of his own pocket (it did not). The contested amount, he noted, probably would not cover the cost of the labor involved in rejecting the claim in the first place.

Babbitt said the Saturday night stopover requirement had not appeared on the voucher submitted to MMS's finance personnel. The stipulation appeared in other materials Ferguson submitted, but was overlooked. "When my office called," he said, "they immediately realized their mistake. Of course, having the Vice President on her side probably didn't hurt her case too much."

Babbitt's \$38 promise during the May 17 meeting was quickly kept: Ferguson's refund was processed that afternoon, he said.

-MMS-