



# ROSSMOOR NEWS

WALNUT CREEK, CALIFORNIA

The newspaper serving the senior adult community of Rossmoor. For more information, go to the Web site at [www.rossmoor.com](http://www.rossmoor.com)

---

## Republican Perspective

*By John Littig*

### Your Birthday Gift to Michelle Obama

Traveling on Air Force One, President Obama, his wife, and two daughters took a 15-day Christmas vacation in Hawaii. But then a strange thing happened.

On Jan. 5, the president and his two daughters flew back to Washington, leaving Michelle on Oahu. There has been speculation, primarily in the tabloids, that the president's public display with Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt might have played a part in this decision. But the White House described the separate return from Hawaii as a birthday gift from the president to Michelle, allowing her to "spend time with friends ahead of her upcoming 50th birthday" on Jan. 17.

Now if the First Lady had flown back to Washington with her husband, there would be no additional cost to the taxpayers. But her separate return came with a price tag. For one thing, she does not fly by commercial airliner. At least one separate Air Force plane was needed to retrieve her, maybe another for additional equipment and hangers-on. In addition, there is the cost of maintaining her round-the-clock Secret Service protection detail in Hawaii for the duration of her stay, along with other support staff. The additional cost of this separate return has been estimated as high as \$800,000. We don't know, because the White House has, so far, maintained a publicity shroud around the return trip particulars.

The First Lady has previously been criticized in the press for taking lavish vacations, including Spain's Costa del Sol, the Bahamas, and Martha's Vineyard. Now this latest extravagance came just as the president announced his focus on economic inequality in America - perhaps to divert attention from the Obamacare fiasco. Regardless of the reason, another squandering of taxpayer money on Michelle Obama's lavish lifestyle seems a poor backdrop for the president's avowed focus on inequality.

Coincidentally, former NBA star Dennis Rodman organized a team of ex-NBA players to travel to North Korea to play exhibition games against a North Korean team. The occasion for this was the Jan. 8 birthday of Kim Jong Un, the dictator of the People's Republic of North Korea and, according to Rodman, "a nice guy" and his "friend for life."

So, beside the fact that both birthdays are in January, what does Rodman's birthday gift to Kim Jong Un have to do with President Obama's birthday gift to the First Lady?

As foolish as Rodman's "gift" was, it's pretty unlikely that Rodman is sticking us with the bill. In contrast, we the U.S. taxpayers will be picking up the tab for the First Lady's gift from the president. Even if we hadn't intended to send the First Lady a gift -or even a card.

John Littig can be emailed at [jslittig@aol.com](mailto:jslittig@aol.com).