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INSIDE: HUD

SMOOTH RIDE . . . As part of a "Golden Fleece" award from Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.) last year, HUD Secretary Samuel R. Pierce Jr. won the dubious distinction of having the most expensive limousine of any Cabinet member.

Pierce was among 190 federal officials receiving chauffeur service to their homes at a cost of \$3.4 million a year. Proxmire said the busiest car belonged to CIA Director William J. Casey, whose driver received \$26,000 in overtime pay last year on top of a \$20,000 salary. Pierce's Oldsmobile 98 diesel weighed in with the costliest lease at \$8,088.

Proxmire, who authored a law barring many federal officials from using a government car for commuting, said that bureaucrats regard the cars as "a real status symbol. When we try to take the limousine away, they just buck like steers. I think they'd rather lose a billion-dollar program than a limousine."

A HUD spokesman said Pierce had wanted a cheaper General Motors car and settled for the more expensive lease after delivery problems with several area dealers. But when Ford came out with a discount program this year, he said, Pierce was able to get "a much swankier car," a Lincoln Mark 6, for just \$3,075.

—Howard Kurtz