

Wastebook



A Guide to Some of the Most Wasteful
Government Spending of 2010

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WASTEBOOK 2010

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Dear Taxpayer,

As the year 2010 ends, millions of Americans are still struggling to find work. Even those lucky enough to have jobs have had to tighten their belts and trim household budgets. For some this has meant cutting out luxuries; for others, having to make tough choices between necessities. For everyone it means taking stock of what they can really afford.

Is it so much to expect Congress do the same?

The need to cut back federal spending is obvious: there simply is not enough money to pay for everything the government is doing.

Excessive borrowing and spending has driven the national debt to a staggering \$13.8 trillion. Last year alone, the government spent well over \$1 trillion more than it collected in taxes. Every one of those borrowed dollars will need to be paid back with interest, and unless we can rein in spending, it will also mean higher taxes.

Americans eager to avoid this are asking the government to do more with less, just as they have been doing. The federal budget, however, remains bloated with spending on projects that would hardly merit tax dollars in flush times.

Consider that in 2010 the government spent nearly \$2 million to showcase neon signs no longer in use at Las Vegas Casinos. Or that the Government Printing Office commissioned a new comic book to unfold the history of printing for children – at a cost of \$30,000.

Examples like these are too numerous to count. Worse yet, they are costing us billions even as we borrow huge sums just to keep the government operating at a basic level.

If deficit spending was an economic cure-all, it seems that it would have done some good over the past decade. Since 2000, the government borrowed and spent eight trillion dollars and we still find ourselves in one of the worst economic periods of the past century.

Well-intentioned people across the political spectrum will argue about the best way to get us back on track. But we can all agree that cutting wasteful and low-priority spending from the budget is not only sensible, but essential.

As a nation, we have been through this before and shown that getting the budget under control is indeed possible. In 1946, following World War II, the government reduced spending by more than 40 percent to stave off growing deficits.¹

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Naysayers at the time warned that budget cuts would lead to the “Depression of 1946.” *Business Week* even went so far in September 1945 to make the doomsday prediction that GNP would drop 20 percent and that unemployment could climb to 14 percent if drastic cuts were enacted.² Not only did the cuts erase the deficit, however, they coincided with a period of unrivaled economic expansion.

As you look at these examples, ask yourself: at a time when we are borrowing over \$44,000 for every person in the country, are these items a priority and are they a federal responsibility? Many taxpayers will no doubt agree that the wasteful spending uncovered in this report is not what they had in mind when they filed their taxes in April. Few will find that they represent the best our government has to offer.

During these difficult times when families are struggling to make ends meet, the federal government can best assist hard working Americans by keeping their taxes low and not burdening them with higher debt. Congress can do so by not spending money we do not have on things we do not need, like the over \$11.5 billion of examples provided in this report.

Sincerely,



Tom Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator

I. Upkeep for Unused Monkey House and Other Buildings - (Department of Veterans Affairs) \$175 Million

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) spends \$175 million every year to maintain hundreds of buildings it does not use, including a pink, octagonal monkey house in Dayton, Ohio.³

Many of the buildings are in severe disrepair, but the VA does not have the funds to improve them.⁴ Complex federal laws make it difficult for the agency to sell the buildings. So instead they sit unused, except for the vermin, birds, and insects that use them for shelter.⁵



The VA disputes the \$175 million figure, saying it spent only \$34 million last year on unused buildings. Moreover, the agency says it has made progress in shedding properties it no longer needs, selling off 266 buildings in the last three years.⁶

Meanwhile, some veterans' advocates are calling on the VA to use the buildings to house homeless vets.⁷

2. Sprucing Up Apartments Before They Are Torn Down - (Shreveport, LA) \$1.5 Million

The city of Shreveport, Louisiana misspent \$1.5 million in stimulus funds on mold remediation for a housing complex it was considering for demolition, according to a federal audit.⁸

To obtain the stimulus money, the city's housing authority promised the federal government it would spend the money on improving a number of low-income homes it managed. Those projects included a mere \$100,000 for combating mold and mildew at an apartment complex named Wilkinson Terrace.

More than ten months after awarding the grant to Shreveport, officials from the Department of Housing and Urban Development noticed the city had failed to spend most of the money. Under the rules of the stimulus, the money was to have been spent within one year. The agency reminded Shreveport that the funds needed to be put to work, or they would be rescinded.

In the span of a few weeks, Shreveport officials cut contracts worth over \$1.5 million for mold remediation at Wilkinson Terrace – fifteen times what they told the feds they would spend, and much more than a site facing possible demolition likely deserved. As the HUD Inspector General noted in an audit of the troubled grant, “if the Authority’s ultimate plan was to demolish the Wilkinson Terrace site in the next few years, the prudence of its decision. . . should be further questioned.”

What's more, when the IG's investigators examined Wilkinson Terrace, it found the contractors had failed to do the work properly. “[T]he inspected units had what appeared to be pest excrement caked on surfaces that were to have been cleaned and disinfected,” the IG wrote.

The audit concluded that Shreveport should return over \$1.1 million in misspent federal funds. The city disputes the IG's findings.

3. Museum Where Neon Signs Go to Die... - (Las Vegas, NV) \$1.8 Million



Did you ever wonder where the flashy and colorful signs in Las Vegas go when they die? The city of Las Vegas has received a \$5.2 million federal grant to build the Neon Boneyard Park and Museum, including \$1.8 million in 2010.⁹ Over the last decade, Museum supporters have gathered and displayed over 150 old Las Vegas neon signs, such as those from the Golden Nugget and Silver Slipper casinos.¹⁰

In 2004, then-Secretary of Interior Gale Norton¹¹ approved the federal money for this graveyard of glitter.¹² In December 2010, the “Boneyard” plans to unveil its open-air museum with an adjacent park with benches, picnic tables, and a stage.¹³ Huge glittery letters from old signs spelling out the word “neon” in LED lighting will welcome visitors to the park.¹⁴ When asked, Bill Marion, Neon Museum president, glowed about the park, “Where else could you have a neon museum except in Las Vegas?”¹⁵

Museum supporters say the Museum is a popular place for film shoots, fashion shows, and weddings.¹⁶ With Nevada’s high unemployment rates, would it be more popular to figure out a better place in the state to spend the money?

4. “Free” Grateful Dead Archive - (Santa Cruz, CA) \$615,000

Grateful Dead chose a public institution to archive the band’s memorabilia “because the whole idea of it being public and free was important to them,” yet taxpayers are paying \$615,000 to make the band’s archives “free” and “public.”¹⁷ The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded the University of California at Santa Cruz the federal funds to digitize Grateful Dead photographs, tickets, backstage passes, flyers, shirts, and other memorabilia.¹⁸ IMLS notes “this



is one of the first efforts to preserve and share cultural and historical artifacts of the baby boom generation, a group that includes 76 million Americans.”¹⁹

Rolling Stone magazine listed the Grateful Dead in the top “100 Greatest Artists of All Time,”²⁰ and estimates place the net worth of two prominent band members, Jerry Garcia and Phil Lesh, at roughly \$40²¹ and \$35 million,²² respectively.

5. Agencies Pile Up Unnecessary Printing Costs - \$930 Million

Encouraging federal employees to hit “print” less could save taxpayers \$930 million.

A report finds that federal agencies – excluding the Department of Defense (DOD) – spend nearly \$1.3 billion a year on office printing.²³ Of these printing costs, the study identifies \$440.4 million a year – 34 percent – spent on unnecessary printing.²⁴ These figures do not include the funds agencies spend to publish various documents for public consumption, but rather the estimated annual printing expenditures based on the average federal civilian employee.

The DOD, alone, spends at least \$1.4 billion on printing, copying, and faxing each year.²⁵ Using analysis similar to that employed by the previously cited study, DOD spends about \$490 million annually in unnecessary printing.²⁶

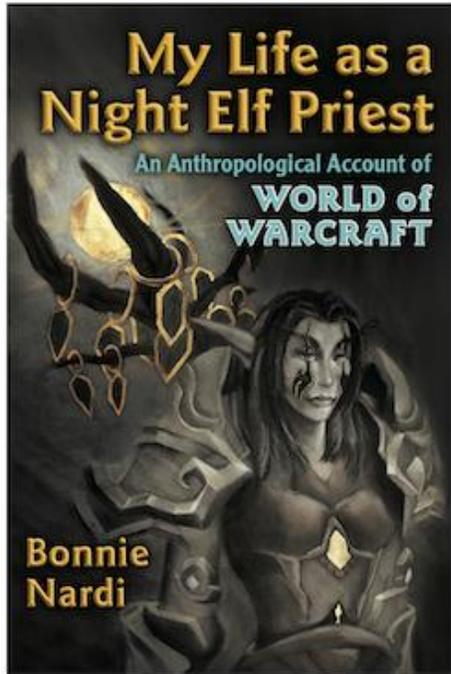
The studies noted few agencies had established or enforced printing guidelines detailing when it was appropriate and inappropriate for employees to print documents. Eighty-nine percent of federal employees reported their agencies do not have formal printing policies in place.²⁷



6. Studying World of Warcraft and Other Virtual Games - (Irvine, CA) \$2.9 Million

Most people have to work for a living; others get to play video games.

In 2008, Professor Bonnie Nardi of the University of California-Irvine received \$100,007 from the National Science Foundation to “analyze and understand the ways in which players of World of Warcraft, a popular multiplayer game, engage in creative collaboration.”²⁸ Dr. Nardi published her findings in a new book, *My Life as a Night Elf Priest*, released in May 2010.²⁹



Her work focused “on modding—the creation and distribution of player-created software modifications that extend the game—as an act of creative collaboration.”³⁰ Nardi spent “countless hours in Beijing cafes and other parts of China studying how Chinese players approach the game.”³¹ The research team observed players’ physical environment for playing the game: “Sometimes odd or humorous juxtapositions of the physical and virtual occurred as at one Internet café at the train station in Hangzhou, which offered foot massage and Internet access right next to each other.”³²

Describing her as “a hardcore WoW [World of Warcraft] fan,”³³ the book’s promotional materials say that Professor Nardi has compiled “more than three years of *participatory* research in Warcraft play.” (emphasis added)³⁴

Professor Nardi and her colleagues at UC Irvine have since received an additional \$3 million in NSF grant funding from 2008-2011 for additional research involving “decentralized virtual activity systems.”³⁵ The University’s press release explains how “emerging forms of communication, including multiplayer computer games and online virtual worlds such as ‘World of Warcraft’ and ‘Second Life’ can help organizations collaborate and compete more effectively in the global marketplace.”³⁶

An interviewer asked the author to differentiate between when she was “playing” and when she was “researching.” The author answered: “Except for when I am learning a difficult new raid encounter! Then I allocate 100 percent of my brain cells to preventing my character’s death.”³⁷

7. Dept. of Energy Still Fails to Turn Off the Lights - (Department of Energy) \$2.2 Million



The U.S. Department of Energy's electric bill is \$190 million a year and auditors say millions of dollars are wasted on inefficient lighting alone.³⁸ According to a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Inspector General (IG) report released in June, "the Department [of Energy] could save over \$2.2 million in electric utility operating costs annually, equating to the amount of electricity used to

power over 3,200 homes per year" by turning off the lights and using more efficient technology.³⁹

The U.S. government is the largest energy consumer in the country. The DOE is designated as the lead federal agency to coordinate energy efficiency efforts for all federal agencies. It is also the primary outlet for federal energy efficiency programs and enforcement for the private sector. The DOE, however, consumes more energy than all but one other federal civilian agency (the U.S. Postal Service).

As the DOE continues to police the energy usage of taxpayers, the light will hopefully come on about its own inefficiency.

8. Fraudulent Medical Testing by Criminal Gangs - (U.S. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services) \$35 Million

Medicare paid out over \$35 million to a vast network of 118 “phantom” medical clinics, allegedly established by members of a criminal gang to submit phony reimbursement claims.⁴⁰

The clinics never existed anywhere but in paperwork. Prosecutors say the gang used stolen identities for dozens of doctors and over 2,000 patients to file over \$100 million worth of phony claims via these “clinics.”⁴¹

Medicare honored over a third of the fake claims, making payments for several months before the ruse was discovered.⁴² Since making dozens of arrests in October, federal officials have scrambled to recover the funds, seizing a Maserati, a Jaguar, and property in Las Vegas and Palm Springs, Calif.⁴³

The ring was allegedly headed by an Armenian gangster in Los Angeles named Davit Mirzoyan. The gang was also accused of running schemes involving stolen credit cards, untaxed cigarettes and counterfeit Viagra.⁴⁴

According to the prosecutors, one of the alleged gangsters pulled a knife on an associate and “threatened to disembowel the individual” if he did not repay a debt he owed.⁴⁵

It is estimated that the U.S. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) loses an estimated \$60 billion in taxpayer funds every year to waste, fraud, and abuse.⁴⁶

When agents from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General examined more than 900 medical suppliers in California in 2007, they found that *more than one in 10 of the companies were a fake* – with no open, active physical location.⁴⁷ When the Inspector General and “federal prosecutors set up a fraud-fighting ‘Strike Force’ in South Florida, Medicare bills for wheelchairs and other medical supplies fell by 63 percent, or \$1.7 billion, compared to the prior year.”⁴⁸

9) Poems in Zoos - (AR, IL, LA, WI, & FL) \$997,766

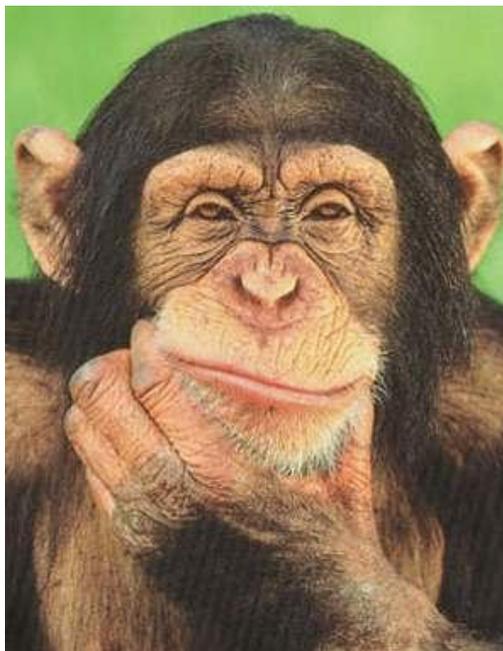
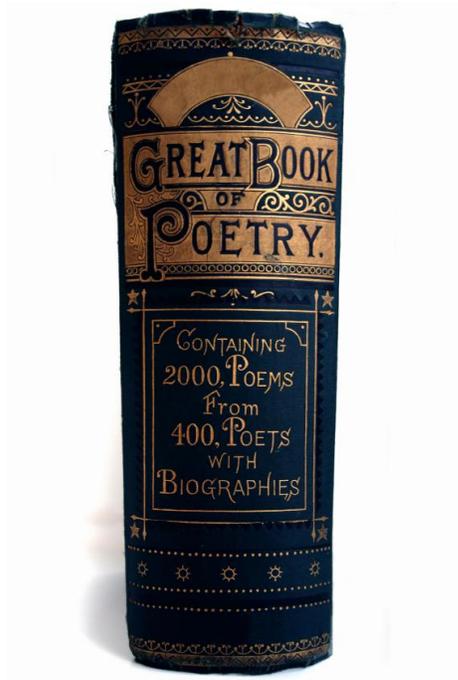
Our nation currently faces many challenges; a shortage of poetry in our nation's zoos, however, is rarely cited as one of them. It is not widely viewed as an example of our nation's crumbling infrastructure or a contributor to our national economic crisis. Nor is it a dangerous disease in need of curing.

Nevertheless, a federal grant program has directed a million dollars from the public coffers to infuse zoos around the United States with snippets of poetry.⁴⁹

Hence, the Little Rock (Ark.) Zoo now touts a sign sharing a bit of wisdom from Hans Christian Andersen: "Just living is not enough, said the butterfly. One must have sunshine, freedom and a little flower."⁵⁰ Zoos in Chicago, New Orleans, Milwaukee, and Jacksonville, Florida, will also sport bits of poetry, thanks to the U.S. taxpayer.⁵¹

Poets House, the New York-based organization administering the multi-year program, says its goal is to "deepen public awareness of environmental issues through poetry."⁵²

For projects like these, taxpayers may prefer to hear from Edgar Allen Poe's raven: "Nevermore."



10. Shooting Range Armed with Taxpayer Dollars - (Las Vegas, NV) \$15.68 Million

Located less than 25 miles north of the Las Vegas airport, the Clark County Shooting Park is not your normal gun range. The 2,900-acre facility has an archery range,⁵³ a building with a 30-seat classroom,⁵⁴ a rifle and pistol range, and 24 trap and skeet fields.⁵⁵ In the future, the range will have another 700 developed acres that will also include an area for horseback-mounted shooting.⁵⁶



The gun range was built because of federal legislation that procured the land and allocated more than \$64 million in Bureau of Land Management (BLM) funds to plan and build the gun range,⁵⁷ including \$15.6 million this year alone. The shooting park is being billed as a huge tourist attraction.⁵⁸

The park, however, has been losing money. This year, the park had \$430,000 in revenues, but cost \$1.3 million to operate.⁵⁹

In response, Clark County sent a million dollars of local funds to make up the difference. The county funds directed to the shooting range came from an account that paid for maintenance of local public pools. The result was at least one pool had to close its doors during the summer.⁶⁰

“We use the park fund to fund the shooting park to the tune of a million, a million-and-a-half dollars a year. At the same time, it's 102, 104 degrees and there's a lock on the gate to the pool,” said the official.

11. Bogus Tax Refunds for Prisoners - \$112 million

The Internal Revenue Service paid out \$112 million in undeserved tax refunds to prisoners who filed fraudulent returns, according to the Treasury Department's Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA).⁶¹

According to TIGTA, The IRS fails to screen most tax returns filed by prisoners – even when it knows it has no wage information for them. The inspector general's office first highlighted this lack of oversight in 2005, but the problem has persisted.⁶²

“There is a major problem with returns being filed fraudulently by people who are incarcerated,” TIGTA Inspector General J. Russell George told the Washington Post in December. “What makes this even more problematic is that we identified this as a problem more than five years ago. The problem not only persists, it's gotten even worse.”⁶³

12. Comic Superhero Mouse Teaches History of Printing - (Government Printing Office) \$31,350

The Government Printing Office (GPO) is using a “video game space mouse” (and nearly \$60,000 in taxpayer funds⁶⁴) to teach children the history of printing.⁶⁵

In September, the GPO released its first-ever comic book, “Squeaks Discovers Type,” in which Squeak the Space Mouse explores the history of the printed word, from cuneiform to the Internet age,⁶⁶ and explains “why printing is important.”⁶⁷

The opening page features a school boy grumbling about the report he was assigned on the invention of printing, leading the superhero rodent to exclaim, “He thinks printing is boring! This is a job for Squeaks!”⁶⁸

Anticipating high demand, the office printed 5,500 copies of the title.⁶⁹

Even if the title sells out, it looks to be a money-loser: GPO sells the book for \$5 a copy,⁷⁰ recording an estimated \$5.70 loss for every book sold. The GPO calls that loss a “marketing expense,” part of its effort to educate the public on its mission.

Taxpayers - who footed the bill for the project - might have another name for it.



13. Big Subsidies, Little Airports - (Atlanta, GA) \$2.4 Million



The cities of Macon and Athens, Georgia are both less than a 90-minute drive from Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International airport.⁷¹ Despite this, the U.S. Department of Transportation subsidized 26 flights per week to and from each city at a clip of \$464 per passenger for Macon and \$135 for

Athens.⁷² Passengers pay \$39 each for a seat on the 50 minute flight.⁷³ The payment are permitted under the federal government's Essential Air Service (EAS) program, which allows the Department of Transportation to subsidize otherwise unprofitable flights by carriers to and from rural communities far removed from any "hub" airports.⁷⁴ The local newspaper reports that the Macon averaged 10 passengers a day,⁷⁵ while Athens averaged 12 EAS subsidized flights.⁷⁶ By law, the Department of Transportation subsidies are capped at \$200 for flights to airports less than 210 miles from a large or medium hub, which Atlanta is. The two routes also appear headed in different directions – while ridership to Athens route saw an increase in passengers in the past year, Macon experienced an 85percent decline in ridership.⁷⁷

Robert Reichert, Mayor of Macon, in arguing for continued service, said simply that "people like to be able to fly into their hometown."⁷⁸ Aviation consultant Mike Boyd sees it very differently, "[f]rom Macon, you have service. It's called Hartsfield-Jackson."⁷⁹ Georgia Skies, the carrier that has held the contract for the past two years, had a contract that expired on September 30, 2010. The Department of Transportation rejected all four bids for a new two-year contract as too costly, and there will be a second round of bidding in November.⁸⁰

14. European Junket - (Vienna, Austria) \$465,000

In July, nearly half a million dollars in taxpayer money⁸¹ went to the XVIII International AIDS Conference in Vienna, where wine tasting and castle tours were among the events planned for the conference participants.⁸² Speaking at the conference, former U.S. President Bill Clinton joined the chorus of those criticizing the cost to human lives of wasting AIDS funds on junkets and



conferences. “In too many countries, too much money goes to pay for too many people to go to too many meetings, get on too many airplanes,” Clinton said. “Keep in mind that every dollar we waste today puts a life at risk.”⁸³

While the International AIDS Conference can provide a unique forum for networking, reviewing scientific developments, and sharing information for many stakeholders, modern technology allows us to accomplish these goals for relatively little cost.

There are, however, no lifesaving alternatives to medicine. The money spent on the conference could have paid for doctors, nurses, prevention services, and treatment for those afflicted by the virus.

15. “Critter Crossing” - (Monkton, VT) \$150,000



The Monkton, Vermont Conservation Commission received \$150,000 in federal grant money⁸⁴ to build a “critter crossing,”⁸⁵ to save the lives of thousands of migrating salamanders and other amphibians that would otherwise be slaughtered by vehicle traffic on a major roadway.⁸⁶

Thousands of blue-and yellow-spotted salamanders,⁸⁷ frogs, and other amphibians spend the winter months in the rocky uplands near Monkton, but must return to low-lying wetlands in order to reproduce.⁸⁸ To travel between these two areas, the salamanders must cross the heavily-traveled Monkton-Vergennes Road.⁸⁹

During past migrations, conservationists estimated up to a thousand animals could be killed in a single night.⁹⁰ Some evenings, volunteers have assembled to

gather the animals in buckets and carry them across the road in “bucket brigades” - but those efforts create their own safety concerns.⁹¹

The crossings will be low culverts running beneath Monkton-Vergennes Road. Low retaining walls alongside the highway would corral migrating amphibians to the passages, which will have dirt floors and rocks large enough to hide them from predators.⁹² (“We don’t want to build a buffet for raccoons,” noted a herpetologist involved in the project.⁹³)

Some have celebrated the project. The group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals recognized the town’s efforts with a “Compassionate Action Award.”⁹⁴ Others remain skeptical. “I certainly respect all species. However, I don’t see the need to pay \$150,000 for a salamander crossing,” read one email reportedly sent to the *Burlington [Vermont] Free Press* newspaper. “I realize there are a lot of other stupid things my tax dollars go toward, but this one is near the top of the list.”⁹⁵

16. Internet Dating Study - (Stanford, CA) \$239,100



The National Science Foundation directed nearly a quarter million dollars to a Stanford University professor’s study of how Americans use the Internet to find love.⁹⁶ The project surveys over 4,000 Americans on how they met their partners and how long those relationships lasted.⁹⁷

Unfortunately for taxpayers, it’s not clear what public policy value, if any, the project could have. A draft report makes no mention of public policy or changes in laws or regulations that would be informed by the work.⁹⁸

That said, the research may highlight important developments in American society. For instance, the draft report notes that the Internet is especially good for flirting, and the Internet is safer and more discreet for finding same-sex partners.⁹⁹

17. City Builds Streetcar System on Same Route as Subway System - (Atlanta, GA) \$47.6 Million

The City of Atlanta recently received \$47.6 million in stimulus funding to construct a \$72 million, 2.62-mile streetcar project in downtown Atlanta. The new street car will take passengers from Centennial Olympic Park to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center.¹⁰⁰ Luckily, if passengers do not want to ride on the



An artist's rendering of the proposed Atlanta streetcar

streetcar, they can also take the existing Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), which covers the same area as the streetcar.¹⁰¹

Similar projects haven't fared that well. A tourist trolley and MARTA bus-line covering the same route as the planned streetcars previously failed due to lack of use.¹⁰² Of course, all of these public transportation options ignore the fact the route is completely walkable. According to the City of Atlanta's Infrastructure

Report, however, Atlanta currently has a backlog of \$79.4 million in needed sidewalk repairs.¹⁰³

MARTA announced this past summer that it will be cutting bus routes and train frequency, increasing train wait times up to five minutes.¹⁰⁴ Even with proposed fixes, MARTA will still be operating at a deficit of \$69 million for the year, just \$3 million shy of the total cost of the streetcar project. MARTA will help run the streetcars.

Support for the streetcar system is mixed, with many Atlantans complaining that the addition of the streetcars will be costly, yet do nothing to ease Atlanta's growing traffic problem. In fact, of 40 mass transit projects rated by regional planners, the streetcar system ranked last in half the categories used to measure impact. One Atlantan, who works by a designated stop for the streetcar, stated the project was "foolishness" because "[i]t's not going to spur development, it's not going to spur anything...when there's this many people out of work, and that's how they're going to use our dollars [by funding the streetcars]?" Another Atlantan believed the streetcar was too small of a solution stating "[i]n terms of shuttling people from one neighborhood to another, in terms of where the jobs are in the big picture, I don't think that'll get us where we need to get to while MARTA's going broke." Experts acknowledge that the streetcar is a gamble and there is no way of knowing what ridership will be.¹⁰⁵

18. Closed Park Receives “Green Improvement” Funds for Unused Building - (Elverta, CA) \$440,000



A ranch house in a closed park that has been unused¹⁰⁶ for a decade has received \$440,000¹⁰⁷ for green energy upgrades.¹⁰⁸

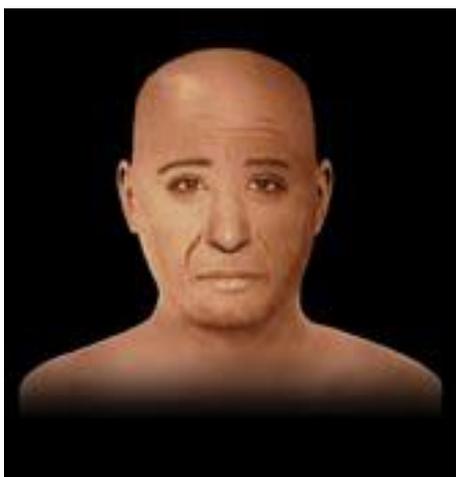
The 345-acre Gibson Ranch Park, where the ranch house is located, was partially closed due to budget and staff cuts¹⁰⁹ in 2009 and is currently closed to the public while county officials develop a long-term plan to keep the park open.¹¹⁰

The new funds are from a federal Energy Efficiency Block Grant program and will pay for new windows, HVAC system, lighting and roofing.¹¹¹

Some have called the project a misuse of money, including Lisa Morris of the neighboring Rio Linda and Elverta Recreation and Park District.¹¹² Another local horse owner who uses the park stables called the money “squandered.”¹¹³

The closure of the park and bidding process for new management has been contentious, and has brought increased scrutiny on the county parks’ use of funds for park maintenance.¹¹⁴

19. Money for a Mummy- (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives) \$20,588



The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) took the term “cold case” to a new level in 2010. The agency spent over \$20,000 in taxpayer money¹¹⁵ “to unravel the anonymity of a 2,500-year-old mummy.”¹¹⁶ Two ATF agents spent months investigating the physical and facial features of the mummy, named Ka-i-nefer.

The investigators were able to determine the mummy’s approximate age (between 45 and 55), height (5 feet 5 inches), and shoe size (7).

Commenting about the project, ATF’s deputy director said, that he was proud that ATF investigators skills were used to help “unravel the anonymity of a 2,500-year-old mummy.”¹¹⁷

20. Census Super Bowl Commercial Too Ironic to be Understood -
(U.S. Census Bureau) \$2.5 Million



U.S. taxpayers watched their money vanish quicker at the Super Bowl than those who bet on Peyton Manning and the Indianapolis Colts to win the game. The U.S. Census Bureau lost a \$2.5 million bet when its “Snapshot of America” ad tanked when it ran during a commercial break in the third quarter. Media critics agreed the multi-million dollar advertisement ranked as one of the worst during the Super Bowl. For example, the Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management gave the taxpayer-funded commercial an “F” grade, the only Superbowl commercial to receive such a low score.¹¹⁸ Additionally, both USA Today¹¹⁹ and Entertainment Weekly placed the Census advertisement at the bottom of their lists. Entertainment Weekly provided this review of the unusual commercial: “How weird to hire all those funny character actors, then accidentally air an unfinished version of a commercial that left us all wondering what the frak we just watched!”¹²⁰ In an attempt to justify the cost, Census officials defended the use of federal funds by claiming “any publicity about the 2010 Census—good or bad—should help save taxpayer money in the long run. A higher census response rate cuts the need for temporary workers to conduct expensive follow up interviews.”¹²¹ Unfortunately, according to the Bureau, participation in the 2010 Census was no higher than a decade ago.¹²² Much like the media critics, it was clear that the American taxpayer did not get the joke, either.

The \$2.5 million spent on the Super Bowl ad was only a small fraction of the \$133 million the Census Bureau spent on its entire advertising campaign.¹²³ In total, the Census produced commercials in 28 languages designed to reach each American

42 times by running ads during popular primetime shows and the 2010 Winter Olympics. The Census Bureau also spent these funds on a 13 vehicle national road tour of Census vehicles that traveled to parades and NASCAR races. Again, none of these strategies appears to have produced an increase in census returns.



2010 Census Road Tour Vehicle at the Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration in Grand Prairie, Texas.

21. Studying Male Prostitutes in Vietnam - (San Juan, Puerto Rico) \$442,340

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) spent nearly \$442,340 million to study the number of male prostitutes in Vietnam and their social setting.¹²⁴ According to the project's abstract, the University of Puerto Rico examined "the impact of male sex work on the growing HIV epidemics in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam." The NIH summary pointed to "an expansion of markets for male sex work and international male sex tourism."¹²⁵

Since, 2008, the project has received about \$500,000 annually.¹²⁶



22. Shrek-Themed Onion Promotion Campaign - (GA) \$90,000

This year, taxpayers forked over \$60,000 for the “first-of-its kind” promotion of the Vidalia onion in conjunction with the movie, “Shrek Forever After.”¹²⁷ The promotion “also features Shrek-tacular, kid-friendly Vidalia recipes.”¹²⁸ The idea for the marketing campaign came from a memorable line in an early Shrek film. According to the promotion campaign summary, “Shrek set up this ‘Ogres & Onions’ concept in a conversation with Donkey in the first Shrek film when they talk about ogres and onions having layers in common.”¹²⁹

Other Vidalia-related promotions also received federal funds. The Vidalia Onion Museum and website received \$30,000.¹³⁰ In total, \$20,000 will go toward the Vidalia Onion Museum, which will “illuminate the sweet onion’s economic, cultural, and culinary significance by walking guests through various exhibits.”¹³¹ The other \$10,000 will pay for the website, which will allow “visitors to easily share their love and dedication to the Vidalia Onion Brand.”¹³²

Some wasteful spending literally makes you cry.

23. Zoo Receives Federal Funding to Develop Online Video Game ‘Wolfquest’ - (Apple Valley, MN) \$609,160



The National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded over \$600,000 to the Minnesota Zoo to create a wolf “avatar” video game called “WolfQuest.”¹³³

“You have to learn how to hunt, survive, defend your territory and ultimately find a mate and establish your own pack,” said project director Grant Spickelmier, Assistant Education Director at Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley.¹³⁴

The explicit purpose of the game is for participants to “emerge from the learning experience with a clear understanding of wolf conservation issues in the real world.”¹³⁵ Steve Feldman, spokesman for the American Zoo Association, says the “level of realism, and also the goal, which is to effect real conservation behavior change, is what make this game unique.”¹³⁶

An NSF press release similarly indicates, “A larger goal of the game is to see if it can encourage young people to get out into the natural world.”¹³⁷ In the meantime, however, the game has been downloaded over 200,000 times and boasts a community forum with over 15,000 members.¹³⁸

24. Demolishing Abandoned Facilities at Non-Existent Lake - (Lake Optima, Hooker, OK) \$172, 110



Before



After

When it was built by the Corps of Engineers, Optima Lake was heralded as a future oasis for residents of the Oklahoma Panhandle. Despite the construction of a large dam and related facilities, no lake ever formed. That has not stopped the Army Corps of Engineers, however, from announcing over \$172,000 worth of property improvements for the “lake.”

In the 1960s, Optima Lake was built to improve the water supply of the Panhandle in Oklahoma and to provide flood protection. Despite the effort, it was never filled with water, making it all but useless to potential visitors and leading the federal government to abandon the project years ago. It remains today as a remote site visited by few and strewn with abandoned structures.

In early 2009, the Corps of Engineers set aside over a million dollars from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to replace an existing guardrail at Optima Lake, arguing the funds were needed to bring its lightly used road up to full federal highway standards.¹³⁹ The Corps of Engineers later halted the guardrail project¹⁴⁰ after taxpayers pointed out that stimulus money could be better spent somewhere other than at an abandoned, non-existent lake.

This past September, the Corps announced renewed plans for the lake, designating over \$152,000 in stimulus funds to demolish “148 campsites, 11 restrooms, 2 trailer dump stations, 1 chimney and the Overlook Building” at Lake Optima.¹⁴¹ The Corps also spent another \$19,500 on speed humps, signage, and locked gates to close the road to the lake.¹⁴²

25. Federal Database to Plan Your Next “Haycation” - (Alesia, OR) \$28,934

The Department of Agriculture gave nearly \$30,000 to a group of farmers looking to create a tourist-friendly database of farms¹⁴³ that host guests for overnight “haycations.”

Numerous websites already exist to educate would-be “agritourists” of their “farm stay” options, including websites for the farms themselves. A simple Google search for the term “[farm stay](#)” returns more than 300,000 hits.

The federally funded website, www.farmstayus.com, will help “agritourists” looking to rough it on a farm or ranch instead of taking the typical vacation. The website warns, however, that such getaways are not without risk: “A word of caution, these are working farms and ranches, not amusement parks or petting zoos, and always have an element of danger.”¹⁴⁴

26. Another Bridge to Nowhere - (Hillsborough, NH) \$150,045

Federal stimulus funds totaling \$150,045 were paid to preserve and resurface an 1860 New Hampshire bridge that does not connect to any roads and ends in an eight-foot drop.¹⁴⁵ The purpose of the project, which only generated 1.90 jobs, is to “better accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.”¹⁴⁶

However, some have questioned whether bicyclists will even use the bridge because it fails to connect to a street. “That bridge is not stimulating anybody. Is anybody on it? Is anybody fishing? Is anybody photographing it? No,” said a frustrated resident of a nearby town.¹⁴⁷

Some local residents wanted the money to go to more important transportation priorities. “I think that money could have been used to fix roads that people actually drive on instead of using our tax dollars to fix something no one actually uses,” stated another local resident.¹⁴⁸



27. Party Time at the FAA - (Atlanta, GA) \$5 Million

“It beats being at work!” glowed one Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) manager at a taxpayer-funded conference last December.¹⁴⁹ The FAA spent \$5 million to send 3,600 employees to a “conference” in Atlanta, although “whistleblowers and critics say [the conference] was little more than an excuse to throw a three-week-long Christmas party.”¹⁵⁰ An undercover investigation by *ABC World News* revealed the nightly parties got a bit on the wild side. “Anytime you get a bunch of FAA guys together, it is nothing but a party,” bragged one FAA employee.¹⁵¹ According to the report, “[a]nother conference attendee asked a female *ABC News* undercover reporter if she was a ‘hooker’ because ‘I was ready to reach for my wallet.’”¹⁵²



According to FAA officials, the purpose of the December meetings was actually to train managers on the new labor contract for air traffic controllers that went into effect two months earlier on October 1. One whistleblower suggested that instead of a three-week conference, “a PowerPoint or even a videoconference would suffice.”¹⁵³ FAA officials strongly disagreed, insisting that the meeting needed to be “face-to-face.”¹⁵⁴

Steve Lewis, an FAA manager from Phoenix, noted that meetings followed by “buffet cocktail parties” are important to promote “a more harmonious workplace.”¹⁵⁵

28. Budget Oversight Training for Legislators in Eastern Europe? - (NY) \$2.6 Million

Over \$2.6 million of taxpayer money will go to “parliamentary strengthening” in Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁶ The Research Foundation of State University of New York (SUNY/CID) will use the federal funds to address “policy development, legislation formulation and oversight functions.”¹⁵⁷ Some of the skills they would like to enhance are budget oversight initiatives and legislative drafting skills of legislators.¹⁵⁸ With a \$13.8 trillion dollar debt, if the U.S. State Department wants to improve the budgetary oversight functions of a legislature it should look first here at home.



**29. Bus Statue in America's Biggest Little City - (Reno, NV)
\$224,000**



A 40-foot long, 6.5 ton statue of a bus titled, “Jackson” on a pole, designed by Philadelphia artist Donald Lipski, will now greet passengers entering Reno’s new Regional Transit Center.

According to the Washoe County Regional Transit Commission, public artwork like the bus that hangs 28 feet in the air and costs \$224,000¹⁵⁹ is important because “integrating

art helps build a sense of pride, ownership, and identity with the surrounding community.”¹⁶⁰

**30. Unneeded Courthouse Space Costing Taxpayers Millions -
\$51 Million**

Unneeded space in federal courthouses costs the taxpayer \$51 million annually, according to the Government Accountability Office (GAO).¹⁶¹

GAO examined 33 federal courthouse projects completed since 2000. It found millions of square feet of unnecessary space – nine courthouses’ worth – which Congress never approved.¹⁶²

Every unneeded square foot of building space held by the federal government requires annual funding for operations and maintenance. This includes the cost of cleaning, heating, and lighting. According to the GAO, “[t]he estimated cost to construct this extra space, when adjusted to 2010 dollars, is \$835 million, and the annual cost to rent, operate and maintain it is \$51 million.”¹⁶³

The last thing the federal government needs right now is additional space in super-sized courthouses. According to the Office of Management and Budget, there are currently 46,745 under-utilized government properties and 18,849 properties that are not being utilized at all. That is a total of 65,594 properties with an estimated value of \$83 billion that could be sold, better managed, or demolished.¹⁶⁴

**31. Hollywood Stars Come Out for a Film Extravaganza -
(Woodstock, NY) \$10,000**

For years the Woodstock Film Festival has been a favorite stomping ground for Hollywood's brightest stars, and 2010 was no exception. This year, taxpayer funds totaling \$10,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts helped sponsor the 11th Annual Woodstock Film Festival (WFF),¹⁶⁵ which occurred from September 29 to October 3.¹⁶⁶ The festival included some adult-only fare, such as "Bill Plympton and Signe Baumane's BATTLE OF THE SEXES," billed as "a very sexy, very funny, ABOVE 18 ONLY program," which involved "showing the funniest, sexiest, animated cartoons in a 5-round match to discover which gender makes the hottest cartoons!"¹⁶⁷



According to the WFF website, the five-day event includes a "variety of films, first-class concerts, workshops, celebrity-led panels, an awards ceremony, and fantastic parties."¹⁶⁸ Hollywood stars, like Kevin Bacon, Steve Buscemi, Tim Robbins, and Uma Thurman regularly attend the festival and its parties.¹⁶⁹ Additionally, "festival mainstays" consist of record label executives, models, entertainment lawyers, producers, and critics.¹⁷⁰

32. Walk in the Stimulus Dog Park - (Washington, D.C.) \$90,825

The National Park Service (NPS) spent \$90,825 in stimulus funds to upgrade Marion Park, a popular dog destination on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The money went to repainting the existing fence, sidewalk repair, and purchasing new benches and trash cans for the park.¹⁷¹

According to NPS, this canine-friendly park is "the perfect place to take the kids for a stroll to the playground, or enjoy a snack in the grass under any of many ornamental trees."¹⁷² Doggeek.com considers Marion Park a dog park and notes that it also offers poop bags and water for canines.¹⁷³

**33. "Excess" Stimulus Funds Buy Steel Tube Sculpture - (Eugene,
OR) \$78,979**

When a bridge project proved to be cheaper than expected, the city of Eugene, Oregon was faced with a question: would it have to give back nearly \$100,000 in "excess" federal stimulus funds it received to build the span?

Instead, the city opted to tack on a last-minute public art installation to the bridge project. Roughly \$80,000 in “excess” taxpayer funds later, the stimulus-funded bridge now boasts a series of long tubes that hold netting and jut from the ground.

If you’re wondering what it is, you’re not alone. “That’s part of the attraction — what the hell is that thing?” remarked a member of Eugene’s public art committee.¹⁷⁴

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the agency responsible for the “excess” funds, interprets the project and believes in its merit. “Specifically, the sculpture represents the tradition of Native American net and weir fishing in the northwest region,” states the FHWA.¹⁷⁵



Lee Imonen’s sculpture frames the Delta Pods Bridge.

34. Teaching South African Men How to Wash Their Genitalia - (Los Angeles, CA) \$823,200

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) secured a grant for \$800,000 in stimulus funds to study the effects of a genital-washing program in Orange Farm, South Africa.¹⁷⁶ Investigators will attempt to teach “uncircumcised African men how to wash their genitals after having sex,” and hope doing so will prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.¹⁷⁷ According to the grant abstract, the NIH “will study the feasibility of improving male genital hygiene as a possible way for men to protect themselves from HIV.”¹⁷⁸ Researchers are most interested in identifying the effects of washing immediately after sex, but also “at least 12 hours after.”¹⁷⁹ If the research produces positive results taxpayers might see more of their money going to a similar study. The grant states, “[i]f we find that men are able to practice consistent washing practices after sex, we will plan to test whether this might protect men from becoming HIV infected in a later study.”¹⁸⁰

**35. Marketing Strategy for Idaho's Wine Industry - (Caldwell, ID)
\$100,000**

Some may not know much about Idaho's fledgling wine industry. But thanks to taxpayer-financed "marketing strategy,"¹⁸¹ we will all be paying to learn much more.

The \$100,000 grant will help boost the growth and recognition of Idaho's wine industry.¹⁸² "It'll give us the opportunity to make some headway in putting ourselves on the map," says the head of the Idaho Grape Growers and Wine Producers Commission.¹⁸³ The money comes from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.¹⁸⁴

**36. Gold-Plated Potties in the Woods - (Denali National Park, AK)
\$1.49 Million**

The Denali National Park in Alaska recently built new restrooms at the Teklanika campground to "replace chemical toilets with a sweet smelling toilet facility" at a cost of nearly \$1.5 million to taxpayers.¹⁸⁵ The park will be spending more than \$41,000 to replace each of the 36 toilets.



Even worse, following completion of these expensive toilets, it was determined that the contractor had failed to ensure that all of them were compliant with the American for Disabilities Act (ADA). While the resulting additional costs are supposed to be covered by the contractor, it is unbelievable that a project that expended so much money couldn't be completed correctly.¹⁸⁶

37. Artist Awarded Over a Quarter of a Million Dollars of Federal Funds to Design a Sculpture for Federal Courthouse - (Billings, MT) \$260,000

Federal stimulus dollars in the amount of \$260,112 were recently awarded to New York artist Jason Middlebrook to construct a public sculpture outside a yet-to-be-built federal courthouse in Billings, Montana.¹⁸⁷ While local Montana artists applied for the project, the Art in Architecture selection panel chose Middlebrook,

who will need to travel to Billings to meet locals and learn about the area before designing the sculpture for the courthouse. One member of the selection panel, the executive director of the Yellowstone Art Museum in Billings, described Middlebrook's works, stating "[i]t really makes you feel like you're in an otherworldly environment." He also explained that "any dollar put toward making something beautiful is a dollar well spent...[i]t doesn't translate into dollars and cents. Art has its own value quite apart from economics." The panel member also noted the importance of public art because it reaches individuals who may never visit a museum.¹⁸⁸

38. Renovation Questioned by Congress - (Roanoke, VA) \$51 Million

The General Services Administration (GSA) has committed to a three-year, \$61 million¹⁸⁹ building renovation project, although its value has been questioned by a bipartisan group of lawmakers.¹⁹⁰

The GSA's planned makeover for the Poff Federal Building in Roanoke, Va., is intended to boost the structure's energy efficiency.¹⁹¹ The plan calls for replacing the structure's roof and glass walls, installing new heating and cooling systems, installing solar panels, and refurbishing the restrooms.¹⁹²

However, GSA adopted the plan without conducting a cost-benefit analysis, outraging Republican congressman Bob Goodlatte, one of the lawmakers opposing the project.¹⁹³ GSA conducted an after-the-fact analysis, which found the project would save money in the long term. "I fear a whitewashing of the facts," Goodlatte said. He called the project a "boondoggle."¹⁹⁴

Virginia Democratic Sens. Mark Warner and Jim Webb have called the project unwise, mainly because it will disperse to multiple locations 400 employees of the Department of Veterans' Affairs who are already struggling with a significant backlog of work from an influx of returning veterans. Moving the VA employees adds more than \$10 million to the project's cost, a government official said in November.¹⁹⁵

The three lawmakers have called on GSA to reconsider the project, and a veterans' group has sued to halt progress until veterans could be assured the move would not affect the VA's ability to provide services.¹⁹⁶

39. Duplicative Shuttle Services For Federal Employees - (Washington, D.C. Area) \$4.2 Million

Government agencies spend millions of dollars every year shuttling Washington-area federal employees on near-empty buses running along overlapping routes. A study by the General Services Administration (GSA) determined 85 different shuttle bus routes operate in the Washington, D.C. area, with a cost exceeding \$18.5 million.¹⁹⁷ According to the *Federal Times*, “[m]any of the bus routes overlap, yet buses will run mostly empty rather than pick up employees from neighboring agencies because there is little if any coordination between agencies.”¹⁹⁸ Specifically, the report identified 45 of 85 shuttle routes that could be either eliminated or consolidated into existing routes, which would save taxpayers at least \$4.24 million.¹⁹⁹ Agencies seem to be divided, with “some opposed to giving up their shuttle services and others open to the idea as a way to save resources.”²⁰⁰ Some agencies have expressed “security concerns about having employees from multiple agencies riding on the same bus and making stops at multiple locations.”²⁰¹ A former federal employee commented that the system lacked oversight, and as a result, largely empty shuttles were allowed to continue running.²⁰²



40. Transportation Dollars Excavate Ship from War of 1812 - (Upper Marlboro, MD) \$385,000

As the nation approaches the 200 year commemoration of the War of 1812, archaeologists in Maryland are working to excavate a sunken ship that may date

back to the war. Using nearly \$400,000 from the U.S. Department of Transportation,²⁰³ the researchers believe the ship may be the remains of the U.S.S. Scorpion, which was tasked with defending Washington, D.C., but was sunk by the British. According to the *Washington Post*, “[t]he excavation is part of Maryland's effort to create a tourism cash cow from the bicentennial of a war whose biggest claim to fame is inspiring ‘The Star-Spangled Banner.’”²⁰⁴ The entire project may consume as much as \$4 million total, but all of the funding has not yet been arranged.²⁰⁵ Questions have been raised, however, about why the state’s transportation funding was used for this purpose even as Maryland has over 250 deficient bridges.²⁰⁶

41. Carrousel Museum Takes Taxpayers for a Spin - (North Tonawanda, NY) \$265,000

The National Endowment for the Humanities gave over a quarter-million dollars in taxpayer money to a carousel museum in upstate New York to pay for architectural improvements.²⁰⁷

The Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum makes its home in the building, which housed the Herschell Carrousel Factory until the 1950s.²⁰⁸ The museum claims to host 15,000 visitors a year.²⁰⁹

The grant will pay to “stabilize and support the carving shop’s failing wood tresses and roof trusses and replace the aging sprinkler system.”²¹⁰

For those passing through or living in North Tonawanda, New York, the museum offers a chance to see demonstrations of carving and restoration of wooden horses, band organ roll production, and antique carousel operation.²¹¹

The museum also hosts several carousel-related events throughout the year, like “Santa on the Carousel” in December.²¹²



42. The Cost of Wild Horses - (Bureau of Land Management) \$64 Million

Congress has spent more than \$668 million maintaining a “wild horse and burro” population on federal and private land.²¹³ This year, spending for the program increased by 58 percent to \$64 million.²¹⁴

Because Congress has protected these “wild horses,” the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has been unable to maintain the appropriate levels of horses on federal lands, causing private and public damage and dramatically increasing federal costs of the program.

Around 32,000 horses are in private holding facilities and another 3,600 are on U.S. Forest Service lands.²¹⁵ In fact, 70 percent of FY 2009 appropriations went to paying ranchers to keep excess horses on their private properties²¹⁶ at an average of \$1.27 per horse per day (or \$460 per horse per year).²¹⁷

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), more than 64 percent of these horses are stored on private lands in Oklahoma.²¹⁸

43. Hawaiian Cook Book - (HI) \$30,501²¹⁹

Exotic fruits and vegetables, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and taxpayer money: the ingredients for a federally funded cook book. If only Washington politicians could find the recipe to balance the budget and stop wasteful spending.

Thanks to a USDA grant, a Hawaiian agency will create a cookbook that uses Hawaiian specialty crops as ingredients. The cookbook will feature recipes that “create flavor and sweet sensation.” The project staff expects to print 6,000 books to motivate readers who are concerned with limiting their use of sugar to purchase more of Hawaii’s specialty crop produce.²²⁰ In total, the state of Hawaii was awarded \$46,808 through the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004, which provides assistance for specialty crops through 2012.²²¹ Hawaii plans to use these funds for other important activities such as increasing awareness and promoting consumption of Hawaiian coffee, promotion of Hawaiian-grown flowers, and educational materials highlighting Hawaii’s specialty crops.

In total, USDA awarded \$55 million through 54 grants this year to fund 827 projects.²²²

44. Bus Company Gets Competitive Edge with New “Rocket Riders” - (Minneapolis, MN) \$2.85 Million

In the case of two bus companies providing shuttle service between Duluth and Minneapolis, one received nearly three million dollars to purchase new busses, the other did not.²²³ Jefferson Lines, a nationwide carrier, received a \$2.85 million stimulus sub-award²²⁴ from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, which it used to purchase several new “Rocket Rider” luxury busses seen below,²²⁵



equipped with “Free Wi-Fi, satellite radio, movies, luxury seating and extra legroom”²²⁶ Other businesses have suffered as a result of the government grant enabling Jefferson to purchase the brand new, state-of-the-art busses. In response, those businesses are starting to raise their voices. “When there’s a market and they are competitors, it should be left to the market without government

interference,” said Dave Clark, owner of Skyline Shuttle, which runs several busses on the same routes as Jefferson Lines. “They could have taken the risk themselves, but they relied on the taxpayer to take the risk.”²²⁷

45. A Recession-Inspired Video Game - (Hanover, NH) \$137,530

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to fire someone, a new video game is available to help you get in on the fun! One Dartmouth professor received a federal grant to create a recession-inspired video game called “Layoff,” a puzzle-style game in which players fire as many people as they can as quickly as possible.

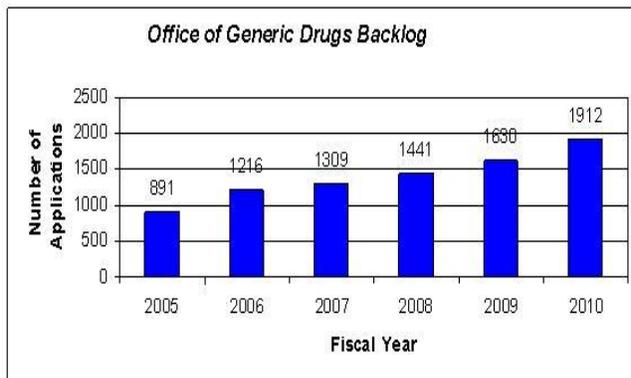
The \$137,530 award from the National Science Foundation was given to Mary Flanagan for a broader project called, “Values at Play.”²²⁸ The initiative seeks to “harness the power of video games in the service of humanistic principles, or human values, knowing that their work can have a tremendous and wide-ranging impact on our world,” according to its website.²²⁹



In “Layoff,” players take the role of management that needs to cut jobs. “The gamer is presented with an 11-by-8-inch grid populated by tiny workers...The objective is to shuffle these characters into groups of three of a kind, at which point they can be banished to mill aimlessly about the unemployment line,” according to a news report. Only there is a catch: “The fired workers are replaced by new ones, including suit-wearing bankers and financiers, who cannot be laid off. (When a player hovers over those characters, they spout self-justifying platitudes or blithe appraisals of their company’s outlook.)”²³⁰

In an interview, Ms. Flanagan explained the value of her work, noting “[w]e were trying to make these abstract figures real...It’s kind of a protest game.”²³¹ Ms. Flanagan admits her game vilifies bankers and financiers, but claims her only agenda was to raise consciousness and encourage people to “take a stand.”²³² It is up to them to decide what that stand entails, she said.²³³

46. FDA Employees Need Contractors’ Help to Understand Backlogs - (Washington, DC) \$1.08 Million



The bloodiest day of the Civil War came at the Battle of Antietam.²³⁴ While there are lessons to be learned from a visit to the historic battlefield, one must question whether it is necessary for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take its Office of Generic Drugs (“OGD”) employees there to learn “leadership” from a contractor telling stories

about General Lee and General McLellan. At the same time, a backlog of 2,136 drug applications sat on their desks in Washington, D.C. as of June 2010.²³⁵ The leadership trips to Antietam were run by Colorado-based Leadership Performance Institute, which has received approximately \$6.4 million in federal contracts over the last 6 years.²³⁶

Perhaps it was a good thing the OGD folks were out of the office on a field trip for a bit, since it may have given another contractor time to assess the backlog. Helen Winkle, director of the FDA’s Office of Pharmaceutical Sciences, which oversees the OGD, points out that before hiring international consulting firm McKinsey & Co., “we did not know specifically what was in the backlog, or what the reason for it being in the backlog was.”²³⁷ Over a million dollars later,²³⁸ we hope the employees at OGD will now lead the charge to eliminate their ever-growing backlog of drug applications.

47. Joint Strike Fighter Program Experiences Huge Cost Overruns - (Department of Defense) \$1.5 Billion

The Department of Defense’s Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) program is the military’s most expensive weapon system acquisition program, but constant cost overruns have kept the price tag climbing ever higher to get less and less. Pentagon officials

plan to spend over \$323 billion to acquire nearly 2,400 fighter planes, but in 2001, the military expected to pay \$231 billion for 2,800 fighter planes.²³⁹ Despite the more than 50 percent increase, taxpayers will be paying much more for fewer planes. Due to the rising price tag, the Joint Strike Fighter program actually violated a law prohibiting cost overruns on major weapon systems. Known as the Nunn-McCurdy Act, the law requires the Secretary of Defense to cancel weapon systems if they incur cost overruns more than 50 percent over their original cost estimate. In order to keep the program alive, the Secretary of Defense must certify to Congress that the program is absolutely vital to national security and that no sufficient alternatives for the weapon system exist.²⁴⁰

To date, the Department of Defense has completed less than ten percent of the operational testing for the high-tech plane, meaning more cost overruns are likely. Current Pentagon plans call for a purchase of several hundred planes at over \$100 million each before testing is complete.²⁴¹

As a result of the overruns, Congress spent an extra \$2.8 billion for future research in order to finish development on the JSF program.²⁴² According to *Aviation Week*, the Defense Department is responsible for about 54 percent of these overruns: “Delays in reaching developmental milestones account for 26 percent of the cost increase. Another 23 percent is from correcting airframe weight estimates that were low, incorrect escalation rates and an incorrect use of a cost model in the earlier acquisition strategy. Five percentage points account for the extension of production.”²⁴³ At least \$1.5 billion of this year’s extra costs, therefore, are a result of DOD mismanagement.

48. Unauthorized Zoo Party - (Cook County, IL) \$79,000

Officials in Cook County, Ill., used \$79,000 in federal funds meant to repair and rebuild homes damaged by floods to throw a picnic party at a local zoo for an estimated 2,200 victims of a 2008 flood who had yet to receive help.²⁴⁴

A spokesman for Cook County Board, President Todd Stroger, said the event’s costs included catering fees of \$28 per adult and \$23 per child²⁴⁵ for “hungry as a bear” picnic baskets,²⁴⁶ and a \$2,000 charge for pavilion rental.²⁴⁷

According to news accounts and documents released by Stroger’s office, the event featured a DJ and dancing, a buffet, fountain drinks, face painting for children, prostate screening for adults, T-shirts, door prizes,²⁴⁸ “seven caricature artists, a juggler and a stilt walker,” and a “music therapy workshop.”²⁴⁹ (The prizes were donated by local businesses, according to the county spokesman.)

The money was taken from \$10 million in federal aid meant to help victims rebuild homes damaged or destroyed by a massive flood two years prior.²⁵⁰ An investigation by WLS-TV found that the county has failed to provide any help to many families they once promised assistance from the fund.²⁵¹

County Board President Stroger has defended the event, saying “it wasn’t spent just to have a day at the zoo. It was spent to get people in one spot where they can have health services, find out about the disaster grant. It was there to be something that could help people.”²⁵²

49. NSF Studies Political Talk Shows on Fox News and MSNBC - (Philadelphia, PA) \$66,638

Bill O’Reilly and Rachel Maddow are not to blame for polarizing American politics, at least according to one researcher. The National Science Foundation (NSF) provided a \$66,638 grant to Temple University political scientist Kevin Arceneaux to study the influence of political programming in mass media. He set out to test the claim that cable television shows allow the public to insulate themselves from opposing viewpoints—polarizing the electorate.²⁵³

For the study, Arceneaux conducted two experiments. In the first, subjects were forced to watch a 15-minute segment from The Rachel Maddow Show or The O’Reilly Factor. In the second experiment, another group of subjects were allowed to choose between Hardball with Chris Matthews or one of two unrelated entertainment shows, with a separate control group watching only an entertainment show.²⁵⁴

His test results found that while the choices people make in consuming the news have some effect, it is possible that some of the problem lies with a public that is more interested in voting than it used to be. Among the more puzzling of his findings, Arceneaux places the blame for polarization on “increasing voter turnout.”²⁵⁵

50. Protecting a Spanish-built Fort from “Constant Wave Attack” - (San Juan, Puerto Rico) \$300,000

Four centuries ago, the Fort of San Geronimo in Puerto Rico was built to defend the Spanish from a British attack. According to the National Park Service (NPS), the fort faces a different kind of foe today, “constant wave attack.”²⁵⁶ To fend off the forces of erosion, the NPS has provided a \$300,000 grant for stabilizing and conserving the structure.²⁵⁷ The history of Fortín de San Gerónimo de Boquerón

spans back several centuries. “In order to defend San Juan from invasion through the shallow bay of Boquerón, the Spanish erected a small battery in 1591 that came to be known as San Gerónimo,” according to the award notification.²⁵⁸ A British



attack left the stronghold in pieces, and it was later repaired.²⁵⁹ While owned by the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the Caribe Hilton Hotel manages the property,²⁶⁰ which was called by Frommer’s “one of the most up-to-date luxury properties in San Juan.”²⁶¹ In the 1980s the fort was added to the National Register of Historic Places,²⁶² but due to lack of attention, the stronghold “is

structurally unstable” and “out of bounds for visitors.”²⁶³

51. “Free” Harvard Courses for Federal Workers - \$5 Million

All parents would love to be able to send their kids to a high-priced and prestigious university. Some may be shocked to learn roughly \$5 million in federal funds goes to sending government employees to Harvard.²⁶⁴ Sending federal employees to a month-long Ivy League university leadership course costs taxpayers more than \$18,000, which is two times what the “average public university charges for tuition and fees...”²⁶⁵ One federal employee that attended the leadership course said that the “days were packed with sessions. And though they weren’t particularly difficult academically, the benefit was not in its academic rigor.”²⁶⁶

52. Ethanol Tax Credit: Burning a Hole in the Wallets of Taxpayers...and Their Car Engines - \$6 Billion

In the 1970s, Congress began providing federal assistance for the domestic production of ethanol. Since then, federal assistance has grown dramatically to include several significant tax incentives and other federal grant programs.

While born of good intentions, federal subsidies have had less than satisfactory results. Ethanol-blended fuel is nearly a third less efficient than gasoline (ethanol burns at 68 percent the energy content of gasoline), has contributed to the increased price of corn (as well as land, feed, and other input costs), and can cause engine damage.²⁶⁷



While various forms of federal assistance continue to sustain the ethanol industry, foremost among them is the Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (VEETC), a tax break amounting to \$0.45 per gallon to blenders of ethanol. This tax credit subsidy alone accounts for \$6 billion in federal spending.²⁶⁸ It is available in unlimited quantities to blenders, including companies such as Exxon, BP, and Chevron. Yet even the ethanol industry admits the VEETC is nearly irrelevant.²⁶⁹ While it was intended to

encourage the use of ethanol, the Congressional Research Service determined the VEETC only duplicates what the Renewable Fuels Standard already requires. Now the VEETC only functions to incentivize the consumption of fuel.²⁷⁰

Overall, ethanol subsidies are outdated and have failed to achieve their goals of helping our nation achieve energy independence. As a result of federal subsidies, the Congressional Budget Office recently found consumers incur a cost of \$1.78 before they even pay at the pump.²⁷¹ Meanwhile, U.S. biofuels consumption remains a small share (4.3 percent) of national transportation fuel use.²⁷²

The original ethanol mandates stemmed from several events, foremost of which was the global energy crisis of the 1970s and a desire to achieve energy independence. Over four decades later, our nation seeks this goal more than ever. Needless to say, it is time to give taxpayers a break and allow the ethanol industry a chance to stand on its own two feet.

53. Alcohol, College Students, Foreign Countries, and Your Money - (Seattle, WA) \$41,380

Breaking news!—college students studying abroad tend to drink more alcoholic beverages. Thanks to research funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, taxpayers now know “study-abroad students double the amount they drink while away.”²⁷³ The project found “students under the age of 21 nearly tripled their drinking habits.”²⁷⁴



The over-\$41,380 federally backed study²⁷⁵ also revealed “students who traveled to Australia, New Zealand and European countries drank more heavily than those

who studied in Asian, African, Latin American and Middle Eastern countries.”²⁷⁶ However, in the end researchers could not answer whether the level of drinking was risky or not.²⁷⁷

54. Wine and Beer Promotion Abroad - \$8.6 Million

At least \$8.6 million in federal funds were paid this year for overseas wine and beer promotion. The grants came from the Market Access Program (MAP) within the U.S. Department of Agriculture.²⁷⁸

The MAP program distributed \$8.3 million to the Wine Institute, the Northwest Wine Promotion Coalition, and the New York Wine and Grape Foundation. The Brewers Association, Inc, “an organization of brewers, for brewers and by brewers”²⁷⁹ that focuses on the promotion of craft beer,²⁸⁰ received a \$365,655 federal grant.²⁸¹

In 2008, the total dollar amount of U.S. wine and brandy shipments exceeded \$13.4 billion. Additionally, in 2009, the United States produced over 758 million gallons of wine, with California accounting for 90 percent.²⁸² According to the Brewers Association, “[c]raft brewer retail dollar value in 2009 was an estimated \$6.98 billion, up from \$6.32 billion in 2008.”²⁸³

55. The Little Engine that Almost Didn't: The Shay Engine No. 4 Goes from Scrap Metal to Museum Piece with Taxpayer Funds - (White Pines, CA) \$102,694



Over \$100,000²⁸⁴ in federal funds will pay to restore a locomotive, which operated during the 1920s and sat rusting in a scrap yard for decades under a mountain of old tires. The Sierra Nevada Logging Museum will use a Department of Transportation historical preservation grant to return the locomotive, Yosemite Lumber Co. Shay No. 4, to working condition so visitors can watch it hit top speeds of six or seven miles per hour.²⁸⁵

The story of the Shay No. 4 begins in the 1920s. From roughly 1920 to 1943 the locomotive served the essential purpose of hauling logs in the Stanislaus National Forest. When its original owner went bankrupt in 1943, the engine was sold

for scrap to be melted down, potentially to aid in the war effort. The engine, however, became buried by a mountain of tires and forgotten. In fact, the engine was not discovered until the Environmental Protection Agency ordered the tire-pile removed and the engine was found beneath it. The engine was almost saved when the Nevada State Railroad Museum bought the engine, but the museum decided it was not needed and abandoned the engine in the desert. In 2004, the Sierra Nevada Logging Museum was looking for a working logging engine and bought the engine, which had been preserved by the dry desert air. Currently, the museum anticipates the restoration will be completed in 2011.²⁸⁶ Therefore, after 90 years of rusting under tires, escaping becoming scrap, and sitting in the desert heat, the engine is finally being restored by over \$100,000 in taxpayer funds.

56. Federal Health Program Duplicates Work - (Department of Health and Human Services) \$338 Million²⁸⁷

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) operates a non-competitive, highly earmarked program through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) for “health care facilities and activities.” The program duplicates existing efforts within both HRSA and HHS, according to the the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The OMB found the program to be “highly duplicative of other Federal, state, and private efforts,” and provides funding to “organizations that also receive funds for the same purpose through other HRSA programs, Medicare and Medicaid capital payments, NIH, the Federal Housing Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.”²⁸⁸

57. Federal Money Goes Toward Maryland’s “Top Chefs” Documentary - (MD) \$25,000

Most Americans have heard of the popular reality television series “Top Chef.” The show, however, has new competition thanks to federal funding. A \$25,000 federal grant will pay for part of a “one-hour documentary film focusing on Maryland’s top chefs and farmers and will use their restaurants and farms to demonstrate changes in the food economy.”²⁸⁹ Additionally, the project will “develop a companion website, with program information, recipes from participating restaurants, [an] online survey of consumer awareness and attitude, and links to useful sites such as Maryland's Best.”²⁹⁰ Unfortunately, it appears taxpayers were left holding the check for this feast.

**58. Federal Study Investigates Cow Burps - (Durham, NH)
\$700,000**

Someone needs to teach cows proper manners. A \$700,000 federal grant²⁹¹ paid for researchers to examine “greenhouse gas emission from organic dairies, which are cause by cow burps, among other things.”²⁹² The principle investigator told a reporter, “[c]ows emit most of their methane through belching, only a small fraction from flatulence.”²⁹³ The U.S. Department of Agriculture awarded the funds to the University of New Hampshire “to create a computer model that measures the amount of greenhouse gases an organic dairy farm produces and thus provide ways to cut those emissions.”²⁹⁴ One of the purposes of the research is also to find ways to make organic farms more financially competitive with general farms.²⁹⁵

**59. Pedestrian Bridge Built Steps from Another Pedestrian Bridge -
(Bothell, WA) \$260,000**



The Puget Sound Regional Council spent \$260,000²⁹⁶ building a pedestrian bridge across the North Creek, just 20 paces from an existing sidewalk crossing the river. Part of a larger \$1.1 million stimulus grant to improve Bothell Trail,²⁹⁷ this project has been described by locals as “embarrassing,” “not needed,” and “not the best place.”²⁹⁸ A city spokesperson emphasized that “we

are a city of rivers” and argued that the 12-foot wide bridge would be safer than that 5-foot sidewalk.²⁹⁹

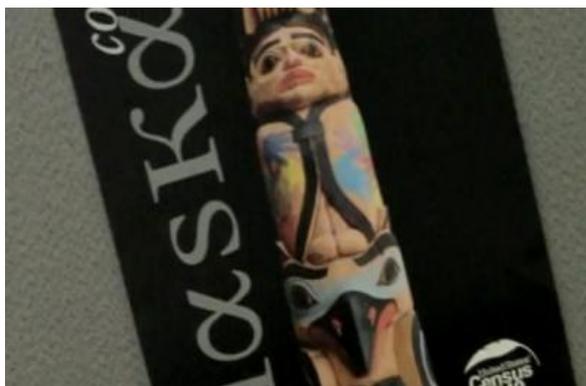
The money from this duplicative project should be put toward higher priority projects in the region. One example is the South Park Bridge that recently closed down in Bothell’s low income neighborhood, which forces 20,000 vehicles a day to take the detour route. That project has been requesting aid from the Regional Council unsuccessfully for some time.³⁰⁰

**60. Emergency Operation Fund Becomes a Pork Barrel -
(Department of Homeland Security) \$60 Million³⁰¹**

Funded at \$60 million annually, the Homeland Security’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Grant Program was originally designed to support local emergency preparedness efforts, targeting areas of specific need in each state and locality.

Unfortunately, the earmarking of EOC funds has significantly reduced the program's effectiveness.³⁰² The president's FY 2010 budget called for the program's termination, stating that its "focus was compromised, and by 2009, 60 percent of the EOC grant funds were congressional earmarks not allocated by merit-based criteria."³⁰³

**61. Census Awards and a Totem Pole - (U.S. Census Bureau)
\$436,000**



For the last ten years, Census officials have wracked their brains to figure out ways to increase participation in the 2010 decennial count. In the State of Alaska, the least responsive state, they pinned their hopes on a totem pole.³⁰⁴ "The 8-foot totem brings us an accurate and inspiring vision of the census," noted Jan McStay, an assistant regional census manager.³⁰⁵ 2010 marked the most

expensive census in history,³⁰⁶ leaving some taxpayers wondering whether a \$23,000 totem pole was the best use of funds. Defending the purchase, the Bureau argued it would help increase involvement in the Census. However, Alaskans' participation in the 2010 Census decreased from the 2000 survey.³⁰⁷

62. Crouching Educator, Hidden Taxpayer: Part of a \$177,746 U.S. Department of Education Grant Sends Teachers on a Field Trip to China - (Cleveland, OH)

From June 12th to 22nd, 2010, as teachers across the nation faced potential layoffs, federal funds sent U.S. teachers to China to learn more about China's education system. "One of the main goals of the trip was for Roxboro teachers to develop a firsthand appreciation of Chinese language and culture," glowed the district's director of educational services.³⁰⁸ The funding for the twelve-person trip abroad came from a \$177,746 Foreign Language Assistance Program grant, which the U.S. Department of Education administers.³⁰⁹ Taxpayers, however, did not sign the permission slip for this overseas trip.



63. Quietly Settling Sexual Harassment Claims Against Housing Chief - (Philadelphia, PA) \$900,000

The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) paid out \$900,000 in confidential, out-of-court settlements to four female plaintiffs who filed sexual harassment suits against its director.³¹⁰ The office oversees public housing for the city of Philadelphia, but nearly all of its \$345 million annual budget is paid by using federal funds.³¹¹ The director, Carl Greene, has since been fired.

A lawyer for one claimant, PHA architect Elizabeth Helm, said Greene told her a promotion was “contingent on a quid pro quo based on her succumbing to his unwanted sexual advances.”³¹² The lawyer said Green told Helm, “I know you don’t want to kiss me,” before grabbing her and kissing her.³¹³

A PHA spokesperson denied the claims, calling them “scurrilous charges.”³¹⁴

The housing agency has also been sued by 300 employees who claim Greene strong-armed them into contributing to a sham non-profit Greene used to host events, including a “lavish” party celebrating his 10th year helming the agency, and trips to a “fun zone.”³¹⁵

Greene was fired Sept. 23, shortly after the sexual harassment suit payments came to light.³¹⁶ PHA chairman John F. Street called Greene a “flawed genius” but a “true serial sexual harasser.”

“He is the Tiger Woods of public housing,” Street said.

Greene has filed a suit against Street and the rest of the PHA board, claiming wrongful termination and defamation of character. He is reportedly seeking millions.³¹⁷

64. Study of Why Political Candidates Make Vague Statements - (Berkeley, CA) \$216,884

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has provided \$216,884 in funding to the University of California Berkeley and Stanford University to study “Candidate Ambiguity and Voter Choice.”³¹⁸

The researchers will review transcripts of all presidential debates since 1960 and ask whether “candidates avoid or limit their ambiguity in circumstances when our experiments suggest that ambiguity would be harmful? Do candidates use ambiguity differently in primaries than in general elections?... And do candidates call attention to ambiguity when our experiments show that it could be

advantageous?” The researchers will also review if “candidates can gain or lose support by taking ambiguous positions.”³¹⁹

According to the proposal description, “[i]n addition to advancing our understanding of politics, the project will have several broader impacts,” including “practical lessons for candidates, advisors, and citizens who are involved in political campaigns.”³²⁰

65. Earmarks Cut Into Education Budget - (Department of Education) \$226 Million

Eager to trade taxpayer money for political goodwill, lawmakers are using taxpayer dollars to line the pockets of certain schools and colleges with frivolous education “pork.” Two federal programs, each intended to spur innovation of the American educational system, serve as slush funds for congressional pork projects: the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) and the Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE).³²¹ Over the last decade, Washington politicians obtained 5,563 earmarks costing nearly \$2.3 billion through these programs. In federal fiscal year 2010 alone, Congress provided over \$101 million to the FIPSE program and over \$125 million to FIE. In federal fiscal year 2010, 97.4 percent of U.S. Department of Education’s earmarks flowed through FIPSE and FIE, including 543 earmarks costing more than \$190 million.³²² A closer look at the types of projects funded by Washington politicians through these two programs show that their money has not been put to good use. This decade, Congress has earmarked federal taxpayer dollars to fund: wine studies; politicians’ legacy programs; a study for a school that does not exist; efforts to deter negativity; mariachi music; and seemingly endless projects far removed from the nation’s fiscal priorities.³²³

66. Long Live the Queen...Bee? - (AR) \$270,934.69

Thanks to \$19,321 of a federal grant, the state of Arkansas and the University of Pine Bluff will provide training to novice and commercial beekeepers on “maintaining beehives and honey production” and “the skill of raising queen bees.” The Central Arkansas Beekeepers Association and the Central Arkansas Ladies Beekeeping Association will also participate in the program. A field



demonstration will follow each course to provide a hands-on experience with beehive maintenance and evaluating the health of the beehives and bees.³²⁴

In total, the Arkansas Agriculture Department received \$270,934.69 through the United States Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.³²⁵ Arkansas plans to use the remaining funds not used on cultivating honey bees for other projects, including studying grapes and wine, designing decorative sacks promoting Arkansas specialty crops, developing varieties of muscadines, and attending the 2010 Fresh Summit.

The USDA awarded 54 grants for specialty crops to fund 827 projects totaling \$55 million, which is a ten percent increase from last year.³²⁶ Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.³²⁷ The USDA lists a number of crops that qualify for specialty status, including common fruits and vegetables, Ephedra (banned by the FDA in 2004³²⁸), Wormwood, and Christmas trees.³²⁹

67. Parachute Museum - (Dayton, OH) \$60,500

Americans who wonder about the history of the parachute are in luck. A museum dedicated to the history of parachutes is now open to answer their questions. And the cost to taxpayers is only \$60,500.³³⁰ A federal earmark grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services financed the completion of Aviation Trail's Parachute Museum located in Dayton, Ohio, which will "provide comprehensive information related to the design, fabrication and use of parachutes." Taxpayer funds paid for new exhibits and video equipment, such as television touch screens that show footage of parachutes in use and a hands-



Photo of an exhibit inside the federally fund parachute museum in Dayton, Ohio.

on exhibit that will allow museum visitors to practice packing a parachute into a backpack.³³¹ So, if you have never seen video of a person using a parachute or you are interested in packing your own parachute, the Parachute Museum is now open. Interestingly, a Frenchman, Louis-Sebastien Lenormand, is generally recognized as the first person to make a descent using a parachute.³³²

68. Congressional Record Printed Daily, Rarely Used - (Washington, D.C.) \$28.25 Million



While many in private business are using the digital age to save money on printing costs, Congress still hasn't figured it out.

This year Congress spent \$28 million to print the rarely used paper versions of the Congressional Record, even though access to this information has been available online for fifteen years.³³³ According to the Government Printing Office (GPO), 4,551 copies of the congressional record are printed daily, many of which go directly to the trash.³³⁴

69. Banjo Player Honored in Museum - (Shelby, NC) \$1.5 Million

Taxpayers may not quite get the twang for their buck from this project. A North Carolina county hopes a \$1.5 million federal grant for a museum honoring a local bluegrass singer will provide an economic boost.³³⁵

The Earl Scruggs Center, which is not expected to open until the end of 2011, will contain exhibits paying tribute to the well-known banjo musician.³³⁶ “[Scruggs] changed the way people looked at the banjo as an instrument,” remarked the Destination Cleveland County Executive Director.³³⁷

The U.S. Department of Commerce awarded the grant on April 7, 2010.³³⁸

70. Mayors Take European Vacation to Green Capital 2010 Conference - (Stockholm, Sweden) \$50,000

Federal funds totaling \$50,000 paid for a delegation of 10-15 U.S. mayors to travel to Stockholm, Sweden to attend the inaugural European Green Capital conference.³³⁹ Once in Sweden, the participants took a 90 minute boat tour of the city and participated in a “thematic networking session,” among other events.³⁴⁰



From October 20th to 22nd 2010, European mayors and city officials gathered in “The Venice of the North” to discuss “urban sustainability and the role of cities in reducing greenhouse gas emissions to reduce threats from climate change.”³⁴¹

71. Manufacturing Assistance Program Overlaps Existing Federal Programs - (Department of Commerce) \$124 Million³⁴²

The Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (HMEP) provides consultative services for manufacturers that can be found many other places in the private and public sectors. Through non-profit partner offices throughout America, HMEP claims to help “clients achieve higher profits, save time and money, invest in physical and human capital, and create and retain thousands of jobs.”³⁴³ In 2007, the Office of Management and Budget found that “the program only serves a small percentage of small manufacturers each year” and that one-fifth of all companies aided by HMEP had more than 250 employees. Originally, HMEP centers were to become self-sustaining but have never been able to, receiving more than \$1.5 billion in taxpayer resources. Elimination of this program was included in the Congressional Budget Office’s August 2009 Budget Options document, which noted, “Proponents of this option question whether it is appropriate or necessary for the government to provide technical assistance such as that offered by the HMEP program...The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has noted that survey results from the Modernization Forum indicate that about half of the partnership’s clients believe the services they obtained from HMEP are available other places, although at a higher cost.”³⁴⁴ This program received \$124 million in the Appropriations Bill for FY2010³⁴⁵ and received \$110 million in FY2009 appropriations. Similar programs include the Small Business Administration’s

Small Business Development Center (SBDC) program, which funds similar non-profit extension centers meant to service small businesses in achieving economic success with consulting advice they may not be able to afford.³⁴⁶ The SBDC program received \$113 million in FY2010.³⁴⁷

72. Studying Wild Blue Monkey's Business - (New York, NY) \$168,766



The National Science Foundation awarded a \$168,766 federal grant to Columbia University researchers to study the sexual behavior of wild blue monkeys by analyzing monkey feces in Africa. The project, which is titled “Group size and reproductive success of female and male blue monkeys,” seeks “to understand the evolutionary basis of group living.” However, the investigation requires the scientists to observe the monkeys doing some interesting business. According to the abstract, “[t]he researchers monitor demographic changes, female social and sexual behavior, and collect fecal samples for genetic paternity assignment using microsatellite loci.”³⁴⁸ The same Columbia University researcher was previously awarded \$276,219 in federal grant money to study African blue monkeys also by collecting and analyzing feces.³⁴⁹

73. Expensive Electric Buses Purchased for Third Richest County - (Howard County, Maryland) \$3.7 Million

Howard County, Maryland was recently named by *Forbes* as the third richest county in the nation, with a median household income over \$101,000.³⁵⁰ Maybe that is why one local county official sees the \$4.7 million price tag for three new electric buses as a bargain. The money will be used to purchase three “first of its kind” electric buses that can charge without being plugged in – the primary destination for the buses will be the local Columbia Mall.³⁵¹ The Federal Transit Administration is chipping in \$3.7 million toward the total cost through its Transit Investments for Greenhouse Gas and Energy Reduction (TIGGER) Program.³⁵² At nearly \$1.56 million per bus, County Executive Ken Ulman counted the purchases as “another example of our commitment to saving the environment and saving money.”³⁵³

74. Beachfront Promenade for Tourists - (Pascagoula, MS) \$500,000

Tourists visiting the beach in Pascagoula will soon have a ten-foot wide lit walking path, benches, and landscaping to enjoy, courtesy of the American taxpayer.³⁵⁴ The \$4 million promenade project,³⁵⁵ which received \$500,000 from the 2010 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development funding bill,³⁵⁶ will be adjacent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' ongoing \$12 million beach expansion project, pictured above.³⁵⁷ The effort is part of the city's plans to implement the "Complete Streets" initiative, aimed at "creating a more pedestrian and bike friendly" community.³⁵⁸



75. Study to Transform a Barn into a Cultural Center - (Darien, GA) \$81,005

An \$81,005 grant³⁵⁹ will fund a study to determine how to rehabilitate an eighty-year-old dairy barn into a "major tourist attraction" in Georgia.³⁶⁰ Specifically, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) money will "develop a plan for the stabilization, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the Huston Dairy Barn as a Coastal Interpretive Center."³⁶¹ "In other words, we're not going to put cows back in there," remarked the executive director of Darien's Downtown Development Authority.³⁶²

76. A Tree Grows In...Cracked Pavement: Transportation Enhancement Grants Used to Plant Flowers Instead of Repairing Highways - (Department of Transportation) \$571 Million



Funds originally intended to repair and maintain highways are being allocated to plant flowers and trees on the side of the road. Congress established the Highway Transportation Fund (HTF)—funded by the 18.4 cents per gallon federal gas tax—to finance the maintenance and construction of the Interstate Highway System, but a portion of those funds are now being used for

aesthetic purposes only.³⁶³ While highways and bridges across the country are crumbling, the Government Accountability Office found that from 2004 to 2008, the Department of Transportation spent \$850 million in Highway Transportation Funds on 2,772 landscaping and other scenic beautification projects. According to the Department of Transportation, \$571 million was obligated for these types of projects just last year.³⁶⁴ Presumably, the flowers growing on the side of the road will divert the drivers' attention from cracks and potholes in the pavement. Other projects intended to enhance the transportation experience and funded as "transportation enhancements" include museums, bike trails, and road-kill reduction projects. Funded projects, however, do not always occur in the proximity of a highway. Some examples include excavating a ship in Maryland³⁶⁵ and \$270,000 to renovate and operate a historical trolley as part of a museum's effort in Pennsylvania.³⁶⁶

These expenditures are made at the same time that the Highway Trust Fund is being drained and critical infrastructure continues to be in disrepair. In fact, the Obama administration said that as much as \$17 billion in additional federal money is needed to maintain roads and bridges. Indeed, as a result of the recession, Americans are driving less or trading in gas guzzlers for fuel efficient cars, resulting in lower gasoline consumption and lower gasoline tax revenues.³⁶⁷ As a result, the transportation infrastructure of many states is suffering. For example, in Texas highways are deteriorating as transportation funds are drying up. The Texas Department of Transportation forecasted it would need \$370 billion from 2011 to 2035 just to fund transportation projects designed to ease congestion and maintain commuter roads across the state. The Texas gas tax stands at 20 cents per gallon, however, one local researcher does not believe that raising the tax is the answer since "[a]nytime anyone buys a new car, chances are it is more fuel efficient. If you drive the same amount of miles and your fuel efficiency goes up, you are consuming less gasoline, and you are paying less gas tax. But the state still has to maintain the roads that you drive on."³⁶⁸

At a time when funds are scarce and states are desperate to repair highways, the federal government should place less emphasis on the view from the driver's seat and more attention on ensuring drivers arrive at destinations safely on well-maintained highways.

77. Millions To Study Why Americans Voted in the Election - (MI & CA) \$2.3 Million

Tens of millions was spent on private opinion polling and data analysis this election cycle. This however did not deter the National Science Foundation (NSF)

from awarding the University of Michigan and Stanford University a total of \$2.3 million to do similar research as part of the “American National Election Studies (ANES)” project.³⁶⁹ Specifically, the grant intends to answer the question, “Why did America vote as it did on Election Day,” and to determine “explanations of election outcomes by providing data.” The grant will also go toward studying the 2012 national elections.³⁷⁰

Michigan and Stanford researchers also received a total of \$9.3 million in 2005 to do similar work during the 2006 and 2008 election cycles.³⁷¹ In addition, estimates place the University of Michigan and Stanford University endowments at \$6 billion and \$12.6 billion, respectively.³⁷²

78. Video Game Parties Rock Out - (Murfreesboro, TN) \$5,000



A Tennessee library spent \$5,000 to host a series of video game parties.³⁷³ “Thanks to a federal grant, your local library is now also a spot where you can challenge your friends to Rock Band or Dance Dance Revolution,” the library’s website announced.³⁷⁴ Other video game events include Wii bowling, Madden NFL 09, and Mario Kart all on a “96 inch widescreen inflatable television.”³⁷⁵

In describing an upcoming gaming session, a local newspaper reported, “Participants can rock out at the library,”³⁷⁶ noting that “Rock Band allows up to four players to play along to popular rock music songs, using guitar, bass guitar, drum, and microphone controllers.” The funds came from the Institute of Museums and Library Sciences (IMLS), which works as an arm of the federal government to develop “strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.”³⁷⁷

According to the library, the purpose of the grant is to “to promote lifelong learning and literacy in the library through video game programs, while raising awareness about library services.”

79. Duplicative Overseas Marketing Program - (Department of Agriculture) \$34.5 Million³⁷⁸

The Foreign Market Development Program provides funding for efforts to promote exports of agricultural products from the U.S., such as grains and oilseed, and higher value products such as meat and poultry.³⁷⁹ However, the program is duplicative of the Market Access Program (MAP), which works similarly to create and expand foreign markets for U.S. agricultural products. Specifically, MAP also promotes the export of products such as eggs, fruit, meat, poultry, seafood, tree nuts, and vegetables.³⁸⁰ In 2010, \$26.5 million of the programs budget went to groups and trade associations, such as the National Renderers Association, that also received Market Access Program funding.³⁸¹

80. “Save the (Working) Clock Tower?” - (Warwick, RI) \$350,000

What does a congressional earmark directed toward Rhode Island have in common with the 1980s hit movie *Back to the Future*? The rally cry: “Save the Clock Tower.” We still remember this line as a pivotal plot-point in the movie to this day. The movie plot involved volunteers asking for donations from people in the community to repair the fictional broken clock tower that was damaged when it was struck by lightning. Little did Hollywood screenwriters know they only needed to ask Congress. Back to 2010, through the help of a \$350,000 earmark,³⁸² a working 19th-century Rhode



Island clock tower will get a touch-up, even though the clock, itself, still keeps the correct time.³⁸³ A local newspaper reported, “though the historic clock is still ticking, it needs work and so does the domed tower.” The earmarked funds came from the Department of Interior’s “Save America’s Treasures” program, and also went toward buttressing the tower, repairing the copper roof, and “refurbishing the clock’s chime mechanism.”³⁸⁴

81. Civility Discussion - (Pullman, WA) \$212,735

A \$212,735 federal grant will pay for “a public forum exploring the state of civility in American democracy.”³⁸⁵ Organizers scheduled the public discussion for Spring 2011 at Washington State University. “A workshop following the two-day event will bring together scholars, librarians, filmmakers, and K-12 educators to develop

curricula, museum exhibits, library programs and online resources around the theme of civility,”³⁸⁶ according to a press release for the event.

82. NIH Promotes Awareness for Non-Existent Vaccine (National Institutes of Health) \$55,000

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) spent \$55,000 to promote HIV Vaccine Awareness Day,³⁸⁷ even though no vaccine exists. May 18, 2010, marked the thirteenth annual observance of HIV Vaccine Awareness Day. According to the NIAID website, “[t]his annual observance is a day to recognize and thank the



thousands of volunteers, community members, health professionals, and scientists who are working together to find a safe and effective HIV vaccine. It is also a day to educate our communities about the importance of preventive HIV vaccine research. In recognition of HIV Vaccine Awareness Day, community activities and media events are being held around the country.”³⁸⁸

Between 2001 and 2005, NIH spent more than \$5.2 million on this “HIV vaccine awareness” campaign, not including staff time or travel expenses.³⁸⁹

HIV/AIDS continues to devastate communities in the United States and around the world. In the United States, more than 50,000 people become infected with HIV each year.³⁹⁰ Approximately 33.4 million people are living with HIV around the world, with approximately 2.7 million new infections each year. To date, more than 25 million men, women, and children are believed to have died from AIDS worldwide.³⁹¹

It would seem the best way to recognize and thank those working to develop a HIV vaccine is to ensure the funds being provided by the taxpayers for HIV vaccine research are actually being used for promising research rather than reminding people how important that research is.

83. Congressional Postcards from Washington D.C. - \$500,000

Everyone loves getting postcards in the mail from friends. Postcards from members of Congress may not be so fun – especially if you are the one paying for it. In 2010, Congress approved \$500,000 for a pilot program for postcard mailings by senators “for the purpose of providing notice of a town meeting by a senator in a

county...at which the senator will personally attend.”³⁹² This is certainly not a priority in a time of budget shortfalls.

84. Public Housing Units Bleeding Energy and Cash - (Housing and Urban Development) \$1 Billion



The federal government could save as much as \$1 billion per year if the Department of Housing and Urban Development were to reform its low-income housing policies, according to an analysis by the National Consumer Law Center.³⁹³ In 2010, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) spent more than \$5 billion for assisted housing, but the analysis found a significant portion of those funds were

put to use paying utility costs for poorly insulated, energy guzzling public housing and subsidized rental units.³⁹⁴ Unfortunately, HUD does not appear to be anywhere close to fully addressing the problem. The NCLC report noted, “[HUD] reported shaving off only \$33 million of that multi-billion dollar bill, or 2/3 of 1 percent. Clearly, HUD can do better for the taxpayers....”³⁹⁵

85. Renovating Pizzeria with New Vertical Garden Entry Way - (Waterloo, IA) \$60,000

Taxpayers who visit Tony’s Trattoria in Waterloo, Iowa may literally get to taste the results of a federal grant. The pizzeria received \$60,000 in federal funding³⁹⁶ to improve the property’s façade and give it a more inviting feel.³⁹⁷ Specifically, customers using the back



entrance will now be greeted by a vertical garden, which will “provide the restaurant herbs such as basil, cilantro and rosemary.”³⁹⁸ It is part of a green design that some are hoping will help make the restaurant more attractive to patrons. While the design will only be noticeable to those who use the rear entrance, the restaurant manager insists, “The rear of the building needs to be as exciting as the front.”³⁹⁹ Proud owner Tony Tomlyanovich noted “it wouldn’t be nearly as impressive if we didn’t get the grant.”⁴⁰⁰

86. Venetian Architecture Exhibition - (Venice, Italy) \$100,000



For some people a trip to Venice exploring the world of art is a dream vacation. For some employees of the State Department, it is just another day at the office. The State Department spent \$100,000 for “curators at nonprofit museums, galleries and arts and architecture schools [to] travel and display their works” at an architecture exhibition in Venice, Italy.⁴⁰¹ The Venice Biennale of Architecture 2010 was held between August 29 and November 21, 2010.⁴⁰² Instead of dabbling in the world of architecture, perhaps the government should focus on constructing a sound federal budget.

87. Intelligence Center Nobody Wants (Department of Justice) \$44 Million⁴⁰³

Every year, millions of dollars for our national defense are siphoned away from the military’s budget to pay for a single congressional pork-barrel project. This funding is directed to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC), which is administered not by the Pentagon, but by the Department of Justice (DOJ). The DOJ has previously asked Congress to shut down the drug center, stating that its operations are duplicative of other DEA facilities⁴⁰⁴ and that reassigning NDIC’s responsibilities would improve the management of counter-drug intelligence activities, allowing for funds to be spent on more important priorities.

To date, NDIC has cost taxpayers more than half a billion dollars.⁴⁰⁵

**88. Boost Tourism in Wine Country - (Monterey County, CA)
\$297,985**



“Like guests at a vast coastal spa, our grapes luxuriate in just-right conditions. Superb soils. Warm sunshine. Cool ocean breezes. Slow and leisurely ripening—up to 60 days longer than other wine growing regions,” reads a Monterey Wine Country brochure.⁴⁰⁶ The experience sounds so delightful even the federal government is encouraging people to visit the charming location. This spring, the Monterey County Vintners and Growers Association secured two grants for nearly \$300,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to boost tourist awareness for the wine county.⁴⁰⁷

89. Stimulus Puts Goats to Work - (Benewah County, ID) \$4,950

Naaaaaa a good use of taxpayer dollars: part of an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act project was used to put goats to work.⁴⁰⁸ Unfortunately, human beings did not fare so well. The Heyburn State Park rented 540 goats,⁴⁰⁹ at a price tag of \$4,950, for “invasive weed management.”⁴¹⁰ The National Park Service (NPS) allocated over a million dollars to Benewah County to help control the weeds. Overall, the project employed roughly 527 more goats than human beings.⁴¹¹



**90. Eliminate Duplicative DOD-Run Grocery and Retail Stores -
\$157 Million**

The Department of Defense (DOD) currently administers a network of grocery and retail stores on military bases around the world. The Defense Commissary Agency operates grocery stores (commissaries), while retail goods are sold by the Army and Air Force Exchange, the Navy Exchange, and the Marine Corps Exchange.⁴¹²

Since these agencies are separate but perform similar functions, they each operate duplicative overhead headquarters and staff. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has proposed consolidating the military services commissaries and exchanges. A portion of the savings from the consolidation could be paid to members of the Armed Forces as an additional cash benefit (grocery allowance), to be spent at the new agency or in their local community at commercial grocery and retail stores or online. This effort would save \$157 million in 2010.⁴¹³

91. Traveling Dance Festival - (\$11,000)



Federal funds totalling \$11,000 paid for a traveling dance festival to perform across the United States.⁴¹⁴ The show, which is titled “Celebrate–Song, Dance & Story!” consists of six different entertainers from various heritages.⁴¹⁵ During the performance, one performer sings “two fados and a Portuguese popular song, while dressed as a fisherman from his hometown of Buarcos, mainland Portugal.”⁴¹⁶ The Department of Education funds the traveling dance festival through the “Educational, Cultural, Apprenticeship, and Exchange Programs for Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Their Historic Whaling and Trading Partners in Massachusetts (ECHO).”⁴¹⁷

92. Your Money Biking, Walking, and Talking Away - (Chattanooga, TN) \$36,000

The Federal Highway Administration spent \$36,000⁴¹⁸ co-sponsoring the 2010 International Symposium on Bicycling and Walking,⁴¹⁹ which occurred from

September 13th through 17th.⁴²⁰ The conference featured a Pro Walk/Pro Bike[®] Networking Party and numerous bicycle and pedestrian related workshops, such as “Tips and Strategies for Using Social Media.”⁴²¹ Another session taught attendees that “[b]icycle and pedestrian planning in Mexican cities such as Guadalajara, Leon, and Aguascalientes offer many lessons that are appropriate in cities around the U.S.”⁴²²

Participants were also coached on strategies on getting more federal funding: “Attendees will learn how to apply for [federal] funds: what works, what doesn’t.”⁴²³

93. A Million of Taxpayer Dollars Shipwrecked - (Alpena, MI) \$1 Million

Over the last six years, Congress has earmarked over six million dollars⁴²⁴ for one shipwreck museum in Michigan. A portion of these funds have gone toward a replica schooner and a shipwreck that visitors can walk through.⁴²⁵



While most other national marine sanctuaries regulate natural resources, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary solely protects and interprets a “nationally significant” collection of shipwrecks and other maritime heritage resources. According to public records, the Sanctuary does not regulate fishing and other natural resources.⁴²⁶

There are already more than 30 similar museums in Michigan already. In fact, four maritime/lighthouse museums are within 100 miles of Thunder Bay. There are also two maritime museums within 150 miles that have an actual schooner and frigate that visitors can walk through.⁴²⁷

The shipwreck museum has received six earmarks since FY 2005, tallying to over six million dollars, including one million dollars in the FY 2010 Commerce, Justice, and Science appropriations bill. Unfortunately, taxpayers will never recover the sunken treasure—their money—from this shipwreck.

94. Lynn Me The Money!: Federal Funds Refurbish Downtown Stores, City Parks, and Ponds - (Lynn, MA) \$2,835,000+

This year, the Goldfish pond in Lynn, Massachusetts celebrated its 30th year with \$35,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds⁴²⁸ paid to renovate the walls of the small island in the center of the pond.⁴²⁹ Renovations on the heart-shaped pond itself were completed five years ago, and it is unclear why the island wall was not repaired at that time. According to a local official, the city planned to drain the pond in September 2010 to determine the nature of the work needed on the island wall.⁴³⁰ The local official explained that because the organization that received the money was non-profit, it did “not have to take the lowest bidder but they [did have to] justify their contractor selection.” Renovations on the island wall come on the heels of Lynn receiving \$2.8 million in federal funds for neighborhood and park-related programs. The Lynn City Council used these funds, in part, to refurbish another city park and pond. That park and pond received new playground equipment, a gazebo, a pond aerator, a boat dock with a ramp leading up to the dock, and a water play area that included spray jets and nozzles.⁴³¹

Meanwhile, in downtown Lynn, federal dollars are replacing the façade of stores in the central business district. Funds obtained from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development were used to update the front of a vacuum store, a video store, a nail salon, a bakery, a beauty salon, and a Mexican restaurant. Since federal funds reimburse the business owner up to \$4,000, one local official declared, “[i]t’s an inexpensive way to fix up a storefront, especially for the business owner” and urged others to apply.⁴³² Whether the American taxpayer would agree is uncertain.



The Current view of Lynn storefronts



The projected view of Lynn storefronts featuring a uniform façade pattern

95. Storm Surge Signs Frighten Local Residents - (TX) \$42,544

Some Texas residents are unhappy with over \$42,544⁴³³ in federal funds being allocated towards posting 400 signs showing how high the storm surge would be in a major hurricane.⁴³⁴ The signs are intended to show how deep the water would be if there were a 25-foot storm surge.⁴³⁵

While the local reaction has been mixed, realtor Susan Maki told one reporter, “I think they’re overkill. I think they frighten people.” Ms. Maki also noted that she fears the signs will lower property values.⁴³⁶ The cities of Galveston, LaPorte, and Seabrook determined the signs are unnecessary and said no thanks to the free signs.⁴³⁷

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funded the project through Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).⁴³⁸ To date, \$27,000 of the money has been appropriated.

96. Office for Retired Speakers of the House of Representatives - \$440,955.87⁴³⁹

The Former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert receives nearly half-a-million dollars every year from taxpayers for an office he rarely visits.⁴⁴⁰ The allowance pays for a fully furnished office, staff, franked mail, phone bills, cable, and payments to lease a car. According to one news report, the former Speaker rarely visits the office and his three staff members each earn over \$100,000.⁴⁴¹ Adding together fiscal years 2008 and 2009, \$879,000 of taxpayer money went toward providing the former Speaker a stipend to maintain an office after leaving Congress.⁴⁴² Current law limits the payments to former Speakers to five years after finishing their term as the top-ranking House leader. Former Senate Majority Leaders do not receive a comparable stipend when they retire.⁴⁴³

97. Grants for Scientific Research - (Department of Energy) \$60 Million

Sensing that shoes were a potential source of harm to the environment, some researchers used \$10,000 in federal funds to help develop “footwear from renewable sources.”⁴⁴⁴ This was just one of the many projects awarded funds through the Science to Achieve Results (STAR) grant program at the Environmental Protection Agency. The STAR program received more than \$60 million in 2010, funding scientific and engineering research at academic and nonprofit institutions. However, this research replicates the billions of federal

dollars for research throughout the university system. Eliminating STAR was a suggestion included in the Congressional Budget Office's August 2009 Budget Options document, which stated "STAR's research on water quality, land use, and wildlife is similar to work done in other federal agencies." OMB also found that the program's coordination with other EPA offices and other agencies was inadequate to ensure that the agencies had access to research findings; [and] that the program had not shown "adequate progress toward achieving long-term goals."⁴⁴⁵

98. 1920s Gas Station Transformed into Museum - (Wytheville, VA) \$77,000

The town of Wytheville, Virginia received \$215,000 in federal transportation dollars⁴⁴⁶ to restore an 84-year-old service station and transform it into the "Great Lakes to Florida Transportation Museum."⁴⁴⁷ Officials plan on returning the station to its 1920s look, making part of the building a "hands-on discovery museum," and providing other displays for adults.⁴⁴⁸ The authenticity of the museum will only go so far; the gas tanks at the service station were removed in 1955.

99. "Corruption on Steroids" Misspends Federal Funds - (CA) \$293,000

The former city administrator for Bell, California funneled nearly \$293,000 in federal funds to companies without using contracts, competitive bidding or gaining City Council approval, according to an audit by California Controller John Chiang.⁴⁴⁹

Chiang identified \$293,000 in unapproved, unauthorized and possibly illegal expenditures by former City Administrator Robert Rizzo,⁴⁵⁰ who was arrested in September, along with his deputy and four of the town's five council members, on corruption charges.⁴⁵¹ In total, the ex-officials are believed to have misappropriated over \$5 million, including hundreds of thousands to their own accounts. The alleged scheme was so broad the Los Angeles District Attorney called it "corruption on steroids."

Among the questioned uses of federal funds Chiang identified was nearly \$100,000 from a federally funded oil recycling grant program that was given to a company owned by the city's own Director of Planning Services. Auditors found the work allegedly performed by the firm did not conform to the grant program, and could

find no evidence the expenditure was the result of a competitive bidding process.⁴⁵²

The findings “[raise] serious questions about possible conflicts of interest, favoritism, and other improprieties,” Chiang concluded.⁴⁵³

100. City Gets Funding for “Slightly Different” Bike Signage - (Portland, OR) \$900,000



Why have one bike sign when you can have two? Portland, Oregon spent \$900,000 in federal stimulus funds on a new bike signage project⁴⁵⁴ even though the city already has similar bike signs, which it plans to leave up.⁴⁵⁵ “The new signs—which include arrows, distance, and travel times to key destinations—have a slightly different design than existing ones,” according to a local biking website.⁴⁵⁶

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