



**THE WASTE REPORT'S**

**AIRING OF  
GRIEVANCES**

**FESTIVUS  
2015**

**A Festivus collection of government waste worth shouting about.  
Presented by the Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee- Rand Paul, M.D. Chairman**

## THE WASTE REPORT'S

# Airing of Grievances for 2015

*We've got a lot of problems with  
how our tax dollars are spent!*

Happy Festivus! Once again, the federal government found new and inventive ways to waste the tax dollars of hard-working Americans this year. *The Waste Report* has highlighted many examples, totaling more than one billion dollars worth of wasteful spending, misplaced priorities, and bad management.

Our investigations into federal spending may not have uncovered any government contributions to something called The Human Fund (Money for People), but we did find Uncle Sam putting taxpayer dollars to work creating a foreign made-for-TV cricket league, paying for federal yoga classes, developing a climate change video game, and studying whether being in space changes the effectiveness of golf clubs.

In a time of unending budget deficits and growing debt, the government also demonstrated continued management problems. For example, it permitted (and often encouraged) millionaires to live in public housing, and failed to promptly address significant Medicare overpayments.

So, before the Feats of Strength can begin, there must be an airing of (spending) grievances.

*And now you're gonna hear about it!*

## THE WASTE REPORT'S

# Airing of Grievances for 2015

*Taxpayer dollars were wasted by the Federal Government as it...*

Paid for children from Pakistan to travel to the U.S. to attend Space Camp and visit Dollywood ( <a href="#">State</a> ).....	\$250,000
Permitted millionaires to live in federally-subsidized public housing ( <a href="#">HUD</a> ).....	\$104,000,000
Helped pay for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Hollywood museum exhibits ( <a href="#">NEA</a> ).....	\$25,000
Established a made-for-TV professional cricket league in Afghanistan, where few homes have TVs ( <a href="#">State</a> ).....	\$850,000
Paid for a community college to develop a curriculum of winemaking studies ( <a href="#">NSF</a> ).....	\$853,000
Paid for yoga classes for bureaucrats across the federal government ( <a href="#">Multiple agencies</a> ).....	\$150,000
Promoted economy-boosting regulatory reform abroad while over-regulating our own economy ( <a href="#">USAID</a> ).....	\$400,000
Paid for development of a climate change-hyping video game for kids ( <a href="#">NSF</a> ).....	\$450,000
Used funds at the allegedly cash-strapped National Park Service to put on a flower show ( <a href="#">NPS</a> ).....	\$100,000
Gave its employees at the Dept. of Education a days-long course on how to write an email ( <a href="#">ED</a> ).....	\$7,700
Bought solar panels to power a veteran's hospital that had to be removed before they could be used ( <a href="#">VA</a> ).....	\$8,000,000
Subsidized many ordinary crops that have been designated "specialized" ( <a href="#">USDA</a> ).....	\$72,500,000
Paid for TV commercials to promote Christmas trees at Christmastime ( <a href="#">USDA</a> ).....	\$50,000
Helped pay for a conference to examine male pattern baldness ( <a href="#">NIH</a> ).....	\$15,000
Built a massively expensive gas station in Afghanistan that practically no one can use ( <a href="#">DOD</a> ).....	\$43,000,000
Failed to prevent substantial Medicare overpayments for sleep studies ( <a href="#">HHS</a> ).....	\$175,000,000
Simultaneously promoted tourism to the U.S. and tourism to Albania to the same audience ( <a href="#">USAID</a> ).....	\$6,000,000
Paid for foreign students to visit American community colleges, but only for one year ( <a href="#">State</a> ).....	\$15,670,000
Studied whether a college student's friends may impact weight gain during their freshman year ( <a href="#">NIH</a> ).....	\$380,000
Researched the effectiveness of golf equipment in space ( <a href="#">NASA</a> ).....	\$15,000,000
Studied whether to sterilize wild burros in a particular area of California ( <a href="#">DOD</a> ).....	\$218,000
Studied whether people playing <i>Pong</i> saw a bigger paddle when they were playing "in the zone" ( <a href="#">NSF</a> ).....	\$350,000
Subscribed to premium satellite TV packages with sports and movie add-ons for NOAA ships ( <a href="#">NOAA</a> ).....	\$40,000
Sent an American jazz band to play a Turkish jazz festival that they hadn't put on their European tour ( <a href="#">State</a> ).....	\$50,000
Failed to prevent double-dipping from both FEMA and private insurance for disaster assistance ( <a href="#">FEMA</a> ).....	\$53,200,000
Allowed School Lunch Program funds to be used for lawn sprinklers and other purposes ( <a href="#">USDA</a> ).....	\$158,000,000
Funded a massive sewer system in a small town based on unrealistic growth projections ( <a href="#">EPA</a> ).....	\$760,000
Studied emotions and how people feel about the decisions they make for themselves ( <a href="#">NSF</a> ).....	\$175,950
Paid insurance to farms built in areas where crops can't be reliably grown ( <a href="#">USDA</a> ).....	\$370,000,000
Built a new laundromat at a National Forest when two other laundromats are within walking distance ( <a href="#">NPS</a> ).....	\$25,000
Paid for a study to figure out why Americans don't want to use the metric system ( <a href="#">NSF</a> ).....	\$188,000
Bought unnecessary high-end treadmills for use in day-to-day functions ( <a href="#">DOE</a> ).....	\$50,000
Failed to stop federally-paid medical care from being used in exotic vacation locales ( <a href="#">USCG</a> ).....	\$1,200,000

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**Taxpayer Dollars Wasted: \$1,026,957,650**



THE WASTE REPORT'S

**Airing of Grievances for 2015**

What does \$1,026,957,650 of wasteful spending mean to you?

If just the waste we found is : **\$1,026,957,650**

And the average taxpayer pays about :  $\div$  **\$7,212**

Then Uncle Sam **WASTED** all the taxes of: **142,394 people**

That is roughly the population of Savannah, GA; Dayton, OH;  
Pasadena, CA; Syracuse, NY; or **2.35 times** the size of  
Chairman Paul's hometown of **Bowling Green, KY.**

**So the question is:**

**Was it your taxes that were wasted?**





*WASTE REPORT for August 10, 2015*

**Learn English... at Space Camp and Dollywood**

If you were a kid in the '80s, you probably dreamed of going to Space Camp, especially if you saw the movie. Well, if you have about \$1,000 and can get yourself to Huntsville, Alabama, you too can go to Space Camp. **That is unless you are a kid in Pakistan, because if you are, Uncle Sam will send you to Space Camp on the taxpayer's dime, to the tune of \$250k.**<sup>1</sup>

That's right, last March the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad put out a grant opportunity to send **24 Pakistani students to 6-days of Space Camp in Alabama.** Why is the federal taxpayer financing a trip around the world for Pakistani kids to play astronaut? Well, **"To promote the development of English language, social, and analytical skills of the participants, through first-hand experiences in science and technology."**<sup>2</sup> With seven Space Camps around the world, including Italy and Japan, the State Department might be on to something bigger than Rosetta Stone and Facebook combined.

**Space Camp to learn English?** By that standard doing almost anything in an English speaking country like the U.S. must qualify. **Why not a trip to an amusement park? Well, actually!!!** After splash down in Huntsville, the grant calls for the group to head out on a nearly 700 mile bus trip bound for Washington D.C. which includes **a day's visit, (perhaps from 9 to 5) at the Pigeon Forge, TN, amusement park, Dollywood, named for country legend Dolly Parton.**<sup>3</sup>

And while NASA's FY 2016 Budget request includes \$94 million for education, there is no mention of using that money to send American kids to Space Camp, which itself is not federally financed.<sup>4</sup> In fact, **Space Camp is a luxury even for kids in Huntsville, where the Elks Club takes up the effort to annually send a different 5<sup>th</sup> grade class to the camp.**<sup>5</sup> Perhaps if kids in Alabama were learning Japanese, the State Department would send them to Space Camp-Japan, maybe with a stop off at Tokyo-Disneyland.

**In Waste, Anything is Possible**

<sup>1</sup> *Youth Exchange Program – NASA Space Camp*, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Islamabad, Opportunity Number: SCA-ISB-15-AW-008-03092015, March 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Note: Space Camp is Run by the State of Alabama and through a private foundation

<sup>5</sup> Bonvillian, Crystal, *Farley Elementary 5th graders get surprise trip to Space Camp*; AL.com, December 2014



WASTE REPORT for July 27, 2015

**Public Housing: Not low-income? No Problem!!!**

The premise of the “social safety net” is to help people in need while they get back on their feet. And, just like a net that catches you when you fall, once you begin to climb again, you leave the net behind.

**So, why is the federal government spending \$104 million a year subsidizing public housing for people who are no longer low-income?** According to a Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Inspector General’s (IG) report, someone only needs to qualify as low-income once—when they first enter the program—and after that they can make as much money as they want without having to leave taxpayer-subsidized housing.<sup>1</sup>

The IG’s report found over 25,000 cases of people receiving benefits. And that is not just a case of occasionally exceeding the threshold, in almost all cases the income threshold had been exceeded for more than one year. Keep in mind that people receiving government financed housing vouchers to rent properties on the open market are cut off when their income exceeds the limit for 180 days.<sup>2</sup>

**Even those in the wealthiest 1 % are in on the deal.**<sup>3</sup> In New York, one family of four was making nearly \$500k a year and owned property that generated about \$150k a year in additional rental income. A single tenant in rural Nebraska made double the maximum income threshold and had **\$1.6 million in assets, including \$470k in real estate, yet only paid \$300 a month in rent** to the housing authority.<sup>4</sup> In both cases the tenant had not met the low-income standard in more than 5 years.

Oddly, this is not the result of a scam or a loophole. According to the IG report, **“HUD repeatedly objected to our audit on the grounds that the governing statute and regulations require that public housing authorities not deter overincome [sic] families from residing in public housing.”**<sup>5</sup>

So why even have an income threshold? Well, the IG put it best: **“the public housing program was created to provide affordable housing to eligible low-income families...”** And with almost 600,000 people on waiting lists, quite rightly said, **“HUD did not assist as many low-income families in need of housing as it could have.”**<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kasperowicz, David E. *Overincome Families Residing in Public Housing Units*, Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Philadelphia. July 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pp. 7

<sup>3</sup> <http://money.cnn.com/2012/11/20/news/economy/top-1-percent/>

<sup>4</sup> Kasperowicz, David E. *Overincome Families Residing in Public Housing Units*, Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Philadelphia. July 2015 pp. 6-7

<sup>5</sup> Ibid pp. 20

<sup>6</sup> Ibid pp.20



## WASTE REPORT for July 6, 2015

### Lights, Camera, Waste

Since well before Jed Clampett moved his family to Beverly Hills, Hollywood and the movie industry has been synonymous with wealth. And at the center of it all is The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the academy), familiar to most Americans for its annual awards show commonly known as the Oscars.

So one may ask, why an organization in an industry known for an abundance of wealth needs a **\$25,000 grant from the National Endowment of The Arts to help plan exhibits for The Academy Museum**, which is set to break ground later this year?<sup>1</sup> The grant is supposed to help fund decision making about the, “exhibition's conceptual themes, selection of related artist projects and creation of a film/film clip listing, artifact checklist, and preliminary interpretive plans.”<sup>2</sup>

But, **while Uncle Sam helps pay to plan the museum's exhibit**, one item we know will be in the museum is the Aries 1B Trans-Lunar Space Shuttle from, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which the academy bought for a cool **\$344,000**.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to scores of Hollywood brass ponying up donations to the museum, the academy is flush with cash; it makes profits of roughly \$50 million on the Oscars alone.<sup>4</sup>

And, while \$25,000 might be small in the scope of the federal budget or in Hollywood, it is over half what the average worker makes in a year,<sup>5</sup> and equals the full federal tax liability of almost four average Americans.<sup>6</sup> So, one must wonder, when cries ring out about what constitutes a fair share of taxes for someone to pay, why are any of those tax dollars going to support a museum that does not need it?

### **And, The Nominees for Most Wasteful Are...**

<sup>1</sup> National Endowment for the Arts, Washington D.C. award number 15-4400-7105

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Hamedy, Saby, *The \$344,000 movie item: Academy buys ship from Kubrick's '2001,'* Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles, CA, March 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Cunningham, Todd, *Academy Turned \$51M Profit on 2012 Oscars.* The Wrap: Covering Hollywood, Los Angeles, CA. January 2013

<sup>5</sup> BLS Statistics- All Occupations Mean Annual Wages.

<sup>6</sup> Calculated using IRS data





## WASTE REPORT for June 8, 2015

### Anyone up for a Game of Waste?

Imagine if the federal government funded a major U.S. broadcaster to put on a baseball tournament, featuring MLB players, and all in the name of combating gang violence?

Surprisingly, the State Department (State) is doing almost exactly that in Afghanistan, by propping up the Sixers Cricket League. Last year the federal government gave One TV, a **for-profit Afghan television station, roughly \$350,000, to “support the development of a national cricket league [principally a tournament] in Afghanistan,”** In addition to sponsoring the league, **this grant helped train personnel on sports broadcasting and production.** <sup>1</sup>

Just last month, State published a new grant opportunity to put on the same tournament this year and again, includes **training “Afghans in the production of professional sports broadcasts (specifically cricket).”** This time, the grant is for **up to \$500,000 with an option for a one year extension.** Applicants must demonstrate their ability to work with the Afghan Cricket Board (which is the sport’s governing body), but also One TV, as they retain the exclusive broadcasting rights to the tournament. <sup>2</sup>

The idea behind the cricket league is to **provide an outlet for young men who may be susceptible to extremism** in Afghanistan. <sup>3</sup> But instead of something like a little league, **these at-risk youths mostly get to watch on TV, which may be hard given only 0.003 percent of the population have TVs.** <sup>4</sup> Instead, the league is comprised of five regional teams <sup>5</sup> and is to feature well-known Afghan cricket players such as Mohammad Nabi Eisakhel, who last year captained the Bandi Ameer Dragon as well as the successful Afghan National Team. <sup>6</sup>

### **Uncle Sam’s Afghan Cricket League? Now That’s a Sticky Wicket**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usaspending.gov/transparency/Pages/TransactionDetails.aspx?RecordID=27765306-04D5-EC2A-EF26-B66BD60929B9&AwardID=7960995&AwardType=G>

<sup>2</sup> Department of State, *Men’s National Cricket League in Afghanistan*, Kabul, Afghanistan. April 2015, Grant Id No. SCAKAB-15-CA-008-SCA-04222015

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Basic Data- Afghanistan, PressReference.com, Web: May 2015; <http://www.pressreference.com/A-Be/Afghanistan.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> <http://1tvnews.af/en/news/sport/11849-cricket---afghan-sixer-tournament-commences--bandi-ameer-dragons-vs-spin-ghar-tigers>





## WASTE REPORT for June 15, 2015

### Waste, Vintage 2015

It's no secret Americans are embracing wine, leading entrepreneurs to plant fields of grapes across America. Washington State has been at the forefront of this trend since winemaking first expanded beyond California's borders decades ago. In fact, according to the USDA, as of 2013, wine is a \$230 million industry in Washington alone.<sup>1</sup>

So with such a booming, well established industry, why is the **National Science Foundation providing \$853,000 to Washington community colleges to fund winemaking programs?**<sup>2</sup> This is especially strange given that community colleges throughout the Pacific Northwest have offered wine-centric degrees for years. Two of the recipients of this grant have well established programs; The South Seattle College, started the **Northwest Wine Academy** in 2004<sup>3</sup>, and Yakama Valley Community College began its **Vineyard and Winery Technology** program in 2010<sup>4</sup>

The justification, according to the grant synopsis is that last year, an industry assessment (available on the Washington State University website) found the state's wine industry could be in a labor shortage, needing more than six thousand new workers by 2018. But, a closer look at this study shows, that even at the upper extreme, **only 4% of new workers will require an Associate's Degree.** The vast majority, 5990 new workers (94%), will need no degree.<sup>5</sup>

Most troubling, NSF is often touted as being critical to funding cutting-edge, basic research that the private market would not. Yet this grant does not fund research. Instead, it is targeted at community colleges with existing wine programs to help them "share resources and develop new online and hybrid curricula for Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees..."<sup>6</sup>

### **So, what wine pairing goes best with waste?**

<sup>1</sup> USDA, National Agriculture Statistics Service, *Washington Wine Grape Release*, Washington, D.C., March 2014

<sup>2</sup> NSF, *Pacific Northwest Viticulture and Oenology Education Collaborative*, Washington, D.C., Award No. 1501522, March 2015. Web. [http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD\\_ID=1501522&HistoricalAwards=false](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1501522&HistoricalAwards=false)

<sup>3</sup> <http://nwwineacademy.com/about/mission>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.yvcc.edu/academics/programs/Agriculture/vinewine/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Agri-Business Consultants, LLC. *Washington Wine Grape and Winery Employment Needs Assessment with Projections to 2018*, Prosser, WA, March 2004

<sup>6</sup> NSF, *Pacific Northwest Viticulture and Oenology Education Collaborative*



## WASTE REPORT for September 14, 2015

### Federal Yoga: Bend, Stretch, Waste

Maybe you saw a Groupon for yoga classes and considered it, but, even at a discount you were not sure you wanted to spend the money.

Well, if you were an employee at certain federal agencies you would not have to worry about cost, as the U.S. taxpayer picks up the tab. That's right, a variety of federal agencies in a number of locations provide "free" yoga classes to employees. But these classes are not free; **since 2013, they have cost taxpayers over \$150,000.**<sup>1</sup>

The **State Department spends \$15,000 for yoga in the nation's capital.** A yoga instructor in from Berkeley, California is paid \$4,000 a year from the Department of Agriculture's Research Service.

Of course, **the Department of Energy**, which the *Waste Report* highlighted trying to buy the Cadillac of treadmills earlier this year, has gotten in on taxpayer financed yoga; but for \$11,000 annually they also offer pilates at a California location. Another agency aligning its chakras is **the Environmental Protection Agency.**

**The Railroad Retirement Board spends \$11,000 annually for yoga classes** for office workers at its Chicago headquarters. Strangely, they reported that participants were initially charged for the class, but **in some kind of weird reversal of economic principles, there was so much demand, the agency decided to start picking up the tab in 2010.**

Not all agencies that offer employees yoga at work also pay the cost; many agencies, including the U.S. Senate, require participants to pay for the class.

**Government, bending over backwards to waste your money.**<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All data in this *Waste Report* was obtained through USASpending.gov or through correspondence with agencies legislative affairs or inspectors general offices.

<sup>2</sup> Note: the Department of Veterans Affairs is the largest purchaser of yoga services in the federal government, followed by the Department of Defense, but many of these classes are for rehabilitation of wounded soldiers or other service related ailments and were thus excluded from this report.



WASTE REPORT for December 7, 2015

**Racking Up Regulations at Home While Cutting Them Abroad**

After years of complaints from across the country about the burdens of over-regulation, our federal government is finally cracking down and taking a “guillotine” to the regulatory colossus—only in Armenia, but not in the United States.

In a glaring display of contradiction, the US Agency for International Development has backed approximately \$400,000 in grants to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe for work to reduce and streamline the regulatory burdens on businesses in Armenia.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted, of course, that eliminating burdensome regulations is generally a good thing. In fact, the “guillotine,” as it is known, applies important criteria to regulations, such as whether a regulation is legal, necessary, and business friendly.<sup>2</sup> These are obviously criteria our own federal government should apply to regulations here at home. Unfortunately, the American taxpayer will have to wait to see their tax dollars support U.S. regulatory reform at home.

In fact, while the federal government is funding a “regulatory guillotine” in foreign countries, the Obama Administration is adding approximately 81 major regulations annually, just slightly worse than the 62 added annually under President Bush.<sup>3</sup>

And what is a major regulation? Well, according to law, it costs the economy at least \$100 million in economic activity, creates a major cost increase for consumers, or has an adverse effect on employment and the competitiveness of American businesses.<sup>4</sup> In total, it is estimated that regulations cost the American economy \$1.88 trillion annually.<sup>5</sup> Aside from the cost to the economy, the Mercatus Center at George Mason University estimates that the federal government itself spends almost \$50 billion creating and enforcing regulations.<sup>6</sup>

One would justifiably assume that Armenia is suffering under a terrible regulatory climate if it requires intervention from our government. Armenia is trying to address about 25,000 laws and regulations hindering business. Project documents note this number is burdensome and that, “[o]bviously, the creation of open competitive market[s] require simple and transparent rules for doing business.”

How, then, does the U.S. stack up? According to Regdata.org, the U.S. has over 1.04 million regulations,<sup>7</sup> or over 40 times the number of crushing regulations as Armenia.

**Maybe instead of funding this project,  
the U.S. government should be applying for its help.**

<sup>1</sup> USAID Award Number AID-111-IO-12-00001 accessed from ForeignAssistance.gov. November 2015

<sup>2</sup> Minasyan, Karine; First Deputy Minister of Economy, Republic of Armenia; *Better Regulation in Armenia— Case of the Guillotine Reform*, Penetration made at OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum; Dublin, Ireland; April 2012

<sup>3</sup> *Ten Thousand Commandments 2015: Fact Sheet*; Competitive Enterprise Institute; Washington, DC; 2015

<sup>4</sup> Carey, Maeve; *Counting Regulations: An Overview of Rulemaking, Types of Federal Regulations, and Pages in the Federal Register*; Congressional Research Service, Washington, DC; July 2015.

<sup>5</sup> *Ten Thousand Commandments 2015: Fact Sheet*; Competitive Enterprise Institute; Washington, DC; 2015

<sup>6</sup> Ellig, Jerry, & Broughel, James; *While Regulatory Spending and Output Increase, Economic Analysis of Regulations Is Often Incomplete*; Mercatus Center at George Mason University; Arlington, VA; May 2014

<sup>7</sup> *Why We Need Regulatory Reform in Two Charts*; Regdata.org; Mercatus Center at George Mason University; Arlington, VA; 2013



**WASTE REPORT for November 30, 2015**

**Climate Change: The Video Game**

A whole generation remembers the thrill of strolling into an elementary school computer lab, firing up an Apple II computer, and playing *The Oregon Trail*. Well, thanks to an almost \$450,000 grant from the National Science Foundation, it appears a whole new generation of students will have their own iconic game...on climate change.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently “[e]ducating young people about Global Climate Change (GCC) is challenging because they have difficulty relating to its slow pace, with larger effects 10s-100s years in to the future.”<sup>2</sup> How to solve that problem? A video game aimed at indoctrinating kids into the climate change way of thinking.

The Climate Change Narrative Game Education (CHANGE), which is being developed by researchers at the University of South Florida and piloted at Hillsborough County high schools, aims to counter this morass by, “develop[ing] a place-based futuristic gaming simulation model...”<sup>3</sup> Of course, the CHANGE project is all supposed to be “scientifically realistic.”

The game will involve a science fiction narrative of the effects of climate change on the students’ community as told by virtual persons from the future. This, “focus on the built environment will help students attach a ‘human face’ and a sense of immediacy to hitherto abstract issues of global warming.” The first part of the game will ask students to deal with simulations like severe weather and sea-level rise, while the second part of the game will group students in teams to create plans to “save the future.”<sup>4</sup>

How far in the future? Well, 110 years. Recall that Doc Brown and Marty only went 30 years in the future; and while *Back to The Future* was a great movie trilogy, accurately predicting just 30 years in the future proved pretty hard.

Perhaps the government, instead of Hollywood is better at predicting the future? Take for example Dr. John Holdren, who is the President’s chief science advisor and was a technical advisor on former Vice President Al Gore’s movie *An Inconvenient Truth*. In 1986, he predicted 1 billion people would die as a result of global warming by the year 2020. At his 2009 confirmation hearing he was asked if he still believed climate change would kill 1 billion by 2020. He said, “I think it could happen.”<sup>5</sup> Scared yet?

Here’s a prediction: the real science behind this game is psychology and political science.



**You Have Died of Global Climate Change**

<sup>1</sup> NAF Award number 1316782 [http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD\\_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false).

<sup>2</sup> G. Smith, L. Lou, A. Feldman, P. Wang (2015) SCIENCE FICTION NOVELS WITH GAMES FOR LEARNING CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENCE, EDULEARN15 Proceedings, pp. 6163-6169.

<sup>3</sup> NAF Award number 1316782 [http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD\\_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1316782&HistoricalAwards=false)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ces.fau.edu/SLR2013/posters/feldman-change.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Confirmation hearing for Dr. John Holdren to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy; U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; February 2009.





*WASTE REPORT for September 28, 2015*

**National Park Service's Flower Show: A Blooming Waste**

If you are a national parks enthusiast, then you probably already know that next year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Park Service (Park Service). However, you probably did not know as part of its Centennial Celebration, **the Park Service is planning to spend \$100K for a “flower show” in Philadelphia, Pa., this upcoming March.**<sup>1</sup>

The Philadelphia Flower Show is an event the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society (PHS) puts on every year going back to 1829. This year's theme is “Explore America: 100 Years of the National Park Service,” and **will span over 33-acres of the Philadelphia Convention Center and include a Park Service's “Find Your Park” pavilion.**<sup>2</sup>

While the flower show itself is a remarkable event and the nearly 200-year old PHS uses the proceeds to finance charitable activities -- **the question remains, why is this the Park Service's best use of taxpayer money?**

**This is especially troubling considering the Park Service and their supporters have cried foul for years over the agency's funding.** The National Parks Conservation Association said earlier this year that “the current Fiscal Year 2015 funding level for national parks is vastly insufficient to bring parks back to where they were, and where they need to be—especially in advance of the 2016 Centennial.”<sup>3</sup>

Additionally in 2012, the Washington Post reported that the Park Service's financial situation has caused, the Blue Ridge Parkway to be “...**unable to fill 75 vacant positions since 2003.**” and, “[f]or the past three years, New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument has lacked the money to hire a specialist to protect its archaeological ruins and resources.”<sup>4</sup>

While some of our national parks are facing staffing shortfalls, the Park Service included in its grant notice that it would, “**provide one full-time staff member as a point of contact to [PHS] for the duration of the project,**” as well as provide staffing at the Park Service pavilion when the flower show takes place in March.<sup>5</sup> **It is just a little hard to swallow that on one hand there are cries of a lack of funds and personnel at parks, then on the other hand you hear money and staff can be found for a flower show.**

**Government Waste, as reliable as Old Faithful**

<sup>1</sup> 2016 Philadelphia Flower Show, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior. Washington, D.C. Via, Grants.gov. Award Number: NPS-15-NERO-0150. Sep2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> National Park Service Funding, National Parks Conservation Association. Washington, D.C.; September 2015 [NPCS](#)

<sup>4</sup> Eilperin, Juliet. National parks face severe funding crunch, Washington Post. Washington D.C.; August 2012

<sup>5</sup> 2016 Philadelphia Flower Show, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior. Washington, D.C. Via, Grants.gov. Award Number: NPS-15-NERO-0150. Sep2015



*WASTE REPORT for May 18, 2015*

**You've got Waste: \$240/hr E-mail Class**

It is on your computer, it is on your phone. From sharing recipes to writing serious communication; email has become a part of everyday life. In fact Jacob Morgan of Forbes declared in a 2013 article, "Everyone has an email account."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps this is why earlier this month, the **U.S. Department of Education (Dep. of Ed)**, of all federal agencies, awarded a contract (**at about \$240 per hour**) for an "**Email Writing Course**" to be given to twenty of their employees (in two cohorts).<sup>23</sup> According to the solicitation, participants should come away knowing things like, "when to write an email," and the "[p]roper tone and etiquette," of an email.<sup>4</sup> Keep in mind; **these are not students, but federal workers at the Dep. of Ed's Headquarters in Washington, D.C.**

As pervasive as email is, one would expect this course to be a simple one or two hour "tune-up" on writing skills. Instead the Dep. of Ed, is asking for a **two to three DAY course**. Even some prospective venders were skeptical of the time requirement. In an addendum to the original solicitation, the Dep. of Ed. responded to vender questions, including one that rightly asked how many hours of training was expected for each session. The response was shocking, "The Department anticipates that **these days will be full days of training.**" Another asked if the two to three day requirement is meant to provide for both cohorts (which would be somewhat more reasonable). The response, "**The requirement is for 2 separate offerings of a 2-day or 3-day course.**"<sup>5</sup>

**To: American Taxpayer**

**Subject: Our (Dep. of Ed) Plan to Waste Your Money**

<sup>1</sup> Morgan, Jacob; *5 Ways Email Makes Your Employees Miserable*; Forbes, New York, NY; October 2013 Web: May 2015 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacobmorgan/2013/10/15/5-ways-email-makes-your-employees-miserable/>

<sup>2</sup> *Email Writing Course*, Fedbiz, March 2015. Solicitation Number ED-CFO-15-Q-0006

<sup>3</sup> Approximately \$7,700 award, divided by 36 hours (assumes two, two-day sessions at eight hours)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, *Performance Work Statement*

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, *Attachment 0001*



## WASTE REPORT for June 01, 2015

### Waste, Powered by the Sun

In the latest example of a federal solar project gone wrong, the Little Rock, AR Veterans Hospital made an **\$8 million investment on nearly 7000 solar panels that were never turned on**. Now the VA is removing those panels to make way for a new parking structure, which supposedly will house the solar panels on its roof.<sup>1</sup>

Local news reports show decisions were made on the parking project with plenty of time to prevent the wasted spending on the solar panels. The parking project was approved in August 2012, six months before the solar project broke ground, and the site was selected for the parking structure a month before the solar project was complete.<sup>2</sup>

But it was not the parking structure that prevented the panels from being turned on. According to local news, the solar project had design flaws that caused difficulties linking up to the local power grid. ArkansasMatters.com reports that a **representative for the solar project contractor likened the project to baking a cake, saying, "We didn't have a good recipe here and we're afraid of toasting something."**<sup>3</sup>

Even if the project had come off as planned, the VA estimates the solar panels would save about \$150,000 a year (about 12 percent) in electricity costs. Meaning **it would take 53 years for the panels to pay for themselves.**<sup>4</sup>

Members of the Arkansas congressional delegation, including Senator John Boozman and Rep. French Hill (R)-who represents Little Rock, are asking the Inspector General to investigate this matter further.<sup>5</sup>

### **Uncle Sam, an abundant source of waste**

<sup>1</sup> Dover, Erica, *Little Rock VA built solar panels knowing they would be "relocated"*; KATV (ABC) 7, Little Rock, AR; April 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Berry, Josh, *7,000 Solar Panels at VA Hospital Remain Turned Off*; Arkansasmatters.com, Nextstarbroadcasting; Arkansas, April 2015

<sup>4</sup> Buck, Philip, *State delegation looking into VA Hospital solar panels*; THV (CBS) 11, Little Rock, AR; April 2015

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



## WASTE REPORT for November 23, 2015

### Special Thanksgiving Foods

Thursday, millions of Americans will sit down to Thanksgiving dinner. While you enjoy the sweet potatoes and green beans, you might not realize that according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), **except for the turkey and stuffing, just about everything else on your table is considered “special” and eligible for federal support from the \$72.5 million Specialty Crop Block Grant program (SCBGP).**<sup>1</sup>

According to USDA, “The SCBGP focuses on projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops...The block grants are designed to increase the long-term success of producers and broaden the market for specialty crops.”<sup>2</sup> Allowable activities under these grants include some types of marketing, travel, consultants, attending conferences, development of websites or mobile apps, and more.

So, what exactly qualifies as a specialty crop? You may be envisioning some exotic herb or something new to the market. It would probably be something rare, atypical, and thus in need of competitive enhancement. You would probably be surprised to learn that according to USDA, just about everything is “special.”

In fact, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack said in his April 18, 2014 blog post, “Specialty crops make up the bulk of what we eat—all of our fruits and vegetables, tree nuts and dried fruits—as well as things like cut flowers and nursery crops.”<sup>3</sup> It seems when Congress created the program, the definition of “specialty” was wide enough you could drive a truck through it... and it is a big truck.

**But, the bulk of what we eat? Yes, USDA lists over 300 special crops and only 36 non-qualified crops. So, what exactly is on the list? Here is just a sampling:**

- apples • strawberries • raspberries • blueberries • blackberries • peaches • sweet corn • potatoes • green beans • peas (all varieties) • broccoli • grapes • almonds • pears • cherries • carrots • Brussels sprouts (yuck)<sup>4</sup>

Seems these are hardly new and unheard of crops. USDA blog post a Deputy Administrator said of one specialty crop, “[w]hether purchased fresh, frozen, or pureed, the **blueberry has long been a staple in the diets of many people.**” A specialty-staple, who knew? Even more weird is quinoa is on the non-qualified list of crops.<sup>5</sup>

Oh, and it is not just food. Turfgrass (sod) makes the cut and so do live Christmas trees (future Waste Report maybe). So even after Thanksgiving dinner is over your pocketbook is not safe - your tax dollars might have gone to support the football field you see on TV or the tree the family cuts down at the local u-cut place.

## Doesn't this make you feel special?

<sup>1</sup> SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANTS: Helping farmers who raise fruits, vegetables, and nuts with improved training, infrastructure, and marketing; National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition; Washington, D.C.; October 2015

<sup>2</sup> Grants & Opportunities: Specialty Crop Block Grant Program; United States Department of Agriculture; Washington, D.C.; November 2015  
<http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants>

<sup>3</sup> Vilsack, Tom; Secretary of Agriculture; *Secretary's Column: Farm Bill Supports Specialty Crop Growers, Improves Access to Healthy Food*; United States Department of Agriculture; Washington, D.C.; April 2014 <http://blogs.usda.gov/2014/04/18/secretarys-column-farm-bill-supports-specialty-crop-growers-improves-access-to-healthy-food/#more-51325>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/USDASpecialtyCropDefinition.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Parrott, Charles; *Celebrating the Blueberry – A Fruit and an Industry That Really Packs a Punch*; United States Department of Agriculture; Washington, D.C.; July 2014 <http://blogs.usda.gov/2014/07/03/celebrating-the-blueberry-a-fruit-and-an-industry-that-really-packs-a-punch>





WASTE REPORT for December 21, 2015

'Tis the Season to be Wasting, Fa La La La - La - La La – La - La  
(Your Government Sponsored Christmas Tree)

Friday morning, children and parents all across the world will gather around the Christmas tree to see what Santa left. Maybe you finally got the kids got the National Science Foundation's [climate change video game](#) they've been begging for. Just kidding, we know no one actually asked for that. Even though they already paid for it.

But at the center of all those gifts is a stunted evergreen decorated with blinking lights and memories of Christmas past. Perhaps you and the family went out to cut down your tree this year, and maybe it was a TV commercial on Thanksgiving Day that inspired this joyous family experience. But, even if your tree is fake, your tax dollars paid for that commercial.

So, why is Uncle Sam making TV commercials for Christmas trees? Well, as *The Waste Report* showed in our [Thanksgiving edition](#), virtually all crops (including Christmas trees) are a "specialty" product according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This makes them eligible for special marketing assistance grants. Combine overly broad eligibility criteria, intergovernmental bureaucracy, and agencies flush with your tax dollars, and BOOM, Christmas tree commercials.

In this case, the Georgia Christmas Tree Association got \$50k in federal funds, "to boost the sales of Georgia Grown Christmas trees by implementing a 30 second cable TV ad that would run for four days over the 2012, 2013, and 2014 Thanksgiving weekends." <sup>1</sup>

One might think Georgia must have a fledgling Christmas tree industry to need Uncle Sam's help. While Georgia is not a Christmas tree juggernaut like Oregon or North Carolina, with over 50,000 trees, they are hardly a slouch either. In fact, Georgia produces more trees than 28 other states, including Idaho and Montana.<sup>2</sup>

True, a Christmas tree might not be an everyday purchase, but with about 30 million real trees sold every year <sup>3</sup> this is hardly a niche industry either, making its classification as a "specialty" all the more absurd.

By the way, come Valentine's Day, if you see an ad reminding you to get roses for your sweetheart...yep, that too could have been funded by Uncle Sam as specialty crop marketing.

**Merry Christmas!!! See you in 2016**



Is this one of those [\\$13k treadmills](#) Dep. of Energy Tried to buy?

HINT: This One Is The Climate Change Video Game



<sup>1</sup> USASpending.gov; Grant Number 12-25-B-1455  
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.realchristmastrees.org/dnn/Portals/22/Files/STATES%20BY%20TREES%20HARVESTED.pdf>  
<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statista.com/statistics/209249/purchase-figures-for-real-and-fake-christmas-trees-in-the-us/>



*WASTE REPORT for November 16, 2015*

**Bald is Beautiful, but Waste is Not**

Maybe the comb runs through your hair a little easier than it used to, or trips to the barber take less time these days. But whether you have just accepted it, are trying to fight it, or are not even losing your hair at all, your tax dollars are going to combat baldness.

**The National Institute of Health (NIH) spent \$22,500<sup>1</sup> on a grant to put on the 9<sup>th</sup> World Congress for Hair Research being held in Miami, Florida this week.<sup>2</sup>** Hair research is not uncommon for NIH and the National Science Foundation to fund. But usually that research falls in one of two categories: the study of hair for forensic identification purposes, or the study of inner-ear hair and how it contributes to hearing loss.

**But make no mistake the 9<sup>th</sup> World Congress is definitely about baldness.** The theme of this year's conference is Reflect, Rejuvenate, and Regenerate, and includes sessions like, *Growing Better Hair: Impacting Pre-Emergent Hair via Scalp Condition; Hair Dye; Hair Care; and Robotic Hair Transplants.*<sup>3</sup>

**Hair loss treatment, by the way, is a booming \$3.5 billion industry.<sup>4</sup>** So, aside from the obvious question of why the federal government is funding a hair loss conference, one has to wonder if this funding was needed in the first place.

In fact the World Congress has over twenty general sponsors including companies like Proctor and Gamble and Women's Rogaine, who together contributed at least \$125,000 in general sponsorship dollars, and more in event specific sponsorships. In addition to the sponsors, participants in the conference must pay between \$675 and almost \$1,200, and just one booth in the exhibit hall costs \$3,500.<sup>5</sup>

Some may argue that with a \$3.7 trillion budget and hundreds of millions of dollars of waste already identified in *The Waste Report*, \$22,500 is not that bad. But consider **the average American would have to work three years, three months, before their taxes would pay for this grant.** That's enough to make you pull your hair out.

**The Federal Government:  
Guaranteed to Grow Waste on Any Surface**

<sup>1</sup> Note: An earlier version of this report stated the amount as \$15,000, however subsequently a second grant for \$7,500 was also issued for this conference.

<sup>2</sup> *9TH WORLD CONGRESS FOR HAIR RESEARCH (2015 WCHR)*; National Institute of Health RePORT Grant Database; Washington, D.C.; September & November 2015 (respectively) Grant numbers: 1R13AR068911-01A1and 3R13AR068911-01A1S1

<sup>3</sup> *Final Program Guide-9<sup>th</sup> World Congress for Hair Research*; North American Hair Research Society: Geneva, IL; November 2015

<sup>4</sup> Bergeson, Laine; *The Truth About Hair Loss And Baldness Cures*; Huffington Post; New York, NY. November 2014

<sup>5</sup> *Sponsorship Opportunities-9<sup>th</sup> World Congress for Hair Research*; North American Hair Research Society: Geneva, IL; November 2015



**SPECIAL EDITION WASTE REPORT for November 12, 2015**

**DOD's \$43 Million Gas Station Almost No One Can Use**

**The Waste Report strives to report on original examples of egregious government waste uncovered by the Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee (FSO). However, sometimes something so shocking comes along that it deserves mention here, even though has already come to public attention. This is one of those cases.**

Several news outlets have reported on a \$43 million gas station built by the Department of Defense in Afghanistan. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction issued a *Special Report* in late October on the compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station, which cost at least 86 times more than similar projects.<sup>1</sup>

FSO dug deeper into the report and found the ridiculous price tag just scratches the surface.

To begin with, the IG found no evidence that DOD ever did a feasibility study before moving forward with the project. Had they done so, they would have found that Afghanistan, “[I]acks the natural gas transmission and local distribution infrastructure necessary to support a viable market for CNG vehicles.”

But even if getting CNG to the station was not a problem, it seems no one in Afghanistan can afford vehicles that run on the fuel. CNG conversion costs as much as \$800, in a country where the average annual income is about \$690. This may explain why the U.S. government paid to convert at least 120 Afghan vehicles to CNG. What is strange is one of the project goals was to expand CNG usage to Mazar-e Shariff because of its 100,000 cars. But DOD failed to do its home work, mischaracterized the city as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest in the country (it is actually 4<sup>th</sup>) and ignoring the economics of transitioning those cars to CNG.

Even more troubling is that DOD seemed to have stonewalled the whole investigation. The IG noted that they discovered the vehicle conversions in a video on a contractor's website (where they noted the U.S. government footed the bill). DOD simply did not respond to IG inquiries on that subject.

In fact, DOD did not answer any of the IG's questions, saying the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO-the \$800 million program through which the project was funded) was shuttered in March of this year and no one knows anything about the program anymore. As the IG rightly said in the report's cover letter, “Frankly, I find it both shocking and incredible that DOD asserts that it no longer has any knowledge about TFBSO, an \$800 million program that reported directly to the Office of the Secretary of Defense and only shut down a little over six months ago.”

These are the ingredients of waste:

An [unaudited bureaucracy](#)<sup>2</sup> flush with (your) cash, a rebuilding effort,  
and an environmental angle in a warzone halfway around the world.

<sup>1</sup> DOD'S COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS FILLING STATION IN AFGHANISTAN: AN ILL-CONCEIVED \$43 MILLION PROJECT; Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction; Afghanistan. October 2015

<sup>2</sup> Senator Rand Paul, M.D., Chairman of the FSO Subcommittee introduced the [Audit the Pentagon Act of 2015 \(S. 300\)](#) on January 26, 2015



*WASTE REPORT for November 9, 2015*

**Dreaming of Waste: Medicare overpays for Sleep Studies**

You have probably heard of sleep apnea, the condition where a person momentarily stops breathing during sleep. In fact, Medicare alone spends almost \$300 million a year on sleep studies to determine if patients have this condition. **Unfortunately, it seems Medicare has a problem with overpaying for these important studies, costing taxpayers as much as \$175 million a year.**

In a recent report, the **Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services noted that one provider of sleep studies recently agreed to repay \$15.3 million resulting from false claims.**<sup>1</sup>

The IG report delved into another sleep study provider from Orlando that was estimated to have been **overpaid more than \$1 million, or almost 60 percent of all payments they received.** Specifically, the IG found, that in a sample of 100 patients, **74 percent of items billed were not allowable under Medicare guidelines. In addition, nearly one-third of those payments were made without supporting documentation, such as a doctor's referral.** And, in one instance, Medicare paid for a procedure that was not even done.<sup>2</sup>

Shockingly, roughly 60 percent of payments made to this particular provider were over 3-years old. Which means Medicare paid the bill for services without the required documentation and never followed up again.<sup>3</sup> This never would have been noticed if it were not for the Inspector General. If this is the trend, then **the government could be improperly paying as much as \$175 million a year just on sleep studies.**

It is no wonder that the **Government Accountability Office estimated earlier this year that Medicare makes over \$45 billion, or roughly 12.7% of its outlays, in improper payments annually.** Further GAO lists a root cause of Medicare improper payments as, “[i]nsufficient documentation for home health claims...”<sup>4</sup>

For those keeping score, earlier this year the Waste Report reported how Coast Guard members were able to use a [medical travel program to take vacations](#). What made this waste possible? **Travel approvals made without required documentation**, including missing doctor referrals. See a trend?

<sup>1</sup> Pilcher, Lori S., *TOTAL SLEEP MANAGEMENT, INC., BILLED MEDICARE FOR UNALLOWABLE SLEEP STUDY SERVICES*, Office of the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services; Washington, D.C.; October 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp 6

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp 5

<sup>4</sup> Bertoni, Daniel; Davis, Beryl H.; *IMPROPER PAYMENTS: Government-Wide Estimates and Use of Death Data to Help Prevent Payments to Deceased Individuals*; Testimony Before the Before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate; Government Accountability Office; Washington, D.C.; March 2015





*WASTE REPORT for November 2, 2015*

**U.S. Taxpayers Paying to Study Albanian Tourism**

Have you ever dreamed of a European vacation, maybe you would like to check out England, France, Germany, or...Albania? Well, if you have not thought of spending your money on a trip to Albania, you might be surprised to learn the federal government is spending your tax dollars to study and promote their tourism industry.

That is right! The U.S. Agency for International Development is currently planning to award as much as **\$6 million as part of Tourism as a Leading Edge**, a joint venture with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, **for studies and work to improve tourism in Albania.**<sup>1</sup>

The problem it, seems, is that the Eurozone economic crisis is having a negative ripple effect on the Albanian economy which previously relied heavily on remittances of earnings abroad, particularly from Greece.

**To restart their economy, the Albanian government is hoping to capitalize on the country's tourism potential, but it is the U.S. taxpayer who is foot at least part of the bill.** Amazingly, tourism is already a major contributor to the Albanian economy. According to the grant description, tourism (in total) currently accounts for 17 percent of the nation's economy. By comparison, The World Travel and Tourism Council reports that tourism contributes 9.5 percent to the worldwide economy and 8.4 percent to the U.S. economy.<sup>2</sup> **This means Albania's tourism economy, as a percent of GDP, is already larger than the U.S.**

Meanwhile, the U.S. Treasury Department contributes approximately \$100 million to Brand USA, a joint public-private effort to promote the U.S. tourism industry by attracting foreign vacationers to America.<sup>3</sup> **In other words, one part of the federal government is working against another; one effort spending money to get foreign tourists to vacation in American, the other to get them to vacation in Albania. What next? Provide public housing to people who already own their own homes? Oh wait, we do that too.**

At the least, one must wonder: why if this is a priority for the Albanian government, why is the U.S. taxpayer is footing the bill?

**Uncle Sam, "Come Visit the U.S. ...or go to Albania"**

<sup>1</sup> *Tourism as a Leading Edge*, Agency for International Development; Funding opportunity number: APS-182-16-000001

<sup>2</sup> *Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2014 United States*; World Travel and Tourism Council; London, United Kingdom; 2014

<sup>3</sup> *FY2016 Objectives, Summary Marketing Plan, & Budget*; Brand USA; Washington, D.C.; August 2015



*WASTE REPORT for October 26, 2015*

**Free Community College for Foreign Kids**

For millions of Americans, community colleges offer an affordable and convenient opportunity to begin a college career or to gain a competitive edge in the job market. But it turns out the federal government thinks community colleges should not be limited to, well, the community. **Thus is planning to spend \$15.6 million to bring foreign students to America to attend these institutions for one year.**<sup>1</sup>

The FY2016 Community College Initiative (CCI) Program which is run by the State Department's Office of Global Educational Programs at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) plans to target poor students from several countries including India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

India's inclusion in the CCI is particularly interesting. **Last year, the University Grants Commission of India (something of a national board of education) approved the creation of 98 new community colleges across India.**<sup>3</sup> **Meaning American community colleges will now be in competition with Indian community colleges for students.**

Even more shocking about the Indian case **is that earlier this year the State Department issued a \$70,000 grant opportunity to put on a traveling photo exhibition of American community colleges throughout India.**<sup>4</sup> It seems Indian parents are not too sure about the concept of community college so, **the State Department has to put in an extra effort to sell the idea...with pictures. Two State Department boondoggles rolled in one.**

The kids that do get to come to U.S. community colleges may only select from only eight fields of study, including, Applied Engineering, Business Management and Administration, Media, and Public Safety. **But with only one year of study they will not be able to take a two-year associate's degree with them back to their home countries. Also, missing are staples of community college curricula such as nursing or vocational skills, which would prove useful in developing economies. At least the National Science Foundation's Winemaking classes do not appear to have made the cut either.**

**In case you were wondering, \$15.6 million is enough to pay for 2330 semesters at the average community college.**<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> FY 2016 Community College Initiative Program; Department of State; Washington, DC; Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAS-16-008

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> UGC approves 98 community colleges from five states, IndiaToday.IN; New Dehli, India; May 2014

<sup>4</sup> Photographic Exhibit on Community Colleges in the U.S.; Department of State, Mission to India; New Delhi, India; May 2015; Funding Opportunity Number: NDRFP16-07

<sup>5</sup> Calculated using data from The College Board. <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/pay-for-college/college-costs/college-costs-faqs>



*WASTE REPORT for October 19, 2015*

**NIH: Finding Friends to Fight the Freshman 15lbs!!!**

The “freshman 15” is an old legend around college campuses; the idea that new college students, away from home and confronted with a campus food service smorgasbord tend to put on a few extra pounds.

**Well the National Institutes for Health aims to get to the bottom of this with a \$380k grant to study how social relationships in college contribute to weight-related problems.**<sup>1</sup> Because it’s not the food you eat, it’s the friends you make.

The study being done at Arizona State University (ASU) **seeks to identify how the friendships freshman make in college contribute to weight-gain** and poor eating habits. In addition to collecting data on the types of friends college freshmen make, the study will, **“survey friends of participating students across an academic year to explore friends' potential impact on freshmen's weight-related outcomes.”**<sup>2</sup>

Nothing like asking your new friends about your eating habits. **“So, how many chili dogs did Tom really eat?” “So, how many of your sorority sisters skipped breakfast?”**

But there may be a wrinkle in this plan that makes it even more wasteful of tax dollars. **College weight gain might not even be a problem.** Numerous independent studies spanning decades have agreed that freshman **only gain around 2.7 to 3.5lbs over their entire freshman year.** It turns out it was Seventeen Magazine that arbitrarily put the number at 15 back in 1989.<sup>3</sup>

But even the 2 to 3lbs might not even be a problem. An Ohio State University (OSU) study comparing college freshman to their non-college peers and found only a discrepancy of about half a pound, attributing most of the weight gain at the tail end of growing to adult size. The OSU study concludes, **“Anti-obesity efforts directed specifically at college freshmen will likely have little impact on obesity prevalence among young adults.”**<sup>4</sup> Even ones aimed at your social weight gain?

To put it in perspective, with an in-state cost of attendance at about \$27k and out-of-state at \$42k, **these funds could have paid for 9 to 14 freshman’s first year at ASU, if not more critical research or reduce the federal deficit.**<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bruening, Meredith M, *The Role of Friendship Networks on BMI and Behaviors among College Freshman*, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ. NIH Award Number 5DP5OD017910-03 September 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Breene, Sophia, *Why the ‘Freshman 15’ is a Lie*; Huffington Post via Greatist; New York, NY; September 2013

<sup>4</sup> Grabmeier, Jeff, *The Freshman Fifteen just a Myth, Nationwide Study Reveals*; Research News-Ohio State University; Columbus, OH October, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated using cost attendance at ASU found at: <https://students.asu.edu/financialaid/coa>



*WASTE REPORT for October 5, 2015*

**Houston, We Have A Problem...with our Slice**

When Allen Shepard first proposed hitting a golf ball on the moon as part of the Apollo 14 mission, NASA said it was, “**far too frivolous.**”<sup>1</sup> They eventually backed down; but like landing on the moon, the sentiment that golf in space is frivolous seems to have faded from memory. This may explain why **last year, Cobra Puma Golf was able to do an experiment on the International Space Station (ISS).**

So, what kind of research does golf club maker do in space? According to Duane Ratliff, Director of Center for Advancement of Science in Space (CASIS), “[t]his is not research on a golf club,” but rather on how certain materials behave in zero gravity.<sup>2</sup> However, Cobra’s website tells a different story, saying research in space is, “**allowing us to create the most technologically advanced golf products in the world... technologies that will enhance the performance of all golfers.**”<sup>3</sup> Including Astronauts?

**NASA Watch (a space industry watchdog) said of the project, “CASIS Would Rather Go Golfing Than Do Actual ISS Research.”** But it seems “actual research” is hard to come by. CASIS’s 2014 Annual Report shows they received only 122 proposals for research.<sup>4</sup> Thus, **with low competition for ISS for resources, golf equipment can make the cut.**

CASIS by the way, is a non-profit that NASA selected to facilitate outside research on the ISS. For their efforts, **they get a \$15 million grant each year from the federal government, but** as the NASA Inspector General reports (and is affirmed in CASIS annual report), “[t]o date, **CASIS has raised just \$14,550 in cash [from outside contributors].**”<sup>5</sup>

This all stems from the Obama Administration’s 2010 decision to end the Space Shuttle replacement program, Constellation which cost taxpayers \$9 billion but never flew. In consolation, the ISS was designated a national lab (making it available for private research) and its life was extended to 2024 (it was supposed to be deorbited this year).<sup>6</sup> And, for those keeping score, NASA is asking for approximately **\$3 billion to fund the ISS just for the next year.**<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, U.S. astronauts, now accesses the ISS in seats purchased on the Russian Soyuz rocket, at a cost of as much as \$70 million apiece.<sup>8</sup>

**Government Waste: par for the course...even in Space**

<sup>1</sup> Rose, M.L. *Did Neil Armstrong Play Golf on the Moon?*, Golfsmith-Golf Tips; Austin, TX

<sup>2</sup> Dean, James, *A better golf club? Space may play a role in that.* Florida Today; Florida, September 2014

<sup>3</sup> *Space Is In It*, Puma Cobra Golf, <http://www.cobragolf.com/cobra-king-ltd>

<sup>4</sup> *Annual Report FY 2014*, Center for the Advancement of Science in Space; Melbourne, FL; December 2014

<sup>5</sup> *Extending the Operational Life of the International Space Station Until 2024*, Inspector General-National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Washington, D.C. September 2014 Report number IG-14-031

<sup>6</sup> Matson, Jason, *Phased Out: Obama’s NASA Budget Would Cancel Constellation Moon Program, Privatize Manned Launches*; Armonk, NY February 2010

<sup>7</sup> *FY 2016 PRESIDENT’S BUDGET REQUEST SUMMARY*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Washington, D.C.; February 2015

<sup>8</sup> *Extending the Operational Life of the International Space Station Until 2024*, Inspector General-National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Washington, D.C. September 2014 Report number IG-14-031





*WASTE REPORT for September 22, 2015*

**Invasive Burros, Coyotes, and Waste: OH MY!!!**

Have you ever left the lid off the garbage can only to find animals got into it the next morning? With trash strewn across the yard, you dialed an exterminator to immediately come out and deal with the pesky critters. Not likely. Instead you became vigilant about keeping the can closed?

Well, the U.S. Department of Defense DOES call the exterminator, or something like it, to deal with the **invasive feral burro and coyote population at Fort Irwin, Calif., which costs taxpayers \$218k.**<sup>1</sup>

**But, why is this a new problem** for a base that has been in continuous operation for over 60 years?<sup>2</sup> Well, it appears that the **coyotes and burros are attracted by humans, on-base, who either feed the animals directly or leave food and trash in the open.** The base's lead wildlife biologist Liana Aker advised in an article just last year, "First, don't ever feed coyotes [which are often sick with mange]...People feeling sorry for and **feeding them is probably our biggest problem here.**"<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a cheaper alternative would be for people stationed at Fort Irwin to stop feeding the animals.

**The grant to nearby, as in almost 800 miles away, New Mexico State University (NMSU) calls for such things as, "[e]xamine the effectiveness of various medical procedures (chemical sterilants, surgical sterilization, etc.) to reduce reproduction and recruitment of juvenile animals in the burro population."**<sup>4</sup> Being that this grant is just for a study, we can assume more spending will follow based on NMSU's recommendations. And, this is not the first time dealing with the local animal population has cost the taxpayer. Earlier efforts have included a **2009 relocation of about 100 wild burros**<sup>5</sup> and a **recently revived effort to relocate desert tortoises.**<sup>6</sup>

## **So, Save the Taxpayer's Dime: Don't feed the Wildlife**

<sup>1</sup> *Investigation into the Control of Invasive Feral Burro and Coyote Populations on Fort Irwin CA*, Department of Defense, Via USASpending.gov. Award number W9132T1520001; February 2015

<sup>2</sup> *Fort Irwin History* <http://www.irwin.army.mil/Pages/VisitorsTab/FtIrwinHistory.html>

<sup>3</sup> *DESERT DENIZEN: The Coyote, Iconic symbol of the Wild Southwest or Overpopulated Nuisance?*, Aker, Liana; Ozawa, Leslie; Army.mil. August 2014, Accessed July 2015: <http://www.army.mil/article/131951/>

<sup>4</sup> *Investigation into the Control of Invasive Feral Burro and Coyote Populations on Fort Irwin CA*, Department of Defense, Via USASpending.gov. Award number W9132T1520001; February 2015

<sup>5</sup> *Pesky burros to be removed from SoCal desert base*, Inland Daily Bulletin; Ontario, CA; July 2009

<sup>6</sup> Danelski, David; *FORT IRWIN: Relocation of desert tortoises OK to resume*, The Press Enterprise; Riverside, CA; May 2012



WEEKLY WASTE REPORT for September 8, 2015

**In the ZONE, A Perception of Waste**

Some athletes call it “the zone,” the sense of being on your game; the feeling you are so hot that you are on fire; you just cannot miss. But it seems the **National Science Foundation (NSF) did miss when it spent \$350k to fund a study of athletes in the zone.**

That’s right, a study, originally funded in 2010 and conducted by researchers at Purdue University, looked at how perception relates to performance. **The grant leads off with, “[a]thletes playing well describe distortions in spatial perception: basketball hoops appear as large as hula-hoops, golf holes as big as manholes, and baseballs as big as grapefruits.”<sup>1</sup>** The big question here? Do athletes play well because they perceive baseballs to be as big as grapefruits, does the perception materialize when playing well, or is it just a false memory?

This is already sounding very **similar to the NSF-funded study covered in The Waste Report of July, 14, *Feeling Bad About Government Waste?***, where NSF spent \$175k to figure out how good people are at predicting how they will feel about decisions they make.

So, what was learned in this study? In tennis, players who hit the ball out of bounds thought it came at them faster than those who hit it in play, and **when playing Pong (yes, a version of the video game Pong) the virtual ball seems to move slower when the paddle is bigger.<sup>2</sup>**

But most fascinating (as in why are taxpayers paying for this?) was **an experiment relating to the perception of walls in parkour.** What is parkour, you ask. Well, sometimes called “free running,” parkour is **an urban sport involving scaling and jumping off walls, similar to what is seen on *American Ninja Warrior*.** And, thanks to NSF’s funding, **we’ve learned that traceurs (skilled parkour athletes) see walls they may scale as shorter than novices and presumably everyone else.<sup>3</sup>**

While a professional sports team or a trainer may find value in understanding how an athletes’ perception may influence their performance (or visa-versa), Uncle Sam should leave it up to those entities to provide the funding for such projects.

**Government’s Use of Tax Dollars: Definitely not in the Zone.**

<sup>1</sup> *Action's Effect on Perception*, NSF; Research at Purdue University; Award No. 0957051.

<sup>2</sup> *Performance and ease influence perceived speed*, Witt, JK ; Sugovic, M. Web of Science Core Collection; PION LTD, 207 BRONDESBURY PARK, LONDON NW2 5JN, ENGLAND; 2010

<sup>3</sup> *What is Parkour*, World Freerunning and Parkour; <http://www.wfpf.com/parkour/>



*WASTE REPORT for August 31, 2015*

**NOAA: Surfing the Channels While Riding the Waves**

Imagine you were going to miss your favorite TV show or a critical sporting event because you had to work. Well, the crew and scientists of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) ship Fairweather do not have to worry about such things because the **American taxpayer is spending over \$40,000 to make sure they have premium satellite TV while at sea.**<sup>1</sup>

The Fairweather is part of NOAA's Pacific fleet, primarily charged with studying and mapping the ocean floor.<sup>2</sup> With a maximum duration of about three weeks between refueling, the scientists and crew can undoubtedly get homesick and even bored on the open seas. So, it seems reasonable to provide some level of basic entertainment.

But, there is no basic cable (or satellite) here; **the Fairweather's package has over 300 TV and music channels, including premium sports channels, such as the PAC-12 and Big Ten Networks, NFL, NHL, and MLB Networks, and NBA TV.**<sup>3</sup> In fact, only Dish Network's (who won this contract) highest-end package offers such a line up.<sup>4</sup>

Nielson reported last year that **the average American home has 189 channels or about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> less than are available on the Fairweather.** Interesting enough, Nielson also shows that **households consistently only watch about 17 channels no matter how many are available.**<sup>5</sup> **But when it is on Uncle Sam's dime... go ahead load it up;** someone onboard might want to watch Rural TV, which is part of the package. And load it up is just what NOAA did, with 44 satellite receivers so that everyone aboard has personal access to this viewing smorgasbord.<sup>6</sup>

By comparison, **members of United States Navy only get three TV (News, Sports, and a variety channel) and three music channels on ship,** all run by Armed Forces Networks.<sup>7</sup> Why not NOAA style satellite TV on Naval ships? As one source told the FSO subcommittee, "we need that bandwidth to do our jobs."

**Stay tuned, Up Next: More Waste**

<sup>1</sup> *Satellite TV Service*, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Fedbizopps.gov, Solicitation # NMAN79111401412DLZ Aug. 2014

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.oma.noaa.gov/publications/fa\\_flier.pdf](http://www.oma.noaa.gov/publications/fa_flier.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> *Satellite TV Service*, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Fedbizopps.gov, Solicitation # NMAN79111401412DLZ Aug. 2014

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.dish.com/compare-channels/?vals=AT250>

<sup>5</sup> *CHANGING CHANNELS: AMERICANS VIEW JUST 17 CHANNELS DESPITE RECORD NUMBER TO CHOOSE FROM*, The Nielson Company, New York, NY; May 2014

<sup>6</sup> *Satellite TV Service*, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; Fedbizopps.gov, Solicitation # NMAN79111401412DLZ, Aug. 2014

<sup>7</sup> *Fact Sheet: Direct to Sailors (DTS)*, Department of Defense and the American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS), May, 2012



U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
**Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight**

Senator Rand Paul, M.D. (Kentucky), Chairman



*WASTE REPORT for August 24, 2015*

## **The Sweet, Sweet Musical Styling of Waste**

From Duke Ellington to Tony Bennett, Jazz is a part of the American soul. One group taking the genre to new levels is the New Orleans based Soul Rebels. The Village Voice said of the group, “[t]he hip-hop-inflected eight-piece Soul Rebels are arguably the most dynamically au courant of the city’s many fine brass bands.”<sup>1</sup>

Have not had a chance to take in one of their concerts? Well, you’ve paid for one of their concerts overseas. That’s right, earlier this summer, **the Department of State spent nearly \$50,000 of taxpayer money to, “...support the Soul Rebels to travel to Turkey to give public performances as part of the 22nd Istanbul Jazz Festival”**<sup>2</sup>

What is most surprising is that **the Soul Rebels’ were already on a European tour, making taxpayer financing for the stop in Turkey unnecessary.** In fact, after Turkey, the Rebels went on to make stops in Belgium, France, Ireland, Norway, and meet up with Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga at the “North Sea Jazz Festival,” in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup>

**The group is hardly a fledgling act needing Uncle Sam’s help.** Soul Rebels has put out six albums since 1999, including *Power=Power (2013)* where they incorporate their unique sound to popular songs by the likes of Bruno Mars and Nicki Minaj. That is not the only company they are keeping. They share a label with, Tom Jones, They Might Be Giants, and Alison Krauss.<sup>4</sup>

**So, the question has to be asked, why does such a cutting edge, established group need Uncle Sam to pay for them to play at a well-established European jazz festival?**

## **Just a little bit waste to get you singing the blues**

<sup>1</sup> Gehr, Richard, *SOUL REBELS+JON CLEARY & THE ABSOLUTE MONSTER GENTLEMEN+LOST BAYOU RAMBLERS*; The Village Voice; New York, NY, June 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *IZMIR FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE, ARTS AND EDUCATION*; USASpending.Gov; Washington, DC; May, 2015

<sup>3</sup> North Sea Jazz Festival, Songkick.org <http://www.songkick.com/festivals/32691-north-sea-jazz/id/21183698-north-sea-jazz-festival-2015>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rounder.com/artists/#D>





*WASTE REPORT for August 17, 2015*

**FEMA: Cover this Disaster Twice**

Paying for something twice is one of those things that gives you a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach. **When it comes to disaster recovery, Uncle Sam often unnecessarily pays twice, costing taxpayers over \$50 million in the processes.**

According to more than thirty Department of Homeland Security Inspector General reports, from just the last five years, **taxpayers have spent at least \$35.5 million remediating disaster damage also paid for by outside insurance.**

For example, following Hurricane Sandy, Seaside Heights, NJ, billed FEMA over \$45,000 for vehicle repairs that were also covered by the city's insurance policy.<sup>1</sup> **Palm Beach County or municipalities therein, claimed \$622,596<sup>2</sup> for a variety of projects also paid for by insurance, including \$20,581 for repairs to a golf course.<sup>3</sup>**

But that's not all, the FSO Subcommittee also found another **\$17.7 million in double payments for disaster recovery** reported by the Inspector General in just in the last five years. One example included the Port of Tillamook Bay, OR, billing FEMA twice for the same debris-removal totaling a **whopping \$1.4 million overcharge.**

What makes this case interesting (and shocking) is the double billing was caused by Tillamook's alternative use project. What is an alternative use project? Well, storms damaged a little-used rail line that Tillamook decided was not needed anyway. **So, FEMA gave them \$44.6 million (or 90% of the cost to repair the actual storm damage) to be used for an alternative environmental project (which only in part included flood mitigation) in the Tillamook watershed.** Unfortunately, Tillamook billed FEMA for the debris removal under both its traditional disaster recovery award and the alternative environmental project.<sup>4</sup>

It is understandable that in a disaster quick action is needed and some things fall through the cracks, but with longer term projects, particularly those not actually mitigating disaster damage, or lower priority projects like golf course reconstruction, it should not be that hard to figure out if something is covered by insurance or already paid for.

<sup>1</sup> *FEMA Should Recover \$2.75 Million...*, Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General; Washington, DC; May 2015. Report Number OIG-15-90-D

<sup>2</sup> Aggregated

<sup>3</sup> *FEMA Should Recover \$4.9 Million of Public Assistance Grant Funds Awarded to Palm Beach County, Florida – Hurricane Wilma*, Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General; Washington, DC; July 2013. Report Number OIG\_DA-13-23

<sup>4</sup> *FEMA Misapplied the Cost Estimating Format Resulting in an \$8 Million Overfund to the Port of Tillamook Bay, Oregon*; Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General; Washington, DC; May 2015. Report Number OIG-15-89-D



*WEEKLY WASTE REPORT for August 3, 2015*

**School Lunch Program: Feeding Lawns, Not Kids?**

According to the California Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes (CSOOO), over at least a six year period, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) **diverted more than \$158 million of federal School Lunch Program funding to other uses including buying lawn sprinklers and paying the salaries at the district's television station.**<sup>1</sup>

One tactic used was to reduce lunch periods to as little as 20 minutes in some schools, so students (whose lunch was already paid for with federal funds) would be unable to receive food.<sup>2</sup>

But this did not stop LAUSD from crying foul about school lunch funding. In January 2009 (while funds were being misappropriated) a LAUSD press release carried the headline, **"Cafeteria fund cash flow may leave neediest LAUSD students hungry,"** advocating for increased funds. The release notes that, "Superintendent Cortines has directed a **comprehensive legislative and media initiative to ensure state decision makers and the public understand the consequences of a compromised meal program would have on our students ability to learn.**"<sup>3</sup>

The 2013 CSOOO report found **several other California districts mismanage or illegally reappropriated the Federal School Lunch funds**, and implied it was a general practice. What should concern federal taxpayers is that generally, once the money is in state hands, the state is responsible for oversight. In the case of California, the average state auditor is keeping tabs on (or trying to) federal (and state) funds going to a whopping 51 school districts. At approximately \$2 billion annually, California is the largest recipient of federal funds from the School Lunch Program.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, upon assuming office late last year, **California Senate President, Keven de Leon, who represents portions of Los Angeles, discontinued CSOOO.**

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<sup>1</sup> Sweeny, Jim; *Food Fight: Small team of state examiners no match for schools that divert student meal funds*; California Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes; Sacramento, CA. February 2013

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> *Cafeteria Fund Cash Flow May Leave Neediest LAUSD Students Hungry*, Office of Communication, Los Angeles Unified School District; Los Angeles. January 2009

<sup>4</sup> Sweeny, Jim; *Food Fight: Small team of state examiners no match for schools that divert student meal funds*; California Senate Office of Oversight and Outcomes; Sacramento, CA. February 2013



*WASTE REPORT for July 20, 2015*

**The Smell of Waste, in More Ways Than One**

You may have seen Rob Port's [WatchDog.org](http://WatchDog.org) article on the sewer debacle in Ray, ND. Expecting a population explosion from the Bakken oil boom, the town of **about 600 people nearly tripled their sewer capacity at a cost of \$2.5 million**. But then oil prices dropped, the boom cooled, and the population in Ray never took off as expected. **Now the city does not have enough waste to run its plant and is importing, well, sewage from surrounding areas.**<sup>1</sup>

A little town made a big gamble and is now importing sewage. Kind of a funny story; that is, until you learn that **the federal taxpayer footed much of the bill for the sewer upgrade**. That's right, through the EPA's Clean Water State Revolving Fund, federal dollars passed through the state and on to Ray as low interest loans, of which more than **\$760k was later forgiven.**<sup>2</sup> And, that is not counting other federal funds that may have come in to the local water authority.

But this was not just an unforeseen error. No, Ray and the state seemed to have gotten caught up in the excitement of a boom and missed the forest for the trees. **Ray's 2015 comprehensive plan forecast its population to grow by a minimum of 396 percent by the end of this decade.**<sup>3</sup> But **Williams County's** (where Ray is located), 2012 comprehensive plan, **projecting only 22 percent population growth by 2020 and a peak in 2025 at 32 percent, county-wide.**<sup>4</sup> Those figures more closely match historic boom era norms, including in Ray.

**So, it is curious how this project ever got approved.** While Ray will probably see some population growth over the next decade due to oil, it is at somewhat of a geographic disadvantage. Ray is between two larger cities, that are better positioned to grow to serve the oil industry, Tioga (pop est. 3000),<sup>5</sup> 15 miles to the east and in a higher concentration of wells; and the county seat of Williston (pop est. 30,000), 35 miles to the southwest, is simply more attractive to the influx of oil workers because of its size.<sup>6</sup>

## **Tax Dollars, Flushed Down the Toilet...And Imported to Ray, ND**

<sup>1</sup> Port, Rob; *Sh!t show: North Dakota town, sewage companies battle over poop*, WatchDog.org: North Dakota, May 2015

<sup>2</sup> *Clean Water Revolving Fund*, EPA.gov., USA Spending, and information obtained from the State of North Dakota.

<sup>3</sup> *City of Ray: Comprehensive Plan*; Prepared by CTA, Red Lodge, MD; Ray, ND; 2014

<sup>4</sup> *Williams County Comprehensive Plan 2035*; Williston, ND, December; 2012

<sup>5</sup> Community Statistics, City of Tioga, ND; 2015

<sup>6</sup> *Rent in Williston, N.D. tops averages in New York City and Los Angeles*, New York Daily News Via AP; New York, NY; Feb. 2014



## WASTE REPORT for July 14, 2015

### FEELING BAD ABOUT GOVERNMENT WASTE?

Have you ever had a salesman try to talk you into a purchase you were not too sure about? Maybe he was selling you on watching the Super Bowl on a huge new T.V. or trying to convince you that the ladies will love you in a sporty new car. That sales technique counts on the buyer ignoring more logical, fact based considerations while focusing more on a feeling you may or may not have in the future.

Well, the National Science Foundation feels sorry for people that make poor decisions based on emotion and is hoping to help with a taxpayer funded **\$175,950 grant to research ways to better predict a person's feelings about the decisions they make.**<sup>1</sup>

“People making important decisions--such as whether to undergo surgery, listen to public health warnings, or pursue a specific career-- **will be better informed if they can accurately predict how the outcomes of their decisions will make them feel.**”<sup>2</sup>

Using **logic over emotion in making decisions should just be common sense and not warrant any research; but worse still is the government spending taxpayer money to figure out how people can better use emotion to make decisions.** Maybe this grant was the product of an emotional decision based on feelings. It certainly wasn't based on a logical use of your hard earned money.

So the next time there is a hurricane warning or a medical professional says you need a procedure, **Uncle Sam wants to make sure you are fully in touch with your feelings when you make the decision on whether or not follow expert advice.**

### **How does funding this study make you feel?**

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<sup>1</sup> NSF, *Collaborative Proposal: Understanding the Improving Predictions about Future Feelings*; Research at UC-Irvine; Award No. 1451214.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid





## WEEKLY WASTE REPORT for June 29, 2015

### Taxpayers, Ensured for Loss!!!

Insurance protects against the rare and unforeseen, not the regular and predictable. You insure your car against accident, not oil change.

But, when the government is the insurer, this kind of obvious logic does not apply. Surprisingly (or maybe not), the Department of Agriculture (USDA) is paying out approximately **\$370 million annually in “prevented planting” crop insurance to farmers who cannot plant their crops in SEASONAL WETLANDS.**<sup>1</sup>

At issue is the intersection of the “prevented planting” crop insurance and prairie potholes. What are prairie potholes? They are basically ground depressions that fill with water in the rainy spring and dry out in the summer and fall, and are mostly located in the upper-Midwest. The “prevented planting” program is taxpayer subsidized crop insurance that compensates farmers when **extreme** weather prevents planting.

The problem is, some farmers claim prevented planting **each year** for the regular flooding of prairie potholes.<sup>2</sup> In fact, **farmers in sixty-five counties**, mostly in the Dakotas, **have gotten payouts, 14 years in a row**, and in another twenty-nine counties have gotten payments 13 of the last 14 years. In most cases, insurance payments were greater what direct crop subsidies would have been.<sup>3</sup>

No private insurer would stand for this and would either not offer insurance or would control for this kind of abuse. To their credit, the USDA is not complacent in this abuse. Several attempts have been made to close the prairie pothole loophole. As recently as last year, USDA “clarified” rules to effectively prohibit claims four years in a row.<sup>4</sup> But data suggests this new policy could be gamed. At the heart of the problem is that USDA simply does not have a definition of “Normal” weather.<sup>5</sup>

**So, if we know it is sure to happen, why are we insuring against it?**

<sup>1</sup> Cox, Craig, Soren Runquist, Anne Weir; *Boondoggle: “Prevented Planting” Insurance Tears Up Wetlands and Wastes Billions.* Environmental Working Group, Washington, D. C. April 2015

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Risk Management Agency-USDA. RMA Clarifies Prevented Planting Standards in the Prairie Pothole Region [Press Release]; August 2013

<sup>5</sup> Cox, Craig, Soren Runquist, Anne Weir; *Boondoggle: “Prevented Planting” Insurance Tears Up Wetlands and Wastes Billions.* Environmental Working Group, Washington, D. C. April 2015



U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight

Senator Rand Paul, M.D. (Kentucky), Chairman



*WASTE REPORT for December 14, 2015*

**Only You Can Prevent...Coffee Stains?**

Maybe you have anguished over a coffee stain on your pants or prayed an errant blotch of marinara sauce would come out of a white shirt. Well, it seems **the U. S. Forest Service is concerned about laundry too, which is why earlier this year they spent almost \$25k to build the Smokey Bear Laundromat at the Lincoln National Forest in Ruidoso, NM.**<sup>1</sup>

The project solicitation calls for converting a single car garage at the Smokey Bear Ranger House into a six machine laundromat. However, this expense is just for the facility, the washers and dryers were not included in the \$25k price.

Some readers may be envisioning a remote outpost<sup>2</sup> far from civilization. However, the Lincoln National Forest abuts the town of Ruidoso, and the **Ranger House itself is right off of a highway, across from a golf resort and next to commercial shopping on both sides.**<sup>3</sup> It is basically just another business (with a giant back yard) off a city street. Even the solicitation for the project notes that **lodging and meals can be found within two miles of the worksite.**<sup>4</sup>

**More surprising is the proposed location for the government laundromat would be just 0.2 miles from Becker's Mountain Laundry and just 0.3 miles to Evergreen Cleaner (which offers laundry services).**<sup>5</sup> But when the taxpayer is footing the bill, 0.2 miles seems a lot longer.

Ruidoso by the way is hardly a small, remote hamlet. In fact Ruidoso is something of a tourist destination with a micropolitan statistical area population of 21,223 and over 7,500 housing units.<sup>6</sup> Forest Service personnel can easily live in the local community and **hardly need a full complement of accommodations, such as laundry services, at the Smokey Bear Ranger House.**

## **Taxpayers getting taken to the cleaners once again.**

<sup>1</sup> *Smokey Bear Laundromat*; U.S. Forest Service- Lincoln National Forest, NM; Fedbizopps Solicitation Number AG-7512-S-15-0023

<sup>2</sup> Remote outposts in Lincoln National Forest (which is actually comprised of three districts sprawling over 1,000,000 acres) do have laundry facilities.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Becker's+Mountain+Laundry/@33.347922,-105.675754,15z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x0:0x4e7a642b954b60b1>

<sup>4</sup> *Smokey Bear Laundromat*; U.S. Forest Service- Lincoln National Forest, NM; Fedbizopps Solicitation Number AG-7512-S-15-0023

<sup>5</sup> Calculated by Google Maps

<sup>6</sup> *City Data for Ruidoso, New Mexico*; Country Homes of America; December 2015



## WASTE REPORT for June 22, 2015

### Measuring Waste

A teacher may have tried to teach you the metric system, but you probably still do not know what a 22° C temperature or 10K run really means.

Now the National Science Foundation is spending **\$188,000 to fund a university professor to write a book on “The Measure of Modernity: Standards and Standardization in the United States.”**<sup>1</sup> The grant synopsis notes, “A comprehensive history of standards and standardization in America does not exist...” The reasoning may be found elsewhere in the synopsis where it says, **“they [measurements and standards] are quite pervasive but rarely appreciated.”**<sup>2</sup>

While measurements and standard may be rarely appreciated, the U.S. government does spend millions of dollars each year on an office to promote and study weight and measurement, the Office of Weights and Measures at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. One of their functions is to promote broader acceptance of the metric system in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the U.S. government has been promoting the metric system for 140 years. Why? Well, it would probably surprise most Americans to know that in 1875, the U.S. became a party to the Treaty of the Meter which **officially put the United States on the metric system.** But official or not, as was observed by the Monroe Administration in 1821, the free-market had caused a coalescence around a relatively uniform system of measurement, the American Customary System.<sup>4</sup>

As to a history of measurement, the Office of Weights and Measures has an array of publication about the subject, including, *Weights and Measurements of the United States: A Brief History.*<sup>5</sup> While little has developed to prompt an update of this publication since 1975, if we need an updated history, they are the ones to do it.

**No matter how you stack it, this adds up to waste.**

<sup>1</sup> NSF, *The Measure of Modernity: Standards and Standardization in the United States*, Washington, D.C., Award No. 1331231, February 2015. Web [http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD\\_ID=1331231&HistoricalAwards=false](http://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1331231&HistoricalAwards=false)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nist.gov/pml/wmd/index.cfm>

<sup>4</sup> Harris, William. "Why isn't the U.S. on the metric system?" 04 October 2011. HowStuffWorks.com. <<http://science.howstuffworks.com/why-us-not-on-metric-system.htm>> 04 May 2015.

<sup>5</sup> *Weights and Measurements of the United States: A Brief History*, National Bureau of Standards, Department of Commerce. Washington, DC. 1975



## WASTE REPORT for May 11, 2015

### Nuclear Waste: Dep. of Energy's \$13K Treadmills

The National Nuclear Security Agency (NNSA) of the Department of Energy put out a **Name-Brand** solicitation in February for five Woodway treadmills, with upgrades.<sup>1</sup> **Woodway is luxury** manufacturer of treadmills; the *4Front* model, which NNSA is seeking four of, **retails for over \$10,000**, with upgrades (Personal Training Display Board, +10% incline and +2.5 mph top speed) **adding \$3,900 per-unit** according to a Woodway pricing guide.<sup>2</sup>

The solicitation states that NNSA planned to “utilize the treadmills to qualify Federal Agents on the running requirements established by the NNSA ...” The Federal Agents here are Nuclear Materials Couriers, who according to an NNSA recruiting brochure **must pass a minimum standard in the 1-mile and a 40-yard dash run, every six months.**<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the standard warranting such a high-end treadmill is the ability to outrun nuclear radiation in the event of an accident?

The solicitation indicates these treadmills will service approximately 500 Agents. By comparison *Livestrong.com* reports that the average Gold's Gym has approximately 5000 members. They also report Anytime Fitness typically uses LifeFitness 93 or 95ti treadmills which run (no pun intended) around \$4,000.<sup>4</sup>

The solicitation was automatically archived in March without being filled. But the question remains, why does the Department of Energy need the Cadillac of treadmills?

This is not the first time a federal agency has bought high-priced exercise equipment. Last month in a Senate Finance Committee hearing, it was revealed that the IRS spent bought \$8000 stair climbers.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Posted February 12<sup>th</sup>, Updated February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Solicitation Number: DE-SOL-0008095

<sup>2</sup> Woodway USA, *All Products Price List*; Waukesha, WI; 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Nuclear National Security Administration, Office of Secure Transportation; *Federal Agent Brochure*; 2015

<sup>4</sup> <http://shop.lifefitness.com/us/cpo-95t-inspire-treadmill-p1239.html>

<sup>5</sup> Becker, Bernie, GOP senator rips IRS 'wasteful spending'; *The Hill*, Washington, D.C.; April 2015





## WASTE REPORT May 5, 2015

### Medical Waste: Coast Guard Medical Vacations

In February, the Inspector General (IG) for the Department of Homeland Security issued a report documenting a lack of oversight in the Coast Guard's *Travel to Obtain Health Care Program*. At an **average annual cost of \$1.2 million** (not counting lost work), this program pays for persons stationed in Alaska to travel to receive medical care they cannot get locally.<sup>1</sup>

As the IG notes in their report, most care can be fully provided in Anchorage or (if needed) in Seattle, WA. Instead, the IG uncovered **trips from Alaska to Vail, Colorado; Orlando, FL; Scottsdale, AZ; and Savannah, GA.**<sup>2</sup> Though a doctor's referral is supposed to be required before travel is approved, only twelve percent of records had such notes.

In total, **94 percent of all records were missing key elements** including travel requests, approval forms, cost estimates, and/or doctor's notes.<sup>3</sup> This lack of basic documentation prevented the IG from substantiating whistleblower claims that **trips -even to Anchorage- were more for shopping than medical care**, while also preventing the IG from affirming the need for accompanying **spouses (who also traveled at taxpayer expense)** to assist patients.

The IG made several recommendations to improve training on what kind of documentation is required for the health care travel program. The Coast Guard agreed to all the recommendations and has implemented the training, but **one should not need special training to know that taxpayer funded medical travel should not be approved without a doctor's note**, especially if that travel is for couples' trips to vacation hot spots.

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<sup>1</sup> Persons stationed in Hawaii and Puerto Rico are also eligible for this program, but together only account for 7% of total cases.

<sup>2</sup> DHS Office of the Inspector General, *The U.S. Coast Guard Travel to Obtain Health Care Program Needs Improved Policies and Better Oversight*, Rep. No. OIG-15-31, Washington, D.C. February 2015. Web [https://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/Mgmt/2015/OIG\\_15-31\\_Feb15.pdf](https://www.oig.dhs.gov/assets/Mgmt/2015/OIG_15-31_Feb15.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

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