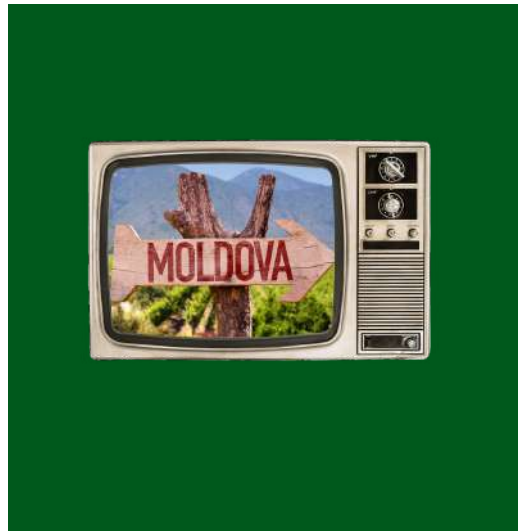




THE FESTIVUS REPORT 2019



Happy Festivus! Another year gone already. It seems like just yesterday I was sounding the alarm over a \$20 trillion debt, and now the U.S. has pushed past \$23 trillion! The more things changed in 2019, the more they stayed the same. Hollywood continued going back to tried and true classics, releasing hits like *The Lion King* and *Aladdin*. And the federal government clung to old ideas such as failing to fund the government on time and spending even more taxpayer dollars.

Americans rang in 2019 with a government shutdown. Democrats, perhaps bolstered by a new House majority, instantly blocked funding to stop Republican action on the border. Worse than that, in August, Congress undermined the Budget Control Act of 2011, throwing out the budget caps and suspending the debt ceiling for two whole years — setting the stage for even more reckless spending! Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office projects more than \$1 trillion annual deficits as far as the eye can see. Needless to say, it's been a bad year for federal spending. In fact, a November review of Fiscal Year 2019 from the CBO states Congress spent \$4.4 trillion in FY2019, 8 percent more than 2018. Net interest payments on the debt also skyrocketed to \$423 billion, \$52 billion more than FY2018.

It's easy if you're a conservative to get depressed. But don't give up. I will continue to fight the wasteful spending. In the future, I will rate each waste of taxpayer dollars I cover on a scale of 1 to 5 pigs as I hand out the "Platinum Pig Awards." Stay tuned for more about that. Meanwhile, this year, I am highlighting a whopping \$50,463,462,292.35 of waste, including a study of Panamanian frog mating calls, sending low-quality textbooks to Afghan students, and a grant to fund a Peruvian Green New Deal. It must need exporting after the Senate unanimously opposed it! So, before we get to the Feats of Strength, it's time for my Airing of (spending) Grievances!

I got a lotta problems with federal spending, and now you're gonna hear about it!



Keep track of Dr. Paul's efforts to expose government waste and reform federal spending at <https://www.paul.senate.gov>.

Dr. Paul's 2019 Airing of Spending Grievances

In this report, you will find . . .

- What does government waste mean for you?
- What could the government have paid for instead?
- Spending Solutions: What has Dr. Paul been doing about the problem?
- Dr. Paul's Compilation of Waste Reports
 - Spring Waste Report
 - Summer Waste Report
 - Fall Waste Report



Keep track of Dr. Paul's efforts to expose government waste and reform federal spending at <https://www.paul.senate.gov>.

So, what does **\$50,463,462,292.35** mean to you?

If the waste I found is: $\$50,463,462,292.35$

And the average taxpayer pays about: $\div \underline{\$8,215.48}$

Then Uncle Sam **WASTED** the taxes of: 6,142,484 people

That's **137%** of the population of Chairman Paul's home state of Kentucky



Keep track of Dr. Paul's efforts to expose government waste and reform federal spending at <https://www.paul.senate.gov>.

So, what else could **\$50,463,462,292.35** have bought us?



One hundred thousand miles of paved four-lane roadway, enough to wrap the entire Earth four times!



Seven months of medical care for all of America's veterans



Six years of the entire federal court system

Do you think you could you have spent **\$50,463,462,292.35** better than the federal government did?

Admittedly, this is a pretty bleak picture. But hope is not lost. The problem of government waste is extremely solvable ... with the right willpower. This year, I've been hard at work not only highlighting wasteful spending but trying to make sure Congress addresses the fiscal problems it has created for itself.

You might have noticed Congress did not pass a budget this year. But I guaranteed the Senate still held a vote on my Two Pennies Plan budget in June. My plan would have balanced the budget in five years without touching Social Security or Medicare. It is a reasonable plan that requires Congress to find just two pennies out of every on-budget dollar to cut. It doesn't even mandate where! Congress could have opted to cut five percent from one agency and even increase another agency's budget.

Later that month, Congress passed a \$4.5 billion spending package intended to help address the crisis at the southern border (the same one Democrats claimed was non-existent while they were shutting down the government in January). I tried to get Congress to pay for their spending by cutting foreign aid, which, as my discoveries over the last year show, could certainly stand to be cut.

As summer waned, years of bloated spending came home to roost as the U.S. reached the debt limit ... again. Congress was planning to end budget caps, a signature achievement of the Tea Party. So, to try to bring the Senate back to its senses, I offered a plan to Cut, Cap, and Balance the budget.

In the fall, it was clear Congress yet again was not going to fund the government on time. So, as it often does, it resorted to Continuing Resolutions (CRs), and when it did, I was right there to present an alternative, offering an amendment in line with my Two Pennies Plan.

On one of the CRs, I introduced an amendment based on my Penny Plan to Enhance Infrastructure Act (S. 2792). Instead of the U.S. borrowing more money, my plan would redirect current funding levels to provide \$12.3 billion in paid-for new infrastructure spending in 2020 alone without touching Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security. It has been estimated this could pay for between 2,500 and 6,200 miles of new 4-lane highways or 2,200 miles of 6-lane interstates. Or it could potentially resurface nearly 20,000 miles of existing 4-lane roads. My amendment version would have redirected just 1% of the CR into infrastructure, including fixing our drinking water infrastructure.

While even the common-sense proposals recounted here were too much for the big spenders, rest assured, I will keep working hard in 2020 to solve our fiscal crisis. Congress has every tool and opportunity to solve these problems, and I am making sure my fellow legislators know it!

WASTE REPORT



SPRING 2019: WASTE IN FULL BLOOM

BY CHAIRMAN RAND PAUL

Springtime has come again! The flowers are blooming, the leaves are slowly but surely returning to the trees, and the birds are chirping. Hope springs eternal amid all the new beginnings – but so does government waste, as it appears bureaucrats are just as intent on wasting your money as ever.

Like clockwork, it is that time of year again when Congress considers the federal budget. And with budget season here, it is incumbent upon us all to remember that the United States is more than \$22 trillion in debt. Despite record revenues thanks to tax reform, the federal government still managed to increase the debt by \$1.2 trillion in Fiscal Year 2018 due to drastic increases in spending. But rather than address the problem, Congress plans to shirk its responsibility to tackle our fiscal crisis yet again by considering a budget that doesn't even attempt to balance. Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget agree that spending on interest on the debt will exceed defense spending in five years and cost nearly \$1 trillion in just 10 short years.

So here we are, standing athwart those who would waste Americans' money, showing the American people and Congress a small fraction – just \$42.6 million – of the wasteful projects on which agencies have spent their tax dollars.

And we also remind Congress that when agencies have enough money to waste, they have too much money in the first place.

The federal government wasted Americans' tax dollars as it...

- Bought an elementary school gym scoreboard at a 491% markup (BIA) \$13,000
- Sent international students to college for free (State) \$15,825,000
- Studied the habits of online dating app users (NIH and NSF) \$1,200,000
- Taught Lao to Laotians (USAID) \$20,000,000
- Improved the quality of TV in Moldova (State) \$2,000,000
- Paid to teach social scientists how to apply for grants (NSF) \$103,777
- Allowed the 1033 Program to be abused (DOD) \$2,711,255
- “Tested” whether social justice improves STEM education (NSF) \$649,773
- Funded a week of summer school for grad students (NSF) \$49,990
- Developed 6 undergrad course units on food marketing (NIFA) \$128,054

TAXPAYER DOLLARS WASTED: \$42,680,849

DUNKING ON THE TAXPAYER

The Bureau of Indian Affairs paid a 491% markup on a scoreboard for an elementary school gym

Regular readers of *The Waste Report* know it typically highlights the many frivolous ways the federal government spends your money. This story is a little different — it shows the wasteful results of needless and costly federal rules that dictate what companies the government is allowed to do business with. In this case, **the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) spent \$13,000, which amounted to a 491 percent markup from what retailers were charging for similar items on the open market, on a gym scoreboard for an elementary school on an Indian reservation.**¹

Everyone’s Favorite Topic: Regulations!

Why did Uncle Sam pay nearly five times the going rate, you ask? Because it complied with the Buy Indian Act, a law regulating how BIA acquires goods and services for reservations. Department of Interior (DOI) regulations require the BIA “to give preference to Indians whenever the use of that authority is authorized and practicable.”²

Though the Buy Indian Act does permit purchasers to buy from non-Indian vendors under certain circumstances, the process is so laborious and time-consuming that it is, for all intents and purposes, prohibitive. **“Any deviation from [the Buy Indian Act] policy,” according to the BIA, “must be approved by an authorized official and documented in the contract file, except for**

purchase card transactions”³ (Emphasis theirs).

This includes, according to DOI, a requirement that “[t]he purchaser must conduct market research which shows that he or she cannot reasonably expect to obtain offers from IEEs [Indian Economic Enterprises] that will be competitive in terms of price, quality, and delivery.”⁴ (Even in cases where a purchase card can be used, the choice still needs to be justified.⁵)

The various steps in the deviation process, including cases where a price is obtained from an IEE but found to be “unreasonable,” are laid out in Part 1480 of the DOI Acquisition Regulation.⁶

These steps require navigating the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), **a 1,900-page, 53-part, 312-section tome outlining the federal government’s procedures for everything from purchasing helium to processing donations of food.**⁷ It is unwieldy, complex, and unnecessarily burdensome.

Needless to say, it is highly unlikely someone would take the time to jump through all these hoops, especially if an item is needed quickly.

Of course, there is something to be said for buying from IEEs to serve Indian reservations when the prices are comparable to those on the open market. But with current regulations, IEE suppliers are not incentivized to compete with non-IEEs for the government’s business, so higher prices can be more easily charged, which in turn limits the non-governmental patrons willing to buy from IEEs.

Economic engineering through federal mandates, though well-intentioned, can generate unintended consequences including hampering job growth, failing to address underlying concerns, and costing the government even more money than it would otherwise spend. It's past time to remove needless procurement regulations that harm taxpayers and private businesses alike.

FREE COLLEGE FOR FOREIGNERS (PT. 2)

The State Department is spending \$15,825,000.00 on free college for international students

For millions of Americans, community colleges offer an affordable option for receiving a college education and gaining a competitive edge in the job market. But despite American families scrimping and saving to afford college, **the State Department is using your taxes to pay the tuition of international students enrolled in American community colleges.**

Avid readers of *The Waste Report* may recall a 2015 entry in which we exposed the profligate spending of the Community College Initiative (CCI),⁸ an exchange program that, according to the State Department, “provides scholarships [to students from other countries] to spend up to one academic year at U.S[.] community colleges.”⁹ Since this program is so out of step with the Trump administration’s agenda, one might have expected it to have been ended by now.

But one would have been wrong, because **the State Department’s Bureau of**

Educational and Cultural Affairs is still spending millions on the program — committing up to \$15,825,000, to be exact, to send a total of about 390 foreign students to American community colleges across academic years 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22.¹⁰ The initiative will cover the costs of “approximately 130 program participants from approximately 12 countries, to include Brazil, India, Indonesia, South Africa and other countries (subject to change),” according to the funding announcement, each academic year.¹¹

While the State Department hasn’t nailed down the countries of origin yet (and leaves itself room to make other adjustments along the way¹²), they have so far determined that the lucky students will get to enroll in one of the following areas: agriculture, applied engineering, business management and administration, early childhood education, information technology, media, public safety, or tourism and hospitality management.¹³ For some reason, this list excludes several disciplines that would be valuable in many



CCI students at the Alexandria, VA, campus of the Northern Virginia Community College. Photo Credit: <https://blogs.nvcc.edu/ci/2017/09/21/introducing-the-2017-2018-cci-program-participants/>.

other parts of the world, such as nursing and vocational skills.

At the end of the program, the participants are supposed to earn a certificate or similar credential “whenever possible.”¹⁴ **But when not possible, it’s unclear what (if anything) they will earn, since the CCI Program lasts no more than half the time it takes to complete an associate degree.**

And in case you were wondering, the \$15,825,000 spent on this initiative would be enough to cover a full year of in-state tuition for more than 3,200 U.S. community college students.¹⁵

SWIPE LEFT ON WASTE

The NIH and NSF are spending up to \$1,200,000.00 to study online dating user habits

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) “was founded in 1962 to investigate human development throughout the entire life process, with a focus on understanding disabilities and important events that occur during pregnancy,” according to their website, which also states that their “mission is to ensure that every person is born healthy and wanted, that women suffer no harmful effects from reproductive processes, and that all children have the chance to achieve their full potential for healthy and productive lives.”¹⁶ The National Science Foundation (NSF) was created “to promote the progress of science; to advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; to secure the national

defense...”¹⁷ **Apparently, NICHD and NSF think a good way to advance these missions is by studying dating app user habits, funded by cobbling together several grants totaling \$1.2 million.**¹⁸

Some of the findings have made more headlines than others, though what they all have in common is that they have nothing to do with either the NIH’s or NSF’s purpose. Most notable was a finding published in *The New York Times* that “sexual desirability peaks at age 50” for men and at age 18 for women.¹⁹ But the *Times* did not highlight the other findings this research unearthed, which included **finding that online dating app users pursue potential mates “who are on average about 25% more desirable than themselves,” as well as finding “that the probability of receiving a response” on an app “markedly” decreases when the pursued is more desirable than the pursuer, and that dating app users exert greater effort to pursue “more desirable” mates than they do to pursue less desirable ones.**²⁰ Another groundbreaking finding funded by these tax dollars was that the users “enact screeners (‘deal breakers’) that encode acceptability cutoffs,” such as physical distance from the user.²¹

There is no reason research like this should receive federal funding. In truth, the only suitable financiers would be dating app companies themselves. It is silly to pretend this study has anything to do with reproductive and childhood development, “public health” or “science promotion” more generally.

NIH and NSF grant review panels would do the taxpayers a favor by following a strategy

of dating app users: only swipe left on the most attractive proposals.

THE LANGUAGE OF WASTE

**USAID is spending
\$20,000,000.00 to teach Lao to
Laotians**

If we told you the U.S. government was spending money to address illiteracy in the United States, you might not object. But what if we were to tell you the U.S. is spending \$20 million teaching Laotians their own language?

Well, that's exactly what **USAID is doing, committing 20 million American taxpayer dollars to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a communist nation controlled by one party, in pursuit of (according to USAID):**

- 1.) **"Improved Lao reading ability for non-Lao speakers and vulnerable students,"**
- 2.) **"Improved classroom instruction through enhanced teacher competencies and resources to meet needs of target children,"** and
- 3.) **"Strengthened community engagement to provide a conducive learning environment for improved reading skills, particularly for non-Lao speaking and vulnerable communities."**²²

The USAID outpost in Bangkok, Thailand, has opted to focus the agency's efforts on, as it says, "children in the pre-primary education (pre-primary classrooms attached to primary schools), and in early grade classrooms through grade 2 with monitoring of

children in grade 3 to see if interventions are successful."²³ USAID says, "[w]ith limited funding" (though since when is a \$20 million award "limited funding?"), it will concentrate "on a selected number of communities."²⁴

USAID also points out that a portion of Laotians are not native Lao speakers and do find it difficult to "learn the national curriculum provided in the textbooks and learning materials."²⁵

Granted, these are serious concerns. But, for some reason, the U.S. government has deemed it appropriate to spend your tax dollars on tackling another country's issues with education even though, despite all the government funds poured in at home, reading proficiency here shows a lot of room for improvement. **"More than 36 million adults in the United States cannot read, write, or do basic math above a third grade level,"** literacy advocates note.²⁶ In New Jersey alone, which has only a slightly larger population than Laos,^{27, 28} a report showed that **"17% of adults lack basic literacy skills."**²⁹

In 2015, the Organisation [sic] for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found **the mean U.S. reading score was second tier, "not significantly different from the OECD average,"** and a point lower than the three-year trend.³⁰ The U.S. ranks 22nd in literacy globally, tied with Taiwan, and trails far behind the top five: Singapore, Hong Kong, Canada, Finland, and Ireland.³¹

In other words, even after millions upon millions of dollars, the government can't seem to teach English to American kids, but thinks it can use millions more of your money to teach Lao to Laotian kids.

WASTE: AS SEEN ON TV

The State Department is spending \$2,000,000.00 to improve TV programming in Moldova

There is widespread international agreement that the Moldovan television industry is not internationally competitive. But apparently the State Department has determined it is worth saving, because it is devoting \$2 million of taxpayers' money to the effort. Why the State Department would use American tax dollars to support direct competition with an American industry is beyond us. Nevertheless, **it is spending \$2 million to “increase the quality and quantity of locally produced content on Moldovan television through co-productions that expand investment and employment in the media space,”** according to a State Department funding notice.³²

Countering Russian TV Influence

In theory, the grant is designed in part to counterbalance Russian-produced television content shown in Moldova. According to the State Department, “entertainment content rebroadcast and/or repackaged from the Russian Federation continues to maintain a dominant local position, given its low costs and high quality, when contrasted against primarily low-quality domestic production of entertainment programs. ...”³³ Citing a 2017 report from the Independent Press Association (IPA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty reported in February 2018 that the “Russian media ‘broadcast propaganda messages and constantly manipulate public opinion’ both in

its informational and entertainment programming.”³⁴

Their article was written in context of a then-recent development in Moldova. On January 10, 2018, more than five months before the deadline for this grant application,³⁵ Andrian Candu, acting president of Moldova at the time, approved a law “ban[ning] most television and radio programs not produced in the European Union, the US, or Canada, or by the states that have not ratified the European Convention on Transborder Television,”³⁶ according to a news report. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has also reported the move “effectively bans the rebroadcasting in Moldova of Russian television programs on news, analysis, politics, and military issues.”³⁷ So the Moldovan government is already moving to counteract certain Russian influence



Animal welfare activist appearing on Moldova's state-owned network, Moldova 1. Photo Credit: <https://megliovivere.com/2018/07/31/appearing-on-moldovan-tv/>.

— without any need for help from the U.S. State Department.

A Priority for American Taxpayers?

With our national debt now exceeding \$22 trillion, and many domestic needs to

consider, it simply makes no sense to spend American tax dollars on this project, especially since the State Department isn't just planning to support Moldovan programming; it's seeking to build the Moldovan domestic TV industry from the ground up.

The U.S. Embassy in Moldova acknowledges that the Moldovan TV sector isn't viable on its own, with the Embassy noting the goal of the \$2 million grant as being "to create an environment in the creative television content industry which will allow Moldova's creative content industry to mature to a level where it can be sustainable. Ideally," it continues, "Moldovan production companies would have the capacity to conceive, produce, and distribute high-quality programming and formats within Moldova and abroad."³⁸

Ultimately, this fool's errand certainly has the makings of a great TV show — one that could be a comedy or a tragedy. We'll have to stay tuned to find out.

GRANTS FOR GRANTS

The National Science Foundation spent \$103,777.00 to teach social scientists how to apply for grants

In fiscal year 2017, the National Science Foundation awarded \$6.2 billion in funding for various proposals.³⁹ As part of its review process, the NSF rates proposals on a scale from zero to five.⁴⁰ But the NSF must think the quality of the proposals can be improved, because that year **it issued a \$103,777 grant to the University of Mississippi to teach "early-career PhDs" how to apply for grants.**⁴¹

Working college professors, for whom the classes are designed,⁴² must be knocking down doors, asking to be taught how to write grant proposals, right? That's why NSF approved this expenditure? Wrong. **The NSF is clear the "Summer Course on Grant Writing in the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SCG)" is being provided to "early-career scientists who ... will be recruited to participate."**⁴³

The NSF award abstract states the course's focus as being on "the social, behavioral, and economic (SBE) sciences with mentorship and training in grant writing."⁴⁴ Aims include giving participants "a brief appreciation of research design ...," along with "help[ing] [them] locate NSF and other federal research support" agencies, "improv[ing] [their] ability to develop and write a scientifically well-conceived research proposal," and "promot[ing] the spread of appropriate, robust scientific research in the SBE sciences in underrepresented communities....," according to the abstract.⁴⁵

Just in this edition, *The Waste Report* has once again documented instances of government waste through NSF grants. As we say elsewhere, this is simply out of our desire to see the NSF better use the money Americans work hard to earn.

We're not so sure it inspires greater confidence for taxpayers to hear the NSF, with such a track record, is using more of their money to fund training in how to ... get even more of their money from the NSF.

One can only hope that at some point during the program, these social scientists will learn how to be frugal with the taxpayers' money.

“PROTECT AND SERVE”

The Pentagon sent \$2,711,255 in surplus military gear to police in Thetford Township, Michigan (pop. <7,000)

Put yourself in the shoes of a police officer for a moment. What would you need to do your job? Perhaps a pistol, a bullet-proof vest, or a squad car? The chief of police of Thetford Township, Michigan, seems to have had a more expansive wish list. **Ultimately, a department that serves a population of fewer than 7,000 people⁴⁶ received \$2,711,255 worth of surplus military equipment from the Department of Defense (DOD), according to the Genesee County sheriff.⁴⁷ And that stunning figure is only part of the story.**

So how did such a small town manage to amass a small fortune in materiel from DOD?

The 1033 Program

Those seeking answers need only look to the DOD’s 1033 program. **The program allows registered law enforcement agencies to receive surplus military supplies “for bona fide law enforcement purposes that assist in their arrest and apprehension mission,”** according to the DOD’s Defense Logistics Agency (DLA).⁴⁸ The DLA reports that “[o]ver 8,000 federal and state law enforcement agencies from all 50 states and the U.S. territories participate in the program.”⁴⁹ It also notes these agencies must place specific requests, justify them, and get approval from the State Coordinator and Law Enforcement Support Office.⁵⁰

Somehow, despite the requirement that 1033 requisitions serve “bona fide law enforcement purposes,” Thetford Township PD managed to accrue nearly 4,000 items from the program,⁵¹ including:

- **Four mine detector sets⁵²**
- **Three hydroseeders⁵³**
- **Two parachutes⁵⁴**
- **A bounce house⁵⁵**
- **A rock-climbing wall⁵⁶**
- **A 7-ton forktruck⁵⁷**
- **Humvees⁵⁸**
- **Snowshoes⁵⁹**
- **Dive boots⁶⁰**
- **1,000 kitchen items⁶¹**
- **A tractor⁶²**
- **A riding lawnmower⁶³**

The Pentagon must be facing some unusual challenges if it needs hydroseeders, “kitchen items,” a riding lawnmower, and a bounce house to defeat our nation’s adversaries. And who knew that these were vital tools of domestic law enforcement, too?! **The criminal element in Thetford Township must be armed to the teeth if the police there need *mine detectors* to keep the streets safe!**

The truth of the matter is that Thetford Township criminals are no more advanced than criminals anywhere else. The DOD simply has far too much materiel on its hands thanks to obscene levels of military spending. **The federal government spends more in inflation-adjusted dollars on military spending today than it did during our arms race with the Soviet Union.⁶⁴** Is the U.S. in more danger today than it was in the days of air raid drills in elementary schools? Not hardly. But DOD bureaucrats would rather militarize local police forces with their excess gear than

admit they don't need all the tax money flowing their way.

Small Town, Big Attention

It would be one thing if the Thetford Township PD was using all of the equipment it acquired. **But a township audit revealed that “[t]he police didn't keep track of what they had or what they had given away,”** *The Detroit News* reported.⁶⁵ The article also noted that “nearly a third of the items ... were listed as ‘off-site’” in an inventory log created by the police chief “without giving a specific location.”⁶⁶



As the controversy intensified, local news reported on Thetford Township Supervisor Gary Stevens finding “a seven-ton piece of military surplus equipment” someone left in his driveway. Credit: ABC12 News Team: <https://www.abc12.com/content/news/Thetford-Township-on-hook-for-towing-military-surplus-equipment-police-vote-nixed-489267641.html>.

Attention to the situation only continued to grow. In August 2018, news broke that the Genesee County sheriff had arrested the police chief, who was “charged with embezzlement and obstruction of justice” stemming from his alleged handling of certain items from the 1033 program.⁶⁷ The following month, a report stated, “Thetford Township will have to return its federal military surplus – if it can locate it – to the government, if there are no other police departments that want it.”⁶⁸ As of this writing, the police chief’s

case continues working its way through the legal system.*⁶⁹

Earlier this year, the Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management Subcommittee wrote to the DOD to ask how certain items Thetford Township PD acquired through the 1033 program were deemed to meet the “bona fide law enforcement purposes” requirement, and what safeguards are in place to prevent future misuse of the program. We will continue to monitor the situation as we stay vigilant in the battle to protect taxpayer resources.

CHEMICAL REACTIONS, ANATOMICAL DISSECTIONS, AND #ACTIVISM

The National Science Foundation spent \$649,773.00 to see if STEM majors benefit from a college program based on social justice

What were you asked in your last job interview? Were you asked about your interest in the position and your qualifications for it? Probably. Were you asked about your commitment to social justice? Probably not.

So why did the National Science Foundation (NSF) spend \$649,773 to find out whether an undergraduate program based on social justice ideas helps students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) complete their degrees or enter STEM professions?⁷⁰

What's Actually Being Studied?

The taxpayer funds were invested in an effort to “investigate how impactful a social justice curriculum is on students’

STEM career/higher education choices⁷¹ that would “also examine the way in which a mentoring program with specifically defined activities contributes to student success.”⁷²

Cabrini University, a liberal arts institution in Pennsylvania, is implementing an “ambitious plan ... based on the hypothesis that engaging the ... scholars in STEM learning and career exposure through a framework of social justice will help to secure their retention to graduation and placement in graduate or professional positions in STEM fields.”⁷³

But manifestly, through NSF, taxpayers financed 16 need-based scholarships of “up to \$8,000/year for four years (\$32,000 [total per student])”⁷⁴ to Cabrini University for “low income biology and chemistry majors”⁷⁵ (one cohort in fall 2017 and another in fall 2018⁷⁶).

The abstract lists “[a]cademic and social support activities for the scholars” as “includ[ing] (a) cohort-based learning communities, (b) peer and faculty mentoring, and (c) early and consistent research experiences via course-based research and other more traditional student faculty collaborations.”⁷⁷ It also notes “[t]he project is anchored in Cabrini College’s [now University] Justice Matters core curriculum, which ... [integrates] civic and social responsibility into student learning.”⁷⁸

What exactly is the *Justice Matters* curriculum, you ask?

Cabrini University and *Justice Matters*

Whereas some colleges have core academic requirements based on subject areas,

Cabrini has *Justice Matters*, a curriculum it describes as “develop[ing] a common core of knowledge and connect[ing] the theory and practice of social justice to each student’s major.”⁷⁹ So Cabrini University has issued NSF funds to 16 incoming STEM students, who would already have to go through the *Justice Matters* core curriculum in order to graduate,⁸⁰ and enrolled them in a “specialized”⁸¹ program (“Science Scholars for Social Justice”⁸²). It will then track how many of them go on to complete a degree and how many enter professions in their fields of study⁸³ — which is something most college alumni offices do anyway.

The funds this project spends on 16 students at one liberal arts college exceed the combined federal income tax burden of 77 middle-income Americans.⁸⁴ The NSF owes American taxpayers an explanation as to why it thought this was a good use of those hard-earned tax dollars.

ENGINEERING WASTE

The National Science Foundation spent \$49,990.00 on one week of summer school for grad students

NSF grants are, unfortunately, a frequent topic of *The Waste Report*. This is out of no ill will toward the NSF, but out of a wish to see it stop frittering away the American taxpayers’ money on frivolous projects that don’t advance our national interests.

Unfortunately, the NSF has not heeded our call, instead giving the University of Southern California (USC) \$49,990 to put on a six-day⁸⁵ “intensive and interactive educational experience [for] graduate

students who are interested in studying decision making in the context of engineering design and systems engineering ... from graduate programs that do not have appropriate coursework in this area.”⁸⁶ The abstract outlined a program including “social events ... [to] enable students to develop their networking skills” and said that “[t]ravel and participation scholarships [would] serve to ensure a broad participation that maximizes community impact.”⁸⁷

At the time the award was granted, researchers claimed that **“the summer school will have a broad impact in the research community, including other NSF-supported research projects, by advancing training and standards in this area of research.”**⁸⁸ If the NSF was persuaded that paying for 20 students⁸⁹ to attend a six-day conference would have a “broad impact,” one can only guess what they would think a program of narrow impact looks like.

One can certainly understand the benefits USC is reaping from NSF support, but what about the American taxpayer? In the past, NSF funds totaling over \$331,608,950 have been used on absurd projects, *The Waste Report* has found, including studies about the betting habits of entrepreneurs in Uganda,⁹⁰ winemaking programs at community colleges,⁹¹ how to make tomatoes taste better,⁹² and many more. Meanwhile, the United States is \$22 trillion in debt.

It appears *The Waste Report* will have to offer our intensive and interactive educational experience about decision-making to the NSF employees who approved this grant. Lesson

One: Decide to reject wasteful grants like this one.

DESERTING FACTS FOR NARRATIVES

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture spent \$128,054.00 on six undergraduate food marketing course modules

There is an oft-repeated, yet misleading, claim that “[m]ore than twenty-three million Americans live in ‘food deserts,’ low-income communities with only limited access to healthy and nutritious foods.”⁹³

Former First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” campaign popularized this idea, saying that “[i]f we don’t solve [the] problem [of childhood obesity], one third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives. Many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma.”⁹⁴ As part of this push to combat childhood obesity, the “Let’s Move!” campaign took aim at food deserts.⁹⁵

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), jumped on the bandwagon, issuing a \$128,054 grant to Saint Joseph’s University (SJU) to, according to the grant, “transform food marketing education by creating a series of six ... undergraduate course modules designed to integrate social justice education and research training to identify and address the unmet

food needs of urban residents living in food deserts.”⁹⁶

Too Convenient to be True

But even during the early Obama years, not everyone was convinced about the underlying assumption. A piece in 2010 argued that **“our [society’s] take on the obesity issue at hand cannot be that sugary and high-fat food is always the only food that is available to poor people within walking distance. It simply isn’t true.”⁹⁷** Even if we “make sure all poor people live three blocks or fewer from a supermarket,” the writer contended, “we will see a problem continue.”⁹⁸

Few publications were more sympathetic to the Obama administration than the left-leaning online magazine *Slate*, yet even it published a piece in 2014 saying that **“before Obama’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative was announced in 2010, studies suggested that the food desert explanation for obesity wasn’t right.”⁹⁹**

Yet government rushed in, because it can just use someone else’s money – yours.

As the *Slate* article noted, “It’s easy to understand why Michelle Obama and other influential figures have promoted fresh food initiatives: Bringing a bounty of fresh produce to impoverished ‘food deserts’ is a lovely idea. But the idea isn’t borne out by evidence.”¹⁰⁰

The point has continued to find even more backing since then. As one example, in 2015, a National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) report would conclude that “healthfulness of household consumption responds minimally to improvements in local retail environments.”¹⁰¹

In other words, “social justice education and research training” does not account for taste buds, and even if you make healthy food available to shoppers, you can’t decide somebody else’s personal preferences for them.



Though they make for a convenient narrative, common assumptions about food deserts are unsupported by the facts. Photo Credit: elvissa,

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/elvissa/822691369/sizes/m/>

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SJU justified the grant, which works out to **a cost of \$21,342.33 per academic unit**, by asserting that a “lack of appropriate academic preparation is resulting in a growing shortage of qualified supermarket managers”¹⁰² to deal with what they thought was the issue and stating that the “project’s intended beneficiaries are undergraduate food marketing students who represent tomorrow’s food industry leaders.”¹⁰³

But if students rely on false premises about the food industry, they will find themselves woefully unqualified to join it, much less to lead it.

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[https://federalreporter.nih.gov/Projects/Details/?projectId=579406&ItemNum=2&totalItems=2&searchId=b8ad34eca70a415e97466f31ec9b8e6d&searchMode=Advanced&resultType=projects&page=1&pageSize=100&sortField=ContactPiLastName&sortOrder=asc&filters=\\$Fy:2011\\$SmOrgName;ST%20JOSEPH%27S%20UNIVERSITY\\$OrgState;PA&navigation=True](https://federalreporter.nih.gov/Projects/Details/?projectId=579406&ItemNum=2&totalItems=2&searchId=b8ad34eca70a415e97466f31ec9b8e6d&searchMode=Advanced&resultType=projects&page=1&pageSize=100&sortField=ContactPiLastName&sortOrder=asc&filters=$Fy:2011$SmOrgName;ST%20JOSEPH%27S%20UNIVERSITY$OrgState;PA&navigation=True)

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

THE SUMMER 2019

WASTE REPORT!



THE LATEST NEWS ON GOVERNMENT WASTE!

"GREEN GROWTH" IN PERU!

\$10,000,000



FROG MATING CALLS!

\$466,991



INCREASING TRUST IN TUNISIAN POLITICS!

\$2,000,000



ABANDONED MENTAL HOSPITALS!

\$2,120,040,355

The federal government wasted Americans' tax dollars as it...

- Attempted to increase trust between Tunisian political parties and citizens (State) \$2,000,000
- Converted an abandoned mental hospital into DHS HQ (GSA and DHS) \$2,120,040,355.35
- Supported “Green Growth” in Peru (USAID) \$10,000,000
- Fixed vehicles New York City falsely claimed Superstorm Sandy damaged (FEMA) \$5,303,624
- Increased the capacity of the Pakistani film industry (State) \$100,000
- Paid out billions from Medicare in improper payments (CMS) \$48,000,000,000
- Taught English and IT skills at Madrassas (State) \$150,000
- Studied frog mating calls in Panama (NSF) \$466,991
- Paid for Google Scholar searches in Hawaii (NSF, NOAA, USFS, DOI, NASA) \$51,722,107
- Paid for property confiscated in Afghanistan by the ANDSF (USACE) \$325,485

TAXPAYER DOLLARS WASTED: \$50,190,108,562.35

MR. SMITH GOES TO TUNIS

State is spending up to \$2,000,000.00 to strengthen democracy in Tunisia

Tunisia gained its independence in 1956 from France, after which autocrat Habib Bourguiba governed the country from 1957 to 1987, before being removed in a bloodless coup led by another autocrat, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.¹ During the 2011 Jasmine Revolution, Ben Ali was exiled to Saudi Arabia.² But despite the ouster of Ben Ali, Tunisia has never had strong republican roots. Nevertheless, the State Department believes it should use your tax dollars to tinker with the civic processes in a culture where self-determination has not been the norm. That is why it is spending up to **\$2 million “to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in Tunisia by increasing trust between political parties and citizens.”**³

Support for Political Parties at Home and Abroad

Toward this end, the grantee will be responsible for goals including **helping the Tunisian political parties build “responsive” party platforms and “develop[ing] mechanisms for citizens and selected civil society organizations to hold political parties accountable for their performance, behavior, and use of resources.”**⁴ While the State Department is paying to try to get Tunisians to have faith in their political parties, American taxpayers have largely lost faith in the two major American political parties.

According to Gallup data, since roughly 2005, a majority of Americans have believed the two major U.S. political parties are doing an inadequate job.⁵

Despite established party platforms and regular elections in which citizens and organizations can hold politicians and parties accountable, Americans are clearly lacking faith in our political parties. What makes the State Department believe Tunisians will have faith in theirs if they adopt American characteristics when even Americans lack faith in the two parties?

Nation-Building Does Not Work

The U.S. taxpayer has funded many attempts at nation-building in recent years – in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, just to name a few. In each instance, U.S. blood and treasure have been spent in an ultimately failed effort to remake countries in our image. Do not misread us – the U.S. political system is far and away the best in the world, with more than 200 years of bloodless transfers of power to back it up. But that does not mean we can simply impose our Jeffersonian ideals on other countries.

According to the State Department, the U.S. has spent over \$1.4 billion in Tunisia following the Jasmine Revolution on efforts “focus[ing] on an array of targeted areas that include ensuring and enhancing internal and external security, promoting democratic practices and good governance, and supporting sustainable economic growth.”⁶ **What makes State believe \$2 million more will succeed where \$1.4 billion has failed?**

THE MONEY PIT

DHS and GSA have spent \$2,120,040,355.35 trying to turn an abandoned mental hospital into a new DHS headquarters

St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C., has a long history. Congress created the hospital as the Government Hospital for the Insane in 1855.⁷ During the Civil War, it served as a general hospital, at which time, according to a D.C. government website, “[w]ounded soldiers ... were reluctant to admit that they were housed in an insane asylum, and instead referred to their location as ‘St. Elizabeths,’” which was “the name given to the original 600-acre tract of land. ...”⁸ Eventually, tenants totally abandoned the West Campus, while a mental hospital remains on the East Campus.⁹

But in recent years, government waste has entered the story. **The General Services Administration (GSA) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have been attempting, since 2005 and at a cost of more than \$2.1 billion to the taxpayer,¹⁰ to establish a headquarters for DHS on parts of the property.¹¹** This effort includes creating office space for the Office of Secretary of Homeland Security and other crucial senior personnel in the West Campus’ main building.¹²

If you want to turn an historical mental institution into a high-tech and secure government facility, you will face a multitude of problems along the way.

The problems DHS and GSA have faced are particularly fundamental, which raises

questions as to why the agencies selected the site in the first place. First – **the slope on which they are building the site is unstable.**¹³ Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee staff requested information regarding what percentage of the site is unstable. **GSA responded that the entirety of the site was not unstable, but up to 30 percent was subject to “anticipated slope instabilities.”**¹⁴

Because the entire site is an historical landmark, GSA has had to work around D.C. preservation regulations, including maintaining the exterior façade of key buildings.¹⁵ So when GSA and DHS gutted the interior of the buildings, they kept the exteriors intact to use as shells for newly constructed buildings within the walls of the originals.¹⁶ In 2010, GSA learned the buildings lacked adequate



Photo of a hallway in the main DHS facility at St. Elizabeths. Each door leads to an office that used to be a bedroom in the mental hospital. Photo Credit: FSO Staff

foundations, and some were literally sinking into the ground.¹⁷ **In sum, GSA has spent \$305 million on “adaptive re-use,” or, in other words, maintaining the historical facets of the buildings to conform to historical preservation requirements.**¹⁸

Meanwhile, there are portions of the site which are “restricted for development” due to historical and environmental concerns.¹⁹ GSA and DHS have also agreed other portions of the site – inside the secure perimeter – must remain open to the public.²⁰ **The surrounding community will maintain access to the site, albeit on a limited and supervised basis, to visit a hilltop from which community members traditionally watch Fourth of July fireworks, visit the cemetery on site, and use an auditorium.**²¹



Photo of the auditorium on site at St. Elizabeths. Despite being inside the secure perimeter, the public will maintain access to it after DHS moves into the facility. Photo Credit: FSO Staff

If there were not enough problems with the physical site itself, DHS has also spent significant sums recreating the interior architecture down to the crown moldings, carvings, and other intricacies of interior design.²²

The decision to use St. Elizabeths Hospital, in light of all of these concerns, becomes even more starkly acute when one

considers DHS and GSA considered roughly 12 other sites for their headquarters, instead choosing a site with historical, environmental, and geological issues.²³

Even worse? **After investing so exorbitant a sum on adaptive re-use, GSA and DHS are reportedly largely chucking the model and “proposing to demolish at least five of the historic buildings.”**²⁴

Though certain components of DHS, such as the Coast Guard’s headquarters²⁵ and the Office of the Secretary of Homeland Security,²⁶ have finally transferred there, the American people are expected to spend millions more in a project that has become a textbook example of poor government planning – and that is now projected to last until 2026.²⁷ Rest assured there will be legislative action taken to ensure this boondoggle does not continue to waste taxpayer dollars.

THE PERUVIAN GREEN NEW DEAL
USAID is committing “up to”
\$10,000,000.00 on “green growth”
in Peru

In March 2019, the U.S. Senate unanimously rejected a suite of policies, dubbed the “Green New Deal,” proposed by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Senator Ed Markey (D-MA), which proponents claim will support “green growth” in the United States. By a vote of 0-57, with 43 Senate Democrats, including every Democrat senator running for President of the United States, abstaining in “protest,”²⁸ the representatives of the American people roundly rejected these policies.²⁹ Whereas every senator, Republican and Democrat,

refused to support the policies on the record, (perhaps recognizing the devastating damage implementation would do to the American job market and larger economy), Green New Deal bureaucrats at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) apparently feel some sympathy for them. **How else can one explain the agency spending \$10 million to develop “Green Growth in Peru”?**³⁰

That’s right! USAID is committing “up to” 10 million American taxpayer dollars “to develop new and innovative alliances with the private sector that advance environmentally-friendly economic development (i.e. green growth) in Peru.”³¹ They add, “The envisioned activities will facilitate private sector financing and investment in value chains that lead to improved management of natural resources and a reduction of GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions.”³²

It wasn’t enough for the federal government to waste taxpayer funds on boondoggles such as Solyndra. Now it wants to go abroad and do the same!

SANDY FRAUD
New York City agreed to repay \$5,303,624.00 after receiving federal money to fix junked vehicles it claimed were damaged by Superstorm Sandy

Think back to October 2012. On the lighter side, the Baltimore Ravens were on their way to winning the Super Bowl, and the San Francisco Giants swept the Detroit Tigers to win the World Series. But hearts were also

heavy, as Superstorm Sandy cut its tragic path of devastation at the end of the month. Fast forward to 2019 and Sandy is still in the headlines, this time as part of yet another story of fraud and abuse undermining the best of intentions with the American people’s money.

In a proposed settlement in a lawsuit, New York City agreed to repay \$5,303,624 in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance for filing false claims regarding certain vehicles the storm supposedly damaged.³³

“Specifically,” according to the Justice Department press release earlier this year, “the City will make a cash payment of \$4,126,227.34 and relinquish rights to an additional \$1,177,396.66 that FEMA had previously approved for disbursement.”³⁴

The problems began when the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) submitted a list of claims to FEMA for a total of \$12,758,664 in reimbursement for vehicles, all of which it claimed were damaged by the storm.³⁵ However, “many of the vehicles” instead were already “non-operational—and some had even been marked for salvage—years before Sandy,” the federal government stated in its complaint.³⁶ The government also made it clear that proper oversight was ignored every step of the way.³⁷

It turns out, according to the federal government, that **an NYC DOT employee even brought the problem up, informing a Deputy Commissioner shortly after the City made its initial request that it had included vehicles it should not have submitted.**³⁸ In its complaint, the federal government claimed **the City employee**

mentioned certain vehicles were the same ones NYC DOT had years before told the NYPD “were sitting under the highway in the dump for seven years ... being pick[ed] apart by vandals stealing brass fittings, copper wire harnesses and anything else they could sell for scrap.”³⁹

Despite this revelation, only when the NYC DOT found out the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York began investigating did it start to come clean.⁴⁰

Amazingly, it required multiple revisions of the list the NYC DOT sent to FEMA to remove all false claims.⁴¹

This is not the first discussion regarding the federal government, waste, and Sandy recovery money, and surely it will not be the last.⁴² Such stories are vivid reminders of the strict vigilance needed to ensure that when the federal government authorizes huge sums of taxpayer money for disaster relief, the disasters are limited to the natural ones to which it means to respond.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN KARACHI

State is spending up to \$100,000.00 to increase the capacity of the Pakistani film industry

People say that show business is one of the hardest industries into which to break. Filmmakers, producers, directors, writers, and actors often struggle in anonymity for years or decades before finally writing the hit, getting the role, or having that one idea that will slingshot them to fame and fortune.

But lucky for a handful of Pakistani filmmakers, the State Department is spending up to \$100,000 to “[e]xpand and strengthen” Pakistan’s film industry by teaching “aspiring filmmakers” how to write screenplays and make films.⁴³

The grantee organization will “[d]evelop a short film competition with a minimum of fifty (50) aspiring filmmakers and film or media students from undergraduate and graduate film and media programs at universities across Sindh and Baluchistan ... on themes of ‘strength in diversity’ and ‘women’s empowerment.’”⁴⁴

The lucky aspiring filmmakers and film students will benefit from the State Department flying an American filmmaker to Pakistan to put on “two (2) masterclasses on screenwriting and filmmaking...”⁴⁵ This American also “may partner with the Karachi Film Society (KFS), the parent body of the Pakistan International Film Festival (PIFF), or a similar organization” to help train select Festival participants through multiple workshops focusing on the technical aspects of the trade.⁴⁶

The organization will be required to facilitate tickets to the Festival awards for those participating in the grantee’s short film competition, as well as help them boost their connections while there.⁴⁷ According to the Festival’s website, it “aims to be the largest film festival in Pakistan,” with a goal of “creat[ing] a unique platform which promotes both Pakistani cinema and Pakistani filmmakers by showcasing their films to diverse international audiences.”⁴⁸ Finally, the grantee will help maximize media coverage of the American’s

participation at the Festival and assistance to Pakistani filmmakers.⁴⁹

With the State Department going to such lengths to spend Americans' tax dollars on supporting Pakistani filmmakers, one might assume the industry is flailing. It is not. The State Department itself admits that "Pakistan's film industry is growing dramatically."⁵⁰

If the industry is growing "dramatically" and offering more opportunities to Pakistani filmmakers than ever before, why do Pakistanis need American tax dollars to further build its capacity? Why are Americans responsible for paying to make Pakistani films better? Simply put, Americans are not responsible, but their State Department is intent on wasting their hard-earned money anyway.

BRACE FOR WASTE
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid paid \$48,000,000,000.00 in improper payments in Fiscal Year 2018 – paid over \$900,000,000.00 in one alleged wide-ranging, multi-year scheme

When it comes to federal programs, Medicare ranks only behind Social Security as one of the largest, totaling \$582 billion spent in FY 2018.⁵¹ Since the program is so big, it opens up all sorts of possibilities for abuse, and it looks like we are seeing another example. Earlier this year, the federal government alleged scammers' plans led to **\$1.2 billion in losses in the Medicare program – including over \$900 million in improper Medicare payments alone** – before the Department of Health and Human Services Office of

Inspector General (HHS OIG) and other investigators closed in, with 24 individuals ultimately charged.⁵²

In its announcement about the investigation, the Justice Department alleged a wide-ranging, international scheme they said included **Medicare paying for orthopedic braces doctors prescribed "either without any patient interaction or with only a brief telephonic conversation with patients they had never met or seen."**⁵³ To make matters worse, some received braces they did not want, NBC News reported, adding that prosecutors noted this "could disqualify them from receiving a brace under Medicare if they need one in the future."⁵⁴ **The Justice Department also alleged money was "laundered through international shell corporations," before being spent on "exotic automobiles, yachts and luxury real estate in the United States and abroad."**⁵⁵

Unfortunately, this is hardly the only case where it appears the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) made improper payments. **In Fiscal Year 2018 alone, CMS is estimated to have paid \$48 billion in improper payments.**⁵⁶ This is not any secret, either. CMS's propensity to make improper payments in part forced the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to deem it a High Risk Program,⁵⁷ a moniker it has retained since GAO initially imposed it in 1990.⁵⁸ **Over 80 GAO recommendations remain unfulfilled, with 28 recommendations alone made between the 2017 and 2019 High Risk Lists, the last two iterations of the report.**⁵⁹

Improper payments fundamentally undermine the effectiveness and stability of federal programs, and Medicare itself is already

in a precarious position. In fact, **CMS predicts the Medicare Hospital Insurance (HI) trust fund will be entirely depleted come 2026.**⁶⁰ Moreover, CMS also projects that **“Medicare’s costs under current law [will] rise steadily from their current level of 3.7 percent of GDP in 2018 to 6.0 percent in 2043.”**⁶¹ Under even good circumstances, never mind the ones in which Medicare finds itself, both the program and the American people can ill-afford to be paying out nearly \$50 billion in improper payments.

Perhaps the real improper payment is the giant amount of mandatory spending Congress allocates to CMS, allowing Medicare and Medicaid to grow unabated.

WWW’S AND ABC’S

State is spending “up to” \$150,000.00 to teach English and IT skills at Madrassas

The State Department has a long history of bringing Islamic scholars to American schools, just in this decade spending millions on a program for Afghan lawyers, including those with a background in Sharia law, to study at Ohio Northern University.⁶² Now, the State Department is flipping the script. Instead of paying to bring Islamic students to the U.S., the State Department is paying **“up to” \$150,000 “for a project to support teaching the English language, basic IT skills, leadership, and tolerance”** to students **“at 23 religious schools (Madrassas) throughout the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR).”**⁶³

The State Department’s excessively optimistic view is that by teaching future Mullahs English, basic IT skills, and about “a

culture of tolerance, coexistence, and acceptance,” the madrassas will in part “help produce open minded Mullahs (religious leaders) in the future.”⁶⁴ However, it is equally possible this grant could help lead to more radicals in the future knowing how to better speak English and use the internet, skills which could then be used to radicalize Americans.

Whatever the outcome of the grant, one thing is certain, at the very least. Before we send \$150,000 in American taxes abroad to teach English and IT skills, we should first consider our own country’s situation.

The most recent American Community Survey run by the **Census Bureau determined that 8.5 percent of Americans ages five and up are limited in English proficiency.**⁶⁵ Meanwhile, according to the Pew Research Center in 2019, one in ten Americans do not go on the internet.⁶⁶ According to a 2013 Pew survey, of the percentage then that did not use the internet, roughly one third believed it **“was too difficult to use. ...”**⁶⁷

Needless to say, work remains to be done to strengthen both English language talents and internet abilities here at home before Americans give up more resources to teach those skills in madrassas in Iraq.

WHEN A FROG LOVES A WOMAN

NSF spent a significant portion of a \$466,991.00 grant on studying frog mating calls

If you were told the federal government was going to study how a species of animal mates, it’s not too likely the subject of this next

story would make the short list of candidates that came to mind.

In this case, **the National Science Foundation (NSF) spent a significant portion of a grant totaling \$466,991⁶⁸ on studying the mating call of the male túngara frog of Panama.**

In a look at the effects of urbanization, the study examined the differences between the mating call in the city and in the forest, including its likelihood of attracting midges and bats in each of those environments.⁶⁹

Small Frogs Under the Big Lights

So what did the researchers determine? In short, urban life seems to have benefited the male frogs, who “call at higher rates” and have a more complex, attractive mating call than their forest-dwelling counterparts.⁷⁰ While the male urban frogs “experience higher competition for mating opportunities,” they also face less risk from predators.⁷¹



Túngara frog mid-mating call. Photo Credit: The Scientist.com and Ximena Bernal <https://www.the-scientist.com/notebook/these-flies-hijack-frogs-love-calls-30193>.

When the researchers switched the frogs’ environments, they found that urban frogs could quickly adjust their calls to help protect from threats.⁷² But the forest frogs’ calls didn’t get more attractive when they went to the city.⁷³

As of this writing, our government has piled up a debt over \$22 trillion, along with a 10-month deficit of \$866 billion that is projected to rise to over \$1 trillion by the end of the fiscal year.⁷⁴ **As we deal with this crisis and also wrestle with paying for actual priorities, do we really want government funding studies of a non-endangered⁷⁵ frog’s mating habits?**

Panamanian frog mating calls may sound different in forests and cities, but all this use of your resources sounds like to us is waste.

SCHOLARS IN PARADISE

Funds from grants worth \$51,722,107.00 were used to do Google Scholar searches, in Hawaii, about the effects of climate hazards

It doesn’t take a lot to get published in academic journals nowadays. **Just ask researchers who used federal money from grants worth \$51,722,107⁷⁶ from the National Science Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to convene in Hawaii and search the already existing literature of the impacts of “climate hazards” on humans, as well as analyze and compile the results.⁷⁷**

That’s right! The paper, entitled *Broad Threat to Humanity from Cumulative Climate Hazards Intensified by Greenhouse Gas Emissions*, is largely a compilation and analysis of a search of already existing literature the researchers found on Google Scholar between February and March 2017⁷⁸ ... in Hawaii.⁷⁹ In connection,

they also developed a database to centralize the research.⁸⁰ Among other things, the researchers reported climate hazards being linked to increased cases of diarrhea, as well as to bedwetting, lower “academic performance,” and other problems.⁸¹

The paper itself was a collaborative effort between 23 researchers from around the world.⁸² At least 5 of the 23 received federal funding.⁸³

Given our astronomical debt and skyrocketing deficits, were taxpayer funds really needed for this compilation and further study of previous research?

Another question must also be asked: if the researchers are so concerned about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, why did they travel to Hawaii from around the world in order to do a study that consisted of sitting at a computer and perusing Google?⁸⁴

Conclusions or Biases?

The authors used the paper to sound an alarm of “the broad and heightened threat to humanity from ongoing GHG emissions intensifying multiple climate hazards to which humanity is currently vulnerable.”⁸⁵ Yet, despite the authors’ central conclusion being an argument for “substantial and timely reduction of GHG emissions,” they admit both that “[t]he impacts reported here have varying degrees of uncertainty related to their detection and attribution to climate hazards,” as well as that “[a] related uncertainty is the extent to which climate hazards implicated in observed impacts were due to anthropogenic forcing.”⁸⁶ They also note that “pinning down human

influences on climactic changes requires considerable caution.”⁸⁷

Despite the myriad uncertainties, the authors forge on, adding, “the human contribution to recent climactic changes is very likely. ...”⁸⁸ We’ll leave it to readers to decide if they stuck the landing on any possible jump to conclusions.

Meanwhile, though the researchers describe their efforts to limit bias, they also allow for a possible “bias in the literature itself towards reporting negative impacts.”⁸⁹

Consider us biased toward better uses of taxpayer resources.

TOOK THE PROPERTY AND RAN

Army Corps of Engineers paid \$325,485.00 for property confiscated in Afghanistan by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces

U.S. armed forces and American contractors have been in Afghanistan since 2001. One might think the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), which the United States helps fund by “provid[ing] the bulk of funding necessary to build, train, equip, and sustain the ANDSF,”⁹⁰ would not harass the personnel of American contractors or confiscate contractor property, given both parties are ostensibly on the same side. You would be wrong. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reviewed contracts between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and American contractors and found “ANDSF personnel had confiscated more than \$780,000 in property and equipment. ...”

SIGAR also revealed reports of ANDSF harassing our contractors' personnel.⁹¹

Regarding the property, SIGAR found that across three contracts, ANDSF confiscated over \$780,000 in U.S. contractor material - "despite the provision of approximately \$1,302,800 in excess spare parts and equipment" from the first two contracts.⁹²

American taxpayers footed a \$325,484 bill for the property ANDSF confiscated under the first two contracts that USACE was unable to recover.⁹³ As of this writing, the current sum of hundreds of thousands of dollars regarding equipment confiscated under the third contract may expand even further as USACE conducts its review.⁹⁴

(Keep this story in mind as the federal government continues to spend over \$51 billion a year nation-building in Afghanistan.)

Worse than the confiscated equipment was the harassment ANDSF members forced our contractors' personnel to endure. **SIGAR's findings brought to light reported mistreatment such as detention of staff, intimidation, and threats, with it appearing such incidents happened in part due to ANDSF attempting to get them to do work that was not covered under the contract or to prevent them from keeping the contractors' own property.⁹⁵** SIGAR reported that one U.S. contractor company alone filed hundreds of "serious incident reports (SIR)s," including many regarding the problems listed above, in a period of just a little over two years.⁹⁶

Amazingly, SIGAR also found that the **USACE did not "have an official system in**

place to record actions it has taken to resolve incidents reported by contractor staff."⁹⁷ While USACE agreed with SIGAR's recommendation and began a process for tracking incidents reported, one hopes it will turn more focus to stopping such incidents from even taking place.⁹⁸

The easiest solution for USACE and the rest of the U.S. armed forces would be to recognize the U.S. mission in Afghanistan today has expanded further than anybody could have imagined in 2001. Although the U.S. originally deployed personnel to Afghanistan with the mission of disrupting and destroying al-Qaeda and Taliban networks, American forces are now on a nation-building expedition gone horribly wrong.

Clearly, there are larger costs, human and monetary, of nation-building we simply cannot ignore.

¹ WorldAtlas, “Presidents of Tunisia Since 1957.” *WorldAtlas.com*, 2019.

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/presidents-of-tunisia-since-1957.html>.

² *Ibid.*

³ State Department Funding Opportunity #SFOP0005045.

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=305899>.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Reinhart, RJ, “Majority in U.S. Still Say a Third Party Is Needed.” *Gallup*, October 26, 2018.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/244094/majority-say-third-party-needed.aspx>.

⁶ U.S. Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, “U.S. Relations With Tunisia: Bilateral Fact Sheet,” *U.S. State Department*, July 20, 2018.

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-tunisia/>.

⁷ U.S. General Services Administration, “History of St. Elizabeths.” *U.S. General Services Administration*, May, 2013.

<http://www.stelizabethsdevelopment.com/history.html>.

⁸ Stelizabethseast.com, “East Campus History.”

Stelizabethseast.com, 2019.

<https://stelizabethseast.com/our-history/>.

⁹ U.S. General Services Administration, “History of St. Elizabeths.” *U.S. General Services Administration*, May, 2013.

<http://www.stelizabethsdevelopment.com/history.html>.

¹⁰ FSO Staff Oversight Briefing at St. Elizabeths, March 8, 2019 and follow-up call with GSA, April 17, 2019.

¹¹ U.S. General Services Administration, “Master Plan for the Department of Homeland Security Headquarters Consolidation at St. Elizabeths West Campus.” *U.S. General Services Administration*, January 10, 2019.

<https://www.npc.gov/docs/actions/2019January/MP211MasterPlanfortheDepartmentofHomelandSecurityHeadquartersConsolidationatStElizabethsWestCampusInformationSheetJan2019.pdf>.

¹² FSO Staff Oversight Briefing at St. Elizabeths, March 8, 2019.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ FSO Follow-Up Call with GSA, April 17, 2019.

¹⁵ FSO Staff Oversight Briefing at St. Elizabeths, March 8, 2019.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ FSO Follow-Up Call with GSA, April 17, 2019.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² FSO Staff Oversight Briefing at St. Elizabeths, March 8, 2019.

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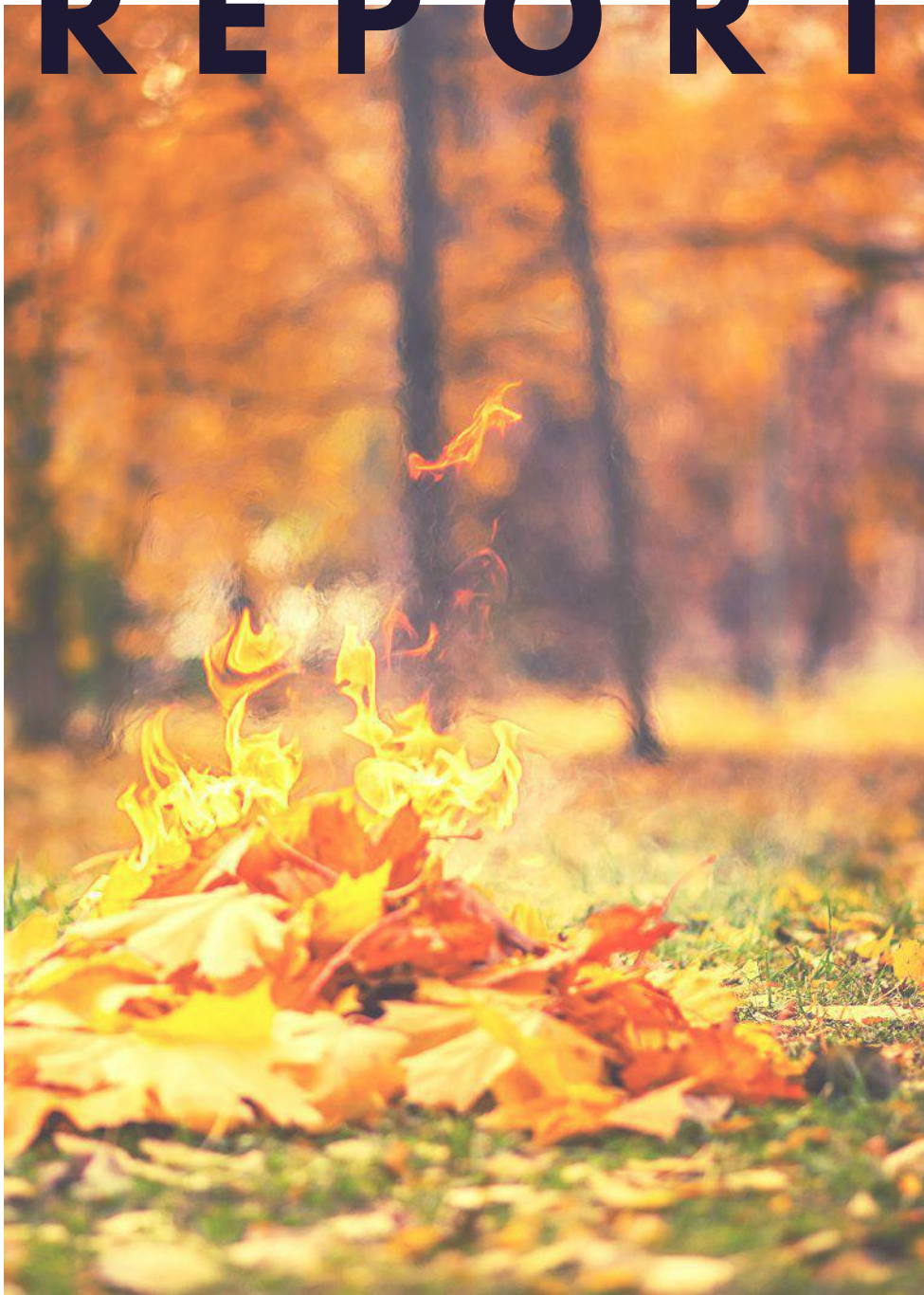
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WASTE REPORT



WASTE REPORT | FALL 2019

BY CHAIRMAN RAND PAUL

The federal government wasted Americans' tax dollars as it...

- Spent millions on the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) \$153,000,000
- Funded debate and Model United Nations competitions in Afghanistan (State) \$300,000
- Funded research that involves hooking Zebrafish on nicotine (NIH) \$708,466
- Bought a statue from Bob Dylan for the embassy in Mozambique (State) \$84,375
- Studied the connection between drinking alcohol and winding up in the ER (NIH) \$4,658,865
- Improved the quality of Egyptian schooling (USAID) \$16,000,000
- Bought textbooks for Afghan students (USAID) \$33,921,175
- Brought Serbian cheese up to international standards (USAID) \$22,000,000

TAXPAYER DOLLARS WASTED: \$230,672,881

STAND CLEAR FOR WASTE

The federal government is expected to spend \$153,000,000.00 on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority in FY2020

Ask nearly any Washingtonian of their opinion of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (Metro), and the answer will near universally be negative. In fact, Metro's routine service outages, delays, incomprehensible policy choices, and mismanagement of funds has led to, as WAMU reported earlier this year, **the lowest ridership in almost 20 years** — roughly 595,000 per weekday “in last half of 2018,” which is down from a peak of “almost 752,000” per weekday a little over 10 years ago.¹ **Despite its chronically bad performance, the Congressional Budget Office is projecting the federal government will cut Metro a \$153,000,000 check for Fiscal Year 2020.**²

Metro is “so bad,” a piece in the *Washington Examiner* stated in 2017, “that it derives a benefit from low expectations. Riders are let down so often that higher fares for worse service is what they have come to expect.”³

Yet, somehow Metro has self-reported generally positive feedback from customers.⁴ When a watchdog tried to get a copy of a Metro customer survey and properly filed a request for documents, **Metro refused to release it but eventually provided (and charged the watchdog \$324.17 for) a 29-page document, 28 pages of which were redacted.**⁵ In fact, according to the watchdog, Metro threatened to never honor future requests from the

watchdog, submitted via a particular email, if it didn't pay the \$324.17.⁶ **The watchdog had to sue to force them to release the redactions.**⁷

The case, for which the same Metro that a WAMU story called “cash-strapped”⁸ in 2017 has hired a high-powered D.C. law firm, is currently working its way through the court system and is projected to take more than half a year to resolve.⁹ Metro's obstinacy did not surprise the watchdog, who says that “various general managers have promised transparency but, in fact, Metro has become increasingly opaque. A taxpayer-funded organization withholding information ... from the public on dubious grounds is unacceptable.”¹⁰

Recently, rather than using its service to improve public perception, Metro launched a \$400,000 public relations campaign, aptly titled “Back2Good,” to entice commuters back.¹¹ If you are questioning the reasoning of spending so much money on a PR campaign, you are not alone. *The Washington Post* reported that “some were surprised at Metro's decision to spend six-figures on a PR campaign during a budget crisis, when the agency [was] considering raising fares and reducing service to offset a



Metro's Back2Good program appears to not have improved public sentiment. Photo Credit: Metro <https://twitter.com/wmata/status/809786446173401088>.

\$290 million shortfall. Wouldn't that money be better spent on repairs and infrastructure, they asked?"¹²

The *Post* also noted that "Back2Good isn't the first time in recent history Metro has forked over a pretty penny for public relations," pointing out that "[w]eeks after a smoke calamity took a woman's life at L'Enfant Plaza in January 2015, Metro hired two high-powered public relations firms to assist the agency with image control. The cost of those hires: \$250,000," adding, "In that case, the costs were covered by Metro's insurance carrier, AIG, according to an agency spokeswoman."¹³



An intrepid *Washingtonian* took the time to edit the grammar of a Metro ad at Metro's Navy Yard stop, an ad that plays on fears of climate change. Photo Credit: FSO Staff.

However, Metro's high-cost PR work apparently has not persuaded riders, and it did not persuade Maryland about Metro's competency, either. This summer, the state held back over \$55 million in funding, citing "an ongoing pattern of fiscal obfuscation and a lack of cooperation from WMATA," according to a letter the

Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) sent Metro.¹⁴ In the letter, MDOT stated, "WMATA's books cannot continue to be a financial black hole, absorbing every dollar it can but providing no information or data that Marylanders expect from public institutions."¹⁵

It appears the action had an effect. In September, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan decided to release the funds, saying to news outlets, "WMATA has finally agreed to our demands for greater transparency for every dollar spent and all future investments by the Metro system."¹⁶

So we've seen some of the overall issues, but let's take a little deeper look at some of the specific projects on which Metro is spending our tax dollars.

Subsidizing Competitors

One might think Metro would use its funding to improve its services. **Instead, it launched a \$1 million subsidy pilot program involving one of their competitors.**¹⁷ Metro SmarTrip pass holders will be eligible for \$3 per Lyft rides 40 times a month.¹⁸ According to Metro, the users must "commute to or from work within Metro's compact service area," have "[a] job that requires [them] to commute to and/or from work between midnight and 4am," and have the Lyft app.¹⁹

Metro does require details so it can verify the rider's employment, and that he or she works between midnight and 4am.²⁰ Program riders must also travel with others — a private bus.²¹

Now midnight to 4am is quite late, **but it should be noted that Metro offers a bus**



Metro says, 'Use Lyft!' 'Photo Credit: Metro, <https://www.wmata.com/service/bus/>.

service at that time, called its “After Midnight Service.”²² While Metro cited schedule changes in its rail service as the reason for the program,²³ the development was not exactly universally praised by those targeted.²⁴

It is simply sheer incompetence for a company to claim *subsidizing and showcasing a competitor* is a good use of its budget at any time, never mind when its users are at a 20-year low, and it is trying to instill confidence.

Operation Golden Potty

If there is any case of Metro’s mismanagement that perfectly encapsulates the problem, it is what the WMATA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) has deemed “Operation Golden Potty.”²⁵

From 2003 to 2017, according to the OIG, Metro spent “approximately \$500,000 maintaining a single self-cleaning toilet located at the Huntington Metro Station.”²⁶ The OIG cannot definitively state how much was spent because Metro lost invoices for 2007, 2012, 2013, and 2014.²⁷

To make matters worse, the toilet was not user-friendly, a documented experience shared by the news shows — though it did excel at providing some background music for users.²⁸

Metro justified their purchase to the OIG as necessary in the wake of the September 11,

2001 attacks.²⁹ According to Metro, the toilet was necessary to provide customers access to a bathroom at the Huntington Station because it would present “security concerns” for riders to use the station’s already existing bathrooms.³⁰ The OIG was skeptical this was the reason and refused to adopt that determination in its review.³¹ And it is hard to blame them. Allowing riders into the system carrying backpacks, suitcases, or anything else without being checked by security guards is not a security concern, but using the bathroom is?

To top it off, the half-million-dollar toilet sat broken and abandoned in the Huntington Station from 2017 to early 2019.³² Metro contracted with a private company to clean and maintain the self-cleaning toilet but canceled the contract in 2017.³³ While Metro had plans to move the toilet to a different station,³⁴ it ended up decommissioning and removing the facility in early 2019.³⁵ FSO staff inquired about the current whereabouts of the toilet, but Metro was unable to provide an answer.



Photo of the half-million-dollar toilet facility. Metro left the facility broken for two years before taking it out of the Metro station. Photo Credit: Wikipedia Commons / Ser_Amantio_di_Nicolao, via WAMU. <https://wamu.org/story/19/07/26/inspector-general-found-wmata-spent-416000-on-a-self-clean>.

“Temporarily” Out of Service...

Part of what irritates so many Washingtonians about Metro is its seeming inability to do the easy things. For just three of the many egregious examples, **Metro has spent more than 52 months building a bike storage room at Metro’s East Falls Church Metro Station,³⁶ took more than 48 months³⁷ fixing the air chilling system in two of its most trafficked Metro stations,³⁸ and took roughly 25 months to repair three escalators in another station.³⁹**

To be fair, it appears the bike storage rooms are more than just four walls, with *The Washington Post* reporting in a November 2015 article on multiple such projects that they would be “similar to the one in College Park,” which it said “featur[es] security cameras, an emergency callbox and real-time video and intercom communications with Metro’s Parking Operations Control Center.”⁴⁰ That same article also stated the facilities were “scheduled to be open next month, [Metro] said.”⁴¹ According to the OIG, which is looking into the situation, Metro has indicated the East Falls Church facility will not open until September 2020.⁴²

A delayed bike facility pales in comparison to the treatment train riders were subjected to over the past four years. In two major stations, **Metro repeatedly failed to fix the air chilling system, turning the stations into what Metro riders were calling “a ‘freaking furnace,’ ‘unbearable’ and ‘inhumane,’”** *The Washington Post* reported in August 2019.⁴³ The problem arose in 2015, yet Metro announced in August 2019 that the fix was again delayed.⁴⁴ Finally, later that month, Metro said the system was repaired.⁴⁵

And it’s not just bike buildings and air conditioning. Metro recently finished a project it slated to last **“approximately 2 ½ years”** to repair three escalators at its Friendship Heights station.⁴⁶ While Metro stated the escalators under repair would not be simultaneously out of service, it defies belief that replacing three escalators would take a contractor and team of workers more than 4,000 hours.⁴⁷

Clearly, WMATA is a poor steward of public funds, be they federal, state, or local. Why Americans from across the country are being forced to subsidize the Washington, D.C., public transit system’s ineptitude is beyond comprehension.

The federal government simply cannot afford to flush \$153 million down the toilet this coming year, particularly on an agency seemingly hell-bent on wasting Americans’ hard-earned tax dollars.

DEBATABLE PRIORITIES

U.S. Department of State is spending up to \$300,000.00 on debate and Model United Nations competitions in Afghanistan

After 18 years, thousands of American soldiers killed and wounded, and nearly \$1 trillion in military spending alone,⁴⁸ it is safe to say the United States is in a war of attrition in Afghanistan. What might break the deadlock and help secure a brighter future for Afghanistan? Well, if you’re the State Department, and you keep getting handed enormous amounts of taxpayer money from Congress without much scrutiny, you might think **spending up to \$300,000 on debate**

and Model United Nations competitions in Afghanistan could do the trick.⁴⁹

According to the grant notice, the State Department is paying “for two organizations to plan, organize, and implement local and national debate or Model United Nations training and tournaments for university students [aged 18-30] throughout Afghanistan. ...”⁵⁰ **The two grants, the sum of which will be up to \$300,000, will run concurrently for three years and are designed for up to 300-500 participants per year.**⁵¹

The State Department says the goal of the program is “[f]or Afghan youth to develop skills required for successful civic engagement (e.g., public speaking, critical thinking, leadership, team building, and in-depth research)” — with an eye on “contribut[ing] to the strengthening of civil society” in Afghanistan.⁵² If that’s your goal, you might want to make sure participants can understand the language the State Department requires them to use in the competitions: English.⁵³ **But the language requirement may be a tall order out the gate, as only six percent of the Afghan population can speak English.**⁵⁴

Thankfully, State at least requires grantees to produce “[a] plan for assessing English language skills of potential participants,”⁵⁵ ostensibly limiting the potential participants to those few age-appropriate Afghans who already know English. As part of the final program, the grantees will have to “[provide] pre-debate training workshops and research sessions to prepare participants to successfully serve on debate teams in formal debate competitions conducted in English,” as well as “[conduct] additional programs or activities

that enhance English and relate to debate competitions.”⁵⁶

This is what should no longer be up for debate: using Americans’ taxpayer dollars to put on debate and Model U.N. tournaments in Afghanistan is a waste of Americans’ money — particularly when the events are being held in a language 94 percent of Afghans don’t even speak!

HOOKED ON WASTE

The NIH is spending up to \$708,466 on research in London that involves hooking Zebrafish on nicotine

As debate rages in the country over vaping, **the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is sponsoring a nearly five-year project that involves actively addicting its subjects, Zebrafish, to nicotine.**⁵⁷ **The project, being conducted at the Queen Mary University of London, will cost the American taxpayer \$708,466.**⁵⁸

Researchers reported to NIH that they are using your money in part “to identify genes affecting vulnerability to addiction by screening lines of mutagenized zebrafish for core behaviors associated with addiction: sensitivity to drug reward and impulsivity.”⁵⁹

They state they will “test the hypothesis that genes that show persistent adaptive changes in expression following chronic nicotine exposure are also addiction vulnerability genes,” or, in other words, testing the relationship between addiction and genetics.⁶⁰

Spending fewer than a million dollars may seem like a “drop in the bucket” compared to the hundreds of millions and billions the federal government routinely dishes out, but it all adds up to the massive budget deficits and \$23 trillion national debt before us today.

Everybody agrees that nicotine addiction is a problem. But you have to be smoking something other than nicotine if you think the solution is to ship American tax dollars abroad to addict Zebrafish to nicotine.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT IT IS A-WASTIN' ... YOUR MONEY

U.S. Department of State bought an \$84,375.00 statue from Bob Dylan for the embassy in Mozambique

With hits like “Mr. Tambourine Man,” “Blowin’ in the Wind,” and “Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door,” there can be no denying Bob Dylan is a musical icon. But do his musical accomplishments justify the State Department choosing to buy an original Bob Dylan sculpture, for \$84,375,⁶¹ to place in its embassy in Mozambique?⁶²

Apparently, the federal government’s answer is “Yes.”

Why is the State Department buying art in the first place? Every time State builds “any new project,” such as a consulate or embassy, **“0.5% of the value of the construction project” is allocated for art acquisition, according to the department, no matter how large that 0.5% represents.**⁶³ For embassies, the State Department often leans

on its “Art in Embassies” (AIE) program, “which,” a report noted, “places American art in U.S. diplomatic outposts worldwide to showcase U.S. culture and soft power.”⁶⁴ As part of its work, AIE has also received hundreds (at least) of donated pieces.⁶⁵

But with the basic purpose in mind, it’s important to point out that the same report cited above also mentions a former government official “critici[zing] the department for putting artwork on display inside the U.S. embassies,” as “nearly all ... are surrounded by security perimeters with limited public access.”⁶⁶

Great music is timeless, and Bob Dylan’s work will continue to endure.

What cannot endure, if we are ever to get our deficit and debt under control, is such extravagant spending by federal agencies.

NIH ASKS, “CAN DRINKING TOO MUCH GET YOU INJURED?” WE ASK, “WILL NIH STOP WASTING TAXPAYER DOLLARS?”

NIH has spent \$4,658,865.00 studying the connection between drinking alcohol and winding up in the emergency room

The federal government and the general population have long recognized that drinking alcohol increases the likelihood of injuries stemming from events like traffic accidents while under the influence. For example, in 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed the National Minimum Drinking Age Act into law,

withholding certain federal funds from states that did not raise their drinking age.⁶⁷ In addition, and in the absence of a federal mandate, the alcoholic beverage industry regularly urges consumers to “drink responsibly.”⁶⁸

But scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) did not trust common knowledge and have decided **to spend \$4,658,865 over several years to study the connection between drinking alcohol, hurting yourself or somebody else, and winding up in the ER.**⁶⁹

Most recently, the researchers have pursued three goals. The first includes **looking at alcohol use in the six hours before an injury, as well as the type of injury that brought patients to the ER**, such as “traffic [accidents], falls ... near drowning,” etc., in consideration of several factors in different countries, including legal restrictions on alcohol.⁷⁰ Second, they are “**estimat[ing] relative risk (RR) of injury related to alcohol consumption volume (dose-response relationship) by cause of injury, (in layman’s terms, if you are more likely to get hurt, and how, if you drink more).**”⁷¹ Lastly, they are “**estimat[ing] alcohol attributable fraction (AAF) by cause of injury...**”⁷² (or in other words, **the degree to which alcohol is responsible for the injury).**

So, what findings has the research helped produce? In the abstract for a 2019 paper, researchers assert that “[c]ountries with high DDP [detrimental drinking pattern] are at higher risk of injury from most causes at a given level of consumption, while countries with low restrictiveness of alcohol policy are at higher risk of injury at lower levels of

consumption and at higher risk of traffic injuries at high levels of consumption.”⁷³

Who would have thought that when it’s easier to get your hands on alcohol, the injury risk can increase, especially when it comes to vehicle-related injuries?

We likely all know someone whose life has been tragically impacted by alcohol. But at a time when we have to borrow from China just to pay our bills, is there really a reason this research, especially when so much common sense is involved, at the very least could not have been conducted without the taxpayers’ resources?

HOW DO YOU WRITE “WASTE” IN HIEROGLYPHS?

USAID is spending up to \$16,000,000.00 to improve the quality of Egyptian schooling

Nearly everyone has fond memories of some of their excellent teachers. But, unfortunately, the state of the American education system is such that there are also not-so-great memories and experiences. Knowing the problems that exist here at home, it may surprise Americans to learn that their government is **investing up to \$16 million to improve the quality of the Egyptian educational system.**⁷⁴

The massive sum of money is meant to help Egypt’s Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MOETE) train school officials and install a better system for licensing and certifying them that is tied to merit.⁷⁵

USAID states that the “overall goal is to support improved teaching of the reformed curricula at the primary level by qualified, incentivized, and continuously developed teachers; and furthermore, to institutionalize a [Continuous Professional Development] system that adapts to Egyptian educators’ evolving professional development needs.”⁷⁶

Noble aims, sure, but before we go telling other countries how to improve their education system, perhaps we should take a closer look at the story here at home.

A Crisis in American Education

According to a 2018 report by TNTP (The New Teacher Project), for which it “partnered with five diverse school systems” in the U.S. to conduct direct observation and other research, **“Students spend most of their time in school without access to four key resources: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers who hold high expectations.”**⁷⁷ In fact, they state, “[s]tudents spent more than 500 hours per school year on assignments that weren’t appropriate for their grade and with instruction that didn’t ask enough of them — the equivalent of six months of wasted class time in each core subject.”⁷⁸

Meanwhile, according to The Hechinger Report, **“Since the ... National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP, was first administered in the early 1990s, student achievement, particularly in math, steadily improved until the late 2000s, then flatlined. Reading scores also stagnated. In 2015, scores dipped in math among both fourth- and eighth-graders, and these math**

scores did not bounce back with the 2017 test. Average students’ scores remain well below what test overseers consider to be ‘proficient’ for each grade level.”⁷⁹

In the report cited earlier, TNTP found that the students in the study **“demonstrated mastery of grade-level standards ... 17 percent of the time”** despite “[meeting] the demands of their assignments 71 percent of the time,” and spending “88 percent” of class time on class-related activities.⁸⁰ **However, the majority still received As and Bs.**⁸¹

Yet the clear room for improvement at home has not stopped the big spenders at USAID from gallivanting around the world and trying to fix Egypt’s flailing system.⁸²

When it comes to wisely using your hard-earned money, the federal government simply isn’t passing the test.

TEXTBOOK GOVERNMENT WASTE

USAID has spent \$33,921,175.00 on a program that has included supplying textbooks, many of which are subpar and/or sitting in warehouses, for Afghan students

When the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001, President Bush articulated a clear message. “On my orders,” President Bush said, “the United States military has begun strikes against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime. ... These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations,

and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”⁸³

Who would have thought that after hearing those words, the United States would end up **paying nearly \$34 million — so far — for a program that has included providing subpar textbooks to Afghan schoolchildren as part of its efforts in Afghanistan?**⁸⁴

The failure was part of USAID’s Afghan Children Read (ACR) program, a 5-year program taking place from April 2016-April 2021 (with the full cost expected to clock in at \$69,547,810).⁸⁵ According to USAID, the ACR is a joint effort between it and the Afghan Ministry of Education (MoE) “1) To build the capacity of the MoE to develop, implement, and scale up a nationwide early grade reading curriculum and instruction program in public and community-based schools; and 2) To pilot evidence-based early grade reading curricula and instruction programs to improve reading outcomes for children in grades one through three in public and community-based schools.”⁸⁶



Unusable textbooks at an Afghan school, paid for with Americans’ tax dollars. Photo Credit: SIGAR.

Amazingly, the first accomplishment to which USAID points in a write up on the

program is that they have “[p]rinted and distributed 595,000 Early Grade Reading (EGR) teaching and learning materials, including textbooks. ...”⁸⁷

There appears to be more to the story, however, as a review by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found in part that “[p]rincipals and teachers at a quarter of the schools inspected stated, ‘that the books were no longer in usable condition.’”⁸⁸ Along the way, SIGAR also found significant “book quality deficiencies, such as, loose or blank pages, misspellings, and low quality paper.”⁸⁹



Some of the 154,000 USAID-funded textbooks sitting in storage, with these located at the Herat Field Office in Enjil, Herat, Afghanistan. Photo Credit: SIGAR.

When SIGAR inspected warehouses where ACR books were being kept, it found a sad state of affairs. It reported that “**five storage facilities held about 154,000 textbooks.**”⁹⁰ One might think it’s good to have that many books in storage, ready to be delivered. However, SIGAR said that “[m]anagers at four out of the five facilities stated that they had no plan to distribute the books in the near future.”⁹¹ It “also observed that some of the facilities were not in good condition,” including one that “was not equipped with a ventilation system to preserve the books.”⁹²

What's worse? USAID's grantee responsible for printing and distributing the books does not seem to recognize a problem. When faced with its shortcomings, it superficially agreed with SIGAR's findings but attempted to explain away issues SIGAR raised, the FSO Subcommittee has learned, including shifting blame to parents, students, and school officials in its response to SIGAR discovering textbook bindings falling apart.⁹³

Here's something else we suspect would have a hard time staying intact: the argument for why American taxpayers have to spend so much money funding this textbook example of government waste.

WASTE, WITH EXTRA CHEESE

USAID spent part of a \$22,000,000.00 project working to bring Serbian cheese up to international standards

Who doesn't like a good piece of cheese? Whether its cheddar, Swiss, provolone, or simply American cheese, everybody has their preference. **And thanks to USAID, your new favorite might eventually be from Sjenica, Serbia!**

That's right! USAID spent part of a \$22 million "Sustainable Local Development Project"⁹⁴ training the staff at the Regional Center for Agricultural Development (RCAD) in Sjenica, Serbia,⁹⁵ to follow the cheese standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and help producers adopt best practices.⁹⁶ USAID reports the head of the center as stating, **"Our ultimate goal is to be able to guarantee the Sjenica**

cheese standards and quality to the consumers in the EU, US, and further."⁹⁷

What tangible skills did USAID help impart? Well, "RCAD's staff was trained to introduce and implement ISO standards, to properly sample milk and meat products at local farms, to calibrate laboratory equipment, and to advise farmers on improving the safety and quality of their products," a company that implemented the overall Development Project reported.⁹⁸

"The project also trained 30 dairy and livestock farmers and processors on how to improve production practices and meet laboratory standards," they noted, going on to also say it "engaged a local backstopping expert to assist the laboratory staff during critical phases of the accreditation process. ..."⁹⁹

In recent years on the domestic side, the U.S. has been experiencing a massive, historic cheese surplus, one that would eventually hit 1.4 billion pounds — which NPR noted in its report "means that there is enough cheese sitting in cold storage to wrap around the U.S. Capitol."¹⁰⁰

So American dairy farmers dealing with the realities of this situation might be cheesed off to learn their government worked to strengthen competition and the European cheese market — using their own tax dollars to boot!

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