

2008: Worst Waste of the Year

A look back through some of the year's most outrageous federal spending



A Report By

Senator Tom Coburn

Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management,
Government Information, Federal Services and International Relations

December 2008

To the American Taxpayer,

As part of my commitment to oversee how federal agencies in Washington, D.C. spend your money, I am releasing a series of oversight reports on federal spending. My hope is that this effort will assist federal agencies – and those of us in Congress overseeing their budgets – to rein in wasteful spending and to demand measurable results before asking taxpayers to send more of their money to the federal government.

I also hope federal agencies and congressional committees alike will welcome these oversight reports and join the effort to identify additional areas of waste, mismanagement, fraud, and abuse. If we work together, we can find better ways to prioritize our nation's limited financial resources.

With billions of taxpayer dollars spent on low-priority and questionable projects, 2008 was a banner year for wasteful Washington spending. In a time when the government is spending huge sums to address a struggling economy, Congress needs to ensure efficient use of our own resources before turning to taxpayers and asking for more. No one who pays taxes likes to see the government waste resources. I believe the American taxpayer deserves better.

As President Lincoln said, we are a “government of the people, by the people, for the people,” and to uphold that principle, we need your help. As part of an ongoing effort to shine light on the federal government, I encourage anyone with examples of government waste, mismanagement, fraud, or abuse to share those with me.

To submit a tip (anonymously, if you wish) through the Internet, please visit my tip page: <http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/>. Or to submit a tip by mail to my subcommittee office, please mail to:

Senator Tom Coburn
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With your help, we can begin making a difference and change the way Washington works.

Sincerely,

Tom Coburn, M.D.
United States Senator

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Executive Summary

Politicians in Washington outdid themselves in 2008, wasting taxpayer money in ways and amounts once thought unimaginable – all without blushing. So outrageous was the spending, an outside observer would be forced to think that not only do Americans love to pay taxes, but that the federal budget was in a state of perpetual surplus. This report is an attempt to pull back the curtain on 65 examples of wasteful Washington spending worth more than \$1.3 billion, and by doing so, provide a mechanism to hold Congress accountable for fiscal responsibility. It is time for Washington to stop recklessly spending other peoples' money and burdening future generations with insurmountable national debt.

Wasting taxpayer dollars in any year is unacceptable, but the extent to which it occurred in 2008 was a clear demonstration of how Washington politicians often put low-priority items ahead of more important needs. Federal agencies dedicated scarce dollars to the search for outer space aliens (\$9.4 million), a retractable shade canopy (\$2.4 million), training classes for casino workers (\$784,000), voice mail for the homeless (\$15,000), and a non-functioning gas station shaped like an airplane (\$9,000).

This was the case despite the fact that by the end of the fiscal year the federal government spent nearly \$3 trillion, but racked up a \$455 billion budget deficit – the largest in the nation's history.¹ If the surpluses from Social Security and Medicare are not included, the true federal deficit was \$639 billion.² The current national debt stands at more than \$10.6 trillion, which must be repaid with interest.

While these examples of waste might seem insignificant when compared with the overall federal budget, the cost is sizeable when added together. And worse, many of these low-priority projects are funded year after year, regardless of whether they achieve their intended effects or not.

Such was the case with the Frank M. Charles Memorial Park in New York, which received \$1 million in 2008 to repair tennis courts and to install AstroTurf on a single baseball field. The same park received a \$1 million grant in 2000 for similar upgrades, but the money was squandered, leaving the park in a state of disrepair and in need of more federal funds.

Similarly, half a million dollars was given to the B In Tune youth music program in 2005 to teach kids about "funk music and Nobel peace laureates." No proof was ever furnished to show the money was used for its intended purpose, and when asked why, the organization's director said that a senior consultant "became ill." A \$430,000 grant was given to the organization in 2008, which the director said would be used to teach kids how to be a DJ or how to produce a television show.

¹ Congressional Budget Office, Monthly Projections, November 2008, <http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9912/11-2008-MBR.pdf>.

² The figure was arrived at by subtracting the off-budget surpluses from the on-budget deficits, data can be found here: CBO's Baseline Budget Projections, September 2008, http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/97xx/doc9706/Selected_Tables.pdf.

One example of big-ticket waste was the National Drug Intelligence Center, which received \$39 million in 2008. It was created to help assist federal law enforcement with drug investigations, but has failed to be helpful in that regard, receiving the label of “boondoggle” from *U.S. News and World Report*. One former NDIC director even said that the work performed by NDIC was subpar, saying he “recognized that a lot of reports were god awful, poorly written, poorly researched, and, in some cases, wrong.”

Some examples of Washington waste are well-intentioned, but raise questions about whether certain projects are best left to local government or private financiers. The Wilson Skateboard park for youth in the suburbs of Los Angeles is one such example, which received nearly \$300,000 in federal grants this past year. Another is the free-bike library in one Colorado town, which allows local residents to check out bikes at no cost – it received \$66,000 in 2008.

Some examples merely border on the ridiculous, such as \$188,000 in funding for the Lobster Institute, which exists to promote the lobster industry throughout Maine, in part by deploying an underwater LobsterCam. Likewise, one million dollars was given to Louisiana for the construction of a bike path along its levee system, even as the levees remain in need of additional repairs.

For each example of outrageous federal spending, it represents a significant investment of time and energy by government officials who decided that each was a good use of taxpayer money. It is no wonder, then, why the American people have so little regard for the government’s ability to use their money wisely – their fears are often well founded. A November 2008 poll by *Gallup* and the *Partnership for Public Service* found that only 27 percent of Americans rated the overall performance of federal agencies as “good/excellent,” while 66 percent rated it “fair/poor.”³ In fact, a July Rasmussen poll found that 69 percent of voters think “the government can cut large amounts of wasteful spending without harming important programs.”⁴

The response from Washington can no longer be more of the same, but rather it requires Congress and federal officials alike to take taxpayers seriously. Implementing the following steps will help reduce, though not likely eliminate, wasteful Washington spending:

1. Eliminate programs that do not work;
2. Eliminate or consolidate duplicative programs;
3. Eliminate earmarks;
4. Implement stronger transparency measures;
5. Conduct more congressional oversight;
6. End automatic budget increases for federal programs; and
7. Establish independent and enforceable performance measures for every program.

³ Partnership for Public Service and Gallup Consulting poll, “In the Public We Trust: *Renewing the Connection between the Federal Government and the Public*,” November 2008, <http://ourpublicservice.org/OPS/documents/InthePublicWeTrustNov24.pdf>.

⁴ *Rasmussen Reports*, “Most Americans Say Balanced Budget Good for Economy but Question if McCain Can Achieve it by 2013,” July 8, 2008, http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/business/general_business/most_americans_say_balanced_budget_good_for_economy_but_question_if_mccain_can_achieve_it_by_2013.

Introduction

“We could say they spend money like drunken sailors, but that would be unfair – to drunken sailors. It would be unfair, because the sailors are spending their own money.”

- Ronald Reagan on Congress⁵

Wasteful spending in Washington is nothing new. Countless stories emerge year after year about government officials spending taxpayer money in outrageous ways that no ordinary person would ever choose to spend his or her own money. Over time, the cost of these wasteful spending decisions has been significant, making many Americans rightfully frustrated with the way government does business. While government excesses should never be tolerated, they are particularly troublesome in times of financial difficulty like we face today.

2008 was a record year for the federal budget, though not in a manner worth celebrating. Total federal spending approached \$3 trillion, while Congress ran up the budget deficit to \$455 billion, according to the Congressional Budget Office – the largest in the nation’s history.⁶ If the surpluses from Social Security and Medicare are not included, the true federal deficit was \$639 billion.⁷ The budget deficit is the measure of how much more the government spent than it received in taxes for a given year. Any money spent by the government over and above its revenues must be borrowed from creditors around the world, all of which is repaid with interest. In 2007 alone, the federal government spent \$239 billion – one in every eight dollars it spent that year – solely on interest payments toward the national debt.⁸ The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates that the budget deficit may reach as high as \$1 trillion in 2009, forcing an ever-greater portion of the federal budget to be used for debt repayment.⁹

Likewise, the national debt is the cumulative total of budget deficits from prior years that have not yet been repaid. As of December 8, 2008, the national debt reached \$10,653,930,363,287.91 – or more than \$10.6 trillion.¹⁰ This figure represents \$6.4 trillion the federal government has borrowed from private lenders, both foreign and domestic, as well as \$4.2 trillion it has borrowed from programs like Social Security and Medicare. Paying this money back often costs several times the amount of principal originally borrowed. All of it comes from the pockets of U.S. taxpayers.

Driving a substantial portion of the federal budget each year is the government’s social insurance programs: Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Estimates prepared by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) – the investigative arm of Congress – show that the

⁵ <http://www.quotationcollection.com/quotation/199/quote>.

⁶ Total federal outlays for FY 2008 were \$2.979 trillion, Congressional Budget Office, Monthly Projections, November 2008, <http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/99xx/doc9912/11-2008-MBR.pdf>.

⁷ The figure was arrived at by subtracting the off-budget surpluses from the on-budget deficits, data can be found here: CBO’s Baseline Budget Projections, September 2008, http://cbo.gov/ftpdocs/97xx/doc9706/Selected_Tables.pdf.

⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *FY 2007 Financial Report of the United States Government*, pg. 22, <http://www.gao.gov/financial/fy2007/mangmntdis.pdf>.

⁹ Dickson, David M., “Watchdog forecasts \$1 trillion budget deficit,” *Washington Times*, November 1, 2008, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/nov/01/watchdog-predicts-stimulus-plans-will-propel-defic/>.

¹⁰ Treasury Direct: Debt To The Penny <http://www.treasurydirect.gov/NP/BPDLogin?application=np>.

projected cost to the government of paying for these programs in the future will be at least \$52.7 trillion. More simply, every American currently owes at least \$410,000 to pay for the commitments made by the government in these areas, though that figure is on the rise.¹¹

These existing budgetary difficulties were in place even before the collapsing subprime mortgage market sparked economic crisis this year, further straining the budget. Efforts by the Federal Reserve and the Department of the Treasury to stave off economic trouble have resulted in huge commitments of federal resources that will need to be funded. Consider the following liabilities assumed by taxpayers as a result of government actions to date.

In March 2008, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York loaned \$29 billion to J.P. Morgan Chase for the acquisition of Bear Stearns, a failing investment bank.¹² In September, the Treasury used \$200 billion to bail out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, two government-sponsored enterprises involved in the subprime mortgage industry.¹³ Also in September, the government seized control of American International Group (AIG) by loaning the company up to \$85 billion as an attempt to protect the broader financial system.¹⁴ AIG was loaned an additional \$37.8 billion in October to bail it out again once the first attempt proved inadequate.¹⁵ This was quickly followed by a third attempt, which involved the purchase of \$40 billion in AIG stock as well as \$53 billion in troubled mortgage assets, leading to a total rescue package valued at more than \$150 billion for a single company.¹⁶ All of these rescue attempts were dwarfed following the collapse of Lehman Brothers, a major investment bank, which prompted Congress to pass a \$700 billion bill aimed at propping up the broader financial system.¹⁷

While the federal government intends for the funds involved in each of these financial rescue plans to be paid back, there is no guarantee that they will – and the short-term costs are enormous. To pay for everything, the Treasury plans to borrow \$550 billion in the final three months of 2008 and \$368 billion during the first three months of 2009. In all, some economists predict that the federal government will borrow more than \$1.5 trillion during 2009.¹⁸ Total commitments of taxpayer money for rescuing the economy during 2008 have approached \$3 trillion.¹⁹ One research firm puts that estimate even higher, finding that the federal

¹¹ Presentation made by Comptroller General of the United States, David M. Walker, U.S. Government Accountability Office "Saving Our Future Requires Tough Choices Today," p. 6, January 14, 2008, <http://gao.gov/cghome/d08465cg.pdf>.

¹² Lawder, David, "NY Fed to provide \$29 billion in Bear Stearns financing," *Reuters*, March 24, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSWAT00917720080324>.

¹³ Ellis, David, "U.S. seizes Fannie and Freddie," *CNN Money*, September 7, 2008, http://money.cnn.com/2008/09/07/news/companies/fannie_freddie/index.htm?postversion=2008090720.

¹⁴ Karnitschnig, Matthew, "U.S. to Take Over AIG in \$85 Billion Bailout; Central Banks Inject Cash as Credit Dries Up," *Wall Street Journal*, September 16, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122156561931242905.html>.

¹⁵ Meier, Barry, and Mary Williams Walsh, "A.I.G. to Get Additional \$37.8 Billion," *New York Times*, October 8, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/09/business/economy/09insure.html>.

¹⁶ Son, Hugh, and Craig Torres, "AIG Gets Expanded Bailout, Posts \$24.5 Billion Loss," *Bloomberg*, November 10, 2008, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aLAOKeHG_AM4&refer=worldwide.

¹⁷ Herszenhorn, David, "Bailout Plan Wins Approval; Democrats Vow Tighter Rules," *New York Times*, October 3, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/04/business/economy/04bailout.html?hp>.

¹⁸ Hilsenrath, Jon, "New Debt Could Hamstring Obama," *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 2008, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122591965987102467.html>.

¹⁹ Goldman, David, "Your \$3 trillion bailout," *CNN Money*, November 5, 2008, http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/05/news/economy/three_trillion_dollar_bailout/.

government's rescue actions put the total closer to \$5 trillion.²⁰ Total federal commitments to date are approximately \$7 trillion, or half of the national gross domestic product.²¹

Despite the urgent financial and budgetary circumstances, Congress continues to waste enormous amounts of money each year on frivolous and wasteful projects – and 2008 was no exception. While economic crisis looms large on the horizon, Congress acted in the past year as if the federal budget was in a surplus and money was no object. It was a year that witnessed millions of dollars spent on the search for outer space aliens, a military blimp rejected by the Pentagon, a retractable shade canopy in a riverfront park, a bike shower and café, and a congressional junket to the Galapagos Islands.

In a year that witnessed record prices for gasoline, rising tuition and health care costs, mortgage difficulties, rising unemployment and a recession, politicians should not be looking for ways to take even more money from the pockets of Americans for trivial projects. More than ever, taxpayers need their hard-earned paychecks to use for that which they determine is most important for their families.

This report attempts to highlight some of the more egregious examples of wasteful Washington spending from this past year. In doing so, it should become clear to even the casual observer that Congress has failed to put high priorities ahead of low ones. What remains is a federal budget cobbled together according to the needs of special interests, campaign contributors and lobbyists, with low priorities often put at the top of the list. Until Congress can rein in wasteful spending, billions of taxpayer dollars will continue to be spent every year on frivolous projects.

If past is prologue, Congress will continue to put short-term interests ahead of long-term interests until pressure is put on them to change their actions. Fiscal responsibility will be accomplished only when politicians do what is best in the long-term and sacrifice parochial interests in favor of national priorities.

In that light, I have scoured the federal budget for examples of government spending that do not meet the test of common sense, and could easily be sacrificed. The result is a survey some of the best of the worst from 2008, with cases from across the federal bureaucracy and around the country.

In Washington, D.C., the refrain is often heard that government programs are underfunded, lacking in resources. It seems to those in government there is never quite enough to fund all the projects they would like to undertake with taxpayer money. To the contrary, there is plenty of room to tighten the belt and trim away wasteful government spending. This report provides a few good places to start.

²⁰ Moyer, Elizabeth, "Washington's \$5 Trillion Tab," *Forbes*, November 12, 2008, http://www.forbes.com/home/2008/11/12/paulson-bernanke-fed-biz-wall-cx_lm_1112bailout.html.

²¹ Goldman, David, "Bailouts: \$7 trillion and rising," *CNNMoney*, November 28, 2008, http://money.cnn.com/2008/11/26/news/economy/where_bailout_stands/?postversion=2008112615.

Snapshots of Wasteful Washington Spending

The following brief snapshots provide examples of outrageous, wasteful or fraudulent government spending throughout the federal budget in the past year. They came from grants, contracts, earmarks or other funding sources, but each one represents the judgment of a government official with discretion to spend taxpayer money. Presented in no particular order are some of the worst snapshots of government waste from 2008.

Search for Outer Space Aliens – California (\$9.4 million)

Some examples of federal spending are truly out of this world, and \$9.4 million in grants to the SETI Institute in California is no exception. The SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) Institute is devoted to searching for life in outer space, but has not had any luck yet. One member of Congress was able to secure \$1.6 million from the budget of the Defense



E.T. phone home.

Department for this effort.²² Commenting several years ago on public investments for SETI, John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists remarked, “I think most people think there are aliens out there. With the limitations in space and time I don't think we'll ever see any of them. But communicating with them is another matter. It's awfully expensive and difficult to try to send a human being through space, but sending radio signals, that's cheap.”²³

Voicemail for the Homeless – Ohio (\$15,000)

While the homeless in Summit County struggle to find food, shelter and clothing, this Ohio community made sure they were not lacking in one essential service: voice mail. A \$1 million Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) will carve out \$15,000 for the free voice mail service. Interestingly, the community spent only \$10,000 of the same CDBG grant on transitional housing for “homeless single parents.”²⁴

Training Classes for Casino Workers – Kansas (\$784,000)

Good casino workers are hard to find in the Kansas City area, according to the Departments of Labor and Education. Both federal departments teamed up this year and gave \$784,000 in grants to the Kansas City Kansas Community College for a new training program geared to assist workers that may seek employment in a nearby planned casino.²⁵ Casino owners are not taking

²² “Now Playing at Reason.tv: Earmarks—The Alien Menace,” *Reason: Hit and Run blog*, July 29, 2008, <http://www.reason.com/blog/show/127791.html>.

²³ Sorid, Daniel, “Alien Investigators: A Look at the SETI Institute,” *Space.com*, May 9, 2000, http://www.space.com/searchforlife/inside_seti_000427.html.

²⁴ Armon, Rick, “\$1 million in grants go to council,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 30, 2008, http://www.ohio.com/community/summit_county/33558989.html.

²⁵ \$478,000 grant from the Department of Education through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_352776.html; \$307,000 grant from the Department of Labor through the Employment and Training Administration http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_330340.html.

any chances when it comes to getting the government to pay for their workers' training. "Every casino operator has talked to us about this," said Lori Trumbo, dean of business and continuing education at the community college. "They are going to need these employees, and they're going to need them to be well-trained."²⁶



Inflatable alligator

Inflatable Alligator and Under-the-Sea Waterslide – Texas (\$367,000)

A preliminary report by the Texas Education Agency, released this past April, found that \$367,000 in federal funds were misspent by the Cleburne school district. Audit officials became suspicious when, "The district did not provide lesson plans or other documentation to show how rental of an inflatable alligator and an under-the-sea water slide supported reading instruction."²⁷

Tennis Courts and Artificial Baseball Field Turf – New York (\$1 million)

In 2000, the Frank M. Charles Memorial Park received a federal grant of \$1 million to upgrade its deteriorating facilities, but according to Dorothy McCloskey, president of the park's oversight committee, "the money was wasted." The problem, she insisted, was the park management's "notorious inability" to perform routine maintenance, leaving the tennis courts and baseball fields in a state of disrepair. Taxpayers chipped in an additional \$1 million grant this year to repair the tennis courts and to provide artificial turf for a baseball field.²⁸ There is hope that this time will be different, "I'm not willing to see another million dollars wasted," McCloskey said.²⁹

Cleveland Botanical Garden Green Corps – Ohio (\$517,000)

Fifty-five teenagers are learning to plant vegetables and do landscaping through the Cleveland Botanical Garden's "Green Corps," a work-study program that teaches teens to make salsa. A grant of \$517,000 – or more than \$9,400 per student – was directed to the Green Corps out of juvenile justice programs at the Department of Justice.³⁰ Students are instructed how to use the vegetables they grow to bottle and sell "Ripe from Downtown®" salsa and vinaigrette.³¹ Geri Unger, director of the program, noted the impact it is having on teens, "For many, this is the first time they've eaten vegetables they actually see growing."³²



²⁶ Stagemeyer, Suzanna, "Wyandotte County casinos may give college a big boost," *Kansas City Business Journal*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/stories/2008/08/04/story2.html>.

²⁷ Deller, Martha, "Report details Cleburne misuse of funds, criticizes officials," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, April 23, 2008.

²⁸ "Park's \$1 Mil Grant Discussed," *Queens Chronicle*, August 21, 2008, http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20085518&BRD=2731&PAG=461&dept_id=574908&rfi=6.

²⁹ Landor, Lee, "Meeks, Friends Obtain \$1 Mil For Charles Park," *Queens Chronicle*, August 7, 2008, http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19898611&BRD=2731&PAG=461&dept_id=574908&rfi.

³⁰ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_328748.html.

³¹ Cleveland Botanical Garden Website, <http://www.cb garden.org/Learn/Outreach.html>.

³² Theiss, Evelyn, "Cleveland Botanical Garden Green Corps plans open house," *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland), July 21, 2008, http://blog.cleveland.com/health/2008/07/cleveland_botanical_garden_gre.html.

Free-Bike Library – Colorado (\$66,000)

A \$66,000 federal grant to promote clean air has been used in Fort Collins, Colorado, for a “bike library” that allows local residents to check out bicycles for free. According to the *Coloradoan*, “demand for bikes has been so great, however, that the library is often empty,” leading to “shoving matches between riders over the free-to-borrow bikes.”³³



Bridging the Generational Gap with Nintendo Wii – Indiana (\$3,905)

The Institute of Museums and Library Sciences, an arm of the federal government dedicated to “strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas,” awarded a grant to Westfield Washington Public Library for the purchase of “a Nintendo Wii console, tv, camcorder and games.”³⁴ According to the *Indianapolis Star*, “The Wii will be used to encourage patrons to meet and exchange ideas with other community members during multi-generational gaming events held at the library.”³⁵

Portraits of Cabinet Officers (\$167,290)

Even in the age of high-resolution digital photography, numerous government officials prefer to have their likeness captured for posterity on the painter’s canvas. Nearly \$170,000 was spent on just six portraits for the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Commerce, the NASA Administrator, the Commandant of the Coast Guard and even the director of the National Cancer Institute. Taxpayer watchdog groups have questioned this spending, wondering whether every cabinet and sub-cabinet officer needs his or her own hand-painted portrait. Former Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta, however, thinks the expenditures are just fine, noting how often he finds inspiration from portraits of other former secretaries. “Hopefully, as some future secretary is looking at my portrait, either in Transportation or Commerce, they might say, ‘Hey, Norm, thanks for the job you did.’”³⁶

FCC-Sponsored NASCAR Events to Promote Digital Television Transition (\$350,000)

Fans of NASCAR will not be left wondering how to watch their favorite races on television come February 2009 if chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Kevin Martin, has his way. Martin spent \$350,000 of taxpayer money to advertise the nationwide transition to digital television, scheduled for early next year, on the hood of NASCAR driver David Gilliland’s No.



No. 38 car after crashing in its first race.

³³ Hughes, Trevor, “Demand has Bike Library short on wheels,” *Coloradoan*, August 5, 2008.

³⁴ Website of the State of Indiana, http://www.in.gov/library/files/2008_LSTA_Grant_Awards.pdf.

³⁵ Hull, Paula R., “Westfield Library awarded LSTA grant,” *Indianapolis Star*, June 16, 2008.

³⁶ Lee, Christopher, “Official Portraits Draw Skeptical Gaze,” *Washington Post*, October 21, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/20/AR2008102003627.html?tid=informbox>.

38 car.³⁷ In what is hoped *not* to be a sign of things to come, the DTV Ford crashed hard into the wall during its first appearance on the track. FCC Commissioner, Jonathan Adelstein, added, “This doesn't seem like the most efficient use of resources.”³⁸

“George Washington Slept Here” Travelling Museum – New Jersey (\$49,000)

Woodbridge Township, New Jersey, carries the proud distinction of being one of the places George Washington slept during one of the more than 24,000 nights in his life – and they want everyone to know. To commemorate the occasion – and others like it through its history – the federal government has given the township \$49,000 for a traveling museum to be displayed in schools, libraries and just about anywhere else people might be interested. Remarkd one local congressman, “It's right that one of the largest and oldest communities in our state create a traveling historical museum.”³⁹

Senate Restaurants Post Huge Loss (\$2 million)

Who says there is no such thing as a free lunch? Certainly not the taxpayers who helped to subsidize lunches and snacks for Senators and their staffs in 2008. According to Senator Dianne Feinstein, chair of the committee that oversees cafeterias, Senate restaurants will post losses as large as \$2 million in 2008, following a loss of \$1.34 million in 2007.⁴⁰ Data from the Chief Clerk of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee shows that, “Since 1993, losses have averaged over \$900,000 annually and taxpayers have been required to provide \$18.1 million in operational subsidies. In fact, the Senate Restaurants have operated at a loss in 37 of the last 44 years.” There is a glimmer of hope, though, for the years to come. All Senate cafeterias were privatized this fall and opened under new management in hopes of ending taxpayer support.

Scottsville Streetscaping Project – Virginia (\$392,000)

Minor's Diner and the James River Store are just the latest victims of Department of Transportation “assistance” that has proved less than helpful. The businesses were forced to close after \$392,000 was given to Scottsville for a streetscaping project that shut down main roads, blocked sidewalks, and “left roads unpaved and uninviting.” The streetscaping project, intended to beautify the downtown area by burying power lines, is now a year behind schedule and \$200,000 over budget. When asked about what era he hoped to return the town to by this endeavor, Mayor Stephen Phipps said, “It's not a certain era, per se, just a time when we didn't have power lines.”⁴¹ Mark Collins, owner of Coleman's Outdoors, noted that he was among the “lucky ones” because of his rear parking lot. “[The new lamps] look nice,” said Hollis Lumpkin, owner of Lumpkin's Restaurant, “but they're lighting vacant storefronts.”⁴²

³⁷ Schatz, Amy, “FCC's Race Car to Promote Digital TV Hits the Wall,” *Wall Street Journal Blog: Washington Wire*, October 20, 2008, <http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2008/10/20/fccs-race-car-to-promote-digital-tv-hits-the-wall/>.

³⁸ Website of Citizens Against Government Waste, Press Release, “CAGW Names FCC Chairman Kevin Martin October Porker of the Month,” October 23, 2008, <http://www.cagw.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=11662>.

³⁹ Chang, Kathy, “Federal funds secure police upgrades, mobile museum,” *Woodbridge Sentinel*, January 9, 2008, http://ws.gmnews.com/news/2008/0109/Front_Page/005.html.

⁴⁰ Yehle, Emily, “Feinstein Warns Cafeteria Prices Could Rise,” *Roll Call*, May 12, 2008, http://www.rollcall.com/issues/53_135/news/23557-1.html?type=printer_friendly.

⁴¹ Weaver, Scott, “Scottsville Businesses endure retrofit,” *Charlottesville News and Arts*, July 17-23, 2007, http://www.c-ville.com/index.php?cat=141404064435450&ShowArticle_ID=11431607070936865.

⁴² White, Caite, “Scottsville streetscape off schedule, over budget,” *Charlottesville News and Arts*, July 8-14, 2008, http://www.c-ville.com/index.php?cat=121304064644348&z_Issue_ID=11800307081422338&ShowArchiveArticle_ID=11800707083568835&Year=2008.

Constructing the Tampa Riverwalk – Florida (\$294,000)

Taking a stroll along the Hillsborough River may take a little longer once city officials use a \$294,000 federal grant on construction of the Tampa Riverwalk, but at least it will be more enjoyable.⁴³ Funds were made available by the Department of Housing and Urban Development for a redevelopment plan to “create a vibrant and interactive waterfront experience for residents and visitors that reflects the spirit and uniqueness of Tampa.”⁴⁴ According to the City of Tampa, local residents have only chipped in 14 percent of the total project costs, while U.S. taxpayers have paid at least 20 percent.⁴⁵ One real estate developer who was thrilled about the influx of federal dollars was “The Donald.” Donald Trump nearly scuttled Riverwalk plans last year in a court battle with the city of over whether he was required to pay \$700,000 for the portion in front of his luxury condominiums.⁴⁶ Fortunately, taxpayers were there to pick up the tab.



Crowds gather on Riverwalk for Flugtag, sponsored by Red Bull, in which aircraft are launched into the Hillsborough River.

Driving Tours and Exhibits for the America West Heritage Center – Utah (\$200,000)

The Institute of Museum and Library Sciences will provide \$200,000 to the America West Heritage Center in Utah – open only during the Summer – to develop a driving tour to help visitors understand what life was like in the Cache Valley from the 1820s to the 1920s.⁴⁷ Funds would also be available for the museum’s other exhibits such as Baby Animal Days, the Corn Maze, the Halloween Light Show, Tellabration! (a storytelling event), and A Frontier Christmas featuring a snowman making contest.⁴⁸

Restoring Robert Frost Farm – New Hampshire (\$205,800)

While Robert Frost may have taken the road less travelled, the caretakers of his farm in Derry, New Hampshire, have beaten a well-worn path to the federal government for a grant of more than \$200,000.⁴⁹ The funds from the Economic Development Initiative grant program at the Department of Housing and Urban Development will be used for “major improvements to bring

⁴³ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_288929.html

⁴⁴ Website of the City of Tampa, Florida, http://www.tampagov.net/dept_riverwalk/.

⁴⁵ City of Tampa Website, “Funding the Riverwalk,” http://tampafll.gov/dept_riverwalk/information_resources/get_involved/funding_the_riverwalk.asp

⁴⁶ Gedalius, Ellen, “Trump Dispute Hinders Riverwalk,” *Tampa Bay Online*, May 31, 2007, <http://www.tbo.com/news/nationworld/MGBFB7PMC2F.html>.

⁴⁷ “Earmark to fund museum exhibits,” *Jackson Hole Star-Tribune*, July 30, 2008.

⁴⁸ Website of the American West Heritage Center, “History of the American West Heritage Center,” <http://www.awhc.org/page.php?n=history>.

⁴⁹ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_289430.html.

Frost's former home to good condition," according to the Frost farm trustees.⁵⁰ Frost farm offers tours, a trail, displays and poetry readings, all offered to the public free of charge.⁵¹ Taxpayers may wonder whether this is an urgent national priority, though one observer remarked, "This is an example of tax dollars being well used."



Robert Frost Farm in Derry, New Hampshire, source: <http://robertfrostfarm.org/>

"The check's in the mail" – IRS Mailings for Rebate Checks (\$42 million)

When Congress passed legislation this year giving every taxpayer a stimulus check, the Department of the Treasury felt recipients needed a little advanced warning. It spent nearly \$42 million on a mailing to inform taxpayers not that their checks had arrived, but merely that they would be there soon.⁵² Each piece of mail cost 32 cents to print, process and deliver. Treasury

officials insisted that the mailing was essential to "have as few people as possible confused." The *Las Vegas Sun* wondered aloud: "why not include the explanation letters with the checks and use the other money for something useful, such as investigating tax fraud?"⁵³



Kids love the world's largest stuffed fish.

Remounting "World's Largest Mounted Fish" – New York (\$135,000)

Following an absence of nearly a decade, a 32-foot whale shark made a long-awaited comeback at the Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum - mounted on a wall, that is. Leaky plumbing damaged the stuffed shark – thought to be the largest stuffed mounted fish in the world – while on display more than ten years ago, leading many to believe that it would never again appear in public. David B. Schwendeman, taxidermist, thought otherwise and rescued the shark with the help of a \$135,000 federal grant from the Save America's

⁵⁰ Kalil, Mike, "Frost Farm supporters celebrate federal funding for preservation," *Union Leader*, May 30, 2008, <http://www.theunionleader.com/article.aspx?headline=Frost+Farm+supporters+celebrate+federal+funding+for+preservation&articleId=6fdf6cf9-1e93-43bd-8800-7bf67df4a053>.

⁵¹ Website of the New Hampshire State Park System, <http://www.nhstateparks.com/frost.html>.

⁵² Barrett, Devlin, "Letters about tax rebates cost IRS \$42 million," *Associated Press*, March 8, 2008, <http://dekalb-chronicle.com/articles/2008/03/08/news/news04.txt>.

⁵³ Editorial, "Rebates will be mailed," *Las Vegas Sun*, March 10, 2008, <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/mar/10/rebates-will-be-mailed/>.

Treasures program, noting that “taxidermy [is] the ultimate in terms of conservation and wise use of our natural resources.”⁵⁴

Redecorating Train Station – New Jersey (\$1.9 million)

Rutherford Train Station in New Jersey was remodeled this summer with the help of a \$1.9 million grant from the federal government. Funds for the project were earmarked out of the Federal Highway Trust Fund, ordinarily set aside for important road and bridge projects, and paid for by federal gas taxes. According to the *New Bergenite*, among other fixes, “workers will install new doors to the café and the rear platform as well as clean or replace the copper-clad window enclosure for the ticket office.”⁵⁵ NJ Transit Executive Director, Richard Sarles, noted

that the repairs were crucial because usage of the station had increased to 940 customers a day – a number he called “significant.” Besides, he added, “We [also] had federal funds available to do it.”⁵⁶

Ice worm

Mesenchytraeus solifugus

Length: 1.5 to 2.5 centimeters

Diameter: .5 millimeter

Behavior: Forms colonies of up to 30 million. Lives in burrows, appearing on glacier surface several hours before sunset and penetrating back into the glacier several hours before sunrise

Range: Glaciers and snowfields of Alaska and Pacific Northwest



Source: Daniel H. Shain, Rutgers University
LORI A. GALLO/Courier-Post

Search for Alaskan Ice Worms – New Jersey (\$326,733)

The National Science Foundation awarded a grant of more than \$325,000 to Daniel Shain, professor at Rutgers University, to trek to Alaska in search of the elusive ice worm. Unfortunately, he and several students spent two weeks this August hunting through snow and ice for ice worms, only to come back empty-handed. According to the *Cherry Hill Courier Post*, “Shain said his sixth Alaskan voyage was a continuous adventure that had everything he'd hoped for but new populations of worms.”⁵⁷

Medicare Overpayment for Name-Brand Drugs with Generic Alternatives (\$6.5 million)

Many medications are available in both name-brand and generic versions, with generic alternatives offering consumers an inexpensive option without sacrificing quality or effectiveness. In March, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services wasted \$6.5 million by purchasing cancer drug irinotecan, sold by Pfizer Inc. as Camptosar, rather than the generic alternative, according to the inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services. While a generic alternative was approved in February, Medicare continued to

purchase the name-brand option at twice the price of the generic option during the following month.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “One that almost got away,” *Newsday.com*, August 2, 2008, http://www.newsday.com/community/news/northshoresuffolk/huntington/ny-lfcov0803_0_233803.story. Website of the Save America’s Treasures program, <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/>.

⁵⁵ O’Keefe, Daniel, “Station Upgrades Begin This Summer,” *South Bergenite* (New Jersey), May 21, 2008, <http://www.southbergenite.com/NC/0/1286.html>.

⁵⁶ Davis, Tom, “Rutherford Train Station to be Restored,” *The Record* (North Jersey), May 15, 2008, <http://www.northjersey.com/news/18963424.html>.

⁵⁷ Rosen, Jeremy, “Professor’s passion for ice worms sizzles,” *Courier-Post* (New Jersey), August 27, 2008, <http://www.courierpostonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080827/NEWS01/808270361/1006>.

⁵⁸ “Medicare overpaid on drugs, report says,” *Bloomberg News*, August 28, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/28/business/fi-medicare28>.

3-D Space Theater – Indiana (\$2.4 million)

Kids in Indiana may never travel through space, but that won't stop them from experiencing the next best thing. The National Science Foundation gave the Terre Haute Children's Museum a grant for \$2.4 million to construct a 3-D space theater. Fortunately for those living outside Terre Haute metro area, "the museum also plans to take the new space exhibit to area fairs, festivals and events across Indiana and Illinois."⁵⁹

Bike Path Along Baton Rouge Levees – Louisiana (\$1 million)

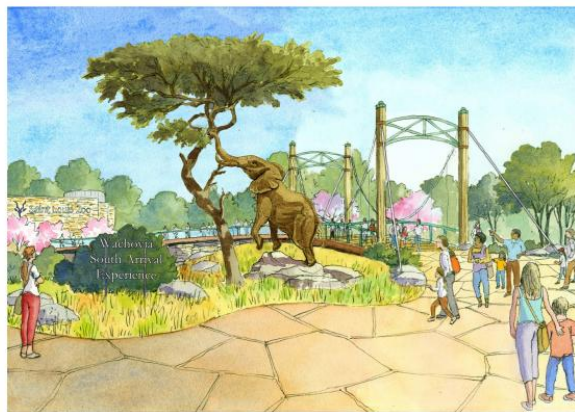
Even as Louisiana continues to rebuild its levees following the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Congress has made sure one priority project stays on track: a bike path along the Mississippi River levee. A \$1 million grant was awarded by the Federal Highway Administration – out of a fund set aside for road and bridge projects – to lengthen a bike path from downtown Baton Rouge to the campus of Louisiana State University.⁶⁰ Noted one member of Congress from Louisiana who was instrumental in securing the funds, "I think it's a great investment."⁶¹

Microchips in Cactuses – Arizona (\$???)

Thieves looking to nab a saguaro cactus in Arizona may have another thing coming if Jim McGinnis has anything to do with it. He's the top "cactus cop" in town and plans on using National Park Service funds to implant microchips in selected saguaro cactuses to help him track them down if stolen from federal property. These special cactuses, which number in the thousands, can grow to enormous sizes, sometimes taking as long as fifty years to flower, though they can be valuable on the open market. "Saguaros are the plant that gets the most money," said McGinnis. "Everybody wants a saguaro in their front yard."⁶²

St. Louis Zoo Bridge to Parking Lot – Missouri (\$5 million)

The St. Louis Zoo will get a new pedestrian bridge linking its south gate to a parking lot across the street, compliments of a \$5 million grant from the Department of Transportation. Zoo president, Jeffery Bonner, noted that "from the parking lot, the approach to the bridge will take visitors past a recreated African savanna made from landscaping and bronze sculptures, including a 19-foot-tall elephant statue." Taxpayers concerned with the project's large price tag can rest assured that the federal money will, "give



Artist's conception of the new world-class parking lot bridge.

⁵⁹ "T.H. Children's Museum to get a new space exhibit," *WTHITV.com*, June 17, 2008, <http://www.wthitv.com/Global/story.asp?S=8514103>.

⁶⁰ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_351638.html.

⁶¹ "Landrieu gets BR bike path \$1 million," *2TheAdvocate/WBRZ News 2* (Louisiana), April 13, 2008, <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/17586714.html>.

⁶² Rotstein, Arthur, "Feds to use computer chips to foil cactus thieves," *Associated Press*, October 9, 2008, <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/2008/10/09/20081009saguaro1009.html>.

a world-class institution a world-class front door,” according to one member of Congress.⁶³ Added Bonner, “We think this will become one of the most admired public spaces at the zoo.”⁶⁴

EPA Administrator Junket to Australia (\$280,000)

Why waste your time testifying before the Senate when you can tour a waste treatment plant in Australia? That was the decision of the EPA Administrator, when in April he and 11 lucky staffers skipped a Senate hearing invitation and instead took a last-second trip Down Under for important environmental policy meetings on Aussie sewage. The trip cost taxpayers more than a quarter of a million dollars, but the itinerary included stops at the Bundamba advanced water treatment center in Queensland Territory, the Melbourne Eastern Water Plant, and “a tentative farm visit.”⁶⁵

Revitalization in Cleveland – Ohio (\$1.1 million)

The Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Agency in Ohio used a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to purchase 33 homes in Cleveland as part of a revitalization effort. Unfortunately, they overpaid by more than a million dollars by paying above-market rates for the houses, despite being in a declining market. According to *The Plain Dealer*, the median price for all homes sold in Cleveland was \$15,000 for the first half of 2008, while the average price of the homes purchased with taxpayer dollars was \$83,000. “I think it is extremely suspect,” said Councilman Brian Cummins, whose district includes two of the homes. “(The) prices seem high for this neighborhood.”⁶⁶

Visitor Center for National Fish Hatchery – Missouri (\$2.8 million)

In 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service faced a \$2.5 billion shortfall, forcing the agency to leave 200 national refuges unstaffed and to implement a plan to lay off 565 employees by 2009.⁶⁷ In a sign of how fast budget priorities can change in only one year, the Fish and Wildlife service set aside \$2.8 million in 2008 to construct a visitor center for the National Fish Hatchery in Neosho, Missouri. David Hendrix, manager of the Neosho hatchery, said that he wanted the center “to contain all the broad features the hatchery wants — a book and souvenir shop, an exhibit hall with displays, and a large aquarium.”⁶⁸

⁶³ Hathaway, Matthew, “Zoo will get bridge,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Missouri), October 7, 2008, <http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/stlouiscitycounty/story/4E04381114324799862574DB0010E47F?OpenDocument>.

⁶⁴ “Wachovia gives \$2.5M for zoo renovation,” *St. Louis Business Journal*, October 6, 2008, <http://stlouis.bizjournals.com/stlouis/stories/2008/10/06/daily23.html>.

⁶⁵ Kamen, Al, “Sunny Australia Sure Beats a Senate Hearing,” *Washington Post*, April 2, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/01/AR2008040102478.html>.

⁶⁶ Donaldson, Stan, “CMHA paid top dollar for houses even as property values crashed,” *The Plain Dealer*, October 23, 2008, http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2008/10/cmha_paid_top_dollar_for_house.html.

⁶⁷ “National wildlife refuges feel the budget ax,” *Associated Press*, March 15, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17634561/>.

⁶⁸ Spellman, Derek, “Bids submitted to visitor center at Neosho hatchery,” *The Joplin Globe*, August 17, 2008, http://www.joplinglobe.com/local/local_story_230215529.html.

Renovating Old Tiger Baseball Stadium – Detroit (\$4 million)

In 2000, the Detroit Tigers baseball team moved out of Tiger Stadium after calling it home for eighty-eight years. Demolition of the stadium was well underway when the decision was made



Old Tiger Stadium in need of major repairs.

to stop, due to the efforts of the Old Tiger Stadium Conservancy, an organization formed to preserve the semi-demolished remains as a “public park, youth sports venue, and destination for baseball fans.”⁶⁹ Fortunately for the conservancy, taxpayers are now coming through in the bottom of the ninth with a \$4 million federal grant to renovate the old stadium, in addition to several “federal tax credits.”⁷⁰ One city developer, noting that the value of the land would be greater if the stadium were cleared away, remarked, “To try to raise money to just hold on to a portion

of an old stadium might not be easy.”⁷¹

Studying American and Chinese Video Game Habits – California (\$100,000)

American and Chinese video game playing habits have been too long overlooked by mainstream science, according to the National Science Foundation (NSF). To remedy this, NSF gave University of California at Irvine a \$100,000 grant to study the differences in how gamers from the U.S. and China play World of Warcraft, a popular online video game that allows opponents to do battle on the planet Azeroth. The key difference scientists discerned to date: “the Chinese tend to play a ‘more challenging’ version of the game.”⁷²

Military Funding Diverted to Tentmaker – New York (\$1.6 million)

\$1.6 million in funds provided by Congress to the military will be diverted to a private tent-making company, not to help troops in the field, but to save jobs. Johnson Outdoors was threatened with possible lay-offs after a declining need for tents meant that “military personnel are staying more in hard-sheltered buildings versus tents,” said William Kelly, vice president of the recreation equipment company. Layoffs were averted, thanks to the generous donation from the U.S. Marines, by way of a congressional earmark, that asked the company to keep making the tents anyway.⁷³

Low-Income Student Program Used for Employee Bonuses – California (\$3 million)

The San Diego school district misused \$3 million in federal funds intended for nutrition programs to assist low-income students by spending it on bonuses for employees leaving the district, according to the *Voice of San Diego*. Funds were given to the school district by the

⁶⁹ Website of The Old Tiger Stadium Conservancy, http://www.savetigerstadium.org/getdoc/2151f106-5088-47fb-88bd-019d7691013f/read_more.htm.

⁷⁰ Beck, Jason, “Final Tiger Stadium demolition delayed,” *Major League Baseball News*, October 7, 2008,

⁷¹ Lapointe, Joe, “Tiger Stadium Faces Partial Demolition Amid Opposition,” *New York Times*, May 11, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/11/sports/baseball/11stadium.html>.

⁷² Cheung, Humphrey, “UC Irvine given \$100,000 to study WoW players,” *TG Daily*, September 12, 2008, <http://www.tgdaily.com/content/view/39296/98/>.

⁷³ Nguyen, My-Ly, “Defense spending saves jobs at Johnson Outdoors,” *PressConnects.com*, October 10, 2008, <http://www.pressconnects.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081010/BUSINESS/810100334>.

Department of Education, which had not yet decided whether the school district would be required to pay back the misused funds.⁷⁴

Halloween Signs in Salem – Massachusetts (\$50,000)

There is only one thing more frightening than being in Salem on Halloween: being in Salem and not knowing where to park. The National Park Service was able to scare up \$50,000 to help the town install 32 signs directing tourists in town for Halloween to off-street parking and two public parking garages.⁷⁵

National Drug Intelligence Center – Pennsylvania (\$39 million)

In 1992, Congress created, the National Drug Intelligence Center in Johnstown to collect information on drug activity around the nation. Since then, though, it has been labeled a “boondoggle” and, according to *U.S. News and World Report*, “been rocked by scandal, and been subjected to persistent criticisms that it should have never been created at all.”⁷⁶ Attempts have been made in recent years by the Department of Justice to shut down the center because of concerns related to duplication, overlap and wasteful spending. None of this stopped Congress from awarding NDIC \$39 million in 2008.⁷⁷ One former NDIC director said, “I recognized that a lot of reports were [awful], poorly written, poorly researched, and, in some cases, wrong.”⁷⁸

First Tee Golf Program – South Carolina (\$3 million)

Kids around the nation will be invited to learn and appreciate the game of golf through a \$3 million grant from the Pentagon to First Tee.⁷⁹ First Tee is a non-profit organization that was founded to bring underprivileged youth off the streets and onto the golf course. When one member of Congress responsible for arranging the grant was asked what childhood golf had to do with the military, he responded that golf “helps you make generals and colonels.”⁸⁰

Teen Club and Whitewater Rafting Trips – Florida (\$651,500)

Miami teens can look forward to a taxpayer-funded adventure, made possible by a \$651,500 grant from the Department of Justice program for juvenile justice. Using a similar grant of \$50,000 last year, the Teen Club paid for trips to Walt Disney World as well as for whitewater rafting.⁸¹ While part of the money in 2008 will be used for constructing a new teen center, a

⁷⁴ Alpert, Emily, “School District Settles for \$300K with Feds,” *Voice of San Diego*, October 16, 2008, http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/articles/2008/10/17/this_just_in/527settlement101608.txt.

⁷⁵ Dalton, Tom, “City installs new signs,” *The Salem News*, October 22, 2008, http://salemnews.com/punews/local_story_295231951.html.

⁷⁶ Bret Schulte. “A Drug War Boondoggle: The White House wants to kill it, but a little government agency may manage to live on,” *U.S. News World & Report*, May 1, 2005, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050509/9ndic.htm>.

⁷⁷ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_352958.html.

⁷⁸ Bret Schulte. “A Drug War Boondoggle: The White House wants to kill it, but a little government agency may manage to live on,” *U.S. News World & Report*, May 1, 2005, <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050509/9ndic.htm>.

⁷⁹ Freddoso, David, “Hole In One!” *National Review*, November 8, 2007, <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=ZjYyODRiZThiZmVhMmUyM2U4NjZhYWU5YmFmNGVjNDg=>.

⁸⁰ Brodsky, Robert, “Congress still pigging out on pork-barrel projects: watchdog group,” *Government Executive*, April 2, 2008, <http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0408/040208rb1.htm>.

⁸¹ Website of the City of Miami, <http://www.miamibeachfl.gov/newcity/press/press07/White%20Water%20Rafting%20Post%20Story.pdf>.

significant portion will likely once again go toward rafting trips. One observer joked, “That’s a lot of white water rafting trips.”⁸²

Kanjorski Center Parking Garage - Pennsylvania (\$5.6 million)

That the Kanjorski Center, a 32,000 square foot office building in Pennsylvania, has stood completely empty since 2005 did not prevent Congress from trying to funnel \$5.6 million in transportation money to add a large parking garage to it.⁸³ Officials at the Department of Transportation opposed the project, noting that current law prohibits the department from funding parking garages unless they serve mass transit needs – and this parking garage would not meet the test. Angered by the rules, one local congressman is fighting to keep the project alive, saying, “I don’t think the rule should have any attention paid to it. Because in Congress we have our own rules.”⁸⁴ When challenged by a reporter that the parking garage is costly to federal taxpayers, he replied, “For the community, it is free money.”⁸⁵

B In Tune Youth Music Program – Washington, D.C. (\$430,000)

Although nearly half a million dollars was directed to B In Tune youth program this past September, the result may not have been music to taxpayers’ ears. In 2005, a half million dollar grant was given to the non-profit organization to teach youth about “funk music and Nobel Peace laureates,” though it is doubtful money was ever spent for that purpose, according to the Department of Education. A report from B In Tune was due in September 2006, but had not been turned in to the department as of December 2007 – fifteen months late – because a “senior consultant became ill.” Questions remain about how the new \$430,000 grant will be used, but according to Eugene Maillard, director of B In Tune, “It might be music camps. It might be lessons. It might be how to be a DJ. It might be how to create a television show.”⁸⁶

Field Trips for School Teachers – Illinois (\$918,600)

Field trips aren’t just for students anymore. Teachers from Illinois were given a grant of nearly \$1 million by the Department of Education Teaching U.S. History program for vacations in the name of “continuing education.” Upcoming outings are planned for New York City, while past trips to New Orleans, Boston, California and Washington, D.C. were paid for with federal funds. High school teacher, Chris Johnson, a veteran trip-taker, feels that excursions to other cities help to give teachers “ownership” of the material they teach. “I’m a better teacher today than before I started these trips,” he said.⁸⁷

Captain John Smith Water Trail – Virginia (\$446,500)

Seafaring taxpayers can hardly wait for the completion of the Capt. John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail in 2009 – the nation’s first trail completely under water. Using \$446,500 from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), buoys throughout the Chesapeake Bay will mark the waterways used by John Smith in his early exploration of America,

⁸² Fraga, Lazaro, “Miami Beach Teen club gets \$680,000 grant,” *Miami Herald*, April 20, 2008.

⁸³ Crabtree, Susan, “Big earmark headache for Rep. Kanjorski,” *The Hill*, July 8, 2008, <http://thehill.com/leading-the-news/big-earmark-headache-for-rep-kanjorski-2008-07-08.html>.

⁸⁴ Attkisson, Cheryl, “The Parking Garage To Nowhere?,” *CBS Evening News: Follow the Money*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/01/eveningnews/main4316199.shtml>.

⁸⁵ Attkisson, Cheryl, “The Parking Garage To Nowhere?,” *CBS Evening News: Follow the Money*, August 1, 2008, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/08/01/eveningnews/main4316199.shtml>.

⁸⁶ Sheridan, Mary Beth, “Hoyer Is Proof of Earmarks’ Endurance,” *Washington Post*, December 10, 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/09/AR2007120901640.html>.

⁸⁷ Pospeschil, Jodi, “Grant lets teachers learn while on the road,” *Peoria Journal Star*, April 24, 2008.

though the water trail will only be accessible to those who own, or have access to, a boat.⁸⁸ In commenting on why this project is an urgent national priority, Jim Rapp, executive director of Delmarva Low Impact Tourism Experiences, said, “You can't PowerPoint this stuff.”⁸⁹

Wattstar Theatre and Education Center – California (\$294,000)

Don't let the fancy name fool you, the Wattstar Theatre and Education Center is an ordinary movie theater – only most movie theaters have not received nearly \$300,000 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. While not yet built, the Wattstar Theatre boasts that it would be the “Only Entertainment Venue in Watts” and plans to show first-run movies on its four screens with over 1,000 stadium seats.⁹⁰ As one positive sign that the project is moving along, a 2007 benefit screening of *The Reaping* was held to raise money for the project, drawing a host of celebrities such as “former American Idol Contestant Sabrina Sloan.” When asked about the importance of the new movie theatre, Barbara Stanton, executive director, predicted that the presence of the movie theater would have dramatic effects, saying, “The Wattstar is a catalytic project that will revitalize the entire community.”⁹¹ According to the theater's website, the presence of the Wattstar will eliminate travel time of 7-10 miles to see a film. Stanton added, “Senior citizens have basically given up going to the movies because it is too far.”⁹²

2010 Decennial Census Bailout – (\$210 million)

Since 2004, the Census Bureau has embarked on an effort to bring the 2010 Census into the 21st Century, but wound up in the 18th Century. One of the significant challenges facing the Census is the collection of information from 300 million Americans entirely by paper and pencil. To do so, the Bureau awarded a \$600 million contract to the Harris Corporation to develop handheld computers that would help census takers collect data electronically. The devices were problematic from the start, and although they rely on basic technology found in nearly all cell phones, the agency was never able to get them working properly. When asked in 2006 whether it would be appropriate to have a backup plan in case the handheld computers did not work, then-director Louis Kincannon responded, “They will work. They have worked. You might as well ask me what happens if the Postal Service refuses to deliver the census form.”⁹³ Despite enormous cost overruns, the devices will only contain half of the functionality originally intended. As a reward, Congress gave the Census Bureau a \$210 million bonus in the form of an “emergency” bailout.⁹⁴ \$800 million later, the 2010 Census will still be collected, not electronically but by paper and pencil, just like the first census over 200 years ago.

⁸⁸ Press Release of U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin, “CARDIN, MIKULSKI ANNOUNCE \$14 MILLION FOR MARYLAND INITIATIVES IN CJS SPENDING BILL,” October 17, 2007, <http://cardin.senate.gov/issues/record.cfm?id=285562&>.

⁸⁹ Murray, Molly, “DELMARVA: John Smith water trail advances,” *The News Journal*, October 6, 2008, <http://www.delmarvanow.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081006/NEWS01/81006012/1002>.

⁹⁰ Wattstar Theatre and Education Center website, <http://www.wattstar.com/goals.html>.

⁹¹ “Interview: Barbara Stanton and the Wattstar Theatre,” *Experience LA Blog*, April 16, 2007, <http://blog.experiencela.com/2007/04/interview-with-barbara-staton-and.html>.

⁹² Norwood, Chico, “After Almost 50 Years, Watts May Soon Get a Movie Theater,” *L.A. Watts Times*, June 25, 2008, <http://www.lawattstimes.com/articles/2008/06/25/news/front%20page1.txt>.

⁹³ Dry, Rachel, “Head Count By Hand,” *Washington Post*, April 9, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/08/AR2008040803321.html>.

⁹⁴ Nagesh, Gautham, “Census receives \$210 million in emergency funding for 2010 count,” *NextGov*, July 2, 2008, http://www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20080702_9517.php.

Airplane-Shaped Gas Station – Tennessee (\$9,000)

It is an airplane that cannot fly and a gas station that has not pumped gas for nearly half a century, but the Powell Airplane Filling Station has just landed a \$9,000 federal grant.⁹⁵ It is an

old airplane-shaped building that once served as a gas station, liquor store and used car lot, though is now an eyesore on the side of a busy highway. A few local residents have rallied around the old filling station in hopes of turning the tiny airplane into leased office space. Tom Milligan, who has been instrumental in the effort, said, “I was coming up through here one day and I seen they had two bulldozers on the front and I thought they was fixin' to wreck the place. [I] knew we were going to have to have quite a lot of money to fix it.”⁹⁶ Rock Bernard, another local resident, added, “If you ask 100 people in Knoxville, I bet 80 will know where it's at.”⁹⁷



Non-working airplane-shaped gas station to be used as an office.

The Unwanted Sidewalk – Kentucky (\$1 million)

Residents of Lexington are upset about a plan to put sidewalks in front of their houses using a \$1 million federal grant, arguing that they are not needed. Some on the city council say the sidewalks are essential for safety. Julian Beard, representing the area in question, insists, “I don't see foot traffic or anybody trying to create foot traffic there for any purpose.”⁹⁸ The editorial board of the *Lexington Herald-Leader* argues that the project should move forward anyway for the sake of the residents' health, noting that in another part of the state obesity was helped along by “crumbling sidewalks, and a lack of walkways along busy rural roads.”⁹⁹

Specialty Potatoes for High-End Restaurants – Idaho (\$298,068)

“Demand has gone way up for specialty potatoes, especially in restaurants,” so says Robert Tominaga, President of Southwind Farms, when discussing the 2008 crop.¹⁰⁰ That is good news for him, since his farm grows a large variety of specialty potatoes, such as Russian banana fingerlings, red thumbs and ruby crescents, that it sells to high-end restaurants. Despite its success, USDA officials decided that the potato farm was in need of taxpayer assistance and

⁹⁵ Flory, Josh, “Airplane landmark gets federal help,” *Knoxville News Sentinel (Tennessee)*, November 17, 2008, http://blogs.knoxnews.com/knx/flory/2008/11/airplane_landmark_gets_federal.html.

⁹⁶ Hensley, Clayton, “Preservation effort gaining ground: Folks, businesses doing their part to help save landmark,” *Knoxville News Sentinel (Tennessee)*, December 26, 2007, <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2007/dec/26/preservation-effort-gaining-ground/>.

⁹⁷ Blackerby, Matt, “Group raising funds to restore Airplane Filling Station,” *Knoxville News Sentinel (Tennessee)*, November 24, 2008, <http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2008/nov/24/trying-to-keep-an-icon-aloft/>.

⁹⁸ Ku, Michelle, “Proposal would put sidewalks along Tates Creek Road: In 2001, Similar plan for tates Creek Road ran into dead end,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, November 17, 2008, <http://www.kentucky.com/181/story/595160.html>.

⁹⁹ Editorial, “Get moving, Lexington: Sidewalks for Tates Creek Road,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, November 19, 2008, <http://www.kentucky.com/591/story/597623.html>.

¹⁰⁰ “Spud Story,” *Food Service Director Magazine*, http://www.fsdmag.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=105681&Itemid=88.

provided it with a nearly \$300,000 grant to help advertise its products. Co-owner Jerry Tominaga was thrilled about getting government money to expand his business. "We want to be able to go out and attract new customers," he said.¹⁰¹

Train Depot for "Birthplace of American Railroad" – Pennsylvania (\$170,000)

Move over Baltimore! Honesdale, Pennsylvania (population 4,874), residents believe their town is the rightful birthplace of American railroading, and have asked the federal government to help them build a historic train station to prove it. While Baltimore claims that its 500-mile B&O railroad line, which began construction in 1829, is where it all began, Honesdale claims that its three-mile track, built in the same year, is actually older.¹⁰² For now, the federal government has not taken an official position on the matter, but did provide \$170,000 to Honesdale through the Department of Housing and Urban Development to construct a new historic train depot.¹⁰³ For Gail Tucker, executive director of the Greater Honesdale Partnership, the issue is a settled one. "We are the birthplace of the American railroad. It's who we are. That is quite a large hook to hang our hats on. There is unlimited marketing potential," she said.¹⁰⁴



ConAgra plant during flood of 1993 - it sits across the street from the new flood memorial.

Mississippi River Flood Memorial Plaza – Illinois (\$200,000)

Residents of Alton will not easily forget the great flood their town experienced in 1993 after the federal government builds the town a flood memorial plaza. The only problem is that the plaza will be built in the middle of a flood plain. A \$200,000 grant by the Department of Transportation will help the plaza feature a "sandbagger statue-fountain, flagpole, drinking fountain, interpretive panels, limestone benches and trashcans."¹⁰⁵ While the town hopes that visitors will learn to appreciate the struggle that comes from floods, "The site is a stone's throw from the Mississippi when the river is within its banks, and often under water when the river floods."¹⁰⁶

Feasibility Study for Medical School that Will Not Be Built – Mississippi (\$478,492)

While there are no plans to ever build an osteopathic medical school at Jackson State University (JSU), Congress funneled nearly half of a million dollars to study the possibility, anyway. Tom Meredith, the state commissioner for higher education, discussed the matter with the President of JSU, and said that, despite the congressional money, both the state and the university are opposed to the

¹⁰¹ Palmer, Joshua, "Southwind Farms gets federal producer grant: Company one of five in Idaho to receive grant," *Times-News* (Idaho), November 12, 2008,

http://www.magicvalley.com/articles/2008/11/12/business/local_state/148572.txt.

¹⁰² Website of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Museum, <http://www.borail.org/history-of-museum.shtml>.

¹⁰³ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_288954.html.

¹⁰⁴ Hinline, Brian, "Train depot eyed for downtown area," *The Weekly Almanac*, November 12, 2008,

<http://www.theweeklyalmanac.com/articles/2008/11/12/news/doc491b3a7573503905331018.txt>.

¹⁰⁵ Weller, Linda, "Alton to build Flood Memorial Plaza," *The Telegraph*, November 27, 2008,

http://www.thetelegraph.com/news/alton_20712_article.html/flood_plaza.html.

¹⁰⁶ Hillig, Terry, "Alton will build flood memorial," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (Missouri), November 28, 2008,

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/illinoisnews/story/5AC02309CC3196B886257510001782C4?OpenDocument>.

building of a new medical center. Meredith said, "It has become clear that Jackson State has no intention of pursuing such a school; it simply agreed to conduct a feasibility study for the state at the request of [Congress]." ¹⁰⁷

Billings Mustangs Minor League Baseball Stadium – Montana (\$328,300)

In 2008, the Billings Mustangs – a minor league baseball team affiliated with the Cincinnati Reds – moved out of Cobb Field and into its new home, Dehler Park. While constructing the new stadium, which cost \$13 million, came in under budget and completed its first season of operations, the federal government is sending the team a check for \$328,300. Funds will come from the Community Development Block Grant program despite the fact that local citizens fully funded the stadium with municipal bonds and more than \$2 million in private donations, making federal money unnecessary. "But I have plans for it," insists Mike Whitaker, director of the park. He would like to use at least \$100,000 of the extra cash to put up a foul ball net that the stadium does not need, "We feel we need to put netting along North 27th Street, even though it's not required." ¹⁰⁸



Unwanted Neon Bike Signs – New York (\$148,773)

After finding that one stretch of road little more than half a mile in length with 49 neon green signs urging drivers to "share the road" with bicycles, Ann Sandford said, "enough is enough." She is one of several residents of Sagaponack who is unhappy that a federal grant of nearly \$150,000 is cluttering the road and ruining pristine country views. Tom Neely, the town's public transportation director said he would look into whether anything could be done, but that the "the number of signs was designed to meet federal guidelines." ¹⁰⁹



Neon signs cluttering the road in Sagaponack.

Art Museum in Iraq (\$13 million)

The State Department gave \$13 million to International Relief and Development, a non-governmental organization, to help caretakers at the Iraq National Museum in Iraq learn better

¹⁰⁷ Brown, Laraye, "JSU continues medical school feasibility study: But commissioner of higher education says university won't open a facility," *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, April 18, 2008, <http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080418/NEWS/804180347/1001/news>.

¹⁰⁸ Hagenruber, Matt, "Successful Billings stadium to see changes," *The Missoulian* (Montana), November 29, 2008, <http://www.missoulian.com/articles/2008/11/30/news/mtregional/news13.txt>.

¹⁰⁹ Young, Beth, "Sagaponack: A wrong turn for bike signs?" *Southampton Press* (New York), November 18, 2008, http://www.27east.com/story_detail.cfm?id=180874.

techniques for art care and display from experts at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore.¹¹⁰ Some hope the project may one day lead to the artifacts being put on display in public, though the Iraqi museum is currently closed. Some controversy surrounded the museum in 2006 when the nation's top archaeologist fled to Syria, fearing that preservationists were interested only in preserving "a radical Islamic agenda."¹¹¹

Tibbits Opera House Facelift – Michigan (\$500,000)

While the fat lady may not yet be singing at the Tibbits Opera House in Coldwater, she is asking Uncle Sam for a half million dollar facelift.¹¹² Originally built in 1882, the opera house façade has undergone a series of changes, having become a movie theater in the 1930's and a community theater since the 1960's – each with a different building front.¹¹³ Community activists want to see the project through full circle by restoring the original opera house façade in order to help the downtown area have a more historic feel for tourists. Taxpayers will be assisting this effort through the National Scenic Byways Program, which city planner Christine Hilton hopes "will increase interest in Tibbits as a historically-significant building."¹¹⁴



(Left) Façade of the Tibbits Theatre c. 1882; (Right) Current façade.

Small Business Loans to Liquor Stores (\$82 million)

The economic downturn may have strained the credit markets, making it tough for businesses trying to get a loan, but the federal government has made sure low-interest rate loans are flowing for liquor stores. In 2008, the Small Business Administration guaranteed loans for 331 liquor stores, putting taxpayers at risk for more than \$82 million in the event the loans default.¹¹⁵ This was great news for Spanky's Liquor World, Pistol Pete's Beef N' Beer, and Wagon Wine Shoppe, each of which received government loans.

¹¹⁰ Sessa, Sam, "Walters is on team to save Iraqi art," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 30, 2008, <http://www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/bal-al.walters30nov30,0,1352354.story>.

¹¹¹ Woolridge, Mike, "Leading Iraq archaeologist flees," *BBC News*, August 26, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5289046.stm.

¹¹² Website of the Tibbits Theater, Press Release, "TIBBITS RECEIVES \$500,000 NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS GRANT," December 1, 2008, <http://www.tibbits.org/NSBPMDOTgrantPR12-01-08.htm>.

¹¹³ "Then and Now" history of the Tibbits Theater, Website of the Tibbits Theater, <http://www.tibbits.org/history.htm>.

¹¹⁴ "Tibbits receives \$500k Scenic Byways Grant," *Coldwater Daily Reporter (Michigan)*, December 2, 2008, <http://www.thedailyreporter.com/news/x776468506/Tibbits-receives-500k-Scenic-Byways-Grant>.

¹¹⁵ Information was obtained through USApending.gov using keyword searches for "liquor," "beer," and "wine." Search for "liquor:" http://www.usaspending.gov/faads/faads.php?&recipient_name=liquor&fiscal_year=2008&record_num=f500&detail=0&datatype=T&reptype=r&database=faads&sortby=r; search for "beer:"

Statewide Barn Census – Vermont (\$150,000)

Barn enthusiasts of all ages participated in a statewide barn census this year, volunteering to “roam across the Vermont countryside counting barns and collecting information and stories about them.” Supporters hoped to get a picture of and a story about every barn in the state, though the task was admittedly daunting, according to Eve Pearce, one of the volunteers. “A stop at a barn can take up a few hours, as the owner has many stories about the barn's history,” she said.¹¹⁶ Funding for the barn count, in the amount of \$150,000, was provided by the National Park Service Preserving America grant program.¹¹⁷ Thomas Visser, a Vermont preservationist,



Old barn

commented on the importance of the work for future barn preservation, noting that the census was “the equivalent of conducting a population study of an endangered species.”¹¹⁸

Powder to Protect Soldiers from Chemical Attack – Pennsylvania (\$5.6 million)

Members of Congress have put U.S. troops in the field in danger through the congressional earmarking process, simply by choosing powder over lotion. Rohm and Haas, a well-connected company that produces a powder useful to resist chemical attacks, received \$5.6 million in Defense Department funds to produce kits for soldiers. While this may seem beneficial to the troops, the Pentagon has determined that a lotion available to do the same thing is seven times more effective than its powder counterpart. Defending the earmark, Daniel Kohn, president of Truetech, a New York company that produces the powder kits, said, “In self-defense, we've gone to our representatives in Congress and we've said: 'You know, let's lay our cards on the table — we're in business to provide a living and jobs in your district’”¹¹⁹

http://www.usaspending.gov/faads/faads.php?recipient_name=beer&reptype=r&database=faads&fiscal_year=2008&detail=0&datype=T&sortby=r; search for “wine:” http://www.usaspending.gov/faads/faads.php?recipient_name=wine&reptype=r&database=faads&fiscal_year=2008&detail=0&datype=T&sortby=r.

¹¹⁶ Whitcomb Jr., Keith, “Barn by barn: Statewide census of agricultural icons under way,” Bennington Banner (Vermont), November 8, 2008, http://www.benningtonbanner.com/local/ci_10933698.

¹¹⁷ Press Release of the Office of the Governor of Vermont, Jim Douglas, “Vermont Governor Jim Douglas press release,” October 17, 2007, <http://governor.vermont.gov/tools/index.php?topic=GovPressReleases&id=2667&v=Article>; Official Website of the Vermont Barn Census, <http://www.uvm.edu/~barn/>.

¹¹⁸ Cormier, Amanda, “Vermont barn census lays foundation for preservation efforts,” *Middlebury College Student Weekly*, November 13, 2008, <http://media.www.middleburycampus.com/media/storage/paper446/news/2008/11/13/LocalNews/Vermont.Barn.Census.Lays.Foundation.For.Preservation.Efforts-3540249-page2.shtml>.

¹¹⁹ Christine Willmsen and David Heath, “Earmark helps businesses, not troops,” *The Seattle Times* (Washington), December 7, 2008, http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2008478150_favor07.html.

Profiles in Government Waste

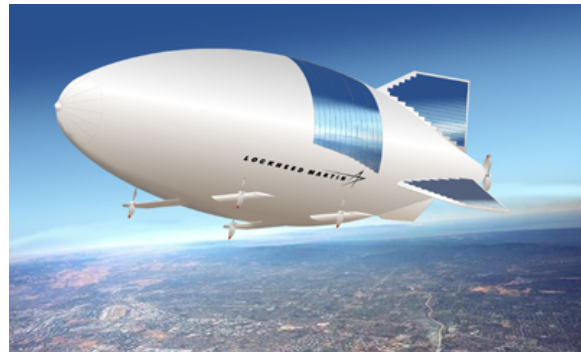
The following examples provide a more in-depth view of some of the year's worst government spending.

High Altitude Airship – Ohio (\$3.2 million)

Military gadgetry is by nature unusual stemming from its unique mission to aid in the defense of the nation. Sometimes, though, military technology is so strange that the Pentagon does not need it and does not want it. Meet the High Altitude Airship.

Described by *Popular Science*, the HAA is a blimp-like aircraft intended to float 12 miles above the earth and provide spy surveillance. It measures “500 feet long, with a volume of 5.2 million cubic feet, the prototype high-altitude airship, or HAA, will be 25 times larger than the Goodyear blimp.”¹²⁰ The blimp is a creation of Lockheed Martin, which was awarded a \$150 million contract in 2006 by the Missile Defense Agency to produce 10 blimps.¹²¹

Initial excitement over the project in military circles quickly faded when it became apparent that it would take longer than expected to deploy and would be limited in its use, leading the Missile Defense Agency to scrap it. Lockheed Martin officials fought back. David Kier, vice president of program management for Lockheed Martin, said it was his hope to keep the project going despite rejection from the military, “I’ve struggled to keep this alive for several years.”¹²²



High altitude blimp rejected by the Pentagon.

For years, Congress has poured millions of dollars into the development of the HAA despite repeated insistence from the Pentagon that the technology is not needed. In 2008, Congress decided to move forward anyway and direct an additional \$2.5 million from the nation's military budget to further development of the HAA.¹²³

With the HAA facility in Akron, Ohio, Lockheed Martin was able to sell the project as a jobs program for local residents and keep it on life support for an extra year. One local congressman, instrumental in keeping the project alive, touted his involvement with the HAA as evidence of his ability to “deliver for the district” and “to bring federal money back to the district,” which he

¹²⁰ Stibbe, Matthew, “Defense Inflation,” *Popular Science*, February 1, 2004, <http://www.popsci.com/military-aviation-space/article/2004-02/defense-inflation>.

¹²¹ “Lockheed Wins \$149.2M Contract for High Altitude Airship (updated),” *Defense Industry Daily*, January 16, 2006, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/lockheed-wins-1492m-contract-for-high-altitude-airship-updated-01607/>.

¹²² Roque, Ashley, “Lockheed Martin Seeks Military Service to Build Blimp After Congress Adds Funding,” *Congress Now*, January 8, 2008, <http://www.congressnow.com/ArticleDetail.aspx?ArticleID=3720>.

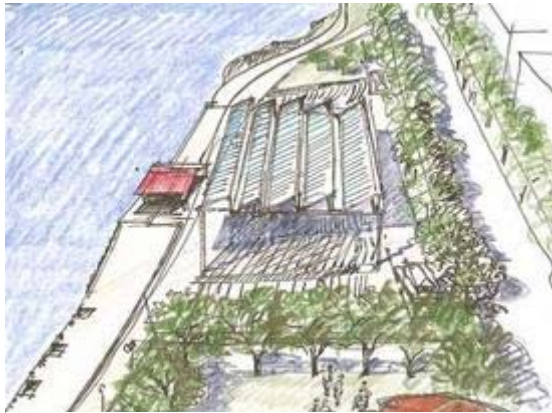
¹²³ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_344967.html; http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_353532.html.

said would be “key to luring jobs.”¹²⁴ In describing why he worked so hard to bring the HAA to Akron, said “the only criteria I use are creating jobs, or improving the health, safety and welfare of the district.”¹²⁵ Apparently, even at the risk of compromising the defense of the entire nation.

Retractable Canopy for Haddad Riverfront Park – West Virginia (\$2.4 million)

The hot West Virginia sun will no longer trouble visitors of Haddad Riverfront Park in Charleston, much to the relief of local recreationalists. A \$2.4 million grant from the Small Business Administration will provide the park with an elaborate retractable canopy to shade concert goers.¹²⁶

Haddad Riverfront Park is a popular gathering place in the summer for city residents who want to enjoy some outdoor fun. According to the official website of the City of Charleston, “Haddad Riverfront Park is the perfect setting for boaters, as well as land lovers, for docking or just watching the boats go by! The park is available for public or private concerts, reunions, conferences and even weddings.”¹²⁷ Some visitors may even be lucky enough to have caught



Artistic rendition of the new shade canopy to shield spectators at next World’s Strongest Man Competition.

the World’s Strongest Man competition when Haddad Riverfront Park played host to the “Power Stairs” portion of the games in September.¹²⁸

But, while those visitors may have had fun, many believe that the outdoor park lacks one essential element: shade. “Some of the events were held down there on the staging area like the car lift and pull. Certainly, it was pretty hot that day and it would have been nice some kind of overhead shade,” said one local official.¹²⁹

The idea for a canopy dates back to a plan laid out by city consultants in 2005 to develop the downtown waterfront area. Sasaki Associates, a consultant firm hired by the city, estimated that a shade canopy would cost around \$250,000 to complete.¹³⁰ When an announcement was made in February that \$2.4 million in federal funding would be made available for a canopy project in the park, city officials were thrilled about the

¹²⁴ Byard, Katie, “Teacher challenges Ryan for Congress,” *Beacon Journal*, October 15, 2008, http://www.ohio.com/news/top_stories/30993689.html.

¹²⁵ Eaton, Sabrina, “Ohio lawmakers secure earmarks, draw criticism,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer: Politics Blog*, June 6, 2008, <http://blog.cleveland.com/openers/2008/06/earmarks.html>.

¹²⁶ Balow, Jim, “Canopy project: Will Charleston get a cool lid for Haddad Park?” *West Virginia Gazette*, June 24, 2008, <http://www.wvgazette.com/News/200806230644?page=1&build=cache>.

¹²⁷ Website of the City of Charleston, <http://www.cityofcharleston.org/recreation/pages/city.htm>.

¹²⁸ Official website of the World’s Strongest Man Competition, <http://www.theworldsstrongestman.com/wsm/2008/events.html>

¹²⁹ “Riverfront Improvements on the Way,” *WCHS*, September 16, 2008.

¹³⁰ “Riverfront Improvements on the Way,” *WCHS*, September 16, 2008.

possibilities. “We’ll be able to do a roof, and there’s other things we’d like to do,” Mayor Danny Jones said. “There’s plenty of money.”¹³¹

Under normal circumstances, the Small Business Administration (SBA) uses its budget of approximately \$500 million to guarantee loans for businesses that cannot get credit in the private sector. Congressional earmarks bypass this process, and require the SBA to give grants, rather than loans, directly to interest groups selected by individual members of Congress. In 2008, the SBA was directed by Congress to spend more than \$69 million on 190 pet projects, including the retractable canopy. To pay for these projects, Congress regularly increases the SBA budget by the amount needed to pay for its earmarks, adding to overall costs for taxpayers.

As part of the plan, the consultants “proposed to build a canopy over the park’s amphitheater,



West Virginians enjoying a summer concert without shade.

replace some concrete seating with grassy lawns, add plazas and lawns on both sides and incorporate the Union Building in the overall design.” Charleston City Manager, David Molgaard caught the vision and emphasized the importance of designing the new canopy properly, “The key element, of course, is the design of the canopy. We’d like a retracting canopy over the seating” to ensure a good view of Fourth of July fireworks.¹³² When asked by a local reporter about the challenge of working with the Small Business Administration to obtain the funding, Molgaard replied, “We of course do not have an actual design yet, so that makes it more difficult.”¹³³

Details over what the canopy will look like remain a matter of speculation. Negotiations over a final design were still up in the air as of September,

though the City of Charleston was preparing to hire a design contractor. According to the *West Virginia Gazette*, “The pavilion might be used by vendors, or as a staging area for concerts or other events, [Molgaard] said. ‘Or somebody could take their lunch there, sit in the shade and watch the boats go by.’”¹³⁴

Molgaard’s ambitious plans for developing the riverfront park, though, are not limited to a new canopy, “Maybe there would be a hotdog stand,” he said.

¹³¹ Balow, Jim, “Money Coming for Roof at Levee,” *The Charleston Gazette*, February 1, 2008, <http://sundaygazette.com/News/200801310664>.

¹³² Balow, Jim, “Canopy project: Will Charleston get a cool lid for Haddad Park?,” *West Virginia Gazette*, June 24, 2008, <http://www.wvgazette.com/News/200806230644?page=1&build=cache>.

¹³³ Balow, Jim, “Canopy project: Will Charleston get a cool lid for Haddad Park?,” *West Virginia Gazette*, June 24, 2008, <http://www.wvgazette.com/News/200806230644?page=1&build=cache>.

¹³⁴ Balow, Jim, “Haddad Park Canopy Designers Chosen,” *West Virginia Gazette*, September 5, 2008, <http://wvgazette.com/News/200809040681?page=2&build=cache>.

Lobster Institute – Maine (\$188,000)

Lobster lovers everywhere were happy to have gotten their claws on federal funding in 2008. Taxpayers, with the help of the Maine congressional delegation, shelled out nearly \$200,000 to help the Lobster Institute conduct research on Maine lobsters.¹³⁵

Grant funding in the amount of \$188,000 was given to the Lobster Institute through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to support the Lobster Health Coalition, part of the Institute's Conservation, Outreach, Research and Education (CORE) initiative, which "provides strategic framework for the institute's academic and outreach activities."¹³⁶ Research funds are directed primarily at keeping the lobster industry afloat for the "thousands of Maine people depend on lobstering for their livelihoods, including 5,800 who hold commercial licenses to fish for lobsters," noted Robert Baylor, executive director of the Lobster Institute.¹³⁷



Lobster-flavored dog treats.

Ordinarily, the Lobster Institute boasts of its reliance "on sponsors and endowments so that it will not need to rely on the federal government."¹³⁸ In an interview with the *Bangor Daily News*, though, Baylor explained why federal funding was needed this time, saying "It's not trivial. It's about the survival of the industry." He added that people eat Maine lobsters all over the country and even in Canada, and that "one of the reasons people come to Maine is to see the quaint lobster villages and eat lobster."¹³⁹

The Lobster Institute was founded in 1987 to promote the interests of the lobster industry of Maine through a variety of means, including research and promotional activities.¹⁴⁰

According to the Lobster Institute website, the organization's list of accomplishments is extensive, including publishing *A Lobster in Every Pot* (1990), a book of lobster recipes and lore, as well as helping to organize the first International Lobster Congress (1993).¹⁴¹ In the area of "research of note," the Lobster Institute takes pride in its partnership with Saltwater Marketing and Blue Seal Feed to develop Lobster Bisque-its, a "lobster-based pet

¹³⁵ Website of the Office of Management and Budget, Earmarks Database, http://earmarks.omb.gov/2008-earmarks/earmark_326992.html.

¹³⁶ University of Maine Website: "Lobster Institute Receives Funding for Lobster Health Coalition," August 8, 2008, http://www.umaine.edu/news/article.asp?id_no=2244.

¹³⁷ University of Maine Website: "Lobster Institute Receives Funding for Lobster Health Coalition," August 8, 2008, http://www.umaine.edu/news/article.asp?id_no=2244.

¹³⁸ Ekstrom, Vicki, "Maine leaders trading 'pork' for lobster," *Bangor Daily News*, April 4, 2008, <http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=162536&zoneid=500>.

¹³⁹ Ekstrom, Vicki, "Maine leaders trading 'pork' for lobster," *Bangor Daily News*, April 4, 2008, <http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=162536&zoneid=500>.

¹⁴⁰ Website of the Lobster Institute, <http://www.lobsterinstitute.org/index.php?page=13>.

¹⁴¹ Website of the Lobster Institute, <http://www.lobsterinstitute.org/media/20%20yr%20history%20display.pdf>; http://www.amazon.com/Lobster-Every-Pot-Recipes-Lore/dp/0899092160/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1223665981&sr=8-1.

treat” for dogs.¹⁴² LobsterGram has even teamed up with the Lobster Institute in a joint effort to, in part, “educate the public about lobster and the lobster industry.”¹⁴³

One of the institute’s most popular attractions is LobsterCam, an underwater camera attached to a lobster trap. Live pictures are available on the Internet twenty-four hours a day through TheLobsterCam.com, which is updated every two minutes and allows anyone to see the underwater world of lobsters from the comforts of their home.



Typical views from LobsterCam.

The federal government’s decision to fund lobster research made one taxpayer watchdog group see red. Citizens Against Government Waste awarded the Maine congressional delegation with the Taxpayers Get Steamed Award. One senator said, “If we’re going to fund a lobster cam at a time when we’re at war, we’re not making good decisions.”¹⁴⁴ A gubernatorial candidate in Missouri even got into hot water over his vote in Congress to support funding for the Lobster Institute. According to the *Southeast Missourian*, his primary election opponent “sent a campaign worker dressed as a lobster to [the candidate’s] events to highlight his vote” for the lobster research funding.¹⁴⁵ He was in good company, though. The House of Representatives voted 328-87 in favor of giving \$200,000 to the Lobster Institute.¹⁴⁶

Wilson Skateboarding Park – California (\$296,601)

California kids will have a totally radical new place to skateboard once taxpayer funds help construct a skatepark in a community outside of Los Angeles. Federal officials are hoping the nearly \$300,000 in community development block grants for a new public skateboard facility will put the skids on gang violence in southern California.¹⁴⁷

Local California residents had been clamoring for years that youth-oriented activities were needed, prompting officials to decide that constructing a skateboard park would be the best option. The skate area will “have a kidney-shaped bowl, it’s going to have a large street course area [and] a lot of banks,” said Brandon Mims, project manager for Compton’s Parks, Recreation

¹⁴² Website of the Lobster Institute, <http://www.lobsterinstitute.org/media/20%20yr%20history%20display.pdf>, p. 7.

¹⁴³ Lobster Cam Website, [http://www.livelob.com/\(A\(lim8Qd9gyQEkAAAAYiVjYTE5NDktZjE2ZC00OGFhLThhZmQtOWJINTA5ZjBjO G1xMOX2YH8-kOpK3S2E0a7PjfJO3Rc1\)\)/website/articles/Lobster_Institute.aspx](http://www.livelob.com/(A(lim8Qd9gyQEkAAAAYiVjYTE5NDktZjE2ZC00OGFhLThhZmQtOWJINTA5ZjBjO G1xMOX2YH8-kOpK3S2E0a7PjfJO3Rc1))/website/articles/Lobster_Institute.aspx).

¹⁴⁴ Ekstrom, Vicki, “Maine leaders trading ‘pork’ for lobster,” *Bangor Daily News*, April 4, 2008, <http://bangornews.com/news/t/news.aspx?articleid=162536&zoneid=500>.

¹⁴⁵ Keller, Rudi, “Kenny Hulshof: The ‘accidental’ candidate for Governor of Missouri,” *Southeast Missourian*, September 21, 2008, <http://www.semissourian.com/article/20080921/NEWS01/709219847/-1/news01>.

¹⁴⁶ House of Representatives roll call vote no. 735, 110th Congress, July 26, 2007, <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll735.xml>.

¹⁴⁷ Eaton, Allison Jean, “Wilson Skate Park Project Breaks Ground,” *The Compton Bulletin*, June 11, 2008, http://www.thecomptonbulletin.com/news05_061108/.

and Special Services Department. As far as the layout itself, “we try to make it visible so they don’t run into each other,” said Charles Strawter, one of the park’s designers.¹⁴⁸



Tony Hawk shows off for fans at the new Wilson Skatepark.

costs. Skateboard legend Tony Hawk kicked in more than \$70,000 for the project through his foundation.

City officials developed the idea for the skatepark in 2001 as a means to occupy teens during the day, but were unable to secure funding through state and local government budgets. After private grant funds were not enough to cover the costs, the city turned to the federal government.

Final costs for the park escalated considerably from the original \$225,000 estimate in 2007 to nearly \$525,000 in 2008. With the infusion of federal funding, officials were able to vastly expand their plans – and vastly expand their

According to the *Compton Bulletin*, “with the [City] Council’s Jan. 23 [2007] approval of the reprogramming of certain federal grant monies into new community betterment projects, the skate park will see an increase of \$150,000 in funding.”¹⁴⁹ The *Los Angeles Wave* noted that additional funding allowed the “skate park in 2007 [to have] grown in size, both in square feet and amenities.”¹⁵⁰

“The Compton project absolutely represents the type of project we want to support,” Hawk said. “I started this foundation because I saw a real disconnect in terms of where skate parks were being built and where they were truly needed, and they are needed in areas where there are more kids at-risk.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ De Gruy, Leiloni, “City is feeling a bit board,” *The Los Angeles Wave*, June 12, 2008, <http://www.wavenewspapers.com/default.asp?sourceid=&smenu=71&twindow=&mad=&sdetail=8501&wpage=1&keyword=&sidate=&ccat=&ccatm=&restate=&restatus=&reoption=&retype=&repmin=&repmax=&rebed=&rebath=&subname=&pform=&sc=1019&hn=wavenewspapers&he=.com>.

¹⁴⁹ Allison Jean Eaton, “Tony Hawk Foundation Grants \$10K for Compton Skate Park,” *Compton Bulletin*, February 2, 2007, http://www.thecomptonbulletin.com/news07_020707/index.html.

¹⁵⁰ De Gruy, Leiloni, “City is feeling a bit board,” *The Los Angeles Wave*, June 12, 2008, <http://www.wavenewspapers.com/default.asp?sourceid=&smenu=71&twindow=&mad=&sdetail=8501&wpage=1&keyword=&sidate=&ccat=&ccatm=&restate=&restatus=&reoption=&retype=&repmin=&repmax=&rebed=&rebath=&subname=&pform=&sc=1019&hn=wavenewspapers&he=.com>.

¹⁵¹ Eaton, Allison Jean, “Wilson Skate Park Project Breaks Ground,” *The Compton Bulletin*, June 11, 2008, http://www.thecomptonbulletin.com/news05_061108/.

Fish and Mermaid Mural – Wisconsin (\$6,000)

Mayor Gary Becker of Racine, Wisconsin, first got the idea for a mermaid mural while walking the streets of Philadelphia. A friend took the mayor to Zagar’s Magic Garden – a downtown maze and mural made of “empty bottles, broken dishes, bicycle wheels” – and he knew that the idea would be perfect in his city.¹⁵² “Within a few minutes of seeing the Magic Garden,” says Becker, “I started thinking, ‘This would be great in Racine.’”¹⁵³



Zagar’s Magic Garden

Becker personally searched out Isaiah Zagar, the creator of the Philadelphia murals, and coaxed him into coming to Racine with \$6,000 in federal block grant money given to the city.¹⁵⁴ Zagar accepted and completed his mural this past summer, in time for the city’s Uptown Festival. When asked about the vision he had for the mural when asked to come to Racine, Zagar responded, “There is no vision . . . what comes out, comes out.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Ornamento, “Isaiah Zagar’s Magic Garden,” *Ornamento blog*, July 22, 2007, <http://ornamento.wordpress.com/2007/07/22/isaiah-zagars-magic-garden/>.

¹⁵³ “Art on a big scale, to transform a neighborhood,” *Racine Post*, June 13, 2008, <http://news.racinepost.com/2008/06/art-on-big-scale-to-transform.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Burke, Michael, “City shows off new Uptown mosaic on Washington Avenue,” *The Journal Times (Wisconsin)*, June 14, 2008.

¹⁵⁵ “Art on a big scale, to transform a neighborhood,” *Racine Post*, June 13, 2008, <http://news.racinepost.com/2008/06/art-on-big-scale-to-transform.html>.

According to the local newspaper, “the playful murals are made with sea shells, broken mirrors, pottery, and other household items — even a dish made for holding deviled eggs. Zagar said the theme is a fish and mermaid, but the design is also open to personal interpretation.”¹⁵⁶

“There’s a buzz — there’s definitely a buzz” about Uptown, said Kristin Niemiec, the city’s corridor specialist.¹⁵⁷



Source: *Racine Post*¹⁵⁸, Mermaid mural in downtown Racine, Wisconsin.

Residents are hopeful that the new mural will spur development in Racine. “This makes Uptown unique and different,” Mayor Becker commented, “It’s a good boost for Uptown and a tremendous activity, so we’re on our way.”¹⁵⁹ Zagar’s wife hoped her husband’s taxpayer funded artwork would have far-reaching effects: “You can see a whole neighborhood change with one of these murals,” she said.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Burke, Michael, “City shows off new Uptown mosaic on Washington Avenue,” *The Journal Times (Wisconsin)*, June 14, 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Burke, Michael, “City shows off new Uptown mosaic on Washington Avenue,” *The Journal Times (Wisconsin)*, June 14, 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Photo credit: Pete Selkove, *Racine Post*,

http://bp2.blogger.com/_ymkfNB3shbw/SFQavksiyWI/AAAAAAAAAB7c/YPRITJKFZ6M/s1600-h/mosaic8a.jpg.

¹⁵⁹ Burke, Michael, “City shows off new Uptown mosaic on Washington Avenue,” *The Journal Times (Wisconsin)*, June 14, 2008.

¹⁶⁰ “Art on a big scale, to transform a neighborhood,” *Racine Post*, June 13, 2008, <http://news.racinepost.com/2008/06/art-on-big-scale-to-transform.html>.

“This is a good start,” local resident Eloise Johnson said. “This is a beautiful start.”¹⁶¹

Freewheel Midtown Bike Center Café and Bike Shower – Minnesota (\$560,000)

The Freewheel Midtown Bike Center opened this spring in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with the help of more than half a million dollars from the federal government. The Freewheel center is a rest stop of sorts for bicyclists using the Midtown Greenway, a 5.5 mile bike path for city residents who travel throughout town without their cars. It will feature a café, bike store, bike valet and “the city’s first bike shower.”¹⁶² Kevin Ishaug, owner of Freewheel Bikes, summed it up, “It’ll be a place to stop for on-the-spot repairs, bike rentals, even order a favorite drink from the barista.”¹⁶³



Home of the new Freewheel bike shower.

Freewheel bike center is located less than three miles from the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, which collapsed on August 1, 2007, killing 14 people. Ironically, a \$560,000 federal grant was funneled to the bike center from the Department of Transportation just as the Federal Highway Trust Fund – used for major road and bridge projects – teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. One senator, echoed the complaints of those frustrated by wasteful spending when he noted that important road and bridge work is routinely put on the back burner while less important priorities are funded, and then accused the federal government of “nickel and diming our degrading roads, bridges, highways.”¹⁶⁴ As evidence of questionable congressional priorities, only six days after the collapse of the I-35W bridge, the Senate voted against a proposal for redirecting all money related to bike paths toward ailing bridges and roads by a margin of 80-18.¹⁶⁵

According to the *Star Tribune*, the “5,500-square-foot center on the Midtown Greenway includes private showers for riders, a big shower stall for washing bikes and 150 secure indoor bicycle parking spots that riders can access around the clock.”¹⁶⁶ At least one local resident, Jackie Wildflower, believes that the new Freewheel bike center will be a boon: “I biked past it the other day and I was like, ‘That’s a really good idea. I’m glad, because you know, people are

¹⁶¹ Burke, Michael, “City shows off new Uptown mosaic on Washington Avenue,” *The Journal Times (Wisconsin)*, June 14, 2008.

¹⁶² Website of the City of Minneapolis,

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/mayor/news/20080516newsmayor_uniquemidtownbikecenteropens.asp.

¹⁶³ Website of Freewheel Bike, <http://freewheelbike.com/page.cfm?pageid=210>.

¹⁶⁴ Stout, David, and Matthew Wald, “Highway Fund Shortfall May Halt Road Projects,” *New York Times*, September 5, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/06/us/06highway.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

¹⁶⁵ Website of the U.S. Senate, Senate Roll Call Vote #333, 110th Congress, 1st Session, September 11, 2007, http://senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=110&session=1&vote=00333.

¹⁶⁶ Foti, Jim, “Cyclists Get Their Own Greenway Pit Stop,” *Star Tribune (Minneapolis-St. Paul)*, May 17, 2008, [http://www.startribune.com/local/19033144.html?location_refer=\\$sectionName](http://www.startribune.com/local/19033144.html?location_refer=$sectionName).

getting flat tires all the time and they're like, 'Man, I have to go all the way over here to get my tire fixed.' So it'll be really great to have it easily accessible on the trail."¹⁶⁷

Congressional Junket to Galapagos Islands (\$???)

Members of Congress are known to take an occasional trip around the world on "fact-finding" missions to uncover those difficult-to-find policy insights that just cannot be found at home. One trip taken this past summer to the Galapagos Islands by seven members of the House of Representatives left many people wondering whether "fact-finding" is simply code for vacation.

In June, the group of congressmen jetted off for a five-day excursion to the Galapagos Islands to review research projects in the region funded by the National Science Foundation. They hoped to monitor the progress NSF has made in studying "how El Nino weather patterns might affect the Northwest and the increasing acidity of the oceans."



Red Mangrove Inn¹⁶⁸

According to *The Daily News*, the delegation also got a close-up look at ocean species during a snorkeling trip.¹⁶⁹ "You can't learn about this just by reading scientific papers or in a telephone conversation," added the Congressman leading the trip.

An investigative report by *Inside Edition* found that "the group stayed in plush seaside suites at the Red Mangrove Inn, one of the most expensive resorts on the island. From breakfast to dinner, the hotel staff catered to their every need. At night when the torches were lit, the group dined on fresh sushi and fine wine."¹⁷⁰

Defending the outing, one member of Congress said that few representatives appreciate the important scientific work being done in the Galapagos Islands, "I'm trying to build a greater

¹⁶⁷ Espinoza, Ambar, "Greenway bike center makes biking no sweat," *Minnesota Public Radio*, May 16, 2008, http://minnesota.publicradio.org/display/web/2008/05/15/greenway_bikecenter/.

¹⁶⁸ Website of the Redman Grove Inn, http://www.redmangrove.com/pages/aventura_lodge.html.

¹⁶⁹ Lystra, Tony, "Baird to take work trip to Galapagos Islands," *The Daily News* (Washington), June 12, 2008, http://www.tdn.com/articles/2008/06/12/area_news/doc4850b9cd207ab662320807.txt.

¹⁷⁰ Inside Edition, "Congressional Travel Investigation," airdate October 13, 2008, can be seen at <http://www.insideedition.com/news.aspx?storyID=2208>.

awareness of these issues among my colleagues.”¹⁷¹ He also stated that one of the central reasons for going to the islands was to see a tsunami warning center. Unfortunately, it turned out that no center existed on any of the islands.¹⁷²

Conceding that the trip would not just be grueling meetings and rigorous oversight, though, he later added, “It’s sort of a vacation sort of work. Not a bad place to do both.”¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lystra, Tony, “Baird to take work trip to Galapagos Islands,” *The Daily News* (Washington), June 12, 2008, http://www.tdn.com/articles/2008/06/12/area_news/doc4850b9cd207ab662320807.txt.

¹⁷² Inside Edition, “Congressional Travel Investigation,” airdate October 13, 2008, can be seen at <http://www.insideedition.com/news.aspx?storyID=2208>.

¹⁷³ Inside Edition, “Congressional Travel Investigation,” airdate October 13, 2008, can be seen at <http://www.insideedition.com/news.aspx?storyID=2208>.

Wasteful Federal Programs

Some federal programs merely contain a little wasteful spending, while some programs are wasteful through and through. The following programs wasted significant sums of money in 2008, and provide a meaningful glimpse into the ways in which bureaucracies can be used to fund both narrow special interests and parochial projects with public money.

National Park Service 100-Year Birthday Party (\$24.6 million)

The National Park Service (NPS) turns 100 years old in 2016 and the agency is throwing itself a birthday party in style, with the taxpayer picking up the tab. Congress authorized \$24.6 million for 2008 to spend on the Centennial Challenge, which is comprised of questionable projects – “And that’s just for this year!” said National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar.¹⁷⁴ It is all part of the Centennial Challenge, an initiative begun in 2006 to spend \$1 billion on NPS projects in the build-up to the centennial celebration.

Recently, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) found that the NPS maintenance backlog has grown to more than \$9.6 billion on all of its properties, making some question the need and timing for an elaborate and expensive birthday celebration.¹⁷⁵ To deflect criticism away from the initiative, the administration has couched it in goals that anyone who likes national parks would see as laudable:

“Enhancing family experiences in parks through interactive interpretive programs, improving visitor services, restoring historic and cultural sites for public enjoyment, and engaging Americans in preserving their heritage through volunteerism and philanthropy.”¹⁷⁶

Upon further inspection, though, it seems that the Centennial Challenge is being used to fund a large number of low-priority projects:

- \$60,000 for Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in Missouri for “Parkpalooza,” an event featuring “rock climbing, lost worlds, music and dance and a photo contest.”¹⁷⁷
- \$75,000 for Zion National Park in



Inflatable Parkpalooza sign enhances the enjoyment of visitors.

¹⁷⁴ National Park Service press release, “Secretary Kempthorne announces first round of National Park Centennial projects,” April 24, 2008, <http://www.nps.gov/2016/assets/files/News%20Release%20Centennial%2004-24-08.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵ Vincent, Carol Hardy, *National Park Management*, Congressional Research Service, August 15, 2008, report RL33484.

¹⁷⁶ White House press release, “Fact Sheet: The National Parks Centennial Initiative,” February 7, 2007, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/02/20070207.html>.

¹⁷⁷ Website of the National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/parkmgmt/upload/parkpalooza.pdf>; Parkpalooza website, <http://www.nps.gov/jeff/planyourvisit/parkpalooza.htm>.

- Utah to celebrate its own centennial with an “artist-in-residence” program.
- \$40,000 to “create a virtual interactive map of Fredericksburg Battlefield” in Virginia.
 - \$180,000 for Acadia National Park to combat childhood couch-potatoism with “Engaging Youth: No Child Left Inside Initiative.”
 - \$19,627 for constructing an “Interpretive trail and Amphitheater at Carnivore Cove,” at Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument in Idaho.
 - \$50,000 for Hawaii Volcanoes National Park to “link Hawaii’s national parks through an innovative junior ranger program.”
 - \$2,000,000 for the New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park to “build indoor and outdoor performance venues for the New Orleans Jazz Museum.”
 - \$4,500,000 for the Wisconsin Avenue Plaza at the Georgetown Waterfront Park in Washington, D.C.¹⁷⁸

Centennial Challenge projects are funded through a matching grant arrangement by which private donations are matched by the government. Bill Wade, with the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, raises the additional question about how such an arrangement may affect the project selection process. “We will continue to raise the question about quid pro quo. We would wonder, for instance, what the ‘Metro Business Enterprises’ expects to get in return for it’s million dollars plus for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial project.”¹⁷⁹

Weed and Seed Program – Department of Justice (\$32 million)

“Weed & Seed” is a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) sponsored initiative that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in neighborhoods across the country. The strategy involves a two-pronged approach: Law enforcement agencies and prosecutors cooperate in “weeding out” criminals and community-based organizations collaborate to “seed” prevention, intervention, and treatment services as well as neighborhood restoration programs.¹⁸⁰ In 2008, Congress appropriated \$32,100,000 for the program.¹⁸¹

While Weed & Seed’s goals may be laudable, few studies are available to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. A review of some recent Weed & Seed initiatives, in fact, reveals that federal funds have been spent on questionable activities that on the surface appear to have little to do with supporting law enforcement priorities or crime prevention.

¹⁷⁸ “Wisconsin Avenue Plaza will provide a superior recreational destination and will be the lively centerpiece of the Georgetown Waterfront Park, with its signature elements including an interactive fountain, pergola and river stairs with seating for 350 at the finish line of the Potomac River regattas.” <http://www.georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/07-136%20ROCR%20Centennial%20press%20release%20formatted%208-23-07.pdf>; additional information at <http://www.georgetownwaterfrontpark.org/>

¹⁷⁹ Repanshek, Kurt, “2008 National Park Service Centennial Projects Run the Gamut, From Traveling Trunks to Biodiversity Inventories,” *National Parks Traveler*, April 24, 2008, <http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2008/04/2008-national-park-service-centennial-projects-run-gamut-traveling-trunks-biodiversity-inven>.

¹⁸⁰ “Weed & Seed,” U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs Community Capacity Development Office website, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ccdo/ws/welcome.html>, accessed November 24, 2008.

¹⁸¹ James, Nathan, “An Overview and Funding History of Select Department of Justice (DOJ) Grant Programs,” CRS RL33489, January 16, 2008, http://www.congress.gov/erp/rl/html/RL33489.html#TOC2_8.

A shortage of police tickets in Indianapolis, Indiana, left law enforcement officers “scrounging to find enough paper tickets” to write traffic citations. According to local television news channel 6, “Marion County’s 32 law enforcement agencies are all counting their paper tickets as the year comes to a close, but Indianapolis police officers are almost completely out of the essential item.”¹⁸²

When the city received a \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Weed & Seed program in October 2007, it decided to spend some of the money issuing tickets, not for traffic infractions but for motorists who leave valuables inside their vehicles. Northwest District Major Paul Ciesielski said “we put warning tickets on windshields where our officers noticed that was the case. It’s not a fine. The ticket has a Weed & Seed logo and some advice.”¹⁸³ The city also spent \$175,000 in federal funds to pay for two indoor soccer programs. Scott Rosenberger, the local Weed & Seed site coordinator, hopes to continue the soccer programs next year, but he said new ideas are needed for how the federal money should be spent because “after the excitement of getting the grant last year, interest kind of trailed off.”¹⁸⁴

In October, the West Asheville District Weed & Seed Grant in North Carolina sponsored a “Shred-a-thon,” where locals were invited to bring up to one box load of outdated personal papers to be transformed into mulch for the Community Peace Garden.¹⁸⁵

This summer in Youngstown, Ohio, the North Side Weed & Seed offered lawn mower maintenance sessions for up to ten youths from the North Side. With this program, Rick George, associate director of the Center for Human Service Development at Youngstown State University, hopes to give area youth the knowledge and tools to start cutting grass as a job and as a way to clean up their neighborhood. Etiquette classes to teach kids the appropriate way to act in certain situations were also provided.¹⁸⁶

As part of the Weed & Seed project of Allentown, Pennsylvania, “government grant money has been provided to a hip-hop class to offer lessons to youth,” according to the *Baltimore Sun*. The program was started in 2006 and currently 30 youth meet regularly every week to practice their hip-hop dancing skills.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Rinehart, Jack, “Indianapolis Police Running Low On Paper Tickets Next Shipment Won’t Arrive Until December,” *TheIndyChannel.com 6 News*, November 18, 2008, <http://www.theindychannel.com/news/18011005/detail.html>.

¹⁸³ Tuohy, John, “Northwestside leaders seek input on fighting crime with \$150,000 in federal funds,” *The Indianapolis Star*, November 8, 2008, <http://www.indystar.com/article/20081108/LOCAL1802/811080365/1195/LOCAL18>.

¹⁸⁴ Tuohy, John, “Eagledale neighborhood seeks ideas for fighting crime,” *Indianapolis Star*, October 17, 2008, <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081017/LOCAL1802/810170507/1195/LOCAL18>

¹⁸⁵ Boyd, Leslie “Fight identity theft: Shred old documents for free,” *Asheville Citizen-Times*, October 22, 2008, <http://www.citizen-times.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008810220308>

¹⁸⁶ “Weed and Seed seeks lawnmowers for Youngstown youth,” *The Vindicator*, June 21, 2008;

<http://www.vindy.com/news/2008/jun/21/weed-and-seed-seeks-lawnmowers-for-youngstown/?newswatch>

¹⁸⁷ Eckley, Elizabeth, M.A., et. al. “The City of Allentown Weed and Seed Initiative: Evaluation 2008,” *Lehigh Valley Research Consortium*, page 13; http://lehighvalleyresearch.org/files/articles/Allentown_Weed&Seed_Final_Report.pdf.

There's a new approach to reducing crime in Toledo, Ohio.¹⁸⁸ While the police ranks in Toledo, Ohio, have decreased for the last three years and are expected to be even lower next year,¹⁸⁹ Department of Justice funds are being targeted towards building a green house. Over 30 north Toledo kids built a greenhouse as the result of a Weed & Seed grant and "coordinators are hoping it will help reduce gang activity, teach job skills, beautify the neighborhood and increase the availability of fresh produce," according to a local media report.¹⁹⁰



Toledo, Ohio's new approach to reducing gang activity relies upon fresh produce from this newly opened greenhouse paid for with a federal Weed & Seed grant.

In Modesto, California, the Paradise South Weed & Seed Project presented a break dance competition¹⁹¹ and offered Hip-Hop/Modern Jazz dance classes. "The Hip-Hop and Modern Jazz dance class will focus on the fundamentals of contemporary dance techniques, including stretching, center floor techniques, movement across the floor, progressions and dance routines," according to the city.¹⁹²

A Weed & Seed grant paid to send 100 sixth-graders from Philadelphia, California, to camp this past summer. "At night, students sang songs around the campfire and slept in tents. During the

¹⁸⁸ 'The Greenhouse Project,' 13 abc WTVG-TV Toledo, December 4, 2008,

<http://abclocal.go.com/wtvg/story?section=news/local&id=6539061> .

¹⁸⁹ "Toledo crime down 17.5% since '06; Offenses declined even with fewer officers, police chief says," *The Toledo Blade*, November 21, 2008, <http://www.toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20081121/NEWS02/811210373>.

¹⁹⁰ 'The Greenhouse Project,' 13 abc WTVG-TV Toledo, December 4, 2008,

<http://abclocal.go.com/wtvg/story?section=news/local&id=6539061>.

¹⁹¹ The city of Modesto news release. "'MIX AT 615' PRESENTS BREAK DANCE COMPETITION," May 8, 2008;

<http://www.modestocalifornia.us/cmo/releases/2008/nr08133.asp> .

¹⁹² The city of Modesto news release, "FREE DANCE CLASSES AT MADDUX YOUTH CENTER," May 28, 2008,

<http://www.modestorda.net/cmo/releases/2008/nr08158.asp> .

day they learned about wildlife, explored a creek for living organisms and even caught a glimpse of a sleeping bear,” according to a local press report. Assistant Principal Laura Solis said because the school is working on improving its students’ academic performance, “a great deal of time is focused on academics and little time or school resources are available for this type of experience.”¹⁹³

The Weed & Seed program of Las Cruces, New Mexico, hosted a Talent Show in March.¹⁹⁴

A \$1 million grant to Mobile, Alabama, this past November will be used to improve a crime-ridden neighborhood through “beautification projects.”¹⁹⁵

While many of these events may have been fun or even educational recreational events for children, adolescents and teenagers, it is difficult to demonstrate how these activities may have impacted crime or advanced the mission of the Department of Justice.

Transportation Enhancement Grants (\$800 Million)

In 2008, more than \$800 million in taxpayer funds were spent on “transportation enhancement” (TE) projects, such as bike paths, pedestrian facilities, museums, scenic routes, historic preservation, and greenery for roadside beautification.¹⁹⁶ To pay for these frivolous projects, taxpayer dollars are siphoned from federal highway transportation dollars needed for critical infrastructure initiatives, such as road and bridge repairs.

According to the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, the entity tasked with tracking how enhancement funds are used, “Nationwide, over half (54 percent) of TE funds were spent on bicycle and pedestrian facilities, combined with rail-trails, between fiscal year 1992 and fiscal year 2003. Scenic beautification projects received 17 percent of available funds and historic preservation and preservation of historic transportation facilities together received the third largest share at 16.6 percent.”¹⁹⁷

Hundreds of transportation enhancement projects, from museums to bike trails, are funded across the country every year. For example, in 2008, the program designated nearly \$1 million

¹⁹³ Rodriguez, Monica, “Camp Trask up to the task; Philadelphia Elementary students study wildlife,” *The Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, June 9, 2008, http://www.dailybulletin.com/ci_9535198.

¹⁹⁴ “Weed & Seed to Host Talent Show,” City of Las Cruces, March 13, 2008; http://www.las-cruces.org/police/news/news_item.asp?NewsID=566.

“Weed & Seed digging up local talent,” *Las Cruces Sun-News*, March 14, 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Colquitt, Ron, “Mobile gets \$1 million federal grant for city’s Weed and Seed program,” *Press-Register (Alabama)*, November 25, 2008, http://blog.al.com/live/2008/11/mobile_gets_1_million_federal.html.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, “Apportionments, Rescissions, and Obligations, FY 2008,” http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/TE/appor_res_2008.htm, accessed December 2, 2008.

¹⁹⁷ National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, “Frequently Asked Questions,” <http://www.enhancements.org/FAQ.asp>, accessed December 2, 2008.

for expansion of the Allen County Museum in Lima, Ohio.¹⁹⁸ Specifically, the money was intended for a new exhibit to “showcase the Society’s Shay locomotive, built in Lima in 1925.”¹⁹⁹

In West Lafayette, Indiana, more than \$800,000 in federal transportation enhancement funding was directed to fund a “1.1-mile section of new trail along the North River.” According to local press, the grant would be used to “turn what is a dirt path used by people waiting for a CityBus into a concrete trail.”²⁰⁰

Another \$800,000 grant for Jackson, Tennessee, was provided for the construction of a “railroad museum at the Old Country Store property off of the U.S. 45 Bypass.”²⁰¹

The 1,699 residents²⁰² of the town of Mercer, Wisconsin will soon enjoy \$631,008 worth of federally funded downtown streetscape improvements. The transportation enhancement grant will be used for “decorative street lighting, sidewalks, planters and street furniture.”²⁰³

While some of these projects might be worthwhile to the people who will benefit from them, they are hardly national priorities. U.S. taxpayers could save hundreds of millions of dollars per year by eliminating these programs from the federal budget.

¹⁹⁸ National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, “Project List,” <http://www.enhancements.org/projectlist.asp>, accessed December 2, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Allen County Museum, “Phase II and III,” http://www.allencountymuseum.org/Phases_II_and_III.html, accessed December 2, 2008

²⁰⁰ Malik, Michael, “Safety ‘primary purpose’ of \$1M trail project along N. river Road,” *Journal and Courier*, November 10, 2008, <http://www.jonline.com/article/20081119/NEWS02/811190339>, accessed December 2, 2008.

²⁰¹ Beadle, Nicholas, “Jaxx lease approved,” *Jackson Sun*, December 3, 2008, <http://www.jacksonsun.com/article/20081203/NEWS01/812030308>.

²⁰² City-Data.com information for the town of Mercer, Wisconsin, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Mercer-Wisconsin.html>, accessed December 2, 2008.

²⁰³ Wisconsin Department of Transportation, List of 2008 Transportation Enhancement Awards, <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/localgov/docs/te-grants.pdf>, accessed December 2, 2008.

Conclusion

The examples of government waste in this report, totaling more than \$1 billion, are just a small amount of the taxpayer money wasted during 2008. While this can be discouraging – and even frustrating – to the millions of Americans who work hard for their pay and do not appreciate seeing their taxes squandered in Washington, D.C., it also presents an opportunity to change the way the government does business.

For the past several years, politicians from both parties have lived under the fiction that the Treasury is an unlimited source of funding for programs of all kinds, freeing them from the responsibility to choose high priority projects over low ones. Some of the blame rests with a congressional habit known as “earmarking” – a practice that allows members of Congress to designate millions of dollars per year per member for projects of their choosing in their home districts. In 2008 alone, more than \$17 billion was spent on 11,610 earmark projects without any of them having undergone a serious merit review process.²⁰⁴

But the spending problem extends far beyond earmarks, as this report demonstrates. It reaches into programs and departments across government in the form of wasteful grants, contracts and agreements that receive little notice. It can take the form of funds being misdirected, overspent and improperly paid. Or, it can simply result from fraud. Whatever the form of government waste, it is clear that there is plenty of room to trim the federal budget.

At the heart of wasteful Washington spending is the fact that politicians and government agencies mask government spending behind program names or descriptions that sound laudable, but make it difficult for taxpayers to discover exactly how the money is spent.

Additionally, beneficiaries receive significant personal advantages, but the costs per project seem insignificant to taxpayers. For instance, when the government gives an organization \$3 million the organization benefits greatly, but the cost to each American citizen is only one penny. It creates a strong incentive to lobby for government funds, but only a small incentive to oppose an individual wasteful project. Unfortunately, a lot of wasteful projects added together create a considerable expense for taxpayers.

Fixing the problem will require a concerted effort by the public to pressure both Congress and the President to rein in wasteful spending in a systematic way. Only by holding elected officials accountable to a higher standard can taxpayers expect better results in Washington, D.C.

One useful tool to hold government officials accountable is USASpending.gov, a website created by Congress in 2006 to track the recipients of all federal grants and contracts. Interested citizens can also sign up for daily updates on wasteful government spending at coburn.senate.gov.

²⁰⁴ Citizens Against Government Waste, *2008 Congressional Pig Book Summary*, http://www.cagw.org/site/DocServer/CAGW-Pig_Book_08.pdf?docID=3001.

Recommendations

If the wasteful spending habits of Washington are going to change, it will only happen because members of Congress and government officials are held accountable by those who elect them. When the American citizenry demands change, they will get it – but not until then. Government officials and politicians have grown comfortable spending taxpayer money in unwise ways, even using public funds to reward campaign contributors to buy votes.

There are several common-sense steps taxpayers can demand that the government can take now to begin cutting back immediately on wasteful spending.

1. **Eliminate programs that do not work.** Federal programs do not often disappear, but that does not mean they all work well. If a determination is made that a program is not achieving results, it should be eliminated.
2. **Eliminate or consolidate duplicative existing programs.** Those that duplicate existing government programs and are no longer needed and should be eliminated.
3. **Eliminate earmarks.** Earmarks, otherwise known as “pork,” are pet projects that members of Congress single-handedly direct, often to bring home money to their district. While that might seem like a good idea, or even a congressman’s job, the earmark process is corrupt, wasteful and non-transparent. Tax dollars are routinely directed into questionable projects, as seen in this report, which benefit lobbyists, special interest groups and the well-connected. They are not required to have a meritorious purpose or to demonstrate results, and should be eliminated.
4. **Implement stronger transparency measures.** Transparency in government should allow the taxpayer to know how every penny of federal money is spent. The advantages of this are obvious, and include the accountability brought to officials who know that poor spending decisions will be found out and penalized. Taxpayers should be able to track every federal expenditure on loans, grants and contracts down to the penny.
5. **Conduct more congressional oversight.** Congressional oversight and hearings provide an opportunity to exert Congress’ “power of the purse” on the actions of the government. Oversight should ensure money is spent wisely and in line with objective performance standards. Members of Congress should be held accountable for how tax dollars are spent, and they in turn should agencies accountable for how they spend tax dollars.
6. **End automatic budget increases.** Too often, Congress increases the budget of every government agency without regard to the previous year’s performance. This practice must end with resources being directed only to those programs performing well and not to those that fail, as well as to only those programs that are true national priorities.
7. **Require Performance Metrics for All Programs.** Many federal programs operate with objectives that are ill-defined or non-existent. Every program should be given performance metrics that are measureable and enforceable.

If these recommendations are followed, it will help to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent more efficiently and effectively than it is today.

Appendix 1: List of Wasteful Spending Items

The following is a list of all 65 examples of wasteful government spending contained in this report.

Search for Outer Space Aliens – California (\$9.4 million)
Voicemail for the Homeless – Ohio (\$15,000)
Training Classes for Casino Workers – Kansas (\$784,000)
Inflatable Alligator and Under-the-Sea Waterslide – Texas (\$367,000)
Tennis Courts and Artificial Baseball Field Turf – New York (\$1 million)
Cleveland Botanical Garden Green Corps – Ohio (\$517,000)
Free-Bike Library – Colorado (\$66,000)
Bridging the Generational Gap with Nintendo Wii – Indiana (\$3,905)
Portraits of Cabinet Officers (\$167,290)
FCC-Sponsored NASCAR Events to Promote Digital Television Transition (\$350,000)
“George Washington Slept Here” Travelling Museum – New Jersey (\$49,000)
Senate Restaurants Post Huge Loss (\$2 million)
Scottsville Streetscaping Project – Virginia (\$392,000)
Constructing the Tampa Riverwalk – Florida (\$294,000)
Driving Tours and Exhibits for the America West Heritage Center – Utah (\$200,000)
Restoring Robert Frost Farm – New Hampshire (\$205,800)
“The check’s in the mail” – IRS Mailings for Rebate Checks (\$42 million)
Remounting “World’s Largest Mounted Fish” – New York (\$135,000)
Redecorating Train Station – New Jersey (\$1.9 million)
Search for Alaskan Ice Worms – New Jersey (\$326,733)
Medicare Overpayment for Name-Brand Drugs with Generic Alternatives (\$6.5 million)
3-D Space Theater – Indiana (\$2.4 million)
Bike Path Along Baton Rouge Levees – Louisiana (\$1 million)
Microchips in Cactuses – Arizona (\$???)
St. Louis Zoo Bridge to Parking Lot – Missouri (\$5 million)
EPA Administrator Junket to Australia (\$280,000)
Revitalization in Cleveland – Ohio (\$1.1 million)
Visitor Center for National Fish Hatchery – Missouri (\$2.8 million)
Renovating Old Tiger Baseball Stadium – Detroit (\$4 million)
Studying American and Chinese Video Game Habits – California (\$100,000)
Military Funding Diverted to Tentmaker – New York (\$1.6 million)
Low-Income Student Program Used for Employee Bonuses – California (\$3 million)
Halloween Signs in Salem – Massachusetts (\$50,000)
National Drug Intelligence Center – Pennsylvania (\$39 million)
First Tee Golf Program – South Carolina (\$3 million)
Teen Club and Whitewater Rafting Trips – Florida (\$651,500)
Kanjorski Center Parking Garage - Pennsylvania (\$5.6 million)
B In Tune Youth Music Program – Washington, D.C. (\$430,000)
Field Trips for School Teachers – Illinois (\$918,600)
Captain John Smith Water Trail – Virginia (\$446,500)
Wattstar Theatre and Education Center – California (\$294,000)
2010 Decennial Census Bailout – (\$210 million)

Airplane-Shaped Gas Station – Tennessee (\$9,000)
The Unwanted Sidewalk – Kentucky (\$1 million)
Specialty Potatoes for High-End Restaurants – Idaho (\$298,068)
Train Depot for “Birthplace of American Railroad” – Pennsylvania (\$170,000)
Mississippi River Flood Memorial Plaza – Illinois (\$200,000)
Feasibility Study for Medical School that Will Not Be Built – Mississippi (\$478,492)
Billings Mustangs Minor League Baseball Stadium – Montana (\$328,300)
Unwanted Neon Bike Signs – New York (\$148,773)
Art Museum in Iraq (\$13 million)
Tibbits Opera House Facelift – Michigan (\$500,000)
Small Business Loans to Liquor Stores (\$82 million)
Statewide Barn Census – Vermont (\$150,000)
Powder to Protect Soldiers from Chemical Attack – Pennsylvania (\$5.6 million)
High Altitude Airship – Ohio (\$3.2 million)
Retractable Canopy for Haddad Riverfront Park – West Virginia (\$2.4 million)
Lobster Institute – Maine (\$188,000)
Wilson Skateboarding Park – California (\$296,601)
Fish and Mermaid Mural – Wisconsin (\$6,000)
Freewheel Midtown Bike Center Café and Bike Shower – Minnesota (\$560,000)
Congressional Junket to Galapagos Islands (\$???)
National Park Service 100-Year Birthday Party (\$24.6 million)
Weed and Seed Program – Department of Justice (\$32 million)
Transportation Enhancement Grants (\$800 Million)

Total Wasteful Spending: \$1,315,476,562

Appendix 2: Guide to Government Waste

As a taxpayer, you have the right to know how your hard-earned money is being spent in Washington. Unfortunately, as this report reveals, wasteful Washington spending is out of control and must be addressed before our nation faces bankruptcy. It is time for Congress and Washington politicians to be held accountable for every dollar spent. Taxpayers across the country must demand accountability and transparency in every corner of our bloated federal government.

These websites are dedicated to shining light on federal spending and provide numerous examples of ineffective government programs, wasteful congressional earmarks, and careless government spending.

Federal Accountability & Transparency

The USASpending.gov website allows you to “google” all government grants, contracts and loans, so you can track how your tax money is being spent.



Washington Waste

For examples of outrageous government waste, visit [Your Tax Dollars at Work](#) and [Washington Waste of the Day](#).



Agency Oversight

As part of my oversight efforts, I am working to release a series of oversight reports on federal agencies. To view these oversight reports, please visit my [Investigative Reports](#) website.

