



FEDERAL FUMBLES

VOL. 7

SENATOR JAMES LANKFORD

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MY FELLOW TAXPAYERS,

In the last year, we have seen the cost of groceries, rent, utilities, and gas all go up. Yes, we still have wasteful spending in government. Our families are talking about ways we can cut our unnecessary spending to ensure the necessities are covered. The same conversation is happening right now in Washington, DC, except it's focused on our nation's debt ceiling as we climb past \$31 trillion in debt.

The US is the only nation in the world that has a debt limit, which forces Congress to talk about the root causes of our spending. The first debt ceiling was enacted in 1917 through the Second Liberty Bond Act. In 1939 Congress created the first aggregate debt limit for all government debt, which was at the time only \$45 billion.

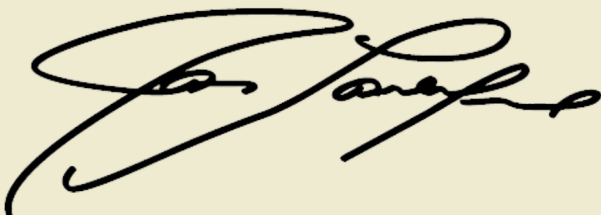
In the last 100 years, Congress has added to the debt limit while also debating ways to reduce spending and lower the debt. Over the next 10 years, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that interest payments on our debt will total \$10.5 trillion if nothing changes, and some of those interest payments will go to countries like China.

We have to talk about the debt, but we also have to talk about the spending that got us to \$31 trillion. In Vol. 6 of Federal Fumbles: Ways the Federal Government Dropped the Ball, I walked through the ways we can reform our broken budget and spending process, which has contributed to the growing national debt.

With an entire generation that has never experienced inflation, getting out of this is going to be a long, hard road. While Washington, DC, is having a conversation on whether to raise a debt limit without discussing how we got here, I'm releasing Vol. 7 of *Federal Fumbles*. Examples of wasteful government spending are everywhere. No rational person — of any political party — says we can't find any areas to cut spending.

Federal Fumbles is a starting point for everyone in America to talk about encouraging Congress to find ways to cut wasteful spending to address our fiscal realities. We're all in this together. It's time to step up to address the problems that Congress, the Administration, Democrats, and Republicans have ignored for far too long. It's time to pick up and run the ball.

In God We Trust,



James Lankford
United States Senator for Oklahoma





Shakespeare at the Border

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies a \$50,000 grant to host a conference in San Antonio, TX.[i] The purpose of the conference? To recreate the works of Shakespeare to represent a “new cultural praxis in decolonizing the US-Mexico Borderlands.”[ii]



CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$50,000

I don't think that's what Shakespeare had in mind when writing Romeo and Juliet or Hamlet. Spending your tax dollars for Medieval and Renaissance experts to recreate these tragedies is indeed a tragedy in and of itself. Romeo, Romeo, where shall I spend the taxpayer's money, Romeo? To spend or not to spend, that is the question.



Drag Shows in Ecuador

Believe it or not, the US Department of State awarded \$20,600 to a culture center in Ecuador to host 12 drag shows.[iii]

The grant was given to the Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano Abraham Lincoln in an effort to promote diversity and inclusion in Ecuadorian culture.[iv] It was funded as a part of the State Department's public diplomacy program, which works to "support the achievement of US foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security." [v]

Let's see...which foreign policy goal or national security objective does a drag show in Ecuador accomplish?



Yuma Downtown Redevelopment

If you eat lettuce, it's probably coming from Yuma, Arizona, which is located on our southern border. Yuma is faced with a disastrous crisis at the border and is in desperate need of policy changes and resources that would secure Yuma and the border. More than 300,000 people have illegally crossed the border in Yuma, which has strained the city's infrastructure and threatened our nation's food security because of the contamination caused by illegal border crossers walking through the lettuce fields.



But that's not the fumble. Congress gave \$2.5 million to Yuma, not to stop the border crisis, but to redevelop its downtown.[vi] This feels like a \$2.5 million apology note rather than a fix for the crisis. Close the border instead of redeveloping Downton Yuma.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: EARMARK

FUMBLE: \$2.5 MILLION



Music Therapy for Social Anxiety

It's a known fact that many of us rely on music to help ease our minds. But that did not stop the National Institutes of Health (NIH) from studying it and giving it a fancy name: "gaze-contingent musical reward therapy," or GC-MRT. And they spent more than \$660,000 of taxpayer money to study it in 2022.[vii] And 2021.[viii] And 2019.[ix] And 2018.[x]

This name and description sounds fancier than your favorite relaxing classical symphony. According to the NIH, GC-MRT "uses complex stimuli of photo montages of 16 competing threat and non-threat faces that foster transfer to real life situations. It directly trains sustained attention by using eye tracking to detect visual attention and to train it as it occurs. It incorporates music chosen by the patient, which enhances task engagement."[xi]

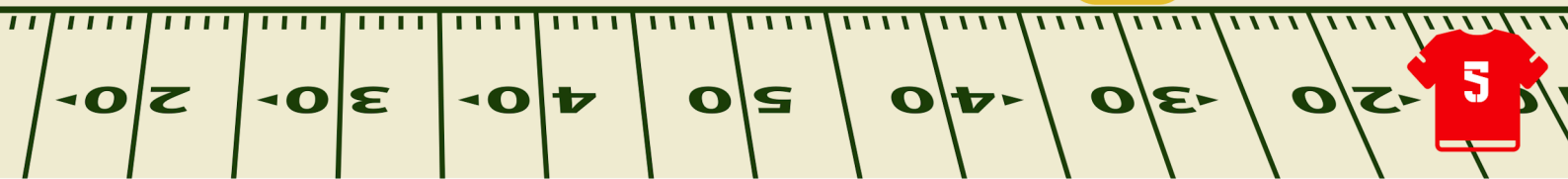
In other words, happy music will play when a non-threatening image occurs. Groundbreaking.

Next time you're walking into an uncomfortable situation, just put on your favorite song to relax. There, I just gave you some free advice that would have cost you over half a million dollars at the NIH.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NIH

FUMBLE: \$2,641,738



Colonial Mexican Soundscapes

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$66,000

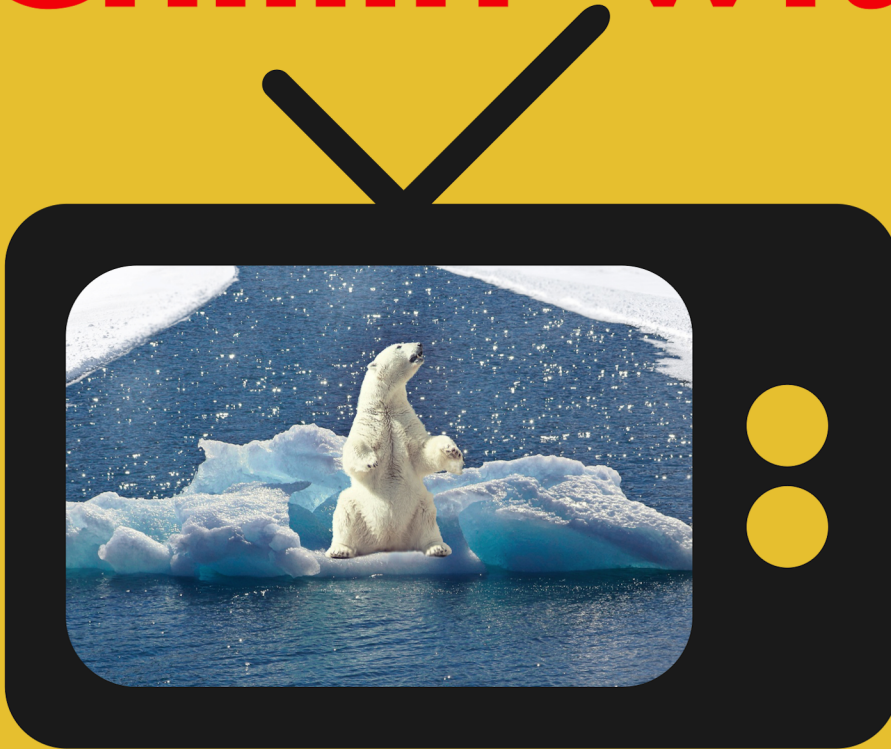
Actions speak louder than words, but that is not stopping \$66,000 of your tax dollars from going to the writing of a book titled Mexican Soundscapes of the Colonial Era.^[xii] Unbelievably, as the book title suggests, this grant from the NEH will go toward writing a book on the cultural meaning of sound in colonial Mexico.

\$60,000 was awarded in 2022 to complete the book, and that follows a \$6,000 award given in 2021 to fund a trip to Mexico City to “inform the drafting of three chapters.”^[xiii] Yes, you paid for a trip to Mexico to “research” sounds.

The book will focus on the use of sound in Colonial Mexico as a “disciplinary force in the hands of officials who imposed order by utilizing important technology including bells, cannons, and firearms to shape their authority.”^[xiv] Maybe the federal government should listen to the sound of US taxpayers as they shout, “Stop wasting our money!”



Chillin' with Vlad



It sounds like the plot of a movie: a team of scientists with plans to resurrect an extinct ecosystem in the Russian Arctic to repopulate it with large herbivores. The animals will then turn the tundra into grasslands and slowdown the melting of permafrost.

If that sounds too crazy to be true, the NEH just awarded \$60,000 to write the book Pleistocene Park: Extinction and Eternity in the Russian Arctic. [xv]

The book will demonstrate Russia's "apocalyptic utopianism and its concern with the end of life on Earth as we know it and fears of human extinction." [xvi]
You worked overtime to pay your taxes for Russian apocalyptic utopianism.



CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$60,000



Shakespeare in VR



Once Romeo and Juliet are finished at the southern border, the NEH is taking them into virtual reality (VR)! At a cost of \$100,000[xvii], Carnegie Mellon University is developing a prototype of an interactive VR experience that will “enable users to step onstage in an Elizabethan theater, assume a role in a Shakespearean play, and perform in conjunction with professional actors or fellow users.”[xviii]

Students will wear VR headsets that enables them to see the virtual theater in front of them. They will be blind to the world around them, much like many of my colleagues in DC are blind to the spending in front of them.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

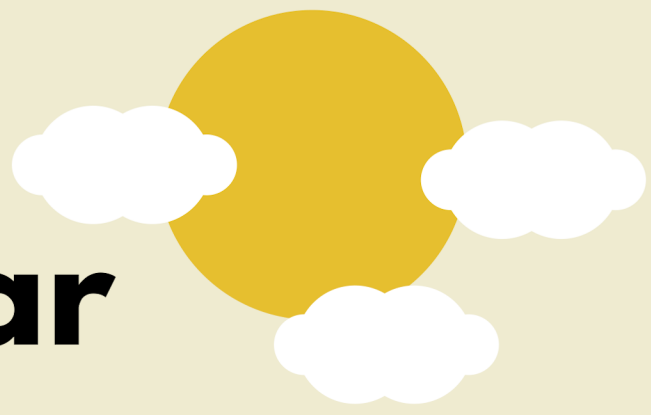
TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$100,000

When you paid your taxes this year, did you imagine you were paying for students at Carnegie Mellon to use VR goggles to pretend they are portraying Lady Macbeth on stage?



Million-Dollar Splash Pad

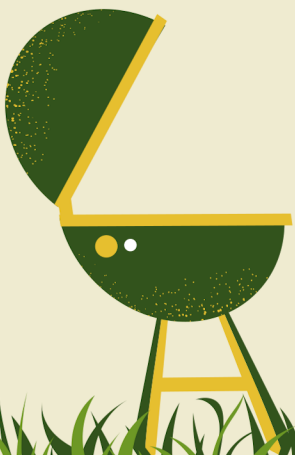


Memorial Park in Center Line, Michigan, is about to be the hottest playground in town. Thanks to you and me, a nearly million-dollar earmark was included in the FY2023 government spending bill.[xix] That's right, nearly \$1 million was set aside not for community development, flood mitigation, or nonprofit assistance, but for a splash pad at a park.



This is not a matter of being anti-fun but a matter of fiscal responsibility. The same park received hundreds of thousands of dollars in private donations. If a community wants a splash pad, it should look toward its own community resources and not the federal government's (empty) piggy bank to make the project happen.

You worked all year to pay taxes so kids in Michigan can play in the splash park this summer. Does that make you feel like you've been soaked?



Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Some great Oklahomans have been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame including Woody Guthrie and Leon Russell. That is a well deserved honor, indeed, and their accomplishments make our state proud. What's not well deserved, though, is the \$1 million of your tax dollars that went to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame's Museum in Cleveland.[xx]

Cleveland could learn a thing or two from Tulsa, where our historic OKPOP Museum and world-renowned Bob Dylan Center have not relied on federal tax dollars slipped into a thousand-page long government-funding bill. An earmark for rock & roll doesn't rock.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING
TEAM: EARMARK
FUMBLE: \$1 MILLION



Aloha!

Taste of Hawaii

It's no secret that government spending is often referred to as "pork." But it looks like "pork" has moved to new, fresher, and healthier options. In the FY2023 funding bill, more than \$3.4 million of your tax dollars went to various farmers' markets in Hawaii.[xxi]

Specifically, \$1.5 million went to Hana Fresh Farm[xxii], \$1 million to the Lanakila Pacific Food Hub, \$492,000 to Moloa'a AINA Center Food Hub[xxiv], and \$435,000 to the Kohala Food Hub.[xxv]



The term is "local farmers' markets" not "federal farmers' markets" for a reason. But be sure to check them out next time you're in beautiful Hawaii. You helped pay for them.



Cheers to **Government Spending**

**What's \$4 million worth to you?
To the community of Napa
Valley, it's worth 8.2 miles of a
pedestrian trail to close a gap
on an existing trail. Specifically,
it will fill in a section of the Napa
Valley Vine Trail to connect
wineries together between
Yountville and St. Helena.[xxvi]**

**CONFERENCE: SPENDING
TEAM: EARMARK
FUMBLE: \$4 MILLION**

**Napa Valley is one of the wealthiest areas of the country with
hundreds of wineries and multimillion-dollar homes. Why did
we just take tax dollars from Oklahoma rural health centers
and give them to a winery trail in California? I think they can
afford to pay for that already.**





European Butterflies

I don't have anything against butterflies, even if they speak French or German. But I am opposed to the National Science Foundation (NSF) giving \$138,000 of American tax dollars for European scholars to study butterflies.[xxvii]

The project studies the impact that climate change has on European butterflies—during winter.

The project, which takes place in Germany, funds a study by a Swedish researcher who will study nine species of butterflies to better “understand the impacts of changing climate on organisms,” as it is “critical to study how temperature-dependent processes will be altered in response to increasing winter temperatures.”[xxviii]

Let's see if we can find somewhere in the US where Europe is paying for a study of American butterflies and climate change.



Dancing in DC



CONFERENCE: SPENDING
TEAM: EARMARK
FUMBLE: \$1 MILLION

The Dance Institute of Washington, a “dance equity organization” in our nation’s capital, received \$1 million in the FY2023 government spending bill. [xxix] Your tax dollars are going to support events such as a free dance class on Monday evenings and dance performances throughout DC.[xxx]

Dancing is not the problem. Federal tax dollars paying for dance classes is the problem.

Until Congress gets its spending problem under control, \$1 million grants should be carefully considered and not two-stepped out the door.



Yoko Oh-No!

Yoko Ono may have caused the breakup of the Beatles, and now she has your tax dollars, too.[xxxi] The NEA awarded the Springfield Museum of Art in Missouri \$25,000 to support the installation of an exhibit titled Yoko Ono: Mend Piece.[xxxii]

The Springfield Museum of Art describes the exhibit as a “simple white room,” where “shattered cups and saucers are placed on a table.”[xxxiii] “Participants are asked to mend the fragments together using common household items: twine, glue, scissors, and tape. The resulting works are displayed on nearby shelves, evidence of the power of collective action.”[xxxiv]

I wish I was making this up.

Maybe Yoko Ono and those who participate in the exhibit should listen to the Beatles’ song “Come Together” for a better and less costly way to fund collective action.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEA

FUMBLE: \$25,000



Get Well, Russia!

The NSF was founded to “promote the progress of science, advance national health, prosperity and welfare, and to secure the national defense.” So it makes perfect sense that it spent over \$660,000 to study the impact that COVID-19 had on Russian women.[xxxv]

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NSF

FUMBLE: \$660,422

In 2022 the NSF awarded \$660,422 for the project “Understanding the Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 in the Arctic.”[xxxvi] The project will evaluate the impact that COVID-19 had on women in Russia, Iceland, and Alaska. Well, at least Alaska is in the US.



Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

“

**It was twenty years ago today
Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play
They've been going in and out of style
But they're guaranteed to raise a smile**

”

When Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play in 1947, our national debt stood at \$258 billion. In 1967 when the song was written, it had increased to \$326 billion.

Today our national debt stands at more than \$31 trillion. But that didn't stop the NEA from giving \$40,000 of your tax dollars to Pepperland, a new exhibit in Brooklyn, New York, that pays tribute to Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.[xxxvii][xxxviii] And the band is not even American!

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEA

FUMBLE: \$40,000



Salem Witch Trials

While classic American literature is being removed from some classrooms across the country for being insensitive and not conforming to the leftist agenda, the NEH is working to increase discussion of the Salem Witch Trials in classrooms. And it's costing us more than \$180,000.[xxxix]

The NEH awarded Endicott College in Massachusetts \$181,539 to host a three-week institute at its ocean-front campus for 26 middle and high school teachers to come together to explore and discuss the Salem Witch Trials.

The institute, titled "The Salem Witch Trials: Their World and Legacy," will provide teachers the opportunity to "discuss the latest scholarship on the trials and to consider parallels between 1692 and moments in United States history that have been marked by fear of enemies both real and imagined." [xl]

Here is my fear: we're wasting your tax dollars. I think that fear may be real.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$181,539



Smart Toilets

The NIH is responsible for important medical research. However, they occasionally flush that mission down the toilet with some of their funding decisions. For example, they awarded nearly \$350,000 to develop a Smart Toilet application that uses artificial intelligence.[xli] That's right, a smart toilet app.

The NIH's goal of conducting groundbreaking medical research seems to have gone from number one to number two. The Smart Toilet system is "an engineered portal retrofitted to a conventional toilet that, discreetly and post-flush, inspects stool appearance and enables hands-free stool sampling for analysis." [xlii] The goal of the project is to improve the management of treating inflammatory bowel disease. The thinking is that if stool can easily be sampled and tested, improved outcomes can occur.

This sounds like an idea for a tech company, not the preeminent health research agency for our country. It's time to flush this idea down the drain.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NIH

FUMBLE: \$349,877



CONFERENCE: SPENDING

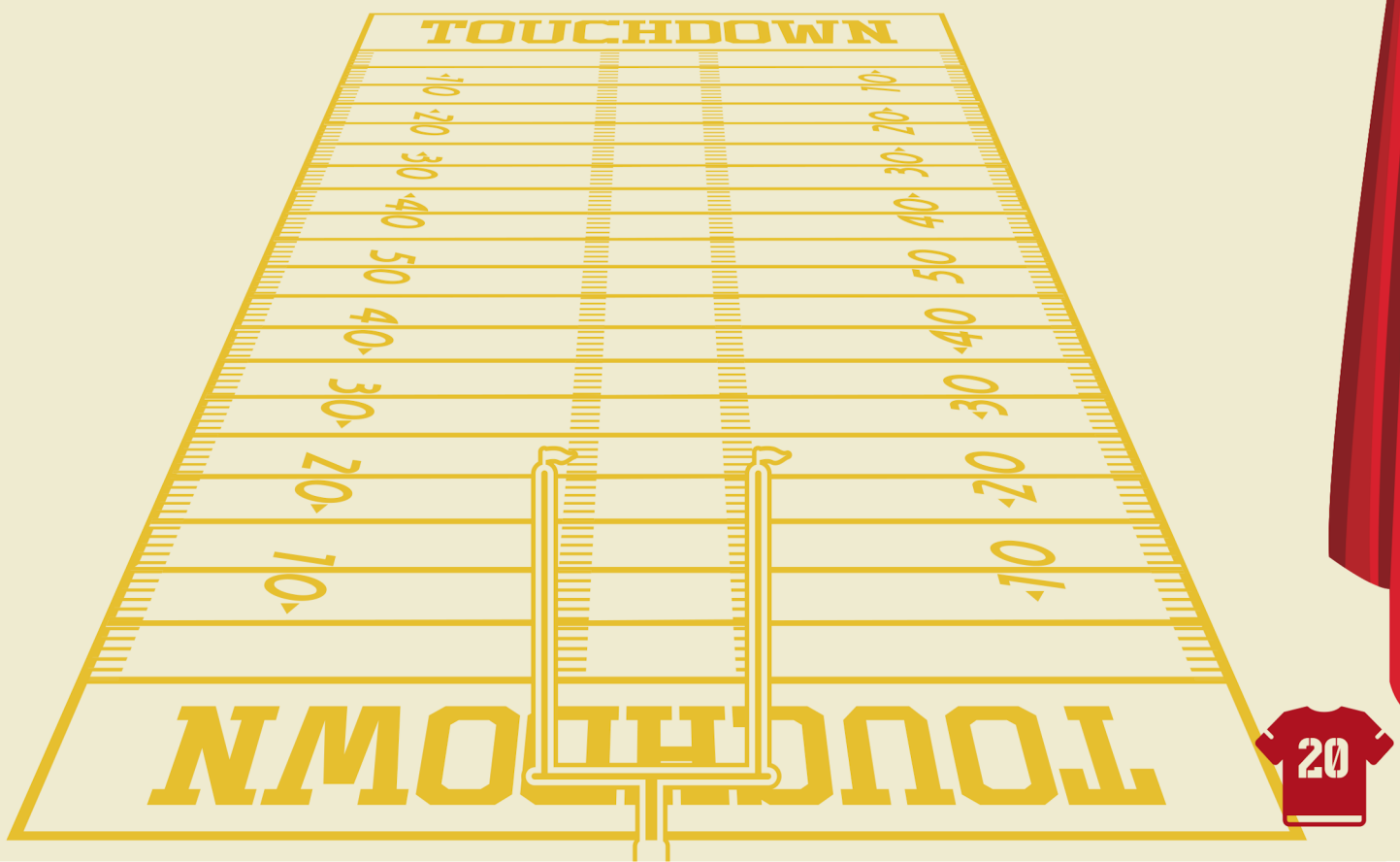
TEAM: EARMARK

FUMBLE: \$750,000

New York Metropolitan Opera Fire Alarm

While I was fighting to include policies and funding to strengthen our southern border during the FY2023 spending bill negotiations, others had different priorities. We didn't fully fund the border, but we did help fund The Phantom of the Opera.

The FY2023 spending bill included \$750,000 for the New York Metropolitan Opera to update its fire alarm.[xliii] Obviously fire safety and mitigation are important. But as a private entity that's worth \$3.7 billion,[xliv] the Met shouldn't rely on federal taxpayers to pick up the tab. A fire system at a national Smithsonian museum is understandable. One at the Met is not.



You Ghana Be Kidding Me

The NIH awarded \$268,737 in 2022 for a project titled “Strengthening Injury Control Research in Ghana and West Africa.”[xlv]

The project title sounds compelling, but it’s also head scratching to figure out why the NIH is spending US taxpayer dollars in this way.



The helmet research project concluded, “Helmets provided significant protection against head injury.”[xlvi] Even more, it concluded that full face helmets were 94% more effective in preventing head injuries than open-faced helmets.[xlvii] And the seatbelt research study found that 21.6% of passengers wore seatbelts.[xlviii]

That’s right. We spent \$268,737 on a study to learn it’s safer to wear a helmet and your seatbelt. I certainly hope the people of Ghana wear helmets on motorcycles and use seatbelts on buses, but I’m certain we could better utilize our foreign aid dollars.

The bigger question—who got paid more than a quarter million dollars to say helmets save lives?

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NIH

FUMBLE: \$268,737





Humans, Chimpanzees, & Climate Change in Sierra Leone

What do humans, chimpanzees, and climate change in Sierra Leone all have in common? You'll have to read the book of the same name to find out. You might as well because your tax dollars funded a \$60,000 grant from the NEH to write it.[xlix]

Using villages and chimpanzee communities in Sierra Leone, the book explores the idea that "climate change is more than a problem to be solved by science; it is about the ability to know one's self".[I]

With a national debt of more than \$31 trillion, certain types of spending are more appropriate than others. This is a reminder that we have to take government spending more seriously and fund projects that are truly federal priorities—not monkey business.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$60,000



Ghana, Roads, & Climate Change

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NIH

FUMBLE: \$79,880

We have two entries for Ghana this year! In last year's edition of Federal Fumbles, I exposed a \$164,000 NIH study on rural roads in India. So this year, I wasn't entirely surprised to discover they also spent nearly \$80,000 to study the impact of climate change on road safety in Ghana.

The project, titled "Understanding the Effect of Climate Change on Road Safety in Ghana" is pretty self-explanatory, but it also raises so many questions. My first question: why?

The study will consist of interviewing 400 commercial drivers to study climatic hazards that the drivers have noticed on the roads in Ghana and to assess the correlation between crashes and "extreme weather" events, also known as rain.

All roads lead to more wasteful spending.

I'm Right, You're Wrong



Everybody has disagreements. But the Biden Administration can't stand it if people disagree with their ideas. Need evidence? The NSF awarded more than \$400,000 to address what they call a "pluralistic ignorance gap on climate change."^[li] If you disagree on climate change, you need re-education.

The project abstract calls a difference of opinion "ignorant" and "discourages responses from elected officials, who respond to what they see as their constituents' priorities."^[lii]

CONFERENCE: SPENDING
TEAM: NSF
FUMBLE: \$400,632

The study hopes to align everyone's beliefs on climate change. These are your federal tax dollars used to convince you that you're ignorant if you disagree. How does that affect your climate?

“Cli-Fi”

Most of us know the Parable of the Sower, the story Jesus tells his disciples to signify the importance of having strong roots in your faith. In it, Jesus illustrates farmers scattering seeds. Some of the seeds fall on rocky soil and thorns, which result in a poor crop. However, seeds that fall on good soil multiply plentifully, a representation of the importance of rooting yourself in good faith.

But the NEH finds it appropriate to use your tax dollars to reinterpret this parable to teach our kids about the dangers of climate change. That’s right, the NEH awarded \$215,000 to California State University to conduct a three-week institute for middle and high school teachers to study “climate futurism,” better known as “cli-fi.” [liii] One of the books that teachers will study in this genre is a reimagined take on the Parable of the Sower.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$215,000

The reimagined tale, also called Parable of the Sower, looks at the state of our nation in the year 2024. It illustrates an unstable US due to climate change and corporate greed. To combat it, a new religion is formed called Earthseed, which believes that humanity’s destiny is to leave Earth for new planets.

Your tax dollars paid for a rewrite of scripture to indoctrinate children on climate change activism. Does that make you feel warm?



Climate Change in the Middle East & North Africa

You probably heard that President Biden recommitted the US to the Paris Agreement, a hilariously misleading “solution” to stop climate change. But you probably haven't heard where else the Biden Administration is pushing its Green New Deal policies.

The NIH spent more than \$580,587 in 2022 to fund the GeoHealth Hub for Climate Change and Health in the Middle East and North Africa.^{[liv][lv]} The study consists of several parts. First, funding is awarded to the Jordan University for Science and Technology to develop research on climate change and health impacts. Funding is also awarded to train climate-change stakeholders on the best ways to address climate change in Jordan, Lebanon, and Morocco.

And the spending repeated itself in 2023,^{[lvi][lvii]} meaning more than \$1.1 million was spent on this project in total.

If other countries want to create Middle Eastern climate “stakeholders,” they are more than welcome to, but they certainly don't need your tax dollars to do it.





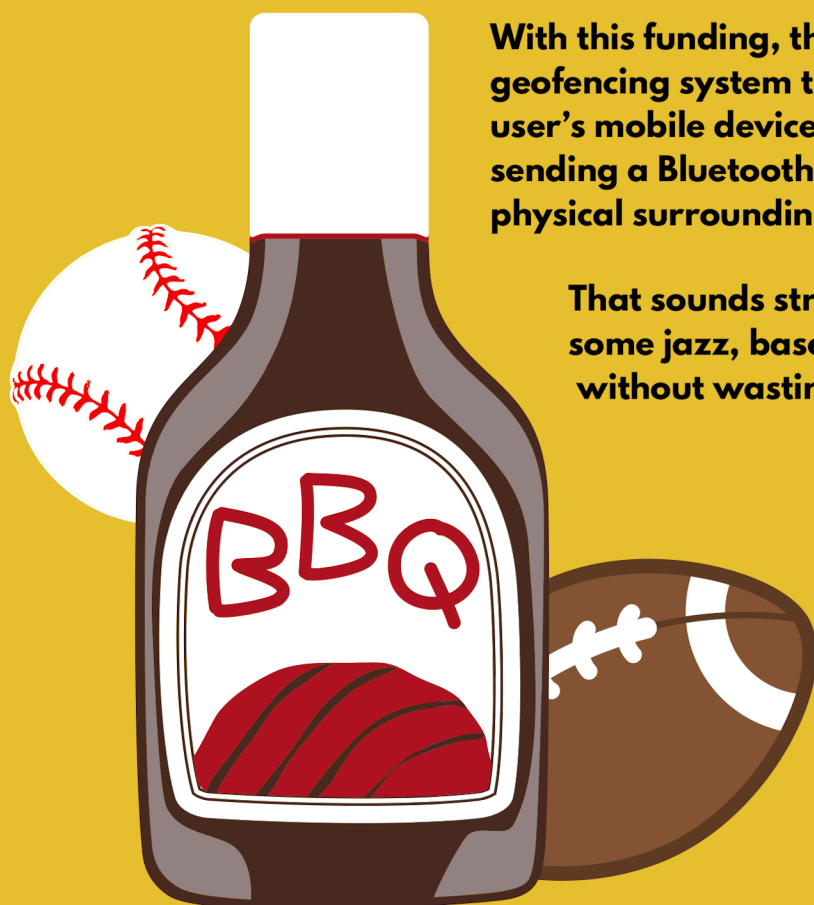
Missouri isn't the only state with great jazz, baseball, and BBQ, but it's the only state that received nearly \$150,000 of your federal tax dollars to promote it.

That's right, the University of Missouri was awarded \$149,855 to develop an "immersive digital history trail" that will create a location-based notification system of famous jazz, baseball, and BBQ spots around Kansas City.[lviii] This seems like a great project for the tourism agency in Kansas City to design and pay for, not federal tax dollars.

Funding local trails is nothing new to Federal Fumbles, but funding a digital history trail is a new development.

With this funding, this digital trail will create a "two-way geofencing system that will offer location-based media on the user's mobile device as they move along the trail while also sending a Bluetooth signal that triggers events within the user's physical surroundings." [lix]

That sounds stressful. Can't we just relax and enjoy some jazz, baseball, and BBQ without notifications and without wasting your tax dollars?



CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$149,855

VA Abortion

Those who served our country in uniform have protected our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness for more than two centuries. They deserve care and support for their service to our nation, which this Administration has recently decided includes taking life rather than protecting it. Here is the most recent example: the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is ignoring the plain text of a decades-old federal law, and now they offer abortions and abortion-related services. And you, the taxpayer, are on the hook for it.

The VA estimates that providing abortions will cost \$11.3 million between FY2023 and FY2027.[1x]

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

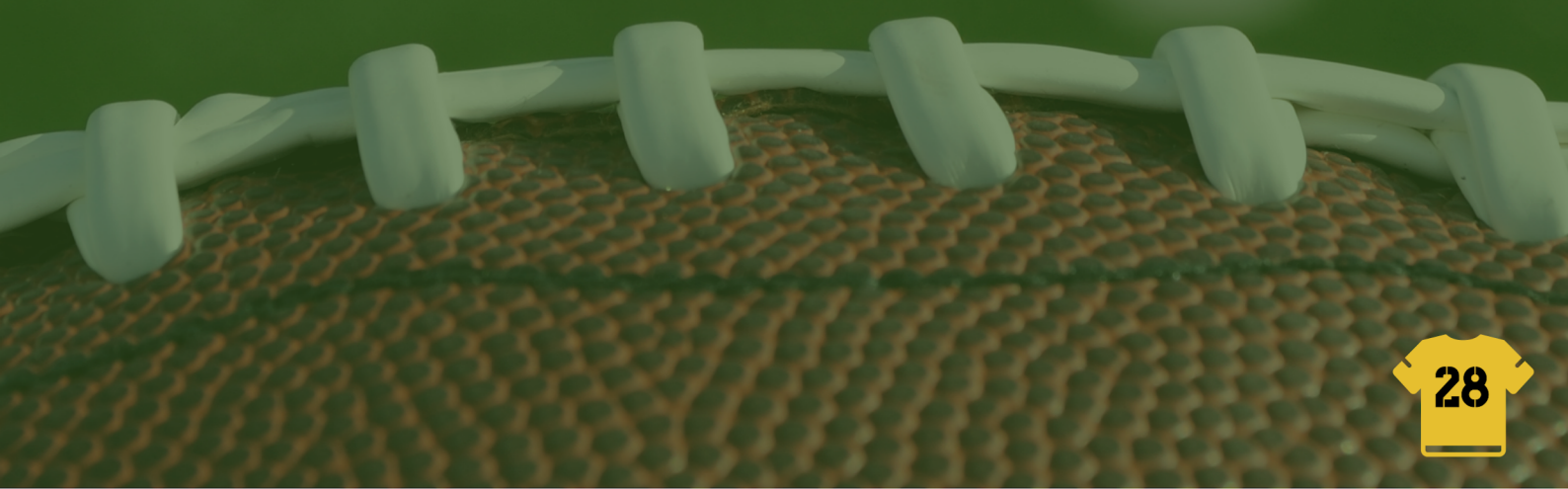
TEAM: VA

FUMBLE: \$11.3 MILLION

This move from the Biden Administration in September 2022 clearly violates long-standing federal law that explicitly excludes the taxpayer-funded VA from providing abortions. This Administration is so obsessed with abortion that they are turning every VA facility into an abortion clinic. In fact, the VA is now offering abortions even in states that have laws to protect unborn life.

Our nation's heroes deserve to get the care they need after returning from the frontlines. They shouldn't have their health system used as a political weapon that breaks long-standing federal law and directs funds away from the health care needs of veterans.

I'm a proud cosponsor of a joint resolution of disapproval that would undo this rule allowing the VA to perform abortions. Americans shouldn't be forced to pay for abortions. Both the taxpayer and the unborn deserve more respect.



Rum Cover Over

For Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, rum isn't just their preferred drink. It's also a massive tax incentive paid by you, the US taxpayer. And the way the two territories spend the incentives will make you feel like you've had one too many. Here's a spoiler: It's not on public support programs, as intended.

Back in 1917 Congress decided to help support the economies of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands by gifting them all the revenue from federal tax collected on rum. Instead of being deposited into the US Treasury, the revenue would go to the individual islands to fund local programs.

Simple enough, right? Wrong.

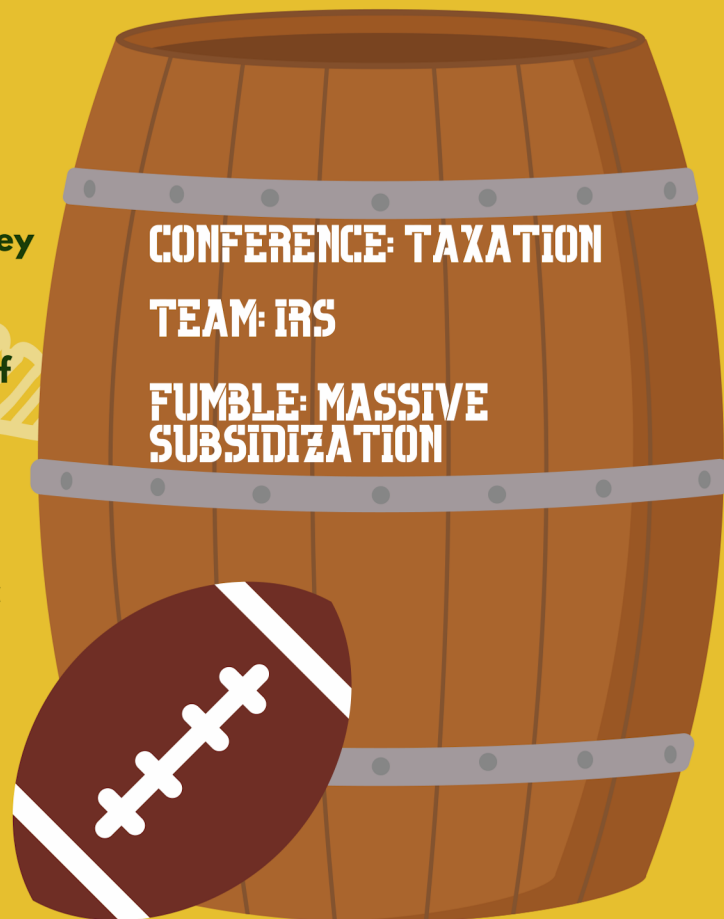
In addition to the rum produced in their territories, they also receive tax revenue from rum produced elsewhere. The amount each territory received is based on how much rum they produced relative to each other. If Puerto Rico produced 60 percent of the rum between it and the Virgin Islands, it would receive 60 percent of the tax revenue collected from rum produced elsewhere.

This results in a massive pile of cash that the territories are then supposed to spend on public support programs.

What could go wrong when you encourage more rum production to help their economy? The incentives drastically increased rum production. And how do they pay for the incentives? With the tax revenue they receive that is meant to support their local economies.

For example, the Virgin Islands provided \$2.7 billion over 30 years to the manufacturer of Captain Morgan, built them a \$165 million distillery, set price controls on molasses, a 35-percent advertising subsidy, and an 80-percent income tax break.[xi] All in an effort to lure the producer from Puerto Rico.

In short, the governments of Puerto Rico and the Virgins Islands end up subsidizing massive rum-producing companies instead of supporting their own economies. That's not fair to you, the taxpayer, not to mention the struggling economies in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.



Butchers

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NEH

FUMBLE: \$30,000



in Paris

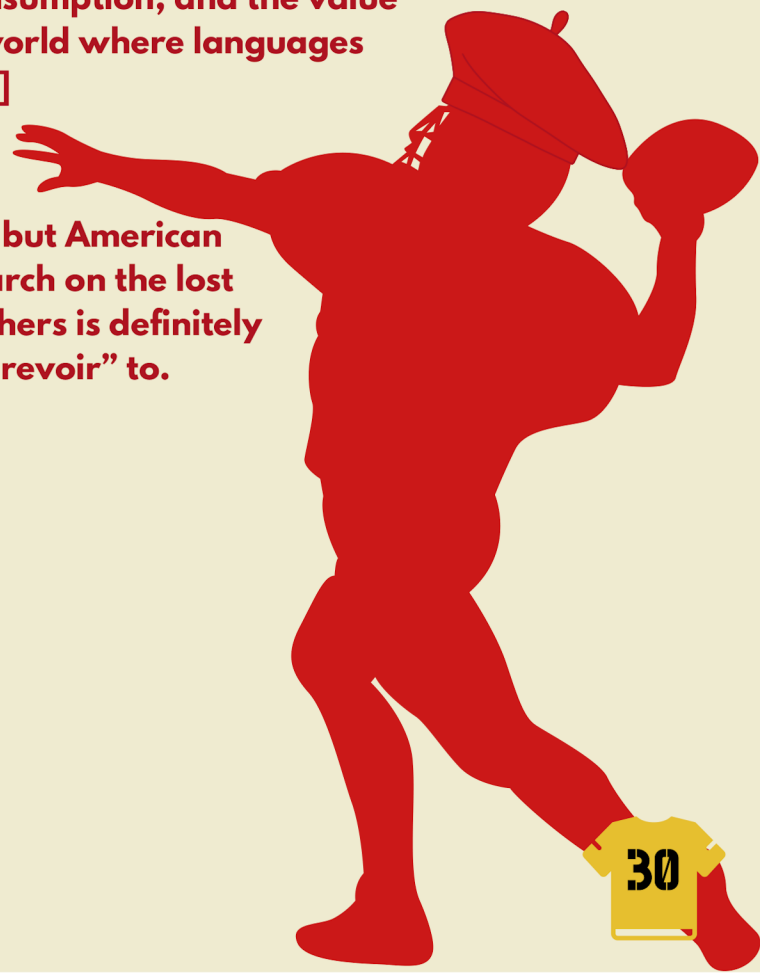
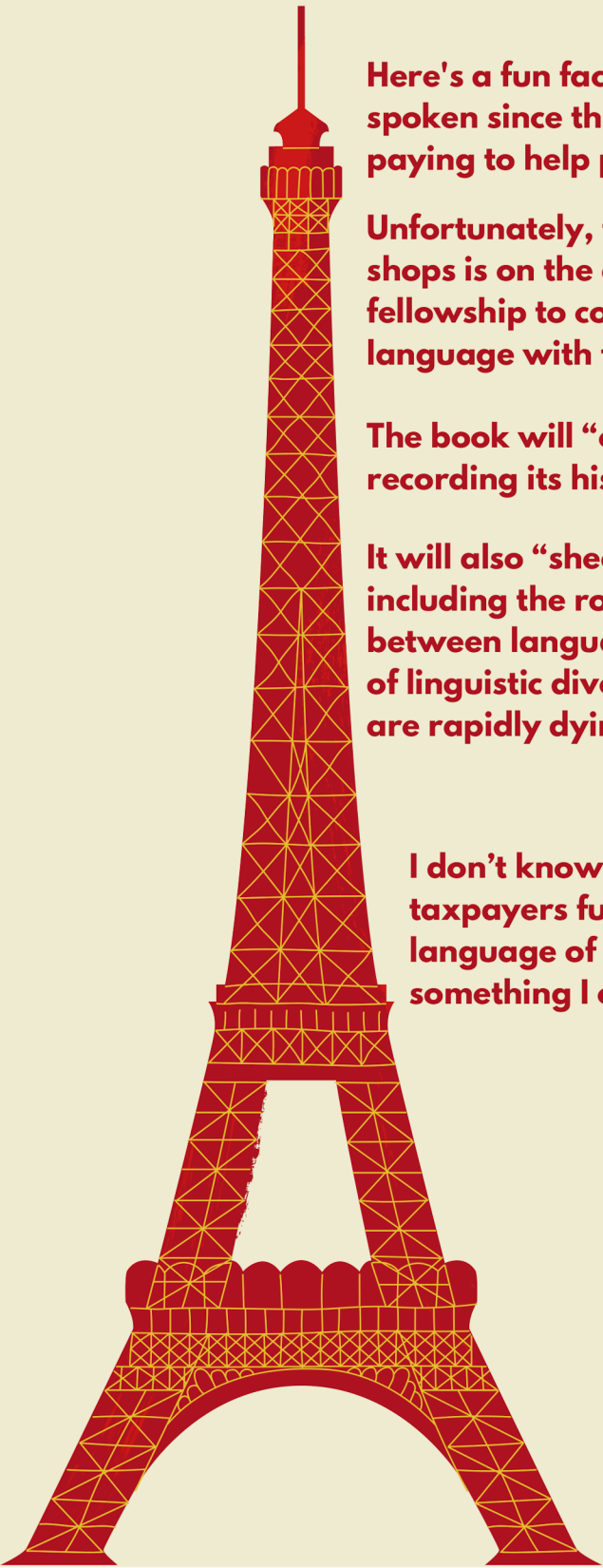
Here's a fun fact: Butchers in Paris have a secret language they've spoken since the 13th Century. It's called Louchébem, and you're paying to help preserve it! Not the French, you.

Unfortunately, the language is nearly extinct, as its use in butcher shops is on the decline. As a result, the NEH awarded \$30,000 for a fellowship to complete a book on Louchébem to preserve the language with the hope of bringing it back to life.[lxii]

The book will “chronicle Louchébem by “tracing it to its origin, recording its history, and evaluating its current status.”

It will also “shed light on wider issues of modernity, including the role of tradition, the relationship between language and consumption, and the value of linguistic diversity in a world where languages are rapidly dying off.”[lxiii]

I don't know about you, but American taxpayers funding research on the lost language of French butchers is definitely something I can say “au revoir” to.



Reports on Reports

It's fair to ask: What does Congress actually do? While the textbook answer is to legislate by writing and amending the laws that govern our nation and fund our government, there are also lesser-known duties, like oversight.

Congress uses oversight reports to collect data and to craft legislation. Some reports are tremendously useful and help identify ways agencies are dropping the ball. On the other hand, some of the reporting requirements are tremendously duplicitous and useless and are fumbles in and of themselves.

In addition, there's not one central place where these thousands of reports are housed. This only increases the amount of duplicitous or outdated reports that exist. Even if an agency wanted to stop providing a mandated report, there isn't a proper way to make that request to Congress.

Here are some examples of the types of reports that Congress requires—the good, the bad, and the ugly:

Putting the “Broad” in Broadband

Rural broadband connectivity is no stranger to Federal Fumbles. In Vol. 4, I called out the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for using funds set aside to strengthen rural connectivity to instead provide more options to already served communities. My solution was for the FCC to target underserved areas and examine the requirements for what “served” means.

Since then, a new discovery has been made due to a recent report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that helps further explain why rural America is still not connected.

The report found that the amount and cost of federal programs that supposedly work toward increasing broadband are riddled with fraud, waste, and abuse. Specifically, more than 100 programs that are dedicated to broadband access are administered by 15 different agencies.[lxiv]

And the cost for those 100 programs? \$44 billion (Yes, billion with a “b”) for just five years between 2015 and 2020.[lxv] Only the federal government could spend \$44 billion over five years and still not have a solution.

With 100 programs spread out among 15 agencies, a universal definition of “service” is needed. If definitions and goals are not aligned, billions of dollars will undoubtedly continue to be wasted with little progress shown for it. Yes, we need a report on how billions are spent on broadband.

DaD (Delays and Duplication) at DoD (Department of Defense)

In FY2000 the DoD was required to issue 513 reports to Congress each year. By FY2020, that number had skyrocketed to 1,429.[lxvi]

In 20 years the number of reports increased by 179 percent. While some of these reports are certainly necessary, this sheer increase screams duplicity and redundancy—a bureaucratic nightmare. And that’s what has happened.

DoD uses different systems to track congressional reporting requirements that do not “talk” or “operate” with one another. So the team that’s in charge of the reporting cannot actually efficiently talk with the teams that need to be reported on.

This, coupled with the drastic increase in reporting requirements, creates a scenario in which fragmentation and duplication can easily occur.

For example, there are multiple reporting requirements on the Alaska Communication Disposal.[lxvii] There are also multiple reporting requirements on the status of the Everglades restoration projects.[lxviii] And there are more than a few various requirements for the Army to report on wetland restoration projects.[lxix] Just to name a few.

This needs to be fixed with a simple solution to allow different systems to talk to each other. Our defense community has sophisticated weapons and resources to protect the homeland. Creating a system to track reporting requirements should not be an impossible task.

Passing the Time in Pasadena



CONFERENCE: SPENDING
TEAM: EARMARK
FUMBLE: \$1.5 MILLION

Dining al fresco can certainly be a treat. But do you think your tax dollars should fund it? Congress apparently thinks so.

Thanks to a set-aside hidden in the FY2023 spending bill, \$1.5 million is going to Pasadena's on-street dining project.[lxx] And it isn't clear what exactly the money is being spent on—chairs, tables, or outdoor buildings? Who knows.

Many restaurants chose to expand their outdoor seating options during COVID-imposed restrictions, but COVID is over. Despite that, your tax dollars continue to be spent on COVID precautions in California. California certainly has the weather to enjoy dining al fresco, but why are Oklahoma taxpayers paying for Californians to eat outside?

Instead of spending \$1.5 million of federal tax dollars to enhance outdoor dining in Pasadena, spending \$1.5 million a few hours down the road at our southern border would actually meet a federal nexus.



Giving the Green to China

The Development Finance Corporation (DFC) was created in 2020 to provide loans to projects in developing countries that will improve their local economies and increase regional stability. These loans can only be approved if they are likely to earn a profit for US taxpayers, just like loans at your local community bank.

I support the DFC because it's an important tool to invest in economic development abroad without giving out tons of cash in foreign aid.

The DFC also helps us compete with China, which engages in “debt trap diplomacy” by providing loans to countries that are unable to repay them and then seizing critical infrastructure as collateral in order to counter the US.

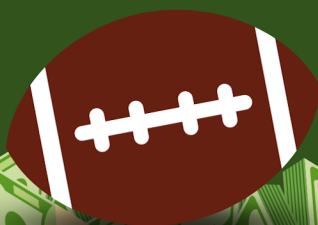
One of the greatest areas of need for development financing is in energy projects in countries that have no energy infrastructure or electricity.

But the Biden Administration has put a huge roadblock in front of unleashing the full potential of this funding, while also giving an advantage to China. It has chosen to only invest in “green energy” projects with the DFC.

This move limits the options for US investment abroad while also abandoning the traditional energy market, allowing China to dominate the market while the US sits on the sidelines.

And although the Biden Administration is ceding the market on traditional energy projects, it's ramping up financing for solar energy projects—even though most of the solar supply chain is based in China. In fact, China's share in manufacturing of solar panels is more than 80 percent in everything from raw materials to the finished good.[lxxi] By only focusing on financing solar energy as part of our international development strategy, the President is actually financing our top geopolitical competitor, the Chinese Communist Party.

What could be a great “win-win” program for all has now been turned into a political tool being used to cut off US competition resulting in a forfeit for taxpayers.



Piecing Together Peace Unsuccessfully

If Middle East peace is a priority for the US, we should fund initiatives that bring Arabs and Israelis together, not further apart. That's not always how it works, though.

For example, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has a mission to serve Palestinians who were displaced by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Unfortunately, UNRWA does little to improve the lives of Palestinians and instead promotes antisemitism and hatred of Israel, which incites political violence and makes tensions between Israelis and Palestinians worse.

Since the establishment of UNRWA in 1950, the US has contributed more than \$6.5 billion to the agency.[lxxii] During the Biden Administration alone, the US has contributed \$768 million to UNRWA. Other countries are also failing to pay their fair share—major economies in the Middle East region, like the UAE, contributed nothing last year[lxxiii], and China only contributed \$1 million in 2022 despite having the second-largest economy in the world.[lxxiv]

President Biden says he wants peace in the Middle East, but he is directly supporting ideologies and programs that put that goal further out of reach.



US Government Temporarily Glamping at the Border

In Vol. 5 of Federal Fumbles, I uncovered the “soft-sided facilities” at the southern border. These facilities, which are glorified tents, are used to house and process immigrants since Customs and Border Protection (CBP) doesn’t have the permanent facilities needed to keep up with the rising encounters.



In 2020 CBP spent more than \$1 million on these tents every single day and spent a total of \$445.9 million on the tents in 2020.[lxxv]

In 2023 that number has doubled to \$991 million. [lxxvi]—for tents.

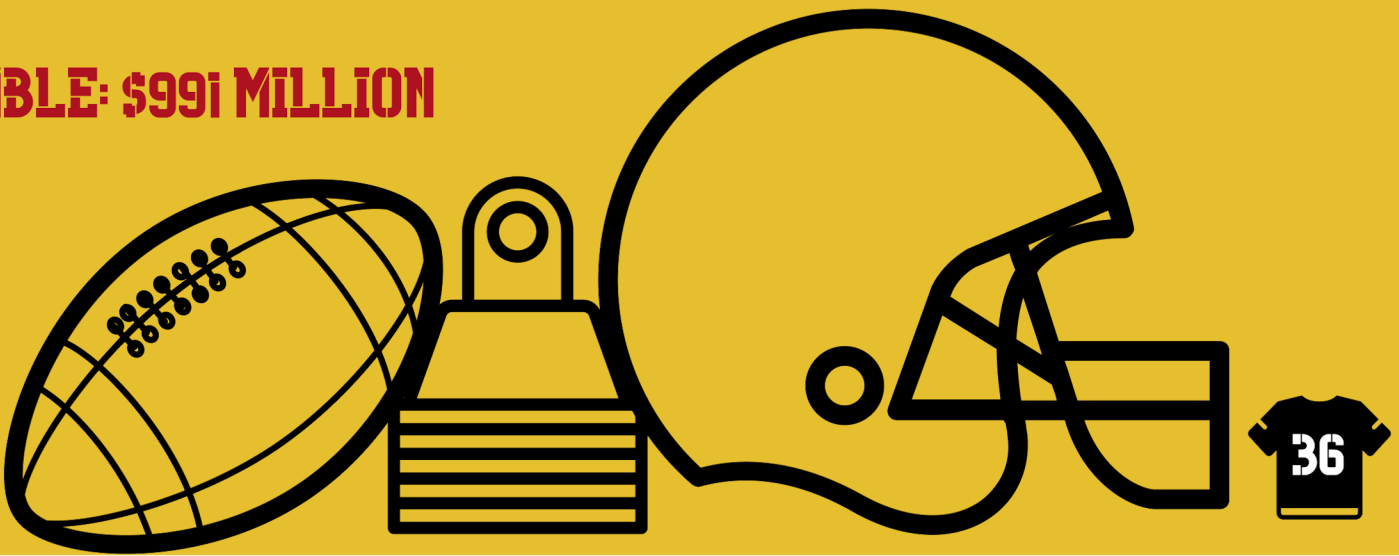
With the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) projecting that even more illegal immigrants will seek to cross the border in the coming months, these costs will continue to grow until the Biden Administration gets the border under control.

I’ve pushed the Biden Administration to build the border infrastructure necessary to stop the waste and end the border crisis. This infrastructure includes the wall, and it includes additional detention facilities.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: CBP

FUMBLE: \$991 MILLION



Overpaying Contractors

\$40 billion isn't a rounding error for most Americans. However, that's how much federal agencies government-wide spent last year on a variety of common goods and services through the General Services Administration (GSA) buying program. Here's the rundown: In 2016 GSA started a program called the Transactional Data Reporting (TDR) pilot. It changed the way we price billions of dollars in contracts so they no longer require contractors to provide commercial pricing data.[lxxvii]

The contractor would instead provide transactional data, such as prices paid by government customers. Instead of reporting what non-government customers pay for their products, they just ensure the prices paid are "relatively competitive" with other government contract prices. This means that the government could be getting charged much higher prices than other customers.

The Inspector General found that this practice cannot provide agencies with assurance that the orders they place on these \$40 billion worth of contracts will result in the lowest overall cost alternative to meet the government's needs.[lxxviii] This places the federal government at increased risk of overpaying for products and services.

And after this pilot program continued for five years, GSA announced in 2022 that it would expand it and make it permanent. Instead of ignoring the Inspector General's numerous warnings, GSA should at least pause the continued expansion of this program until its own watchdog is confident that the American taxpayer is not overpaying. That is way too big of a red flag to not address.

If your family was overpaying for groceries, you'd find another grocery store. It's unacceptable that the federal government doesn't do the same.

CONFERENCE: OVERSIGHT

TEAM: GSA

FUMBLE: \$39 BILLION AT RISK

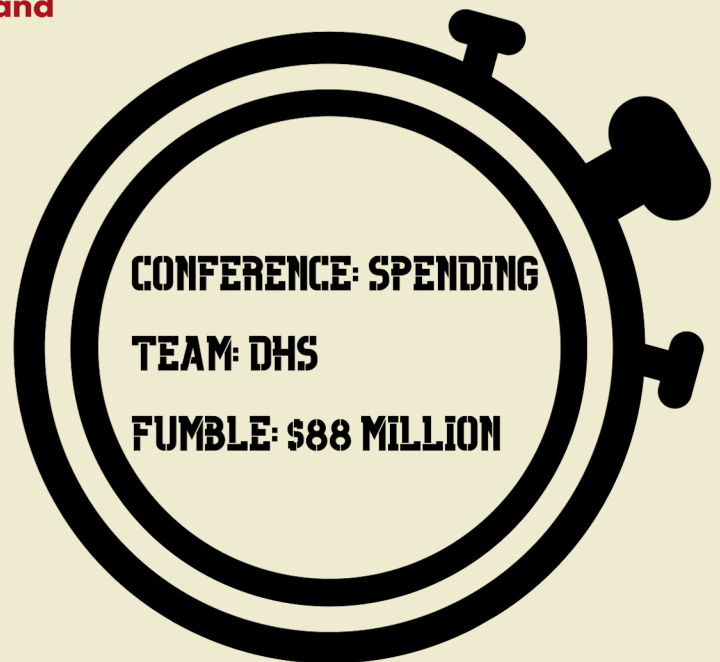


11 Years Until Your Court Date? DHS Says Yes!

Terrible policy makes for terrible (and costly) results. Here's an example. The Biden Administration created the Notice to Report and Parole + Alternatives to Detention Programs (Parole+ATD) that sought to quickly process migrants who cross the border. However, it was anything but helpful, and the Northern District of Florida federal court later ruled that the policy was unlawful.[lxxix]

The cost? \$88 million over less than a year and 11 years of additional waiting time.

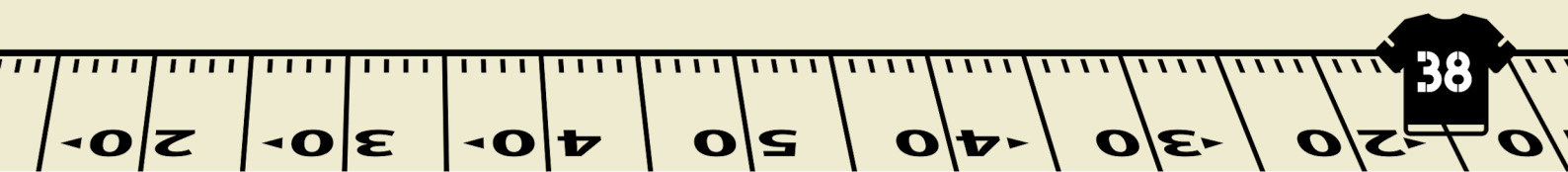
In April 2022 US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) estimated it would take three years and \$25 million to clear the backlog and issue notices to appear for roughly 100,000 illegal immigrants who were processed with a Parole+ATD. On top of that, for every 30 days that the policy remained in place, another year and another \$8 million would be added to the cost of clearing the backlog. Right now, migrants in New York City will wait until March 2033 to begin their processing and receive a court date.



In March 2023 a federal court struck down this program.[lxxx] Since the program was in place for 11 months from April 2022 to March 2023, 11 extra years have been added to the backlog time, as well as an additional \$88 million.

I'm glad that the court struck down this program, but we're still on the hook for paying for it and for locating and completing processing for roughly 600,000 migrants who are caught in this backlog. Even after this backlog is cleared, these individuals will then enter the 2.1 million-case backlog that's pending with the immigration courts at the Department of Justice.

I've worked to hold DHS accountable for this failed program. I was able to get GAO to investigate it and provide a report on its costs for DHS and effects on border security. I've also demanded information from DHS Secretary Mayorkas about its impacts. DHS responded to my concerns by changing the forms it used to process individuals, and the federal judge that struck down the program relied on my oversight letters and testimony in his ruling that it was unlawful.



Critical Minerals

It's almost certain the chips and components inside your cell phone come from critical minerals from countries like China. They might be called smart phones, but it's not exactly smart policy to rely 100 percent on other countries' production of 17 critical minerals.

Likewise, the US relies heavily on other countries' production of 47 minerals. Of those, we rely on China for 18.[lxxxi] Not exactly smart policy. Again.

When the Biden Administration announced its vehicle emission standards for vehicles manufactured through 2032 requiring 50 percent of all new American-made vehicles to be electric vehicles (EVs), it did so without granting more mining permits (and even revoking several from the previous Administration!). Smart policy can't be so short-sighted that China holds our manufacturing hostage.

Further, the ironically named Inflation Reduction Act calls for significant investment into EVs and battery manufacturing within the US. However, producers in the US are dependent on China to provide the minerals necessary to make these products.

It doesn't have to be this way. I have pushed the Biden Administration to stop their abuse of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to push the American energy grid further into China's hands.[lxxxii] I also secured expanded loan programs for critical mineral development, processing, and recycling.

Finally, I introduced legislation to establish a safe alternative supply line for critical minerals with allies who share our environmental standards.[lxxxiii]

The Biden Administration has called a timeout on multiple mining projects in the US. Here are some examples:

DULUTH COMPLEX

LOCATION: MINNESOTA

PLAYERS: COPPER, NICKEL, COBALT, & PLATINUM GROUP METALS

POINTS: 8 BILLION TONS

TIMEOUT:

- **OCLAIM BOUNDARY WATER & WILDERNESS AREA PROTECTIONS**
- **OEPA CLEAN WATER ACT PERMIT PULLED**

Minnesota is home to the Duluth Complex, a vast mineral deposit critical for our nation's strategic metal supply. It contains 95 percent of the nation's nickel reserves, 34 percent of copper, 88 percent of cobalt, 51 percent of platinum, and 48 percent of palladium. That's for the entire US.

There are a number of companies attempting to develop these resources in northern Minnesota that provide good-paying jobs with taxes and revenue that will support local communities.

However, the Biden Administration has decided it's better to continue delaying and restricting mineral development by rescinding an already-approved Clean Water Act permit and establishing boundary water and wilderness area protections.

These new restrictions prevent accessing key materials needed for American-made solar panels, wind turbines, transmission lines, and batteries to China's benefit.

Forget sports betting in Las Vegas—the most exciting thing Nevada has going for it is its supply of lithium, which is a critical component for EV batteries. However, the Fish & Wildlife Service is preventing fully tapping into it because of an endangered species you have likely never heard of: the Tiehm's buckwheat.

Accessing this mine in Nevada is crucial to ensuring a robust domestic supply of lithium, but the Tiehm's buckwheat is apparently more important than national security and energy security.

Again the Biden Administration is hiding behind NEPA and the extreme environmentalist lobby to hinder domestic mineral production. A mixture of streamlining mining permits and strategic international partnership could establish the US as a competitor in electrification. Instead, President Biden is turning over the ball to China's lithium industry.

THACKER PASS

LOCATION: NEVADA

PLAYERS: LITHIUM

POINTS: 22,000 METRIC TONS ANNUALLY

TIMEOUT:

- **FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE LISTED THE TIEHM'S BUCKWHEAT AS AN ENDANGERED SPECIES**



ROSEMONT COPPER MINE

LOCATION: ARIZONA

PLAYERS: COPPER,
MOLYBDENUM, SILVER, &
GOLD

POINTS: 243 MILLION
POUNDS ANNUALLY OF
COPPER, 5.4 MILLION
POUNDS OF MOLYBDENUM,
2.0 MILLION OUNCES OF
SILVER, & 17,000 OUNCES
OF GOLD

TIMEOUT:

- BIDEN
ADMINISTRATION
REFUSES TO
CHALLENGE THE NINTH
CIRCUIT'S RULING
AFTER USFS
APPROVED THE
PROJECT

The Rosemont Copper Mine is a proposed copper, silver, and molybdenum mining operation. It has the potential to be the third-largest copper mine in the US and is expected to produce 243 million pounds of copper annually, which is equal to 10 percent of total US copper production.

In 2017 the US Forest Service (USFS) granted approval for the mine to begin operation after the completion of a 10-year environmental impact statement in 2013. But President Biden allowed a court order to step in as a scapegoat for his anti-mineral policies.

I have called on the Administration to stop dragging their feet in the permitting process.

The Ambler Access Project, a 211-mile-long proposed road connecting Alaska's highway system to the Upper Kobuk Mineral Projects in northwest Alaska has had bipartisan support since its greenlighting in 1980.

In 2020, 30 years after it was approved, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Army Corps of Engineers issued a joint decision authorizing a final plan that met the mandate.[lxxxiv]

But in March 2020, the Biden Administration rescinded the authorization citing lack of consultation with tribes and environmental impacts of the new road.

The Upper Kobuk Mineral Project is one of the world's richest known copper-dominant polymetallic deposits—containing over 2 billion pounds of copper, 3 billion pounds of zinc, nearly 1 million ounces of gold, and 52 million ounces of silver. These materials are necessary to meet the President's lofty EV requirements.

Members of Congress, Democrat and Republican, have made it clear that the only problem with the project is lack of access.[lxxxv][lxxxvi] Still it seems that BLM does not share those concerns.

AMBLER ACCESS

LOCATION: ALASKA

PLAYERS: COPPER & ZINC

POINTS: ONE OF THE
WORLD'S LARGEST
MINERAL DEPOSITS

TIMEOUT:

- BLM CONDUCTING A
SUPPLEMENTAL
REVIEW



It's tough to find resolutions in Washington, DC, these days. The Resolution Copper mine in Arizona is no different. The mine is estimated to put out 1 billion pounds of copper a year, which is roughly 25 percent of projected US copper demand annually.

Since the project's commencement in 2013, investors have sunk over \$2 billion to develop and permit the project.

Resolution Copper was supposed to get ownership of the land in March 2021 after receiving a green light from the Trump Administration. But then the Biden Administration rescinded the decision. There have been numerous bills introduced from Republican and Democrat lawmakers alike to complete the land transfer, but none have been signed into law.

Until critical mining projects like this are completed, it's going to be difficult for the US energy grid to adapt to our growing dependence on electricity. Copper is essential for every electrical project. You cannot electrify the nation without copper, and you cannot have copper without a mine.

PEBBLE MINE

LOCATION: ALASKA

PLAYERS: COPPER, GOLD, & MOLYBDENUM

TIMEOUT: EPA VETOED THE PROJECT

In an un-shocking turn of events, the Biden Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permanently vetoed the Pebble Mine operation in Alaska.

Pebble Mine was a large critical mineral operation that would have supplied a significant amount of copper, gold, and molybdenum. Fun thing is, these are essential components for President Biden's demand for an expansive EV fleet. But it seems the President would prefer to import these metals from China rather than accessing our own resources in the US.

The reason? Salmon. After 10+ years and countless taxpayer dollars thrown at studying the effect that Pebble Mine could theoretically have on Bristol Bay salmon, the EPA picked politics over policy.

Pebble Mine would face intense scrutiny and environmental oversight if it operated. It would be subject to our already strict environmental regulations; it would not get a pass. Looks like Alaska's critical mineral industry may be sleeping with the fishes!

RESOLUTION COPPER

LOCATION: ARIZONA

PLAYERS: COPPER

POINTS: 132,000 TONS PER DAY & AS MUCH AS 40 BILLION POUNDS OVER FORTY YEARS

TIMEOUT:

- **FURTHER REVIEW OR COMPLETE RE-DO OF ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

WARRIOR MET COAL'S BLUE CREEK EXPANSION

LOCATION: ALABAMA

**PLAYERS: MET COAL FOR
STEEL PRODUCTION**

**POINTS: 24 MILLION TONS
OF MET COAL**

TIMEOUT:

- **APPLICATION & COAL
LEASES ARE "FROZEN"
DUE TO COURT CASES**

Contrary to popular belief, "coking" is not the simple act of enjoying a coke at Sonic. It's actually the process that converts coal into iron and steel. But Warrior Met Coal, a hard-coking, coal-mining company in Alabama, could use an ice-cold Coke after what the Biden Administration has put them through.

The company announced in 2009 that it intended to expand into the Blue Creek Mining District. After a pause in the process, the company restarted their permitting application process in 2014. The expansion would provide 24 million tons of metallurgic (met) coal over its lifespan. The Biden Administration did place a moratorium on thermal coal mining in the US, but because this coal is used for the production of metal alloys and not for burning, the moratorium did not apply.

But since the Biden Administration came into office, the application has not moved and remains on the sidelines for no clear reason. The company is eager to provide the materials necessary to wean the US off Chinese supply lines, but the Biden Administration does not share the same urgency. President Biden's supposed goals of mineral independence will never be met when it moves at a glacial pace.



No Prisoner Left Behind

The Department of Justice (DOJ) recently implemented a transgender curriculum in federal prisons. The cost? \$1.5 million in taxpayer dollars.[lxxxvii]

The curriculum will teach federal inmates who identify as transgender “techniques to seek support for mental health concerns and skills to advocate for physical, emotional, and sexual health and safety,” according to the Bureau of Prisons (BOP).[lxxxviii]

The BOP goes on to say that the curriculum will allow them to “expand program offerings for transgender inmates.”[lxxxix]

Every person deserves to be treated with respect, and we must prioritize the safety of individuals in BOP custody. However, \$1.5 million to develop a specific curriculum for a small population of individuals in BOP custody rather than focusing efforts to promote protections for biological women and reduce recidivism seems questionable.

The Administration’s policy also requires BOP staff to use an inmate’s preferred pronouns with no conscience protections afforded. Additionally, the policy prioritizes placing individuals in areas consistent with their gender identity rather than their biological sex, with no clear policy to prioritize other individuals in custody.

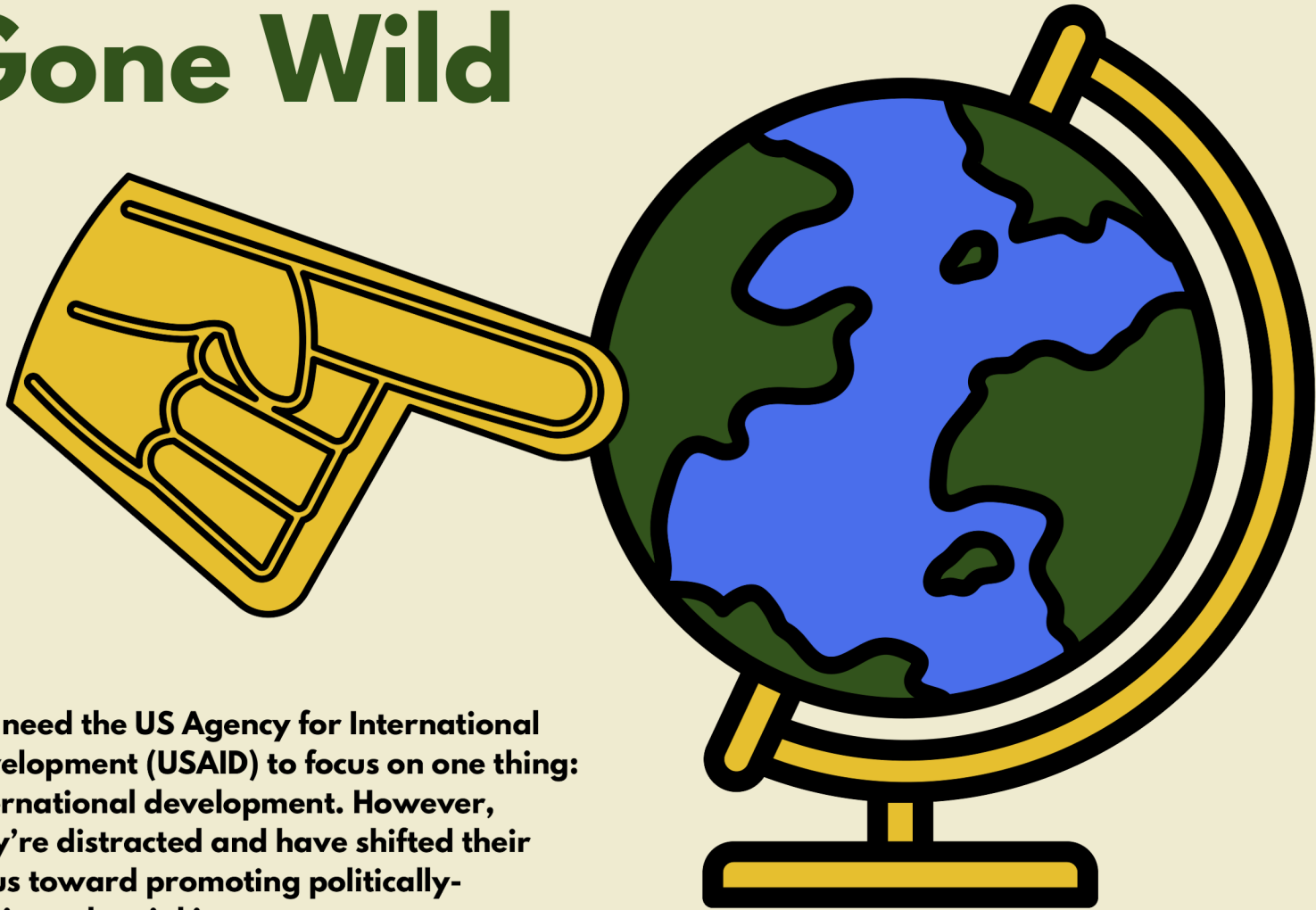
CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: DOJ

FUMBLE: \$1.5 MILLION



International Development Gone Wild



We need the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to focus on one thing: international development. However, they're distracted and have shifted their focus toward promoting politically-motivated social issues.

Specifically, USAID created a program advisor position to support “the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation Inclusive Development Hub Programs” to “protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex individuals.”[xc]

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: USAID

FUMBLE: \$358,907

In countries struggling with war, starvation, poverty, and a host of other issues, I'm not sure why this has become a focus of our foreign policy or what it has to do with international development. But it cost \$358,907 in federal tax dollars,[xci] and it has the potential to skyrocket to \$969,821 in the future.[xcii] Everyone deserves dignity and respect, and no one should be subjected to violence or discrimination. But using tax dollars to promote controversial cultural issues around the world is not the way to solve the problems we need USAID to solve.



American Rescue, Unless You're a Baby in the Womb

The American Rescue Plan was a \$1.9 trillion spending spree. If the fiscal irresponsibility wasn't bad enough, \$459 billion of those funds were not prohibited from being spent on abortion.

In 2020 Congress passed five bipartisan bills related to the COVID pandemic that targeted relief to those who need it most. All five of those bills prohibited the use of taxpayer dollars to pay for abortions by incorporating the long-standing Hyde Amendment. But then President Biden decided that the partisan American Rescue Plan should direct American tax dollars to abortions.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

FUMBLE: \$459 BILLION

\$386.7 billion of the appropriated funding could be used to directly fund abortions, \$81.7 billion was appropriated to subsidize health insurance plans that cover abortion, \$10 billion could be used for abortion lobbying overseas, \$704 million could be used to subsidize abortions, and \$50 million was appropriated for the Title X family planning program that serves as a slush fund for the abortion industry.[xciii]

Funding during a pandemic should save lives, not take lives. Abortion funding shouldn't have been in a COVID pandemic bill. This should not be controversial.

Watermelons, Egypt, & Math

The small dollar amount of this fumble is not the main point here. It's the way I discovered it that showcases our broken spending process.

While I was preparing for a hearing with GAO to discuss the implementation of my Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act, which creates an inventory of our federal spending, I went to Grants.gov to do some quick investigating. I typed in “watermelon” to see what, if any, grants were given to study watermelons.

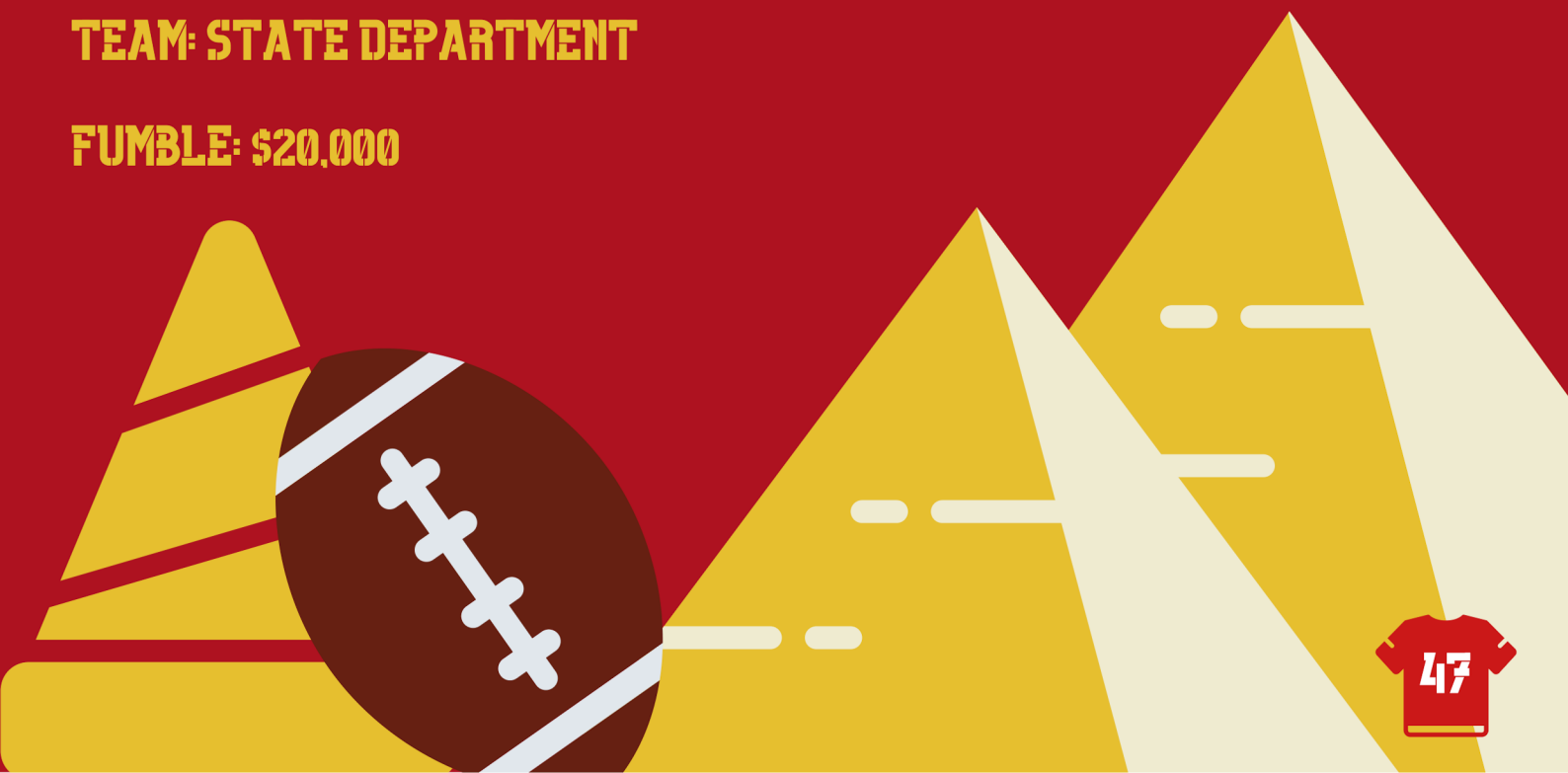
Much to my surprise, one of the two grants that popped up was a \$20,000 grant for the Egypt-US Learning Program to help the Egyptian government implement a reading and math program for students.

While it's ridiculous that we spent \$20,000 for Egyptian students to study reading and math, it's even more head scratching that this appeared when I searched for watermelons in the first place. This just goes to show how pressing it is for the Office of Management and Budget to fully implement the law of the land and create the inventory of federal programs mandated by my Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act, which is now law.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: STATE DEPARTMENT

FUMBLE: \$20,000



Biden's Abortion Slush Fund

For more than four decades, Congress has included a clear prohibition on taxpayer funds being used for elective abortion. This prohibition applies to federal funding including all Health & Human Services funding, as well as Medicaid. That restriction is also reiterated on federal funding for Title X family planning services.

As Oklahomans have often heard me say, because abortion takes life, rather than protects life, abortion is not healthcare, and taxpayer dollars should not be used to pay for it.

Nevertheless, the Biden Administration has allowed federal tax dollars to fund some of the largest abortion providers in the country. Since his inauguration day, the Biden Administration has been working to use Title X for Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers.

As revealed in Planned Parenthood's annual report in FY2021-2022, they received more than \$670 million from the federal government.[xciv] In that same timeframe, they performed 374,155 abortions.[xcv]

President Biden proves again and again to be the most pro-abortion president in the history of our country. Not only does his Administration want to increase abortions, they want to force the American people to pay for them.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: PLANNED PARENTHOOD

FUMBLE: \$670 MILLION



Progressivism Goes to Pakistan

I already uncovered a \$20,600 grant from the State Department for a cultural center in Ecuador to host drag shows, but it gets worse. They also gave \$500,000 to teach English in Pakistan with a focus on courses for Pakistani transgender youth.[xcvi]

The goal of this half a million-dollar grant is to “prioritize communications and interaction with international audiences, educational and cultural programming, and professional and educational exchanges.”[xcvii] Somehow this is supposedly connected with empowering transgender youth.

The Biden Administration’s leftist social agenda knows no bounds, nor does it respect your tax dollars. Funding transgender programs, including a transgender-specific curriculum in our prisons, is not enough for them. They are passing the ball to Pakistan.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: STATE DEPARTMENT

FUMBLE: \$500,000



Montreal Protocol



Your tax dollars shouldn't go to China, period. Unfortunately, they can. Surprise! It's all in the name of combatting climate change.

The Montreal Protocol is an international treaty designed to reduce gas emissions that threaten the ozone. The Treaty was ratified by the Senate in 1988, and the fifth amendment to the Montreal Protocol, the Kigali Amendment, was ratified last fall with 69 votes, despite my opposition.

Under this Treaty, countries are obligated to decrease the use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), but those obligations are different for “developed” countries and “developing” countries. Countries that are “developing” are given more time to phase out HFCs, and may also be eligible for financing from wealthier nations like us.

Despite having the world's second-largest economy, China “self-identifies” as a “developing” country and is therefore eligible for US taxpayer dollars and lighter obligations under the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

Since the ratification of the Montreal Protocol, “developed” countries like the US have donated \$5.02 billion to help “developing” countries, including China.[xcviii] China should be contributing funds to help poorer countries with their development, not taking money from international treaties to fund their own projects. Even worse, China plans to increase carbon emissions over the next two decades before phasing down—someday.

I voted against the Kigali Amendment for a reason: American taxpayers should not subsidize China's domestic industry, especially as they invest their own yuan to build up their military and threaten Taiwan, commit genocide against the Uyghurs, and steal American intellectual property.



Caliente in Mexico City!



I have uncovered several fumbles this year dealing with climate change in other countries, so it's unfortunately not a surprise that American taxpayers are also paying for climate change studies in Mexico City.

Nearly \$1.5 million of your tax dollars are going to a research and education program to "Understand, Visualize and Mitigate Climate-Change Impact Cascades and Inequities in Central Mexico." [xcix] \$1.5 million would be much better spent on a program to "Understand, Visualize and Mitigate Illegal Immigration Impact Cascades and Inequities at the Southern Border."

Instead, this program will explore how "diverse social groups co-create a shared understanding of complex climate-change impact cascades to water, ecosystems, food, health, livelihoods," and the transformation of "governance and social learning to chart sustainable, socially just, climate-resilient pathways." [c]

This wins the award for the most trendy buzz words used to justify a federal grant.

CONFERENCE: SPENDING

TEAM: NSF

FUMBLE: \$1,499,365



If You Don't Promote Abortion, You Can't Provide Cancer Screenings

Despite prohibitions within Title X that prohibit funds from going to programs where abortion is a method of family planning, under the Biden Administration, Title X has become a slush fund for the abortion industry and Planned Parenthood. Even worse, President Biden is now threatening to withhold Title X money from states that refuse to use the funds to promote abortion.

The Biden Administration is cutting off funds from states for following the law.

In Tennessee, President Biden has cut off federal funds for infertility services; highly effective contraceptive methods; breast and cervical cancer screening and prevention services; STD and HIV prevention education, counseling, testing, and referral; adolescent abstinence counseling; and other preventive services because Tennessee will not also promote an abortion hotline in their state to guide women to abortion clinics. In some states, these services may not be available without federal funds.

President Biden is trying to bully states into violating federal and state law by threatening to take away funds for breast and cervical cancer screenings if a state doesn't promote abortion. It's not only morally wrong, it's a gross misuse of taxpayer dollars.



Touchdowns & Forward Progress

I have proposed solutions for our national spending problems, not just opposed bills that ignore reforms to our broken budget process. Here are several examples of actions I have recently taken to solve our debt crisis and call out fraud, waste, and abuse:

Preventing Government Shutdowns:

I re-introduced my bipartisan Prevent Government Shutdowns Act in January 2023. My bill will take one of the biggest fumbles, shutting down the government, off the table forever. Instead of going through the costly and political exercises of shutting down the government and reopening it, my bill would hold Congress accountable by forcing Members and their staff to stay in town until the work of funding our government is done. With our national debt surpassing \$31 trillion, Congress needs to stop ignoring the tough decisions and leaving town. This just creates new problems.

Addressing the Debt Limit:

I took action back in January to address our looming debt limit while President Biden sat back and ignored the problem. In fact, I wrote President Biden to express opposition to a debt limit hike without real structural spending reforms that reduce deficit spending. I was clear, stating, “Any increase in the debt ceiling must be accompanied by cuts in federal spending of an equal or greater amount as the debt ceiling increase, or include meaningful structural reform in spending.” I presented my Prevent Government Shutdown Act as a reform to consider. In addition, I have been clear there is a list of wasteful spending called Federal Fumbles if the President needs some starter ideas for where to cut waste.

Interest Rates, Inflation, Spending, Oh My:

Sometimes it's best to get back to the basics. In the wake of \$31 trillion in national debt, Democrats' reckless spending spree that is fueling inflation and rising interest rates, I wrote to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) for a check-in on spending and inflation. At that time President Biden had signed policies into law that add \$4.8 trillion in additional deficit spending before 2031. And with \$31 trillion and counting in debt, that equates to \$236,000 per household, or \$93,000 per American. I asked CBO for a thorough assessment of short- and long-term effects of this spending on our nation's fiscal future. The only path to curb inflation is to cut federal spending. This book gives about 50 ways we can do that.



Trust Fund Reports:

In Vol. 6 of Federal Fumbles, I talked at length about the Medicare and Social Security Trust Funds. The fiscal stability of those two programs is critical for taxpayers. However, the reports that detail the funds' financials are not submitted on time. I keep pushing GAO to monitor the trustees' flagrant disregard for statutory deadlines. The Medicare and Social Security trustees' reports are to be issued no later than April 1, yet the 2021 and 2022 reports were issued August 31 and June 2, respectively. The Biden Administration has ignored previous inquiries about why the reports are not submitted on time, and Treasury Secretary Yellen has not signaled any intent to address this issue. As a member of the Finance Committee, which oversees Social Security and Medicare, these reports are critical to addressing solvency and crafting solutions.

VA Hospital Construction:

This is a great win for taxpayers and should serve as an example of how Congress can spend taxpayer dollars wisely. At a time when inflation is soaring, the cost to continue construction of the new VA in downtown Tulsa was also skyrocketing. Instead of appropriating additional dollars, I introduced the CHIP-IN Improvement Act, which allows the VA to use existing funds to offset inflation costs without taking veterans' benefits away. This was a great move for taxpayers but, more importantly, for our veterans and their families.

Fighting Against President Biden's Abortion Obsession:

I talked at length about President Biden's abortion policies in this volume of Federal Fumbles. I'm proud to have led the charge in defending the rights of the unborn and fighting against taxpayer spending on abortion in each of these fights. Recently, I supported legislation that would prohibit the VA from providing abortions using taxpayer dollars. I also led the public comment letter to call out the VA for attempting to provide abortions. And beyond the VA, I introduced the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Acts, which establish a permanent prohibition of federal funding for abortion. This would replace the current annual funding restrictions with a single, government-wide standard.

Recovering Fraudulent Pandemic Unemployment Benefits:

The Department of Labor Inspector General testified that nearly \$200 billion of COVID unemployment insurance benefits could be improper or fraudulent. As a result, I called on Attorney General Merrick Garland and former Department of Labor Secretary Marty Walsh to update Congress on the Biden Administration's efforts to recover these payments. In addition, I introduced the Chase COVID Unemployment Fraud Act to recover funds from unchecked unemployment fraud and to provide incentives for states to recover fraudulent payments.



Opposing Student Loan Forgiveness:

President Biden's student-loan debt relief program is a fumble that impacts nearly every American family. Not only is it a gross overstep of executive power, but it also transfers up to \$20,000 in student loan debt per borrower to taxpayers, many of whom never went to college. The debt plan costs an estimated \$400 billion. This plan also violates the clear separation of powers between Congress, which has the power of the purse, and the Executive Branch. As such, I filed a brief with the Supreme Court to challenge Biden's student loan debt relief proposal. I also introduced legislation that would overturn this debt cancellation scheme.

Defunding Sanctuary Cities:

I introduced the Stop Dangerous Sanctuary Cities Act, which pulls taxpayer-funded grants to cities that prohibit their law enforcement officers from cooperating with federal immigration authorities. In short, sanctuary cities make our nation less safe and willfully undermine efforts to secure the border. The cities that choose to break the law by harboring illegal immigrants should not have the benefit of receiving taxpayer-funded grants from the federal government to deter crime.

IRS Accountability:

You have certainly heard about the insanely costly provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act. One of the worst items is infusing the IRS with \$80 billion in new funding without any oversight measures to prevent waste, protect taxpayer rights, or measure improvement of service. As such, I introduced the IRS Funding Accountability Act, which gives Congress the chance to say how this \$80 billion in new funding could be spent. It also holds the IRS more accountable and provides more transparency. \$80 billion is a tremendous amount of money, and the IRS should use it properly.

Restoring Military Focus:

I uncovered several examples of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in Federal Fumbles when it comes to our military. In a time of Russian aggression, Chinese belligerence, and other threats that jeopardize international stability, the Biden Administration should be laser-focused on those issues and not these DEI initiatives. To stop this, I introduced the Restoring Military Focus Act to eliminate the position of Chief Diversity Officer at the DoD and prohibit taxpayer dollars from establishing any similar office. We already have a diverse military; we should not spend millions of dollars to prove it.

Protecting Prescription Drug Prices:

Prescription drug pricing is nothing new to Federal Fumbles. Unfortunately, the so-called Inflation Reduction Act makes drug pricing even more of a fumble. I introduced the Protecting Drug Innovation Act, which will roll back the federal government's authority to set and control drug prices covered by Medicare, which was a key component of the so-called Inflation Reduction Act. Price controls don't work. A University of Chicago study estimates drug price controls will result in 135 fewer new drugs approved between now and 2039 and an 18.5-percent reduction in research and development.[ci] My bill will remove barriers put in place to ensure research and development continues. We need more rare cancer drugs, not fewer.



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