

FEDERAL



FUMBLES



SENATOR JAMES LANKFORD

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LETTER TO THE TAXPAYERS

My Fellow Taxpayers,

With the leadership of President Trump, we have achieved some significant milestones in the last year. We have improved government efficiency, saved billions of your hard-earned dollars, and redefined spending. However, the work is far from over. Too often the federal government is gridlocked, unresponsive, and inefficient. We must continue pushing through bureaucratic red tape to make the government work better for you, the taxpayer. We have so much still to do.

Throughout the ninth edition of *Federal Fumbles*, I highlight inefficiencies within the federal government and offer solutions on how to save taxpayers billions of dollars. For instance, just this past year, we experienced the longest government shutdown in history, lasting 43 days. Government shutdowns create uncertainties, slow economic growth, and undermine confidence in our institutions. I have a simple solution to end government shutdowns once and for all. Furthermore, I have continued to investigate and provide solutions to COVID-19 fraud in addition to highlighting wasteful spending.

To solve our debt crisis, we must cut spending and grow our economy. We achieved some economic growth milestones over the past year that will have an impact for generations to come. For instance, my *Charitable Act* was included in the *Working Families Tax Cut Act*. This legislation incentivizes taxpayers to support charities, houses of worship and nonprofits at a greater level than before. We were also able to include my *ALIGN Act* to make full and immediate expensing permanent for small businesses, farmers, and ranchers. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

It has been, and will continue to be, my goal with *Federal Fumbles* to make the federal government more transparent for American taxpayers. Now let's go recover some *Federal Fumbles*!

In God We Trust,



United States Senator for Oklahoma

GRANT MISFIRES



A \$53-MILLION TURNOVER

In 2024 the Biden-Harris National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported spending \$53 million on research using human fetal tissue obtained from elective abortions.^[1] In September 2025, the watchdog group White Coat Waste Project revealed that NIH was still funding 17 human fetal tissue grants.^[2] These grants supported animal experiments and other studies that used tissues and organs from aborted babies, obtained from sources including questionable suppliers such as Advanced Bioscience Resources—despite experts confirming that such research is outdated and unnecessary given the availability of ethical alternatives.

After these findings were made public, the NIH announced it would not renew the 17 grants.^[3] Additionally, the Trump Administration announced it would end all funding for research using aborted baby tissues^[4]. While this is a positive step in the right direction, unless Congress passes a statutory prohibition, another pro-abortion administration could resume or expand such projects at any time, forcing taxpayers to fund research that is both immoral and scientifically obsolete. That is why I have signed on to help lead the *Protecting Life and Integrity in Research Act*, which would end the trafficking of body parts from aborted children for research—for good.^[5]

WOOF. \$124,000 GONE TO...CHINA

Despite growing concerns about US dependence on China for critical drug development and biomedical research, NIH paid a Chinese laboratory \$124,000 to conduct drug experiments on up to 300 beagles per week.[6] [7]

The project outsourced drug testing to a facility operating with virtually no US oversight, raising serious national security and animal welfare concerns. *Freedom of Information Act* documents revealed the Chinese lab justified using dogs because beagles are “docile, cute, and easy to domesticate,” a rationale that suggests convenience, not scientific necessity.[8]

As the world learned from Wuhan, conducting animal studies inside China raises profound concerns about transparency, biosafety, and data integrity, especially when US taxpayer dollars are funding the work. After national scrutiny, NIH announced it would not renew the contract.[9] Yet the agency acknowledges that 18 Chinese animal research laboratories—including several with troubling ties to the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army—still hold NIH approval to receive US funding.[10]

The NIH should not outsource drug tests on hundreds of beagles to an authoritarian nation with weak animal protections and significant national security risks. It is time to strip all Chinese research labs of US approval for funds and invest that money in American research.

A COSTLY PLAY CALL: \$250 MILLION ON TRANSGENDER MICE AND MONKEYS

The House Oversight Committee heard shocking testimony that NIH wasted an estimated \$240 million on transgender animal experiments involving mice, rats, and monkeys.[11] These NIH-funded studies attempted to model transgender adults and children by subjecting animals to hormone regimens and surgical procedures.[12]

Many of these animals were subsequently infected with viruses, injected with cancer cells, or exposed to painful shocks to measure physiological and psychological responses.

Following criticism from President Trump, Congress, and taxpayers, DOGE canceled the grants.[13] In August 2025, the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) stated that “no other NIH grants still fund transgender animal experiments.”[14]

However, grants and scientific publications show that several other federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation and the US Departments of Agriculture and Veterans Affairs, have also supported some of these transgender animal studies.[15]

\$149,961 SACK AT THE LINE: TACKLING COVID AND CLIMATE IN ALASKA

It has been almost 6 years since COVID-19 spread around the world, but we are still studying the effects it has...on fish? You heard that right! On February 1, 2025, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded \$149,961 to the Sealaska Heritage Institute to study how climate change and COVID-19 affect herring in Alaska.[16] The project is designed to create an oral history archive with 17 semi-structured interviews and field observations to record the Indigenous knowledge of herring harvesters whose practices have been adversely affected by climate change and COVID-19. Huh?

PLAYBOOK UPDATE

OUT OF BOUNDS: CELLPHONES BEHIND BARS

It's hard to comprehend how many contraband cellphones have infiltrated our prison systems. In both federal and state facilities alike, contraband cellphones have become an underground lifeline for inmates. The most unsettling part is that these phones have turned into tools for crime: coordinating hits beyond prison walls, managing drug networks, arranging illegal deals, even facilitating sex trafficking and prison breaks. The danger not only impacts correctional officers and inmates but also the public as a whole.

In Oklahoma the problem hits especially close to home. On July 31, 2025, a two-year investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs led to the seizure of approximately 90 kilograms of meth, 22 firearms, and nearly \$350,000 in drug proceeds.[17] This investigation led to the arrest of three already incarcerated individuals who were using contraband cellphones to coordinate this illegal activity. This is just the latest story of what is happening in prisons in Oklahoma and around the country because of contraband cellphones.

MVP

In the short term, we have worked with the Trump administration to take critical steps in the right direction. On September 30, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission voted 3-0 to move forward with a new rule that would address phone jamming solutions in non-federal correctional facilities.[18] This rule would remove regulatory barriers for correctional facilities to jam cellphone signals coming out of non-federal correctional facilities.

However, in the long term, Congress needs to amend the *1934 Communications Act* to allow state and federal prisons to use cellphone jammers to ensure they have the tools they need to combat illegal activity in prisons. That is why my colleagues and I introduced the *Cellphone Jamming Reform Act*.[19] After many years of work and conversations with law enforcement, the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Justice, and Oklahoma correctional leadership, we have a bill that would allow states to jam illegal cellphones in their prisons to prevent prisoners from contacting their victims or coordinating even more crime while they are incarcerated.

A PRICEY GAME PLAN: CENSUS COSTS OUT OF CONTROL

The US Census is not only a constitutional requirement, but it is also one of the most ambitious data collection efforts the federal government undertakes, counting everyone in the country every ten years. In 2020 the Census Bureau faced the added challenge of conducting this operation during the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it still managed to introduce several changes that improved efficiency and controlled costs. More than half of all households responded online, and field operations proved more productive than expected, with address canvassers completing their work faster and at a lower cost.[20]

To cut down on unnecessary fieldwork, the first Trump administration authorized the Bureau to use administrative data to count roughly 450,000 households that never mailed back a form.[21] The Bureau also drew on US Postal Service records to flag vacant or undeliverable addresses, avoiding wasted visits to about 13 percent of unresponsive homes.[22] These steps showed how existing data sources can make a massive federal operation leaner and more effective. However, the 2020 Census still cost the taxpayer approximately \$13.7 billion.[23]

MVP

Structural and legal barriers prevent the Census Bureau from using shared data from all existing federal sources. That is a waste! Title 13 of the US Code, which governs the Census Bureau, restricts data sharing across agencies. Many agencies, such as the IRS, collect data on an annual basis from American citizens. For example, every citizen who pays taxes provides the IRS with information every year. The IRS already has the structural and legal barriers in place to do this every year, so we should expand the sharing of IRS and Census data sharing to cut down on costs for American taxpayers. It's time to stop spending recklessly and start acting like we are trillions of dollars in debt.

A SELF-INFLICTED PENALTY: GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

Since the first Trump administration, the federal government has experienced three government shutdowns. The first occurred in January 2018 and lasted three days. The second began in December 2018 and stretched for 35 days into 2019. The most recent shutdown began on October 1, 2025, and surpassed the 2018 shutdown for the longest government shutdown in US history: 43 days.[24]

Government shutdowns come at a steep cost to American taxpayers. It's estimated that previous shutdowns have cost taxpayers around \$7 billion per month.[25] However, this past shutdown is estimated to have cost American taxpayers between \$74 billion and \$85 billion.[26] Beyond the financial burden, shutdowns disrupt the lives of countless federal employees, military personnel, and their families who go without paychecks during these periods. The ripple effects extend far beyond Washington, DC, undermining public trust and straining the very workforce that keeps essential government functions running. Shutdowns are dumb policy!

MVP

For several years, I've advocated for Congress to pass my *Prevent Government Shutdowns Act*, a bill designed to end government shutdowns once and for all.[27] The concept is straightforward: if Congress fails to pass all twelve appropriation bills by the end of the fiscal year, members of both House and Senate, along with their staffs, must remain in Washington, DC, until the job is done.

Under this legislation, an automatic Continuing Resolution would take effect to keep the government open and protect taxpayers from the unnecessary burden shutdowns cause when they occur. During this period, Congress would be prohibited from considering any other legislation until the appropriations process is complete. I believe this accountability-focused approach would encourage lawmakers to meet their fundamental responsibility to fund the government on time and ensure stability for federal employees, military personnel, and the American people.

CALL REVERSED: LOPER BRIGHT WINS

The Supreme Court's decision in *Loper Bright v. Raimondo* marked a major shift in administrative law by overturning the long-standing *Chevron* deference.^[28] Under *Chevron*, courts traditionally deferred to federal agencies' interpretation of ambiguous statutes, even though the most basic understanding of the role of the court is that the court says what the law is, not any agency.^[29] For example, in the past *Chevron* deference has been used to narrowly interpret the circumstances under which a noncitizen can justify withholding removal or adjustment of status.^[30] Additionally, we have seen *Chevron* negatively impact areas such as education, tech, and foreign policy. With that precedent now gone, courts, not executive agencies, will determine the meaning of unclear or open-ended laws.

This change finally corrects the balance of power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. It reinforces the judiciary's role in interpreting statutes while placing greater responsibility on Congress to write clear, precise legislation.

MVP

Moving forward, it is critical for Congress to avoid ambiguous language and clearly focus on defining intent when lawmaking. I have created four main categories of terms that lawmakers must avoid when drafting legislation in the future.

The first category is Poorly Defined Terms, which includes vague words like *substantial*, *significant*, *necessary*, *adequate*, *reasonable*, and *justified*. These terms often leave too much room for interpretation by an executive agency.

The second category is Precautionary Terms, such as *unreasonable risk*, *protect public health*, *ample margin of safety*, and *best available technology*. These phrases tend to be broad and can result in agencies setting their own standards for what qualifies as "safe" or "feasible."

The third category includes Unbounded Terms, like *at the discretion of the Secretary* or *in the public interest*. Such language effectively grants open-ended authority to executive officials without clear legislative guidance.

Finally, the fourth category involves terms that would benefit from Explicit Recognition of Tradeoffs, such as *appropriate*, *practicable*, *feasible*, *necessary*, and *adequate*. Clarifying what Congress intends by these terms would ensure that agencies and courts alike have a concrete standard to follow.

Going forward, I will be a staunch advocate to make sure all legislation introduced in the Senate will abide by the idea that the words in these four categories can no longer be used in legislation. Doing so will promote accountability, limit regulatory uncertainty, and preserve the legislative branch's constitutional role in making law.

NO FREE RIDES

Since I started this series, I have constantly resurfaced the need to restructure the Highway Trust Fund. This trust fund has been steadily moving toward insolvency for years, and one factor contributing is the growing shift toward electric vehicles (EVs). Although EVs typically weigh more than traditional gasoline-powered cars, causing greater wear and tear on roads, they are not required to contribute to the Highway Trust Fund. Yes, they ride for free! [31]

Meanwhile, drivers of gasoline-powered vehicles pay federal taxes on every gallon of fuel they purchase, directly supporting the Trust Fund.[32] As EV adoption continues to rise, this imbalance raises real concerns about long-term infrastructure funding. Without reforms that ensure all vehicles contribute fairly to the system they rely on, the Highway Trust Fund will continue to face a widening financial gap.

MVP

Under President Trump's leadership, the *Working Families Tax Cut Act* has already taken steps to eliminate the \$7,500 tax credit for new electric vehicles.[33] At least taxpayers are no longer buying their own cars *and* paying \$7,500 of someone else's car. But that alone will not resolve the underlying imbalance in how we fund our nation's infrastructure. Congress still needs to pass legislation requiring EVs to contribute fairly to the Highway Trust Fund.

In my view, the most practical and equitable solution is an annual registration tax on electric vehicles. This would ensure that all drivers help maintain the roads they use. Right now, only drivers of gasoline-powered vehicles are paying into the system, while EV drivers benefit without contributing. Creating a fair, uniform contribution structure will strengthen our roads and reduce our debt.

DEFERRED MAINTENANCE: PENALTIES ADD UP

Deferred maintenance has severely weakened many federal office buildings across the country. The scale of the problem is staggering. The Department of Agriculture's South Building alone carries nearly \$1.8 billion in deferred liabilities.[34] Other agencies face similar troubling backlogs: the Department of Health and Human Services' headquarters has \$173.5 million, the Department of Labor headquarters has \$387 million, the Department of Energy headquarters has \$37 million, the Office of Personnel Management headquarters has \$34 million, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development headquarters has \$225.3 million in deferred liabilities.[35]

These numbers reflect decades of underinvestment and delayed repairs, and they illustrate how deeply federal infrastructure has deteriorated. What should be safe, functional workplaces for government employees and American taxpayers have instead become symbols of the growing cost of inaction.

MVP

The solution to this growing maintenance crisis is straightforward: consolidate and sell. Many federal office buildings in Washington are operating far below capacity, yet taxpayers continue footing the bill for their upkeep. By selling underutilized properties and consolidating agencies into fewer, more efficient spaces, the federal government could generate an estimated \$400 million in net receipts over ten years.[36]

Additionally, there is a fund within the General Services Administration—which controls all federal real property—that is supposed to be used to fix issues such as deferred maintenance. However, the fund is being skimmed for other reasons while federal buildings fall apart. Congress needs to force the sale of unused spaces and take better care of America's property.

BARRED OWLS VS. SPOTTED OWLS

The Barred Owl Management Strategy is a US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) initiative finalized in 2024 under the Biden administration to address the decline of the northern spotted owl, a threatened species under the *Endangered Species Act*.^[37] Although barred owls are native to eastern North America, they began expanding westward in the early 20th century. The FWS attributes a 70- to 80-percent decline in spotted owl populations over the past three decades because of competition for food and nesting sites.

So what's the Biden solution to barred owls? Shoot them. They authorized the lethal removal of up to 435,000 barred owls across 24 million acres (roughly the size of Indiana), within 14 national parks and 17 national forests, including Olympic, Yosemite, and Redwood.^[38] The removal process began with a \$4.5-million pilot contract in 2024 to kill approximately 1,500 owls over four years, at an average cost of \$3,000 per bird.^[39] The process requires two spotters to verify species identity before removal teams lure and kill the owls at night.

First, it is not the role of the federal government to dictate species management strategies when states and localities are fully capable of managing their own wildlife populations. States already manage deer, turkey, pheasant, and countless other species using hunting seasons, tagging systems, and transparent reporting. These systems work, and they operate without federal intervention.

Second, the cost of implementing this program is unjustifiable. At an estimated \$3,000 per owl, the long-term cost exceeds \$1 billion. This is an irresponsible use of taxpayer funds, especially when states concerned about these owl populations could design and fund their own targeted management strategies. How about we use that \$1 billion to improve education, roads, or national defense? I know some Oklahoma hunters who would take out the barred owls for free—if you let them.

MVP

In the short term, the Barred Owl Management Strategy should be ended. The Senate has tried this multiple times through the *Congressional Review Act*.^[40] Over the long term, a broader reform of the *Endangered Species Act* is needed to ensure that species protection efforts do not override common sense or impede economic development when population changes stem from natural ecological dynamics.

DELAY OF GAME: PIPELINE PERMITTING

The *Clean Water Act*'s Section 401 requires any project that may result in a discharge into waters of the United States to obtain a water-quality certification before construction can begin.[41] Under this provision, a federal agency cannot issue a permit or license for an activity involving potential discharge unless the state, an authorized Tribe, or, in limited circumstances, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issues or waives certification.[42] In other words, the jurisdiction where the discharge originates has effective veto power over the whole project, no matter how much the project expands.

This framework has increasingly been weaponized by left-leaning states and cities to block nearly all new pipeline projects—not because of legitimate water quality concerns but to advance climate agendas and restrict the development and use of fossil fuels.[43] That drives up fuel costs for everyone because pipelines require permits under Section 401 of the *Clean Water Act*, which has become the primary tool these liberal states use to stall or stop critical energy infrastructure.

MVP

A proposed solution to this issue is my *UPDATE Act*. This bill would eliminate Section 401 entirely and restore federal authority over permitting. Under this approach, the federal government would rely on existing processes to evaluate and issue permits in a uniform, predictable manner, preventing states from unilaterally obstructing interstate energy projects.[44]

LOCK THE CLOCK

Daylight Saving Time was an effort to conserve fuel for candles and gas lamps during World War I, more than 100 years ago. [45] It started in Germany but quickly spread across many parts of the world including the United States. In the early 1970s, Congress lengthened Daylight Saving Time in order to save energy during the Middle East oil embargo.[46] In 2005 Congress extended Daylight Saving Time to eight months of the year.[47] Congress needs to stop “tweaking” Daylight Saving Time. Congress needs to *end it*.

MVP

For many years, including 2025, I have teamed up with a group of bipartisan Senators to introduce the *Sunshine Protection Act*. This bill would “lock the clock” in Daylight Saving Time, producing more hours of sunlight in the evening hours after work and school.[48] That means more time away from screens for your kids, more time for a round of golf, and more time outside throwing the ball with your dog. We all hate time change—so let’s end it.

OFFSIDES: CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

It is no secret that for decades, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has tried to infiltrate and influence different sectors of American society. For the last two years, the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has investigated the CCP's infiltration and manipulation of universities in the US, exposing American taxpayers' direct investment in Chinese entities involved in military-civil fusion.^[49] In other words, China has slowly and secretly been trying to capture our military secrets through American universities. Many of these universities have been researching cutting-edge, fourth-generation nuclear weapons technology, artificial intelligence, graphene semiconductor technology, robotics and control systems, and more.

MVP

To combat the CCP and put a stop to the influence it has over universities across our country, I introduced the *Countering Adversarial and Malicious Partnerships at Universities and Schools (CAMPUS) Act of 2025*.^[50] This bill prohibits joint research between US universities and universities in the PRC that have connections to China's military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The bill notably prohibits the use of Department of Education funds by K-12 schools partnering with PLA-linked entities. It also keeps federal contracts and research dollars from going to universities that partner with PRC military enterprises.^[51] Additionally, I have joined a letter led by Senator Cotton addressed to Secretary of Energy Chris Wright, addressing concerns about Chinese nationals infiltrating research labs focused on AI.^[52]

BLOWN COVERAGE: HOW IMPROPER PAYMENTS SLIPPED THROUGH—AGAIN

For more than two decades, the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General has raised concerns about the Department's persistent struggle to measure, report, and reduce improper payments within the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. In 17 of the past 20 years, the improper payment rate has exceeded 10 percent, with rates even higher during the COVID-19 pandemic.[53] These improper payments have stemmed from several recurring issues: failure to meet state work requirements, claimants continuing to collect benefits after returning to work, employers not providing timely or accurate employment information, or, in some cases, deliberate fraud schemes.

During the pandemic, the scale of the problem grew dramatically. The estimated improper payment rate reached 18.71 percent in 2021 and climbed even higher to 21.52 percent in 2022 for the two major pandemic UI programs.[54] According to the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General, by February 2023 more than \$888 billion in federal and state UI benefits had been distributed during the pandemic period.[55] Applying the 21.52-percent rate means that at least \$191 billion of those payments were improper. This staggering figure expresses how vulnerable emergency aid programs can be to both systemic weakness and opportunistic fraud.

MVP

Despite repeated warnings and documented evidence of widespread fraud under the Biden administration, there appeared to be little urgency or interest in addressing the problem effectively. At the beginning of 2025, I introduced the *Recover Fraudulent COVID Funds Act*, which would have extended the statute of limitations to 10 years for criminal and civil violations involving specified COVID-19 pandemic relief programs. Moving forward, I will continue to work closely with the Trump administration to ensure that the UI program fulfills its intended purpose while safeguarding taxpayer funds from misuse.

DISASTER AID IS A DISASTER

In last year's *Federal Fumbles*, I highlighted the infamous "spaghetti" map showing the convoluted process for applying for disaster relief. As a reminder, more than 30 federal agencies and supporting organizations are involved in the national disaster recovery framework.^[56] As a result, individuals and communities seeking help must navigate a maze of redundant applications. For example, those needing FEMA Individual Assistance, loans from the Small Business Administration for their businesses, and rental assistance from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development must complete three separate applications, each requiring much of the same information. This duplication creates confusion for survivors and delays the delivery of critical funding.

MVP

President Trump has taken meaningful steps to reduce the bureaucracy that slows down disaster relief efforts. On January 24, 2025, he issued an Executive Order establishing a council to assess FEMA.^[57] Throughout the council's work last year, one finding has been consistent: disasters that are locally executed and state-managed are resolved more quickly than those dependent on federal intervention. It is time to empower state and local governments to lead disaster response rather than relying on a sprawling network of more than 30 federal agencies.

This Congress I have introduced six different FEMA bills to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the entire disaster relief process. One of my bills, the *Investing in Community Resilience Act of 2025*, expands the eligibility requirement for FEMA to provide additional assistance to Public Assistance applicants.^[58] In other words, if you are an entity or nonprofit applying for assistance, FEMA may increase your eligibility for more assistance with three new additional expansions of the program. Another FEMA-related bill I want to highlight is the *Direct Property Acquisition Act*.^[59] As of today, local governments must apply through their state governments for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Jumping through multiple hoops to apply for this program has left many local governments waiting way too long for an answer. My bill authorizes local governments, if determined eligible and selected by FEMA, to apply directly to FEMA for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program assistance for property acquisition. This will make the application process smoother and faster for local governments.

EVs WITH NO E

The Delivering for America Plan serves as the US Postal Service's (USPS) 10-year roadmap to modernize its operations and stabilize its finances.[60] For years USPS has struggled with inefficiencies and financial losses, costing taxpayers billions of dollars. The former Postmaster General introduced the plan as a \$40-billion initiative, including \$19 billion dedicated to the upgrading of USPS's aging vehicle fleet.[61]

The initial vehicle replacement strategy called for 90 percent of the new fleet to consist of conventional gas-powered trucks, with the remaining 10 percent being fully electric. However, following significant pressure from the Biden administration, USPS revised its plan to call for a much larger share of electric vehicles—66,000 to be exact—but they did not allocate enough chargers for their new EV fleet. To support this shift, the administration allocated an additional \$3 billion to USPS through the *Inflation Reduction Act*, intended to expand EV infrastructure and purchase more electric trucks.[62]

In March 2025, USPS contracted three vendors to install 14,050 charging stations nationwide, and as of November 2025, a little more than 6,000 charging stations have been installed at 75 locations.[63] This shortfall has left thousands of the new electric vehicles idle. It is a frustrating example of how focusing on climate more than practicability can adversely impact the use of taxpayers' money.

MOVING THE CHAINS FOR MILITARY SPOUSES: TELEWORK SOLUTIONS

Military families are the backbone of our national defense. When military families are secure at home, our entire nation is more resilient. Yet too many military families struggle to make ends meet. A major contributor to military family financial instability is military spousal unemployment. A staggering 21 percent of military spouses are unemployed—five times the national average.[64] This number does not include military spouses who are underemployed or have given up looking for work altogether. Many factors contribute to the high level of military spouse unemployment—including frequent military-mandated moves, which stall upward career progression for spouses and force them to find new jobs. On average, it takes 19 weeks for a military spouse to find a new job after a Permanent Change of Station. For spouses who are lucky enough to find work, their earnings fall by an average of 14 percent for the year compared to non-military individuals.[65]

MVP

Since COVID-19, I have been shouting from the rooftop that telework has been taken advantage of, which we saw under the Biden administration. I was thrilled when President Trump signed an Executive Order to return federal workers to the office. [66] We spend too much money on federal property and management to use only a small percentage of the space. However, I have also said that telework can be used effectively. For example, I have introduced the *Telework Reform Act*, which would better define the term *telework* to allow agencies to better implement the administration's new in-person mandate.[67] By passing this bill, agencies could better formulate their telework policies to accommodate military spouses when they move to new assignments. This would mitigate employment instability for military spouses and reduce stress on military families.

RED ZONE MISFIRE: THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

If you received a letter in the mail asking you these questions would you answer them?

How many bedrooms does your home have?

Does your home have a shower? Sink? Stove? Refrigerator?

Does anyone in your home own a laptop, smartphone, or tablet?

How many cars do you own?

How much are your monthly electric and gas bills?

What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?

Do you have health insurance?

How many times have you been married?

What time do you leave the house for work?

How many people rode in your vehicle last week? [68]

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

These are just 10 of the more than 60 questions that roughly 295,000 Americans are required to answer each month through the American Community Survey (ACS).^[69] The US Census Bureau created the survey in 2005 to shorten the long, exhausting forms people had to fill out every ten years for the decennial census.^[70] In theory, the ACS was meant to make the census process easier. But in reality, it has evolved into a massive, year-round questionnaire.

Each month, about 295,000 households across the country are selected to participate –nearly 3.5 million households every year. Looking at the sample questions, it is hard not to feel uneasy. Many of them feel invasive, and I know I would be uncomfortable handing over that kind of personal information to anyone.

The ACS's cost only adds to the discomfort. The federal government spends roughly \$250 million every year administering this survey.^[71] Knowing that so much taxpayer money goes toward something that feels so intrusive is frustrating.

MVP

The Constitution requires the government to conduct a survey of the population every ten years, but somehow we have drifted far beyond that original mandate.^[72] What was meant to be a simple decennial count has turned into something much larger and more intrusive. Instead of sticking to what the Constitution actually requires—or having federal agencies share information they already collect—we spend millions of dollars gathering the same information all over again.

For example, the IRS already knows how much money people make and can determine whether someone owns a vehicle. Much of the information about our homes that the government asks for is already part of the public record. It is frustrating to realize that instead of coordinating data among agencies, the government chooses the easier route: spending more taxpayer money to ask the same questions over and over again.

At some point, enough is enough. Ending the American Community Survey would not only save taxpayers million of dollars each year, but it would also put a stop to the government's constant collection of private household information. This is the right thing to do, both for people's wallets and their privacy.

DROPPING THE BALL: OBAMACARE (STILL)

For years there have been warnings about fraud and abuse within the *Affordable Care Act's* (ACA) Enhanced Premium Tax Credit program. Under the ACA, these tax credits are meant to help eligible individuals afford health insurance.[73] In 2024 alone, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services paid an estimated \$124 billion in tax credit subsidies directly to insurance companies.[74]

Given the growing concerns, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) launched an investigation into potential fraud in the ACA marketplace. Preliminary findings detail that in 2025, GAO submitted 20 fictitious applications to the Health Insurance Marketplace using fake names without Social Security numbers, proof of citizenship, or income information.[75]

Despite the lack of identifying information or verification of legitimacy, 18 of the 20 applicants were approved, are still actively enrolled today, and are collectively receiving more than \$10,000 per month in taxpayer-funded subsidies.[76] It is hard to understand how a program handling billions of dollars could allow this level of negligence to remain unchecked.

MVP

Many reforms have been proposed to address the high levels of fraud in Obamacare, such as simply requiring identity verification for Obamacare enrollment and establishing minimum premium requirements to weed out potentially fake enrollees. Many other policies have been proposed in order to decrease the cost of Obamacare plans and therefore decrease the reliance on tax credits—such as funding cost-sharing reductions and increasing access to employer-sponsored health insurance for small businesses. It is time for Congress to realize we can no longer continue to subsidize Obamacare because it is not working.

POLICIES AND PRESCRIPTIONS

Congress previously passed laws to ensure the safety and efficacy of any drug and to specifically state that abortion-inducing drugs cannot be shipped through the mail.

Despite this, both the Obama and Biden administrations gutted safety protocols on chemical abortion drugs. In 2016 the Obama Food and Drug Administration (FDA) eased safety precautions for the administration of abortion drugs, including doing away with in-person and follow-up doctor visits and eliminating reporting requirements for non-fatal adverse events, which means the FDA no longer gathers any data on hospitalizations caused by the use of chemical abortion drugs unless the mom dies. In 2021 during COVID, the Biden FDA allowed the abortion drug *mifepristone* to be delivered through the mail in violation of federal law, and in 2023 it permanently removed the in-person dispensing requirement.

Chemical abortions can cause permanent infertility, significant hemorrhaging, or even the death of the mom if the pregnancy is ectopic, which is why in-person doctor visits have been required in the past. Politics should not determine the safety of a drug; science should. A woman is 8,000 times more likely to end up in an emergency room from taking a chemical abortion drug than Tylenol. Chemical abortions are not safe or simple.

Two recent tragic deaths reported in the media highlight the aggressive and devastating nature of infections after mifepristone abortions: (1) a 24-year-old woman in Las Vegas passed away in 2022 after taking mifepristone and misoprostol to induce an abortion in the first trimester[77] and (2) a 28-year-old mother in Georgia also died in 2022 after taking mifepristone.[78]

Each time the safety protocols were degraded, it became easier for an unsupportive partner, abuser, or trafficker to harm women, girls, and unborn children. Tragic stories are common, proving that an abuser can order mifepristone pills online, crush them, and put them in a pregnant woman's drink, killing the baby and injuring the mother in more ways than we know.

Unfortunately, in October 2025 the FDA quietly approved another generic version of the chemical abortion drug mifepristone.[79] This action happened just weeks after the Department of Health and Human Services announced an investigation into the drug's safety.

MVP

The Trump Administration needs to act now to protect women, girls, and unborn children and restore the original protections that were in place for mifepristone by requiring in-person doctor visits, ultrasounds, and Rh testing.

A RECIPE FOR DISASTER

For years, I have raised concerns about staggering amounts of fraud, waste, and abuse in food aid programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Federal Child Nutrition Program. For example, the US Department of Agriculture reported that the improper payment rate for SNAP in fiscal year 2024 was over 10 percent across all states and territories.[80] Oklahomans do not have an argument with temporary food aid getting to folks who need it, but they have a real problem with their tax dollars being given to people who do not qualify for the program.

Recent reporting from Minnesota further demonstrates the pervasiveness of federal food aid fraud, waste, and abuse. For example, the Minnesota non-profit organization Feeding Our Future was purportedly in the business of helping community partners participate in the Federal Child Nutrition Program during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a federal jury convicted its founder and executive director of stealing nearly \$250 million in funds to fund her lavish lifestyle.[81] This fraudster falsely claimed to have served 91 million meals to needy children, but the aid only went to her cars and house. Without reform, we cannot be sure that food aid is actually helping families in need.

Additionally, the statute of limitations for fraud committed through the *CARES Act*, which was the COVID-era funding bill to provide financial relief, only lasted five years. I worked to pass an extension to the statute of limitations for COVID fraud before it expired but Senate Democrats blocked it. That means the fraudsters blatantly stole money from all of us, and then they got away with it.

MVP

The *Working Families Tax Cut Act* has already taken steps to eliminate food aid program fraud, waste, and abuse to ensure the aid goes to people in need.[82] The law stops unlawful migrants from receiving benefits, strengthens work requirements for able-bodied recipients without dependents, and protects food aid for the truly vulnerable populations who need it: pregnant women, children, seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income families. But this alone will not resolve the underlying issue of food aid fraud, waste, and abuse in this country. Congress still needs to pass legislation requiring federal agencies to take actions to prevent improper payments across the government.

I introduced the *Safeguarding the Transparency and Efficiency of Payments (STEP) Act* in January 2025 to kickstart cutting this waste.[83] This bill would enhance the transparency and efficiency of federal payments by requiring detailed reporting on improper payments and implementing stronger financial controls to reduce fraud. I also introduced the *TRUE Accountability Act*, which requires Executive Branch agencies to proactively develop internal controls to fight future emergencies or crises.[84] Furthermore, my *Recover Fraudulent COVID Funds Act* would extend the statute of limitations for COVID fraud for 10 years so law enforcement can prosecute criminals like the ones in Minnesota.[85]

The American people gave Washington a mandate in the last election: waste less and save more. Fraud within federal programs such as food aid programs is theft from American taxpayers, and safeguards are essential to better steward their hard-earned dollars.

TOUCHDOWNS

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CUT ACT

- *Charitable Act*
 - On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*, otherwise known as the *Working Families Tax Cut Act*, a landmark law that lowers costs for families and cuts burdensome red tape. One of the most impactful provisions is my bipartisan *Charitable Act*. The *Charitable Act* permanently restores and expands deductions for charitable giving for those who do not itemize on their tax returns. Starting after January 1, 2026, taxpayers who do not itemize can deduct up to \$1,000 in cash charitable contributions (\$2,000 for married couples filing jointly). Since about 90 percent of Americans do not itemize, this change gives millions of taxpayers a meaningful incentive to support charities, houses of worship, and nonprofits that depend on small-dollar donations.[86] This is a major win for taxpayers and for communities served by America's charitable organizations.
- *Promoting Domestic Energy Production Act*
 - Nearly every sector of the American economy depends on stable, affordable oil and gas production. But under the Corporate Alternative Minimum Tax created under the Biden administration through the *Inflation Reduction Act*, energy producers face unfair treatment. Unlike other capital-intensive industries, oil and gas companies cannot deduct their normal business costs like every other business. That puts American energy producers at a disadvantage. However, included in the *Working Families Tax Cut Act* was my *Promoting Domestic Energy Production Act*. This language fixed the imbalance and ensured energy producers are treated the same as every other manufacturer.[87]
- *ALIGN Act*
 - Full expensing or bonus depreciation has been a key part of the tax code for more than 20 years, helping US businesses remain globally competitive. The 2017 *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* expanded it to allow 100-percent immediate expensing for qualified property with a class life of 20 years or less, but that benefit began phasing out at the end of 2022. Included in the *Working Families Tax Cut Act* was my *ALIGN Act*, which makes full and immediate expensing permanent.[88] This does not change how much a business can deduct; it simply allows the deduction to occur in the year the investment is made instead of over many years. By enabling 100-percent first-year depreciation, businesses can reinvest faster, hire sooner, and expand more quickly. Full expensing strengthens investment across sectors like rural broadband, agriculture, energy, and manufacturing, supporting local job creation and boosting America's economic competitiveness without increasing our national debt.

VA MEDICAL RECORD MANAGEMENT CENTER

When was the last time you used a CD in your computer? My computer doesn't even have a CD-ROM drive! Yet until recently, the Veterans Affairs (VA) Record Management Center was still using CDs to send veterans their medical records. When veterans request their files, the VA spends \$10 on each disc to mail them to their homes—even though most people today, especially our veterans, do not have computers with CD-ROM drives that can open them.

When I learned of this issue, it was clear that change was needed—not only to stop wasting taxpayer dollars on outdated technology but also to ensure veterans can easily access their records. After months of calls and continued conversations, we were able to bring some basic common sense to the VA's process. The VA will no longer rely on unusable CDs and will now move toward modern, accessible methods of delivering medical records.[89] This is a simple fix that will save money and better serve our veterans.

SMUGGLING DRONES

For years, the use of drones to smuggle contraband into prisons has posed a growing threat, not only in Oklahoma but across the nation. Unmanned aircraft have easily flown over secure prison grounds, dropping packages containing drugs, weapons, cellphones, and other illegal items directly to inmates. This dangerous trend created serious security challenges and put both inmates and correctional staff at risk.

The scope of the problem is clear. From January through August 2025 alone, the Oklahoma Department of Corrections recovered 844 weapons, 4,475 cellphones, 435 pounds of tobacco, and more than \$9,600 in cash from 22 facilities around the state.[90] This was a problem that demanded action, and action was taken.

In December 2025, Congress passed and President Trump signed the *National Defense Authorization Act*, which included critical bipartisan provisions granting law enforcement the authority to combat unmanned aircraft that threaten public safety. This legislation empowers state and local agencies to disable drones used in criminal activity, strengthening security within our prison systems.[91] It is yet another win under President Trump that will have a lasting impact on public safety and the security of our nation.

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