



SUMMARY

As our national debt surpasses \$22 trillion, on Tuesday, March 5, Senator James Lankford (R-OK) released the fourth volume of the federal government waste report entitled, *Federal Fumbles: Ways the federal government dropped the ball*. The football-themed report provides a list of wasteful and inefficient federal spending and ineffective or broken federal programs. It also contains “Touchdowns” and “Forward Progress” sections that detail how Lankford has advanced solutions to the *Fumbles* listed in previous reports.

Highlights from 2019 Fumbles

1. “Let’s Shut Down the Shutdowns” (Pages 1-2) – The recent longest-ever government shutdown cost taxpayers approximately \$11 billion. Last week, Lankford introduced the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act, which would hold Members of Congress, Senators, and the White House accountable for failure to fund the government, instead of our federal families. The bill would require House and Senate members, the White House and Cabinet, and Office of Management and Budget leadership and staff to remain in Washington, DC, until appropriations are restored. The government would remain open with a continuing resolution until the dysfunction in Washington ends. It’s time to stop wasting taxpayers’ time and money on government shutdowns that end up costing us more than keeping the government open.

2. “GREAT Act” (Page 21) – Outdated, duplicative, document-based forms for federal grant reporting make applying for federal tax dollars over-burdensome and over-complicated. In fact, the federal government uses reporting platforms from more than 444 post-award grant forms with no standard data entry. The information is not searchable and requires heavy compliance burdens from grantees. The GREAT Act would help solve that so that taxpayers know where and when their money is spent. Below are a few examples of grants that highlight the need for greater transparency and discretion when spending limited taxpayer dollars:

- **“From Russia with Wine” (Page 21)** – Russia is known for many things, including corruption, meddling, and vodka. However, a new breakthrough is in the works: a book that studies the Russian wine industry throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In FY17 the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded a \$50,400 fellowship to a professor at Sonoma State University. The finished product, *Whites and Reds: Wine in the Lands of Tsar and Commissar*, examines the ways Russia used its wine industry to befriend Europe during the Russian Empire and the Soviet eras.
- **“Mariachi Madness” (Page 22)** – In FY18, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded \$50,000 to the City of San Fernando, CA, for its Mariachi Master Apprentice Program. Moreover, this program has received federal grants totaling a whopping \$725,000 since 2001.
- **“Crafting Craze” (Page 22)** – In FY18, the NEA awarded a \$50,000 federal grant to the City of Los Angeles for the PBS series, *Craft in America*. In fact, since 2005 the NEA has awarded more than \$1.7 million to this production.

3. “Can You Hear Me Now from My Tractor?” (Page 23) – Have you ever felt like you have been ripped off? I’m sure rural Americans do if they paid for but did not receive better cell phone and internet service. The High Cost Fund, which will be the Connect America Fund, was originally created as a program through the Universal Service Fund (USF) in 1996 to help build telecommunication infrastructure in poorly connected mostly rural areas.

Americans have paid billions into these funds through USF fees on their monthly phone bills, regardless of where they live. In 2017 the USF disbursed a total of \$8.8 billion but the problem persists.

4. “\$30 Million: Where’d IT Go?” (Page 40) – Congress authorized \$30 million in the Forever GI Bill for necessary IT repair in September 2017, which was supposed to fix problems facing the Muskogee regional office and others. After my visit to the Muskogee office, my question is simple: what happened to the \$30 million?

5. “This Land (Backlog) is Your Land Backlog (Page 43) – The federal government controls about 28 percent of all the land in the US, primarily west of the Mississippi, through just four federal agencies: USDA, BLM, FWS, and NPS. While the amount of federally owned land in Oklahoma is minimal, Oklahoma taxpayers are still on the hook for the upkeep of the 640 million acres of land throughout the US. Decades of adding to our federal land holdings have led to a maintenance backlog of \$18.6 billion across the four main landholding agencies, which means families’ experiences at these sites will not live up to their full potential.

“Touchdowns” and “Forward Progress” from Previous Volumes:

1. “Make the Senate Work Again” (2019, Page 19) and included in Forward Progress (2017, Page 4) – This Volume previously mentioned Lankford’s proposal to speed up the Senate nomination process. S. Res. 50 was marked up and passed out of the Senate Rules Committee on February 13, 2019. However, last year, it was blocked on the Senate floor by Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) after it was passed out of the Rules Committee.

2. “As Easy As 1, 2, 3” (2016, Page 54) and included in the Forward Progress section (2017, Page 53) – Two of the previous editions of *Fumbles* highlighted the need to pass the Johnson O’Malley Supplemental Indian Education Program Modernization Act. After two years, this is now a touchdown after being signed into law in December 2018.

3. “A Big Problem Dealing with a Big Problem” (2017, Page 19) – A big problem highlighted in the 2017 *Fumbles* was the 7,500 instances of human trafficking in 2016 that were reported throughout the US, which represented a tragic increase of 74 percent from 2015. In 2018, Congress passed the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act to combat online sex trafficking.

4. “Antivirus but Not Anti-Spy” (2017, Page 5) – Lankford highlighted the threat Kaspersky software has on data security. Russia should not be allowed to access our government computers at all and certainly not through an antivirus software our agencies load on our computers. The same should be said for China, which remains on the US Trade Representative’s Priority Watch List.

5. “Call 1-800-IGNORE-U” (2017, Page 8) – Previously, *Fumbles* highlighted an issue involving driving complaints at the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). Vehicles leased from GSA by FSIS accounted for 35 percent of all leased vehicles and accounted for 55 percent of all complaints involving driving. The IG reviewed these complaints and found that FSIS had not investigated or responded to any of the complaints. Since last year’s report, FSIS revised its policies regarding driving complaints and now reviews all reports and assesses them for further investigation.

6. “Lifeline Phone Program” (2015, Page 52) – The first edition of *Fumbles* highlighted the FCC’s Lifeline program, which subsidizes telecommunication services for low-income families. All Americans pay for the Lifeline program through the USF on our phone bills. However, Lifeline has expanded the program to benefit individuals who do not qualify for discounted service or has provided multiple phones to the same address. As a result Lankford’s Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee held hearings to urge FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to address the issues surrounding Lifeline. The FCC then announced in November 2017 an action to reduce fraud and waste in the program by cracking down on “free” cell phones. The DC Court of Appeals sent it back to the FCC for a new rulemaking proceeding and open comment period.

7. “EPA’s \$8.4 Billion ‘Clean’ Power Plan” (2015, Page 79) – The Clean Power Plan (CPP) created broad federal overreach to force states to shut down critical power plants, resulting in significant job loss and decreased energy reliability at an estimated \$8.4 billion cost to American consumers. Thankfully, the Trump Administration unveiled its proposed replacement for the CPP, called the Affordable Clean Energy rule (ACE) in August 2018. ACE still calls on states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it allows states to use various technologies and efficiency improvements to achieve their goals. In the days ahead, ACE will work its way through the rulemaking process.

8. “You Have to Write Rules to Get People to Follow Rules” (2017, Page 37) – The DOJ has a difficult process to report and investigate allegations of sexual assault and harassment in the workplace. While work remains to prevent abuse, protect victims, and hold abusers accountable, Congress took steps last year to lead by example and improve its own harassment and assault policies. The Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act revised some of the once-misguided resolution procedures for sexual assault and harassment on Capitol Hill. In

addition to reforms to the process for filing a claim and proceeding through mediation, current and former Members of Congress must reimburse the Treasury for settlements resulting from a Member's act of discrimination or sexual abuse. The Senate also resolved to require comprehensive annual anti-harassment training for ALL Senate employees, including Senators, their staffs, interns, fellows, and detailees to prevent instances of harassment and assault in the first place.