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# WHERE'S THE PORK?

MAPPING WASTE, FRAUD, CORRUPTION,  
AND TAXPAYER ABUSE

✓ OPENTHEBOOKS OVERSIGHT REPORT





# WHERE'S THE PORK?

## MAPPING WASTE, FRAUD, CORRUPTION, AND TAXPAYER ABUSE

Published: June 2022

**Dedicated to Dr. Tom Coburn**

OpenTheBooks Honorary Chairman  
Rest In Peace - March 28, 2020

**By Adam Andrzejewski**  
Founder/CEO

**Thomas W. Smith**  
Chairman

*"OpenTheBooks is doing the work I envisioned when the Coburn-Obama bill became law. Their innovative app and other tools are putting sunlight through a magnifying glass."*

**U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, MD**  
Washington, D.C. | March 11, 2014

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*"I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results, but also to earn back the trust in government..."*

**U.S. Sen. Barack Obama**

# PROLOGUE

**OUR FEDERAL DEBT JUST PASSED \$30 TRILLION** - at least \$91,000 for every person in the U.S. So, just how much federal waste, duplication, and weird or unnecessary spending are your tax dollars funding?

Here are some starters. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) doled out 2.2 million stimulus checks to dead people. We found that IRS didn't check the "deceased persons list" at the Social Security Administration before cutting the checks. Your cost? \$3.6 billion.

That's just the tip of the iceberg.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) doled out PPP Covid aid to 57,000 entities on the Treasury Department's 'Do Not Pay List.' Again, the SBA didn't check the list before cutting the check. Taxpayer dollars? \$3.5 billion.

The federal agencies aren't just wasting your money. They are literally ripping you off.

In our report, you'll find federal aid flowing to 65,000 fake students "enrolled" in the California junior college system. Nearly \$7 million spent on technology to film your butt - while you're on the toilet. And Fauci's National Institute of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) spent nearly a half million dollars to turn monkeys transgender.

Making matters worse, in 2021-2022, Congress brought back earmarks - the currency of corruption. It's legalized bribery for votes with member pet projects inserted in omnibus spending bills. In the latest bill, there were 5,000 earmarks costing taxpayers \$9 billion.

What government program is running well?

Not the 20 largest federal agencies - they just admitted to their institutionalized incompetence: a total of \$282 billion in mistaken and improper payments (outside of Covid relief programs!).

It's time for a Transparency Revolution.

**Our goal? When citizens see how government is spending their tax dollar, they will hold their politician accountable. Citizens will vote better.**

## WHO WE ARE

American Transparency (OpenTheBooks.com) is a public charity. We do not accept government money. Our oversight reports present hard data so citizens, media, think tanks, politicians, and watchdogs can "follow the money." Hard facts are non-partisan and enhance the public discourse.

## SCOPE & METHODOLOGY



The examples contained in this report are the result of research - searching the federal checkbook, reading agency inspector general reports, finding news articles, and listening to insider tips. We cite others if the reporting was not original to our organization.

Examples [were originally published](#) in our daily "Waste of the Day" column at Real Clear Policy. This report compiles 50 of those accounts.

We would like to thank elected officials like U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), through her monthly [Make 'Em Squeal awards](#) and U.S. Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), through his [Waste Report](#), for highlighting wasteful spending.



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# TOP MACRO-ECONOMIC STATISTICS

- 1** **Federal spending is out of control** – while federal tax revenue is more than \$4 trillion, federal spending is more than \$6 trillion, leaving a \$2 trillion deficit.
- 2** **The national debt** is more than \$30 trillion as of April 2022.
- 3** **That's \$91,353 debt per citizen**; \$242,501 per taxpayer.
- 4** **The U.S. federal debt-to-GDP ratio has grown** over the years. In 2000, it was 58 percent. In April 2022, it's almost 126 percent.
- 5** **The largest areas of spending are on Medicare/Medicaid (\$1.3 trillion),** social security (\$1 trillion), defense/war (\$725 billion), and sadly, interest on debt (\$431 billion).

- 6 Medicare and social security are severely underfunded**, \$34 trillion and \$22 trillion, respectively, in long-term unfunded liabilities.
- 7 The U.S. unfunded liabilities are \$123 trillion.** That works out to \$507,589 of liability per citizen. (Source: Truth In Accounting).
- 8 Americans themselves aren't doing much better than the government.** They have \$1.7 trillion in student loan debt (\$39,699 per student) and \$1 trillion in credit card debt (\$6,458 per holder).
- 9 This out-of-control spending** hasn't solved social problems: almost 40 million people are living in poverty, almost 42 million receiving food stamps, 27 million without health insurance, almost half a million bankruptcies and almost 63,000 foreclosures.
- 10 Wasteful spending will continue** as long as lawmakers have no direct repercussions for voting on pork or misspending taxpayer money.





## **50 EXAMPLES OF FEDERAL TAXPAYER WASTE**

**IN GOVERNMENT, IT'S A TARGET-RICH ENVIRONMENT FOR WASTE, FRAUD, DUPLICATION, AND TAXPAYER ABUSE.**

**FAR TOO OFTEN, LAWMAKERS VOTE FOR SPENDING BILLS WITHOUT READING THEM. EVEN WORSE, THOSE BIG SPENDING LAWMAKERS TOUT THE MONEY THEY BRING BACK TO THEIR DISTRICTS.**

**TODAY, WE CAN DEBATE THE MERITS OF EACH WASTE EXAMPLE. HOWEVER, HERE'S WHAT EVERYONE CAN AGREE ON - EVERY DOLLAR SPENT ON THESE EXAMPLES WAS BORROWED.**

**TODAY, OUR NATIONAL DEBT EXCEEDS \$30 TRILLION AND GROWING. THIS MASSIVE DEBT HAS PUT AMERICA'S FUTURE IN JEOPARDY AND OUR ON-GOING CONCERN IS IN QUESTION.**





## 1. IRS SENDS \$3.6 BILLION IN STIMULUS CHECKS TO 2.2 MILLION DEAD PEOPLE

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In June 2020, the Government Accountability Office reported that more than one million dead people got \$1.4 billion in stimulus checks. By September 2021, the GAO admitted 2.2 million payments flowed to dead people and costs exceeded \$3.6 billion.

The Internal Revenue Service administered the stimulus program, but the agency didn't check the Social Security's 'deceased persons list' before cutting the checks. So, the IRS asked for the money back, but dead people are notoriously bad about paying up. The federal government is equally bad about clawing it back.



## 2. \$6.9 MILLION SMART TOILET ANALYZES "ANAL PRINT"

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

"To fully reap the benefits of the smart toilet, users must make their peace with a camera that scans their anus," the Stanford researchers said.

The National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute gave Stanford University researchers \$6.9 million [to build a toilet](#) with three cameras, including one that can identify the user's "anal print." The toilet monitors urine and stool for signs of disease, including cancer.

## 3. \$3.6 BILLION IN PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM (PPP) PAID OUT TO 57,000 RECIPIENTS ON THE "DO NOT PAY LIST"

At the height of the pandemic, while the U.S. was in economic lockdown, Congress provided PPP funds to small businesses. Instead, 57,000 people listed on the Do Not Pay list were paid \$3.6 billion.

How? The SBA, the Small Business Administration, administered the program and didn't check the Do Not Pay list housed at the Dept. of Treasury before cutting the check. Why have a Do Not Pay list if you don't check the list before cutting the check?

## 4. \$9 BILLION IN COVID-AID TO BAIL OUT COLLEGES IN CALIFORNIA—65,000 FAKE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN CA JR. COLLEGE SYSTEM

Congress bailed out California colleges and universities with \$9 billion in Covid-aid. With the colleges swimming in dough, what could go wrong?

Well, many of the “students” enrolling in the CA junior college system weren’t real. They were fake. Enrolled by hackers. Today, there’s at least 65,000 fake students that are enrolled.

With up to \$5,000 in federal student aid per fake student, the hackers can steal a lot of money – quickly.



## 5. \$123 TRILLION IN UNFUNDED MEDICARE, SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

While politicians promised benefits, they never funded them. There’s \$96.3 trillion owed in promised but unfunded Medicare and Social Security benefits – \$55.1 trillion for Medicare and \$41.2 trillion for Social Security, according to [truthinaccounting.org](https://truthinaccounting.org).

While Uncle Sam has \$5.9 trillion in assets, the \$129 trillion owed in bills – including military and civilian retirement benefits – means the U.S. is in the hole for \$123 trillion.



**FLASHBACK**

In 2018, the U.S. Air Force spent \$1,280 per cup on “hot cups” to keep coffee hot for their fighter pilots.



**U.S. AIR FORCE**

Two years earlier, Travis Air Force Base [reported](#) the 60th Aerial Port Squadron bought 10 hot cups for \$6,930. By 2018, the price for a single cup surged from \$693 to \$1,220. It cost more than \$30,000 for 25 cups.

Then-Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley asked the Air Force for an audit, which found the Air Force [spent \\$300,000](#) on the cups over three years.

## 6. \$2.1 MILLION FOR SEX EDUCATION FOR COMMERCIAL SEX WORKERS IN ETHIOPIA

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gave \$2.1 million to the [Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia](#) to teach sex education to female commercial sex workers.

The education included HIV testing, counseling, and other STI screening and treatments in 2019, as well as free condom distribution, family planning, and tuberculosis screening were also included.

Prostitution is illegal in Ethiopia.



## 7. COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY PRICE TAG: \$18 BILLION A YEAR

President of the United States

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)



In April, the Biden administration [extended the Covid state of emergency](#) yet again, making it the ninth extension. Biden campaigned on shutting down the virus, not the country.

However, he told all 50 governors at the beginning of 2021 that he intended to extend the [90-day state of emergency](#) through the entirety of 2021, rather than reassessing where the country was at the end of each 90-day extension.

Using Congressional Budget Office data, our OpenTheBooks.com [investigation](#) found that each time the state of emergency is extended for another 90 days, it costs taxpayers at least \$4.5 billion in additional Medicaid spending.

Therefore, the annual costs amount to \$18 billion - just in increased Medicaid spending. The U.S. needs a plan on how to move forward. Bleeding \$18 billion every year is not sustainable.





## 8. AMERICA'S 50 RICHEST PLACES RECEIVED \$100 MILLION IN CONGRESSIONAL COVID-BAILOUTS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

What does Beverly Hills, CA; Greenwich, CT; and Key West, FL, all have in common? Rich people. Those towns are home to some of the wealthiest people on the planet. So, why did Congress "bailout" the 50 richest places in America with \$100 million in Covid-aid?

The bailout was courtesy of the American Rescue Act Plan passed in March 2021. Here are some really fancy places that received a taxpayer-funded bailout: Atherton, CA is the wealthiest place in USA and received a \$1.4 million bailout. Beverly Hills (90210) received \$8 million. Key West, FL received \$10 million and Greenwich, CT received \$20 million.

That's YOUR money and they didn't need it!



## 9. CONGRESS CRAMS 5,000 EARMARKS INTO BUDGET BILL COSTING TAXPAYERS \$9 BILLION

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

While Congressional earmarks were banned for a decade, they made a comeback in 2021.

When Congress [passed](#) its \$1.5 trillion omnibus spending bill, with House approval in less than 24 hours, they were able to cram 5,000 earmarks totaling \$9 billion into the final version of the bill. This [included](#) 3,682 earmarks totaling \$5 billion from Democrats, 1,014 earmarks totaling \$3.4 billion from Republicans, and 266 earmarks totaling \$609 million on a bipartisan basis.

Some of the largest earmarks came from Republicans Sen. Richard Shelby (R-AL), the Ranking Member of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, netted a cool \$551 million in total earmarks for his home state, the highest total amount out of all Members of Congress.



## 10. FAUCI'S NIAID SPENT \$478,188 TO TURN MONKEYS TRANSGENDER

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

According to an [NIH grant](#) originally uncovered by [The National Pulse](#), Fauci's agency awarded grants totaling \$478,188 in Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022 to inject hormones into male monkeys to make them female.

All grantees that receive funding from the NIH are required to follow the ethical guidelines put forth in the [Guide for Care and Use of Laboratory Animals](#). It states that "Studies that may result in...significant alterations in the animals' ability to maintain normal physiology...should include descriptions of appropriate humane endpoints or provide science-based justification for not using a particular, commonly accepted humane endpoint."

It is unclear if an official ethical justification for this experiment was ever provided. The chief bioethicist at the National Institutes of Health is Dr. Anthony Fauci's wife, Christine Grady. Grady [earned \\$238,970 in 2021](#) which is more than the vice president makes each year.

### FLASHBACK



## EPA SPENT \$92 MILLION ON LUXURY FURNITURE

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

The Environmental Protection Agency spent a whopping \$92.4 million over 10 years to buy, rent, install, and store office furniture ranging from \$28,290 for five computer work stations; a \$15,751 Wood Racetrack Conference Table from high-end retailer Herman Miller; to a \$4,047 Herman Miller chair.

The EPA spent \$6,000 on furniture for every one of the agency's then-15,492 employees. A few years later, though, the EPA moved back into it's original building!



## 11. PAID TO STAY HOME - 44 PAID DAYS OFF FOR AVERAGE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE COSTS \$24 BILLION

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

[With the addition of Juneteenth](#), federal employees now have an average of 44 days off every year. That is almost nine full weeks of paid time off. Is this France?

President Joe Biden gave millions of federal employees the day off last year to celebrate the new federal holiday, which marks June 19 as a day to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States.

Before Juneteenth was made a federal holiday, federal employees received pay for 10 federal holidays, 13 sick days and 20 vacation days per year on average.

Auditors at OpenTheBooks.com estimate these benefits cost taxpayers \$24 billion annually. Adding the new 11th federal holiday increases that figure.



## 12. MILLIONAIRE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THEIR TAXPAYER-FUNDED PENSIONS

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

What do Congressional felons and Congressional millionaires have in common? They both get taxpayer-subsidized pensions.

We [calculated](#) that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi qualifies for a \$106,363 annual taxpayer-funded pension, and an additional [\\$47,604 a year](#) in Social Security upon retirement, though she carries an estimated net [worth](#) between \$43 and \$202 million.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (with an estimated [net worth](#) of \$35 million) qualifies for an [estimated](#) \$96,738 pension, and he's also [eligible](#) for Social security amounting to an additional \$46,164 each year.

No members have ever been stripped of their federal pension because of a public corruption conviction. [All members of Congress](#) who serve for five years are eligible for a pension at 62 years old, or at 50 years old if they serve for 20 years.



### **13. UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICES (USPS) LOST \$69 BILLION IN 11 YEARS**

**✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION**

A General Accountability Office [report](#) recently found that the United States Postal Service (USPS) lost \$69 billion in 11 fiscal years.

In 2020, the USPS posted a [\\$9.2 billion loss](#), even while it made \$2 billion more than the year before. Its package delivery was up by almost 19 percent during the pandemic, though it saw a 4.2 percent decrease in first-class mail and 15.2 percent decrease in marketing mail.

Overall, a \$1 increase in USPS revenues resulted in a \$1.15 increase in costs during 2020.

The more the USPS sold, the more money it lost.



## 14. CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP) FIRMS GOT \$200 MILLION-\$400 MILLION IN U.S. COVID AID

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

A legal loophole in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) - meant to help American small businesses - was used by 125 defense firms with strong ties to the Communist Chinese Party to collect hundreds of millions of dollars.

The PPP allowed American subsidiaries of foreign companies to get the forgivable loans, sending millions to Chinese companies, [according to The New York Times](#).

The paper reported that more than 125 companies that Chinese entities own or invest in had received \$192 million to \$419 million, with at least 32 Chinese companies receiving loans of more than \$1 million.

## 15. \$300 BILLION IN HOSPITAL AND HEALTHCARE COVID-AID - AND HOSPITALS FLOUT PRICE TRANSPARENCY

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

In 2021, the three largest hospital systems made \$120 billion and soaked up millions of dollars in Covid-aid. They made all this money while violating the new healthcare price transparency rule.

As of January 2022, 86-percent of hospitals across America were ignoring the transparency rule and NOT posting their prices, according to a study by Patient Rights Advocate.

Just think, there's been a \$300 billion industry bailout, all-time profits, and huge hospital CEO salaries. And yet, the hospitals refuse to disclose the prices they charge!



## 16. \$100 BILLION EMPOWERS U.S. GOVERNMENT TO OWN INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

U.S. Government

Michael Powell, the past chairman of the Federal Communications Commission and current CEO of NCTA - The Internet & Television Association, said President Biden's [plan to give up to \\$100 billion](#) to local governments, non-profits, and co-ops to expand broadband internet, "surprisingly Soviet."

A White House [fact sheet](#) about Biden's \$2 trillion American Jobs Plan gives few details about how the \$100 billion for expanding broadband to 100% of the country will be broken down, but a key component will be tasking local government entities with bringing the internet to underserved areas.

"I thought that it was really out of character the degree to which they embraced this sort of unfounded faith in government-owned networks to own, build and run this program," Powell said.

## 17. \$200 - \$400 BILLION IN COVID-AID UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD

Criminals Worldwide

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

The generous unemployment insurance program that Congress put into place to cover Covid-19-caused job losses has become a cash cow for the world's criminals, con-artists, and crime syndicates.

One company estimates over [\\$200 billion](#) has gone or will go to crooks and cybercriminals.

The cybersecurity firm [Agari explained](#) how a Nigerian cybercrime ring targeted last year's Covid-19 relief CARES Act unemployment insurance.

Criminals "are seeing essentially trillions of dollars that is up for grabs," Crane Hasshold, Agari's senior director of threat research [told NBC News](#). "This is their World Series. This is their Super Bowl."

Thieves applying fraudulently for unemployment checks are stealing the identities of living and, often, still-working Americans. Some even file on behalf of well-known public figures.

It's the largest public fraud in the history of America.

## 18. \$110 MILLION SPENT ON GUNS, AMMO, AND MILITARY-STYLE EQUIPMENT AT NON-MILITARY FEDERAL AGENCIES

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Between 2015 and 2019, 76 non-law enforcement, administrative agencies got \$110 million worth of guns, ammunition and military-style equipment.

The details were published in January 2021 in [our report](#) "Militarization of the U.S. Executive Agencies," reviewing the last two years of President Barack Obama's administration and the first three years of President Donald Trump's administration.

It showed that almost \$1 billion was spent on guns, ammunition, and military-style equipment in the 103 federal agencies outside of the Department of Defense between 2015 and 2019, the latest year available.

Of that spending, \$110.6 million went to 76 non-law enforcement, administrative agencies like the IRS, Environmental Protection Agency and Social Security Administration.



## 19. IVY LEAGUE COLLEGES EARMARKED \$168 MILLION IN COVID-19 RELIEF

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Even with \$193 billion in endowments in 2021 – up from \$140 billion in 2020 – [the eight Ivy League universities](#) received \$168 million in coronavirus bailout money from Congress.

Even in March 2021, the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act included about \$39.6 billion for higher education institutions, including private, nonprofit colleges and universities like the Ivy League universities. That's after the Ivy League colleges received [almost \\$42 billion](#) in various forms of subsidies, payments and tax breaks between 2010 and 2015.

We [estimate the Ivies collective endowment](#) to hit \$1 trillion by 2048.

## 20. UNPAID FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS TOP \$435 BILLION

U.S. Government

### ✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

President Joe Biden has mulled forgiving \$10,000 in student debt per borrower and ending tuition for many students at public colleges, even as graduates already have [not paid back \\$435 billion](#) to the federal government.

Of the government's \$1.4 trillion student loan portfolio, almost one-third is unpaid. That \$435 billion is compared to the \$535 billion that private lenders lost on subprime mortgages during the 2008 financial crisis.

As the debate over implementing free college tuition and canceling student debt continues, policy experts, journalists and the public should keep this \$435 billion figure in mind.





**FLASHBACK** **FEDERAL AGENCIES SPENT \$4.4 BILLION ON PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR)**

**✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION**

Between 2007 and 2014, the federal government spent \$4.4 billion on public affairs salaries, bonuses, and outside public relations contractors.

There were 3,092 public affairs officers employed in more than 200 federal agencies, 1,858 of whom made at least \$100,000 in base pay in 2014.

Our [oversight report](#), "The Department of Self-Promotion" showed that the federal government ranked as the second largest public relations firm in the world. Besides the 3,092 public affairs officers, 139 federal agencies spent another \$2 billion during those years on 2,403 outside PR consultants.



**21. FEDS GIVE \$300,000 TO VIRTUAL REALITY PENGUIN STUDY**

National Science Foundation

**✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION**

The University of Wisconsin got \$300,000 from the National Science Foundation in 2020 for Arctic and Antarctic research studying penguins through a virtual reality experience.

The grant provides for a project called "Becoming Joey: Promoting Informal Learning Through Embodiment in an Adélie Penguin Virtual Reality Experience."

To better understand the polar regions, the virtual reality research is "to encourage and support basic research that is best conducted in or can only be conducted in the Arctic and Antarctic."

The small black-and-white tuxedoed little fellas may be cute but \$300,000 for virtual reality? It's for the birds.





## 22. \$38.5 MILLION FOR 100 FARMERS MARKETS PROMOTION PROGRAM

U.S. Department of Agriculture

[READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

While everyone can appreciate a local farmers market for fresh produce, eggs, cheese and pies – but is it worth \$38.5 million?

That is how much the U.S. Department of Agriculture gave to 100 farmers markets for its Farmers Market Promotion Program.

The funding will support promoting the farmers markets, which are aimed at getting products directly to consumers without middlemen. The grant includes funding for developing marketing strategies for the farmers markets, roadside stands and similar activities.

It includes adapting to changing technology, promoting new business opportunities and marketing strategies to reduce on-farm food waste, according to the grant description.

All are good ideas for these small businesses, but \$38.5 million is a lot of money to spend for these for-profit businesses who sell their goods at a premium rate.



## 23. CALIFORNIA HAD A \$76 BILLION SURPLUS AND CONGRESS GAVE THEM ANOTHER \$26 BILLION "BAILOUT"

[READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Thanks to its high earners paying lots of taxes, California had an unexpected \$75.7 billion state budget surplus. But it still got \$26 billion from President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan Act.



When U.S. House Democrats changed the state bailout allocation from population to unemployment rate in the Rescue Plan, California picked up an additional \$6.6 billion. Big losers were states like Georgia (-\$1.5 million) and West Virginia (-\$900 million) as their federal tax dollars were sent to California (and \$6 billion to New York).

California Governor Gavin Newsom used the excess to give \$8.1 billion to residents in the form of "stimulus checks." In 2021, California state government racked up another \$100 billion budget surplus! They never needed a congressional "Bailout."



## 24. FEDS ADMIT \$281 BILLION IN IMPROPER PAYMENTS IN 2021 (NOT INCLUDING COVID-AID PAYMENTS)

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 2021, \$281 billion of taxpayer money was improperly spent, according to a Government Accountability Office [report](#).

Improper payments are payments made by the U.S. government that should not have been made or have been made in an incorrect amount. Each year, the Treasury Department quantifies the prior year's improper payments and the GAO audits them.

At OpenTheBooks.com, we reported that trillions have been improperly spent [since 2004](#).

In 2021, the Treasury admitted to over \$281 billion in improper payments, a \$75 billion [increase](#) from the \$206 billion in improper payments the GAO found in 2020.

One might think the increase came from massive Covid-19 relief programs. However, the auditors generally excluded major relief programs like the Paycheck Protection Program from their analysis, meaning the amount may be much higher.



## 25. KENNEDY CENTER RECEIVED \$270 MILLION, PAID ITS PRESIDENT \$5 MILLION+ SINCE 2016

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

When Congress authorized the [John F. Kennedy Center](#) for the Performing Arts in 1958, it was with the premise the facility would be self-sustaining and privately funded. But since 2016, the Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, has collected \$270 million in federal funds, and its president, Deborah Rutter, made \$5.1 million.

In March 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act – CARES Act – gave the Center \$25 million, \$22 million of which was for payroll. Yet, days later, Rutter emailed employees announcing furloughs because, even with the funding, “the Kennedy Center would run out of cash as early as July.”

Even during the pandemic, in 2020, the Center increased its net assets by \$3.3 million.



**FLASHBACK**



## **NASA SPENT \$1 MILLION TO PREPARE RELIGIONS FOR THE DISCOVERY OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE**

[\*\*✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION\*\*](#)

Assuming that there's life on other planets, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration gave the Center for Theological Inquiry in Princeton, New Jersey \$1.1 million in 2015 to research "the societal implications of astrobiology," the study of life in the universe.

NASA enlisted these theologians to answer the question of how the world's religions would respond if extraterrestrial life were discovered.

The grant raises the question: should government have funded a study on whether Christians freak out upon finding that little green men exist?

## **26. AN ARMY OF 35,940 LAWYERS WORK IN 203 U.S. FEDERAL AGENCIES COSTING TAXPAYERS MORE THAN \$5 BILLION EACH YEAR**

U.S. Government

[\*\*✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION\*\*](#)

If the all the federal lawyers moved to a new city in Wyoming, it would be the third most populous town in the state!

Those costly counselors amount to \$5.2 billion of taxpayer money in 2019, the latest year available.

Yet, only one-third of the lawyers work at The Department of Justice - going after bad guys. That means two of every three federal lawyers are enforcing the administrative state. They're enforcing the laws on you.





## 27. UNITED STATES PAID \$562.4 BILLION ON NATIONAL DEBT INTEREST PAYMENTS LAST YEAR

U.S. Government

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

According to the [United States Treasury](#), the United States spent \$562.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2021 on interest payments alone. This money isn't going towards paying off our current \$30 trillion debt obligations, this just covers the cost of borrowing the money.

In the last two fiscal years, the U.S. spent nearly \$1.1 trillion to pay interest on our national debt.

President Obama and President Trump both contributed to the debt, with Obama adding about \$9 trillion in eight years, and Trump adding approximately the same in four years.

Where does the U.S. go from here? The national debt needs fixing, and fast.

## 28. STATE DEPARTMENT GAVE \$25,000 IN GRANTS TO CHINESE SURFERS

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

Surf's up in Guangzhou!

According to a recent grant notice, the United States' Mission to China is funding [a \\$25,000 grant](#) to "carry out a program to engage Hainan's surfing community and local environmentally active social media influencers on the topic of climate change and impacts to ocean environments." It's your tax dollars at work in the surf of the South China Sea.

That's right. While Beijing continues its military buildup in the South China Sea, the Biden Administration is making sure surfers enjoy the waves!





## 29. \$9.4 MILLION TO KYRGYZ REPUBLIC FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

The federal government recently gave \$9.4 million to support rule of law and anti-corruption activity in the Kyrgyz Republic, a former member of the Soviet Union, and landlocked country in Central Asia with 6.5 million people, slightly less than the population of Indiana.

The American money would be used to “strengthen the judiciary, strengthen justice and legal services to address legal problems, resolve disputes, and protect fundamental rights and thus close the justice gap,” among other things.

The goals sound noble, but that \$9.4 million could be used here to address many domestic problems, like the hundreds of billions in [unemployment fraud](#) that scammers have perpetrated.



## 30. WITH \$1 BILLION SURPLUS, CONGRESS “BAILED OUT” TEXAS FOR \$17 BILLION

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

While Texas had a \$1 billion budget surplus in 2021, it got a bailout from the federal government, collecting another \$17 billion in federal stimulus funds from The American Rescue Plan.

The coronavirus “bailout” for Texas is just part of the \$350 billion in aid for state and local governments after a year of pandemic shutdowns and struggling economies.

The spending plan made no distinction between states that managed its finances well and states that didn’t, between states that had extensive shutdowns and those that didn’t, between states that have gotten some of its tourism dollars back and those that haven’t welcomed tourists back.

Republicans in Congress all voted “no,” yet, Republican governors took the dough.



**FLASHBACK**



National Institutes of Health

**U.S. GAVE \$183,750 TO TEACH CHINESE KIDS HOW TO CROSS THE STREET**

[\*\*✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION\*\*](#)

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates that 6,025 pedestrians died in 2019 and deaths sharply increased in the first half of 2020.

Yes, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services gave a \$183,750 grant in 2016 to fund a virtual reality platform to teach Chinese children how to cross the street.

The funding went to the University of Alabama at Birmingham to develop a virtual reality platform that would be available via an internet connection on computers, tablets, and phones.

While children should be safe while crossing the street anywhere, American taxpayers should be funding their own safety initiatives before that of China's.



**31. \$18.2 MILLION CONGRESSIONAL SLUSH FUND FOR WORKPLACE DISPUTES**

[\*\*✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION\*\*](#)

The Office of Congressional Workplace Rights paid \$18.2 million since 1997 to settle 291 cases of workplace disputes for Congress, the Capitol Police, the Architect of the Capitol, and the Library of Congress.

The fund includes payouts for workplace safety and pay disputes, as well as sexual harassment (#MeToo) claims, though many specifics are not reported.

Though 60 allegations of "Sex/Gender/Pregnancy" discrimination were filed in 2018-2019, it is not known if those types of discrimination or harassment cases were against congressional offices or other offices under the fund.

After 23 years and \$18 million in payouts, taxpayers should know more details.

## 32. YALE ADMINISTRATOR ALLEGEDLY STOLE \$40 MILLION IN COMPUTERS

U.S. Government

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

Former Yale administrator Jamie Petrone recently pled guilty to wire fraud and filing false tax returns for stealing \$40 million from Yale by [buying computers](#) and reselling them for personal gain.

Over the eight years that she ran the alleged scheme, Petrone [told investigators](#) that 90 percent of the purchases she made were fraudulent, adding up to \$40 million. She used the money to buy Mercedes, Cadillacs, a Range Rover, and a Dodge Charger. She also co-owned three properties in Connecticut and another in Georgia.

Yale is the recipient of billions of dollars in taxpayer funds at the federal, state, and local level of government.

Taxpayer money into Yale included \$6 billion [saved in special tax treatment](#) on their \$42.3 billion endowment since 2015; \$3 billion in federal contracts, grants and direct payments [in a recent four-year period](#); special tax treatment of their nearly \$3 billion in tax exempt bonds; and tens of millions of dollars [in state payments annually](#).

Why are the feds funding Yale when they don't have basic accounting controls and an employee can steal \$40 million?

## 33. "FAKE FARMS" RECEIVED \$2 MILLION IN COVID-19 AID MEANT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

### ✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION

Getting the forgivable Paycheck Protection Program loans have been so easy, making it rife with fraud. Hundreds of fake farm businesses applied for and received the money to "pay" their employees during the Covid-19 pandemic shutdowns, [ProPublica reported](#).



The investigative piece reveals that beach towns in Ocean County, New Jersey were the locations for these phantom farms – wheat farm "Ritter Wheat Club" and tree nut farm "Deely Nuts," each got \$20,833, the maximum PPP funds available for sole proprietorships, the ProPublica exposé showed.

No wonder there's tens of millions of dollars of fraud in the PPP program. Turns out that giving financial incentives to lend without asking too many questions is a bad combination.

## 34. U.S. GAVE RUSSIAN LAB \$550,000 FOR GRUESOME CAT EXPERIMENTS

In 2021, the U.S. sent the Pavlov Institute of Physiology in St. Petersburg, Russia \$550,000 to conduct horrific experiments on cats, according to the [White Coat Waste Project](#).

The Washington Free Beacon [reported](#) that one of the [experiments](#) from the St. Petersburg lab included 18 cats getting “decerebrated” and then walked on a treadmill.

Decerebration involves eliminating cerebral brain function by cutting across the brain stem, losing certain reflexes. In this experiment, the researchers attached electrodes to the spinal cords to direct the cats’ motions on a treadmill.

Six Republican congress members wrote a [letter](#) in March asking President Biden to stop the funding. According to the letter, the National Institutes of Health has approved four Russian labs to receive U.S. taxpayer funding. Additionally, 27 labs in China receive NIH funding, for a total of 31 labs in both countries.

Sadly, the National Institutes of Health has a record of funding live animal experimentation, with recently reported examples including [injecting beagles with cocaine](#) and [getting monkeys high on marijuana](#).



## 35. HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) HAD \$2 BILLION IN QUESTIONED COSTS AND \$16 BILLION TO PUT TO BETTER USE - AUDIT

Between April 1 and September 31, 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services accrued over \$2 billion in questioned costs, along with over \$16.2 billion in funds that could have been put to better use, according to an inspector general [report](#) (pgs. 79-83).

Executive agencies are required to provide a semi-annual report to Congress for oversight. In their most recent report, the HHS claims that, over a six-month period, they found \$2.09 billion in questioned costs for which no management decision had been made by the end of the reporting period. Questioned costs are defined by the Inspector General Act as an alleged violation of law or contract, a cost without adequate documentation, or a cost with an unnecessary or unreasonable intended purpose.

Additionally, according to the report, the Inspector General found over \$16.2 billion in funds that could have been put to better use. This includes funds that could have been used more efficiently if management followed inspector general recommendations.

While the \$2 billion in questioned costs is bad enough, losing \$16.2 billion in funds that could have been put to better use is outrageous.

**FLASHBACK**



**NATIONAL "SCIENCE" FOUNDATION - \$300,000 STUDY ASKS: IS RECYCLING MANLY?**

✓ **READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION**

The National Science Foundation gave Penn State University researchers \$300,000 to complete several studies in 2015 and 2016, including ones that looked at whether an activity is a feminine or masculine behavior.

The study organizers had 960 people participate in the three studies, the first two of which included reading fictional summaries "of a person's daily activities, which included either feminine, masculine or neutral pro-environmental behaviors."

The studies showed that pro-environmental behaviors deemed "feminine" or "masculine" may affect people's perceptions about the person. If you are a man carrying reusable shopping bags or a woman caulking windows, watch out, because your sexual orientation could be in question.



**36. FEDS GIVE CREDITS FOR WOOD BURNERS, THEN \$2.1 MILLION IN GRANTS TO REMOVE THEM**

✓ **READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION**

It's duplication nation. Look no further than the Environmental Protection Agency and Congress for the latest example of one hand not knowing what the other is doing.

The EPA is funding \$2.1 million in grants to replace residential wood-burning stoves and fireplaces with electric heat pumps in the San Francisco Bay Area, as reported by [JustTheNews.com](http://JustTheNews.com).

The funding is part of the EPA's larger [Targeted Airshed Grant Program](#) to reduce air pollution, which has spent tens of millions of dollars in the last several years.

This is as Congress passed the \$900 billion Covid-19 relief package, which includes tax credits for people who install home heating and hot water systems that use wood pellets, chips and cordwood.

Congress has created a maze of bureaucracy and overlap, with duplicative programs costing taxpayers.





## 37. NIH GAVE \$500,000 TO STUDY GAMBLING PIGEON

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Recently, National Institutes of Health gave researchers at Reed College in Portland, Ore. \$465,339 to “create a token-based economy where pigeons are taught to gamble with slot machines.” The pigeons were given tokens, and could choose whether to spend, save or gamble them.

While researchers claimed the study help them understand behavioral economics, the NIH didn’t explain how pigeons’ gambling habits relate to human’s gambling habits. Incredibly, they admitted the study focused more on “laboratory models rather than practical applications.”

## 38. FEDS SPENT \$1.2 BILLION IN TAXPAYER MONEY ON FILMS OVER 14 YEARS

U.S. Government

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Between 2008 and 2021, \$1.2 billion in taxpayer money was spent on video production and distribution and other related filming categories.

The Department of Defense was responsible for most of it, shelling out \$721 million, more than the next eight agencies combined. NASA spent \$124 million, and the Department of the Interior spent \$75 million, respectively.

For example, Old Post Films, Inc. collected \$16 million for “Starting Strong Season II,” part two of an [infomercial series](#) to encourage young Americans to join the Army.

That company billed taxpayers \$756.17 per hour for senior executive producers for the series (annualized rate of \$1.4 million), while junior executive producers made \$347.46 hourly (annualized rate of \$700,000).



Consultants on the series made \$191.44 per hour (annualized rate of \$382,000) and makeup artists/hair stylists got \$47.34 per hour (annualized rate of \$94,000) among other staff.



## 39. THE HYDRODYNAMICS OF DEFECATION - A STUDY OF BEASTS POOPING

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

A study looking at how much various animals poop was funded with up to a half-million dollar federal grant and frankly, it stinks.

Did you know that an African elephant can poop up to 16.3 pounds per day? The study titled "Hydrodynamics of Defecation" measured the size, shape and other measurements of feces from various mammals.

It was funded with \$1,490 from Georgia Tech President's Undergraduate Research Awards, and the theory explored in the defecation research came about during other research done thanks to a \$556,584 grant from the National Science Foundation.

The group of researchers at Georgia Institute of Technology and University of Alabama at Birmingham, which documented the bowel movements of the beasts and included four videos of the animals' private moments, thought it was important to "understand the physics by which feces are discharged."



## 40. KANYE WEST'S SNEAKER CO. GOT \$2.4 MILLION IN PPP COVID-AID FUNDING

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Kanye West, who claims a [net worth](#) of \$3.2 billion, [took home \\$2.4 million](#) in coronavirus relief from the Paycheck Protection Program for his clothing and sneaker company, Yeezy LLC.

His company, [he told The Wall Street Journal](#), had a value of \$2.9 billion, with \$1.5 billion in yearly revenues.



The PPP loan program was created to help businesses pay their employees during the coronavirus pandemic. The loans were forgivable as long as the businesses retained their employees and did not cut their paychecks.

### FLASHBACK



National Institutes of Health

## \$3 MILLION TO STUDY IF PEOPLE PREFER RECYCLED, BOTTLED OR TAP WATER

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

If you've ever wondered which tastes better, recycled wastewater, bottled water or tap water, a [2018 study](#) has the answers.

Researchers at the University of California, Riverside, published the study on which type of water tasted better. The study was funded with \$3 million in grants from the National Science Foundation between 2012 and 2016.



The researchers asked 143 people to select which they preferred, with tap water being the least popular, while recycled water and bottled water scored about the same.

\$3 million later and we know that people don't hate the taste of recycled water.



## 43. SPOTTING COWS FROM SPACE COST TAXPAYERS AT LEAST \$45,000

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Ten undergraduate students in a UC Santa Barbara lab asked for eight months whether they were looking at a cow or native tule elk.

They were spotting the wildlife and livestock on satellite images for a study that looked at the interactions between the two animals where their ranges met or overlapped in the Point Reyes National Seashore in Marin County, California.

Funded with a combined \$45,000 from National Science Foundation and the Digital Globe Foundation, researchers had GPS monitoring data from collared elk and field-based surveys of the elk. But they lacked information on the cows, mainly their movements and habits.

These studies may be for scientific purposes, but they sound an awful lot like bull.

## 44. FEDERAL INTERIOR DESIGNERS MADE \$120 MILLION SINCE 2017

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 2019, there were 15 federal agencies that employed 286 full-time interior designers who made up to \$165,417 annually, with salaries totaling \$24.3 million. The cost of healthcare, pension and other benefits would add at least 30 percent - an additional \$7.5 million per year.

While the average salary was \$83,185, 58 designers made between \$100,000 and \$165,417.

In the last year of the Obama administration, there were 270 interior designers, costing [\\$22.1 million in salaries](#). Today, there are 286 employed.

Over the past four years, we estimate \$95 million was spent on interior designers within federal agencies. The amount would likely exceed \$120 million when adding the cost of benefits.



## 45. CONVICTED CONGRESSMAN CHAKA FATTAH GETS \$1 MILLION LIFETIME PENSION

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Disgraced former Congressman Chaka Fattah was released from prison [after about one year](#) in prison after being sentenced to 10 years for a 23-count conviction for racketeering, fraud and other corruption charges.

On top of that, Fattah is collecting a taxpayer-funded pension estimated at least \$55,000 per year because [no member of Congress](#) has ever been stripped of their pension.

Fattah is only 64 years old, so his estimated lifetime pension is \$1 million. He even started his own private company [after being released from prison](#) during Covid!

After Congress tightened ethics laws, convicted members of Congress were supposed to lose federal pensions. However, the law was riddled with loopholes, leaving convicted felons to collect taxpayer-funded pensions.

Image Source Public Domain image of U.S. Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA): <http://fattah.house.gov/press-kit/>

### FLASHBACK



## CREEPY VOICEMAILS FROM 2065 SAY THE WORLD IS DEVASTATED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

An eerie way to spend \$5.7 million from the government is creating fake voicemails from the future, people in 2065 saying that climate change has devastated the Earth and Alaska and California are without water.

In 2012, Columbia University's Climate Center received the \$5.7 million taxpayer-funded grant from the National Science Foundation to "engage adult learners and inform public understanding and response to climate change."

Anyone with the voice memo feature on their iPhone could have done a better job.





## 46. DESPITE \$53.2 BILLION ENDOWMENT, HARVARD GETS \$22 MILLION IN FEDERAL-PAID WORK STUDY FUNDS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

With a [\\$53.2 billion endowment](#), Harvard received \$22.2 million since 2016 from the U.S. Department of Education's Federal Work Study Program, a financial aid program for U.S. citizens and permanent residents in college and working part time.

While the program benefits students, it also benefits employers – whether the university itself or an outside employer – by giving the subsidy to employers to help pay the student employee.

That large sum raises the question: should wealthy private universities like Harvard benefit from the federal taxpayer-funded program that subsidizes its cost to employ students?



## 47. HARVARD SPENT \$75,000 IN FEDERAL GRANTS TO BLOW LIZARDS OFF TREES WITH LEAF BLOWERS

U.S. Government

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 2020, National Science Foundation funded a [study](#) to examine how well different types of lizards could hang on to trees. They were concerned about increasing frequency of hurricanes and high-speed winds due to climate change - especially their effects on the anole lizard population.

So they decided to test how long anole lizards could hang onto trees in these onerous conditions.

To study this, they spent over \$75,000 to blow leaf blowers at lizards on trees.

Why is Harvard receiving a \$75,000 grant when it has a [\\$53.2 billion endowment](#) - up \$10 billion year-over-year?



## 48. \$1.3 MILLION FOR SHRIMP TO RUN ON TREADMILLS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Even after the National Science Foundation was criticized five years ago for [funding an experiment](#) that tested how illness impaired shrimp mobility by putting the crustaceans on a treadmill, the agency continued to fund the experiments through June 2018.

The NSF started funding experiments with shrimp and treadmills in 2007 with an initial \$560,000 grant.

Through the College of Charleston, researchers measured the crustaceans' responses to low oxygen and high carbon dioxide environments in a variety of ways, among other tests.



## 49. \$390,000 TO STUDY IF PARK VISITORS LIKE THE LIGHTING

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

The National Park Service funded a \$390,000 study to determine if NPS park visitors like the lighting.

Women and men might approach their enjoyment of Park Service lighting differently, but the agency anticipated this.

Grant applications should examine “night adapted vision and gender” and also “any variables that might influence human behavior, functional abilities, or perceptions toward artificial light at night.”

According to NPS, the study was necessary because “there is very little understanding about human reactions and expectations with respect to outdoor lighting in national park settings. These perceptions likely influence visitors’ feelings of safety, behavior, enjoyment, and ability to enjoy the night sky and participate in the numerous astronomy based interpretive programs system wide.”



## 50. CORNELL’S ROBOTS WANT A BOTTLE OF WHITE, BOTTLE OF RED—COSTING TAXPAYERS \$1.2 MILLION

U.S. Department of Agriculture

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Cornell University has a [\\$10 billion endowment](#), yet has received \$1.5 billion in grants since 2017, including \$1.2 million since 2019 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to help vineyards manage themselves.

The funding to Big Red was for touch sensitive technologies for improved vineyard management.

“This project aims to develop an automated vineyard system to accurately determine vine yield, leaf area to fruit ratio, and cluster integrity based on touch-sensitive soft robots (rather than the industry standard of computer vision), accurately estimating grape vine yields prior to harvest,” a summary of the project says.

The grant partially funded a seminar titled, “Robots, Wine and Food, a seminar on Precision Agriculture at Cornell and beyond.”

# THE GOLDEN FLEECE AWARDS

## 1975-1988

*"The most successful public relations device in politics today"*  
- The Washington Post

Sen. William Proxmire, a Democrat from Wisconsin, [gave awards](#) to wasteful and nonsensical spending, [eventually handing out](#) 168 Golden Fleece Awards between 1975 and 1988.

Inspired by the wasteful and sometimes silly spending he saw, Proxmire began giving out "Golden Fleece" awards to public officials for wasteful spending.

He gave the first award to the National Science Foundation for spending \$84,000 on a [study on love](#), commenting, "I believe that 200 million other Americans want to leave some things in life a mystery, and right on top of the things we don't want to know is why a man falls in love with a woman and vice versa."

He doled out awards to the Federal Aviation Administration for spending \$57,800 on a study of the physical measurements of [432 flight attendants](#) - paying particular attention to "the length of the buttocks," and how [knees were arranged](#) when they were seated. More awards went to the National Institute on Drug Abuse for a \$121,000 study on developing "some objective evidence concerning marijuana's effect on sexual arousal" on male pot smokers.

THE  
GOLDEN  
FLEECE  
AWARD







## 1. 'DEAR JOHN' CAMPAIGN – ENCOURAGING AMERICANS TO WRITE LETTERS COST USPS \$19M

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 1977, U.S. Sen. William Proxmire gave a Golden Fleece Award to the U.S. Postal Service for spending \$3.4 million – \$15 million in 2021 dollars – on an ad campaign between 1975-1976 to encourage Americans to write more letters to one another.

But the Postal Service also spent another \$775,000 to study whether the campaign worked, costing taxpayers more than \$4 million in 2021 dollars, bringing the total cost of this project to \$19 million in 2021 dollars.

The Postal Service was trying to drum up more business for itself, a dubious task at best, the senator noted.

The \$775,000 wasn't money well spent, as Postal Service bureaucrats were unable to agree on what the results were and indicated they might spend another \$1 million for additional testing in 1978.



## 2. IN 1977, DOJ ASKED: WHY DO INMATES WANT TO ESCAPE FROM PRISON?

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 1977, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration spent nearly \$27,000 – \$119,938 in 2021 dollars – to determine why inmates want to escape from prison. The number of people incarcerated in state, federal and other detention facilities the U.S. hovers around 2 million – more before the Covid-19 pandemic and fewer once the pandemic was underway.

That number was far lower in 1977 with only 278,141 people incarcerated.

Still, Sen. William Proxmire [gave one of his well-known awards](#) to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration that year.

Until it was dissolved in 1988, the LEAA was a part of the U.S. Department of Justice. A study to consider why someone sitting in a prison cell wants to leave is the height of wasteful spending and deserved Proxmire's award.







National Institute  
of Mental Health

### 3. U.S. SPENT \$97K TO STUDY PERUVIAN BROTHELS

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 1979, the National Institute of Mental Health spent \$97,000 – \$384,000 in 2022 dollars – to fund a study that examined behavior and social relationships in Peruvian brothels.

Sen. William Proxmire, a Democrat from Wisconsin, awarded the National Institute of Mental Health his Golden Fleece Award for this unnecessary project.

The study consisted of a researcher and his associate spending 18 months in Peru.

As part of their research, they interviewed 21 prostitutes, as well as brothel staff members, both formally and informally. They also observed prostitutes outside the brothel and visited the brothel at random times throughout the day to “obtain a good idea of its everyday functioning.”

Proxmire said that the researchers kept going back to the brothel “in the interests of accuracy.”



### 4. GROUNDBREAKING STUDY COST TAXPAYERS \$207,230: COOKING EGGS TAKES 30 SECONDS

U.S. Department of Agriculture

✓ [READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 1977, the U.S. Department of Agriculture spent nearly \$46,000 – \$207,230 in 2021 dollars – to find out how long it takes [to cook breakfast](#).

Sen. William Proxmire gave the USDA a [Golden Fleece award](#), deeming the funds a waste of taxpayer money.

The study looked at how long it took to fry two eggs for breakfast.

The verdict was 838 time measurement units, or TMUs (one TMU equals .036 seconds). That’s 30 seconds to fry two eggs, which must have been over easy.

While such an endeavor can elicit a chuckle from even the most serious of cooks, it doesn’t seem that spending \$207,230 to determine it takes 30 seconds to fry two eggs was worth the money.



## 5. GROUNDBREAKING 1976 STUDY FINDS MALE DRIVERS DISTRACTED BY WOMEN

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

All it takes to distract a male driver in Chicago is a woman walking by. That'll be \$46,100, please – \$221,185 in 2021 dollars.

In 1976, the National Science Foundation gave \$46,100 to Dr. Robert A. Baron at Purdue University to study whether women distracted Chicago's male drivers from honking their horns at a stopped car.

The study looked to see if sexual arousal, humor and empathy reduced the aggression of horn honking, so Dr. Baron had a young woman walk past a stopped driver. The women were dressed in a variety of ways – to consider whether sexual arousal played a role, the woman was dressed in a revealing outfit.

To look at whether humor played a role in the driver's response to the stopped car, the woman wore a clown mask.

To test empathy's role, the women wore a bandage on her left leg and walked on crutches.

Dr. Baron found that all three reduced the amount of honking.

Proxmire called this "contrived research" and gave the NSF a [Golden Fleece award](#) to signify its wasteful use of taxpayer dollars.



## 6. IN 1974, VP'S HOME BECAME A "POSH, PLUSH PLEASURE PALACE" COSTING \$2.6M

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

Sen. William Proxmire objected when Congress wanted to spend \$15,000 in 1974 to maintain and decorate the home of the chief of naval operations for the vice president's use.

The measure passed and the Democrat from Wisconsin was assured that "nothing elaborate was contemplated" and that only necessary furnishing would be done and cost \$15,000 – \$72,000 in 2021 dollars.

The house that was to become Vice President Nelson Rockefeller's temporary home and the budget morphed into a \$537,000 expenditure "for a posh, plush pleasure palace," Proxmire said in awarding the Department of the Navy the Golden Fleece award in 1976 [for wasting taxpayer funds](#).



## 7. IN 1978, \$8.4M SPENT ON A NEVER-COMPLETED POLICE CAR

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In 1978, the feds spent \$2 million on developing a [prototype police patrol car](#) – equal to \$8.4 million in 2021 dollars – but they never completed the project.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, part of the U.S. Department of Justice, earned a Golden Fleece Award by U.S. Senator William Proxmire (D-Wis.) to highlight the folly of spending such an outrageous sum on a prototype that was never completed.

If completed, the car was to be filled with gadgets and would have cost \$49,078 each – \$205,497 in 2021 dollars.

Police cars used in New York City, the largest and one of the oldest police departments in the country, include Chevrolet Impalas, costing as much as \$31,620; Dodge Chargers were high as \$30,755; Ford Crown Victoria (discontinued in 2012) was as high as \$29,905, among others.

Proxmire was right to turn on the flashing lights and sirens on this taxpayer boondoggle.



## 8. 1978 STUDY FINDS THAT DRIVERS DISLIKE LARGE TRUCKS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

In June 1978, the Federal Highway Administration spent \$222,000 – \$934,000 in 2021 dollars – to study motorist's attitudes toward large trucks, [earning it a Golden Fleece Award](#) from U.S. Sen. William Proxmire.

Among the questions asked to 2,430 drivers were: Do you consider large trucks to: contribute to traffic congestion? Block a driver's vision? Travel too fast on highways? Travel too slow going up hills? Do you consider side splash from trucks on wet roads to be a problem? That the smoke and fumes from these trucks might be a problem?

The survey came after a similar \$1 million study a few years earlier on the effect of truck size and weight on accident experience and traffic operations, as well as a \$298,000 study before that on the effects of truck size on driver behavior.

It is well established that many drivers dislike driving near large trucks and this third study, like those that came before it, did little to justify the cost to taxpayers.



## 9. 1977 FEDERAL STUDY CONSIDERED WHY PEOPLE ARE RUDE ON TENNIS COURTS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

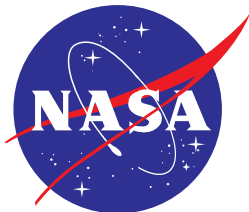
If you've ever exhibited rage on the tennis court, the National Endowment for the Humanities has a study for you.

In 1977, the NEH won a [Golden Fleece award](#) from Sen. William Proxmire for giving a \$2,500 grant – \$11,000 in 2021 dollars – to Arlington County, Virginia, to study why people are rude, cheat, and lie on the local tennis courts.

"The federal taxpayer should not be taxed to determine why tennis can't always be a 'love game,'" Proxmire said.

The NEH gave the grant "to determine why tennis players hog the courts, become frustrated when they have to wait to play, and what responsibility local tennis players have in trying to help the county solve its problem with overcrowding on the courts," Proxmire's press release said at the time.

The NEH justified the grant by saying that tennis players lie about how long they play and resist requests to prove local residency on un-monitored public courts.



## 10. IN 1970S, NASA GOT \$13.5M TO STORE SPACE ROCKS

[✓ READ OUR REALCLEARPOLICY INVESTIGATION](#)

What NASA needed in the mid-1970s was more space to store its space rocks. That's what the agency said when it requested \$2.8 million – \$13.5 million in 2021 dollars – to build an addition to the existing Lunar Receiving Laboratory at the Johnson Space Center to house 100 pounds of moon rocks.

It's also what earned it a [Golden Fleece award](#) in 1976 from Sen. William Proxmire.

"The fiscal irony of NASA's request is that it is not needed," Proxmire said. "In 1971, after spending \$8.7 million to house the moon rocks, NASA curator Dr. Michael Duke indicated that the existing building would be 'the permanent facility for storage, handling and doing detailed studies of the rocks.'"



## 11. FAA BUYS NEW INSTRUMENTS TO KEEP METEOROLOGISTS DRY

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Few, if any, people like to work in the rain and apparently meteorologists are no different.

So in the mid-1970s, the Federal Aviation Administration spent over \$417,000—more than \$3 million in 2021 dollars – on 95 new meteorological instruments so that its employees could make rain predictions from the indoors.

The FAA already had instruments to perform the same function but they had to be read outdoors.

That’s why in 1976, Sen. William Proxmire gave the FAA a [Golden Fleece award](#).



“No longer will FAA employees have to sing ‘Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on My Head’ as they make their forecasts,” Proxmire said on the Senate floor in May 1976. “No longer need they fear precipitation during prognostication.”



## 12. IN 1976, \$1.2M TO STUDY “WHY NEW TOWNS GO BROKE”

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In 1976, The Department of Housing and Urban Development wanted to know why new towns go broke. But that’s a question that has been answered many times before, making the \$245,000 that was spent on a study – \$1.2 million in 2021 dollars – a waste, Sen. William Proxmire said.

“Over the last decade, new towns and new communities have been studied to death while most of the new towns are either dead or dying,” Proxmire said. “We need another new town study like Boston needs beans or Jimmy Carter needs peanuts.”

He gave HUD a [Golden Fleece award](#), noting that new towns require a “massive investment” without having any cash flow, a problem cited in many of the 67 new town studies stored in the Library of Congress.





## 13. IN 1977, PENTAGON MISUSED \$52.3M WORTH OF AIRCRAFT

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The Pentagon used military aircraft for personal and support flights so much that it cost taxpayers \$52.3 million – \$237 million in 2021 dollars – a Department of Defense audit found in 1977.

That massive misuse of the planes won the Pentagon a [Golden Fleece award](#) from Sen. William Proxmire.

The DOD audit found that the military planes were often used for low priority missions – support and personal flights – instead of for combat training and for flights where available commercial transportation was many times cheaper.

"It is a classic example of putting the privileges of rank and the logistics tail before the combat teeth," Proxmire said.

## 14. IN 1976, U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WENT \$67B OVER BUDGET

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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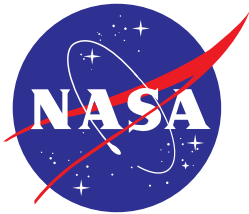
Mismanagement at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was so bad in 1976 that it was responsible for cost overruns of 178 projects that totaled \$14 billion – \$67 billion in 2021 dollars.

That year, Sen. William Proxmire gave the Corps a [Golden Fleece Award](#).

With 178 major projects underway, 83 of them, or 47 percent, had cost overruns of 100 percent or more, Proxmire said in giving out the award.

Those projects were initially slated to cost \$12.7 billion but increased costs led to a new price tag of \$26.7 billion, a \$14 billion (or 110 percent) increase.

A flood control project at Caesar Creek Lake in Ohio cost 243 percent of its original price; flood control in Cooper Lake, Texas was up 325 percent; Fire Island Inlet, New York also increased 325 percent; Sacramento River Bank increased 356 percent; and hurricane protection in New Orleans, Louisiana was up 1,027 percent.



## 15. IN 1978, NASA SPENT \$63 MILLION SEARCHING FOR ET

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

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Many people wonder whether there's other life outside of Earth, but not many spend more than \$14 million to try to find it.

That's what NASA proposed to do for seven years beginning in 1978, spending the equivalent of up to \$63 million in 2021 dollars.

That spending [earned NASA a Golden Fleece award](#) from Sen. William Proxmire.

The funding was slated to go to a jet propulsion lab in Pasadena, California to conduct "an all-sky, all-frequency search for radio signals from intelligent extra-terrestrial life."

The purpose was to build an observational and technological framework on which future, more sensitive search-for-extra-terrestrial-intelligence programs can be based, Proxmire said then.

"At a time when the country is faced with a \$61 billion budget deficit, the attempt to detect radio waves from solar systems should be postponed until right after the federal budget is balanced and income and social security taxes are reduced to zero," Proxmire said.

*Photo by NASA on Unsplash.*

# PREVIOUS OVERSIGHT



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**MAPPING THE SWAMP**  
*A Study of the Administrative  
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**U.S. FOREIGN AID**  
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### In 2020...

*The President's Budget To Congress FY2021* included a first-ever chapter, "Stopping Wasteful and Unnecessary Spending," which was inspired by our oversight report, *Where's The Pork? A Study of \$600 Billion In Federal Grants*. Included in the President's Budget was our report, *Use-It-Or-Lose-It - How The Federal Government Spent \$97 Billion In September 2018*. The President committed to stopping this wasteful phenomenon. Also, the budget cited our report on the National Endowment of the Arts as the principle reason to eliminate the agency. (Media coverage included USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and FOX News.)

### In 2019...

Our Top 82 U.S. Non-Profit Hospitals: Quantifying Government Payments & Financial Assets report launched on FOX News' *Tucker Carlson Tonight* and USA TODAY. This report backstopped President Trump's two executive orders on healthcare price transparency by showing that wealthy charitable non-profit healthcare providers and their CEO's were making big profits. Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) also cited this data in his state of the state address while arguing for price reforms.

### In 2018...

Open The Books' Mapping The Swamp, A Study Of The Administrative State Media report launched on FOX News' *The Ingraham Angle* and directly led to Representative Judy Hice's (R-GA) legislation on pension and bonus transparency (H.R. 2612). Furthermore, we briefed the Executive Office of the President, Office of Management & Budget regarding our policy ideas to drain the swamp.

### In 2017...

The Tax Cuts And Jobs Act 2017, passed into law and included a claw-back tax on Ivy League-style, excessive university endowments. The *Boston Globe* cited our Ivy League, Inc. oversight report as a catalyst for the legislative provision. Coverage included *The Wall Street Journal* and eight segments on Fox News.

### In 2016...

We exposed the \$20 million luxury-art procurement program at the Department of Veterans Affairs, which forced a public apology from the V.A. Secretary and the adoption of new rules to stop the abuse. Coverage included *Good Morning America* and *ABC World News Tonight*.

## IN RECOGNITION OF OUR TEAM

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