



WASTE REPORT for August 10, 2015

Learn English... at Space Camp and Dollywood

If you were a kid in the '80s, you probably dreamed of going to Space Camp, especially if you saw the movie. Well, if you have about \$1,000 and can get yourself to Huntsville, Alabama, you too can go to Space Camp. **That is unless you are a kid in Pakistan, because if you are, Uncle Sam will send you to Space Camp on the taxpayer's dime, to the tune of \$250k.**¹

That's right, last March the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad put out a grant opportunity to send **24 Pakistani students to 6-days of Space Camp in Alabama.** Why is the federal taxpayer financing a trip around the world for Pakistani kids to play astronaut? Well, **"To promote the development of English language, social, and analytical skills of the participants, through first-hand experiences in science and technology."**² With seven Space Camps around the world, including Italy and Japan, the State Department might be on to something bigger than Rosetta Stone and Facebook combined.

Space Camp to learn English? By that standard doing almost anything in an English speaking country like the U.S. must qualify. **Why not a trip to an amusement park? Well, actually!!!** After splash down in Huntsville, the grant calls for the group to head out on a nearly 700 mile bus trip bound for Washington D.C. which includes **a day's visit, (perhaps from 9 to 5) at the Pigeon Forge, TN, amusement park, Dollywood, named for country legend Dolly Parton.**³

And while NASA's FY 2016 Budget request includes \$94 million for education, there is no mention of using that money to send American kids to Space Camp, which itself is not federally financed.⁴ In fact, **Space Camp is a luxury even for kids in Huntsville, where the Elks Club takes up the effort to annually send a different 5th grade class to the camp.**⁵ Perhaps if kids in Alabama were learning Japanese, the State Department would send them to Space Camp-Japan, maybe with a stop off at Tokyo-Disneyland.

In Waste, Anything is Possible

¹ *Youth Exchange Program – NASA Space Camp*, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Islamabad, Opportunity Number: SCA-ISB-15-AW-008-03092015, March 2015

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Note: Space Camp is Run by the State of Alabama and through a private foundation

⁵ Bonvillian, Crystal, *Farley Elementary 5th graders get surprise trip to Space Camp*; AL.com, December 2014