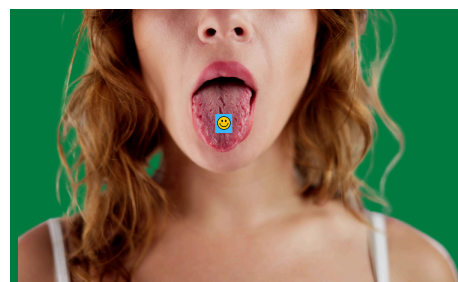




THE FESTIVUS REPORT 2025



The Festivus Report 2025

Happy Festivus! How is 2025 already nearly over? What a year it's been. So much has happened since last year's Festivus Report: Katy Perry went to space, we all found out nothing beats a Jet2 Holiday, the Wicked press tour flooded our feeds, the Pope is now American, and SNL turned 50 years old. And of course, because highlighting waste is a year-round endeavor, my Committee continued conducting effective oversight over USAID's reckless spending and even held a hearing on it.¹

Last Festivus, we clamored over the national debt reaching over an astronomical \$36 trillion. Shockingly, in one short year, the career politicians and bureaucrats in Washington have managed to reach nearly \$40 trillion in debt, without so much as a second thought. When asked who's to blame for our crushing level of debt, the answer is "Everyone." This year, Congress voted to raise the debt ceiling by \$5 trillion, the most we ever have.

Congress keeps shoveling money toward pet projects and special interests while hardworking Americans pay the price through inflation and crushing interest rates – even after President Trump took action to end most foreign aid programs.

From a \$20 billion bailout for Argentina to continued funding for global health programs through waivers, Washington found new ways to keep the cash flowing. And with every new handout, the mountain of debt grows even higher.

For the first time in 50 years, President Trump deployed a pocket rescission, cancelling \$5 billion in foreign aid and international organization funding. While it's a good start, it's just a drop in the bucket. The Congressional Budget Office predicts we will add an average of \$23.9 trillion in debt annually for the next decade. The U.S. government will add over \$6.53 billion of debt every single day for the next ten years. We borrow over \$272 million every hour, we borrow \$4.54 million every minute, and we borrow over \$75,000 every second.

This year, I'm spotlighting a jaw-dropping amount of government waste — the kind that makes you wonder if anyone in Washington has ever heard the word "priorities." **A grand total of \$1,639,135,969,608, which includes \$1.22 trillion in interest payments on the debt.**

We discovered cash going toward experiments teaching ferrets to binge drink alcohol and dosing dogs with cocaine (again). Then there were taxpayer dollars spent on safe spaces at a private university. It wouldn't be a Festivus Waste celebration without mentioning the \$2.1 million spent for researchers to collect saliva samples and survey partiers at EDM clubs and festivals in New York City about their drug use. White Coat Waste helped us uncover hundreds of millions of your hard-earned tax dollars funding labs, gain-of-function research, and brutal experiments on dogs, monkeys, and rats. That includes over \$13.8 million on beagle experiments, \$14,643,280 to make monkeys play a "Price Is Right"-inspired video game, and so much more.

No matter how much taxpayer money Washington burns through, politicians can't help but demand more. Fiscal responsibility may not be the most crowded road, but it's one I've walked year after year — and this holiday season will be no different. So, before we get to the Feats of Strength, it's time for my Airing of (Spending) Grievances.

I've got plenty of bones to pick with reckless federal spending, and now you're going to hear every one of them.

Happy Festivus!

This year's report features...

- **Tik Tok Therapy: Fighting Drugs with Influencers:** The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is spending \$1.5 million on an “innovative multilevel strategy” to reduce drug use in ‘Latinx’ communities through celebrity influencer campaigns.
- **Cartoon Climate Crusaders in Pakistan:** The U.S. Department of State gave \$244,252 to Stand for Peace in Islamabad to produce a television cartoon series that teaches kids in Pakistan how to fight climate change.
- **Lights, Camera, Diplomacy?:** The U.S. Department of State spent \$1.5 million to promote American films, television shows, and video games abroad.
- **Weight Loss by Wi-Fi:** HHS is spending \$1.9 million on a “hybrid mobile phone family intervention” designed to reduce childhood obesity among Latino families in Los Angeles County.
- **More COVID Panic Theatre:** HHS spent over \$40 million on influencers to promote getting vaccinated against COVID-19 for racial and ethnic minority groups.
- **Doomscrolling Studies:** HHS is giving \$2.9 million to University of Michigan to study the effect of screen time on parent-child relationships.
- **Make Vegetables More Inclusive:** USDA spent \$141,517 to create a ‘resilient and equitable’ local food network that prioritizes culturally relevant food for low-income LGBT people of color from the Bronx and Brooklyn.
- **On the Operating Table:** HHS spent \$6.9 million using data to analyze and model trauma and surgery outcomes in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Woke U:** HHS gave \$3.3 million to Northwestern University so they can hire 15 people, erect “scientific neighborhoods,” install “safe space ambassadors,” and form endless committees to “dismantle systemic racism.”
- **Bears, Drag Queens, and Bureaucracy:** HHS spent \$936,000 on marketing campaigns, advisory boards, and engagement strategies targeting niche subcultures in Los Angeles—specifically the “bear/cub,” “drag queen,” and “queer punk rock” scenes—about STD testing and treatment capacity.
- **Saliva Swabs and Sandstorm:** HHS spent \$2.1 million for researchers to collect saliva samples and conduct surveys at EDM clubs and festivals in New York City about drug usage.
- **Pandemic Profiteering:** The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) gave EcoHealth Alliance \$54 million to collect bat coronaviruses and transport them to Wuhan for gain-of-function experiments.

- **Fauci's Beagle Labs Live On:** NIH extended funding for Dr. Fauci's beagle experiments, costing taxpayers \$13.8 million.
- **Coked-Up Canines Redux:** NIH spent \$5,215,216 to dose dogs with cocaine. Again.
- **Ferrets on a Booze Binge:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wasted over \$1,079,360 teaching teenage ferrets to binge drink alcohol.
- **Bird-Brained Spending in China:** The Biden U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded a \$1 million collaboration to soup up bird flu viruses with the Wuhan Institute of Virology's parent organization and a researcher affiliated with WIV.
- **Press Start to Waste:** The National Science Foundation (NSF) spent \$497,200 on a "Video Game Challenge" for children.
- **The Price is Wrong for Monkey Plinko:** NSF and other federal agencies paid \$14,643,280 to make monkeys play a "Price Is Right"-inspired video game.
- **Marine Mammal Money Pit:** The Department of Defense (DOD) is spending an estimated \$77 million a year on an unnecessary dolphin training program that Congress won't let end.
- **Grants for Guatemalan Gender Bending:** USAID squandered \$2 million for "gender-affirming care," activism, and influence campaigns in Guatemala.
- **Bug Buffets:** NSF committed \$2,494,321 to programs that promote insects as "food for humans."
- **Not the "BLT" You're Thinking Of:** DOD funded \$2,818,462 in grants that have paid for aborted human fetal tissue to be implanted in humanized mice.
- **\$1.22 Trillion (and climbing) in Interest Payments:** Americans shelled out \$1.22 trillion in FY 2025 to cover the interest on Washington's maxed-out tab.
- **COVID Cash Grab:** Schools received nearly \$200 billion in COVID relief funds, which was wasted on things like rooms at Caesars Palace, renting out MLB stadiums, and ice cream trucks.
- **The Final Frontier of Fiscal Folly:** The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) paid a \$1.8 billion overage for a shuttle that was six years behind schedule and stranded astronauts in space.
- **Billions for Chargers, Not Much to Charge:** The Biden Department of Transportation (DOT) received \$7.5 billion from Congress to fund electric vehicle charger stations nationwide, but only 68 charging stations are up and running.
- **Migrant Money Grab:** HHS blew through \$22.6 billion on migrant programs that paid for things like furniture, car repairs and home down payments, as well as welfare for illegal immigrants.

- **A Very Fed Season of Giving... to Wall Street and Foreign Banks:** The Fed paid out \$187 Billion in Interest on Reserve Balances (IORB) payments last year alone.

BONUS: SNEAK PEEK AT 2026?

- **Gender Affirming Care and LGBTQ Children's Hospital:** \$2 Million to a San Diego hospital running a pediatric gender-affirming care center that facilitates gender transition surgeries for kids.
- **Tiny Town, Giant Tab:** \$2 Million to a tiny town in Alaska with just 67 residents.
- **Doctors Diagnose Gas Stoves and Trump as Public Threats:** \$700,000 to a Boston chapter of an organization that supports protest rallies against President Trump, hates gas stoves, and more.

TikTok Therapy: Fighting Drugs with Influencers

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1.5 MILLION

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) spent over \$1.5 million on a project called UNETE, an “innovative multilevel strategy” that claims it can reduce drug use in “Latinx” communities through — wait for it — celebrity influencer campaigns and friend groups.²

Citing an August 2022 NIH press release warning about rising drug use among young adults,³ researchers decided the solution wasn’t better enforcement, prevention, or treatment... it was famous people. The plan involves recruiting 30 celebrity influencers — actors, singers, and athletes — to produce anti-drug messages, then piping those messages through friendship networks in South Florida.

Community health workers will map friend groups like they’re in a teen drama movie, push influencer content through television, radio, streaming, and gaming platforms, and track the results. Because nothing says effective drug prevention like getting lectured by someone who once did a guest spot on a telenovela.

Taxpayers are footing the bill to see if celebrity clout and group chats can succeed where decades of anti-drug programs have failed.



Cartoon Climate Crusaders in Pakistan

AMOUNT WASTED: \$244,252

The U.S. Department of State awarded \$244,252 to Stand for Peace in Islamabad to produce a television cartoon series that teaches kids in Pakistan how to fight climate change.⁴

This isn’t just any small nonprofit⁵ - it’s headed by Haroon Rashid, the award-winning creator of the Peabody-winning and Emmy-nominated *Burka Avenger*. The group has worked with UNICEF, USAID, European Union, and even Meta Platforms. American taxpayer dollars fund the creation of animated characters to raise “environmental awareness” and show youth “practical actions” to save the planet.⁶

Because apparently the most pressing priority for U.S. diplomacy in Pakistan isn’t terrorism, security, or economic stability, it’s cartoons about recycling.

It’s climate policy meets Saturday morning TV starring Uncle Sam as the executive producer.

Lights, Camera, Diplomacy?

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1.5 MILLION

The Department of State is spending \$1.5 million to fund the American Film Showcase which is a professional exchange program that sends U.S. documentaries, feature films, and animated shorts around the world, while transporting American filmmakers abroad for screenings, workshops, and discussions.⁷

Launched in 2012 under the Obama administration, the program has featured Oscar and Emmy winners jetting around the globe to chat about free expression and creative economies.^{8,9}

Recent screenings have included *Chasing Ice* in Mongolia, focusing on global warming, and *The Case Against 8* in Estonia to promote LGBT political activism.^{10,11} I think we can all agree Hollywood is doing just fine at spreading its films around the world without our tax dollars.¹²

Weight Loss by Wi-Fi

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1.9 MILLION

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) awarded \$1.9 million on a “hybrid mobile phone family intervention” designed to reduce childhood obesity among Latino families in Los Angeles County.¹³

The concept: if you can’t get families to stop giving toddlers sugary drinks in person, maybe a push notification can. Researchers are recruiting 260 Latino families from WIC centers in East LA and MacArthur Park, offering \$25 gift cards for each check-in (and \$35 at the end) to keep them from dropping out. The grand plan is a few in-person sessions, followed by two months of mobile phone “booster” messages designed to convince caregivers to cut TV time and sugary drinks for kids aged two to five.¹⁴

The intervention also involves “leveraging familism” — the idea that if you can get multiple caregivers to think about broccoli together, it’ll magically lower BMI. To make it sound extra scientific, the study includes randomized control groups, BMI measurements, and computer-generated block randomization — all to find out whether push notifications can do what decades of nutrition counseling hasn’t.

At the same time, the experiment will also explore the potential to reduce obesity risk for parents. Not only are we trying to dissuade watching TV by having kids stare at an even smaller screen, but the project is also trying to tackle adult obesity impacts in an experiment on

kids. So, while families across America are struggling with overpriced grocery bills, taxpayers are shelling out millions to see if a mobile phone can raise your child better than you can.



More COVID Panic Theatre

AMOUNT WASTED: \$40 MILLION +

The cat is out of the bag: more and more studies are revealing how wearing a mask and getting vaccines do little to stop the spread of COVID-19. For example, in the case of mask mandates, researchers who conducted a meta-analysis found they had no significant impact on curtailing the spread of COVID-19 — regardless of the type of mask studied.^{15,16,17} Also as we speak, the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer is being sued in Texas over allegedly misrepresenting the effectiveness of its COVID-19 vaccine.¹⁸

HHS gave the National Urban League \$20.9 million for its “Project Wellness” vaccination coverage program.¹⁹ The plan was to build coalitions in twenty urban league communities, assemble a curated vaccine messaging toolkit, and turn barber shops, churches, mosques, and community centers into pop-up vaccination sites.

They also attempted to categorize every resident’s attitude toward COVID vaccinations on a scale, one of the qualifiers being, “those who are unsure and can be converted to adoption.” The organization goes on to claim decades of broken public health policy and mistrust could be reversed with another round of their magical, woke government-funded messaging. The residents may not have wanted a vaccine before

but receiving a message from a “culturally resonant and relevant influencer” will definitely turn the tide.

UnidosUS was given \$20.9 million for its “Esperanza Hope for All” campaign, a sprawling influencer and media operation designed to push federal vaccine narratives to Latino communities.²⁰ Their website is still a time capsule of Biden-era COVID dogma, filled with talking points on masks, social distancing, and mRNA vaccines that have aged like milk and were even questionable when first posted.²¹

Together, these grants created a coast-to-coast messaging machine where influencers, coalitions, mobile events, virtual town halls, and armies of “trusted messengers” repeated the same pandemic scripts that turned out to be misleading, overblown, or outright inaccurate. Taxpayers got charged nearly forty-two million dollars for the privilege of being lectured by celebrities and community committees that insisted vaccine hesitancy could be solved with more toolkits, flyers, and talking points from the same institutions that caused the mistrust in the first place.²² News flash, the same message coming from a different platform is still the same incorrect message.



Doomscrolling Studies

AMOUNT WASTED: \$2.9 MILLION

The Department of Health and Human Services, through the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, is giving the University of Michigan nearly \$2.9 million to investigate a mystery that has baffled absolutely no one: whether toddlers spending all day on iPads might affect their development.²³

Since the sight of a toddler on an iPad has apparently left the scientific community stunned, researchers created a brand-new “human-computer interaction” framework to study whether screens might impact two- to four-year-olds, something most parents solved without a grant. In practice, that means tracking toddlers for years, videotaping them, coding the “design affordances” of apps, analyzing how often parents look at their own phones, and running structural-equation models to measure whether screens displace activities like... talking, playing, or interacting with parents.²⁴

In other words: taxpayers spent nearly \$3 million to confirm what every parent, grandparent, babysitter, pediatrician, preschool teacher, and exhausted adult with a pulse already knows: maybe children shouldn’t be raised by tablets.

Make Vegetables More Inclusive

AMOUNT WASTED: \$141,517

USDA’s Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program is meant to do something simple: help low-income families access real food by funding projects like farmers markets, food distribution, and community nutrition programs.²⁵ Congress authorized it so communities could meet basic food needs, reduce food insecurity, and support local farmers.

Naturally, USDA sent \$141,517 to the Farm Training Collective NYC for a project built around “QT BIPOC” farmers, an acronym so long it needs its own glossary.²⁶

According to the proposal, this initiative will “co-design” a “resilient and equitable food system” for “low-income QT BIPOC communities,” which they define as queer, trans, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, intersex, gender-nonconforming, non-binary, two-spirit, and basically anyone else they can fit under the umbrella. It raises the question, how does one find “culturally relevant foods” for a two-spirit individual living in the Bronx?

On the Operating Table

AMOUNT WASTED: \$6.9 MILLION

The Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$6.9 million to the University of Buea in Cameroon to create something called the “Data Science Center for the Study of Surgery, Injury, and Equity in Africa,” an entity that doesn’t actually perform surgery.²⁷

If that sounds like the United States is funding surgeons, operating rooms, training, equipment, anesthesia, or trauma care, think again. We paid for algorithms.

The project is a five-year academic partnership across multiple countries in Africa to study surgical equity using “big data,” “data-constrained approaches,” “clustering algorithms,” and “machine-learning trauma follow-up prediction.” In plain English, it is a multi-national paperwork farm built to analyze surveys and run computer models about injuries rather than treating them.

As an eye surgeon, I appreciate innovation. I really do. But innovation is not a substitute for care, and none of this money funds a single

surgery, a single instrument, or a single hour of treatment for anyone.



Woke U

AMOUNT WASTED: \$3.3 MILLION

The Department of Health and Human Services gave Northwestern University \$3.3 million from NIH for a project called NURTURE,²⁸ which reads like a woke cult manifesto.

The grant pays for “scientific neighborhoods,” “safe space ambassadors,” “inclusive excellence” coaching, and an “institutional transformation and accountability committee.”

Northwestern is one of the wealthiest universities in the country with an over \$14 billion endowment,²⁹ yet taxpayers are picking up the tab for its internal HR experiments.

Washington calls this investment. Most Americans would call it waste.



Bears, Drag Queens, and Bureaucracy

AMOUNT WASTED: \$936,000



HHS is spending \$936,000 on mapping every micro-subculture in LA's sprawling sex scene for STD awareness and prevention to create "tailored hip" outreach to niche nightlife tribes most Americans have never heard of.³⁰

While investigating this waste item, we learned a whole lot. We practically had an anthropological tour of every underground social clique in LA.

This grant lists, to name a few, "bear/cub subculture," "tea party community," "drag queen subculture," and "queer Latinx punk rock scene," as target groups.

If California wants to run this kind of sociological mapping project, fine. But why is Washington sending nearly a million taxpayer dollars to fund what reads like a graduate thesis on "LA queer nightlife dynamics"?

Saliva Swabs and Sandstorm

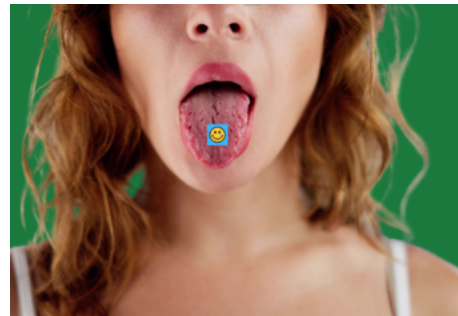
AMOUNT WASTED: \$2.1 MILLION

HHS plans to give \$2.1 million in total to New York University for a four-year project where researchers literally camp outside NYC EDM festivals, hand out surveys about "what you think you took," and then collect saliva samples to test for 1,000+ drugs from people stumbling into warehouse raves.³¹ It seems as if we will just ignore the reliability of the population sample who not only has to give a saliva sample after leaving

a rave but will also have to take a "follow-up survey" to assess for adverse effects.

So, the federal government is spending your money to keep tabs on what's in the molly at 2 a.m. in The Big Apple.

Perhaps we don't need a multimillion-dollar rave reconnaissance mission to confirm that nightclub drugs are, in fact... drugs.



Pandemic Profiteering

AMOUNT WASTED: \$54 MILLION

Fauci and the NIH weren't the only ones who funded the Wuhan lab. The disgraced USAID gave EcoHealth Alliance \$54 million to collect underground bat coronaviruses, transport them to labs like the Wuhan Institute of Virology, and soup them up in gain-of-function experiments with "humanized" mice to make them more contagious and deadly to people.³² This reckless virus-hunting and research funded by USAID likely caused the COVID-19 pandemic that killed millions and cost trillions.³³ But USAID continued forking over millions of tax dollars to the tainted group until mid-2024, years after their connection to COVID and the Wuhan cover-up was exposed.^{34,35}

When I demanded answers from the Biden administration about USAID's funding for EcoHealth's gain-of-function work in Wuhan, I was stonewalled.³⁶ The rogue agency has now

been dismantled, but I've continued to relentlessly investigate the origin of COVID-19.³⁷



Fauci's Beagle Labs Live On

AMOUNT WASTED:
\$13.8 MILLION^{38,39,40,41}

Speaking of Fauci, for years I've also fought his brutal beagle tests, and although he retired from the NIH at the end of 2022, his legacy of pet abuse lives on.⁴²

One research project that was funded during Fauci's 38-year tenure as the Director of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) involves infesting beagle puppies with hundreds of disease-carrying ticks.⁴³

In the Fauci-funded research at the University of Missouri-Columbia, puppies as young as 4 months old are exposed to ticks by having capsules full of the arachnids glued to their bare skin to infect the dogs with illnesses like Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. According to research records obtained by the watchdog White Coat Waste, dozens of the puppies are intentionally denied pain relief so that it does not interact with the infection or experimental vaccines. The NIH-funded project plans to use 436 beagles, some of which come from an abusive puppy mill.⁴⁴

Fauci admitted to Congress last year that he personally signed off on the animal tests his

agency funded.⁴⁵ This project alone is still funded by three different Fauci-era NIAID grants which have cost taxpayers over \$13.8 million so far.

Fauci should be prosecuted, and the puppies should be pardoned instead.⁴⁶

Coked-Up Canines Redux

AMOUNT WASTED:
\$5,215,216^{47,48,49}

In my 2022 Festivus report, I detailed how the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) had paid \$2 million for 6-month-old beagle puppies to wear a jacket that would dose them with cocaine because evidently NIH can't leave beagle puppies alone.⁵⁰ I even gave a Senate floor speech about it.⁵¹

In November 2021, the NIH extended the project and awarded another \$1.7 million in taxpayer funds, bringing the total cost of the project to \$5.2 million⁵².

Seems to me that the NIH has been addicted to wasteful spending.

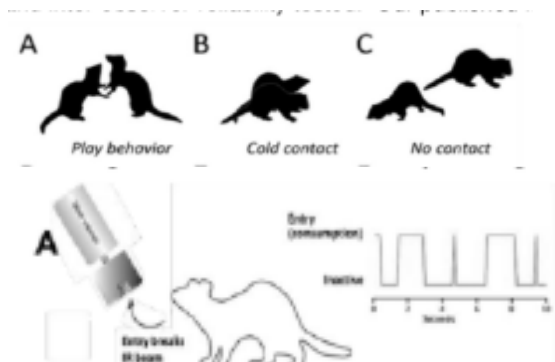


Ferrets on a Booze Binge

AMOUNT WASTED:
\$1,079,360^{53,54,55,56}

Like the NIH and its coke hounds, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) apparently considers studying alcoholism in weasels to be so vital that they approved \$1 million for a project to turn teenage ferrets into binge drinkers. In the study, researchers force ferrets to consume only alcohol for an entire day by withholding their access to water in what the experimenters call “forced binge” days. The other 6 days of the week the animals are given alcohol and water, and this cycle is to continue for up to 90 days, when they finally kill the ferrets.

The researchers claim the goal of this drunken ferret experiment is to “pave the way” for teenage ferrets to be used to test “chemical weapons, opioids, extreme stress, [and] TBI [traumatic brain injuries]” or to conduct studies related to “Depression, Stress responses, Addiction, Schizophrenia, Suicide and Sensory processing.” That’s a lot of taxpayer dollars for something that might not even work.



Bird-Brained Spending in China

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1,000,000⁵⁷

One lab-generated pandemic in Wuhan apparently is not enough for some bureaucrats. In 2021, the Biden U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) funded a five-year, \$1 million collaboration to soup up bird flu viruses between the Wuhan Institute of Virology’s (WIV) Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-controlled parent organization and a researcher affiliated with WIV.⁵⁸ The USDA-CCP project proposed using a popular gain-of-function technique to see if they could make “highly pathogenic avian influenza” more contagious to mammals.⁵⁹ Fortunately, this bird-brained Biden USDA project was cut short by the Trump administration in early 2025.⁶⁰

Press Start to Waste

AMOUNT WASTED: \$497,000

For some agencies, government waste is the name of the game. The National Science Foundation (NSF) spent \$497,200 on something called a “Video Game Challenge”.⁶¹ The contract—awarded to Ensemble Government Services, LLC—pays for the planning, promotion, and judging of NSF’s “Game Maker: Life in 2100”, a nationwide contest asking kids to design video games about the future.^{62,63} Apparently, the best way to inspire tomorrow’s scientists is to pay today’s consultants to run a science fair disguised as Fortnite. While classrooms crumble and researchers fight for funding, bureaucrats are busy leveling up in “Government Spending Simulator.” At least taxpayers can now say they helped fund the world’s most expensive after-school activity—press start to continue wasting.

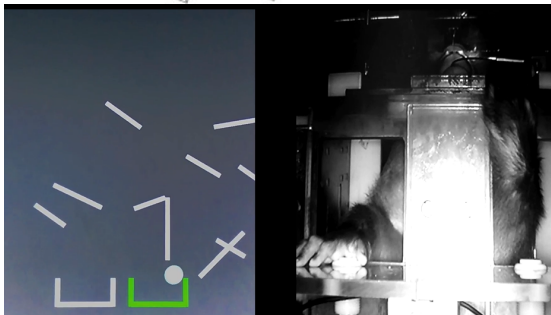
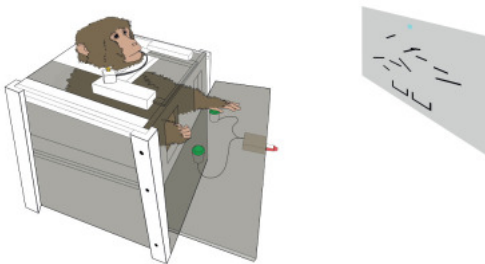
The Price is Wrong for Monkey Plinko

AMOUNT WASTED:
\$14,643,280^{64,65}

The National Science Foundation and other agencies also monkeyed around with your tax dollars. Federal grants from the Department of Defense, National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation obligate over \$14 million in taxpayer dollars to perform inhumane research. Researchers at Brown University are enlisting monkeys to play a video game they invented called “Plinko” - a variation on the famous “Price is Right” game Plinko. The monkeys have “headposts” screwed into their skulls to keep their heads still while they played the game and researchers track their brain activity and eye movements.

The immobilized monkeys are tasked with tapping a button to pick which bucket a ball traversing an obstacle course would land in.⁶⁶ The groundbreaking conclusion? Monkeys are very good at Plinko. This monkey business is funded by several federal grants totaling over \$11 million.^{67 68 69 70 71 72}

C



Marine Mammal Money Pit

AMOUNT WASTED:
\$77 MILLION^{73,74}

The Department of Defense plans to spend \$77 million for the Navy’s unnecessary and outdated Marine Mammal Program—an archaic underwater boondoggle featuring over 120 dolphins and sea lions pressed into service for “experiments” and missions.⁷⁵ That is certainly a different approach to meeting the Navy’s recruiting goals.

Official materials confirm the program’s scope—training bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions to detect mines and objects at sea—so this isn’t folklore; it’s a line item with flippers.⁷⁶

Records show the animals are subjected to sleep deprivation, forced to swallow seawater, and made to wear headphones with loud noises blasting. They even train sea lions to play video games—all on the taxpayer’s dime. Some of the animals were even purchased from SeaWorld!

Here’s the kicker: The Navy itself has said modern aquatic drones can do these jobs, and over a decade ago announced plans to phase out the marine mammal program and retire the animals—until Congress stepped in and enacted a spending bill that literally forced the agency to continue wasting taxpayers’ money on this.^{77,78,79}

Bailing out an outdated program that’s underwater? Sounds about right for Washington.



Grants for Guatemalan Gender Bending

AMOUNT WASTED: \$2 MILLION

In case you need more proof that USAID needed to go: While Americans juggle bills, Washington is wiring money overseas so activists can underwrite sex changes and LGBT political advocacy in Guatemala. USAID awarded \$2 million to Asociación Lambda for “gender-affirming care,” activism, and influence campaigns—exactly the sort of culture-war spending most taxpayers don’t expect to find on their foreign-aid receipt.⁸⁰

As I noted in an op-ed, these USAID “Gender Grants” in Guatemala are a perfect example of how waste hides in plain sight—programs dressed up as diplomacy that do nothing to advance America’s interests.⁸¹ This isn’t disaster relief or clean water; it’s social engineering abroad, funded by people who never got a vote on it.

Bug Buffets

**AMOUNT WASTED:
\$2,494,321^{82,83,84}**

The National Science Foundation has committed \$2,494,321 to programs like the “Center for Environmental Sustainability through Insect Farming” and the “Center for Insect Biomanufacturing and Innovation” which promotes insects as the next frontier in “food for humans” as well as pets and livestock.^{85,86}

Aside from being gross, research shows the hype is crawling ahead of the science—industrial insect farming faces serious economic and technical roadblocks that make large-scale production costly and unreliable.⁸⁷ It’s time to shut down taxpayer-funded bug buffets.



Not the “BLT” You’re Thinking Of

AMOUNT WASTED: \$2,818,462^{88,89}

If eating bugs turns your stomach, this “BLT” might push the faint-hearted over the edge. The Department of Defense spent your money creating so-called “BLT mice” — and no, not the kind of BLT you’re thinking of. These lab animals were implanted with bone marrow, liver, and thymus tissue obtained from aborted human babies.^{90,91}

The projects drew military dollars to support projects using humanized BLT mice.^{92,93} What was billed as science for national defense instead exposed cruel and unnecessary research using aborted fetal tissue, a morally repugnant practice I have been fighting for years.⁹⁴ The first Trump administration cut funding for fetal tissue research, but unfortunately Biden reinstated it and allowed taxpayer funds to once again be used for this inhumane and immoral research.

The DOD still had grants totaling \$2.8 million that were used at least in part to fund human fetal tissue research on humanized mice.^{95,96}

\$1.2 Trillion (and climbing) in Interest Payments

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1.22 TRILLION⁹⁷

Our country is over \$38.4 trillion in debt, and the Treasury Department reports that our interest payments hit \$1.22 trillion for 2025, an all-time record.⁹⁸

That dwarfs most of the government's largest programs. To put it another way: interest is now the third largest "expense" in the federal budget — outranked only by Social Security and Medicare (excluding temporary timing shifts). The government refuses to balance its budget, and taxpayers are stuck picking up the trillion-dollar tab. There's a solution: my "Six Penny Plan."^{99,100} The Six Penny Plan would balance the federal budget by cutting six cents off every projected dollar to be spent over the next five fiscal years.



COVID Cash Grab

AMOUNT WASTED: \$200 BILLION

Here is a perfect example of why I opposed the Biden administration's wasteful COVID handouts from the beginning.¹⁰¹ The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) reported that, "Schools have spent nearly \$200 billion of COVID-Relief funds with little oversight or impact on students."¹⁰² Recent articles report that schools spent pandemic-relief funds on things like rooms at Caesars Palace, MLB stadiums nights for rent, and ice cream trucks.^{103,104}

If that isn't enough, a Department of Education Inspector General audit found school districts that spent relief grants on Xbox systems, smartwatches, construction of synthetic turf sports fields, and even Christmas decorations.¹⁰⁵

The Final Frontier of Fiscal Folly

AMOUNT WASTED: \$1.8 BILLION

I've been calling out NASA's astronomical waste for years.¹⁰⁶ One recent example is Boeing's contract for the Exploration Upper Stage component for NASA's Space Launch System, which ran six years behind schedule and around \$1.8 billion over its budget.^{107,108,109} Keep in mind that this contract was originally awarded for \$383 million. The cost of this project has increased 161% in its lifespan. Last year, in another NASA project managed by Boeing, two NASA astronauts were left stranded aboard the International Space Station when the Starliner spacecraft that was supposed to bring them home suffered numerous system failures, sparking public and internal alarm.^{110,111}

An 8-day trip turned into a months-long fiasco. This is government contractors at their worst—billions wasted, missions delayed, lives placed in

peril, and taxpayer trust eroded—while the American people are asked to keep paying into the rocket that won't launch on time.

Billions for Chargers, Not Much to Charge

AMOUNT WASTED: \$7.5 BILLION

At the behest of the Biden administration, Congress set aside \$7.5 billion in 2021 to blanket America with electric vehicle chargers. Biden promised 500,000 of them. But by April 2025 the federal push had yielded only 384 public ports at 68 stations in 16 states—a network so faint you could miss it with your eyes open.

GAO's recent review didn't just flag the anemic rollout; it blasted the Department of Transportation's lack of measurable performance goals for their program, making success indistinguishable from a ribbon-cutting photo-op.^{112,113} President Trump rightfully attempted to freeze the frivolous funding and redirect the funds to other infrastructure projects, but a federal judge forced the funding to be disbursed to this boondoggle.¹¹⁴

This is why I introduced the End Taxpayer Subsidies for Electric Vehicles Act to stop this kind of spending spree—ending costly federal giveaways that distort markets and leave taxpayers holding the bill.¹¹⁵ This would let the EV industry stand on its own four wheels instead of relying on Washington's endless extension cord.

Migrant Money Grab

AMOUNT WASTED: \$22.6 BILLION

In the past four years, HHS's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) blew through \$22.6 billion on migrant programs that go far beyond shelter and asylum. According to Open the Books,

HHS's splurge included home grants, car loans, startup business assistance, cash stipends, and even property incentives for immigrants.¹¹⁶ According to ORR this money was spent only for those with refugee status, unaccompanied alien children, or those who fall into some other special category.¹¹⁷ However, the funding is passed through several non-governmental organizations, which FEMA proved in 2023 is a good way to make money unaccountable.¹¹⁸

The New York Post reported that HHS distributed millions in "self-reliance grants," car repairs, furniture packages, and even furniture vouchers, effectively helping some migrants move straight into middle-class consumption.¹¹⁹ Additionally, unaccompanied alien children, who are often placed with their parents by ORR regardless of their immigration status¹²⁰, become eligible for a variety of programs like legal services, healthcare and more.¹²¹ This creates a dangerous incentive for families to cross the border separately in order to secure benefits.¹²² As I've made clear through my Excluding Illegal Aliens from Medicaid Act, this kind of spending has to stop.¹²³ Hardworking Americans shouldn't be forced to bankroll benefits for those who broke our laws. The intent of my legislation is to close loopholes that allow illegal aliens to obtain taxpayer-provided benefits.



A Very Fed Season of Giving... to Wall Street and Foreign Banks

AMOUNT WASTED: \$187 BILLION

Recently, I released a sweeping new report exposing how the Federal Reserve has quietly funneled more than half a trillion taxpayer dollars to major domestic and foreign banks through its Interest on Reserve Balances program.¹²⁴ After securing more than 40,000 pages of internal Fed records, the Committee found that IORB payments now make up a startling share of the federal deficit—8.8 percent in FY23 and 10.3 percent in FY24—money that would have otherwise gone back to the taxpayer.

Last year alone, the Fed paid out \$187 billion in IORB, enriching the largest financial institutions in the world. Just twenty banks collected half of all payments since 2013, with America's five biggest banks relying on IORB for more than 16 percent of their net interest income in 2024. JPMorgan Chase alone received \$15 billion; more than its entire investment banking division earned.

The report also reveals that this isn't just a Wall Street subsidy, it's an international one. Nearly forty percent of all IORB funds went to foreign or majority foreign-owned banks, including more than \$10 billion to Chinese institutions. The American taxpayer has effectively covered more than half of Bahrain's bank profits, almost half of Norway's, and nearly a quarter of Japan's. These payouts have pushed the Federal Reserve into unprecedented losses, averaging \$96 billion a year since 2022, and without the IORB regime, remittances to the Treasury since 2008 would have exceeded \$1.5 trillion.

BONUS: SNEAK PEEK

Here you'll find a sneak peek at next year's Festivus. Let's see if these chunks of pork make the cut next year!

Gender Affirming Care and LGBTQ Children's Hospital

AMOUNT TO BE WASTED: \$2 MILLION

As the FY26 spending bill process comes to a close, the Senate is once again sneaking earmarks into must-pass spending bills and hoping no one reads the entire thing.

One of the many pork-loaded stocking stuffers comes in the form of a \$2 million earmark in the Senate Labor-HHS bill for "pediatric mental health services" at Rady's Children's Hospital in San Diego.¹²⁵

The recipient of this subsidy, Rady's Children's Hospital, runs a pediatric gender-affirming care center that facilitates gender transition surgeries for kids. Not to mention, the hospital has made clear it intends to keep performing these procedures even after President Trump's executive order stopping chemical and surgical castration of children.

Tiny Town, Giant Tab

AMOUNT TO BE WASTED: \$2 MILLION

A \$2 million earmark is in the Senate Transportation, Housing & Urban Development appropriations bill for “affordable housing” in South Naknek, Alaska, a village with 67 residents.¹²⁶ That works out to nearly \$30,000 per person. South Naknek is so remote its children must fly to school, and its population has been shrinking for decades.¹²⁷

Doctors Diagnose Gas Stoves and Trump as Public Threats

AMOUNT TO BE WASTED: \$700,000

Through an earmark to the Boston chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, federal funds are being routed to an organization that supports banning gas stoves, the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and even publicly supports protest rallies against President Trump.¹²⁸¹²⁹ Perhaps the senators behind this project care to explain how paying activists is somehow in the best interest of the nation's health.

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