Another New Report Highlights Government's Wasteful Spending

Another report out of Congress underscores the federal government's flagrant disregard for taxpayer dollars. Entitled "Federal Fumbles: 100 ways the government dropped the ball," the report was released on Monday by Senator James Lankford (R-Okla.) and details the billions of taxpayer dollars wasted on ridiculous expenditures.

The *Washington Examiner* notes that Lankford's report "takes over from where former Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., left off with his annual 'wastebook.'"

The expenditures outlined in Lankford's report exhibit significant government overreach, as most of them fall outside of the limits set forth in the United States Constitution. In fact, most of them are paid for by agencies that are by law unconstitutional.

Lankford begins the report by setting the scene for the wasteland of taxpayer dollars:

> Our national debt is careening toward $19 trillion … and federal regulations are expanding at a record pace…. States are constantly handed unfunded mandates and executive fiats that they are forced to implement with minimal direction and no way to pay for them. I present this report as a demonstration of ways we can cut back on wasteful federal spending and burdensome regulations.

Among the expenditures listed in the 145-page report are a $43 million gas station in Afghanistan, paid for by the Department of Defense, $6 billion in wind subsidies, paid for by the Internal Revenue Service, and $2.6 million by the National Institutes of Health for a weight-loss program for truck drivers.

One of the more absurd examples of spending include a study on what happens to insects when manmade lights are turned on. That study concluded, "Anyone raised in a rural area can attest that one way to attract insects is to turn on a light."

This begs the question, if anyone could attest to it, why did the government pay money to study it?

Another lavish outlay was $683,000 for "silent Shakespeare" productions in Washington, D.C. Lankford observed that it seems arbitrary to sit through a silent production of Shakespeare's works since Shakespeare was best "known for his words, not his silence."

Equally absurd is a $370,000 study by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on the dating habits of single adults over the age of 60. "We're talking about spending $300,000 on trying to fund a dating study for senior adults … senior adults that are previously married, how they handle dating later in life," Lankford said on C-SPAN.

The NSF also provided a $50,000 grant to support a project called "Killer Snail: An Interactive Marine Biodiversity Learning Tool." The report states that the intent for the project is to develop an eBook story told from a marine snail's point of view for elementary students, but the project thus far has yielded nothing more than a card game called "Killer Snails: Assassins of the Seas," in which players collect predatory cone snails that prey on fish to build an arsenal of life-saving peptide toxins.

The NSF is notorious for its ridiculous initiatives. Earlier this year, *The New American* reported on a $125,000 study paid for by the NSF on adjectives perceived as racist or sexist.

The NSF also funded a $560,000 study in which the metabolisms of sick shrimp were tested by having the shrimp exercise on a treadmill.

Lankford's recommendation for the futility of the NSF's spending is for Congress to insist that the NSF present clearly how their research findings will serve the national interest.

Lankford's report also focused heavily on regulations, which he states are "an equal part of the problem facing American families and businesses." Lankford notes that for every law passed by Congress last year, 16 new regulations were created, all of which impose costs on the economy.

Among the multiple regulations included in the report are the controversial "Waters of the United States" Rule, which he labeled an intrusive and unnecessary "EPA power grab" at an annual cost of $500 million to businesses, and the $8.4 billion "Clean Power" Act, which will dramatically raise energy prices for American families and "place undue burdens on the economy."

Lankford also lists the Dodd-Frank bill as a culprit in creating 390 new rules and regulations. According to the American Action Forum, the Dodd-Frank bill will cost the economy $895 billion by 2025.

Lankford ultimately contends that the solution to such wastefulness would be to shine a light on government agencies and departments and hold them accountable for their spending and their programs. He states that in an effort to do this, he introduced the Taxpayer's Right to Know Act, which would require government agencies and departments to make public how they spend money and would require them to develop performance metrics for all their programs.

But perhaps the easiest and most constitutional solution would be to eliminate the NSF, along with all of the other agencies and departments that make up the costly federal Leviathan?

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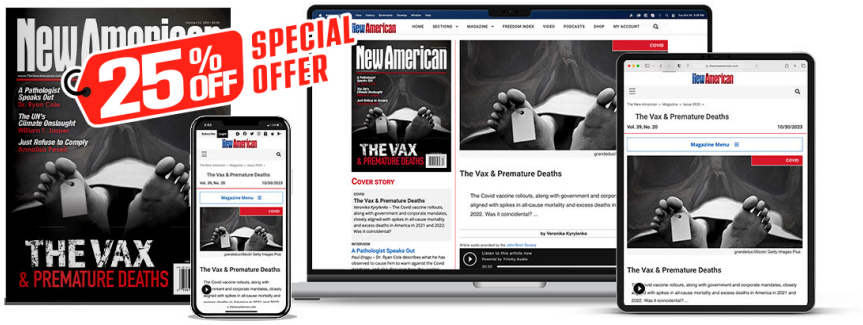

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