



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on December 2, 2015

Several Sources Highlight Federal Misspending After “Wastebook” Author Retires

Before retiring from Congress as Oklahoma’s junior senator, Tom Coburn issued an invitation to others in office to take up where he left off in bringing to light outrageous federal boondoggles. As the editor of *Wastebook*, Coburn delighted in exposing preposterous examples of government waste, and using them to embarrass the various agencies responsible.



One of those taking up the cudgel is Oklahoma Senator James Langford, who [just issued his first edition](#) of *Federal Fumbles*, a reference to examples where agencies of the federal government have dreamed up absolutely ludicrous studies, costing millions and sometimes billions in taxpayer monies.

His first edition highlights 100 of the most “questionable, bogus and ridiculous projects” on which the government has squandered taxpayers’ money, including \$375,000 by the National Science Foundation (NSF) to uncover the dating habits of seniors, plus giving special tax breaks to the National Football League.

Coburn loved to shed light on such insane projects as spending \$500,000 by the Department of Agriculture to encourage butterfly farming on an Indian reservation (in his own state of Oklahoma) and another \$1.5 million on Swedish massages for rabbits.

Taxpayers again had to shell out incredible funds to discover that (surprise!) people are more prickly when they’re hungry. Absurdly, the study included the use of voodoo dolls:

Over the course of twenty-one consecutive evenings, 107 couples were given a chance to stick up to 51 pins into a voodoo doll representing their spouse. The pin-pushing happened in secret, away from the other partner. Participants then recorded the number of pins they poked into the dolls. Those tests revealed what may already be obvious to many couples: a spouse with low blood sugar was an angrier one, and stuck more pins in the doll.

Poof! That little stunt cost taxpayers a third of a million dollars.

Coburn uncovered another NSF outrage: funding an alarmist climate-change video game called “Future Coast” where rising seas cause coastal flooding and all manner of chaos and calamities. That was another \$5.2 million wasted.

And then there was the Department of Defense (DOD) effort to design a Tactical Assault Light Operator Suit (TALOS) made “of military super-armor to withstand bullets and carry hundreds of pounds, all powered by a futuristic energy source.” As Coburn pointed out in his last *Wastebook*:

While a promotional video for the TALOS program shows bullets ricocheting off a cartoon soldier



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dressed in the suit, field tests have so far found soldiers struggling to run, dive and shoot when using the real thing.

Poof! Another \$80 million for that.

Senator Rand Paul releases his own weekly *Waste Report* in the same genre, including in a recent edition, for instance, the \$15,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health to sponsor a Miami conference on hair restoration.

Some issuing their own “waste” reports have another agenda. Arizona Senator John McCain just penned a 19-page report entitled “America’s Most Wasted” in which he identified a \$2.4-billion cost overrun by the Navy. He focused on that particular waste of taxpayer funds because that overrun endangered his campaign to lift sequestration limits on military spending. He asserted,

We have to get rid of the duplicative waste in the Pentagon so that I can have credibility when I say we’ve got to get rid of sequestration because it is destroying our ability to defend the nation.

Congressman Bill Posey (R-Fla.) issues his own “Wasteful Spending List,” the most recent of which included \$24 million spent under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to purchase 1,064 high-end computer routers (at \$22,600 a pop) for use in tiny towns in West Virginia whose residents have no need for such technology. Posey uncovered \$104.5 million spent for a harbor and an airport in the Aleutian Islands. Residents must take a hovercraft to get to the airport, but there’s no reason for them to make the trip as *there are no airlines currently serving it*.

Judicial Watch (JW) tracks government waste as well, exposing the scandal of the Afghan power plant that cost a third of a billion dollars as part of the U.S. government’s “reconstruction” effort. The Tatakhill Power Plant in Kabul was supposed to provide affordable and reliable electricity to Kabul’s residents, but the special inspector general for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported that it “does not seem to have contributed significantly,” providing *less than one-third of one percent of the total power* on the Kabul grid.

JW goes on to point out how the U.S. government wastes \$15 million teaching young people in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala “resocialization” skills and job training. The project, called Youth Pathways-Central America, is supposed to help some 5,100 low-income youths who currently reside in high crime areas to learn “market-relevant skills and secure good employment” somewhere.

JW points out the futility of \$70 million spent on Michelle Obama’s project Let Girls Learn, which explained the reasoning on its website:

We know that countries with more girls in secondary school tend to have lower maternal mortality rates, lower infant mortality rates, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, and better child nutrition.

But too often, a girl who could change her world for the better is locked out of that future by the circumstances of her birth or the customs of her community.

And so funds are extracted from American taxpayers to improve those “circumstances” of foreign girls while reducing, by the same amount, the “circumstances” of American families and taxpayers.

JW asked the wrong question: “Should American tax dollars go to this foreign education cause when public schools in this country have been hurting for years?” A similar admonishment was issued by Lankford when he chastised the NSF for wasting taxpayers’ money, claiming that it needed “to do a better job of proving its research has practical benefits for policymakers.”



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No one seems to be asking the right question: Where in the Constitution is such insanity and wastefulness allowed? A careful reading of Article I, Section 8 (enumerated powers), and the 10th Amendment (powers not enumerated are left to the states or to the people) gives the answer: Not one of these projects is allowed.

It's only when elected representatives understand and honor their oaths of office that this insane government spending can be reined in. Until then, little will change, despite attempts to embarrass agency heads responsible for it through these lists and reports.

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