



THE FESTIVUS REPORT 2021



Happy Festivus! How can 2021 already be coming to a close? What a year it's been. It seems like just yesterday when the national debt was \$20 trillion, but now the U.S. has managed to breeze past \$28 trillion! And, it's safe to say that some big changes have occurred since last year's Festivus Report. Mask mandates, travel restrictions and lock-downs were lifted across many parts of the country. President Biden was inaugurated. Inflation has skyrocketed. The Kardashians finally ended their TV show after 14 years. "Dad bod" was officially added to Webster's Dictionary. And how about the Federal government? Well, unsurprisingly, it managed to keep spending money we don't have on things we don't need.

Readers of the Platinum Pig Awards may recall my Penny Plan Balanced Budget. Only a few years ago, we could have balanced the budget by cutting only one penny off every dollar spent by the Federal government - now, we need to cut 5. 2021 began with Congress spending even more money and approving a \$3.5 trillion Budget Resolution. I attempted to lessen the blow by introducing a series of 48 amendments, including my Five Penny Plan, which unfortunately did not pass. The speed in which our debt is growing means we need ever more vigorous solutions to solve this growing problem.

You'd almost think the government's annual New Year Resolution is to spend more and more money. Well, it is! Meanwhile, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects more than \$1.2 trillion in deficits for Fiscal Year 2022. In fact, CBO states Congress spent \$6.8 trillion in Fiscal Year 2021, \$266 billion more than FY2020. Why continue to recklessly spend taxpayers' money when debt held by the public is already at 103% of GDP?

This year, I am highlighting a whopping **\$52,598,515,585** of waste, including a study of pigeons gambling on slot machines, giving kids junk food, and telling citizens of Vietnam not to burn their trash. No matter how much money's already been wasted, politicians keep demanding even more. But don't worry, I will continue to fight against government waste. So, before we get to the Feats of Strength, it's time for my Airing of (spending) Grievances!

I have a lot of problems with federal spending, and now you're gonna hear all about them!

As Chairman of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight, you can keep track of Dr. Paul's efforts to expose government waste and reform federal spending at <https://www.paul.senate.gov/> and <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/subcommittees/etso>.

Dr. Paul's 2021 Airing of Spending Grievances

In this report, you will find . . .

- What does government waste mean for you?
- What could the government have paid for instead?
- The Waste of 2021
- Spending Solutions: What's Dr. Paul been up to this year?
- Dr. Paul's Platinum Pig Awards for Wasteful Spending for...
 - COVID-19
 - Afghanistan
 - Miscellaneous

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So, what does **\$52,598,515,585** mean for you?

If the waste we found is: $\$52,598,515,585$

And the average taxpayer pays about: $\div \underline{\$15,332}$

Then Uncle Sam **WASTED** the taxes of: 3,430,636 people

That is roughly the population of Los Angeles, California; Chicago, Illinois; or **50.74 times** the size of Senator Paul's hometown of **Bowling Green, KY.**

So, the question is:

Was it your money that was wasted?



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3Hwc7Pp>

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So, what could **\$52,598,515,585** have bought us?



Giving every person in the world \$6.78!



13,149 miles of 4-lane highway construction – long enough to cross the cross the United States 5.26 times!



4.5 months of operating the VA!



1 year and 8 months of funding the Department of Energy!

COULD YOU HAVE SPENT \$52,598,515,585 BETTER THAN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

The Waste of 2021

- Foreign countries use our aircraft for free for 4 years (DOD).....\$773,000,000
- US bought Afghanistan planes that were later thrown away (DOD).....\$549,000,000
- US-constructed buildings in Afghanistan left sitting unused (DOD)\$2,400,000,000
- COVID relief grant for NYC to display art projects across the city.....\$25,000,000
- Ineligible and duplicate PPP loans (SBA).....\$4,290,000,000
- Improper CARES Act unemployment insurance payments.....\$36,000,000,000
- Constructing border walls in the Middle East and North Africa (DOD).....\$250,000,000
- Free trips for Korean kids to visit D.C. (USAID)..... \$150,000
- Grinding up ferrets to develop COVID and flu vaccines.....\$4,500,000
- Tax Credit incentivizing CA residents to uninstall fireplaces.....\$2,100,000
- Translating books into the Georgian language (State).....\$182,741
- Teaching French people about US culture (State).....\$200,000
- Giving irrigation systems to Afghan farmers left unused (USAID)..... \$88,000,000
- Developing a film about dinosaurs to inspire middle schoolers (NSF)..... \$2,500,000
- Pigeons playing slot machines (NIH).....\$465,339
- Telling people to not burn their trash (USAID).....\$11,300,000
- Funding Green Energy programs in Africa (State).....\$179,000,000
- DC Metro paid Lyft to subsidize riders.....\$28,005
- Attempting to replace an assault vehicle over 2 decades (DOD)..... \$3,400,000,000
- Funding the Wilson Center to put on parties for Congressmen.....\$14,000,000
- Study verified that hearing bad news decreases happiness levels (NIA).....\$1,300,000
- Planting trees in New York City.....\$400,000,000
- Government paid for students who didn't actually attend those schools.....\$2,100,000
- Kids crave junk food and gain weight if they're exposed to it (NIDDK).....\$352,000
- Getting high schoolers excited about being airplane pilots (FAA).....\$5,000,000
- Fattening eels for human consumption (FDA).....\$337,500
- Social Security overpayments to beneficiaries in Fiscal Year 2019 (SSA).....\$4,200,000,000

TAXPAYER DOLLARS WASTED: \$52,598,515,585.00

THE FESTIVUS REPORT 2021

COVID-19 Spending



Total Wasted: \$40,316,270,000 (and counting)

SBA WATCHDOG FOUND AT LEAST \$4.29 BILLION IN BAD LOANS OUT OF THE PAYCHECK PROTECTION PROGRAM

In March 2020, government-imposed lockdowns had just begun (remember 14 days to stop the spread?). Nobody knew what would happen to small businesses after state and local governments effectively criminalized commerce. To help small businesses stay afloat, Congress created the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). But rather than make certain that the money went to people who truly needed it, **the Small Business Administration (SBA) sent as much as \$4.29 billion to people who weren't eligible to receive loans or who received duplicate loans.**¹

More than \$3.6 billion of the PPP loans SBA sent out went to those on the Treasury's Do Not Pay (DNP) List.² The DNP list lets agencies check payment recipients to ensure money goes to people who are eligible, like people who aren't convicted fraudsters.³ **But SBA didn't use the DNP List.**⁴ **SBA OIG also found \$692 million went to duplicate loans.**⁵ The CARES Act prohibited duplicate applications and required loan applicants to promise to send only one application; **but SBA didn't check its own database to enforce the rule.**⁶

Congress created PPP, a massive program, and, unsurprisingly, has been plagued by problems. In less than a year, **there have been about 200 prosecutions and 21,000 suspicious loans.**⁷ And who can forget headlines like "Man Purchased Lamborghini after receiving \$3.9 million in PPP Loans"⁸ or "Houston woman accused of spending \$3.6M in PPP loans on Land Rover, luxury items."⁹ **But experts believe we're only seeing the tip of the iceberg.**¹⁰

SBA's lack of PPP oversight (it's yet to produce data on improper payments) shows **the agency was unprepared to manage this task. But the OIG has recommendations for SBA to fix the problem: just use the tools already in SBA's toolbox to save taxpayers billions.**¹¹ **What an idea!**

Whatever you think of lockdowns, certainly everybody should be able to agree that money we spend shouldn't be wasted, especially when it's so preventable. Otherwise, we're just willfully piling on even more debt we and our kids, and their kids, will be forced to pay back.

DOL WATCHDOG FLAGS AS MUCH AS \$36 BILLION IN WASTED UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PAYMENTS

In March, Congress extended super-charged unemployment insurance (UI) through the end of August despite President Biden saying everyone who wants a COVID vaccine will be able to get one by the end of May.¹² It would not be surprising if those supporting extending UI benefits knew **in November 2020 that the Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General (DOL OIG) found the UI benefits program had already paid out as much as \$36 billion in improper payments from the CARES Act alone.**¹³

The program has “an improper payment rate above 10 percent for 14 of the last 17 years.”¹⁴ Presuming, as the DOL OIG does, “an improper payment rate of 10 percent or higher for CARES Act benefits, at least \$36 billion in UI program funds could be paid improperly, with a significant portion attributable to fraud.”¹⁵

Evidence to support these presumptions are not hard to find, if you look. In Akron, Ohio one restaurant employing 44 people pre-pandemic “has received more than 100 notifications ... of bogus unemployment claims as part of the massive unemployment fraud hitting the state and the nation.”¹⁶ In Kentucky, meanwhile, “60,000 of the 90,000 unemployment claims are considered to be fraudulent.”¹⁷ **Some experts say when it’s all said and done, “the losses to unemployment coffers nationwide [will] be between \$200 billion to \$300 billion.”¹⁸**

DOL OIG blames such high fraud rates on folks’ failure to search for work and continuing to claim UI after returning to work, on states operating on dated information, and on employers and other third parties failing to provide complete information to the states.¹⁹ But, DOL OIG believes these problems are fixable if DOL more diligently enforces the rules.²⁰

Reasonable Americans can differ on how best to stop the economic bleeding the lockdowns caused. I, like many of you, think it is well past time to reopen the economy and stop arbitrary restrictions on Americans’ freedoms.

But everybody should agree that we should only be sending UI to people who really need it, and that DOL can and should do more to stop the abuse of the UI system.

BALTIMORE SCHOOL RECEIVED \$1.27 MILLION IN COVID RELIEF FUNDS FOR STUDENTS WHO ACTUALLY WEREN'T ENROLLED

It's no secret that governments, from local to Federal, need better oversight and accountability measures. While the Federal government wastes taxpayer money on frivolous defense weaponry, international endeavors and nonsensical research studies, it's hard to believe we also throw away cash for things that don't even come to fruition.

In Maryland, a school's enrollment is based on the number of students enrolled on paper on September 30th, not accounting for students who transfer after the first month. In Baltimore, the federal funding per student equals \$9,117.²¹ And between 2019-2020²², Augusta Fells school in Baltimore "enrolled" over 140 students with whereabouts unknown, meaning the school improperly received \$1,276,380.

Since the more students a school counts in its enrollment data, the more taxpayer money it receives from the state, a financial incentive exists for school administrators to intentionally inflate enrollment data to increase funding.²³

While this enrollment fraud was occurring in 2020, Baltimore City received \$85 million in CARES Act money²⁴, and in 2021, Baltimore City Public Schools directly received \$197,474,401 under the COVID 2.0 relief bill²⁵.

Even before the pandemic, the Federal government provided nearly \$120 million annually toward Baltimore City Schools' total budget.²⁶

A City of Baltimore investigation found some administrators were changing grades and padding enrollment with "ghost students" who were not actually attending the school²⁷ in order to get more funding.

In turn, the Maryland State Department of Education says the school *may* have to pay the money back to the state.²⁸ It's about time the Federal government sees that it's wasting *real* money when they're carelessly reimbursing schools for "fake" students.



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3ozcboE>

A PICTURE'S WORTH 1,000 WORDS? MORE LIKE \$25,000,000

Remember in elementary school when classmates would glare enviously of students lucky enough to have the supersized Crayola 64-pack with the built-in sharpener? Those seemed to be the crème de la crème of school supplies. Well, imagine if you could buy 1,666 of them, and were paid to draw with them! Well, if you're in New York City, you could have been eligible for \$5,000 to spend on arts and crafts equipment, or could have even raked in money to show your drawings from elementary school.

While the COVID-19 government-mandated lockdowns took a significant toll on nearly every industry, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio is spending **\$25 million of taxpayer-funded federal COVID relief dollars** to launch the "City Arts Corps," paying 3,000 artists to publicly display creative works in an effort to "resurge the cultural scene" in the City.²⁹ Participants may be "artists working in any discipline" as long as they are 21 years or older.³⁰ The performance must be live and in-person (such as in an apartment), free to the public, have a "creative focus," **and may even be old works with no time constraints.**

So, yes, theoretically **even displaying your third-grade paintings or dance moves qualify.**

To prove the event took place, grantees must submit a final report including attendance numbers and **only two photographs.** The more attendees, the better – in the middle of lockdowns!

Sounds like a sweet deal, right? But while these 3,000 artists are presenting poems, paintings and dances, it is important to note that **\$25 million could have been spent to cover about half of the cost of a temporary hospital.**³¹ Wouldn't increased hospital capacity be a more beneficial use of money during a public health crisis?

Forcing artists to fight for one-time payments only available to less than one-nineteenth³² of New York City's artists likely won't significantly (or positively!) aide such a diverse and culturally-influenced city.

That's one expensive talent show!

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Afghanistan



Total Wasted: \$3,809,900,000

FREE FLYIN' WITH \$773 MILLION IN AFGHANISTAN

The United States Department of Defense (DoD) enters into Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreements (ACSA) with foreign countries, “Coalition partners,” to provide them with certain supplies and services in exchange for monetary reimbursement. As such, DoD is responsible for billing and tracking countries’ usage of these goods and services. However, DoD apparently forgot about that part.

Between September 2017 and September 2020, the Department of Defense (DoD) simply “did not request reimbursement [from partner countries] for air transportation services provided to Coalition partners,” “did not obtain flight usage data,” and “did not provide the required oversight of the ACSA program,” according to a Department of Defense Office of Inspector General audit.³³ In other words, **foreign countries used United States government funding to fly our aircraft in Afghanistan for free for 4 years.**

Seventeen countries³⁴ are allowed to use these aircraft as long as they reimburse the costs associated with using U.S. transportation in Afghanistan. These partner countries enter an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ASCA) with DoD to provide logistics support and supplies. However, **DoD is entirely responsible** for initiating the billing process.

U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Multinational Logistics and the logistics division of US Army Central never even tracked American asset usage,³⁵ established rates to charge those nations,³⁶ or developed an agreement with Coalition partners to allow the US to ask for reimbursement.³⁷

Due to the lack of data, there is **no way of verifying how many millions of dollars were lost.** The best estimate we have is \$773 million, since this was the total amount awarded for the three base contracts.³⁸

This neglect was widespread throughout the war in Afghanistan. After withdrawing our troops in August 2021, not only were we letting foreign nations use our aircraft, but now we’re potentially supplying the Taliban with billions of dollars of weapons and letting them make a profit off them.³⁹ **Talk about a free ride!**



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3qOQ2FV>

USAID SPENT \$87.9 MILLION GIVING IRRIGATION SYSTEMS TO AFGHAN FARMERS THAT ONLY 2.7% ACTUALLY USED

In 2016, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) started a program to help the Afghan government help farmers as it cut checks to NGOs to fund Afghan farmers.⁴⁰ **That program paid for 72 farmers to receive a drip irrigation system, including the pipes, wheelbarrow, 2,000-liter water tank, a 5kw generator, and the equivalent of \$53 to pay for installation.**⁴¹ All told, the program amounted to an \$87.9 million investment by Uncle Sam.⁴²

In 2020, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) audited the program and found **only 25 of the 72 farmers actually installed their systems. Of the 25 who did install them, 92% (23 farmers) were not using the systems as intended.**⁴³

So, what happened to the 70 farmers who accepted the systems and didn't use them? **Fourteen couldn't be contacted, seven never got the generator necessary to fill the tank to make the system work, twenty-one said they didn't have enough water to operate the system, and twelve said the components were damaged or unusable.** One farmer - one of the 25 who actually installed the system - **ripped it out because he couldn't afford the fuel to operate the generator needed to fill the water tank.**⁴⁴

As part of the program, USAID built 8 canals. Of the 6 SIGAR looked at, two of them had structural deficiencies.⁴⁵ We can only hope USAID takes SIGAR's advice to inspect the canals and visit the farmers to make sure they're not letting the irrigation system go to waste.

Meanwhile, if any farmer across the country whose irrigation system has been damaged during a flooding were offered a new, free, system, you'd bet your bottom dollar they'd jump at it. Or maybe, we could have put that \$90 million toward fixing any number of the dilapidated roads and bridges we've got at home. It's astounding that we continue to waste our money abroad instead of spending it at home or paying down our monstrous national debt.

Whether it's the gas station with natural gas nobody can use⁴⁶, this agricultural equipment nobody wants, or the electrical grid we built without asking if people could hook into it, your government just can't get it right when spending in Afghanistan.

UNITED STATES SPENT \$549,000,000 ON PLANES FOR AFGHAN AIR FORCE THAT WERE SOLD AS SCRAP

Some say that one man's trash is another man's treasure. While this saying may bring to mind sifting through the aisles of your local thrift shop, looking for the best deal, it's not too often when that "trash" is million-dollar military aircraft.

A Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) investigation found that the United States Air Force decided to supply the Afghan Air Force with Italian aircraft that was ultimately re-sold for \$548,959,743 less than the original value.⁴⁷ How entrepreneurial.

Our military spent \$549 million worth of your taxpayer dollars on aircraft for the Afghan Air Force, just for them to be junked a few years later at a "scrap" value of \$40,257, according to the report.⁴⁸

The Pentagon bought 20 G222 cargo aircraft from Alenia North America in 2008 but the planes proved unreliable, subsequently leading to problems such as long delays to secure the delivery of spare parts, maintenance problems, and safety complaints from Afghan pilots.



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The program was suspended, the planes were destroyed, and turned into scrap metal in 2014, which sold for \$40,257: **not even one-tenthousandth of the value.**

Unfortunately, no one involved in the program was held accountable for this failure even though early alarm bells were raised. SIGAR found that several warnings from within the Air Force about Alenia North America and its lack of a plan to sustain the aircraft "were ignored."

The investigation found that United States contracting personnel did not verify "that Alenia had the required spare parts available as promised," or that it had confirmed the refurbished planes were airworthy "especially in the high altitude and extreme weather conditions of Afghanistan."⁴⁹

UNITED STATES SPENT MORE THAN \$2.4 BILLION ON BUILDINGS IN AFGHANISTAN SITTING UNUSED

Discussions relating to the sheer amount of money and effort wasted have been common since the United States withdrew from Afghanistan after 20 years of war. Whether it be abandoned military equipment or resources, we may never fully know exactly how much of your tax money was trashed as well. Now, we learn **the U.S. spent at least \$2.4 billion on buildings sitting unused, are not being used for their intended purpose, have deteriorated, or have been entirely destroyed.**⁵⁰

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) investigation found **just 4.4% of U.S.-funded building projects were being used and maintained in good condition.**⁵¹ Meanwhile, it found **61% had exterior structural damage, 56% had interior structural damage, 55% had electrical issues, 46% had broken or missing machinery, 38% were damaged by water, mildew, or mold, and 35% had plumbing issues, while 80% had issues that were getting worse over time.**⁵²

Let's be honest: most of these sites probably had more than one issue too. **The question must be asked, why are we spending all this money to build them in the first place?** What was once a mission to seek out and destroy the people who perpetrated the 9/11 attacks has become an exercise in... well, it's unclear exactly what.

Whatever the reason, the effect is that we're lining the pockets of the construction companies building this stuff and the NGO's running State Department-funded programs, and none of it is moving the needle. Our return on investment is near zero while the costs are exorbitantly high, both in treasure and more importantly, in manpower. If a business ran like this, it would be forced to close its doors before they had a chance to become damaged.

Senator Paul recognizes not everybody agrees with me on the best path forward in Afghanistan. But we should all be able to agree that we shouldn't just be building things for them to ultimately be left empty!

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Miscellaneous



Total Wasted: \$8,472,345,585

**CONGRESS GAVE THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT \$250 MILLION TO
BUILD BORDER WALLS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH
AFRICA**

Hundreds of millions⁵³ of foreign citizens, lawfully or not, cross the United States-Canada and the United States-Mexico borders each year. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) received \$26 billion in Federal funding in 2019⁵⁴, but all the while, year after year, our system remains in utter disarray.

Nonetheless, the Federal government feels that it is qualified enough to assist and aide developing countries overseas with their border systems. In fact, \$250 million of your taxpayer dollars are going to building borders in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, and Oman.

This spending dates back to the 2016 Defense Department authorization, when Congress determined that helping developing countries build economic, social, and political institutions was a national security priority.⁵⁵ One border improvement project in Jordan, for example, includes "integrated border security surveillance, detection and interdiction system along Jordan's land borders."⁵⁶

So, in the December 2020 blow-out appropriations bill, Congress spent \$250 million on "enhanced border security" in the Middle East and North Africa.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the United States immigration system still has much work to be done. While we were busy funding other countries' immigration systems, in December 2020, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) received a "flood" of new DACA applications, ultimately resulting in a considerable backlog of over 81,000 applications, according to the agency.⁵⁸

While Americans may be divided on how to solve the crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border, we should all agree that using our taxpayer money to fix someone else's border is not the best idea.

\$150,000 VACATIONS FOR KOREAN “KIDS”

Sometimes it is difficult to advocate for what you believe in, especially when you are young. There is no doubt that learning to confidently speak your mind is a skill many struggle to master; however, what if you could travel the world for free while learning to become a better advocate?

Well, partnering with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Embassy in Seoul is allocating up to a \$150,000 **grant to send ten Koreans aged 15-30 to Washington, D.C. for two weeks to learn about climate change activism.**⁵⁹

The free trip will include meetings with government agencies, non-profits, US-based companies, and more to discuss how the US is addressing climate change.⁶⁰ But, last time we checked, it's free to participate in meetings. So, what else could this money be used on?

Oh, of course, the “vacation” is all-expenses included: providing all food, travel, lodging, and “cultural outings” desired by the participants. If we were to divide the amount of funding by the anticipated number of participants, that could add up to about \$15,000 per participant. Think of how elaborate of a trip you could have with that money: even in Washington, D.C., that'd go a long way! They could all fly first-class, and still have money to spare.

That's about **how much the average American family pays in taxes annually,**⁶¹ so why does the Embassy need that much money to feed young adults pizza and tour the (already free) Smithsonian museums?

By these numbers, 10 Americans will have to work all year to send these “young” activists, some possibly grown adults, on this sightseeing tour. All the while, hard-working Americans across the country are struggling to make ends meet.



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\$4.5 MILLION-DOLLAR ACTIVE INGREDIENT? FERRETS

Animal testing has played a significant role in biomedical research over the decades. In fact, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) even mandates experimental drugs be tested on animals before they are used on humans in clinical trials. However, there have been many debates on the ethics surrounding the use of animals in laboratory testing and if it results in needless suffering and death. Senator Paul's FDA Modernization Act,⁶² for example, would end the FDA mandate and allow drug sponsors to use alternative methods for testing.

Millions of dollars are spent each year to breed animals with the intent to use them for testing. Since 2010, the American taxpayer has given Triple F Farms \$4.5 million⁶³ for the breeding and transporting of ferrets to COVID-19⁶⁴ and influenza vaccine⁶⁵ testing laboratories.⁶⁶ In 2011, an undercover investigation revealed findings from an undercover investigation, including video recordings of ferrets dying in feces, run over by carts, thrown alive into incinerators, hanging from wire.⁶⁷

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) later confirmed these violations but only fined Triple F Farms just under \$44,000⁶⁸, a minor slap on the wrist compared to the millions of dollars of your taxpayer funds they received before and after the investigation.

So, are they still receiving money? Of course, they are. And to make matters even worse, recent inspection reports by USDA have demonstrated that **abuse continues**, citing **excessive piles of feces, scabs on the skin,⁶⁹ empty feed bags,⁷⁰ and soiled enclosures.⁷¹**

If a facility has been found multiple times to be blatantly abusing ferrets, an animal many keep as family pets, why would the Federal government allow them to continue being used in advancing drug development?



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3oEu1Aa>

BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE WITH \$2.1 MILLION FIREPLACES

There's something heartwarming about gathering around a fireplace and keeping warm with loved ones. Fireplaces have been a reliant resource for hundreds of years and continue to provide warmth and comfort to families in homes across the world.

America is suffering from a litany of crises such as rampant increases in drug prices, inflation and the immigration system. However, Congress has another kindling issue to solve: eliminating fireplaces, and getting you to pay for it. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) even granted the 12th Congressional District of California \$2.1 million to incentivize residents to remove wood-burning systems and replace them with electric heat pumps.⁷²

While the American taxpayer is paying to replace fireplaces and send money to electricity companies, shouldn't the government prioritize the most imminent issues affecting its constituents?⁷³

On the contrary, Congress passed the December 2020 \$900 billion COVID relief bill⁷⁴ by a 92-6 vote that happened to include a provision incentivizing the *installation* of fireplaces nationwide by giving a 26% tax credit to people who install home heating and hot water systems that use wood pellets, chips and cordwood.⁷⁵ That is, unless you're one of the citizens being encouraged to remove them!

While some taxpayers are paying thousands to install fireplaces into their homes, they're simultaneously paying for others to get rid of them!

But C-SPAN clearly isn't HGTV, so why is the federal government giving preference to how Americans decorate their homes? Do you support one over the other? It doesn't matter; you're paying for both!



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3oY4K1b>

STATE DEPARTMENT IS SPENDING UP TO \$182,741 TRANSLATING BOOKS INTO THE GEORGIAN LANGUAGE

If we told you the government was giving books to Georgian students, you might think they're in the state of Georgia. But come on, this is the federal government after all!

While your kids and millions of American students were locked out of their schools for more than a year during the COVID-19 pandemic, your government has been paying to translate books into Georgian for Georgian students, and spending \$182,741 to do it!⁷⁶

The U.S. Embassy of Tbilisi's annual Book Translation Program provides funding for publishing houses and academic institutions to translate American books on themes of public policy and civic education, media norms, economics, rule of law, basic education, and American literature.⁷⁷ The books used are not objectionable – some economics textbooks, children's books, and American classics like *All the King's Men* and *Invisible Man*.⁷⁸ **But when did this become the federal government's job? And if these books are so great, shouldn't publishers pay for the translation?**

The Georgian government has a goal to make sure all Georgian children understand English.⁷⁹ Couldn't Georgians be learning English by reading American books?

If the government wants to increase literacy rates, there's more than enough work to do at home. As early as May of last year, studies stated, "COVID Slide estimates suggest students could begin fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in English."⁸⁰ And even before the school lock-downs, American literacy wasn't a pretty read. **In the United States, nearly one third of fourth-graders are not proficient in reading.**⁸¹ **"Some 36 million adults in the U.S. don't have basic reading ... skills above a third-grade level,"** according to estimates.⁸²

It is callous to ship dollars around the world for textbooks when our own nation's students are struggling. And there's no limiting principle here. Today, its Georgia, but why not any number of underdeveloped countries tomorrow?

In case the bureaucrats have forgotten: your constituents are the American people, not foreign citizens.

STATE DEPARTMENT SPENT \$200,000 TEACHING FRANCE ABOUT U.S. CULTURE

Do you understand every single problem facing our country? The State Department thinks they do, and wants to teach France all about them!

The State Department U.S. Mission to France plans to allocate up to \$200,000 to **“enhance the understanding of the United States in France.”**⁸³ U.S. nonprofit organizations and university officials can apply to be flown overseas to hold lectures and workshops explaining themes such as U.S. climate change policy, entrepreneurship, and culture.⁸⁴

While the program’s goal is to improve *bilateral* relations between the two countries, the grant focuses little on understanding French ideals, calling for the “promotion” of United States policies! **On top of that, the concepts of “culinary traditions, art, film, sports, fashion, and literature” are not exactly foreign to the French public.**

The U.S. and France already have strong cultural and economic ties -- the State Department even admitted the two countries share common values, parallel policies, and a pattern of close cooperation.⁸⁵ And in 2019, France traded \$138 billion in goods and services to the United States, making France our third-largest trading partner.⁸⁶

Besides spending \$200,000 for a so-called American expert to visit France, **what are we taxpayers and the average French citizen gaining from this program besides another \$200,000 to the national debt?**

Perhaps the government should consider investing our taxpayer money in the states and not spending our money trying to convince other nations of our greatness. But who knows, maybe teaching French citizens and lawmakers about the Super Bowl (that they somehow don’t know about, according to the State Department) could become the bind that holds us together.



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/30Kawop>

DINOSAURS OF ANTARCTICA: A \$2.4 MILLION (WASTE OF A) BIG SCREEN FILM

Dinosaurs have dramatically risen in popularity since 1914, when short silent film *Brute Force* first hit the big screen.⁸⁷ Now, look to the massive popularity of classic movies like *Jurassic Park* and *The Land Before Time*,⁸⁸ as well as their contemporary counterparts like the *Jurassic World*⁸⁹ movies, which are **worth nearly \$6 billion worldwide**. Surprisingly enough, paleontology can be generated without government assistance. In fact, **paleontology is “experiencing a golden age, with a new dinosaur species discovered every 10 days” among the “Jurassic Park Generation”** which was inspired by the films as children.⁹⁰

That being said, the National Science Foundation (NSF) still granted Giant Screen Films \$2,453,100 in an attempt to promote dinosaurs and “reach millions of theatrical viewers across the U.S.”⁹¹ or rather duplicate what the aforementioned films have already done.

Yes, the government used \$2-million taxpayer dollars to **create a dinosaur-centric film in 2D and 3D, a 3-episode TV series, a fictional book and museum exhibits to “inspire” middle schoolers to build interest in STEM.**⁹² The film features dinosaurs in the Antarctic and hopes to “inspire future polar scientists” and “encourage young people to learn about Antarctica.”⁹³

Even if young, aspiring polar scientists wish to watch the film, entrance to the exhibit is not free! Tickets for one parent and one child to attend run \$34, which could give the museums a profit of up to \$5.1 million if they ultimately reach 1.5 million of their aspired “millions” of film viewers.

I’m pretty sure middle schools already teach students about the continent, and *The Land Before Time VIII: The Big Freeze* (which was nominated for national awards) already highlights dinosaurs adapting to arctic settings.

That being the case, why did Giant Screen need your money to succeed?



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/32iJV2t>

PIGEONS PLAYING THE SLOTS WITH \$465,339

Gambling addiction is a problem affecting **over 10 million Americans and counting**.⁹⁴ If a researcher were to observe and attempt to better understand individuals struggling with this addiction, where do you think they would start? The mega casinos of Vegas and Atlantic City? Sports betting? The rise of mobile gambling?

Surprisingly, none of the above. The correct answer: **Pigeons in a laboratory**. That's right, **NIH granted Reed College of Portland, Oregon \$465,339 to create a token-based economy where pigeons are taught to gamble with slot machines**.⁹⁵

The researchers plan on allowing the pigeons the choice to spend, save, or gamble tokens in this mini-economy. One could understand such a study if pigeon gambling was ravaging the streets of New York City, but it seems as though there are more pressing issues to deal with at the moment.

The researchers admitted that this study focuses **“on laboratory models rather than practical applications,”**⁹⁶ but go on to explain that the findings should still be used -- i.e. funded by your taxpayer money -- to further study “behavioral economics” in humans. **The United States is over \$28 trillion dollars in debt**⁹⁷. Is studying pigeon gambling habits worth adding to the mountain of debt for which future generations will become responsible?

In the words of the great Kenny Rogers “You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away.”

How about we throw this wasteful hand away and hope to be dealt a better one in the next Fiscal Year.



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3Dqlel2>

BURNING YOUR MONEY: USAID IS SPENDING \$11.3 MILLION TO TELL THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM TO STOP BURNING THEIR TRASH

Air and water quality has long been a prominent issue facing Americans. For example, in 2015, **21 million Americans were served by local water systems violating health standards.**⁹⁸ But, the government wants to use your taxpayer money to focus on *international* air and water quality.

In January 2021, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) posted a notice proposing to spend \$11.3 million to “reduce environmental pollution in targeted areas across Vietnam,” which will include encouraging locals to stop burning their trash, promoting recycling, and working with schools to get kids to “influence households’ improved environmental decision-making.”⁹⁹

To encourage these individuals’ “positive environmental change,” USAID thinks simply cutting checks to companies and NGOs will make a significant impact on citizens’ decisions. As if that weren’t enough, USAID hopes to assist Vietnam in improving its air and water quality on a larger scale by supporting heavy-handed approaches, such as helping Vietnamese authorities improve data collection and punish citizens who break pollution laws.¹⁰⁰

But it turns out the bulk of the areas in Vietnam with unhealthy air quality are in the northern part of the country, where wind currents blow polluted air south from China, and east from Thailand.

Surely, most Americans would likely rather we instead use this Federal money on air and quality systems at home.



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CONGRESS GAVE THE STATE DEPARTMENT \$179 MILLION TO FUND GREEN ENERGY PROGRAMS IN AFRICA

In December 2020, Congress passed another huge spending bill, 5,593 pages, costing \$2.5 trillion. Tucked into the monstrosity was **a directive from Congress to the Department of State (State) to spend \$179 million to provide Africa electricity derived from green sources.**¹⁰¹

Developing African nations have fairly good electricity access. Sub-Saharan Africa lags behind other regions but in the last decade the number of Africans without electricity has “been steadily decreasing.”¹⁰² **In fact, 2020 saw 13 million more Africans across the continent receive electricity.**¹⁰³ But it’s not been without challenges to citizens.

Africa already has substantial natural, renewable, resources (the Nile comes to mind) which it can’t implement due to lack of financial backing, but **operating renewable energy sources like solar and hydroelectric remain more costly to its citizens.**¹⁰⁴ **So, by the Federal government providing \$179 million for renewable energy, we’re actually going to be sticking Sub-Saharan African consumers with hefty electricity bills.**¹⁰⁵ If the goal is to flex our soft power muscles by giving Africans power, the best way to get them on our side isn’t to stick them with high cost electricity, or systems which don’t work.

Like Africa, the U.S. is blessed with ample natural resources to give Americans electricity. **But not all Americans have it. As of late 2020, 60,000 American citizens, living on a Navajo reservation, lacked electricity.**¹⁰⁶ In Kentucky, there are plans to upgrade the power grid, costing \$39 million,¹⁰⁷ to provide more reliable electricity access, funded in part by a mix of consumer fees and subsidies raised from State tax revenue.

Shouldn’t we be prioritize giving underserved Americans reliable electricity before spending citizens’ tax dollars on costly and unreliable electricity overseas?

D.C. METRO PAID LYFT \$28,005 TO PICK UP THEIR SLACK

It seems like there's always some sort of project or crisis going on with the Washington, D.C. Metro System. Between derailments,¹⁰⁸ engine fires¹⁰⁹ and ongoing train upgrades,¹¹⁰ it would be difficult to find someone who considers WMATA reliable. In 2019, for example, residents of the Washington, D.C., area criticized the Metro system's After-Hours Commuter Service Program only available to "late-night workers," such as hospitality and healthcare workers.

The Program provides eligible riders with subsidized rides when the Metro is not open, between midnight and 4 AM, via Lyft from areas that originate and terminate within the metro service area. **When the project began in July 2019, WMATA provided eligible riders with \$3 subsidies, which has since been doubled to \$6. In total, as of March 31, 2021, the program has 377 eligible participants who have received 7,386 trips. Metro has literally paid Lyft \$28,005.**

Originally a pilot program, AHCS been extended indefinitely and **Metro budgeted \$1 million for this program for FY22.**¹¹¹ Metro routinely complains it needs more money from its federal and state partners, yet this is how it chooses to spend \$1M?

Maybe if they improved their typical service they could bring riders back, and have the money to expand their service to cover 12-4am, like most other northeastern systems.



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/327VUQ5>

U.S. MARINE CORPS HAS SPENT BILLIONS OVER DECADES TRYING AND FAILING TO DEVELOP A COMBAT VEHICLE

Readers of the Platinum Pig Awards will recall Senator Paul honored the Defense Department for spending billions on replacing the Bradley, which is an armored, infantry fighting vehicle used by the United States Military.¹¹² Well, **now the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) is in on the game, spending \$3,428,300,000 and 20 years¹¹³ trying and failing to develop an amphibious combat vehicle (ACV) to replace the 40-year-old amphibious assault vehicle (AAV).**¹¹⁴

In 2011, having spent \$3 billion, the USMC scrapped its AAV replacement, citing poor test results.¹¹⁵ Even though the project failed, USMC began again and issued two funding opportunities for companies to develop prototypes, costing \$103.8 million and \$121.5 million respectively.¹¹⁶ The USMC ultimately decided to pay \$198 million to one single company for 30 prototypes.¹¹⁷

The prototype testing determined the new ACV is **slower than the 40-year-old AAV, is vulnerable to flat tires in the desert and is not equipped with a hydraulic jack (meaning a second vehicle is needed to change the flat).**¹¹⁸ **The seats aren't designed with body armor in mind, so Marines sitting in the vehicle will be incredibly uncomfortable.**¹¹⁹

Even though these design flaws are relatively easy to fix,¹²⁰ ACV operations have been altogether *suspended* after a "Safety of Use" message resulting from an issue **involving the vehicle's towing mechanism.**¹²¹ Even after nearly \$200 million spent, what was delivered is arguably worse than what the Marine Corps had to begin with!

While the current ACV presents a number of operational and safety issues, USMC has decided to develop the "ACV 2.0," which will incorporate "lessons learned" from the failed ACV as delivered.¹²² Version 2.0 is slated to arrive 10 years after USMC scrapped its initial attempt at replacing the AAV. **Here's hoping we aren't here another decade and \$3 billion flittered away, talking about the same issues...but don't get too optimistic.**

CONGRESS GAVE THE WILSON CENTER, WHICH THROWS SWANKY PARTIES FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, \$14 MILLION

If you've not heard of the Wilson Center, it's a small nonpartisan foreign policy think tank in Washington D.C.¹²³ It's the same as a private think tank, like the Heritage Foundation or the Center for American Progress, except it receives about \$14 million a year from the Federal government.¹²⁴ **So why has it received nearly \$300 million in public money since 1976 when its peers receive \$0?**¹²⁵

It'd be one thing if the money funded exhibits teaching the public about Wilson, but it doesn't. It just pays for salaries and other expenses.¹²⁶ To its credit, **the Wilson Center asked for less money from taxpayers for FY21 (\$8.2 million) than it got for FY20 (\$14 million)**, which is rare in Washington.¹²⁷

If only the Wilson Center realized earlier on that it is not cash strapped. In 2020, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase, BP, Chevron, Goldman Sachs, S&P Global, Delta Airlines, Johnson & Johnson, NASDAQ, and many others donated to the Wilson Center.¹²⁸

Despite its request, Congress still appropriated the Center \$14 million, \$6 million more than it asked for, and the reason why is what people mean when they talk about "the swamp." **Each year, the Wilson Center puts on a gala honoring, among others, current members of Congress, The Woodrow Wilson Awards Dinner.**¹²⁹ The Center says it honors those "thinkers, doers, and risk-takers who have overcome adversity, found success, and stood up for the common good."¹³⁰ A lot of people meet that description, I'm sure you can think of plenty.

The Wilson Center routinely chooses sitting and former members of Congress, cabinet secretaries, and others of their kind. True to form, **2020's honorees were a former Treasury Secretary, a former head of the International Monetary Fund, and two current members of Congress at the exclusive gala.**¹³¹

One has to assume, even if the Wilson Center wants \$0 from the public, it'll still probably get publicly funded. After all, how else will it be able to pay for those fancy galas to honor Washington D.C. bureaucrats?

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING SPENT \$1,299,964 TO VERIFY THAT HEARING BAD NEWS DECREASES HAPPINESS LEVELS

Our government was founded to protect individual rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Happiness, however, is a subjective term and people can define what happiness is for themselves. But **that hasn't stopped the government from spending your money trying to define happiness as well.** Former Senator William Proxmire noted nearly 50 years ago that the Federal government squandered \$84,000 to try and find out why people fall in love,¹³² and now it is trying to find the answer to a happy life.

In fact, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) **used nearly \$1.3 million taxpayer dollars over the course of 5 years to study how hearing good or bad news affects your happiness.** Though each person's emotions are unique, the Federal government *is still* trying to find one common answer, and make you foot the bill.

Particularly, the grant **purports to measure how people feel about various events, how they measure which events are "good news" or "bad news," and which major life events are most important.** The project will survey participants in laboratories and using online surveys on different types of events, such as bereavement, illness, and financial events.

But, to absolutely nobody's surprise, apparently **"good news causes happiness to jump up," and "bad news causes happiness to jump down."**¹³³ Groundbreaking. Should it really have cost \$1,299,964 to make that "discovery?"

I know what you may be thinking: why is the Federal government so interested in this issue, that they're using hardworking Americans' tax dollars?

Well, according to the grant application "understanding which major life events are most important to people can be an important input into public policy." How is public policy relevant to one sole person having a good day?



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NEW YORK CITY SPENT \$400 MILLION PLANTING TREES

What if we told you that you could rake in some cash for pulling up your sleeves and *planting* some trees? Well, as part of the New York Restoration Project (NYRP), New York City put \$400 million of their Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds toward the MillionTreesNYC initiative, in which the City's Parks Department and local homeowners plant trees across the city.

Planting 1 million trees between 2007 to 2017, the primary purpose of the project is to “make New York City more sustainable” and “protect our planet.”¹³⁴ If that's not vague enough for you, MillionTreesNYC Director Morgan Monaco explicitly stated that “our goal is to have New Yorkers form an emotional connection to trees.”¹³⁵

Does that seem like the best use of Federal resources during the Great Recession? Or was this an attempt to distract city-dwellers from the City's increasing unemployment rates?

If you divide the \$400 million spent by 1 million trees planted, you will find that each tree cost the taxpayers a whopping \$400. That price seems a tad high, especially considering it generally costs between \$50 - \$100 to purchase and plant a small tree.¹³⁶ What is the Parks Department doing with the extra \$350 per tree?

Even worse, the Nature Conservancy states “there is no comprehensive plan or sufficient, long-term funding for managing the city's trees in the years ahead.”¹³⁷

In other words, despite overpaying to plant these trees, not a penny is spent to keep these trees and the \$400 million legacy alive.



Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3FuhUD4>

**THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENT \$361,001 TO SEE IF LETTING
KIDS EAT JUNK FOOD MAKES THEM WANT MORE**

It's no secret that kids love junk food, hence the line "acting like a kid in a candy store." It's also no secret that childhood obesity rates have skyrocketed over the last two decades. Considering more and more children are being sedentary as opposed to exercising outdoors, it's no wonder obesity affects nearly 15 million children¹³⁸ across the United States.

Studies already show that sugar has addictive qualities.¹³⁹ But, imagine if you gave a child several portions of candy and junk food every day -- do you think they'd gain weight? It shouldn't take a scientist to figure out that answer.

Well, apparently the government wants to double check this proven fact. The **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)** granted the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo **\$361,011 in Federal funding to study if kids crave junk food and gain weight if they're continuously exposed to it.**¹⁴⁰

This study¹⁴¹ looked at food as a predictor of weight change in children through daily exposure to categorically healthy and unhealthy foods. Kids were given 14 portions of snack food, such as fruit cups and granola bars, and were instructed to eat them daily.

In addition, the study examined if kids continuously snack on fruits and vegetables as opposed to potato chips and chocolate, will they gain weight and keep choosing unhealthy options? Shocking nobody, the answer is no!

¹⁴²

I wonder how many 100 Grand candy bars you can buy for \$361 grand. Either way, SUNY Buffalo sure got one big payday!



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FLYING HIGH (SCHOOLERS) WITH \$5 MILLION

Congress created the FAA Aircraft Pilots Workforce Development Grant Program to encourage and prepare high schoolers to become airplane pilots, aerospace engineers, and drone operators.¹⁴³

Through the award of these Airline Pilots Workforce Development grants, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) aims to provide “meaningful educational experiences” to prepare students to become aircraft pilots, aerospace engineers, or unmanned aircraft systems operators, and support the related professional development of teachers.

In other words, the FAA is **spending up to \$5 million to get high schoolers excited about being airplane pilots.**

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, and since travel restrictions have been significantly lifted,¹⁴⁴ American pilots have been in great demand, with “airlines worried about not being able to replace retiring baby boomers.”¹⁴⁵

However, even before spending your taxpayer dollars, students have **already shown an interest** in the aviation industry, as seen by an impressive 1,063 flying schools across the United States.¹⁴⁶ In fact, the number of pilots across the country has nearly doubled over the last decade, with 222,630 active student pilot certificates in 2020 alone.¹⁴⁷ ATP Flight school, for example, issues 8,133 Federal Aviation Administration Certificates annually and even partners with airlines to streamline faster paths to employment¹⁴⁸ to help meet demand.

In terms of incentivizing students to become aerospace engineers, the number of aerospace, aeronautical and astronautical engineering degrees awarded in the United States **rose nearly 12 percent in 2019** alone.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, the industry is already actively incentivizing people to enter and remain in the professions with its competitive pay: the median annual wage for commercial pilots was \$93,300 in 2020¹⁵⁰ and the medium annual wage for aerospace engineers was \$118,610 in 2020.¹⁵¹

It’s safe to say that the aviation industry has already proven successful at recruiting students, so why should the Federal government spend \$5 million in an attempt to further “inspire” them?

SPRING HAS COME AND GONE, AND SO HAS \$2.8 MILLION

The change from winter to spring is a beautiful and amazing process. It's worth taking the time to experience and learn about, no matter who you are.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) agrees. **In fact, to educate you about this natural phenomenon they want you to stay inside and watch television!**¹⁵² In a project to “explore the dramatic seasonal changes of spring,” the NSF provided funding to WNET (a PBS contributor) to create and air three one-hour long episodes to explain the environmental changes of spring.

Oh, and let's not forget the simultaneous Facebook interaction they provided as well!¹⁵³ Nature and its spring transformation are finally at your fingertips, more accessible than ever before. But really, who has time to go outside and truly experience spring?

Let's not forget the best part -- this whole project was cheap, relative to government spending! Just a mere \$2,850,000 of Americans' hardworking money...for three hours of screen time about an experience that most folks can have by simply walking out of their home.¹⁵⁴

Let's remember that resources such as these are already available for free, between an entire television channel and TV shows dedicated to the issue and countless videos online – even a National Geographic compilation of photos to “watch spring bloom before your eyes.”¹⁵⁵

It seems like the NSF should do a little spring cleaning to get rid of the waste that seems to fill their spending.

FDA SPENT \$337,500 TO FATTEN EELS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

When you look at the “meat and seafood” section of a restaurant menu, you’re likely to find steak, burgers, chicken, salmon, and shrimp. While there are outliers more popular across other regions of the country, such as deer and duck, one food rarely seen on a menu is eel.

Eel is primarily used in Japanese cuisines like sushi and remains popular among Native American tribes. The eel population, however, is declining. Lucky for your stomach, but unlucky for your wallet, the government is here to save the day.

Eel eaters across the country can rest easy knowing that **FDA granted NovaEel Canadian aquaculture company \$337,500 in taxpayer dollars to fatten and raise juvenile eels to keep costs down for those wishing to eat the fish.**

Over the course of two years, NovaEel has been attempting to **turn male eels into females**¹⁵⁶ by administering them with estradiol (a form of estrogen used to treat menopause symptoms) which in turn causes American eels (*Anguilla rostrata*) to gain weight.¹⁵⁷

Because female eels are much heavier than their counterparts, they are more cost effective for sale for human consumption.¹⁵⁸

The FDA chose to fund this study in part due to its effort to support New Animal Drug Applications for drugs intended for minor uses or minor species.¹⁵⁹

This is corporate welfare, driven by somebody at the FDA who must really like eating eel.

Someone should remind FDA that there are other fish in the sea.

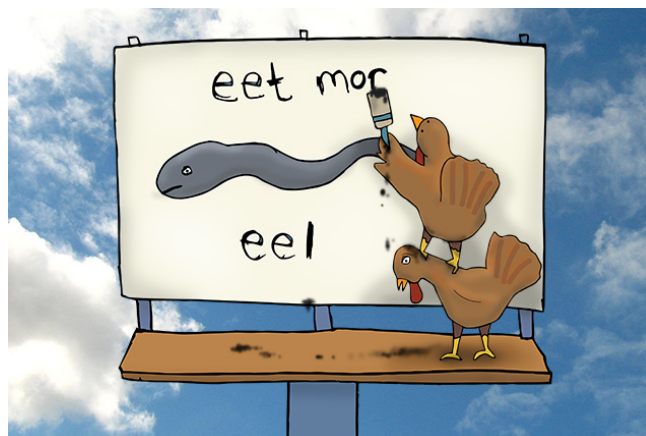


Photo Credit: <https://bit.ly/3HsNyTv>

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION OVERPAID BENEFICIARIES \$4.2 BILLION IN FISCAL YEAR 2019

Social Security is our largest Federal program, totaling over \$1.2 trillion with nearly 70 million beneficiaries in Fiscal Year 2021.¹⁶⁰ Every day, people are finding more ways to game the system, and sometimes even the Social Security Administration's (SSA) lack of accountability results in their own costly errors. In 2015, for example, the Social Security Administration database listed over 6.6 million recipients over 112 years of age – when there are only 42 people in the world known to be that old.¹⁶¹ When programs are so large, they become ripe for mismanagement.

Overpayments occur when SSA pays beneficiaries more than it should for a given period. If a beneficiary does not fully repay the overpayment, SSA recovers the overpayment by withholding monthly benefits. If SSA cannot collect the debt within 12 months, it evaluates the beneficiary's income and assets to negotiate a withholding rate that will recover the overpayment within 36 months. Beneficiaries may receive a longer recovery period without limitation and approval or review.

But, a glitch in the system cannot actually account for overpayments. The SSA's Recovery of Overpayments, Accounting and Reporting (ROAR) system cannot process overpayment recovery actions past the year 2049. Instead, ROAR calculates the amount SSA will recover through December 2049 and deletes the remaining balance. SSA employees must manually establish diaries to account for the untracked debt, a process that will almost certainly result in inaccurate accountings and lost debt.

Earlier this year, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that during Fiscal Year 2019, **SSA made 100,766 overpayments totaling nearly \$4.2 billion that may not be fully recouped until 2049. Of this, the Administration completely deleted and could not account for over \$1.2 billion due to an error in their system.**¹⁶²

As a result of this lost debt, OIG estimates that if the deleted and untracked debt issue is not fully resolved by the end of 2029, untracked debt will have grown to more than \$2.5 billion, and processing the workload will require over 203,000 hours and more than \$28.7 million in administrative costs.¹⁶³

It is more important than ever for Congress to find its fiscal backbone and prevent programs from letting taxpayer dollars vanish into thin air.

And now....



On to the Feats of
Strength!

¹ SBA Inspector General, “Paycheck Protection Program Loan Recipients on the Department of Treasury’s Do Not Pay List, Report 21-06,” Page 2, *SBA Inspector General*, January 11, 2021.

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⁵ SBA Inspector General, “Paycheck Protection Program Loan Recipients on the Department of Treasury’s Do Not Pay List, Report 21-06,” Page 3, *SBA Inspector General*, January 11, 2021.

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¹⁶² The Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, “Audit Report: Overpayments with Recovery Agreements that Will Extend Beyond 2049,” Report Number A-07-19-50775, page 3, *The Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General*, September 2021.

<https://www.oversight.gov/sites/default/files/oig-reports/SSA/07-19-50775.pdf>.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*