



U.S. Representative • 9<sup>TH</sup> CD, New York • Brooklyn-Queens

## ANTHONY D. WEINER

Report

### THE LATEST FEDERALLY FUNDED ANTI-TERROR PROGRAMS: HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING STILL GOING TO WASTE WHILE IMPORTANT NEW YORK CITY NEEDS REMAIN UNMET

#### INTRODUCTION

Millions of dollars that are supposed to fight terror are actually going to the very worst kind of pork barrel programs. Meanwhile, many of New York City's homeland security needs remain unmet.

#### HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING USED FOR ANYTHING BUT HOMELAND SECURITY

##### Columbus, OH

Program: Urban Area Security Initiative

Amount: \$7,348 for 11 vests

Year: 2005

Use: **Bulletproof vests for police and fire department dogs**

"Consider Columbus, Ohio, which used part of its Homeland Security grant to buy bulletproof dog vests." (*Tampa Tribune*, January 5, 2006)

"I challenge anyone to spend \$8 billion and not find something to pick on," Ken Morckel, director of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, said." (*Columbus Dispatch*, December 9, 2005)

"These aren't pets. These aren't woolly sweaters we bought them to walk in the park," [Kerry] Ellis [of Columbus division of fire] said. "These are flak vests we bought to protect an animal who provides an expensive service." (*Columbus Dispatch*, December 9, 2005)

##### Madisonville, TX

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$30,000

Year: 2004

Use: **A custom trailer to be used during the annual October Mushroom Festival.**

"The town, midway between Dallas and Houston, where the largest employer is a mushroom farm, used a federal homeland security grant to buy a \$30,000 custom trailer. 'We are going to start using this customized trailer as a place where people can go if they get overheated or get lost or injure themselves,' said City Manager Tom Ginter." (*Dallas Morning News*,

September 7, 2004)

Westlake, TX

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$3,350

Year: 2005

Use: **Two defibrillators to be placed in elementary school.**

“The town of Westlake, population 300, placed to \$1,675 defibrillators in the grade school.” (*San Antonio Express News*, April 17, 2005)

Navarro County, TX

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$159,000

Year: 2004

Use: **Mobile command bus that has yet to be used in an emergency.**

“Navarro County spent \$159,000 nine months ago on a mobile command bus that has yet to be used for an emergency.” (*San Antonio Express News*, April 17, 2005)

“‘If something happens, you don’t have time to read the directions then,’ said Jim Devine, the homeland security coordinator for Wood County.” (*San Antonio Express News*, April 17, 2005)

Texas (unnamed municipality)

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$50,831

Year: 2005

Use: **Communications equipment purchased from a company owned by county commissioner.**

“The state audit found one jurisdiction spent \$50,831 for communications equipment from a company owned by one of its commissioners. Auditors didn’t identify the jurisdiction.” (*San Antonio Express News*, April 17, 2005)

South Dakota

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$29,995

Year: 2005

Use: **On-site paging system to be used at State agricultural fair.**

“Second, some communities spent money for such items as...a paging system at the South Dakota State Fair.” (*Omaha World Herald*, June 14, 2005)

Montgomery County, MD

Program: Urban Area Security Initiative

Amount: \$160,000

Year: 2005

Use: **Eight large screen plasma television monitors**

“Votes are bought with your money...\$160,000 to provide the government in Montgomery

County, Md., with eight large-screen plasma television monitors.” (*The Union Leader - Manchester, NH*, May 27, 2005)

Hall County, NE

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: undetermined

Year: 2004

Use: **Splints, two drills, protective coveralls**

“Homeland Security grants...HALL: Splints, defibrillator, generator light, 12 radios, 2 drills, protective coveralls, respirators, thermal imaging camera.” (*Omaha World Herald*, June 14, 2005)

“‘If you’re not safe in your hometown, you’re not safe in the homeland,’ [Senator Ben] Nelson said.” (*Omaha World Herald*, June 14, 2005)

Lake County, OH

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$30,000

Year: 2003

Use: **Truck purchased to tow hazmat disposal trailer instead being used by county emergency management employee to commute to and from work.**

“They found the truck - purchased to pull a haz-mat disposal trailer - parked at the home of the Lake County official while he was away on vacation.” (*New York Post*, January 27, 2006 and Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General)

U.S. Virgin Islands

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$1,178

Year: 2002

Use: **Reimbursement of the same travel expense three times.**

“The difference of \$2,356 resulted from errors made by the Department of Finance when it incorrectly posted \$1,178 of travel expenses three times, instead of once.” (Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, *Audit of First Responder Grant Funds Awarded to the Virgin Islands Law Enforcement Planning Commission*, September 7, 2005)

“‘I’m sure the U.S. wants them protected, and we want to be able to respond if something happens,’ [Congresswoman Donna Christensen] said.” (*New York Post*, February 6, 2006)

Converse, TX

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$3,000

Year: 2004

Use: **Trailer used to transport lawnmowers to lawnmower drag races**

“The waste on homeland-security expenditures has been well documented – from the small town of Converse, Texas, using a secure trailer to transport riding lawnmowers.” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, July 24, 2005)

Prince George’s County, MD

Program: Urban Area Security Initiative  
Amount: \$500,000  
Year: 2003

**Use: Digital camera system used for mug shots**

"Instead of buying protective gear for police officers, it chose to purchase a half-million-dollar digital camera system used for mug shots. Officials said that the equipment was a priority because it could photograph terrorist crime scenes and that they relied on a subsequent grant to order biochemical gear. Because of the delay, police are still waiting for the specialized gas masks, according to union officials," (*Washington Post*, November 23, 2003)

Washington, DC

Program: Urban Area Security Initiative  
Amount: \$100,000  
Year: 2003

**Use: Dale Carnegie public speaking training for sanitation workers**

"D.C. Council members questioned the use of homeland security dollars to pay for sanitation supervisors to attend a "Dale Carnegie" management course with no disaster preparedness instruction. City officials later relabeled the course on their documents by removing the management guru's name." (*Washington Post*, November 23, 2003)

"Leslie Hotaling, director of the District's Department of Public Works, said: 'If we can tie it to 9/11 and build capacity in our core functions, let's do it!'" (*Washington Post*, November 23, 2003)

## **NEW YORK CITY'S UNMET NEEDS**

New York City is currently prohibited from using its homeland security funds for the things it needs most. First, federal law prohibits New York City from using homeland security funds to pay for the salaries of the 1,000 "terrorism cops" currently employed to focus on homeland security, terrorism, and intelligence. Second, the Department of Homeland Security only allows New York to use a small portion of the funding it receives for police overtime - and the NYPD spent \$405 million on overtime last year. Finally, major capital projects, like building bioterror response centers, cannot be paid for with homeland security funds.

## **THE THREAT ACT**

Congressman Weiner has authored that THREAT Act (Targeting Homeland Security Resources Effectively Against Terrorism). This piece of legislation would cap the number of cities who could receive Urban Area Security Initiative Grants (UASI) at 15. In 2006, 46 cities are eligible, including 16 that have populations smaller than Staten Island. The THREAT Act would also limit the threat considered to terrorism, instead of natural disasters and outbreaks of disease like bird flu which should, and are, funded through other programs. Finally, the THREAT Act would require that UASI grants payable directly to municipal governments, instead of to the state. Currently, the grant money goes to states, which are permitted under statute to retain 20% of the funds.

## **THE HOMELAND SECURITY TRANSPARENCY ACT**

There is currently no central depository of homeland security grant information. After the federal government awards state homeland security grants, the money trickles down to local

emergency management agencies without adequate reporting back to the Department of Homeland Security about how the money is used. Congressman Weiner plans to introduce the Homeland Security Transparency Act, which would require that any government entity that spends federal homeland security dollars to report the use of the expenditure and an explanation of its connection to homeland security to the Department of Homeland Security within one week of the purchase. It would also require that the Department of Homeland Security post all these expenditures on a publicly available website within one week of receiving the information from a grantee.

Sources: Mayor's Management Report 2006, Department of Homeland Security

### Reports List