

Security or Pork?

A Review of National Homeland Security Funding Boondoggles



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The Offices of
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Millions of dollars that are supposed to fight terror are actually going to the very worst kind of pork barrel programs. Meanwhile, many real homeland security needs – like those in New York City – remain unmet.

Dillingham, AK

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$202,000

Year: 2005

Use: **“Downtown” security cameras for a rural fishing village.** Dillingham, Alaska secured a \$202,000 Homeland Security anti-terrorism grant to pay for 70 "downtown" surveillance cameras. Dillingham (pop. 2,400), 300 miles from Anchorage, has no roads linking it to anywhere.

(*Anchorage Daily News*, May 17, 2006)

Peoria, AZ

Program: Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program

Amount: \$15,000

Year: 2005

Use: **A tactical robot for the City of Peoria**

(*Arizona Homeland Security Grant Program Special Financial Audit*, October 2006)

Modoc County, CA

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$3,500

Year: 2005

Use: **Small crates and kennels to hold stray animals.** “Remote Modoc County, with its population of 18,600, spends \$3,500 for small crates and kennels to hold stray animals” (*Contra Costa Times*, July 10, 2005)

Lake County, IN

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)

Crawfordsville, IN

Program: Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

Amount: \$55,000

Year: 2006

Use: **For the Crawfordsville Fire Department in Indiana to buy gym equipment, provide nutritional counseling and instruct firefighters on how to become fitness trainers**

“Fire departments are using Homeland Security grants to buy gym equipment, sponsor puppet and clown shows, and turn first responders into fitness trainers.”

(Washington Times, April 21, 2006)

Kentucky

Program: State Homeland Security Grant Program

Amount: \$36,200

Year: 2005

Use: **To prevent terrorists from trying to raise money for their plots at the state's bingo halls**

“The Department of Homeland Security gave more than \$36,000 to the Kentucky Office of Charitable Gambling to prevent terrorists from trying to raise money for their plots at the state's bingo halls. An official in the Kentucky organization told a reporter he knew of no terrorists who were doing so, ‘but the potential there, to me, is huge.’”

(*Chattanooga Times Free Press*, May 1, 2006)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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)

Onalaska, WI

Program: Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

Amount: \$8,000

Year: 2006

Use: **For the Onalaska Fire Department in Wisconsin for clown and puppet shows.**

"Even if fire departments are eligible, I would hope they would tell Congress what their real needs are and say 'please don't send us money for puppet and clown shows,'" Tom Schatz, Citizens Against Government Waste
(*Washington Times*, April 21, 2006)

"People in New York and other major cities will not find this funny at all." Tom Schatz, Citizens Against Government Waste
(*Washington Times*, April 21, 2006)

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. In response, Congressman Weiner and Congressman Flake will introduce the Homeland Security Transparency Act.

The bill 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.