



U.S. Representative • 9TH CD, New York • Brooklyn-Queens

ANTHONY D. WEINER

Report

Security or Pork:

A Review of Boondoggles That Were Funded and What Was Not



Prepared by:

The Office of Congressman Anthony D. Weiner

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INTRODUCTION

Last week, homeland security funding to New York City was slashed by \$83 million or 40% while small, low-risk cities like Louisville and Omaha received questionable funding increases. While New York loses vital anti-terror dollars, millions of dollars that are supposed to fight terror are actually going to the very worst kind of pork barrel programs.

HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING USED FOR ANYTHING BUT

HOMELAND SECURITY

Converse, TX

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

Amount: \$3,000

Year: 2004

“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.” (*60 Minutes*, July 10, 2005)

Madisonville, TX

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

Amount: \$30,000

Year: 2004

“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)

Navarro County, TX

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

Amount: \$159,000

Year: 2004

“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

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

Amount: \$50,831

Year: 2005

“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

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

Amount: \$29,995

Year: 2005

“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

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

Amount: \$160,000

Year: 2005

“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

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

Year: 2004

“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, IN

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

Amount: \$30,000

Year: 2003

“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

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

Amount: \$1,178

Year: 2002

“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)

Prince George’s County, MD

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

Amount: \$500,000

Year: 2003

“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

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

Amount: \$100,000

Year: 2003

"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)

Dillingham, AK

Use: **Installation of 70 surveillance cameras**

Amount: \$202,000

Year: 2005

The fishing village of Dillingham, Alaska, is secure now that a \$202,000 Homeland Security anti-terrorism grant has paid 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)

Kentucky

Use: **To prevent terrorists from trying to raise money for their plots at the state's bingo halls** Amount: \$36,200

Year: 2005

"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)

Modoc County, CA

Use: **Small crates and kennels to hold stray animals**

Amount: \$3,500

Year: 2005

"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)

Columbus, OH

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

Amount: \$7,348 for 11 vests

Year: 2005

"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)

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 - HR.5165). First introduced in 2004 and again in April 2006, this legislation would cap the number of cities who could receive Urban Area Security Initiative Grants (UASI) at 15. In 2006, 46 cities received money, including 16 that have populations smaller than Staten Island. While New York received \$124.4 million in UASI funding, that amounts to only \$15.54 per person, while Louisville got over \$33 per person and Omaha got over \$21 per person. In fact, New York ranked 23rd in per capita assistance from DHS. If the THREAT Act had been in place when this week's grants were announced, it would have meant \$48.9 million more in UASI funding for New York.

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 introduced the Homeland Security Transparency Act (HR.5191) in April.

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.

Last month, the House of Representatives approved an amendment offered by Congressman Weiner that will place the requirements of the Homeland Security Transparency Act on grants made through a new Port Security Grant Program. Congress should follow its own wisdom and require public reporting for all homeland security grant programs.

Sources: Mayor's Management Report 2006, Department of Homeland Security, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Dallas Morning News*, *San Antonio Express News*, *Omaha World Herald*, *The Union Leader -Manchester, NH*, *New York Post*, *Washington Post*, *Anchorage Daily News*, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, *Contra Costa Times*, *Tampa Tribune*, *Columbus Dispatch*, Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, *Audit of First Responder Grant Funds Awarded to the Virgin Islands Law Enforcement Planning Commission*