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Photo: AP

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Grassley launches porn inquiry

By: [Andie Collier](#)

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Chuck Grassley knows it when he sees it.

The "it," of course, is pornography. And Grassley has seen it deep in a demurely titled section of a report from the National Science Foundation — a report that says NSF employees have been spending significant amounts of company time on smut sites and in other explicit pursuits.

Grassley, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, on Tuesday fired off a letter to the NSF's inspector general requesting all documents related to the "numerous reports" and seven investigations into "Abuse of NSF IT Resources" cited in the foundation's 68-page semiannual report.

Despite the less-than-lurid sound of the probes, the employees in question weren't just logging onto their Facebook accounts or buying birthday gifts on Amazon.com. The report says they were watching, downloading and e-mailing porn, sometimes for significant portions of their workdays, and over periods of months or even years.

In one particularly egregious case, the report says one NSF "senior official" was discovered to have spent as much as 20 percent of his working hours over a two-year interval "viewing sexually explicit images and engaging in sexually explicit online 'chats' with various women."

Investigators calculated the value of the time lost at more than \$58,000 — for that employee alone.

Following an initial wave of incidents, the grant-making agency — which has an annual budget of \$6.06 billion, and was created by Congress in 1950 to promote the progress of science; advance the national health, prosperity, and welfare; secure the national defense — reveals that probes then “selectively sampled” a single internal server and found even more workers harboring everything from software that can allow users to set up camera-to-camera connections to hard-core images and titillatingly titled bookmarks.

Committee investigators also learned from sources that one employee even had camera-to-camera software to facilitate his on-the-job sexcapades – and that the employee had complained to the IT specialist that his camera was working too slowly.

The foundation has since installed filtering software to prevent employees from accessing inappropriate websites and is currently trying to address the fallout from the agency’s adult-entertainment problem. This includes finding ways to support staffers who were “acutely embarrassed” by the filth-filled environment — like the employee who learned of a co-worker’s adventures in porn via sounds overheard from said co-worker’s computer speakers.

Grassley’s office has asked the foundation to turn over all “specific reports of investigations, audit reports, evaluations and information supporting the examination of the NSF network drive” by Thursday in an effort to “ensure that NSF properly fulfills its mission to strengthen scientific and engineering research, and makes responsible use of the public funding provided for these research disciplines.”

“The semiannual report raises real questions about how the National Science Foundation manages its resources, and Congress ought to demand a full accounting before it gives the agency another \$3 billion in the stimulus bill,” Grassley said.

An NSF spokeswoman said the agency had no comment on the report or its content.