THE FESTIVUS REPORT 2023

The Festivus Report 2023

Happy Festivus!

How is 2023 already coming to a close? What a year it's been. Twitter is now X, what we thought were UFOs were actually Chinese Spy Balloons, Barbie battled Oppenheimer at the box office, and a missing F-35 jet flew for over 60 miles without a pilot. It's safe to say that some big changes have occurred since last year's Festivus Report.

Last Festivus, we lamented over the national debt reaching an astronomical $30 trillion. Shockingly, in one short year, the career politicians and bureaucrats in Washington have managed to approach $34 trillion in debt, without so much as a second thought.

Who's to blame for our crushing level of debt? Everybody. This year, members of both parties in Congress voted to raise the debt ceiling, which empowered the government to borrow an unlimited amount of money until 2024. As Congress spends to reward its favored industries and pet projects, the American taxpayers are forced to pay the price through record high inflation and crippling interest rates.

The same big spenders teamed up, yet again, to continue sending Americans' hard-earned money to foreign countries and funding endless wars, all while ignoring our porous southern border.

And our mountain of debt will continue to pile ever higher. The Congressional Budget Office predicts we will add an average of $2 trillion in debt annually for the next decade. The U.S. government will add over $5 billion of debt every single day for the next ten years. We borrow over $200 million every hour, we borrow $3 million every minute, and we borrow $60,000 every second.

This year, I am highlighting a whopping ~**$900,000,000,000** of waste, including an NIH grant to study Russian cats walking on a treadmill, Barbies used as proof of ID for receiving COVID Paycheck Protection Program funds, $6 million to promote tourism in Egypt, and $200 million to 'struggling artists' like Post Malone, Chris Brown, and Lil Wayne. No matter how much money the government has already wasted, politicians keep demanding even more.

As always, taking the path to fiscal responsibility is often a lonely journey, but, as I've done in years past, I will continue my fight against government waste this holiday season.

So, before we get to the Feats of Strength, it's time for my Airing of (spending) Grievances!

<p style="text-align:center; color:red; font-weight:bold;">I have <u>a lot</u> of problems with federal spending,
and now it's time to hear all about them!</p>

The Waste of 2023

- Barbie Doll Photo Used to Get COVID PPP Funds……………………**portion of $800,000,000,000**
- In the RED: Interest on Our National Debt is Expensive ……………..………..…**$659,000,000,000**
- Dr. Fauci's Monkey Business on NIH's "Monkey Island"……………………………….**$33,200,000**
- USAID Fund to Boost Egyptian Tourism...**$6,000,000**
- USDA's Cutting-Edge Research: Walking Dogs in the Summer…………..……..……..**Unknown**
- DHS Training Employees to Be Their "Authentic & Best Selves"…………..……..……..**Unknown**
- Russian Cats-On-A-Treadmill Studies Funded by NIH……..………......…..…**portion of $2,700,000**
- The Government Pays Dead People … Again!...…………………………………..**$38,000,000**
- DOD's Lobster Tank……………………………………………………………………**$8,395**
- How to Ruin Expensive Military Equipment Part 1: Engines………………….…..……**$89,000,000**
- How to Ruin Expensive Military Equipment Part 2: Transmissions……………………...**$12,600,000**
- How to Ruin Expensive Military Equipment Part 3: Tank Treads………..…………….…**$68,000,000**
- "Real Fake": DHS's 1st Graphic Novel About Disinformation………………………………...**Unknown**
- DHS's 2nd Graphic Novel: COVID Disinformation……….……………………………...**Unknown**
- NIH's Meth-Head Monkeys…………………………………………………**portion of $12,000,000**
- Treasury's Pot of Cash for Political Campaigns……………………………….………**$400,000,000**
- NIH's Monkey Casino: Gambling for Drinking Water…………………….......**portion of $3,700,000**
- SBA's Ticket to Backstage……………………………………………………………**$200,000,000**
- Studying COVID-19 "Misinformation" On Social Media In Black & Rural Communities…**$3,800,000**
- Dr. Fauci's Transgender Monkey Study…………………………………………………...**$477,121**
- Whoopsie: Improper Federal Payments…………………………………………**$236,000,000,000**
- FLASHBACK: The Government Likes Its Gambling Monkeys……………………………**$171,000**

Taxpayer Dollars Wasted: ~$900 Billion

Barbie Doll Photo Used to Get COVID PPP Funds

The faces of Barbie's Dream World played a role in the fiscal nightmare that was COVID-19 spending. Government spending was already out of control when Congress approved $800 billion in COVID Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds. As federal agencies hustled to get the funds out quickly, it came as no surprise when swindlers rushed to line up for their cut of the COVID cash.

Some of us saw the writing on the wall and predicted that shutting down our economy and printing more money to pay the nation to stay home from work would be a fiscal disaster. But using Barbie's face as proof of identity to steal taxpayer dollars was not on my COVID waste bingo card.

Swindlers Used Barbie Dolls to Rob COVID Relief Program (Exclusive)
Barbie, Ken, and wax figures: Meet some of the fake personas at the heart of PPP scheme used to obtain fraudulent funds
Published 06/28/23 05:00 AM ET | Updated 06/28/23 09:18 AM ET
Aneeta Mathur-Ashton

photos submitted as ID for scammers trying to obtain PPP loans DOJ

What was supposed to be an AI system to verify proof of identity, quickly exposed the stupidity of the program. The verification system did not catch the images of dolls uploaded by fraudsters. Somehow the Small Business Administration carelessly approved the applicants from Toyland and sent out improper COVID-19 PPP payments.

Sources: https://themessenger.com/politics/swindlers-used-barbie-dolls-to-rob-covid-relief-program; Sen. Joni Ernst's Squeal Award, https://outreach.senate.gov/iqextranet/view_newsletter.aspx?id=111433&c=JErnst.
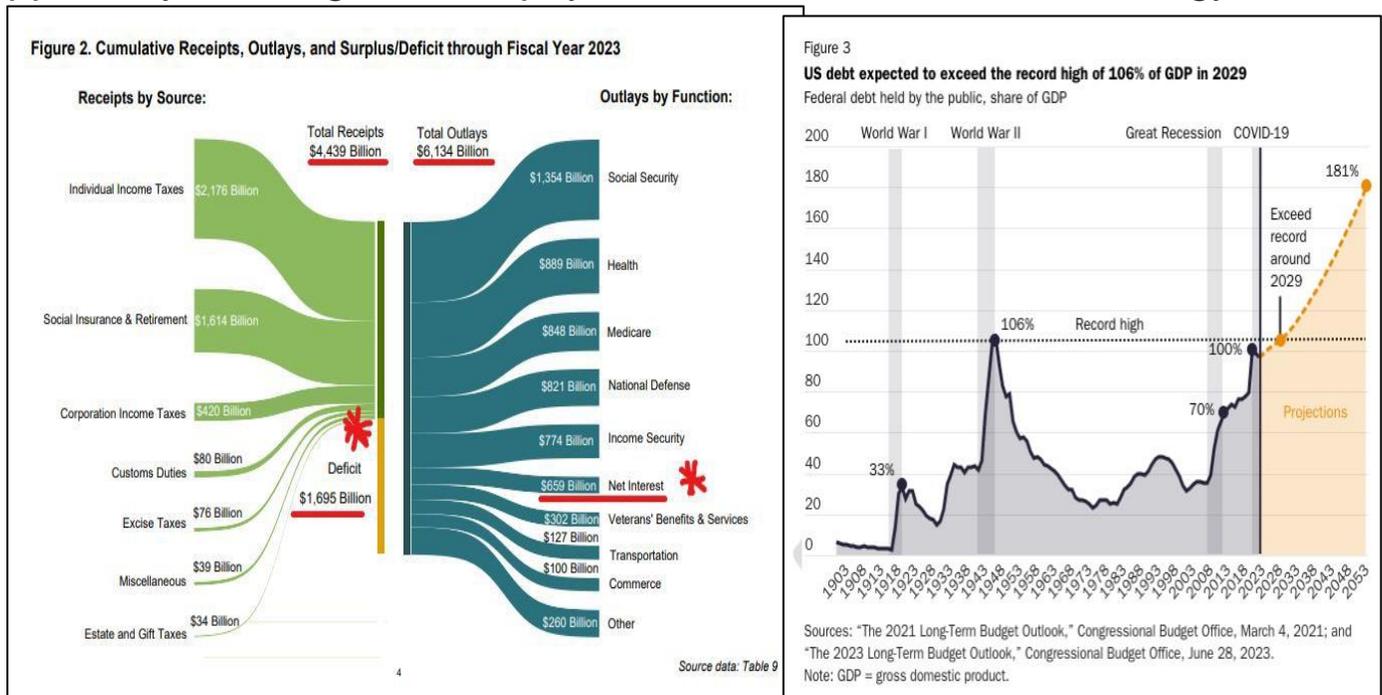
In the RED: $659 Billion for Interest on Our National Debt; Borrowing to Spend Money We Don't Have is Expensive!

It doesn't take a genius to predict the dangers that come with spending money that the government just doesn't have. When the government overspent by $1.7 trillion in FY2023, we were left with a whopping $659 billion in interest payments.

You read that right. In Fiscal Year 2023, the U.S. Department of the Treasury spent $659 billion just to pay the interest on the national debt. Because we don't have the funds to pay that, we have to borrow it — a large portion from China. We borrow from China to pay the interest on funds we couldn't afford to spend in the first place.

My 2022 Festivus Report noted the Department of the Treasury spent $475 billion on interest payments in fiscal year 2022. When the national debt jumped even higher this year, the interest payment went up $184 billion.

Apparently, robbing Peter to pay Paul is not a sound fiscal strategy.

Figure 2. Cumulative Receipts, Outlays, and Surplus/Deficit through Fiscal Year 2023

Figure 3. US debt expected to exceed the record high of 106% of GDP in 2029. Federal debt held by the public, share of GDP

Sources: "The 2021 Long-Term Budget Outlook," Congressional Budget Office, March 4, 2021; and "The 2023 Long-Term Budget Outlook," Congressional Budget Office, June 28, 2023. Note: GDP = gross domestic product.

Sources: Bureau of the Fiscal Service, "Final Monthly Treasury Statement. Receipts and Outlays of the United States Government For Fiscal Year 2023 Through September 30, 2023 and Other Periods," U.S. Department of the Treasury, https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/mts/mts0923.pdf; https://www.paul.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Festivus-23-clean-12.22-v2.pdf; www.cato.org.

Dr. Fauci's Monkey Business:
$33.2 Million to Run NIH's "Monkey Island"

What's known to South Carolina locals as "Monkey Island" is Dr. Fauci's ~3,000-monkey colony, raised on a state-owned island. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) signed a $33.2 million contract with a local business to house, feed, and care for these monkeys before they're shipped to research labs around the country.

The federal government established the colony in the late 1970s, though the multi-million dollar contract to care for the monkeys changed hands a few times. NIH also paid millions to a large pharmaceutical company to maintain Dr. Fauci's Monkey Island.

Monkey business is a big business.

WJCL Archives: The Secrets of Beaufort County's "Monkey Island"

*Sources: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GBEbO0BDzGY; https://www.highergov.com/contract-opportunity/breed-and- maintain-free-ranging-macaca-mulatta-rh-75n93022r00032-r-3a6f0/;
https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_IDV_HHSN272201700046I_7529;
https://www.postandcourier.com/news/alpha- genesis-takes-over-management-of-south-carolinas-monkey-island/article_fb08a7d2-ce5a-11ed-bd91-8b72f090aac4.html;
https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_HHSN272201800009C_7529_-NONE-_-NONE-;
https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2021/11/17/bigger-than-beaglegate-dr-faucis-monkey-island-of-death/.*

$6 Million to Boost Egyptian Tourism?
Talk about Foreign Aid Waste!

Care to float in a hot-air balloon around Egyptian ruins or travel down the Nile on a Royal Cleopatra Nile cruise? Maybe touring the Temple of Khnum, or seeing an 1897 oil press is more your style? If so, Esna, Egypt, might be the perfect spot for your next vacation.

I have nothing against tourism, but U.S. taxpayers should not be the ones funding a tourism-boosting program in Esna, Egypt.

Yet the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) approved spending $6 million to do just that: boost tourism in Egypt, which it promotes as a "value investment in sustainable integrated tourism." USAID's multi-million-dollar VISIT-Esna initiative will run through September 2024.

The U.S. has spent over $100 million on Egyptian tourism so far. What's next – rebuilding the pyramids? Apparently, Congress and the agencies it funds think our treasury is a bottomless pit.

Sources: https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attractions-g303853-Activities-Esna_Qena_Governorate_Nile_River_Valley.html; https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_72026320CA00006_7200; https://www.usaid.gov/egypt/tourism.

# USDA's Cutting-Edge Research: Walking Hot Dogs

When you walk outside in the summer, you get hot. When Labrador retrievers are walked outside in the summer, they also get hot.

Getting hot while walking outside in the heat might be obvious to you, but the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) allocated "cutting-edge" research funding to support a summer study that walked 16 dogs—of two different colors — and measured their rectal temperatures.

Researchers found the Labradors' fur color did not affect their body temperatures after a hot summer's walk. That's it. That's the taxpayer-funded, cutting-edge study.

The Agricultural Research Service at the USDA, which funded the study at Southern Illinois University, gets $1.7 billion a year from Congress, but it's unknown how much the hot dog study cost the taxpayer.

Perhaps taxpayers should have Congress put USDA on a tighter fiscal leash.
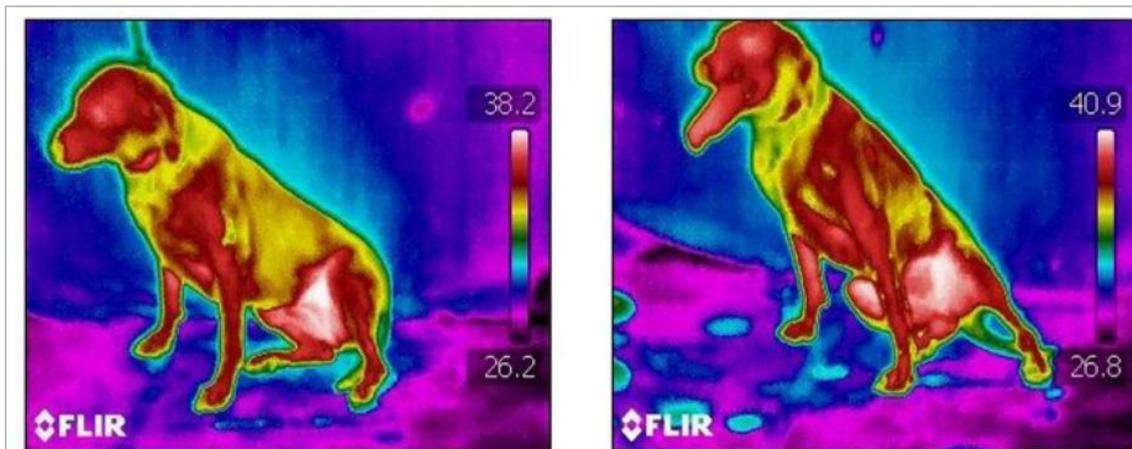
[1] Thermography captured using FLIR T400. Peak values noted at the top of the color legend at the right of each image.
[2] Baseline occurred 30 minutes prior to sunlight exposure (sunlight) and recorded initial measurements
[3] Sunlight phase consisted of 30 minutes of active walking in a sunny outdoor area on a leash
[4] Eye thermal temperature has been correlated with rectal temperature.
[5] Abdominal temperature has been correlated with rectal temperature.

Department of Homeland Security: Training Employees To Be Their "Authentic & Best Selves"

One would think employees of the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) would spend their time combatting cybersecurity breaches and doing other security-related tasks.

Think again. As part of a 5-year "diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA)" strategic plan, CISA employees gathered for a federally funded workshop, where attendees focused on "effective strategies to build and sustain psychological safety that allows individuals to show up to work as their authentic and best selves […]."

Ironically, the workshop coincided with CISA's efforts to suppress protected speech on social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even I was censored at the behest of our government speech minders. And all while I thought I was being my best self.
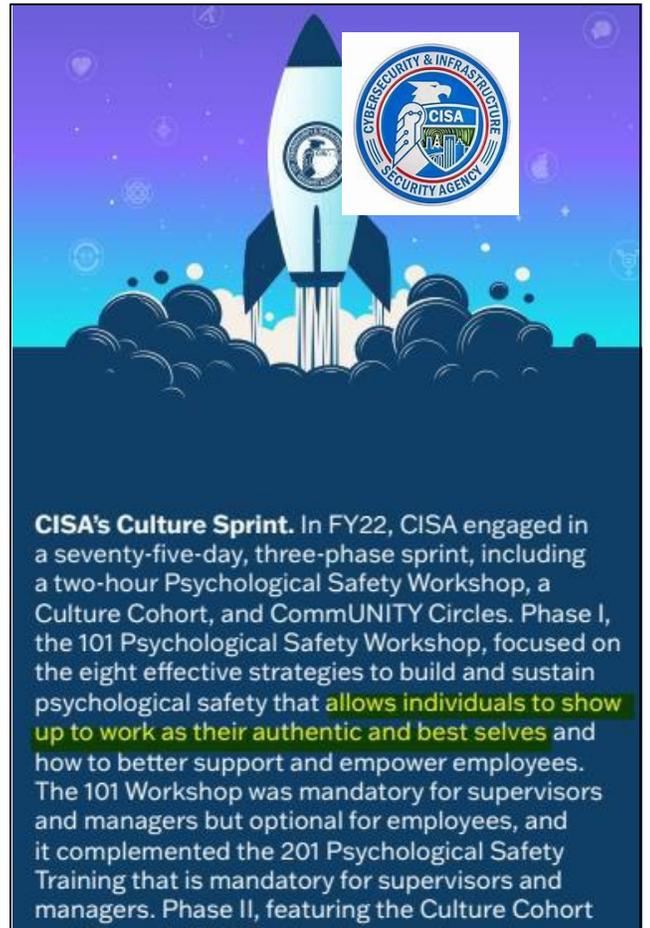
CISA's Culture Sprint. In FY22, CISA engaged in a seventy-five-day, three-phase sprint, including a two-hour Psychological Safety Workshop, a Culture Cohort, and CommUNITY Circles. Phase I, the 101 Psychological Safety Workshop, focused on the eight effective strategies to build and sustain psychological safety that allows individuals to show up to work as their authentic and best selves and how to better support and empower employees. The 101 Workshop was mandatory for supervisors and managers but optional for employees, and it complemented the 201 Psychological Safety Training that is mandatory for supervisors and managers. Phase II, featuring the Culture Cohort

Russian Cats-On-A-Treadmill Studies …
Funded by Part of a $2.7 Million NIH Grant

The Department of Health and Human Services shelled out over $770,00 to a state-run lab in Russia to put 'cats on treadmills'

After having their brain stems snipped, Russian cats were forced to walk on a treadmill in Russian labs. This is all thanks to U.S. taxpayers footing the bill.

Russian scientists, funded with your money, posted videos of their cat-walk studies, which showed shaved cats hooked up to electrodes and struggling to walk on a treadmill.

These cat-walks were part of a $2.7 million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant given to a researcher at the Georgia Institute of Technology in the U.S. The Institute then sub granted the funds to researchers in St. Petersburg, Russia — a fact first uncovered by White Coat Waste Project in 2021.

Funding

This work was supported by Russian Science Foundation grant 21-15-00235 (data analysis, salary for N.M., P.M. and V.L.), National Institutes of Health grant R01 NS-100928 (for neurophysiological testing), Russian Foundation for Basic Research grant 19-015-00409 (study of bidirectional locomotion), and project ID: 73025408 of the St Petersburg State University (salary for O.G.). Deposited in PMC for release after 12 months.
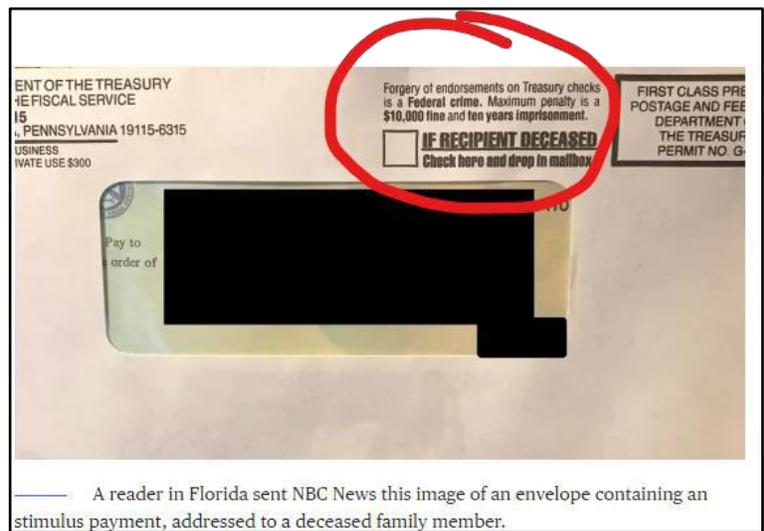
Sources: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9163443/; https://reporter.nih.gov/search/-LnmJEP4kUWIWzmNGNUTkw/project-details/10173912; https://blog.whitecoatwaste.org/2023/04/09/moscow-has-fallen-wcw-defunds-all-russian-animal-labs-putins-kitten-tests/; https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2022/06/11/guidance-on-scientific-and-technological-cooperation-with-the-russian-federation-for-u-s-government-and-u-s-government-affiliated-organizations/; https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12145577/1-3BILLION-taxpayer-dollars-funneled-China-Russia-pointless-projects.html; Video: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7865075/.

The Government Paid $38 Million to Dead People!

U.S. officials testified that another $38 million in COVID payments — an average of $83,000 each — went to people Uncle Sam knew were dead. The figures came from the special task force Congress authorized to track COVID payments from the federal government. Specifically, $10 million was paid to individuals who were already dead on the date someone applied for funding. The government doled out $1.3 million of your money to 30 individuals who were dead for at least a year, in what fraud inspectors deemed one of the "particularly egregious examples."

This was not the first time Uncle Sam tracked taxpayer funds to the mailboxes of the dead. By April 30, 2020, the U.S. Treasury's Inspector General knew $1.4 billion (of $269 billion total) was sent out to more than one million Americans who filed taxes in previous years, and then died, yet still received checks intended as COVID stimulus payments.

A reader in Florida sent NBC News this image of an envelope containing an stimulus payment, addressed to a deceased family member.

Not all the funds were recovered, as dead people are notoriously bad about paying up.

Sources: "FRAUD ALERT FOLLOW-UP: Improved Sharing of Death Records and Use of the Do Not Pay System Would Strengthen Program Integrity and Better Protect the Public," May 2023, https://www.pandemicoversight.gov/media/file/do-not-pay-fraud-alert-follow; Written testimony of Michael Horowitz, Chair, Pandemic Response Accountability Committee Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice, as submitted for Senate HSGAC Committee hearing, Nov. 14, 2023; https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-625.pdf; https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/dead-wrong-feds-sent-1- 4b-stimulus-checks-over-million-n1232070.

DOD's $8,395 Lobster Tank
Not Quite the Tank to Take into Battle!

We all know that the Department of Defense (DOD) makes purchases for military operations. One would imagine weapons, ammunition, and tanks might be among those purchased items, but according to USASpending.gov, they aren't the kind of tanks you're thinking of!

The DOD paid $8,395 for a "Lobster Tank" purchased from a restaurant equipment company in Springfield, Virginia. I understand military personnel need to eat, but does the DOD really need a Lobster Tank? I think we can all agree these aren't the tanks Americans thought their tax dollars were funding.
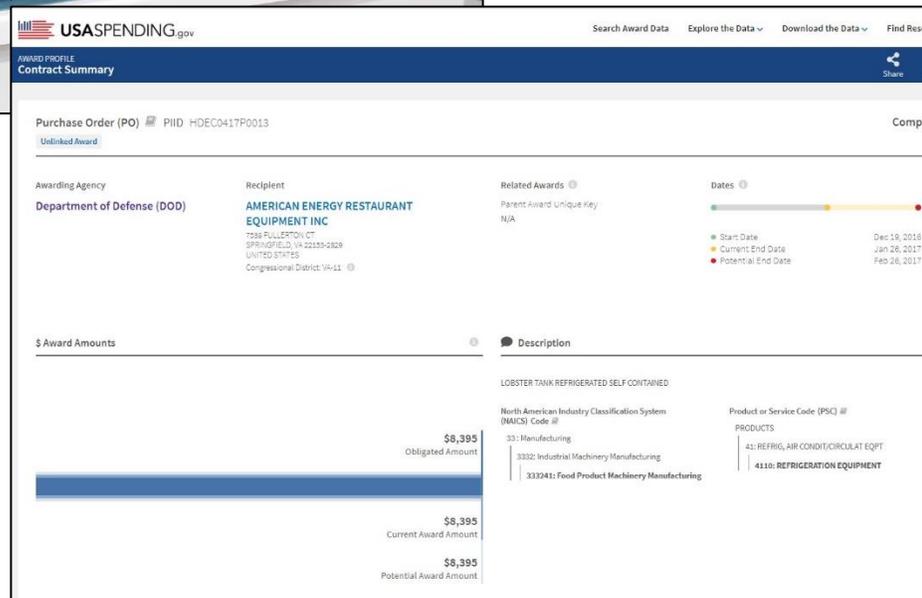
Source: DOD purchase order to American Energy Restaurant Equipment Inc., December 2016,
https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_HDEC0417P0013_9700_-NONE-_-NONE-.

How to Ruin Millions of Dollars in Military Equipment Part 1: $89 Million Worth of Engines

"I know, let's store your vehicle engine outside," said no auto mechanic ever.

But that's just where the U.S. Army officials "improperly stored 80 gas turbine engines" valued at $89.16 million.

Each of the $1.1 million engines were improperly stored for three years!

Apparently, the code to properly store the engines was missing upon their arrival, so, instead of putting the engines in a covered shed they were left outside. At a million dollars an engine, why couldn't someone just call and ask for the code?

CODE RED

(CUI) Figure 3. Gas Turbine Engines Improperly Stored Outside at
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

(U) Gas Turbine Engines Improperly Stored with Humidity Indicators Exceeding the Required Level

(CUI) ████ officials improperly stored 80 gas turbine engines (national item identification number [NIIN] 15482910), valued at $89.16 million, outside in LLRCs.[14] The engines were classified as condition code A (issuable materiel), or materiel that is intended to be issued to the Army without qualification. According to the materiel storage code, ████ officials should have stored the engines in a shed. However, the DLA stored the items outside. ████ officials stated that they stored the engines outside because they did not see a storage code in their system. ████ officials did not coordinate with the respective Army materiel manager to obtain the correct storage information. Because ████ officials did nothing to fix the storage code issue, these engines have been stored outside without a storage deviation approved by the respective Army materiel manager since 2020. In addition, we identified that the DLA did not properly care for the engines, as more than 31 percent of the LLRCs had humidity indicators exceeding the required level, which demonstrated an increased level of moisture inside the LLRCs that exposed the engines to increased corrosion and deterioration.

Source: "(U) Audit of the Defense Logistics Agency Storage and Care of Repair Parts and Components for Army Ground Combat Systems," DOD IG Report, October 2023, https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/24/2003326664/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-001%20SECURE.PDF.

How to Ruin Millions of Dollars in Military Equipment Part 2: $12.6 Million Worth of Transmissions

How much does something have to be worth for the U.S. Army to store it properly? Evidently more than $12.6 million.

This time, the Department of Defense (DOD) Inspector General (IG) found the U.S. Army "improperly stored 135 hydraulic transmissions (NIIN 14131885), valued at $12.60 million, outside." Despite the requirement to be stored in a shed, over 1,000 officials told the IG they simply didn't have room in the shed.

Apparently, the natural next step is to store them in leaky and improperly maintained long-life reusable containers (LLRCs). It was in the outside LLRCs, that inspectors found transmissions stored at excessive humidity levels and among standing water and oil.

'Don't leave it out in the rain' seems like simple and basic training.

(U) Hydraulic Transmissions Improperly Stored with Humidity Indicators Exceeding the Required Level

{CUI} ▉ officials improperly stored 135 hydraulic transmissions (NIIN 14131885), valued at $12.60 million, outside. Specifically, the transmissions were classified as condition code F (repairable materiel) and were required to be stored in a shed, but ▉ officials stored the transmissions outside. ▉ officials stated that there was not enough inside space for the transmissions, but did not have an approved packaging and storage deviation request form. In addition, we identified that the DLA did not properly care for the engines, as 50 percent of the LLRCs with visible humidity indicators exceeded the required level. Figure 6 shows hydraulic transmissions stored outside at ▉.

{CUI} Figure 6. Hydraulic Transmissions Stored Outside at ▉
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

(U) Water and oil at the bottom of the LLRC

{CUI} Figure 7. LLRC and Hydraulic Transmission from the Outside Storage Location at ▉
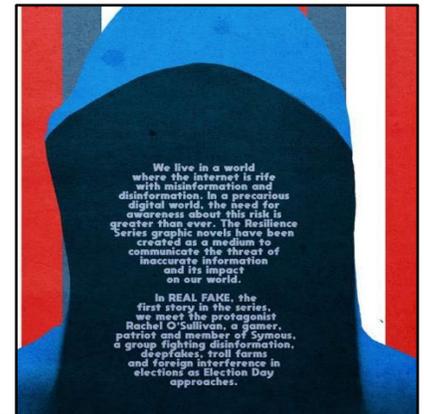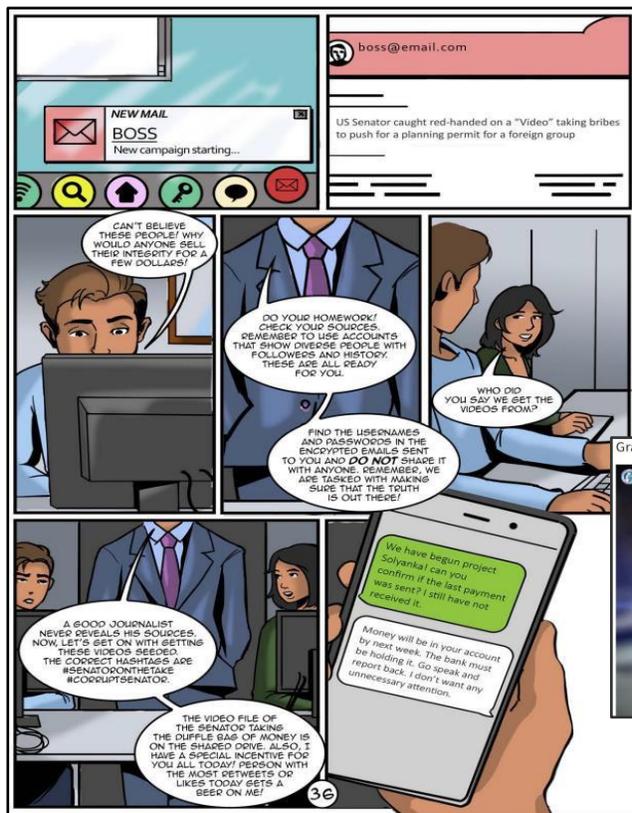(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

Source: "(U) Audit of the Defense Logistics Agency Storage and Care of Repair Parts and Components for Army Ground Combat Systems," DOD IG Report, October 2023, https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/24/2003326664/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024- 001%20SECURE.PDF.

How to Ruin Millions of Dollars in Military Equipment Part 3: $68 Million Worth of Military Tank & Vehicle Treads

The third and final example (until next year) of the Department of Defense (DOD) ruining expensive military equipment, revolves around military tanks and tank treads.

The DOD Inspector General (IG) cataloged "117,534 vehicular track shoes" valued at $68.29 million left outside in the open air. They were not covered or stored properly at all. The IG said over 1,000 military officials did not follow the military's own guidance on storage.

The Bradley, Stryker, and Abrams-using soldiers, along with the taxpayers that fund their vehicles, deserve better. At least we know they'll be in real military vehicles, not lobster tanks!

(U) Figure 1. Army GCS
(U) Source: Army Program Executive Office for GCS.

(U) Vehicular Track Shoes Improperly Stored

(CUI) ▮▮▮ officials improperly stored 117,534 vehicular track shoes (NIIN 06929316), valued at $68.29 million. The track shoes were classified as condition code F (repairable materiel), and the materiel storage code was inside storage. An approved deviation was in place to store the track shoes outside; however, ▮▮▮ officials did not comply with the deviation's mitigation measures, which stated that the DLA would store the track shoes in crates, sleeves, or containers to provide protection from environmental elements. Specifically, all of the track shoes were stored outside and not protected, demonstrating that the DLA did not properly care for the track shoes.

(CUI) DLA Distribution officials stated that they are ordering crates, sleeves, or containers. Figure 5 shows vehicular track shoes stored outside at ▮▮▮ without any packaging.

(CUI) Figure 5. Vehicular Track Shoes Stored Outside at ▮▮▮ Without Any Packaging
(U) Source: The DoD OIG.

Source: "(U) Audit of the Defense Logistics Agency Storage and Care of Repair Parts and Components for Army Ground Combat Systems," DOD IG Report, October 2023, https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/24/2003326664/-1/-1/1/DODIG-2024-001%20SECURE.PDF.

"Real Fake": DHS's Graphic Novel About Disinformation

The Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agency that made itself the arbiter of "misinformation" during the COVID pandemic, created a series of graphic novels, called the "Resilience Series," to help educate the public about misinformation. There is nothing comical about wasting taxpayer money to justify censorship of constitutionally protected speech.

The first in the series was called "Real Fake" and featured a foreign operation created to spread misinformation about a U.S. Senator and impact U.S. elections.

Misinformation is not a joke, but it is especially not funny when bureaucrats in the federal government are determining what is and isn't considered misinformation, all under the guise of protecting Americans.

Sources: https://www.cisa.gov/topics/election-security/foreign-influence-operations-and-disinformation/resilience-series-graphic- novels; https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/cfi_real-fake_graphic-novel_508.pdf.

DHS's 2nd Graphic Novel: COVID "Disinformation"

DC Comics won't be adding these taxpayer-funded comic books from America's Cyber Defense Agency (CISA) to their repertoire anytime soon.

Using the tired old trope that, "disinformation campaigns are a direct threat to our democracy," CISA spent time and money telling people what to believe about COVID vaccines and helping to suppress debate and discussion about the new vaccine technology and its potential side effects.

CISA's latest graphic novel even dips into the conspiracy theory that Russia created a "disinformation pandemic" around COVID. In fact, few did more to cause mistrust than the U.S. government and its cover-up experts like Dr. Fauci, who, we now know, pushed disinformation on mask and vaccine efficacy, while obfuscating our government's involvement with dangerous gain-of-function coronavirus research.

The First Amendment is kryptonite for our government censors.

Sources: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPitFtlEMjs; https://www.cisa.gov/news-events/news/cisa- releases-second-graphic-novel-combat- disinformation-national-superhero-day.

NIH's Meth-Head Monkeys

National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded researchers at the University of Mississippi Medical Center gave lab monkeys meth in the morning and tracked the monkeys' sleep habits through implanted wire leads running "subcutaneously from the head incision to the eye orbit, exiting the eye orbit from underneath the upper eyelid."

The study was funded by portions of four NIH grants and brought to my attention by the White Coat Waste Project.

Over 100,000 Americans die of meth overdoses each year as these dangerous drugs pour across our open borders. Our nation's first responders and families across the country struggle every day to fight this drug epidemic, and yet NIH approved a portion of approximately $12 million in NIH grants to test the sleep habits of monkeys given meth in the morning?

Methamphetamine-Induced Sleep Impairments and Subsequent Slow-Wave and Rapid Eye Movement Sleep Rebound in Male Rhesus Monkeys

Laís F. Berro*, John S. Overton and James K. Rowlett

Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, Center for Innovation and Discovery in Addictions, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Jackson, MS, United States

Use of amphetamine-type stimulants is associated with numerous adverse health outcomes, with disturbed sleep being one of the most prominent consequences of methamphetamine use. However, the extent to which methamphetamine alters sleep architecture, and whether methamphetamine-induced sleep impairment is associated with next-day sleep rebound effects, has received relatively little investigation. In the present study, we investigated the effects of acute morning methamphetamine administration on sleep parameters in adult male rhesus monkeys ($N = 4$) using a fully-implantable telemetry system. Monkeys were prepared with telemetry devices that continuously monitored electroencephalography (EEG), electromyography (EMG) and electrooculography (EOG) throughout the night. We investigated the effects of morning (10h00) administration of methamphetamine (0.01–0.3 mg/kg, i.m.) on sleep during the night of th...

FUNDING

This work was supported by the National Institutes of Health (DA011792, DA043204, DA046778, and DA049886).

$400 Million Pot of Cash for Political Campaigns

Every year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) reroutes incoming tax payments to a fund set aside for U.S. presidential campaigns. The account is funded by a $3 IRS tax return check box. Since 2008, no major political party's candidate for president has accepted the funds. As of November 1, 2023: $400.6 million sat unused in the Presidential Election Campaign Fund Account.

Why do we provide unused and unnecessary welfare for politicians and their presidential campaigns? It's time to scrap the wasteful Presidential Election Campaign check off program.

Sources: https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/understanding-public-funding-presidential-elections/
https://www.fec.gov/resources/cms-content/documents/PECF_monthly_report_2023.pdf

NIH's Monkey Casino: Gambling for Drinking Water

Two laboratory monkeys at the University of Minnesota faced high stakes as their access to drinking water hung in the balance, contingent upon their willingness to embrace what researchers termed "gambling."

To study the region of the brain that impacts risk-taking choices, parts of monkeys' skulls were removed and their brains were injected with tracers and monitored as they gambled between two different options presented to them on two screens.

Test subjects were given a low-risk, low reward choice and a high-risk, high reward option, with the monkeys choosing risk over reward more than 70% of the time.

The study—funded under an NIH National Institute of Mental Health $1.9 million grant and an NIH National Institute of Drug Abuse $1.8 million grant—gambled that this monkey study was a good use of taxpayer funds.

I'm not a gambling man, but I'd bet, with confidence, that the American taxpayers disagree.

Behavior in the gambling task

Two subjects combined. We examined the behavior of two male macaque subjects (*Macaca mulatta*, subjects P and S) performing a well-studied two-option risky choice task (Strait et al., 2014). The data and results we present here have not been published before, but qualitatively replicate our past findings. Specifically, behavioral data indicate that subjects understood the key elements of the task. They preferred offers with the larger expected value on 73.10% of the trials (for individual subjects, see below). This proportion is significantly higher than expected by chance (p<0.001, binomial test). It is also

SBA's $200 Million Ticket to Backstage

When local concert venues and family-owned theaters were forced to shut down during the pandemic, distributing financial relief was left to the Small Business Administration (SBA). The Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program was supposed to provide a lifeline to small entertainment businesses nationwide.

Sadly, but not surprisingly, SBA failed to deliver. *Business Insider* identified dozens of famous music artists and their touring companies that received over $200 million through the program.

So-called "small business owners," such as Post Malone, Lil Wayne, Chris Brown, and Smashing Pumpkins, received up to $10 million each. Even Nickelback received $2 million. While some may claim these funds were used to keep supporting staff, artists were not required to do so, and we have no way of determining how these blank checks were used.

Malone's manager, Electric Feel, and a company run by his agent Dre London, London Ent. Inc., also received grants totaling nearly $20 million.

Post Malone $10M
Common $2.8M
Korn $5.3M
Father John Misty $1.7M
Smashing Pumpkins $8.6M
Steve Aoki $9.9M
Nickleback $2M
Chris Brown $10M
Usher $3.1M
Melissa Etheridge $3.9M
Becky G $2.2M
Leann Rimes $2M
Slipknot $9.7M
Vampire Weekend $8.3M
Lil Wayne $8.9M

Vampire Weekend's manager Monotone Inc. also received a grant, for $3,077,888.

A music festival founded by Slipknot, Knotfest, also received a $1,050,736 grant.

These multi-millionaire musicians were cashing checks, instead of the intended recipients: America's small businesses.

Sources: https://www.insider.com/sba-svog-grant-pandemic-relief-fund-post-malone-chris-brown-2023-8; https://data.sba.gov/dataset/4ad86088-4c7b-4525-9562-ecd9488916c9/resource/e99e8853-d322-4533-9231-a52b149d7444/download/awards-as-of-7-5-22.xlsx.

Studying COVID-19 "Misinformation" On Social Media In Black and Rural Communities, Using $3.8 Million in NIH Funds

Throughout the pandemic the National Institutes of Health (NIH) — an agency that suppressed its own involvement in funding dangerous coronavirus research — labeled any COVID dissent as misinformation.

NIH is now specifically targeting the COVID opinions of black and rural communities. A $3.8 million University of Pennsylvania study is investigating "COVID-19 misinformation exposure on social media among Black and Rural communities" to help "identify and combat misinformation." In this study, researchers examine social media posts "with a specific lens on race" and location.

Investigating and identifying the heterogeneity in COVID-19 misinformation exposure on social media among Black and Rural communities to inform precision public health messaging

Project Number
1R01MD018340-01

Contact PI/Project Leader
GUNTUKU, SHARATH CHANDRA

Awardee Organization
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

📋 **Description**

Abstract Text

PROJECT SUMMARY/ ABSTRACT In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, a parallel `infodemic,' an abundance of reliable information and inaccurate misinformation, persists. There has also been a significant increase in misinformation exchange and consumption, largely on social media platforms, which threatens individual and public health. An important challenge remains to develop strategies to detect trusted and accurate `signals' amidst dynamic misinformation `noise'. This misinformation contributes to confusion, distrust, and distress around health behaviors such as vaccination, mask wearing, and social distancing. The racial disparities in morbidity, mortality, social, and economic consequences of COVID-19 are well documented; less studied are variations in the information- seeking and COVID-19 health decision-making specific to Black and rural communities. Public health information and campaigns have traditionally relied on theory-based surveys or interview methods to measure knowledge and attitudes to design health messaging. Rapid expansion of social media use and parallel advances in machine learning analytics provide a unique opportunity to track public views, knowledge, and attitudes simultaneously to translate novel analytic insights into precision public health communication with an intentional lens on Black and rural communities. This proposal aims to build a computational framework to uncover heterogeneity in attitudes and misinformation exposure towards COVID- 19 vaccination, model predictors of highly engaging and persuasive messages (including sources, linguistic choices, and content); and to use pragmatic qualitative methods to understand individual response to social media misinformation with a specific lens on race (Black and white individuals) and location (rural and urban). While we focus our message development process on COVID-19 vaccination as a timely and critical behavior, and compare targeting across four specific audiences (Black rural residents, white rural residents, Black urban residents, and white rural residents), our approach is highly adaptable across health topics and scalable to a number of precision-targeted audiences. We see a need for flexible and nimble methods for rapid, human-centered content generation that supports accurate, equitable, and effective precision public health messaging. Computational tools powered by machine learning, predictive analytics, and natural language processing married with patient-centered qualitative methods offer a powerful synergy to conventional approaches to public health campaigns to identify and combat misinformation. The findings from this study will directly inform broader public health action and future strategies so that they can be deployed in the current pandemic and in ongoing efforts to address racial disparities in chronic diseases, HIV, cancer, maternal mortality, and mental health.

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But while we know where some of these myths and conspiracy theories come from, understanding how they spread, and who shares the misinformation, is vital. That can provide opportunities for heading misinformation off before it has a real-world effect. And that's why the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is providing $3.8 million to a study led by **Anish Agarwal, MD,** an assistant professor of Emergency Medicine and the deputy director of the Center for Digital Health in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, and **Sharath Chandra Guntuku, PhD,** an assistant professor (research) in Computer and Information Science in Penn Engineering and a senior fellow in the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics, to study the COVID-19-related social media habits of four different populations.

Agarwal and Guntuku hope that using machine learning to analyze social media posts will uncover actionable commonalities across different racial groups and across urban vs. rural environments — both in the spread of misinformation as well as the circulation of scientifically-backed or helpful information.

When the study began in September 2022, much of what the government and social media called COVID "misinformation" (relating to masks, vaccine efficacy, and the virus' origins) is what is simply called "true" this year.

Will truth complicate their 5-year COVID "misinformation" study?

Dr. Fauci's $477,121 Transgender Monkey Study

Under Dr. Fauci, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) was back in the business of wasting your money and torturing animals. This time, instead of tormenting puppies with ravenous sandflies, a Florida lab is trying to feminize male monkeys. That's right, the NIAID is using $477,121 of your tax dollars to fund the forced feminization of male rhesus macaques.

Utilizing taxpayer funds from NIAID, a Florida lab set out to examine what would happen if female hormones were given to male monkeys. After receiving the hormones, biopsies from the force-feminized, male monkeys were tested to see if they were more susceptible to HIV.

The lab worked to make male lab monkeys "transgender" to address "social injustices" suffered by "transgender persons" such as "transgender women (TGW)-individuals who were assigned a male set at birth but express their gender along a female spectrum."

Critics note that monkeys themselves are not susceptible to HIV, and argue injecting the male monkeys with female hormones is unlikely to yield relevant information or to help humans.

A nonhuman primate model to study the immunological effects of feminizing hormone therapy in transgender women

| Project Number	Contact PI/Project Leader	Awardee Organization
5R21AI157929-02	MARTINS, MAURICIO DE AGUIAR	SCRIPPS FLORIDA

Description

Abstract Text

HIV/AIDS thrives in the margins of society, where low education, unstable housing, and poverty heighten people's vulnerability to HIV. No population is more affected by these social injustices than transgender persons. A case in point is transgender women (TGW)-individuals who were assigned a male sex at birth but express their gender along a feminine spectrum. Sadly, TGW have some of the highest concentrated HIV epidemics in the world, with a pooled global prevalence of 19% and a 49-fold higher odds ratio of acquiring HIV than non-transgender adults. A key part of gender affirmation in TGW is feminizing hormone therapy (FHT), of which the main drug is the hormone estradiol. Although the physical female traits triggered by FHT are well established, less is known about the immunological effects of FHT in TGW. It is noteworthy that estradiol can modulate immune responses in many ways, including by upregulating CCR5 expression on CD4+ T-cells. Since activated CCR5+ CD4+ T-cells are highly permissive to HIV infection, a better understanding of how FHT impacts the male immune system may provide new insights into how to prevent HIV infection in TGW. In this regard, here we will model FHT in nonhuman primates to prospectively address two knowledge gaps about the impact of FHT on the male immune system. 1) Does FHT increase the availability of HIV-susceptible CD4+ T-cells in vivo? To answer this question, we will use flow cytometry to assess the frequency and phenotype of memory CD4+ Teens in blood and gut biopsies from male rhesus macaques receiving FHT (Group 1) or placebo (Group 2). By comparing the levels of activated CD4+ T-cells between animals in Groups 1 and 2, this analysis will reveal whether FHT modulates a crucial marker of HIV susceptibility in biological males. 2) Does FHT interfere with adeno-associated virus (AAV)-vectored immunoprophylaxis? Considering TGW's high risk of acquiring HIV, they stand to

Whoopsie: $236 Billion in Improper Federal Payments

Can you imagine having a line item in your personal checkbook for "improper payments?"

This year, the Biden Administration sent out a whopping $236 billion in inaccurate checks, otherwise known as "improper payments." Federal law defines the term as payments made by the government to the wrong person, in the wrong amount, or for the wrong reason.
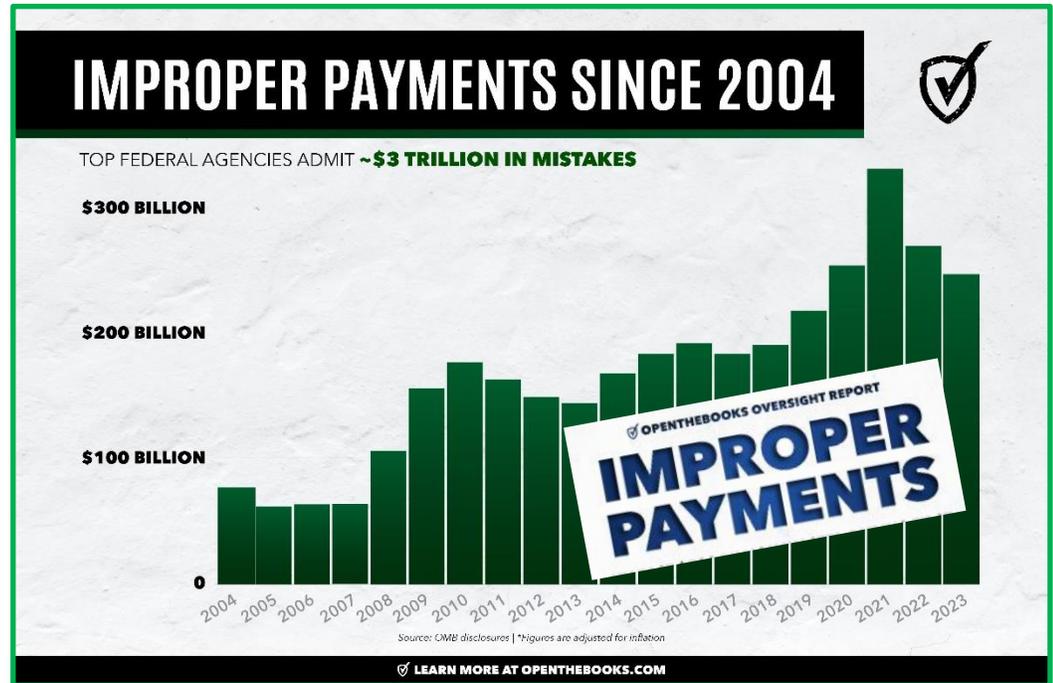
FY2023's whoopsies were down only slightly from FY2022's $247 billion in improper payments, which came to $675 million a day.

Some of the most alarming improper payments are below:

Federal Program	Improper FY23 Payments
Medicaid	$50.332 Billion
Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance	$43.551 Billion
Earned Income Tax Credits	$21.881 Billion
Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Loan Guaranty Purchases	$4.066 Billion
American Opportunity Tax Credits	$1.651 Billion
VA Purchasing Long Term Services and Supports	$1.418 Billion

2021 saw a total of $281 billion in improper payments, largely due to massive COVID overpayments.

Sources: https://www.paymentaccuracy.gov/payment-accuracy-high-priority-programs/;
https://www.openthebooks.com/substack-federal-agencies-admit-to-3-trillion-in-improper-payments-since-2004/;
https://epicforamerica.org/blog/2023-improper-payments-exceed-funding-for-the-u-s-army/;
https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-106285.pdf.

$171,000 Flashback: The Government Likes Its Gambling Monkeys

In 2014, the late Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK), published his annual WasteBook exposing, among other waste, a $171,000 National Science Foundation study making monkeys gamble. As I have highlighted, nine years later, the NIH still is actively studying the gambling choices of monkeys. Can we get out of the monkey gambling business already?!
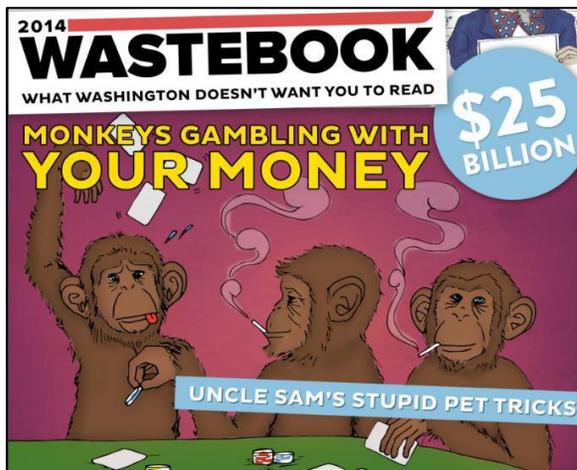
Scientists Hope Gambling Monkeys Unlock Secrets of Free Will

$171,000

It turns out humans are not the only species looking for "Big money, no whammies!" Monkeys also like to play video games and gamble, found an ongoing study supported by the National Science Foundation.

Humans have long been known to have a "hot-hand bias" in which they believe hot or cold streaks exist where there is actually none. Researchers wanted to know if monkeys had the same problem.

"Luckily, monkeys love to gamble," said Tommy Blanchard, a doctoral candidate at the University of Rochester who worked on the study.[180] But scientists "had to create a computerized game that was so captivating monkeys would want to play for hours."[181]

Monkeys were faced with three kinds of games: "two with clear patterns (the correct answer tended to repeat on one side or to alternate from side to side) and a third in which the lucky pick was completely random."[182] They picked up on consistent patterns in the first two games, "but in the random scenarios, the monkeys continued to make choices as if they expected a 'streak.' In other words, even when rewards were random, the monkeys favored one side. The monkeys showed the hot-hand bias consistently over weeks of play."[183] Almost like being stuck in a casino, the three "subjects" played an average of 3,732 games.[184]

Based upon the monkeys' behavior, the researchers concluded monkeys share "our unfounded belief in winning and losing streaks."[185] "Win-stay strategies appear to be more natural for monkeys than win-shift ones," details the study.[186]

The researchers contend the study could "provide nuance to our understanding of free will" or even "inform treatment for gambling addiction."[187] But taxpayers are likely to go totally bananas that NSF is monkeying around with federal research dollars.

The project is being funded as part of a $171,361 continuing grant to be provided by the National Science Foundation from June 2013 to May 2018.[188]

Sources: https://coburn.library.okstate.edu/pdf/Wastebook%202014%20FINAL%208.27.2014741a.pdf; Hagen, Susan, "Monkeys Also Believe in Winning Streaks, Study Shows." University of Rochester Newscenter, 27 June 2014, https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/539516; Blanchard, Tommy, Andreas Wilke, & Benjamin Hayden, "Hot-Hand Bias in Rhesus Monkeys." Journal of Experimental Psychology 40.3 (2014): ProQuest. Web. 16 Oct. 2014, https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2014-25497-001.