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INTRODUCTION

The Rhode Island economy and the state job market are suffering and rank among the worst in the country. In the meantime, state and local budgets burn all around us. Yet, public officials continue to fiddle the same old “spend-and-tax” tune while citizens choke on record deficits and suffocating debt.

Readers of the 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book will quickly determine that in order to address the budget deficits and resulting economic problems facing the Ocean State, out-of-control government spending must be stopped.

The connection must be made to RI citizens that: **Increased Wasteful Government Spending Leads to Decreased Prosperity!** Money taken from productive taxpayers in order to pay for government excess … results in decreased economic productivity.

If readers wonder why unemployment remains at unacceptable levels, taxes are so high, and so many people are giving up and leaving Rhode Island … it is because the state government is spending so much money that it is burning up the economy.

The 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book exposes over 300 pork projects, bungled boondoggles, bad ideas and examples of abuse of power that have resulted in the waste, fraud and abuse of more than $600 million of the taxpayers’ hard-earned money.

Included among the shocking examples of taxpayer-funded expenditures in Rhode Island are:

- $23.1 million to subsidize Providence’s failing convention center;
- $20 million to renovate state lawmakers’ offices;
- $5.3 million for a new elephant pen and a botanical exhibit at Roger Williams Park;
- $4.6 million to overhaul an ice skating rink in Smithfield;
- $3.3 million to renovate the Pawtucket Red Sox ballpark;
- $1.2 million to determine if removing the ovaries of prepubescent rabbits and subjecting them to hormone-treatments impacts cardiac death rates;
- $700,000 to plant 1,600 trees in Providence;
- $500,000 to build a skateboard park at a Pawtucket junior high school;
- $397,344 to renovate Rhode Island College’s swimming pool;
- $301,776 to keep Warwick’s city-owned swimming pool afloat;
- $250,000 to provide digital television to the state’s inmate population;
- $53,419 to provide cash rewards to young people in Mexico who remain free of sexually transmitted diseases;
- $45,000 to repair a sheep barn;
- $44,510 to AS220, a community arts center which published a poem titled “God is Sick of America”;
- $42,994 to excavate textile remains from a farm in western Iceland;
- $14,000 for North Kingstown’s Fourth of July fireworks celebration;
- $1,000 for a grant to an artist who creates women’s underwear from plastic bags and pumps lined with stickpins; and
- $1,000 to reward a photographer known for photos of naked people spitting while jumping.

*Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity*
The Ocean State Policy Research Institute and Citizens Against Government Waste have joined to expose these, and hundreds more, examples of misuse of tax dollars in the 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book. The 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book is the most comprehensive examination of the waste of taxpayer dollars committed by politicians and bureaucrats at all levels of government in the Ocean State.

The Ocean State Policy Research Institute (OSPRI) was founded in 2007 by William Felkner as an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan research and educational institute committed to promoting free-market solutions that address the critical problems in the state, and recently added Mike Stenhouse as Executive Director.

In order to advance personal and economic liberty for Rhode Island, OSPRI develops and disseminates innovative, principled public policy research and solutions.

As Rhode Island’s premier government watchdog organization, OSPRI, through its partnership with the Hummel Report, produces investigative reporting that exposes waste, fraud and abuse of power by elected officials and bureaucrats throughout the state, and advocates for a limited, transparent government.

Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to educating the American public about waste, mismanagement, and inefficiency in government.

CAGW was founded in 1984 by the late industrialist J. Peter Grace and nationally-syndicated columnist Jack Anderson to build support for implementation of the Grace Commission recommendations and other waste-cutting proposals. Since its inception, CAGW has been at the forefront of the fight for efficiency, economy, and accountability in government. CAGW has more than one million members and supporters nationwide. In a little over two decades, has helped save taxpayers $1.07 trillion through the implementation of Grace Commission findings and other recommendations.

CAGW’s official newsletter is Government Waste Watch, and the group produces special reports, and monographs examining government waste and what citizens can do to stop it. CAGW is classified as a Section 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and is recognized as a publicly-supported organization described in Section 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(A)(vi) of the code. Individuals, corporations, companies, associations, and foundations are eligible to support the work of CAGW through tax-deductible gifts.

The 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book is the most expansive collection of examples of questionably-spent tax dollars in the state. From $20 million to renovate the Providence Amtrak train station to a $1,000 handout to a Warwick underwear artist, government waste comes in many different forms and fashions.

This publication takes particular note of exposing pork-barrel spending and government waste by state lawmakers. It also vigilantly reveals costly cronyism by bureaucrats and government officials, the abuse of federal tax dollars in Rhode Island and money squandered by local governments throughout the state.

By holding federal, state and local elected officials accountable for their wasteful spending, the Ocean State Policy Research Institute and Citizens Against Government Waste hope to halt the inexcusable misuse of taxpayers’ money that is now commonplace in government and, ultimately, put more money back in the pockets of every Rhode Islander.
Meet the Board that Poured to Itself

The Governor’s Workforce Board Rhode Island is responsible for overseeing workforce training and educational programs, as well as administering state and federal taxpayer-funded grants related to job skills training efforts in Rhode Island. Over the past two years, the Governor’s Workforce Board has handed out more than $15 million in tax money.

Unfortunately for taxpayers, many of the governor-appointed board members have frequently directed five- and six-figure taxpayer-funded grants to their own companies and organizations.

The Workforce Board’s mission to provide the state’s unskilled and poorly educated residents have the opportunity to obtain meaningful careers through employee training programs. Now it is riddled with apparent conflicts of interests and cronyism by board members, in addition to its flawed structure that forces employers in Rhode Island to fund competitors out of their own pockets.

Unfair Corporate Welfare

One of the Workforce Board’s most well-known, and expensive, projects are the Comprehensive Worker Training Grants. These matching grants allocate certain tax revenues to pay for half of an employer’s cost of training employees. Businesses, labor unions and nonprofits are eligible to apply for the grants. In 2010, 42 companies were awarded a total of $912,046 in Comprehensive Worker Training Grants.

These grants are funded by the state’s Job Development Fund, a job-killing tax on employers that actually increases the cost to conduct business in the Ocean State. This tax forces some businesses to subsidize their competitors and penalizes businesses for creating jobs for Rhode Islanders.

For example, A.B. Munroe Dairy received a $5,000 Comprehensive Worker Training Grant to train new employees. A Rhode Island tradition for generations, A.B. Munroe provides home delivery of dairy products, including milk, cream and butter. One of the Rhode Island companies that paid the Job Development Fund taxes that financed A.B. Monroe’s training grant was Christiansen's Dairy. Also a Rhode Island tradition for generations, Christiansen's Dairy likewise provides home delivery of dairy products, including milk, cream and butter.

Since A.B. Monroe delivers dairy products everywhere that Christiansen’s does, it is in A.B. Monroe’s economic interest to take Christiansen’s customers, cut into their revenues and, ultimately put them out of business. A.B. Monroe undoubtedly hopes to achieve those goals, in part, through the improved employee training subsidized through the Comprehensive Worker Training Grant – the same grant that Christiansen’s helped to fund with their tax payments.

The Governor’s Workforce Board Grant Conflict

As if a taxpayer-financed grant scheme that forces businesses to subsidize their competitors isn’t bad enough, members of the Workforce Board have directed hundreds of thousands of dollars in Comprehensive Worker Training Grants to their own companies and organizations.

The Workforce Board consists of up to 17 members from the private sector, nonprofits and labor unions, as well as high-ranking state officials, including the Directors of the Departments of Human Services, Labor and Training and the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Members of this board played the cronyism game in 2010 when they granted $76,873 in Comprehensive Worker Training Grants to businesses, nonprofits and labor unions that employ, or are run by, fellow Workforce Board members.

Ignoring conflicts of interest, and trampling notions of fairness, objectivity and ethical behavior, the Workforce Board granted Meridian Printing, an East Greenwich-based firm that specializes in product catalogues, travel brochures and postcards, a $25,000
Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity

Comprehensive Worker Training Grants. The president of Meridian Printing, Robert Nagle, is one of the 16 current members on the Workforce Board.

In 2010, the Genesis Center, an education and job training center for immigrants and non-native English speakers, received an $18,073 Comprehensive Worker Training Grant courtesy of the Workforce Board. Pheamo R. Witcher, the president and executive director of the Genesis Center, is a member of the Workforce Board.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 99, a Cranston-based labor union representing construction electricians, received a $16,900 Comprehensive Worker Training Grant in 2010. Twenty-five percent of the Workforce Board members have a possible conflict of interest regarding the IBEW Local No. 99’s grant award, including Robin Coia, who serves as the marketing representative for the New England Laborers Labor Management Coop Trust.

Paul MacDonald, the president of the Providence Central Federated Council of the AFL-CIO, also sits on the Workforce Board, as does William McGowan, the business manager of IBEW Local No. 2323, which serves many of the same workers as IBEW Local No. 99. George Nee, the president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO is also a member of the Workforce Board. These labor union principals agreed to direct tax dollars to support their own IBEW Local No. 99’s training efforts.

Even Workforce Board Chairman Joseph MarcAurele, who is the chairman, president and chief executive officer of the Washington Trust Company was not exempt from this apparent conflict of interest. His company received a $16,900 Comprehensive Worker Training Grant.

One of the few members of the Workforce Board that didn’t appear to have a conflict in 2010 was Martin Trueb, the senior vice president and treasurer of Hasbro. However, the company did receive a $36,900 Comprehensive Worker Training Grant in 2009.

Training on the Taxpayers’ Tab

After members of the Workforce Board secured Comprehensive Worker Training Grants for their own companies, labor unions and nonprofits, 38 other Rhode Island employers received training grants, including:

- $49,000 for Carousel Industries of North America (Exeter);
- $39,000 for Senesco Marine (North Kingstown);
- $25,000 for Computopia (Warwick);
- $25,000 for Gregg’s Restaurant (Warwick);
- $25,000 for Leifkowitz, Garfinkel, Champi & DeRienzo, P.C. (Providence);
- $25,000 for New England Construction Company (East Greenwich);
- $25,000 for Sansiveri, Kimball & Company, LLP (Providence);
- $25,000 for William H. Harris Furs (Warwick);
- $23,100 for DiPrete Engineering (Cranston);
- $20,800 for Honeywell International (Woonsocket);
- $13,200 for Atlantic Paper & Twine Company (Pawtucket); and,
- $12,800 for Judd Brown Designs (Pawtucket).
Governor’s Workforce Board Members also Snag Stimulus Money

In addition to the tax dollars the Workforce Board dispenses each year, the board was given control of nearly $1.4 million in federal stimulus money to hand out to nonprofits. This included taxpayer-funded grants to over a dozen organizations that cater to making “adults with low literacy levels or limited English-speaking skills” employable by offering language education and specialized job training.

The Workforce Board again took care of its own, granting $210,000 to the Genesis Center and Progreso Latino, organizations which have executive directors Pheamo R. Witcher and Mario Bueno – seated on the board. In addition to the Workforce Board directing taxpayers’ money to fellow board members, the remaining $1,146,597 in stimulus money was sprinkled among 10 organizations, including:

- $230,597 to Quality Partners of Rhode Island (health care training);
- $205,000 to Amos House (construction & hospitality training);
- $160,000 to the Rhode Island Outreach Program (health care & finance training);
- $155,000 to Dorcas Place (construction & health care training);
- $110,000 to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence (construction training); and
- $86,000 to the Rhode Island Hospitality Education Foundation (hospitality training).

The money handed out by the Workforce Board, especially the Comprehensive Worker Training Grants, is yet another example of corporate welfare that helps a few well-connected businesses and organizations at the expense of other employers throughout Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island state government should get out of the business of determining the winners and losers in the private sector economy. This would allow the state to focus on the only role it should rightfully assume in the realm of economic development: ensuring a universally favorable business climate, free from high taxes and regulatory burdens.

Eliminating the Workforce Board would reduce the cost of doing business in Rhode Island and ensure a fair shake for all businesses in the state, as well as to help end publicly-funded opportunities forcronyism and conflicts of interest. This would also result in more money for all Rhode Island-based business, not just those fortunate enough to receive corporate welfare handouts at the expense of the rest.

General Assembly Giveaways

Every year state lawmakers give away more than $1 million of Rhode Islanders’ money to local community groups and nonprofits in a series of secretive and controversial grants that force taxpayers to fund organization they may oppose. The legislative grant process allows lawmakers to submit requests for “pork” projects in their districts. Grants allow incumbent lawmakers the opportunity to present the grant check to local groups, receiving praise and a nice photo-op in the process.

In 2011, state lawmakers handed out $1,130,702 in legislative grants. State senators flooded their districts with $882,620 in grant money and House members earmarked another $248,082 in pork giveaways, all courtesy of Rhode Island taxpayers. While Rhode Island’s state lawmakers get to hand big checks to nonprofits they support, many Rhode Islanders don’t have enough left over after taxes are taken out of their paychecks to do the same.

This practice of pork politics gives lawmakers the glory, while forcing taxpayers to shoulder the burden of the cost of the grants.

Senseless Senate Spending

In 2010, when the state Senate doled out 422 fiscal year 2011 legislative grants, 34 of the 38 senators snagged handouts. No Rhode Island state lawmaker pocketed more tax dollars to present to nonprofits and community groups than Providence-area Sen. Rhoda Perry (D-Dist. 3), who netted 21 grants for a total of $61,500. These senators shared in $882,620 worth of senate legislative grants funds:

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
### FY 2011 Senate Legislative Grants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party/District</th>
<th>Senator Sponsoring Grant</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
<th># of Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 3</td>
<td>Sen. Rhoda E. Perry</td>
<td>$61,500</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 4</td>
<td>Sen. Dominick J. Ruggerio</td>
<td>$54,500</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 13</td>
<td>Sen. M. Teresa Paiva-Weed</td>
<td>$49,000</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 7</td>
<td>Sen. Frank A. Ciccone III</td>
<td>$44,700</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 14</td>
<td>Sen. Daniel DaPonte</td>
<td>$43,500</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 1</td>
<td>Sen. Maryellen Goodwin</td>
<td>$39,500</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-Dist. 32</td>
<td>Sen. David E. Bates</td>
<td>$36,834</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 5</td>
<td>Sen. Paul V. Labour</td>
<td>$35,500</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 19</td>
<td>Fmr. Sen. Daniel Connors*</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 23</td>
<td>Sen. Paul W. Fogarty</td>
<td>$30,000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 16</td>
<td>Sen. Elizabeth A. Crowley</td>
<td>$27,500</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 18</td>
<td>Sen. Frank A. DeVall, Jr.</td>
<td>$26,500</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 37</td>
<td>Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 26</td>
<td>Sen. Beatrice A. Lanzi</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 22</td>
<td>Sen. John J. Tassoni, Jr.</td>
<td>$23,500</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 2</td>
<td>Sen. Juan M. Pichard</td>
<td>$23,100</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 10</td>
<td>Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr.^</td>
<td>$22,333</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 30</td>
<td>Sen. William A. Walaska</td>
<td>$21,500</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 31</td>
<td>Sen. Erin P. Lynch</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 27</td>
<td>Sen. Hanna M. Gallo</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 29</td>
<td>Sen. Michael J. McCaffrey</td>
<td>$20,870</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 35</td>
<td>Fmr. Sen. J. Michael Lenihan*</td>
<td>$19,500</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 8</td>
<td>Sen. James E. Doyle, II</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 28</td>
<td>Sen. Joshua Miller</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 12</td>
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<td>$18,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 20</td>
<td>Sen. Roger A. Picard</td>
<td>$16,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 24</td>
<td>Sen. Marc A. Cote</td>
<td>$15,750</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 15</td>
<td>Fmr. Sen. John F. McBurney, III*</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 33</td>
<td>Fmr. Sen. Leonidas Raptakis*</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 6</td>
<td>Sen. Harold M. Metts</td>
<td>$14,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 36</td>
<td>Sen. James C. Sheehan</td>
<td>$13,700</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 11</td>
<td>Fmr. Sen. Charles Levesque**</td>
<td>$13,333</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-Dist. 34</td>
<td>Sen. Francis T. Maher, Jr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-Dist. 38</td>
<td>Sen. Dennis L. Algiere</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Senate Leadership</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** $882,620

* No longer a member of the Rhode Island Senate

^ Grant amount split among the three co-sponsors of a $1,000 grant to the Community Spring Project in Bristol

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Extravagant Earmarks

Since legislative grant funds are debated and divvied up in secret, beyond the scrutiny of the public, it is impossible to determine why a given organization received tax dollars.

In some cases, the senator sponsoring the grant is personally involved in the organization. For example, Sen. Marc Cote (D – Dist. 24) requested and received a $2,000 legislative grant for Cercle Laurier. Cote is a longtime member of the organization.\(^{31}\)

The reason other organizations received grants are less clear, but no less costly to taxpayers. Other taxpayer-funded Senate legislative grants went to organizations including:

- $5,000 - Bristol Last Night Concert (Sen. David E. Bates, R-Dist. 32)
- $5,000 - Johnson’s Pond Civic Association (Fmr. Sen. Leonidas Raptakis, D-Dist. 33)
- $5,000 - Providence St. Patrick’s Day Parade (Sen. Maryellen Goodwin, D-Dist. 1)
- $4,000 - Christmas in Newport (Sen. M. Teresa Paiva-Weed, D-Dist. 13)
- $4,000 - International Tennis Hall of Fame (Sen. M. Teresa Paiva-Weed, D-Dist. 13)
- $3,500 - North Smithfield Mini-Bus Service (Sen. John J. Tassoni Jr., D-Dist. 22)
- $3,000 - American-French Genealogical Society (Sen. Marc A. Cote, D-Dist. 24)
- $3,000 - Ancients and Horribles Parade (Sen. Paul W. Fogarty, D-Dist. 23)
- $3,000 - Rhode Island 4-H Club Foundation (Sen. Francis T. Maher, Jr., D-Dist. 34)
- $3,000 - Rotary Club of Woonsocket (Sen. Roger A. Picard, D-Dist. 20)
- $2,500 - Arts & Business Council of Rhode Island (Sen. Joshua Miller, D-Dist. 28)
- $2,500 - Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy (Sen. Juan M. Pichardo, D-Dist. 2)
- $2,500 - Pineview Little League (Sen. James E. Doyle, II, D-Dist. 8)
- $2,000 - New Urban Arts (Sen. Paul V. Jabour, D-Dist. 5)
- $1,500 - Gaspee Days Committee (Sen. Michael J. McCaffrey, D-Dist. 29)
- $1,000 - Bristol Train of Artillery Armory/Museum (Fmr. Sen. Charles Levesque, D-Dist. 11)
- $1,000 - Lady Northmen Hockey (Sen. John J. Tassoni, Jr., D-Dist. 22)
- $1,000 - Lincoln Conservation Commission (Fmr. Sen. Daniel Connors, D-Dist. 19)
- $1,000 - Oaklawn Grange (Sen. Hanna M. Gallo, D-Dist. 27)
- $1,000 - Providence Community Boating Center (Sen. Maryellen Goodwin, D-Dist. 1)
- $1,000 - Quonset Air Museum (Sen. James C. Sheehan, D-Dist. 36)
- $1,000 - Rhode Island Reds (Hockey Team) Heritage Society (Sen. Daniel DaPonte, D-Dist. 14)
- $1,000 - Rhode Island Senior Softball League (Sen. Beatrice A. Lanzi, D-Dist. 26)
- $1,000 - Sakonnet Preservation Association (Sen. Louis P. DiPalma, D-Dist. 12)
- $1,000 - Warren Summer Concert Series (Sen. Walter S. Felag, Jr., D-Dist. 10)
- $500 - Ocean State Soccer League (Fmr. Sen. J. Michael Lenihan, D-Dist. 35)
- $500 - Warwick Police Athletic League (Sen. William A. Walaska, D-Dist. 30)
- $500 - Waterview Activity Association (Sen. Marc A. Cote, D-Dist. 24)\(^{32}\)

Legislative grant funds are debated and divvied up in secret ... beyond the scrutiny of the public!

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
**House of Horrors for Taxpayers**

While Rhode Island’s state senators gobbled up three and a half times more money to fund their legislative grants in FY 2011, state House members still managed to give away nearly a quarter-million in publicly-financed grants to 74 organizations.

The $248,082 in House grants were split among the following state representatives:

**FY 2011 House Legislative Grants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party/District</th>
<th>House Member Sponsoring Grant</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
<th># of Grants</th>
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<td>D-Dist. 4</td>
<td>Rep. Gordon D. Fox</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 72</td>
<td>Fmr. Rep. Amy Rice*</td>
<td>$17,000</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 41</td>
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<td>Rep. Roberto DaSilva</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 16</td>
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<td>Rep. Scott Slater</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 42</td>
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<td>Rep. John J. DeSimone</td>
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<td>Rep. Joy Hearn</td>
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<td>D-Dist. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 31</td>
<td>Fmr. Rep. Kenneth Carter*</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 8</td>
<td>Fmr. Rep. Steven Costantino*</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 46</td>
<td>Fmr. Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith*</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 44</td>
<td>Rep. Peter Petrarca</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 33</td>
<td>Rep. Donald J. Lally, Jr.</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 38</td>
<td>Rep. Brian Patrick Kennedy</td>
<td>$1,500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 19</td>
<td>Rep. Joseph M. McNamara</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 13</td>
<td>Rep. John Carnevale</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 43</td>
<td>Rep. Deborah Fellela</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 74</td>
<td>Rep. Deborah Ruggiero</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Dist. 27</td>
<td>Rep. Patricia A. Serpa</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** $248,082  74

*No longer a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives*
Public Funds for Political Battles

Former House Deputy Majority Leader Amy Rice may have lost her 2010 reelection battle to 21-year old college student Dan Reilly, but she left taxpayers with something to remember her by: one of the most expensive and unfair legislative grants in recent memory.  

Rep. Rice, a House Democrat who represented Aquidneck Island 72nd District, demanded a $15,000 taxpayer-funded grant to support the Aquidneck Island Schools Municipal Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee was formed in 2010 with an eye toward regionalizing Aquidneck Island’s three school systems into one island-wide super district.

The district unification proposal is unpopular with a large number of Aquidneck Island residents. As a result of the grant, however, Aquidneck Islanders who oppose the school district regionalization scheme are seeing their tax dollars used to research the plan and advocate for its adoption.

Further, in February 2011, the Aquidneck Island Schools Municipal Advisory Committee released a taxpayer-subsidized study recommending a single school district for the island in an attempt to gain support for the regionalization plan. The study was found to be “overly simplistic” and relied on “incorrect data.” One Rhode Island government watchdog noted that, “It is believed that the study authors actually knew their data was wrong, yet they used it anyhow.”

Rhode Islanders may disagree whether Aquidneck Island children would be better served with one regional school district, rather than three distinct community systems. Few, however, would find it acceptable for the state government to take tax dollars from the advocates of one side of a political debate and use that same money to line the pockets of the other side. Unfortunately, Amy Rice’s legislative grant was use for that purpose.

House Handouts

The Aquidneck Island Schools Municipal Advisory Committee was just one of 74 agencies, associations, centers, societies and community groups funded by the Rhode Island House of Representatives legislative grants. Others include:

- $10,000 - Cape Verdean American Community Development Agency (Rep. J. Patrick O’Neill, D-Dist. 59)
- $6,532 - Summit Neighborhood Association (Rep. Gordon D. Fox, D- Dist. 4)
- $5,000 - Day of Portugal and Portuguese Heritage in Rhode Island (Rep. William San Bento, Jr., D-Dist. 58)
- $5,000 - East Bay Community Development Corporation (Rep. Raymond E. Gallison, Jr., D-Dist. 69)
- $5,000 – Pawtucket Winter Wonderland (Fmr. Rep. Peter Kilmartin, D-Dist. 61)
- $3,000 - Charlestown Historical Society (Rep. Donna Walsh, D-Dist. 36)
- $1,500 - Dominican American Association (Rep. Scott Slater, D-Dist. 10)
- $1,000 - Johnston Historical Society (Rep. John Carnevale, D-Dist. 13)
- $1,000 - Lincoln Senior Center (Fmr. Rep. Mary Ann Shallcross Smith, D-Dist. 46)
- $1,000 - Santa Maria Di Prata Society Feast Committee (Rep. Stephen R. Ucci, D-Dist. 42)
- $1,000 - Scituate Cyclones Girls Softball (Rep. Michael J. Marcello, D-Dist. 41)
- $500 - Wickford Art Association (Fmr. Rep. Kenneth Carter, D-Dist. 31)
Secretive Community Service Spending

Similar to legislative grants, Community Services Grants are state taxpayer-funded handouts to locally-focused nonprofits in Rhode Island. Unlike legislative grants, however, lawmakers’ names are not attached to the grant requests. Since legislators can champion Community Services Grants behind a veil of secrecy, it allows for devious state policymakers to use tax dollars to pay back campaign contributors and curry favor with political insiders.

Community Services Grants go through the House Finance Committee. According to Operation Clean Government, “On the day of a hearing, House Finance Committee members are given a list of grants to be discussed that day, but only a few on the list receive an in-depth review. These grants get buried in the budget bill, using different executive branch departments as a ‘pass through’ for these grants.” Despite serving as the administrator of the grants, the departments receiving the grant funds have no discretion over who receives the grants and must pass the earmarked money along to the grant recipients.

Despite the flaws plaguing the administration of the program, including the high possibility of corruption and the use of tax dollars to support private organizations against the will of taxpayers, lawmakers spent $9.2 million in tax money on Community Services Grants to 324 different organizations across the state.

Community Chest of Citizen’s Cash

The sixteen state agencies administering the $9.2 million in Community Services Grants are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Grant Amount</th>
<th># of Grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Human Services</td>
<td>$2,688,983</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Elderly Affairs</td>
<td>$1,085,560</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Corporation</td>
<td>$852,320</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Higher Education</td>
<td>$839,586</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education</td>
<td>$715,187</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health</td>
<td>$583,718</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council on the Arts</td>
<td>$402,475</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Administration</td>
<td>$395,956</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>$378,250</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Rhode Island</td>
<td>$294,612</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Children, Youth and Families</td>
<td>$265,247</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals</td>
<td>$241,175</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Preservation and Heritage</td>
<td>$178,431</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary of State</td>
<td>$150,326</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Environmental Management</td>
<td>$119,865</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Resources Board</td>
<td>$22,444</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>$9,214,135</strong></td>
<td><strong>324</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Frittering Funds Far and Wide

The 324 organizations receiving Community Services Grants include:

- $175,000 - Rhode Island Sports Foundation (Department of Administration)
- $75,000 - AFL-CIO Dislocated Worker Program (Department of Human Services)
- $50,000 - Rhode Island College Modern Language Studies in Portuguese (Office of Higher Education)
- $10,688 - Museum of Work and Culture (Secretary of State)
- $21,303 - Citizenship Participation Grants (Department of Human Services)
- $9,835 - Blacks Interested In Communications (Elementary and Secondary Education)
- $9,218 - 4-H Cooperative Extension Districts (Department of Environmental Management)
- $7,570 - Italian Cultural Heritage (University of Rhode Island)
- $6,274 - Japan/America Society (Economic Development Corporation)
- $3,905 - Bristol 4th of July Parade (Economic Development Corporation)
- $3,563 - Blackstone Valley Tourism (Department of Environmental Management)
- $1,418 - Arnold Mills Parade Association (Historical Preservation and Heritage)
- $1,000 - Warren Maxwell House (Historical Preservation and Heritage)
- $721 - Gaspee Days Parade Committee (Economic Development Corporation)

Cashing In on Campaign Contribution

Former Rep. Steven Costantino (D-Dist. 8) retired from the Rhode Island House of Representatives in order to mount an unsuccessful bid for Providence mayor after the 2010 session of the General Assembly. Before he left however, there now appears to be a question as to whether or not he used his power as chairman of the House Finance Committee to reward a campaign contributor.

The timing of campaign contributions to Costantino by several individuals associated with the Groden Center weeks before the Providence-based facility received a $100,000 Community Services Grants raises a number of red flags.

On March 22, 2010, just as budget discussions were heating up, Costantino pocketed a $250 contribution from the Groden Center’s executive director, and another $250 donation from the center’s chief operating officer.47

A month prior to contributing to Costantino’s campaign coffers, three Groden Center employees donated a combined $800 to House Speaker Gordon Fox (D-Dist. 4) and Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed (D-Dist. 13).48

When the 2011 state budget was announced, it included a $100,000 Community Services Grant to the Groden Center.49 Before the grant passed, it was first approved by Costantino’s House Finance Committee and then rubberstamped by both Fox and Paiva-Weed.

A License to Steal

Under the guise of public safety, Rhode Island’s state government took $732,298 from taxpayers in FY 2011 to fund the Department of Business Regulation’s Commercial Licensing and Racing and Athletics program.50 The program oversees the licensing and regulation of myriad professions and trades, slapping fees and regulations on thousands of Rhode Island employers and workers. In many cases, the Commercial Licensing program governs the requirements necessary for employment in a profession, inhibiting some Rhode Islanders from pursuing the career of their choice.

The Commercial Licensing program regulates real estate agents and appraisers, auto body shops, salvage yards, glass installation, upholsterers, auctioneers, liquor wholesalers, breweries, wineries, sewer line-cleaners, mobile home dealers, trailer parks and health clubs as well as other businesses and professions.51

Supporters of the Commercial Licensing program may claim that the organization has a role in keeping customers safe. In truth, the program creates a disincentive for competent workers to begin new careers or for employers to hire them, while forcing companies to raise prices for consumers across the state.

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Preserving Everything but Tax Money

During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, Rhode Island’s Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission burned through $2.7 million in taxpayers’ money.\(^52\)

The Commission administers the Certified Local Government (CLG) grant program, which provides public money to 15 communities throughout the Ocean State that “have a historic district zoning ordinance and a historic district commission.”\(^53\)

The grants are available for a number of projects, including “identification and evaluation of significant historic and archaeological properties, the nomination of eligible properties to the National Register, historic preservation plans and certain education-related activities.”\(^54\)

In 2010, the Commission scattered $80,233 in CLG grant money among five communities in the state.\(^55\) For the third consecutive year, the largest payout went to the city of Newport and the Newport Restoration Foundation, which received $22,695 to document properties in the Kay Street-Catherine Street-Old Beach Road National Register District. \(^56\) Other 2010 CLG grant recipients included:

- $20,000 to the city of Providence/Preserve Rhode Island to host educational workshops on how to increase energy efficiency in homes while preserving historic character;
- $20,000 to the Town of North Smithfield to conduct an inventory of heritage landscapes;
- $11,538 to the city of Providence/Preserve Rhode Island to put on a statewide historic preservation conference; and
- $6,000 to the Town of North Kingstown/Cocumscussoc Association to write a report about “landscape preservation and interpretation” at Smith’s Castle in North Kingstown.\(^57\)

Pachyderm Housing Projects

Roger Williams Park is a point of pride for many Rhode Island residents. But for others who see the Providence landmark as a continuous devourer of tax dollars, the park is a point of contention. Since 1989, state taxpayers have picked up the tab for $22.4 million in bond payments for “various renovations and upgrades at the Park.”\(^58\)

In 2011, the state plans to pay out an additional $5.3 million for repairs and improvements to the park and the park’s zoo, including a new botanical exhibit and a new elephant house.\(^59\)

Sprinklers Soak Ocean Staters

The FY 2011 budget calls for $25,360 in tax money to pay for the installation of new sprinkler heads in resident rooms at the Rhode Island Training School for Youth.\(^60\) This expenditure of tax dollars is necessary because the school’s administrators couldn’t stop the residents from tampering with the existing style of sprinkler head.\(^61\) As a result, taxpayers, rather than the offending kids, are the ones being punished.

Forcing taxpayers to bankroll a media organization is anything but a free market action!

Providence Plantations’ Public TV Payoff

Forcing taxpayers to bankroll a media organization is anything but a free market action, but it happened this year in Rhode Island when state lawmakers funneled to Rhode Island PBS $636,750 in state taxpayers’ money through a handout to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.\(^62\)

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity

Many PBS affiliates rely on viewer donations to keep their stations in business, but the government giveaway indicates that Rhode Island PBS has a different fundraising system: request money from the state government that is taken from the pockets of all Rhode Island residents, including those who never watch PBS.

Judging by the heap of tax dollars Rhode Island PBS received in the 2011 state budget, their moneymaking scheme is working.

Targeting Tax Dollars

Taxpayers are scheduled to pay $150,000 in 2011 for a feasibility study on the construction of a state weapons range. Since that price tag pays for only the study, and not construction, Rhode Islanders can expect the $150,000 expenditure to be a drop in the bucket compared to the cost of building a fancy new firing range if the project comes to fruition.

A Park with a Portly Price Tag

Station Park in Downtown Providence will soon get a very pricey facelift courtesy of state and federal taxpayers. The park is slated for new fences, trees, lighting, benches, pathways and other upgrades at a cost of nearly $1.2 million – including $400,000 from state funds and $750,000 from federal money.

Bike Paths Built on Bad Math

In the FY 2011, the General Assembly burned through $4.8 million pandering to Ocean State bicycle enthusiasts. First, state lawmakers agreed to earmark $3.3 million in bond funding to build bicycle paths and recreational greenways throughout the state. Legislators then spent an additional $1.5 million on the design and construction of the Blackstone Valley bike path.

Convention Center Calamity

The Rhode Island Convention Center Authority, the public corporation tasked with overseeing the Rhode Island Convention Center, the Dunkin Donuts Center and the Veteran’s Memorial Auditorium in Providence, has turned into a bottomless pit for tax dollars. Operating and management expenses, plus debt payments for the facilities will cost taxpayers $23,130,337 in 2011.

Of course, subsidizing the Convention Center complex’s financial shortcomings is nothing new for Rhode Island’s beleaguered taxpayers. Over the last four years, the Convention Center Authority has lost an astonishing $101.8 million. Including debt service, operations outlays and renovations costs, taxpayers have shelled out $106.2 million to keep the failing facility afloat since 2008.
**Bucks for Ballparks**

In 1999, state taxpayers bankrolled $14.5 million in upgrades to McCoy Stadium, home of the Triple-A Pawtucket Red Sox baseball team. In 2011, the PawSox received another $3.3 million renovation to their ballpark. Tax dollars funded a series of construction projects at the stadium, including a new roof, parking lot resurfacing and the installation of pedestrian walkways.

**Candidates Cashing In**

Rhode Island provides for a system of voluntary public financing of elections much like the federal system for presidential candidates. State taxpayers have the option of voluntarily marking a box on their tax returns to donate $5 towards a pool of funding shared by qualifying candidates for state office.

Under the state’s law governing the public financing of elections, when the money from the taxpayer checkoff program fails to generate the dollars necessary to fill the pockets of all of the candidates requesting public financing, “funds sufficient to meet the levels of the public financing…shall be supplied from the general fund of the state treasury.” Of course, the voluntary public financing program failed to cover all of the eligible candidates during the 2010 elections. As a result, the state handed over $2,111,000 in state tax money to candidates against the will of taxpayers.

When general fund money went to finance the campaigns, it forced taxpayers to fund candidates they did not support. Democrats were forced to fund Republicans. Pro-life taxpayers’ money went to pro-choice candidates. Supporters of free market economic policies bankrolled big government candidate campaigns.

Thomas Jefferson once said: “To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is sinful and tyrannical.” Rhode Island’s public campaign financing scheme certainly violates that premise.

**New England Nepotism**

Between 2010 and 2011, the income of the average Rhode Islander grew less than 3 percent, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Over that same time, Frank Anzeveno, the chief of staff for House Speaker Gordon Fox (D-Dist. 4), saw his income jump a whopping 23.5 percent – from $132,010 to $162,986, according to The Providence Journal.

Anzeveno, a former North Providence state representative, is just one of several well-connected state employees who saw their salaries jump much higher than the 3 percent raise given to most state workers for 2011. Other political insiders receiving hefty taxpayer-financed raises in the past year include:


- Legislative aide Kyle Fellela, son of Rep. Deborah Fellela (D-Dist. 43) now has a salary of $36,101, thanks to a 26.2 percent raise.

- Robin McCauley, the sister of Deputy House Speaker John McCauley (D-Dist. 1) received a 17.5-percent pay increase, boosting her salary as a State House secretary to $42,317.
Auditors Keep an Eye on Their Own Bottom Line

Raymond Coderre, the husband of one of Speaker Fox’s top lieutenants in the General Assembly, Rep. Elaine Coderre (D-Dist. 60), received a pay bump of 8.2 percent, bringing his salary as an auditor for the Office of the Auditor General to $41,160. Coderre is one of 14 workers in the state auditor’s office to receive a raise of more than 3 percent.

Auditor General Employees with 2011 Salary Increases of More than 3 Percent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>2010 Salary</th>
<th>2011 Salary</th>
<th>Total Raise</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert J. Johnson, Jr.</td>
<td>Principal Auditor</td>
<td>$49,556</td>
<td>$58,690</td>
<td>$9,134</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savita Potty</td>
<td>Senior Auditor</td>
<td>$38,058</td>
<td>$42,317</td>
<td>$4,259</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Salem</td>
<td>Senior Auditor</td>
<td>$38,058</td>
<td>$42,317</td>
<td>$4,259</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle McDonnell</td>
<td>Auditor</td>
<td>$38,058</td>
<td>$41,265</td>
<td>$3,207</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond R. Coderre</td>
<td>Auditor</td>
<td>$38,058</td>
<td>$41,160</td>
<td>$3,102</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank L. DiLorenzo</td>
<td>Supervising Auditor</td>
<td>$69,248</td>
<td>$74,891</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Naylor</td>
<td>Principal Auditor</td>
<td>$58,063</td>
<td>$62,653</td>
<td>$4,590</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Bergantino</td>
<td>Senior Audit Manager</td>
<td>$100,999</td>
<td>$108,758</td>
<td>$7,759</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon Pires</td>
<td>Supervising Auditor</td>
<td>$70,180</td>
<td>$75,571</td>
<td>$5,391</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter M. Borges</td>
<td>Data Systems Coordinator</td>
<td>$57,461</td>
<td>$61,875</td>
<td>$4,414</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph E. Cadden</td>
<td>Asst. Data Systems Coordinator</td>
<td>$48,775</td>
<td>$52,522</td>
<td>$3,747</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manrique Vargas</td>
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<td>$72,485</td>
<td>$76,248</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Rossi</td>
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<td>$62,424</td>
<td>$65,665</td>
<td>$3,241</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Capraro</td>
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<td>$42,219</td>
<td>$44,390</td>
<td>$2,171</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These seemingly excessive raises, especially in this time of economic turmoil, high unemployment and budgetary belt-tightening, are concerning, no matter the department. However, when disproportionate raises such as these are given to public employees in the Office of the Auditor General, it is particularly troubling.

The Office of the Auditor General is the last line of defense to make sure that tax dollars are spent carefully and appropriately across the state.

When the agency most responsible for creating an environment of government accountability and transparency is seen as raiding the state coffers to provide employees with dubious raises, every Rhode Island resident and taxpayer has cause for concern.
Pricey Police Protection for a Providence Politician

In 2010, Providence Mayor David Cicilline was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, filling the seat previously held by Patrick Kennedy. But before Cicilline bolted Providence City Hall for the United States Capitol, he forced Providence taxpayers to pony up for security fit for a world leader.

While mayor, Cicilline was protected by a four-man security detail that cost taxpayers $500,000 in 2009. The half-million dollar price tag included the salary, overtime expenses and benefits for four full-time Providence police officers. The patrolmen shuttled Mayor Cicilline throughout Providence in a $43,000 Chevrolet Tahoe, also purchased with taxpayers’ money. The then-mayor claimed he did not know of “another city (Providence’s) size where the mayor doesn’t have a security detail.” The idea of maintaining a substantial security detail was “standard practice,” according to Cicilline.

Jim Hummel of the Hummel Report put Cicilline’s claim to the test by examining the size, scope and cost of police protection for the mayors of five other similarly sized New England cities. Of the five cities, not one maintained a security detail for their mayor.

Hummel found that the mayors of Hartford, Connecticut; Worcester, Massachusetts; and Springfield, Massachusetts have no security detail and do not rely on police officers to drive or escort them. The charter of New Haven, Connecticut, allows for a mayorial security detail, but the city’s mayor refuses the benefit. The mayor of Bridgeport, Connecticut, does not maintain a security detail and allows a patrolman to drive him only “if he has multiple events and needs to get in and out of a destination quickly.”

Even the security budget for Rhode Island’s governor – which includes overnight protection for the governor’s home – is more than $50,000 less than the cost of Cicilline’s security detail.

It remains unclear why the then-mayor of America’s 131st largest city felt he was either so important, or in such grave danger, that a $500,000 security detail was necessary. Now that Cicilline has moved on from the mayor’s office to Congress, it seems that America’s taxpayers are the ones who need protection – from Cicilline’s out-of-control spending.

Fun with Taxpayers’ Funds

The Bristol Town Council apparently loves to throw a party with other peoples’ money. During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, the town’s elected leaders spent $43,000 in taxpayers’ cash on a series of frivolous festivities, including:

- $14,084 - Fourth of July celebration and fireworks
- $12,500 - Last Night concert and fireworks
- $5,000 - Christmas Festival
- $5,000 - Holiday Lighting
- $3,000 - Concerts on the Common

Not to be outdone, Newport earmarked $31,000 to subsidize special events including a St. Patrick’s Day parade, the “Polar Bear Plunge,” a police parade and Independence Day fireworks.

North Kingstown literally burned $14,000 of taxpayers’ money paying for the city’s Fourth of July fireworks.

This year, Warwick officials will celebrate Memorial Day with a parade that will cost taxpayers $3,350.
Costly Concerts

Along with Bristol’s $3,000 subsidy for the “Concerts on the Common” live music series, other Rhode Island cities have decided to use tax dollars to bankroll their own concerts and other festivals. In their 2010 budget, Narragansett officials spent $6,000 to fund festivals and another $3,000 to finance concerts.

Elected leaders in the town of Foster joined many of the Ocean State’s larger municipalities in raiding residents’ pocketbooks to fund outdoor musical entertainment. The town, which sits near the Connecticut border, about 20 miles west of Providence, spent $1,800 for a summer concert series in 2010.

Pawtucket policymakers pledged that the city’s Arts in the Park events would be self-sufficient in 2010. It was a nice try, as the concert and children’s entertainment series still wound up in the red, costing taxpayers $250.

Warwick’s Pool Leaves Taxpayers All Wet

In 2011, Warwick’s city-owned McDermott Swimming Pool will cost an estimated $486,776 to operate. However, admission fees paid by patrons using the pool are only expected to bring in $185,000. The deficit will be made up by wringing out the city’s taxpayers for the remaining $301,776 necessary to keep the pool afloat.

Misuse of Municipal Money

Every fiscal year, each of Rhode Island’s 39 cities and towns pass a budget that outlines the services provided by the counties and the cost to taxpayers for those services. While these budgets should be seen as a promise between the local governments and the residents they serve, a startling number of Rhode Island’s local officials view their budgets as a starting point rather than a finish line. The unlucky residents of those municipalities have to foot the bill for their governments’ inability to live within its means.

Government officials in the following cities broke the promise represented by their budgets, resulting, in some cases, in millions of dollars in additional costs to taxpayers.

Prodigal Providence

No city in Rhode Island spent more extravagantly, or drowned its denizens deeper in debt in 2010 than Providence. The “Creative Capital” outspent its budget by a dizzying $58,259,000.

Among the reasons Providence municipal government finished so far in the hole were the excess expenditures above budget appropriations by the following 35 agencies:

- $8,619,000 by the Fire Department
- $2,601,000 by the Police Department
- $2,136,000 by the Municipal Court
- $1,400,000 by the Building Inspection Administration
- $1,330,000 for Heat, Light and Power
- $590,000 for the Master Alarm Connection Fee
- $574,000 by the Office of Arts, Culture, Film & Tourism
- $378,000 by the Law Department
- $344,000 by Planning and Urban Development
- $332,000 for WSB Reimbursement
- $289,000 by the Recorder of Deeds

Officials in multiple RI cities exceeded the limits of their budgets, costing MILLIONS to taxpayers!
Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity

- $173,000 for JTPA/Planning Reimbursement
- $142,000 by the Bureau of Licenses
- $74,000 by Traffic Engineering
- $63,000 by the City Collector
- $60,000 by the Building Inspection Administration
- $51,000 by Parks Grounds Maintenance Services
- $44,000 for Snow Removal
- $38,000 by the Bureau of Licenses
- $37,000 by the Electrical Installations Division
- $34,000 by the Probate Court
- $31,000 by the Public Works Administration
- $25,000 by Vital Statistics
- $20,000 by the Board of Tax Assessment Review
- $20,000 for the Building Board of Review
- $20,000 for Seasonal Recreation
- $18,000 by the Communications Department
- $13,000 by Engineering and Sanitation
- $11,000 by the Commissioner of Public Safety
- $8,000 by the Plumbing, Drainage and Gas Piping Division
- $7,000 by the Board of Canvassers
- $6,000 by the City Clerk
- $3,000 by the Office of Parking Administration
- $2,000 by the City Assessor

Busting Bristol’s Budget

The Town of Bristol’s general fund expenditures exceeded its revenues by $5,111,802 in 2010, including the following:

- $164,180 by Civic Services
- $88,780 by the Fire Department
- $47,395 by the Rogers Free Library
- $31,105 for Recreation
- $26,020 by the Town Hall Complex
- $8,429 by the Harbor Patrol
- $8,100 for Boards and Commissions
- $6,937 by the Town Solicitor
- $4,070 by the Municipal Court
- $3,375 for Building Inspections
- $2,997 by the Finance Department

Woonsocket Waste

In 2010, Woonsocket overspent its revenues by $2,659,063, including excess budgeted appropriations in the following services:

- $516,554 for General Expenditures (Education Department)
- $417,286 by the Fire Division (Public Safety)
- $62,040 by the Planning Department (General Government)
- $42,403 by the City Clerk (General Government)
- $20,871 by the Office of the Director (Public Works)
- $16,746 by the Personnel Administration (General Government)
- $9,283 by the City Solicitor (General Government)

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Big Spending in the Smallest City

Central Falls, the state’s smallest city, busted its budget in a big way, spending $2,591,618 more than it budgeted in 2010, including:

- $720,413 for Code Enforcement
- $453,492 by the Fire Department
- $235,586 for Legal
- $127,589 for Highways
- $107,479 for Debt Service
- $81,493 for Contingency
- $70,612 for Major Purchases
- $47,817 by Finance
- $21,174 by the Mayor
- $16,206 for Retirements
- $13,054 for Recreation
- $2,040 for Personnel
- $1,667 for Planning
- $1,567 by the Tax Assessor
- $904 by the Municipal Court

Publicly Working Over the Taxpayers

The Washington County town of Richmond was home to one of the most budget-busting agencies of any city or town in the state last year. Richmond’s public works department was budgeted to spend $587,603 during FY 2010. When all expenses were tallied, the department devoured $853,258 – overspending the original departmental budget by $265,655, or 45.2 percent.

Cumberland’s Gap

Rhode Island’s northeasternmost town, Cumberland, finished 2010 in the black even though 17 of the town’s funds exceeded their budgeted appropriations:

- $224,247 by Public Works
- $224,222 for Town Debt Service
- $177,946 by the Finance Office
- $151,621 by the Rescue Service
- $93,918 by Public Works
- $84,060 for Capital Improvements
- $48,260 by Town Hall
- $41,633 for Revaluations
- $23,571 for Recreation
- $14,705 for Senior Services
- $14,061 for Telecommunications
- $13,451 for Information Technology
- $7,925 for Animal Control
- $4,633 for the Board of Canvassers
- $1,916 by Children and Learning
- $1,410 by the Probate Court
- $232 by the Municipal Court

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Second to None in Spending

Warwick, Rhode Island’s second largest city, was first-rate in terms of devouring dollars in FY 2011. Budget line items that ended in the red included:

- $176,893 for Services and Utilities (General Government)
- $172,418 for Benefits Overtime and Sick Leave (Fire Department)
- $61,387 for Police Benefits Overtime and Sick Leave (Police Department)
- $36,923 for Ambulance (Fire Department)
- $35,272 for Labor Specialists (Legal)
- $33,277 for Supplies and Fuel (Engineering)
- $31,034 for Education (Police Department)
- $24,956 for Education (Fire Department)
- $21,396 for Administration (Legal)
- $21,256 for Supplies and Utilities (Library)
- $15,196 for Electricity (Street Lighting)
- $12,880 for Maintenance of Police Cars (Police Department)
- $12,838 for Supplies and Services (Police Department)
- $12,383 for Consulting (Engineering)
- $11,757 for Salaries and Wages (Board of Canvassers)
- $11,712 for Repairs and Maintenance (Library)
- $11,102 for Salaries and Wages (Clerks and Records)
- $6,043 for Utilities (Fire Department)
- $5,303 for Fuel (Fire Department)
- $3,455 for Salaries and Wages (Town Administrator)
- $3,133 for Fleet Maintenance (Public Works)
- $1,735 for Supplies (Parks and Recreation)
- $1,713 for Fees and Supplies (Town Council)
- $1,077 for Travel/Training (Town Administrator)
- $1,454 for Fees, Supplies and Postage (Town Planner)
- $703 for Alarm and Radio (Fire Department)
- $46 for Office Expenses (Clerks and Records)
- $21 for Professional Services (Tax Assessor)

Tiverton Spends a Ton

Thirty-seven of Tiverton’s services to residents exceeded their 2010 budgets by a combined total of $43,473, including:

- $20,070 for Landfill Equipment Rent (Landfill Operations)
- $3,644 for Building Inspector Salary (Building and Zoning Inspector)
- $3,095 for Municipal (Pension Plans)
- $1,874 for Mandated State Education (Police General Expenses)
- $1,580 for Boat Operations (Harbor Master)
- $1,225 for Overtime Patrol (Police Department Salaries)
- $1,200 for Personnel Services (Board of Canvassers)
- $1,136 for Beach Expenses (Parks and Recreation)
- $1,000 for GIS Expenses (Planning Board)
- $997 for Custodial Personnel (Building Maintenance)
- $902 for Preventive Maintenance (Parks and Recreation)
- $799 for Gas and Oil (Police Operations)
- $714 for Field Rehabilitation (Parks and Recreation)
Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity

- $575 for Ft. Barton Park Maintenance
- $571 for Station/Building Maintenance (Fire Operating Expenses)
- $432 for Clerical (Tax Collector)
- $404 for Personnel Mowing Services (Parks and Recreation)
- $403 for Apparatus Maintenance (Fire Operating Expenses)
- $331 for Bailiff (Municipal Court)
- $309 for Supplies and Postage (Planning Board)

Misspending Municipalities

Other municipal departments, agencies and funds throughout Rhode Island that exceeded their budgets in 2010 include:

- $553,870 by the Newport Police Department
- $385,938 by the Smithfield Police Department
- $66,942 for Westerly Street Lighting
- $59,867 for Warren Public Safety
- $58,945 for the Cranston Law Department
- $51,708 for the Narragansett Highway (Public Works)
- $46,241 by the Smithfield Fire Department
- $42,569 by the Narragansett General Public Works
- $38,664 by the Narragansett Information Resource Center (General Government)
- $32,882 for Smithfield Street Lights
- $31,121 for Westerly Town Beach Operations
- $30,609 by the Smithfield Treasurer/Tax Collector’s Office
- $25,585 for Warren Waste Water Treatment
- $21,347 for Warren Debt Services
- $18,876 for Scituate Street Lights
- $14,329 for Warren Cost of Collections
- $13,341 by the Scituate Police Department
- $6,854 for Narragansett Administration (Parks and Recreation)
- $6,168 for Narragansett Financial & Records Administration (Financial Administration)
- $5,143 for Narragansett Engineering (Planning, Engineering and Inspection)
- $4,583 for Westerly Highway and Drainage
- $4,191 by the Cranston Parks and Recreation Department
- $1,943 by the Smithfield Tax Assessor’s Office

City Governments Gone Wild

When Rhode Island residents overdraft their checking accounts, they face insufficient funds fees, daily overdraft charges and requirements to quickly deposit money into their account to cover the insufficient funds. But when the elected leaders of Rhode Island’s cities and town overdraft municipal accounts by spending more than comes in, they don’t pay the price – taxpayers do. Policymakers in the following municipalities couldn’t operate within their means, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars more in general fund expenditures than generated revenues:

- $492,347 in Pawtucket
- $386,999 in New Shoreham
- $243,607 in Jamestown

Municipalities fail taxpayers when outlays are allowed to eclipse income. The resulting deficits mean higher taxes, draining rainy day funds or cutting city services.

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Dollar Bills for Slater Mill

One of the Ocean State’s most expensive charity cases is Pawtucket’s Old Slater Mill Association. The organization oversees Slater Mill, the first water-powered cotton spinning mill in America, and receives hundreds of thousands of dollars in handouts from local, state, and federal taxpayers.223

The City of Pawtucket annually raids thousands of dollars from local taxpayers to subsidize Slater Mill. In both 2010 and 2011, Pawtucket city officials spent $36,896 to bankroll the town’s tribute to a bygone era of textile manufacturing.224

However, spending on Slater Mill didn’t stop there. In 2011, the Old Slater Mill Association received $14,427 in state arts funding to support the mill’s on-site “fiber arts center.”225 That amount is in addition to $15,000 in state giveaways and $25,000 in federal stimulus money Slater Mill snagged in 2010.226

The Old Slater Mill Association’s reliance on federal taxpayers didn’t end with the $25,000 stimulus grant. Last year, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) managed to wrangle $194,800 in federal pork-barrel spending to complete a “historic restoration project” at Slater Mill.227

In just the last two years, taxpayers at every level of government have combined to subsidize Slater Mill with $323,019 – or $10.77 for each of the 30,000 visitors estimated to visit the mill each year.228

Pawtucket’s Questionable Contributions

Slater Mill is one of many nonprofits that Pawtucket is subsidizing with tax dollars in 2011.

In addition to the $36,896 of taxpayers’ money that Pawtucket officials are spending on Slater Mill in 2011, city leaders raided residents’ wallets to subsidize these organizations:

- $8,000 to the Boys & Girls Club
- $1,750 to the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
- $500 to the Samaritans
- $200 to the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District229

Charitable Giving Funded by Taking from Taxpayers

Pawtucket’s taxpayer-funded support of nonprofits looks like a pittance compared to the giveaways provided by North Kingstown. The city’s Department of Senior and Human Services pilfered $115,752 from taxpayers to hand out to nonprofits in 2011, including:

- $42,696 to the South Kingstown Senior Center
- $20,000 to the North Kingstown Arts Council
- $6,000 to the Washington County Regional Planning Council230

In 2011, the Providence County town of Smithfield will hand out $100,732 of taxpayers’ money to business and charitable organizations such as:

- $9,800 to the Historical Society of Smithfield
- $4,900 to the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council Project
- $1,500 to the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
- $980 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- $980 to the Georgiaville Pond Association

When tax dollars are snatched from residents in order to dole out grants to the nonprofits that local politicians and bureaucrats deem worthy, taxpayers have less money in their pockets to support the charitable organizations close to their hearts.

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Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity

- $980 to the Samaritans
- $500 to the North Central Chamber of Commerce
- $490 to the Narragansett Council Boys Scouts

West Warwick also got in on the act of forcing residents to fund charities by using $8,000 in local tax money to fund nonprofit corporations of the town leaders’ choice.

There’s No Such Things as a Free Lunch in North Providence

In North Providence, the school cafeteria system is supposed to pay for itself, thanks to kids buying meals and taxpayer-funded grants to offset the cost of students receiving meals through the free and reduced lunch program. Unfortunately for the town’s taxpayers, the cafeteria fund lost money over the past two years, taking a bite out of taxpayers’ wallets as a result.

The cafeteria system was $97,202 in the red in FY 2009. While the cafeterias netted $83,450 in 2010, taxpayers still had to make up for the $13,752 in loses over the two-year span.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT SPENDING

Rhode Island Has Government Waste Down to an Art

In 2011, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts devoured more than $2.6 million of taxpayers’ hard-earned money to support art programs throughout the Ocean State.

The Rhode Island General Assembly decided it would be prudent to spend $1,002,475 in state tax money to fund grants to arts programs, projects and individual artists administered by the State Council on the Arts, and another $665,871 in general operating support for the State Council on the Arts, for a total of $1,668,346.

Additionally, the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts raked in $950,990 in federal tax dollars this year, courtesy of the controversial National Endowment for the Arts.

That hefty sum comes after 2010, a banner year for the Council on the Arts, in which the bureaucracy consumed $2.8 million in total state and federal tax dollars.

Government funding of the arts is problematic on several levels. Bureaucrats and elected officials determine what art receives government funding, therefore determining what defines or constitutes art. This paves the way for government censorship of art.

Art – like other goods and services – should exist in a market environment. If art is of value to a society, it will be enjoyed by its patrons. It should not be left to the government to tax individuals to support art deemed worthy or acceptable by a state bureaucracy.

Eliminating government funding of the arts means that taxpayers would have more money to attend the ballet, buy a sculpture or go to a concert, allowing them to personally choose the art they wish to support, rather than having government make that choice for them.

Examples of organizations funded by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, courtesy of state and federal taxpayers, in 2011 include:

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• $108,804 to the Trinity Repertory Company (Providence)
• $88,207 to the Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra (East Providence)
• $84,206 to the Rhode Island School of Design (Providence)
• $33,490 to the Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre (Pawtucket)
• $25,000 to the Everett Dance Theatre (Providence)
• $20,804 to the Island Moving Company (Newport)
• $11,870 to the Providence Singers (East Providence)
• $11,177 to the Chorus of Westerly (Westerly)
• $9,700 to the Common Fence Music Company (Middletown)
• $8,902 to the South County Center for the Arts (West Kingston)
• $4,809 to the 2nd Story Theatre (Warren)
• $4,000 to the Latino Public Radio (Cranston)
• $4,000 to the Rhode Island Film Collaborative 48 Hour Film Project (Providence)
• $4,000 to the Stadium Theatre Performing Arts Centre (Woonsocket)
• $3,000 to the Portsmouth Arts Guild (Portsmouth)
• $2,000 to the Kingston Chamber Music Festival (Kingston)
• $1,000 to the Newport Review magazine (Barrington)
• $1,000 to the Rhode Island Bolivian-American Association Urkupiña Festival (North Providence)

Wasteful Spending is Not an Act

The Perishable Theater, a Providence playhouse, received $27,695 in general operating support from the State Council on the Arts. With that taxpayer-subsidized support, Perishable will put on a series of productions that will leave many taxpayers wishing they could line up at the box office for a refund, including:

• “Blood from a Turnip” – The Spring 2011 program of the self-declared “oldest late-night puppet salon” in Rhode Island features *Earmarc’d*, a piece whose puppets raise the question “Who’s which way is the what and where we are wandering when we watch?”

• *How To Be A Lesbian in 10 Days or Less* – According to Perishable’s website, the play features a motivational speaker named Butchy McDyke who “will transform you into the queer of your dreams,” and will teach you “to confidently shout, ‘I’m a big ‘ol dyke!’”

• *Jingle Bells & A Few Balls* – Perishable’s annual “Supernatural Holiday Extravaganza” is an adults-only holiday performance focused on the erotic, including scantily-clad cabaret performers, an X-rated mentalist and a “burlesque send-up of Tiny Tim’s untimely demise.”

Short Films with a Long Price Tag

• Lorelei Pepi, a filmmaker and professor at both the Rhode Island School of Design and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, was awarded a $1,000 prize by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts in 2011. The award forces Rhode Island’s taxpayers to finance a portion of Pepi’s future projects. If those future projects are anything like Pepi’s previous work, more than a few taxpayers will be offended by what their tax dollars funded.

• One example is her animated short “Happy and Gay,” a 1930’s-styled cartoon in which “butch animals dressing in drag” decide to try out a gay bar.
Painfully Pricey Panties

The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts awarded a $1,000 taxpayer-subsidized “Fellowship in Three-Dimensional Art” to Joanne Luongo. The textile artist received the grant based on the Council’s appreciation for her quilts, robes and vests made of used tea bags. Besides her artistry with tea bags, the founder of Pawtucket’s Paper Girls Studio and Art Gallery is also known for producing some particularly uncomfortable undergarments. Luongo’s roster of painful panties include women’s underwear crocheted out of plastic bags, pieced together out of muslin thread and woven out of harsh burlap.

Perhaps Luongo’s most outrageous underwear “art” is “Victoria’s Real Secret,” a piece consisting of a pink store-bought thong with scores of pink needles aimed to impale the genitals of the wearer. Luongo’s work doesn’t end with piercing private parts; she also created black pumps lined with several hundred silver head pins prepared to skewer any foot unlucky enough to step near them.

Please Pass the Popcorn – and Your Wallet

As it has in previous years, the annual Rhode Island International Film Festival is collecting a $4,000 handout from the Council on the Arts in 2011. If the 2011 edition of the Newport-based film festival is anything like the 2010 version, many Rhode Island taxpayers won’t appreciate that their money is helping bring a collection of highly questionable and controversial movies to the big screen.

Among the films screened at the 2010 Rhode Island International Film Festival were:

- **Disarm** – Two men who met online hoping for a quick hook-up watch some gay porn, recount their sexual conquests, then realize they have a connection.
- **F-Art** – A mockumentary in which two British artists engage in “Flatulence Art,” or “F-Art,” by transmitting the emotions that flatulence stirs in them to the canvas.
- **Flat Love** – A man who actually believes the world is flat takes his appreciation for the two-dimensional to the extreme when he falls in love with a woman in a painting at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
- **I XXXX** - A gay vampire has an awkward coming out when has to “let his Mom know that blood isn’t the only thing he likes XXXXX” at a Welcome Home party, which includes a XXXXX woman and young men in their underwear.
- **Tub** – The protagonist XXXXX in the shower and, as a result, impregnates his bathtub.
- **You Can’t Curry Love** – The story of a man whose love life changes when he goes on a business trip to New Delhi and meets an Indian cross dresser.
A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words…And a Thousand Dollars

Natalja Kent is receiving a $1,000 photography grant in 2011 courtesy of the Council on the Arts and the state’s taxpayers.

Upon awarding the handout to Kent, based on a series of photographs she submitted, the council described her images as “interesting because they are not about any particular place or time. They are representational, but completely outside of any recognizable context.” The council also described the photographs as “very fun,” “embryonic” and “rock and roll.”

The photographs the council-members were referring to were pictures of naked people jumping, while spitting mouthfuls of what appears to be milk into the air.

Available at the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts website, www.arts.ri.gov.

For Taxpayers, “A.S.” Stands for “Absurd Spending”

AS220, a community arts center in Downtown Providence, is collecting $44,510 in grants from the Council on the Arts in 2011. Taxpayers’ hard earned-money will help bankroll the facility’s printshop, performance stage, gallery space, darkroom, electronics lab, residential artists’ studios, taco restaurant and bar.

The mission of AS220, according to the center’s MySpace page, is to “provide all (Rhode Island) artists the chance to exhibit or perform without judgment or censorship. That means if you live in RI, you can have a show at AS220.”

AS220’s anything-goes atmosphere may be attractive to artists, but it’s far less appealing for many taxpayers footing the bill since their money funds a number of non-essential, questionable X-rated, and controversial projects at the facility, including:

- “XXXX,”* a 3-D collage showcasing plastic toy dinosaurs engaging in XXXX;
- A display featuring photographs of airbrushed XXXX, including “a guy painted with an array of cartoon XXXX;”
- A gallery exhibition featuring a human skull with human hair billowing from the skull’s nose and mouth holes;
- The creation of “Untitled (Adventure),” a piece in which an artist simply wrote the word “Adventure” with black magic market 34 times on a piece of 11” x 14” paperboard;
- All of a Doodah, a collection of poems containing works such as “The Big XXXX You,” “XXXX in Boots,” “Taint,” “God is Sick of America” and “Connie Chung.”

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• Changeable Witness / COZY, a video & poetry project “involving skeletons, a mannequin, a chainsaw and a live nude girl;”

• Concerts starring bands such as Cocktail Fetus Party, The Purple Nurps, Sky Jelly, Royal Jelly, The Rhythm & Blues XXXXers, Cosmic Sneeze, Suicide Knob and Viking Jesus. (* Use of XXXX denotes material too lewd to publish)

(Trespass for Cash)

Natalja Kent’s $1,000 grant for pictures of naked people jumping and spitting looks like a bargain compared to the Council on the Arts award of $5,000 to Providence-based photographer Victoria Crayhon.

Her work is guerrilla art consisting of placing her own lettering on roadside theater and motel marquee signs to spell out statements, then photographing her handiwork. On her website, Crayhon notes that if she cannot obtain permission to put up her statements on the marquees that she hopes to photograph, “I will most likely use (the marquee sign) anyway.”

What Crayhon calls art, state law would call vandalism. Instead of paying a fine, however, she received a $5,000 reward from taxpayers.

Victoria Crayhon
2011 Fellowship in Photography

Available at the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts website, www.arts.ri.gov.

Offensive Plays Are Not Just for Football Anymore

Lawrence Goodman, Providence playwright, is receiving $1,000 through the Council on the Arts in 2011 to finish his new play The Zionist Conspiracy. With its strong political and religious message and accusatory tone, the play is sure to offend many of the same taxpayers who helped to fund the work.

According to Goodman’s website, the play is a “faux espionage thriller set in the months after 9/11.” Characters include an evangelical preacher, an Israeli spy, and a “neoconservative and (an) American-Israeli lobbyist” who paint a “devastating portrait of Jewish complicity with the Bush administration in the run-up to the Iraqi war.”
Health Research Spending is Enough to Make Taxpayers Sick

Over the past two years, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) funded 938 research projects in Rhode Island. In total, these projects cost American taxpayers a total of $255.1 million in 2010 and 2011.

The mission of the NIH – to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce the burdens of illness and disability – is commendable. However, judging by the grants funded by the organization in recent years, the NIH is guilty of giving a number of very unusual and unwarranted projects some very big handouts at taxpayers’ expense.

Examples of some of the more unusual taxpayer-funded health projects in Rhode Island include:

- $3,027,473 from 2009 to 2010 to determine if there is a genetic link to the high obesity rates among Somoans (Brown University);
- $2,565,033 from 2007 to 2010 to develop a church-based weight loss program for African American women by adding eight hours on to an existing 12-hour weight loss video (Brown University);
- $2,460,653 between 2006 and 2010 to test the effectiveness of “culturally appropriate health education and instrumental social support and facilitation” to type 2 diabetes patients in American Samoa (Brown University);
- $2,135,808 from 2006 to 2010 to study whether providing a group of 80-year-olds with booklets, newsletters and coaching calls encouraging them to exercise and eat more fruits and vegetables will result in better health outcomes (University of Rhode Island);
- $2,089,696 from 2008 to 2010 to survey 1,000 6th, 7th and 8th graders about their alcohol consumption “milestones” over the course of three years (Brown University);
- $1,952,080 between 2009 and 2010 to study if sleeping more can help obese people lose weight (Miriam Hospital);
- $1,501,267 since 2007 to investigate the effects of prenatal meth use on child development in New Zealand and the United States (Women and Infants Hospital – Rhode Island);
- $1,208,744 from 2009 to 2010 to conclude whether receiving an anti-smoking DVD in the mail helps smokers with mobility impairments to stop smoking (Miriam Hospital);
- $1,158,550 between 2009 and 2010 to determine if removing the ovaries of prepubescent rabbits, then subjecting them to hormone-treatments, affects the likelihood of sudden cardiac death (Rhode Island Hospital);
- $925,428 from 2006 to 2010 to determine whether smokers who are forced to perform moderate-intensity, aerobic exercise are more likely to quit long-term (Butler Hospital);
- $883,084 from 2009 to 2010 to measure fruit and vegetable consumption when reduced priced fresh fruits and vegetables are delivered to the workplace, and determine if additional fruit and vegetable consumption makes employees more productive (Brown University);
- $467,474 from 2008 to 2010 to decrease risky sexual behavior in an attempt to prevent HIV in Uganda (Rhode Island Hospital)!
$726,806 since 2009 to determine whether weight loss and physical activity can alleviate erectile dysfunction in obese men (Miriam Hospital); 329

$467,474 from 2008 to 2010 to decrease risky sexual behavior in an attempt to prevent HIV in Uganda (Rhode Island Hospital); 330

$444,112 between 2009 and 2010 to evaluate methods to reduce symptoms of depression in Latina mothers of children with asthma (Rhode Island Hospital); 331

$310,293 between 2009 and 2010 to figure out how to recruit and retain young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 for weight loss treatment studies (Miriam Hospital); 332

$243,018 in 2010 to develop a booklet aimed at preventing or delaying “the initiation of alcohol use in adolescents,” to be given to patients in pediatric emergency rooms (Rhode Island Hospital); 333

$159,571 between 2009 and 2010 to study the correlation between parental interaction and weight loss in overweight teens (Miriam Hospital); 334

$124,941 between 2008 and 2010 to collect data about elder care services from long-term elderly care facilities in two cities, Tianjin and Nanjing, in China (Brown University); 335

$58,056 in 2010 to research the role of the protein Kinesin–3 in the water jet propulsion system found in squid (University of Rhode Island); 336

$53,788 in 2010 to examine children’s comprehension of the difference between nouns and verbs – at 14, 16 and 18 months (University of Rhode Island); 337

$53,419 in 2010 to give cash rewards to young people in Mexico who remain free of sexually transmitted diseases (Brown University); 338

$15,000 for the 2010 Biology of Host-Parasite Interactions Conference at Salve Regina University in Newport (Gordon Research Conferences). 339

Money for Moody Mothers

Out of the 938 federal health studies in Rhode Island funded by taxpayers over the past two years, perhaps none is more unnecessary than a study underway this year at Rhode Island Hospital. The hospital received $179,704 to determine whether postpartum depression and other postpartum mood disorders are related to changes in sleep habits of new mothers.

It is hard to imagine that almost $180,000 of taxpayers’ money is necessary to confirm that the lack of sleep associated with tending to a newborn baby makes mothers depressed and moody. Any Rhode Island parent of a newborn could confirm that hypothesis without spending a dime of taxpayer money. 340

Spendthrift Stimulus Spending

Over the past three years, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – known to most as the stimulus – has scattered $862 billion of taxpayers’ money throughout America’s state houses, school houses, businesses, nonprofits and  

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countless other organizations fortunate enough to have the political clout or dumb luck to be on the receiving end of an unprecedented redistribution of taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars. For those less fortunate, namely most American taxpayers, the stimulus has become a litany of pricey and preposterous handouts to support lawmakers’ pet projects and the industries represented with the most successful lobbyists.

Of the $862 billion devoured by the stimulus, $2,049,717,826, found its way to Rhode Island, funding 192 projects.

Total federal stimulus spending in Rhode Island includes taxpayer-funded giveaways to the following agencies:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th># of Awards</th>
<th>Award Amount</th>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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All of that money coming into Rhode Island may seem positive, but every tax dollar the government took to fund stimulus activities is a dollar that the government thought it could spend better than taxpayers. Judging by some of the ridiculous projects, programs and handouts funded by the stimulus, the government was very, very wrong.

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
Stimulus Shenanigans

The stimulus’ $2 billion price tag alone doesn’t tell the whole story of how tax dollars were spent – and wasted – in Rhode Island. In order to see the pork projects and frivolous spending hidden in the state’s stimulus spending, it is necessary to take a closer look.

Some of the more dubious taxpayer-funded stimulus projects in Rhode Island include:

- $30 million to install modern cyberinfrastructure (massive data storage, computational capacity, research data center space, expert staff assistance) at Brown University;\(^{344}\)
- $20 million to renovate state lawmakers’ offices;\(^{345}\)
- $8.2 million for the expansion of the Shellfish Research Center at Roger Williams University;\(^{346}\)
- $3 million to install sidewalks, plant vegetation and mount lights in Charlestown’s Cross Mills village;\(^{347}\)
- $2.3 million to spiff up Newport’s downtown streetscapes;\(^{348}\)
- $700,000 to plant 1,600 trees along the curbs and sidewalks of neighborhoods in Providence;\(^{349}\)
- $640,000 to construct seven buildings, such as gazebos, changing rooms and pavilions, on government-owned lands, including Goddard State Park, Colt State Park and the George Washington Management Area;\(^{350}\)
- $446,247 to fund a six-week winter cruise to the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort Seas so that University of Rhode Island researchers can study the Arctic’s marine system;\(^{351}\)
- $350,000 to renovate dark rooms and digital classrooms at the Rhode Island School of Design;\(^{352}\)
- $300,000 to repaint the lines in parking lots at the Capitol Hill Complex, including the Chapin Health Lab and the State House parking areas;\(^{353}\)
- $250,000 to provide digital television to the state’s inmate population;\(^{354}\)
- $105,000 to replace a communications tower in Central Falls;\(^{355}\)
- $50,000 to take aerial photographs of Charlestown;\(^{356}\)
- $45,000 to repair a sheep barn at Charlestown’s South Farm Preserve;\(^{357}\)
- $42,994 to the University of Rhode Island to fund the excavation of textile remains from a farm in western Iceland;\(^{358}\)
- $29,646 to replace stage curtains at two Warwick secondary schools; and\(^{359}\)
- $27,000 to install acoustic ceiling tiles in the cafeteria of a Middletown school.\(^{360}\)
Rhode Island’s Reckless Road Repairs

Across the United States, some of the most controversial stimulus projects were pricey transportations projects, such as a $3.4 million underground wildlife road crossing for turtles in Florida and an $840,000 bridge repair that primarily serves a country club and a saloon in rural Wisconsin.³⁶¹

Rhode Island has its own fair share of eyebrow-raising, head-scratching transportation projects.

Some of Rhode Island’s more dubious taxpayer-funded transportation projects include:

- $20 million to renovate the Providence Amtrak train station;³⁶²
- $7 million to reconfigure Providence’s old Washington Bridge for cyclists and pedestrians;³⁶³
- $4.4 million to replace road signs along a five mile stretch of Route 10 between Park Ave./Route 12 in Cranston to I-95 in Providence;³⁶⁴
- $3.4 million to replace highway signage on I-95 at Exits 6, 7, 8, 12B, 16, 17, 18 and 29; and on Route 146 at Route 146A in North Smithfield;³⁶⁵
- $3.3 million to replace signs along 3.2 miles of Route 37 between Warwick and Cranston;³⁶⁶
- $750,000 to improve the walkway between Slater Mill and the Visitor Center in Pawtucket;³⁶⁷
- $500,000 to construct a walkway and pedestrian bridge that connects the Moffett Mill site to the Chase Farm property in Lincoln;³⁶⁸
- $300,000 to dismantle, move and reassemble “a historic train signal tower at Kingston Station in the village of West Kingston;³⁶⁹
- $160,000 to replace sidewalks in Lincoln; and³⁷⁰
- $90,000 for a 28-bike capacity bicyclist commuter shelter to expand bus park-and-ride capacity of East Bay Bike Connector Lot in Barrington.³⁷¹

In total, Rhode Island swiped $142.3 million in stimulus handouts to fund 73 transportation-related projects, so it should come as no shock that the Ocean State is paved with one questionable transportation project after another.³⁷² Yet Rhode Island highways still rank last in the nation and the bridges rank as the worst as well.³⁷³

Frittering Funds for Fun

Swimming pools, tennis courts, playgrounds and skate parks may be fun, but they’re certainly not practical for the federal government to build, especially when the government is $14.3 trillion in debt.³⁷⁴ That didn’t prevent Congress from showering millions of Rhode Island cities, towns and schools with stimulus dollars to build and renovate local recreational amenities. Some of the more striking examples of federal dollars funding fun and games in the Ocean State include:

- $12 million to update the recreation center at Rhode Island College, and an additional $397,344 to renovate the school’s swimming pool;³⁷⁵
- $5 million to relocate six ball fields and two soccer fields in Warwick;³⁷⁶
- $4.5 million to construct a new beach pavilion at Sachuest Town Beach – known more commonly to locals as “Second Beach” – in Middletown;³⁷³
- $4.5 million to perform upgrades and renovations at Woonsocket’s Cass Park;³⁷⁸

Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
• $4 million to construct two beach pavilions and perform parking lot renovations at Charlestown beaches;  

• $3 million to expand stadium locker rooms and make other repairs to Bryant University’s athletic facilities;  

• $2 million to build a new band shell at Independence Park in Bristol;  

• $1.8 million to add tennis courts, a parking lot, landscaping and lighting to the Tucker Athletic Complex in Cumberland;  

• $1.2 million to renovate an existing boat ramp and parking area at the Mt. Hope fishing area in Bristol;  

• $1.2 million to build a new gym in Burrillville, including basketball and volleyball courts, and a fitness room;  

• $750,000 to build a bike path connection from existing Broad Rock Playfields to Village at South County Commons in South Kingstown;  

• $500,000 to build a skateboard park and refurbish basketball and tennis courts at Pawtucket’s Jenks Jr. High School;  

• $475,000 to rebuild the soccer facilities at Tasca Field in Scituate;  

• $420,000 to improve Bristol’s beach parking areas;  

• $200,000 to construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities in downtown Barrington;  

• $200,000 to refurbish a neighborhood park in Bristol;  

• $200,000 to build two tennis courts and two basketball courts at the Burrillville Middle School;  

• $150,000 to replace bleachers at the Cranston High School West gymnasium;  

• $150,000 to renovate tennis courts at Lincoln High School;  

• $126,700 to repair the boardwalk and transient boat slips in Bristol’s Rockwell Park Waterfront;  

• $90,000 to replace fencing at Warren Town Beach with a new iron fence;  

• $60,000 to build a bike shelter, showers and map kiosks at a Park and Ride and along the East Bay Bike Path in Warren;  

• $20,000 to repair existing, and purchase addition, playground equipment in Foster.  

A High Price for Ice

The Town of Smithfield’s ice rink received an overpriced overhaul courtesy of the American taxpayer. In total, the Smithfield Municipal Ice Rink snatched up $4,565,000 in stimulus funds to revamp and add on to the hockey and ice skating facility, as follows:  

• $3.5 million to construct an additional ice rink at the complex;  

• $500,000 to build a new lobby and conference room;  

• $250,000 to build a new locker room;  

• $175,000 for roof replacement; and  

• $140,000 to replace the hockey boards.
Pawtucket Politicians’ Pricey Broken Promises

In 2008, the City of Pawtucket and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley Historic Heritage Corridor Commission co-sponsored a competition to select a design for a public art project to sit in front of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. The winning design was “Canter and Shed,” a sculpture featuring “a pair of painted metal structures designed to recall smokestacks, buttresses, and rooftop landscapes, inspired by the buildings of Pawtucket.”

At the time, Pawtucket officials promised taxpayers that the $50,000 needed to erect and install the sculpture would be covered by private donors. In truth, city leaders failed raise the money, and taxpayers were forced to pay the entire cost of the sculpture when Pawtucket received a $50,000 stimulus grant to bankroll the project.

The Refrigerator Rebate Racket

One of Rhode Island’s better-known, and more absurd, stimulus schemes is the Rhode Island Energy Efficient Appliance Rebate Program. The program forces taxpayers (many of whom can’t afford to purchase fancy new energy efficient appliances themselves) to help buy Visa gift cards as rewards for those who can, and do, purchase boilers, dishwashers, freezers, refrigerators, furnaces or water heaters.

In total, taxpayers financed $882,000 worth of rebates on certain qualified Energy Star appliances in Rhode Island. The rebate amounts vary from $100-$500, depending on the size and type of the appliance. For example, rebate amounts included $150 for dishwashers, $300 for tank-less water heaters and $500 for gas and oil boilers.

Bristol’s Boondoggle

The Town of Bristol raked in a $10 million stimulus giveaway courtesy of U.S. taxpayers to revitalize the floundering Bristol Industrial Park. According to the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, the industrial park employs only 81 people. If the stimulus investment saves all 81 jobs, it comes at a cost to taxpayers of $123,457 per job.

Bankrolling a Bus Wash

In 2011, state officials devoted $600,000 in federal stimulus funds to build a new bus wash in Newport. Despite being barely a decade old, the existing bus wash was unable to “efficiently service” Newport’s fancy fleet of trolleys.
CONCLUSION

As the hundreds of examples and more than $600 million in wasted tax dollars exposed in the 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book illustrate, the state of Rhode Island has a spending addiction, as do our lawmakers in Washington, DC. For their part, state and local leaders have a unique opportunity to get serious about bridling government spending and prove to taxpayers that elected officials in Rhode Island view them as more than just ATMs ready to be tapped for the next pork project or pricey scheme.

Two simple steps can prevent government’s runaway spending and reduce Rhode Island’s growing debt and increasing tax burden: Eliminating the waste outlined in this publication and enacting state and local versions of the Grace Commission.

First, as the Piglet Book points out, wasteful spending and questionable programs are rampant in Rhode Island. Simply shuttering ineffective programs and cutting the wasteful projects exposed in this publication would save federal, state and local taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars with little or no noticeable impact on the quality of services received by Rhode Island residents.

Next, state and local lawmakers should establish their own versions of the Grace Commission to analyze every nook and cranny of the state budget and local spending. These groups would function as independent commissions led by business leaders, former policymakers and nonprofit organizations such as the Ocean State Policy Research Institute to uncover waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. After identifying opportunities to stop wasteful expenditures, the commissions would then follow up to ensure their recommendations for budget reductions were carried out.

Rhode Island’s state and local policymakers face important decisions over the coming weeks and months as they respond to budget deficits, revenue shortfalls and economic instability. It will be a choice between the business-as-usual, tax-and-spend bureaucracy and a prudent, responsible government.

By increasing taxes, boosting fees, and playing risky shell games with unfunded liabilities, bonds, and reserve funds, state and local government officials in the Ocean State would only continue the reckless spending that led to the millions of wasted tax dollars highlighted in this publication.

However, by trimming the fat uncovered by the 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book and installing measures to examine how every tax dollar is spent, government leaders can lead Rhode Island in a new direction.

By addressing the problem of wasteful spending, Rhode Island’s policymakers can demonstrate respect for taxpayers’ hard-earned money and usher in a new era of limited, accountable government and unmatched economic prosperity in the Ocean State.
null
Increased Government Spending = Decreased Prosperity
The 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book

BE A VIGILANT CITIZEN!

REPORT WASTEFUL SPENDING OF YOUR TAX-DOLLARS

If you are aware of wasteful spending in your city, town, school district, or the State of Rhode Island, please send an email to OSPRI at info@oceanstatepolicy.org, with the following information:

- Public budget involved (municipality, district, or state)
- Description and amount of spending and why you think it is wasteful
- Website link to provide documentation of the source of the spending (auditor’s report, online budget, credible media story, or other source)
- Your name and town if you would like to receive credit

OSPRI will attempt to validate all submissions and will post appropriate entries in a supplemental online publication in future months.

*******

If you would like to purchase hard-copies of the 2011 Rhode Island Piglet Book, please send an email to OSPRI at info@oceanstatepolicy.org with your request; please include your mailing address. Multiple copies may be requested. OSPRI will respond with instructions and payment options. With a minimum contribution of $25, OSPRI will mail you one copy at no additional cost, additional copies at $7.50 per copy. Please allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. All contributions to OSPRI are tax-deductible.
OSPRI is Rhode Island's leading research and outreach institution for advancing personal and economic liberty via free-market solutions to our state's critical public policy issues. In addition to providing timely research and analysis to the media, OSPRI, a 501C3 non-profit and non-partisan organization, seeks to change the debate in RI by educating citizen groups, public officials, the business community, young voters, and the general public about the benefits of freedom, as well as by organizing a coalition of like-minded community advocacy groups.

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PO Box 2401
Providence, Rhode Island 02906
401.228.6691
info@oceanstatepolicy.org
www.oceanstatepolicy.org