
Contributors: Drew Johnson, Stephen Jones, Adam King, Trent Seibert, George Shifflett and Emily Thompson

Cover Art: Erin Fenley
Layout: Richard Lorenc

The Book Nashville Doesn’t Want You To Read
About the Contributors


To report waste, fraud or abuse of tax dollars, or to submit an item for consideration for next year’s Tennessee Pork Report, please contact the Tennessee Center for Policy Research at: info@tennesseepolicy.org. Rewards are available and anonymity is guaranteed.
Table of Contents

Introduction

1 Tennessee State Legislature
   Well, Boll Me Over ........................................... 3
   Biofuels Boondoggle ........................................ 3
   Time and Money Lawmakers Spend Not Making Laws  ...... 4
   Bringing Home the Bacon .................................... 4
   Please, Mister Postman – Make Them Stop Wasting My Money ........................................ 5
   Per Diem Must Be Latin for “Poor Taxpayer” .......... 6

2 The Bredesen Administration
   The Governor’s Mansion: A House of Horrors for Taxpayers ................................. 7
   Cronies Cash In ................................................ 8
   Andrew Jackson Must Be Rolling Over in His Grave ..................................................... 8

3 Sports & Recreation
   Government-Owned Golf Courses Always Find the Hole ............................................. 9
   Municipal Greens Wind Up in the Red ............................................................. 9
   Taxpayers Are On the Hook ........................................................................ 10
   Be Vewwwy, Vewwwy Quiet. I’m Hunting Taxpayers .............................................. 10

4 Transportation
   The Barge to Nowhere ................................................................................ 11
   Taking Taxpayers for a Ride, One Passenger at a Time ............................................. 11
   Booze It and Lose It (Your Tax Dollars, That Is) ...................................................... 12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Signs of Government Waste are Everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Arts &amp; Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Government Waste is Not an Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Greek Tragedy is a Taxpayer Tragedy, Too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Please Pass the Popcorn — and Your Wallet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>State Wel”Fair” Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tennessee State Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Still Paying for It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>That Chairlift Looks Great in Beige</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bureaucrats, Hard At Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>City and County Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>A Modern Day Bonnie and Clyde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Whoever Said “Size Doesn’t Matter” Never Worked in Bradley County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Clerk Was a Con</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Case of the Missing Green Machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Security Firm Provides Invoices, but No Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>CheckMate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Everything’s Later in Decatur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Money for Nothin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Taxpayers are Getting a Workout in Bradley County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>I’ll Pick Door Number One… If it Opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

What would you do with $110? Pay this month’s electric bill? Purchase groceries for a week? Buy new shoes for your children?

Unfortunately, you won’t ever get the chance to decide because government already spent that amount for you in some highly questionable ways.

State and local governments in Tennessee took more than $260 million from Tennessee taxpayers in 2007 – $110 from every household in the state – to pay for the waste, fraud and abuse of public money unearthed by the 2008 Tennessee Pork Report.

Included in the startling amount of questionable expenditures by public officials in Tennessee are:

• $6.5 million for boll weevil eradication—even though the pests no longer threaten Tennessee’s cotton crops
• $1.4 million to subsidize failing state golf courses for vacationing golfers
• $1.2 million to fund a ferry service used by an average of 23 people per day
• $420,000 for electric motors that were never delivered to Memphis schools
• $27,620 to support a film festival that screened “Goodnight Vagina” and “The Teat Beat of Sex”
• $14,436 to replace dimmer switches in the Governor’s Mansion with fancier brass models

The Tennessee Center for Policy Research and Citizens Against Government Waste have once again joined to expose these, and many more, examples of misuse of tax dollars in the Tennessee Pork Report. The Pork Report is the Volunteer State’s only comprehensive examination of the waste of taxpayer dollars committed by politicians and bureaucrats at all levels of government in Tennessee.

The concept of exposing government waste originated in 1982, when President Ronald Reagan established a panel of business executives and private sector volunteers to undertake a comprehensive review of the federal government. The report of the President’s Private Sector Survey on Cost Control – better known as the Grace Commission – made 2,478 recommendations that saved taxpayers $424.4 billion during a three-year period by eliminating waste, mismanagement and inefficiency in Washington, D.C.

Following the report’s publication in 1984, commission chairman J. Peter Grace joined with syndicated columnist and Pulitzer Prize-winner Jack Anderson to form Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) to promote implementation of the recommendations at every level of government.

Since then, CAGW has been the leader in exposing
pork-barrel spending by the United States Congress. CAGW’s popular *Congressional Pig Book* – an annual exposé of pork-barrel spending in federal appropriations bills – is responsible for millions of dollars in savings to U.S. taxpayers. CAGW is also committed to outing waste by the federal government through its annual *Prime Cuts* publication, a comprehensive look at the depth and breadth of waste throughout the federal government.

The Tennessee Center for Policy Research (TCPR) has combined the premise behind the *Pig Book* and *Prime Cuts* by exposing pork spending projects by members of the Tennessee General Assembly and revealing waste, fraud and abuse of tax dollars at the state and local level to create, with the support of CAGW, the third annual *Tennessee Pork Report*.

Since its founding in 2004 by Drew Johnson, TCPR has been Tennessee’s leading voice for fiscal responsibility, government transparency and reducing the size and scope of government. As the state’s free market think tank and premier government watchdog organization, TCPR tirelessly advances policies to ensure limited, responsible government, while defending the Founding Fathers’ vision of a free society. Tennesseans have been rewarded by those efforts through lower taxes, cuts in state and local spending and a more open, transparent government.

This third annual version of the *Tennessee Pork Report* features a record amount of waste, fraud and abuse of taxpayers’ hard-earned dollars by elected leaders and government officials in Tennessee. From a $70 million pork project benefitting the district of the chairman of the Senate’s powerful Finance, Ways and Means committee, to $5,000 stolen by a Bradley County bureaucrat who used a city-issued taxpayer-funded credit card to purchase personal items such as workout videos and a vacuum cleaner, government waste comes in many different forms and fashions.

While this publication is noted for exposing pork-barrel spending by state lawmakers, we are vigilant to reveal fraud and corruption by bureaucrats and government officials, as well. Never in the history of Tennessee have lawmakers crammed the state budget with so many wasteful pork projects that they use to buy votes and pay off campaign contributors as they did during the past year. At the same time, careless—and often corrupt—state and local bureaucrats and government officials have wasted your tax dollars in unimaginably dubious and despicable ways.

By holding the Governor and members of the Tennessee General Assembly accountable for their pork projects and wasteful spending, TCPR and CAGW hope that state lawmakers will put an end to the inexcusable squandering of taxpayers’ money that is now common in the Capitol. Likewise, by shaming bureaucrats and government officials who take advantage of their positions as public servants by pillaging public funds, TCPR and CAGW desire to reduce waste, fraud and abuse of tax dollars on the local level as well.

No matter the cost or the culprit of government waste, it all comes from the same place: your pocket.
Well, Boll Me Over

Tennessee is nearly free of the cotton scourge known as the boll weevil. But you wouldn't know it from reading the state budget. The Certified Cotton Growers’ Organization Fund – which pays into the boll weevil eradication program – is definitely in high cotton, thanks to taxpayers. The fund received $6.5 million in the 2007 budget. That’s up from last year when the state harvested nearly $4 million from taxpayers for the program.

Here’s the cotton’ pickin’ problem: According to one state officials’s estimate, there are only 8,943 boll weevils remaining in Tennessee. This means the state is spending $731 for every quarter-inch boll weevil beetle in the state.

With virtually no boll weevils to be found, why is more money needed?

Well, it is interesting that the boll weevil prevention fund, administered by the Department of Agriculture, is widely considered a favorite pork-barrel spending project of state Sen. John Wilder (D-Mason). Wilder was the state’s lieutenant governor for three dozen years, until 2007.

A cotton planter and ginner, Wilder is a past president of the Tennessee Cotton Ginner Association. His family owns the Longtown Supply & Gin Company. One of Tennessee’s boll weevil eradication program offices is located near Wilder’s home. After more than 40 years in the state senate, and after being ousted from the leadership role of lieutenant governor, Wilder is retiring from office.

Taxpayers can only hope the boll weevil eradication program finally retires, as well.

Biofuels Boondoggle

On the insistence of Sen. Randy McNally (R-Oak Ridge) taxpayers are funding a program that bribes farmers to stop growing profitable crops and plant switchgrass – a type of prairiegrass – instead.

Over the next five years, $70 million of taxpayers’ money will go to a biofuels initiative that subsidizes switchgrass farming and funds a demonstration switchgrass biorefinery to be built in the East Tennessee hamlet of Vonore.

Seventy million dollars is certainly a serious chunk of change, but the cost to both consumers and the environment may be even greater than that. In Tennessee, ethanol is generally more expensive per gallon than gasoline. Further, ethanol contains less energy than gasoline, causing fuel economy to suffer. The gas mileage of most automobiles is 20-30 percent less when using ethanol instead of gas, making ethanol prohibitively more expensive for consumers.

Worst of all, switchgrass ethanol is actually harmful...
Switchgrass ethanol is actually harmful to the environment. Biofuels made from switchgrass, if grown on land originally intended for corn (which is generally the case under the state’s initiative), increases carbon emissions by 50 percent, according to a Princeton University study.

Since switchgrass is more expensive, less efficient and bad for the environment, there must be another reason the state government spends so much money on a scheme to produce switchgrass ethanol? The reason, simply, is pork. Vonore, where the demonstration biorefinery is going to be built, is in McNally’s district.

Switchgrass gained its name because its thick stems were swiftly applied to the backsides of misbehaving Midwestern farm children. Switchgrass will certainly live up to its name when taxpayers begin to feel the sting from McNally’s boondoggle.

**Time and Money Lawmakers Spend Not Making Laws**

Tennessee legislators sponsor thousands of resolutions each year. Bringing these items to the House and Senate floor might normally benefit Tennesseans, since resolutions have no force of law and grind the legislature to a halt. That helps prevent lawmakers from spending money and trampling liberty. The problem is that the staff time drafting these resolutions costs taxpayers money. Last year, the price tag to compose resolutions topped $70,000.

There were 6,000 items filed by members of the General Assembly last year. Of those 6,000 items, about 2,200 – or 42 percent – were resolutions. These resolutions usually honor individuals or organizations for a job well done or urge the federal government to do something.

And some of these resolutions are just off the wall. One resolution lauded pop star and Shelby County native Justin Timberlake (as if the fame, wealth and women weren’t enough). Another resolution expressed solidarity with a Turkish religious movement. Yet another “provides that the facilities currently used as men’s restroom on second floor of the Tennessee State Capitol shall instead serve as women’s restroom and the facilities currently used as women’s restroom shall instead serve as men’s restroom.”

The resolution surge continues this year. Legislators are spending time and money considering measures to:

- Urge Congress to create a United States Department of Peace
- Urge the governor to create a committee to study creation of a Tennessee Outdoor Recreation Authority
- Urge county clerks to provide space for display of U.S. Department of Transportation-produced pamphlets on the dangers of 15 passenger vans; and
- Urge Congress to study the economic impact of credit card interchange fees.

The next resolution Tennessee’s lawmakers should make is one to spend their time, and taxpayers’ money, more effectively.

**Bringing Home the Bacon**

There’s nothing legislators love more than bringing the pork back home to their district.

In 2007, lawmakers gave themselves $10 million worth of pork-barrel projects to boast about. If that isn’t bad enough, some legislators tried to bring back projects that hit very close to home. Some House
members tried to dole out cash to organizations that benefitted themselves directly in both their personal and their political capacities. For example:

- Rep. Janis Sontany (D-Nashville), asked for $25,000 for a Boys and Girls Club in her district. Sontany is a board member. She put in for $25,000 to Camp Widjiwagan. Sontany is a board member. She earmarked $2,000 to Progress Inc. Sontany is a board member. She attempted to shower various neighborhood associations with $1,000 grants. Sontany is a member of all of them. She also pushed to send $10,000 to Judge Seth Norman’s Davidson County Drug Court. The Judge contributed to Sontany’s campaign in 2006.

- Rep. Mary Pruitt, D-Nashville, requested $55,000 for the South Central Neighborhood Development Corp. Pruitt is a founder and an ex-officio board member of the group.

- Rep. Barbara Cooper (D-Memphis) earmarked $55,000 for a feasibility study for the Friends of T.O. Fuller Park and $6,000 for the Meeman Shelby Horse Trails Program. Cooper is a key member of both groups, according to her own campaign materials.

- Rep. Bill Dunn (R-Knoxville), designated $50,000 for a nonprofit called The Great Schools Partnership. One of the trustees and founding members of that group is Knoxville Mayor Bill Haslam, who gave $5,000 to Dunn’s political action committee in 2006.

- Rep. Joe Pitts (D-Clarksville) dedicated $10,000 to the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Clarksville. The group’s vice-president gave Pitts a $1,000 campaign contribution in 2006.

- Rep. Eric Swafford (R-Pikeville) asked for $10,000 for the United Fund of Cumberland County. An honorary board member and a sitting board member of the United Fund were both 2006 Swafford campaign contributors.

- Rep. Joe Towns (D-Memphis) earmarked $10,000 for his own college fraternity.

If there is a silver lining to all of this, the state Senate successfully pushed for a change to the rules determining how pork is doled out. Instead of the lawmakers bestowing the pork to their grateful constituents, nonprofit groups — such as community centers, youth clubs and volunteer fire companies — had to apply for the money. It’s supposed to stop the biggest conflicts, such as those listed here, from taking place.

The Meeman Shelby Horse Trails Program, among other projects, still received a taxpayer-funded grant. And, unfortunately, the new way of doling out the money didn’t stop one dime of spending. The state taxpayers are still on the hook for millions of dollars in local projects that they will never see or know about. Perhaps the new rules haven’t fixed the problem, after all.

Please, Mister Postman – Make Them Stop Wasting My Money

Fourteen legislators facing reelection spent more than $100,000 in taxpayer cash to send their constituents mail in the run-up to Tennessee’s primary and general election in 2006.

The money comes from a pool of cash that is supposed to be used for legislators office-related
expenses, such as printing, postage and state flags for schools. That didn't stop more than a dozen lawmakers from using taxpayer cash to campaign for reelection.

One legislator who turned his mailing privilege into an unfair campaign advantage was Rep. Joe Towns, Jr. (D-Memphis). He spent $2,251 on nearly 5,000 newsletters that appeared to tout his effort for reelection rather than his accomplishments. “While others are talking… Rep. Joe Towns, Jr. is busy working for you!” the newsletter proclaimed. The newsletter was sent out just four days before the Aug. 3, 2006 primary, in which Towns had an opponent.

Other lawmakers who sent out taxpayer-funded mailers just days before elections include Sen. Dewayne Bunch (R-Cleveland), Sen. Charlotte Burks (D-Monterey) and Rep. Dennis Roach (R-Rutledge).

Per Diem Must Be Latin for “Poor Taxpayer”

Per diem allowances are the daily allowance meant to be used by legislators for room and board. Unfortunately, lawmakers have come to view the per diem of up to $161 per day as an additional salary, rather than a modest allowance for work-related expenses. In fact, a recent report revealed that in 2007, 22 legislators received more in per diem allowance than their base salary of $18,123.

The worst offender is House Speaker Pro Tempore Lois DeBerry (D-Memphis), who received $31,967 in per diem payments last year. She collected most of that during 14 out-of-state trips, including $1,288 she collected during a trip to China.

On that same trip to China, Lt. Governor Ron Ramsey (R-Blountville), billed the state for 12 days of per diem, totaling $1,932. House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh (D-Covington), billed the state for 11 days for $1,771.

The top per diem recipients after DeBerry and Naifeh are:

- Sen. Doug Jackson (D-Dickson), $28,572
- Rep. Joe Towns (D-Memphis), $26,642
- Rep. John DeBerry (D-Memphis), $24,068
- Sen. Mark Norris (R-Collierville), $23,331

Other lawmakers collect per diem even though they live within 50 miles of the Capitol. Rep. Sherry Jones (D-Nashville), lives only seven miles away, yet Jones had the audacity to claim $22,216 in per diem allowance last year. The home of Rep. Brenda Gilmore (D-Nashville), sits just five miles from her office in Legislative Plaza, yet in 2007, she squeezed $22,860 worth of per diem allowance from taxpayers.

“I work myself to death up here, and I'm not ashamed at all of my per diem,” Jones told a reporter. Well, Rep. Jones, the taxpayers who pay that per diem would conclude that accepting money for hotel stays while sleeping at home is shameless, indeed.

In fact, a recent report shows that some state legislators pocket more from their daily expense allowance than they make in salary — taking in up to $161 per day, just for expenses.
The Bredesen Administration

The Governor’s Mansion: A House of Horrors for Taxpayers

We hate to say it, but we told you so.

The renovations at the Tennessee Governor’s Mansion have gone over budget because of extravagant embellishments and poor planning.

Initially, renovating the mansion and bringing the house into compliance with provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act was supposed to cost less than $10 million. Most of that cost was expected to be covered by private donations. Now, the price tag has ballooned to $19.2 million – over 20 times the $900,100 appraised value of the house. And, instead of private donations, taxpayers are now covering most of the bill.

What beefed up the already pricey renovation project? A wet bar, fancy accent lighting and a major kitchen overhaul were added to the project’s bottom line after construction was well underway.

Some of the many opulent additions to the mansion’s restoration plan include:

- Renovating the kitchen – $321,393
- Adding accent lighting – $53,850
- Replacing dimmer switches with brass cover plates – $14,436
- Installing a wet bar – $10,930
- Refinishing sink legs – $7,511

It appears that Governor Phil Bredesen and First Lady Andrea Conte quietly slipped in lavish and costly embellishments to the Mansion renovation project without taxpayers’ knowledge or approval.

Even worse for taxpayers, Bredesen and Conte have more spending in store for the project. Construction recently began on a new phase of the mansion, an underground entertainment facility known in political circles as the “party bunker,” that will likely produce dozens more change orders and millions of additional dollars in expense to taxpayers.

The 2006 Pork Report sounded the alarm about costs associated with renovating the Tennessee Governor’s Mansion:

“It would literally be cheaper for taxpayers to raze the Mansion and build an entirely new executive residence – or sell it off and let future governors live on their $85,000 salary.”

We also warned in the Pork Report that the initial
mansion renovation costs were “just the beginning.” We were right. Now, we fear it’s not the beginning of the end of mansion-related expenses to taxpayers – it’s merely the end of the beginning.

Cronies Cash In

Even though Gov. Bredesen said there wasn’t enough money for more than a three-percent raise for state workers, he made sure funds were available for his cabinet-level staff to cash in big time.

The pay hikes for Bredesen’s political appointees averaged a whopping 23 percent. Despite the governor saying that state government must live within its means like a family or business, he appears to toss that philosophy out the window when it comes paying his cabinet appointees.

In fact, not only did the new paychecks for the appointees outstrip their counterparts in other states, it also turns out the raises aren’t even merit-based. The pay hikes came in the wake of audits revealing that some commissioners did little to deserve their hefty salary increases.

Consider these inconvenient truths for the Administration:

• The Commissioner of the Department of Finance & Administration oversees the Division of Mental Retardation, which failed to claim $2.4 million in reimbursements and gave away $4 million in housing subsidies without using eligibility guidelines. In spite of this, Commissioner Dave Goetz’s annual pay jumped 22 percent to $180,000.

• The Department of Children’s Services failed to investigate child deaths in a timely manner, and even failed to share findings with judges and prosecutors. Still, Commissioner Viola Miller’s annual pay jumped 63 percent to $180,000.

• The Department of Economic Development failed to collect final reports for job training grants totaling $865,000. Nonetheless, Commissioner Matt Kisber’s annual pay jumped 63 percent to $180,000.

It seems job performance doesn’t matter as long as you’re one of Gov. Bredesen’s top lieutenants.

Andrew Jackson Must Be Rolling Over in His Grave

After the Hermitage – the historic home of war hero and President, Andrew Jackson – fell into disrepair and lost visitors, money became tight for the Tennessee treasure.

According to its books, the Hermitage Association, the organization in charge of the property has experienced annual losses as high as $665,000. On top of that, Andrew Jackson’s relatives are threatening to take back the mansion as part of an ongoing dispute with the Hermitage Association, in part, the family claims, because the Association has cheated them out of revenue from ticket sales.

In spite of the gloomy prospects for the historic home, Gov. Bredesen signed off on a $1 million grant to subsidize the Hermitage. There is no audit component to see if the money is used wisely – or if it will just be cash dumped into a money pit.

While Bredesen seems unconcerned about how the money will be used, taxpayers should be very concerned. Even before this latest grant, the state gave the Hermitage $970,000 over the past decade. Despite this infusion of taxpayers’ cash, the Hermitage has not overcome its problems.

Old Hickory would never have dreamed of providing organizations with taxpayer cash without holding them accountable for it. For Gov. Bredesen, it’s business as usual.
Government-Owned Golf Courses Always Find the Hole

If there’s an all-time record for the most wasteful program ever in Tennessee, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation deserves that dubious distinction for continuing to lose money year after year on state-owned golf courses. While there may not be a good answer to the question of why the state is in the golf course business in the first place, there certainly is an answer to the question of how much it costs taxpayers annually for the state to be in the golf course business: $1.4 million.³

Fiscal year 2007 was a record-setting year for state-owned links for all of the wrong reasons. Last year, the state lost $1,434,669 on state-owned golf courses – $243,327 more than ever before in a single year. Chickasaw, located in rural Chester County, managed to lose a jaw-dropping $417,339 by itself in 2007, eclipsing the former record of $330,804 set the previous year by Pickwick Landing. Only two of the state’s 12 golf courses were self-sustaining – the other 10 all required taxpayer subsidies.

Municipal Greens Wind Up in the Red

The fiscally-foolish practice of involving government in the golf business is not limited to state government. Cities across Tennessee own municipal courses and, more times than not, their greens operate in the red.

• The golf course owned by the Nashville suburb of Gallatin ran $177,939 in the red last fiscal year.⁶

• The East Tennessee town of Rockwood needed $56,000 in tax dollars to subsidize the Rockwood Golf & Country Club.⁷

• Despite its prime location, Sevierville’s Eagle’s Landing Golf Club somehow managed to lose $26,519 in the last fiscal year. To make matters worse for Sevierville taxpayers, the city is in the process of completing a second 18-hole course.⁸
Government should wise up to the fact that, while negative numbers might be good when you're playing golf, they're terrible when you own the course. In this time of economic uncertainty and reduced revenue for Tennessee, state leaders should wise up and get out of the golf business once and for all.

**Taxpayers Are On the Hook**

The state legislature gave the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency $500,000 to conduct a study on the feasibility of creating a statewide fishing trail.  

The chief idea behind the trail is to purchase land around certain bodies of water to create prime fishing from Memphis to Mountain City, then stock the waters around the government–pilfered land with crappie and other fish. The hope is that this will attract anglers and bring more tourist dollars to the state.

If the study set taxpayers back $500,000, who knows how much the trail, itself, might ultimately cost?

There are other concerns. Fishstocking programs can be delicate and difficult to maintain. They must be commensurate with the needs of specific bodies of water. Additionally, introducing such a large number of fish into an ecosystem can have adverse effects.

Still, it looks like the TWRA and the Tennessee General Assembly have their minds made up to lead taxpayers down this trail of government waste hook, line and sinker.

**Be Vewwwy, Vewwwy Quiet. I'm Hunting Taxpayers**

When he was a state legislator in 1999, Rep. H.E. Bittle, Jr. pushed for the creation of a “Sportsman” license plate and made sure that part of the revenue from the plates would go to a group called the Sportsmen’s Wildlife Foundation.

In fact, Bittle (R-Knoxville) was the primary House sponsor of the bill which created the specialty plate that features an image of a deer. In the years since then, more than $900,000 in revenue from the plate has been allocated to the Sportsmen’s Wildlife Foundation.

The problem is that Bittle is the founder of that organization, and he is listed as the foundation’s CEO in documents filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Five of the foundation’s six board members are relatives, including Bittle’s wife, his two children and their spouses.

Therefore, the license plate revenue not only funds Biddle’s salary, but the former legislator has used the cash from the specialty plate to pay for 329 acres in Cumberland County, and to build a two-story hunting lodge with a basement on the property. The lodge has five bunkrooms and, according to the Cumberland County Assessor’s office, has 2,400 square feet of space on the main floor, 2,400 square feet in the basement and 1,620 square feet on the upper floor. It has an appraised value of $319,100.

The ex-Knox County area legislator said the idea is to provide a place where children who take an online hunter-safety course can fulfill the program’s field-day obligation. So far he’s hosted a paltry 150 visitors on the property.

It looks like this license plate is a license to fleece the taxpayer.
Despite a cost of $1,380 per day – or more than $500,000 a year – to operate the ferry, only 23 paying passengers ride the ferry on an average day, according to TDOT. That breaks down to an outrageous $59.60 per passenger.

Since ticket prices for the ferry begin as low as 75 cents, and the average passenger pays just 87 cents for the seven-minute river crossing, taxpayers are being taken for a ride by the ferry. Tax dollars subsidize more than 98 percent of every passenger’s trip.

The Barge to Nowhere

In 2001, after three years of hemorrhaging tax dollars, the state wisely docked a government-run ferry service connecting rural Benton and Houston Counties across the Tennessee River. It appears, however, that state transportation bureaucrats have a short memory of their failures. Last November, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) decided to restart the ferry service.21

Unfortunately, resurrecting the ferry service took more than simply pulling up the anchor. The state spent $753,227 in taxpayers’ money repairing the ferry, $332,612 on ramps, $18,196 on site improvements and another $5,500 for signs for the ferry. In total, the state sank more than $1.2 million into the ferry before it crossed the Tennessee River once again.22

Don’t worry, though, said the TDOT bureaucrats, including Chief Engineer Paul Degges. They explained the cost would be well worth it. During the summer months, officials predicted that 200 cars would use the ferry to cross each day. Those same officials boasted that 80 to 100 cars per day would make the trek each day in the cooler months.

Degges even went so far as to call the ferry a “good bargain.”

Like so many other political promises, this one was dead in the water.

Taking Taxpayers for a Ride, One Passenger at a Time

The next time you want to go somewhere, but you don’t feel like driving, just call your city transit system’s “Demand Response Service.” The service, which provides residents with a ride wherever they want to go for a small flat fee – between $1 and $2.50, depending on the city – is available in most of Tennessee’s larger municipalities. The service is little more than a taxpayer-funded taxi service, but it uses costly city-owned shuttle buses instead of cabs.

In fact, in some cases, the service would be much cheaper if the city simply paid for riders’ cab fares instead of subsidizing the expensive shuttle bus service. In Memphis, for example, a ten mile cab ride costs $11. The same trip using the Memphis Area Transit Authority’s Demand Response Service costs taxpayers $21.10. A four-mile trip across Johnson
City costs $9.75 in a taxi, but costs taxpayers $17.52 in the city’s Demand Response Service shuttle.\textsuperscript{23}

The Demand Response Service is yet another example of a well-meaning government program that should just be parked.

**Booze It and Lose It (Your Tax Dollars, That Is)**

Nashville is home to two huge taxpayer-financed money pits – the stadium where the NFL’s Titans play and the arena that the NHL’s Predators calls home. State officials recently found even more ways to channel corporate welfare to the big-pocket owners of the two teams.

The Governor’s Highway Safety Office has given nearly $1.5 million over the past three years to the owners of the pro football and hockey teams to promote the “Booze It and Lose It” campaign. The cash pays for advertising within the stadiums and announcements on the stadiums’ scoreboards asking sports fans not to drink and drive.

This money flows to the wealthy team owners even though the state performs no audits to show whether or not the money spent at the stadium is effective at reducing drinking and driving or alcohol-related traffic accidents.

This example of corporate welfare is enough to drive a taxpayer to drink.

**Signs of Government Waste are Everywhere**

In an effort to increase “public awareness” and promote responsible stewardship, the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) partnered with the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to place watershed signs alongside Tennessee’s major highway and byways. Watersheds are land areas that drain into the rivers, lakes and streams where Tennesseans get water for drinking, irrigation and recreation. The signage is intended to prevent residents from dumping waste in watershed areas, avoiding contamination.\textsuperscript{24} Apparently, TDEC and TDOT didn’t think about the burden to taxpayers that would result from their good intentions. Together, the agencies spent approximately $280,000 to place 187 signs across the state—about $1,500 per sign.\textsuperscript{25} TDEC Deputy Commissioner Paul Sloan stated that he was pleased to work on such a “positive project.” The cost of giving Deputy Commissioner Sloan a warm, fuzzy feeling has left Tennesseans feeling all wet.
Government Waste is Not an Act

The Tennessee legislature allocated $6.5 million to the Tennessee Arts Commission in the 2007-2008 budget. A large portion of that money goes to individual artists, arts councils and playhouses that in turn spend Tennesseans’ tax dollars on some rather risqué endeavors.

Your tax money went to support the following productions, among other, over the past year:

• $70,500 to Playhouse on the Square in Memphis which produced The Great American Trailer Park Musical. According to the Playhouse’s ads, the show is “…ripe with adultery, strippers and murderous ex-boyfriends.” Their own website refers to it as the “theatrical equivalent of a bag of Doritos.” That certainly is one expensive bag of chips.

As absurd as that production was, the Playhouse topped itself with Jerry Springer – The Opera. This offering features “…a reconciliation between the two ultimate adversaries – Jesus and Satan.” With a little help from Jerry, that is.

• $12,190 to the Actors Bridge Ensemble in Nashville, which featured Marisol, an “apocalyptic tragic-comedy.” According the Ensemble’s website, “…a band of guerilla angels has decided that God is senile and must be assassinated for the greater good of the universe.”

• $3,250 to the Actors Co-Op in Knoxville for Vinegar Tom, a play that “…explores the connection between fear of female sexuality and witch hysteria in the 17th century through multiple vignettes…” And it has witches and music to boot!

A Greek Tragedy is a Taxpayer Tragedy, Too

In the 2007 Tennessee Pork Report, the Tennessee Center for Policy Research showcased an example of pork by highlighting $7,000 the Tennessee Arts Commission gave to the People’s Branch Theatre (PBT). At the time, PBT had just opened its version of the ancient Greek play Lysistrata.

According to the PBT website, “Aristophanes makes his war about something really worth fighting for – getting laid! Then PBT throws in some girl on girl action, and in classic Greek style straps on a few strap-ons and voila!”

Well, it was not only a good example of pork, but a horrible play, as well. It was trashed by Nashville Scene theater critic Martin Brady, who said, “Too bad the company misfires badly in its new adaptation of Aristophanes’ Lysistrata. Since it’s a comedy about women denying their husbands sex until they stop fighting a war, you’d think putting this one across might be a modern-minded slam-dunk. You’d be wrong.”

He added, it is “a simple-minded – and at its worst, adolescent – approach to the issues.” He described “groaning double entendres… which… come off with a thud,” and “speeches that are devoid of wit
and parody.”

He did offer one compliment, though – sort of: “Directors Brooks and Baber pace the action swiftly, which offers eventual, merciful relief from the shrillness.”

This pork project richly deserved the Pork Report’s two thumbs down.

Please Pass the Popcorn – and Your Wallet

In 2008, the Tennessee Arts Commission continued its long-standing support of the Nashville Film Festival with a $27,620 grant. The Festival thanked the Arts Commission and the taxpayers who help fund the commission by screening the following films, but first a warning: The descriptions of many of these films, like the films themselves, deserve an R-rating.

- “Goodnight Vagina” begins with the star getting a bikini wax, which leads to an obsession with getting a new vagina. She finds a doctor to perform the vaginaplasty, but finds that the cost to refurbish her privates will come to a whopping $24,000. When her parents won’t give her the money, she does what any American girl consumed with a vagina overhaul would do and turns to a life of crime.

- “The Teat Beat of Sex” is a film that provides penetrating answers to probing questions such as: “Is masturbation good for you?” and “Why do women need panties?” As an added bonus, it is animated.

- “The Frank Anderson” is a film about a man and his troubles trying to get his health insurance company to cover his breast reduction. But after a woman who is approved to get her breasts enlarged meets Frank, she convinces him, according to the official movie synopsis, that “his man-boobs are awesome!”

State Wel’Fair” Watch

The smell of funnel cakes, the sound of laughter and that nauseous feeling on the Tilt-A-Whirl all remind us that it’s fair season in Tennessee. Another thing that might make you nauseous is the amount of money spent by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to subsidize fairs and supplement prize money for good-looking goats and plump pumpkins.

The 2007 Tennessee Pork Report highlighted more than $111,000 in “State Aid” and $43,000 in “Merit Awards.” State Aid money subsidizes premiums fairs pay for contests and agricultural displays, including the prize money for the blue ribbon-winning fruits, vegetables, canned goods and farm animals. Merit Award funds are paid to fairs and livestock shows for meeting basic requirements for cleanliness and other measures of quality.

The Department of Agriculture outdid itself in 2008, ratcheting up the waste to more than $117,000 in “State Aid” and nearly $70,000 in “Merit Awards.”

Examples of taxpayer-funded subsidies to fairs and livestock shows include:

- Tennessee State Fair (Nashville) – $12,192
- Appalachian Fair (Gray) – $12,192
- Obion County Fair (Union City) – $9,522
- Wilson County Fair (Lebanon) – $8,778
- Henderson County Free Fair (Lexington) – $1,981

This is one government scheme that deserves a blue ribbon for government waste.
Ricky Headley continued to collect his $101,700 annual salary after he was arrested for illegally obtaining prescription drugs. Headley finally stepped down in February in a plea deal to avoid felony charges.

• Former Sumner County Sheriff, J.D. Vandercook, plead guilty more than a year ago to defrauding the county of $70,000. He continues to draw his $25,200 annual pension.

Taxpayers paid $20,000 more for a wheelchair lift at legislative plaza than the promised bid from politically connected contractor Ray Bell. Bell initially said he could build the lift – designed to aid lawmakers with disabilities – for a cost of $54,500. But project managers later said they discovered that the lift design did not meet state elevator board requirements, so they redesigned it. Instead of re-bidding the contract, state officials just increased the price of the project to around $75,000.4

The cost increased even more because of aesthetic embellishments. Painting the lift to match the wood accents decorating the nearby hallway was supposed to cost $817 but, in the end, cost $1,500 more than officials had planned.

Ray Bell Construction is a familiar firm to Tennessee legislators. Bell, who recently retired from his
firm, has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to state political campaigns.

**Bureaucrats, Hard At Work**

There they are, state workers with their noses buried in their computers, their fingers dancing across their keyboards. They must be hard at work, earning their taxpayer-funded paychecks, right?

Not in all cases, apparently. Someone working from a computer registered to the state Department of Finance & Administration (F & A) has been using his or her time on the job to log on to Wikipedia. That’s the online encyclopedia that is constantly updated by online users.

This F & A worker apparently went to town updating Wikipedia entries, including adding to an entry discussing prostitution in Las Vegas.

Other Wikipedia updates made by the state employee include:

- Removing a paragraph warning drivers that Coopertown is a speed trap.
- Editing an entry describing individuals who suffer from mental breakdowns by adding, “They may have odd body movements such as short jerks or taking off your clothes in public places.”
- Adding Tennessee to a list of “truffle-growing areas” worldwide.
- Tweaking Sigma Chi fraternity’s page more than 60 times

A timestamp shows that the employee made most of the Wikipedia edits during work hours.
A Modern Day Bonnie and Clyde

When she wasn’t serving up Salisbury steak to the kids at Kittrell Elementary, the former cafeteria manager of the Rutherford County school was helping herself to a heaping serving of your money.

The former cafeteria manager – call her Bonnie – apparently diverted 10 nutrition department checks, totaling $6,249.21, into her personal checking account. In most instances, the checks were made payable to legitimate vendors. However, it seems Bonnie endorsed the back of the checks as the vendor, then signed her husband’s name as the second endorsement before depositing the checks into her own bank account.

The former cafeteria manager created invoices or altered existing invoices to make the payments appear legitimate. Her husband – call him Clyde – was also involved in the scam when he was hired to pressure wash the cafeteria. Bonnie purchased a pressure washer under the school’s name. However, when school officials tried to find the original invoice, it had been deleted and the pressure washer was nowhere to be found. Clyde told officials that he had returned it to the store, but none of the refunded money had gone back to the school.

This modern day Bonnie and Clyde still owe taxpayers thousands – and as far as we know, she hasn’t returned the hairnet, either.

Whoever Said “Size Doesn’t Matter” Never Worked in Bradley County

After Mike Smith was elected trustee of Bradley County, he made a promise “to provide the taxpayers of Bradley County with the best quality of service at the lowest possible cost.”

But it appears he found his office too constricting for such a noble duty and got out the county checkbook to increase the size of his working quarters. In all, he spent $15,300 to upgrade his office, and apparently did so behind the back of the County Commission – which must approve such things.

The Clerk Was a Con

Julie Cole, the accounts payable clerk in the Fayette County town of Oakland, turned her check-writing duties into a money-making scheme.

According to a state investigative audit, between November 2006 and July 2007, Cole issued 57 checks, totaling $42,165, to legitimate town vendors. The former clerk, however, did not deliver the checks to the vendors. Instead, she apparently cashed the checks at a local bank and pocketed the money.

Cole’s scam was uncovered only after a fellow employee observed noticeable discrepancies in the town’s vendor files. By creating fictitious debts in the
town’s accounting records, she was able to prepare official town checks to pay them off. She was also able to conceal her scheme from management in some cases by slightly altering the vendor’s name as it appeared in the town’s files.

The elaborate scam may have come to an end, but taxpayers in Oakland are still paying for this costly swindle.

Regrettably, such scams are not unique to Oakland. Two East Tennessee cities had money stolen by government employees entrusted to oversee public funds:

• While serving as a secretary at Maryville High School, Donna Sloan diverted at least $62,094 generated by school plays, athletic events and dances into her own pocket.

• Former Maynardville city recorder Hazel Gillenwater swiped $20,000 in tax money from the city’s bank account.

The Case of the Missing Green Machines

Clyde Green of Green Motor Works scammed the Memphis City School System out of at least $420,000 with the help of Randle Taylor, a former facility maintenance supervisor for the school system who served as an inside man for the ruse.

With Taylor’s help, Green successfully billed the school system for electric motors that were never delivered or installed into school buildings. Green and Taylor split the windfall.

Security Firm Provides Invoices, But No Security

Forget about being asleep at the switch. Taxpayers are on the hook for security guards who were nowhere near the switch.

A private security firm did not post a guard at a vulnerable Nashville government building on Saturdays for months — but they had no problem sending the taxpayers a bill for $146.76 for each Saturday they were supposed to have worked.

This is the same firm, incidentally, that allowed a laptop computer containing Davidson County voters’ social security numbers to go missing, exposing 337,000 people to possible identity theft.

A former security guard for the company who was fired for skipping out on his duties Christmas Eve night said he thought the company cut back on the Saturday guard service to save money. “They were hoping they could get by with it, I guess,” the former security guard told a reporter.

They certainly got one by the taxpayers.

CheckMate

After a few years of marriage, people say spouses begin to resemble each other. In the case of one Chester County couple, though, the wife apparently thought she could write like her husband.

The Chester County Highway Department’s former payroll clerk is married to the Chester County’s Road Superintendent. She forged her husband’s signature on two county checks that she made payable to herself.

One $900 check was a payroll check, and the other $3,250 check was for “educational and longevity” incentives that she had not legally received. That’s $4,150 of taxpayer money.

Luckily, her scheme was foiled by bank personnel who spotted the sloppy forgery, and noticed that the
county’s mayor, whose signature is required in order to cash county checks, had not signed the fraudulent checks.

**Everything’s Later in Decatur**

Every adult knows that to avoid late fees, you’ve got to pay your bills on time.

But, apparently, someone in the Decatur County mayor’s office hadn’t learned that lesson.

The office received an invoice on August 16, 2006 for architectural work for the county’s detention center. The bill remained unpaid until June 18, 2007 – resulting in taxpayers paying $32,233 in late fees.¹²

The bureaucrats in the county mayor’s office deserve some time in that detention center for that fiasco.

**Money for Nothin’**

Three top Tipton County officials – the Sheriff, Trustee and the Register – left their offices in 2006. But in a pleasant surprise for these Tipton officials, they kept getting paychecks that they shouldn’t have received.

The sheriff was overpaid by $1,966.27, and both the trustee and register were overpaid by $1,787.50. In total, more than $5,000 is owed by these three former county officials to Tipton County taxpayers.¹³

Although letters have been sent by county officials requesting repayment of the overpaid salaries, reimbursements have yet to be made to the county.

**Taxpayers are Getting a Workout in Bradley County**

All too often, Tennessee bureaucrats with government credit cards see the plastic in their pockets as an opportunity for a personal shopping spree.

One example comes from the Sheriff’s Office in Bradley County. Some officials there were responsible for the “questionable use of county credit cards” amounting to over $5,000, according to state auditors.¹⁴ The credit card policy explicitly limits uses to out-of-town travel expenses and discourages any other uses. They used it, though, to pay for items such as furniture and vacuum cleaners.

One of the oddest questionable expenses made by sheriff’s officials was the purchase of workout tapes. While we appreciate the sheriff’s officers attempting to work off their time at the local donut shop, it’s too bad that the office is getting fat off the taxpayer.

*I’ll Pick Door Number One… If it Opens.*

A set of doors that swing the wrong way in violation of fire codes delayed the opening of Maury County’s Culleoka Unit School Library.

School officials learned of the problem long before the school opened for the 2006-07 school year, but students were not allowed to use the library for months.

The state fire marshal said the problem is a design flaw created by the architect, SSOE Inc. But school leaders have been pushing taxpayers to pony up $6,600 to fix the problem. Why won’t school board members go back to the architect and tell him to fix the faulty work?

A reporter in Maury County dug up one possible explanation: School Board Chairman Shaw Daniels works for SSOE. “Daniels’ glaring conflict of interest must not be allowed to continue,” the reporter wrote in an editorial that won First Place in the 2007 State Press Contests. He added that Daniels “previously agreed not to vote on any issue involving SSOE, but then he voted to keep the school board from discussing construction changes.”¹⁵

How’s that for a closed-door policy?
In 2007, thanks to a vibrant economy, the state was flooded with surplus tax money. A surplus is created when the state government collects more money in taxes than it costs to deliver the services promised in the state budget. A more accurate term for a surplus is “taxpayer overpayment.” In total, taxpayer overpayments surpassed $1.3 billion in 2007, dwarfing the previous record taxpayer overpayment of $909 million.

When faced with the option of what to do with the surplus, return it to taxpayers by reducing taxes or seize taxpayer overpayments to embark on a wild spending spree, the Governor and members of the Tennessee General Assembly decided to go hog wild with your tax dollars.

Many of the pork projects exposed in this Pork Report, such as the $70 million biofuels boondoggle, the luxurious additions to the Governor’s Mansion and the state legislators’ $10 million grant program to finance local pork projects, were funded during the bipartisan budget binge that took place in the days after the surplus was announced.

As a result of the unrestrained spending, the Tennessee State Budget rocketed from $25.2 billion in fiscal year 2006-2007 to $28.05 billion in the 2007-2008 fiscal year, by far the largest spending increase in the 212-year history of the state.

During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the state government spent $4,583 for every man, woman and child in Tennessee. The state spends more than $870 every second according to the “Tennessee Budget Spend-O-Meter,” the Tennessee Center for Policy Research’s online tracking tool for state spending—an increase from $833 last fiscal year. That jaw-dropping amount does not include any local spending by cities or counties.

Now the state stands on the precipice of an economic downturn and the state government faces a budget shortfall likely to exceed $300 million. It is important to remember, however, that the shortfall is not a result of bad economic times or a lack of revenue; it was created by the state government’s irresponsible spending spree.

Thankfully for taxpayers, there are three simple solutions available to prevent the state government’s runaway spending and reduce Tennessee’s growing tax burden: posting government spending online, strengthening the state’s constitutional spending limit and enacting a kicker law to refund surplus revenue.

In 2006, the U.S. Congress passed the Federal Financial Accountability and Transparency Act, which President George W. Bush signed into law. The Act requires all federal spending above $25,000 to appear in a searchable online database. The database includes, among other relevant informa-
Finally, state lawmakers should protect taxpayers from government overspending by enacting a measure known as the “kicker” law. The law gets its name because it would require the state to “kick” surplus funds back to taxpayers. Under the kicker, if tax collections rise beyond budgetary estimates, any surplus amount remaining after topping off the state’s rainy day fund would be refunded to taxpayers. This could be done by simply removing the sales tax on groceries for as long as the surplus allows.

Tennessee lawmakers owe it to state taxpayers to enact these simple solutions to add discipline and transparency to the state’s budget process. The result would be a state government forced to do what every family in the state already does—prioritize. The honest and open discussion that resulted would cut millions of dollars in wasteful and duplicative programs to make way for worthy new programs.

Under the kicker, if tax collections rise beyond budgetary estimates, any surplus amount remaining after topping off the state’s rainy day fund would be refunded to taxpayers.
Endnotes


2. Thompson, Emily with Barker, Boyd (Secretary/Treasurer of the Tennessee Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation, Inc). Telephone conversation, April 1, 2008.


33. Brady, Martin. Girl Power/People's


