



FEDERAL FUMBLER

***100 WAYS THE GOVERNMENT
DROPPED THE BALL***

BY U.S. SENATOR JAMES LANKFORD

My fellow taxpayers:

Welcome to the first annual release of the *Federal Fumbles* report! Our national debt is careening toward \$19 trillion (yes, that is a 19 followed by 12 zeros), and federal regulations are expanding at a record pace. Meanwhile families struggle to get home loans, and small businesses struggle to make ends meet. States are constantly handed unfunded mandates and executive fiats that they are forced to implement with minimal direction and no way to pay for them. I present this report as a demonstration of ways we can cut back on wasteful federal spending and burdensome regulations to help families, small businesses, and our economy begin to get out from under the weight of federal stagnation.

Cited here are not only prime examples of wasteful spending, but also federal departments or agencies that regulate outside the scope of the federal government's constitutional role. I firmly believe my staff and I have the obligation to solve the troubles of our nation, not just complain, which is why for every problem identified, you will also find a recommended solution. There is a way to eliminate wasteful, ineffective, or duplicative program spending; develop oversight methods to prevent future waste; and find ways to get us back on track.

Over the years other Members of Congress, including former Senator Tom Coburn, current Senators Dan Coats, Jeff Flake, John McCain, Rand Paul, Rep. Steve Russell, along with the House Republican Study Committee, have offered ideas to eliminate wasteful spending. It takes countless months, days, and hours to go through agency budgets, GAO reports, and Inspectors General reviews to identify, research, and fact-check government waste. It should not be this difficult to find out how exactly our government spends money. Federal spending information should not be limited to Members of Congress and their staffs. So here is one solution: the Taxpayer's Right to Know Act.

In January I introduced the Taxpayer's Right to Know Act, which creates a central database for the financial data of every federal program in all federal agencies and departments. Agencies and departments would be required to develop performance metrics for all of their programs and provide a yearly report card. This centralized database would provide an accessible source for everyone to see how our federal government spends money and how effectively that money is used. You have every right to know how your government spends your money. Sunlight is the solution to most of our federal waste.

It is important to remember that while wasteful government spending is harmful, overly burdensome federal regulations are an equal part of the problem facing American families and businesses. The federal government diligently tracks total tax collections and annual spending levels. However, it does not officially account for total government-wide regulatory costs. While certain regulations are important to keep us safe, the current Administration has churned out new regulations at a pace that exceeds 3,500 per year.

To put that into perspective, last year, the President signed 224 bills into law but published 3,554 final rules. This means that for every law passed by Congress, the federal government created 16 new rules. These 3,554 regulations impose significant costs on the American economy. The National Association of Manufacturers calculated the total cost of federal regulations in 2012 to be a staggering \$2.028 trillion (11 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product). If our \$2 trillion federal regulatory cost were a country, it would be the ninth-largest in the world.

The federal government collected \$1.234 trillion in individual income taxes in 2013 but cost individuals and businesses more than \$2 trillion in federal regulations. In 2014 the federal government published 80 “major” final regulations that were “economically significant,” or regulations that “will cost more than \$100 million a year.” And remember, the costs of those regulations are passed on to you, the consumer.

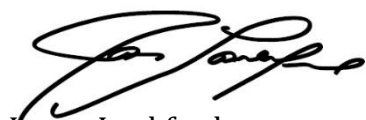
Here is a fun fact: last year, according to the Competitive Enterprise Institute, families spent \$14,974 of their average household income on goods and services to cover the cost of federal regulations. Can you imagine what your family could do with an additional \$14,974 for groceries, gasoline, and savings? Congress owes it to the American people to carefully scrutinize the regulatory process to ensure regulations work for the people. We can balance responsible regulations with cost-effective solutions that work for families. If we do not stop the rising tide of excessive federal regulations, how will the next generation of leaders start the next great American company or afford basic expenses for the family?

I am a proud father of two wonderful girls. I believe there are endless possibilities for the young people of today, as they prepare to be the leaders of tomorrow. My primary mission in the U.S. Senate is to leave the next generation a nation better off than it is today. That is why I leave my family and my home in Oklahoma to come to Washington, DC, each week. I want our government to provide its necessary and essential services and protections—no more, no less. I do not want the federal government to burden our society with its overregulation and overwhelming debt.

It is time for all elected officials in the Senate, House of Representatives, and White House to set priorities, then actually do the work. That is our job. For example, one of our top priorities should be to balance the budget and keep government out of the daily lives of American citizens. An unnecessary challenge is that we often cannot find the common ground to even set priorities, much less decide how to accomplish them. We can all agree that the federal government has a job to do. It is time for us to pick up the ball, and do the work our constituents sent us here to do.

I hope this book provides practical ideas for my fellow Members of Congress, their staffs, and individuals throughout government who can play a role to eliminate careless federal spending and burdensome regulations.

In God We Trust,



James Lankford
United States Senator for Oklahoma

[*To read more on the Taxpayer's Right to Know Act, please click here.*](#)

To go further in-depth on the cost and size of federal regulations, please visit:

[Federal Register: Public Law Numbers](#)

[CRS Report: Counting Regulations: An Overview of Rulemaking, Types of Federal Regulations, and Pages in the Federal Register](#)

[National Association of Manufacturers: The Cost of Federal Regulation to the U.S. Economy, Manufacturing and Small Business](#)

[Competitive Enterprise Institute: Ten Thousand Commandments: An Annual Snapshot of the Federal Regulatory State](#)

KEY

As you read through this book you will notice each entry starts with a short “Quick Stats” section that lists the Conference, Team, Fumble, and How to Recover the Ball. The Conference is either Spending or Regulation to tell you whether the entry is an example of wasteful or duplicative spending or a burdensome regulation. The federal agency or department responsible for the problem highlighted is the Team. The cost of the spending or regulation is the Fumble. How to Recover the Ball is a proposed solution to either prevent the Fumble from happening again or stop a regulation from burdening American families and businesses.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|----------|
| Agency for International Development | USAID |
| Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula | AQAP |
| Army Corps of Engineers | USACE |
| Bureau of Indian Affairs | BIA |
| Bureau of Indian Education | BIE |
| Bureau of Land Management | BLM |
| California Gnatcatcher | CAGN |
| Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services | CMS |
| Compressed Natural Gas | CNG |
| Congressional Budget Office | CBO |
| Crime Victims Fund | CVF |
| Democratic Republic of the Congo | DRC |
| Department of Agriculture | USDA |
| Department of Commerce | DOC |
| Department of Defense | DOD |
| Department of Education | DOEd |
| Department of Energy | DOE |
| Department of Health and Human Services | HHS |
| Department of Homeland Security | DHS |
| Department of Housing and Urban Development | HUD |
| Department of Justice | DOJ |
| Department of Labor | DOL |
| Department of State | State |
| Department of the Interior | DOI |
| Department of Transportation | DOT |
| Department of the Treasury | Treasury |
| Department of Veterans Affairs | VA |
| Environmental Protection Agency | EPA |
| Federal Communications Commission | FCC |
| Federal Highway Administration | FHWA |
| Federal Protective Service | FPS |
| Fiscal Year | FY |
| Fish & Wildlife Service | FWS |

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|--|-------|
| Food and Drug Administration | FDA |
| General Services Administration | GSA |
| Government Accountability Office | GAO |
| Immigration and Customs Enforcement | ICE |
| Inspector General | IG |
| Internal Revenue Service | IRS |
| Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant | ISIL |
| Massachusetts Institute of Technology | MIT |
| National Cancer Institute | NCI |
| National Endowment for the Arts | NEA |
| National Institutes of Health | NIH |
| National Institute of Standards and Technology | NIST |
| National Labor Relations Board | NLRB |
| National Park Service | NPS |
| National Science Foundation | NSF |
| Office of Management and Budget | OMB |
| Renewable Fuel Standard | RFS |
| Safety & Health Involvement for Truckers | SHIFT |
| Securities and Exchange Commission | SEC |
| Social Security Administration | SSA |
| Social Security Disability Insurance | SSDI |
| Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction | SIGAR |
| Task Force for Business and Stability Operations | TFBSO |
| Trade Adjustment Assistance | TAA |
| Unemployment Insurance | UI |
| Wild Horses and Burros | WHB |

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A \$43 MILLION GAS STATION

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** Department of Defense
- **FUMBLE:** \$42,718,739 gas station in Afghanistan
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Require DOD to submit reports on all completed facility construction at the one-, three- and five-year marks to certify the facility's use compared to the original construction justification



Photo: Central Asia Development Group

In 2009 DOD moved its Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) from Iraq to Afghanistan.¹ TFBSO's mission was to help build up the economy of war-torn Afghanistan.² From 2011-2014 TFBSO spent nearly \$43 million in order to construct a CNG automobile filling station in the city of Sheberghan, Afghanistan.³ The belief was that a CNG station would take advantage of the natural gas reserves within Afghanistan and alleviate the need for importing fuel. Unfortunately TFBSO never vetted the feasibility of such a plan. Had TFBSO vetted the feasibility, it would have determined there was no natural gas distribution capability in the country and that the cost of converting a vehicle to CNG exceeded the annual income in Afghanistan.⁴ Would Americans convert their vehicles to run on CNG if it costs more than their annual income? Probably not.

If the outrageous waste of taxpayers' dollars is not enough, DOD was unable to explain the high cost of the project or any other questions regarding its planning. The reason for DOD's inability to provide an explanation is DOD closed TFBSO in March of 2015.⁵ During its lifetime TFBSO spent \$766 million in taxpayer money, but DOD claims there are no records or expertise on TFBSO's activities.⁶

RECOVERY

DOD should not have wasted this much money on a project that a simple feasibility study would have shown was unnecessary. Congress also should have discovered this wasteful project through simple oversight and brought it to an end. Congress should work with DOD to ensure future investments in other countries advance American interests and actually make a difference. A \$43 million natural gas station does neither.

For more information, please visit:

[SIGAR: DOD's Compressed Natural Gas Filling Station in Afghanistan: An Ill-Conceived \\$43 Million Project](#)
[Defense News: SIGAR: DoD Spent \\$43M on 'Ill-Conceived' Afghan Gas Station](#)