CDC Off Center: An Oversight Report on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



CDC Off Center: An Oversight Report on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is a review of how an agency tasked with fighting and preventing disease has spent hundreds of millions of tax dollars for failed prevention efforts, international junkets, and lavish facilities, but cannot demonstrate it is controlling disease. This is U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, M.D.s oversight report on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an agency with a \$10 billion annual budget and a crucial public health mission. This report highlights how the CDC has wasted and continues to waste hundreds of millions of tax dollars, but keeps asking taxpayers for more. A sample of what is included in this new oversight report: CDC spent \$1.7 million including funds from a terrorism account on a Hollywood liaison program, which happens to be run by a former CDC employee (see page 87); CDC paid to create a statue of a woman made out of vegetables, who was featured in its \$106 million new communications and visitor center (recently named after the senator in charge of funding CDC) (see page 11); The Thomas R. Harkin visitor center also includes a giant 70-foot-wide by 25-foot-tall video wall of plasma screen TVs to showcase vignettes about the agency. The plasma TVs are part of the buildings \$5.1 million audio visual integration expenditures (see page 8); CDC spent \$30,000 on saunas for its new \$200,000 fitness center, a center which also includes mood-enhancing lightshows and two \$1,750 zero-gravity chairs (see page 15); CDC syphilis prevention funds were spent to host a safe-sex event with a porn star, during a time when rates of the disease among men climbed by 68 percent (see page 44); CDC HIV/AIDS prevention funds were spent on a transgender beauty pageant (see page 45); CDC spent \$45 million for conferences, including those featuring prostitutes, protests, and beach

parties (see pages 50, 52,53, & 55); CDC sent 110 employees to two international AIDS conferences (20 to Thailand and 90 to Barcelona), when purchasing retroviral drugs with the trip funds likely could have prevented mother-to-child **AIDS** transmission for more than 115,000 infants around the world (see pages 52 & 54); CDC is opening a Hawaii office, a development announced by a senator from Hawaii who oversees its funding (see page 18); The Inspector General finds that of CDCs \$2.6 billion in HIV/AIDS grants, some have no objectives and are abysmal, yet are funded anyway (see pages 38-40); CDC spent \$335 million on a kid-targeted media campaign to fight obesity and found that, later, kids who saw the ads did one more activity, which may or may not have been the result of the ads (see pages 69-71); CDC pays two former employees \$250,000 to (temporarily) help build staff morale, and the agency is currently seeking a full-time replacement who will cost taxpayers over \$1 million in the next decade (see pages 100-101); A CDC HIV/AIDS prevention grantee hosted a bar night and printed magazine instructions on how to throw a good party with lots of alcohol, despite the fact that booze is a known risk-factor for spreading the deadly disease (see page 104); and \$128,000 in CDC bioterrorism funds were spent by Los Angeles County (a high-target area) on trinkets such as letter openers, whistles, magnets, mouse pads, flashlights, pens, and travel toothbrushes (see pages 106-108). As the report notes: CDC Off Center is not an effort to discredit the good work that the CDC and those who work for it have carried out and the good work that will continue in the future. The report will hopefully be seen for what it is: an effort to shine some light on prevention efforts and funding decisions that may be holding the agency back from fulfilling its central mission of fighting and controlling disease.

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