

Elections Project alias, more than 99 percent of the Judicial Education Project's 2018 revenue was a single, anonymous \$7.8 million donation that came through, of course, DonorsTrust. There is no way to know who cut that check.

What does all this dark money financing and front group subterfuge tell us? As a reporter for the *Guardian* observed, the Honest Elections Project, so-called, melds two goals of the right-wing dark money operation: One, pack the Federal judiciary, and two, bring voting rights cases before the packed courts. Rigging elections by keeping "some people" from voting is now a Republican priority, and if Trump judges will help, so much the better.

Just recently, we actually learned more about the covert voter suppression operation. The watchdog group Documented and the magazine *Mother Jones* uncovered a video of a presentation by the dark money group Heritage Action to its top donors. In the video, the presenter brags about getting what she called "key provisions"—"key provisions"—into voter suppression legislation in dozens of capitals around the country.

She tells the donors, and I am quoting here, "In some cases, we actually draft them for them"—they actually draft the laws for the State legislatures—"or," she said, "we have a sentinel"—a sentinel; what a creepy word—"we have a sentinel on our behalf give them the model legislation so it has that grassroots, from-the-bottom-up type of vibe." Big donors love that grassroots, from-the-bottom-up type of vibe.

There is lots of dark money that fuels this covert op. Heritage Action says it plans to spend \$24 million in eight battleground States to "create an echo chamber" of relentless lobbying for voter suppression bills. They say they will be coordinating with known Koch network groups like the Susan B. Anthony List, Tea Party Patriots, and FreedomWorks.

This operation is the kind of stuff that we might want our intelligence services to do in enemy countries to create disruption and discord and provide secret influence. The idea that creepy billionaires are running covert operations in and against our own country, that ought to make you cringe.

Not only is this behavior morally corrupt, it may have broken rules. One State legislature has already floated an ethics probe into Heritage Action's sentinels jamming phony bills through their chamber.

So back to Senate Republicans getting their hair on fire over Kristen Clarke and Vanita Gupta. These two women scare the daylights out of this dark money operation behind Republican voter suppression. Ms. Clarke knows the Voting Rights Act cold; she won voting rights cases against voter suppression laws all over the country. Put Jim Crow 2.0 up against a Depart-

ment of Justice Civil Rights Division led by Kristen Clarke, and that dark money voter suppression operation has a problem. So the big dark money donors behind this covert operation will raise whatever ruckus they can—first, to try to stop Vanita Gupta, which didn't work, and now to stop Kristen Clarke, which won't work—all in an effort to protect their dark money scheme to prevent some people from voting. You have to look behind the smokescreen sometimes to understand what is going on. It is not pretty, but it is the truth.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to conclude my remarks before the vote begins.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, about 50 years ago, William Proxmire rose in this esteemed body and told us about government waste. He called it the Golden Fleece Award. They were studying things like dating and love and what makes love, and we had these great scientific studies about love. These are William Proxmire's words from the early 1970s. He was a conservative Democrat.

He says:

I object to this [study on love] because no one—not even the National Science Foundation—can argue that falling in love is a science; not only because I'm sure that even if they spend \$84 million or \$84 billion they wouldn't get an answer that anyone would believe. I'm also against [this study on love] because I don't want the answer.

I believe that 200 million other Americans want to leave some things in life a mystery, and right at the top of things we don't [need] to know is why a man falls in love with a woman and vice versa.

Stirring words. The Golden Fleece Award—I remember as a kid everybody talked about it. It was in the newspapers. So what have we done to curb the wasteful appetite, the abuse of government that has happened at the National Science Foundation since 1972? Not a damn thing.

Here is one of my other favorites from William Proxmire's days. The FAA was named for spending \$57,000 on a study of the physical measurements of 432 airline stewardesses. These included the distance from knee to knee while sitting and the length of the buttocks. Fifty-eight thousand dollars—this was your government money being put to good use.

So fast forward, and we spend about \$8 billion a year with the National Science Foundation. Is it getting any better? Are they doing a better job at overseeing their money? Well, I don't know. This bill is going to increase their funding by 68 percent. There is \$29 billion in this bill for the National Science Foundation. So don't you think the American people deserve to know where their money is being spent?

This was from their sister Agency, the NIH, but you know we can't get started without talking about it. This is over \$800,000 to study whether or not Japanese quail are more sexually promiscuous on cocaine. I am not making this up—\$800,000 of taxpayer money to study whether Japanese quail are more sexually promiscuous on cocaine.

Do you think we could have just polled the audience? Do you think we could have just said: What do you think? Because that is sort of the answer. The answer is yes. And yet your government spent 800 grand on that. And then when we pointed it out 5 years ago, did they do anything to reform it? No. They are here today to give the Agencies that are doing this research more money.

Another one that I think is quite revealing is this study that is about Panamanian male frog calls. You have about half a million dollars, and they wanted to know whether or not the male mating call is different in the country than it is in the city.

Now, coming from a rural State like Kentucky, I can tell you the male mating call is different in the country than it is in the city. But nobody in Kentucky wants a half a million dollars spent on a Panamanian frog's male mating call. This is not a good use of money.

So if someone told you your government was spending this money, would you give them more? Would you give the Agency more if they were doing this or less? I think less.

In looking at the National Science Foundation's spending, we also found that they spent \$30,000 studying Ugandan gambling habits. Really? We are studying why people gamble in Uganda, why there is a black market in Uganda. Well, do you know what? I think we know the reason. When government oppresses business and regulates business to death, they go to the black market. If you make something illegal, you often get more of it. But we spent \$30,000 traveling over to Uganda to study their gambling habits—utter waste of money. We should not reward these people with more money.

We spent about half a million on a video game. This is an app for your phone. I know we all need things to do when we should be working or at school. This is an app for schoolchildren to teach them alarmism over climate change. So you can click on the app, and it will scare you to death that California is going to be underwater in 100 years—none of which is true, all of which is alarmism, and a half a million dollars spent by the government to alarm our schoolchildren is not a good idea.

This next study points out a problem with funding, in general, in our government. You give funds for something that ostensibly might be a good cause. So a couple of years ago, they gave money for autism—\$700,000 for autism. And you think, well, autism, you know, even myself, as conservative as I am, I

can probably say, well, that is something we ought to study, autism. Well, they subcontracted 700 grand of it to a bunch of egghead researchers to watch Neil Armstrong's statement on the Moon. Do you remember the black-and-white photo? He is on the Moon, and he says, "[O]ne small step for man, one giant leap for mankind," or did he really say: One small step for a man?

So these researchers took \$700,000 to listen to that crackly old cassette recording and find out, did he say "man" or did he say "a man"? So we studied the preposition "a," and we spent 700 grand listening to the tape over and over and over again. And do you know what they determined? They just can't decide. They are unsure, but they did recommend more money to study the problem further.

This is insulting to the American taxpayer. We should not be giving these people more money; we should be giving them dramatically less money.

But it also points out one of the reforms that I have proposed for this Agency. One of the problems with the National Science Foundation is, if I want to do research on Japanese quail snorting cocaine, guess what, I can ask for the same people who are studying snorting cocaine in animals—I can ask them to be on my peer committee. I can choose the people on my peer committee. So if I want to study animals snorting cocaine, I pick other researchers who are studying animals snorting cocaine. Guess what. They tend to say yes. If they say yes, the scientist gets on the next peer Commission, and he says or she says yes for their snorting cocaine research.

This is crazy. We should not let these so-called scientists pick who is on their committee. Not only that, I think we ought to have a taxpayer advocate. Could we not have just someone with a good dose of common sense who says we shouldn't take autism money, steal it, and spend it on a bunch of idiots listening to what Neil Armstrong said when he landed on the Moon? So that is part of the reform we should have.

One of my other alltime favorites from the National Science Foundation—this kind of goes back to William Proxmire and love and happiness—they wanted to know if you take a selfie of yourself while smiling and you look at it later in the day, will that make you happy?

Really? That is a half a million dollars. I don't think we need a scientist to say that that is BS and that government has got no business doing this kind of research. I don't even know how you could even call this research with a straight face. But it goes on year on, year on. We have been complaining about this since 1972, so you would think maybe we would have less of it. We are giving them more money. So we are now increasing their budget by 68 percent despite this kind of research.

The last one I have is this. We spent \$1.3 million on insect ranching. This is

money that was sent to study whether or not we could put insects into animal feed. We spent another \$3 million, though, wanting to know if humans would eat ants to prevent climate change.

What will you do, America, to combat climate change? Will you eat ants to combat climate change? That was a study. This is not science. This is ridiculous in nature.

Actually, I lied. I have got one more example. We spent \$1.5 million studying lizards on a treadmill. So I know you have all been curious, when lizards walk and they kind of waddle and they have a funny walk, why do they walk that way? What is going on in their knee joints? What do their hip joints look like when they waddle across the lawn? Everybody wants to know that, but are you willing to spend \$1.5 million of your taxpayer dollars to take x rays—live, real-time x rays—of a lizard walking on a treadmill? I tend to think, you know, maybe Alzheimer's research, maybe cancer research, maybe heart research. But spending good, hard cash on x rays of a lizard on a treadmill does not strike me as the most pressing concerns of government.

I would argue that instead of increasing their money, we should be decreasing their money. We also need to have oversight on where our money is being spent. There is a great deal of circumstantial evidence now that NIH money went to the Wuhan Institute of Virology. There is a great deal of evidence at least suggesting that the pandemic may have started there. We don't know for certain. I am not saying that it did, but there is evidence now that suggests that it might have. No. 1, there is no animal host for COVID-19. We have not found—of the thousands of animals we tested in the wet market, none of them had COVID-19. When you take COVID-19 and you try to infect bats, which is where most coronaviruses come from, what do you discover? You discover that COVID-19 is actually not very well infected in bats. The bats don't catch it very easily. It seems as if COVID-19 is most adaptive for humans. But if it came from animals, shouldn't there be an animal host that is readily infected by this?

The other evidence we have in the last couple of days is confirmation that three individuals at the Wuhan Institute got sick in November of last year, sick enough to be in the hospital from a virus that was previously undisclosed. They worked in the Wuhan Institute. We are told this came from the wet market lab from exotic animals, but not one animal tested positive for the virus.

We have an amendment we are hoping will be adopted by this body that says gain-of-function research, as defined by the NIH in 2014, will not be permitted in China. We will not fund it with American dollars.

But it is like so much waste in government, I think there is no reason to

be sending any money to China for research. They are a rich country. For goodness' sake, we are worried about them outcompeting us, stealing our intellectual property, and then we send them millions of dollars to do research. Why don't they spend their own money? Do we trust them enough? Are they open enough to tell us what is going on in the lab that we want to give them money?

I think, without question, they have not shown this, and now we are finding out that people were sick in the lab in November.

No more money should go to China for research on gain of function, which means increasing the virulence or pathogenicity or the transmissibility of COVID virus to humans. I urge this body to adopt my amendment, which says, from here on out, China doesn't get any money to create superviruses in a lab, and we should continue to investigate this because 3 million people have died worldwide. We have disrupted the entire world's economy over a virus. If it came from a lab, we need to know it, and it needs to be fully investigated.

VOTE ON BROOKS-LASURE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Brooks-LaSure nomination?

Mr. CRAPO. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. KENNEDY).

The result was announced—yeas 55, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 201 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Heinrich	Peters
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Reed
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rosen
Blunt	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Burr	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cantwell	Leahy	Sinema
Cardin	Luján	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	Menendez	Van Hollen
Coons	Merkley	Warner
Cortez Masto	Moran	Warnock
Duckworth	Murkowski	Warren
Durbin	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Wyden
Hassan	Padilla	

NAYS—44

Barrasso	Ernst	Lummis
Blackburn	Fischer	Marshall
Boozman	Graham	McConnell
Braun	Grassley	Paul
Capito	Hagerty	Portman
Cassidy	Hawley	Risch
Cornyn	Hoover	Romney
Cotton	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cramer	Inhofe	Rubio
Crapo	Johnson	Sasse
Cruz	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Daines	Lee	Scott (SC)