



Great Moments in Government Waste

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Every time some class-warfare Democrat or Charlie Brown Republican says we need higher taxes, I think of all the ways the government wastes money and I get angry because the political elite is ripping off the American people.

Should we send more money to Washington when the federal government is:

- Forcing taxpayers to pay millions of dollars for pro-Obamacare and pro-IRS propaganda.
- Doing interviews about erectile dysfunction for \$6,000 each and sticking the tab on us.
- Hiring bureaucrats to monitor school lunches and replace healthy turkey sandwiches with processed chicken nuggets.

And those are just examples of nickel-and-dime programs. The bigger outrage is that politicians have created costly, inefficient, and bankrupt entitlement programs that threaten our fiscal future.

But the small examples have symbolic value, and now I have something new to add to the list. The idiots at the State Department thought it was just fine and dandy to pay 35 times the market price for some Kindles.

“Hey, let’s stimulate the economy by paying 35 times the retail price!”

IPads are too fancy, Nooks aren’t fancy enough, but Kindles are just right for teaching English, the State Department thinks, which is why it bought 2,500 of them from Amazon in a \$16.5 million no-bid contract, NextGov’s Dawn Lim reports. That works out to \$6,600 per Kindle Touch — a lot more than the \$189 retail price. The plan, according to Kim, is to send the e-readers to “designated libraries and U.S.-friendly educational centers around the world.”

Since your paying for this ripoff, you might be a tad bit irritated. But that’s only because you’re an unsophisticated taxpayer. According to PR hacks, we really are getting a good deal because of all the extras in the agreement. Put down your coffee or soda before reading this passage from the report because I don’t want to be responsible for liquid on your computer screen.

Amazon is responsible for shipping the Kindles, providing 24-7 customer service, sharing data on how the Kindles are used to access content and pushing serialized content to the Kindles regularly. Amazon is also responsible for disabling “standard features, as as [sic.] requested by DoS, for the device such as individual purchasing ability.”

Wow, free shipping. That’s worth a lot. And the customer service surely adds a couple of bucks per unit, not to mention the extra pennies it must cost to disable features and provide electronic updates.

But let's not be too hard on clueless bureaucrats. Maybe they just don't understand high tech. After all, moronic government officials paid more than \$22,000 each for big institutional Internet routers hooked up to just a handful of computers.

It's almost enough to make you think government spending is the problem rather than the solution.

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