

Grammy museum in Mississippi gives U.S. taxpayers more blues

By [Steve Wilson](#)
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Mississippi is cornering the market on taxpayer-funded music museums.

First there was a state-funded museum dedicated to country legend [Tammy Wynette](#)^[2]. Now the state is going to have a [museum](#)^[3] for the Grammy Foundation in Cleveland, Miss., and it's going to be built with federal and state taxpayer dollars.

U.S. Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., in his annual [repo](#)^[4] [rt](#)^[4] on federal government waste, the "Wastebook," said the Grammy Museum played a sour tune as part of the list of 100 "silly, unnecessary and low-budget" projects, which add up to \$25 billion.

The federal government gave Delta State University \$1.25 million — through the U.S. Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration — to help build an access road and upgrade infrastructure in preparation for the 2015 opening of the \$18-million [Grammy Museum Mississippi](#)^[3].

The state also contributed [\\$6 million](#)^[5] to the 280,000-square foot [project](#)^[6], which also got money from private donations and is being built on Delta State's old golf course. The museum is scheduled to open Sept. 26.

"Senator Coburn's 'Wastebook' highlights 100 examples of silly and wasteful federal spending, but there are hundreds, if not thousands, of additional examples," said [Nicole Kaeding](#)^[7], a budget analyst at the Cato Institute. "Many of these projects represent a small portion of the nearly \$4 trillion in annual federal spending, but do illustrate a much larger trend. Congress fails to provide adequate oversight for federal outlays."

Allen Hammonds, a project consultant for the Cleveland Music Foundation and a board member for the nearby [B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center](#)^[8], said the museum, which will be the first Grammy museum built outside Los Angeles, will be a big boost for the Cleveland area.

"The economic benefits have yet to be determined, but when you build a project unique in the way this one will be unique, there will definitely result in an economic boost for the community," Hammond said. "It's not just Mississippi-centric, but it's a Grammy museum in

every respect of the word. It will deal with the complete history of recorded music and the award itself.”

The nonprofit The Recording Academy, which puts on the Grammy Awards, [receives \\$20 million, tax-free of course, for the TV rights](#) ^[9] for the annual awards show. It also has 22,000 members paying \$125 per year.

The music of the Mississippi Delta inspired hundreds of famous bands that followed like Elvis Presley, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones and others. But it seems to also led to a bumper crop of museums. The Grammy Museum Mississippi would be the third in a 50-mile radius.

In nearby Indianola just 26 miles south of Cleveland, the [B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center](#) ^[8] is for fans of the legendary bluesman. Just 37 1/2 miles up U.S. 61, the [Delta Blues Museum](#) ^[10] is the primary draw in Clarksdale.

Hammonds said the museums, along with those in nearby Memphis and in Arkansas, would complement rather than compete with each other.

“I serve on the board of the B.B. King Museum, and I can tell you we don’t see this as anything but a plus,” Hammonds said. “The same thing can be said for the Memphis attractions, the Stax (Records) Museum, Graceland, Sun Studios. All of those serve as individual attractions, but they will serve as group attractions. What we’re beginning to achieve here is a tri-state effort to celebrate our musical heritage.”