

Amendment 3320 – Eliminates the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Hollywood liaison and Ombudsman programs and prohibits the agency from purchasing additional rotating pastel lights, zero-gravity chairs, and dry-heat saunas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has spent over \$2 million (including some anti-terrorism funds) on a Hollywood liaison program to advise shows such as “ER,” “House,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Young & Restless,” and “General Hospital” on their fictitious plotlines. CDC’s grants went to a group in Hollywood run by a former CDC employee who actually created the Hollywood liaison program in the first place.

CDC has also announced plans to create a permanent morale-building ombudsman office, even though a temporary office (which to date has cost taxpayers \$369,920) saw less than one percent of CDC employees over a six month period — only 98 visitors involving 89 concerns — at a cost of approximately \$2,551 per person visiting or \$2,809 per complaint.

In addition, the CDC’s new Tom Harkin Communications Center and visitors’ center in Atlanta, Georgia was built with a fitness center that includes two “mood-enhancing” rotating pastel lights at a cost of \$2,000, two \$1,750 each zero-gravity chairs, and two \$15,000-a-piece dry-heat saunas.

This amendment would prioritize CDC spending by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary agency expenses. Specifically, the amendment would prohibit the agency from staffing and funding the Hollywood liaison program or its grantees, from hiring a new, permanent ombudsman, and from spending more tax dollars on fitness center mood-lighting or saunas.

The identical amendment was accepted by the House of Representatives on July 19, 2007 to the Fiscal Year 2008 House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations bill.

The amendment would result in savings of approximately \$400,000 in FY08:

- \$150,000 to \$250,000 by prohibiting funds for Hollywood liaison program;
- \$107,800 to \$140,200 for not paying an ombudsman's GS-15 salary; and
- \$1,000, \$1,750, and \$15,000 for each light, chair and sauna CDC doesn't buy in FY08

This Amendment Helps CDC Better Prioritize Its Spending and Mission

Prohibiting the CDC from funding these items will free up funds for the agency to spend on the life-saving work crucial to its mission. While the overall amount saved in one year from this amendment may not seem significant in the agency's multi-billion dollar budget, it is important that taxpayers see agencies held to some semblance of fiscal accountability — prioritizing the funding of real people over fictitious characters and practicality over luxury comfort — in time of budgetary constraints.

This Amendment Does Not Eliminate Funding for CDC

Nothing in this amendment cuts a penny from CDC's current budget. All of the funds appropriated in the appropriations bill will still go to the agency. Because the amendment is a limitation amendment, it merely prohibits the CDC from spending funds on the three categories listed.

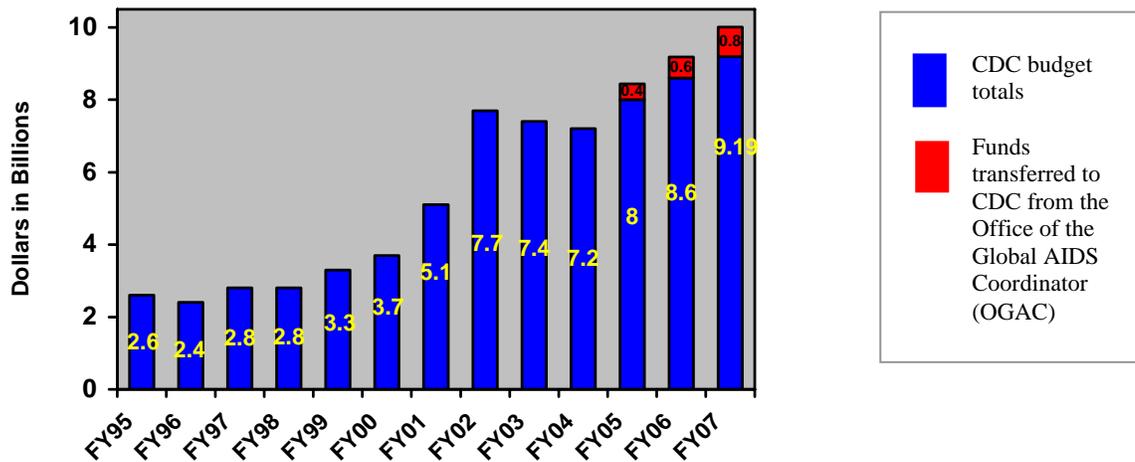
In the case of the Hollywood liaison program, the amendment will result in a savings in CDC's budget between \$150,000 and \$250,000. In the instance of the Ombudsman's program, a permanent ombudsman has not yet been hired, so the funds can be directed elsewhere to other support services or preventative health care programs that more effectively utilize taxpayer dollars. The amendment will prevent the CDC from once-again extending the

temporary ombudsman’s contract, which currently carries a cost of \$1,053 a day through December 31, 2007.¹ Because the CDC has already purchased what many taxpayers might call frivolous fitness center items such as the zero-gravity chairs and mood-enhancing rotating pastel lights, the amendment will not force CDC to sell the items. The amendment merely will prohibit the agency from buying these items again as well as send a message that such luxuries have little place in an agency tasked with protecting our nation’s health and biosecurity.

CDC Funding Has Steadily Increased:

CDC’s funding has almost tripled over the past decade, with large increases coming after the 2001 anthrax attacks and the 2005 avian flu scare.

Figure 1. CDC’s Budget by Fiscal Year (FY)²



¹ October 12, 2007, e-mail communication from HHS official to the office of Senator Tom Coburn indicating that CDC’s temporary \$259,369 contract with Carter Consulting, Incorporated which was to expire on September 17, 2007, has been extended through the end of the calendar year with \$110,551 in FY07 funds, or at a cost of \$1,053 a day.

² See footnote 8 on page 7 of “CDC Off Center” for detailed documentation of CDC budget numbers, http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=f016bd58-8e45-45d4-951a-b6b4d1ef3e70.

CDC Director Claims There Are Not Enough Funds for Priorities:

In a 10-page memo submitted to the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee on April 20, 2007, Dr. Julie Gerberding said that CDC needs a budget increase of approximately \$1 billion in FY08.³ According to press reports about her memo, Gerberding warned that bioterrorism, climate change, chronic diseases like diabetes, and emerging plagues such as drug-resistant tuberculosis represent "urgent threats that have become more prominent in the dawn of the 21st century."⁴

She said spending more money on CDC's disease prevention programs would save money in the long run by reducing a national medical bill that "threatens to overwhelm our financial resources."

Yet, there is little indication that the CDC first has looked within its current budget to reprioritize non-essential funding before asking Congress for more.

Evidently a Half-a-Billion Dollars for Communication Just Isn't Enough:

Dr. Gerberding, CDC's Director, also told the House appropriations committee in April 2007 that CDC needs more money to communicate health information to the public.

"The growing babble of junk science, unsubstantiated opinion and distracting debate that occupies an increasing proportion of cyberspace makes CDC's highly trusted role in distinguishing credible health information all the more critical," she said.⁵

³ "CDC Needs \$1 Billion Budget Increase, Director Says," Cox News Service, May 9, 2007, http://www.coxwashington.com/news/content/reporters/stories/2007/05/09/BC_CDC_FUNDING_1STLD_COX.html.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Id.

Yet over the last two fiscal years, the CDC has allocated \$523.276 million — more than half-a-billion dollars — to health information and services and health marketing.

Table 1⁶

	FISCAL YEAR 2006 FUNDING	FISCAL YEAR 2007 FUNDING	TWO YEAR FUNDING TOTAL
CDC Health Information and Service	\$218,905,000	\$222,653,000	\$441,558,000
CDC Health Marketing	\$39,180,000	\$42,528,000	\$81,708,000

Some of CDC’s Communication Efforts Are Wasteful, Ineffective, and Counterproductive:

The CDC’s recent communication efforts have included:

- Spending \$100 million to build a new Atlanta visitor center with a 70-foot-wide by 25-foot-tall video wall of rear-projection and plasma television screens “highlighting the world of CDC and public health. ...Public health messages are communicated through intriguing narratives alternated with visual vignettes. The installation serves as an introduction to CDC and public health for all visitors.”⁷

When the center was visited by CBS Evening News, the image the camera crew captured on the video wall was of a blue sky with big fluffy white clouds.⁸

⁶ Figures from “FY2007 Joint Resolution [CDC] Detail Table,”

http://www.cdc.gov/fmo/PDFs/FY_2007_JR_Detail_Table.pdf, accessed October 2007.

⁷ See “CDC Off Center, 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,”

http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=f016bd58-8e45-45d4-951a-b6b4d1ef3e70.

⁸ “Congress Scrutinizes Spending At CDC: Report Details How Taxpayer Dollars Funded Center’s Lavish New Digs,” CBS Evening News, July 2, 2007,

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/07/02/eveningnews/main3008131.shtml> (click on photos tab).

- Spending \$335 million taxpayer funds to pay for such health necessities as bouncy yellow balls and Hummer vehicle rentals for CDC's Youth Media Campaign "VERB." The campaign sought to encourage children ages 9-13 (so-called "tweens") to be physically active on a daily basis. Though VERB aimed to make "physical activity cool and fun for tweens," a survey published in the journal *Pediatrics*, and touted by CDC, found that certain subgroups of interviewed children, who had heard of the VERB campaign, reported they were doing one additional activity a day one year after the VERB campaign started. Though there was no proof that these children did one additional physical activity a day because of their exposure to the VERB advertising campaign, CDC claimed the study showed the \$335 million they spent to run ads and buy bouncy balls was effectively combating childhood obesity.⁹
- Funding the STOP AIDS Project of San Francisco with nearly \$700,000 a year in federal HIV prevention funds, a group which used the funds to encourage high-risk behaviors for high-risk populations. The CDC-funded group published a resource magazine for black gay and bisexual men of the San Francisco Bay area which noted it was funded "with a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention." One magazine issue included an article entitled "Party at BJ's," which explained how to have a "house party" and how much alcohol to serve.¹⁰

Despite the fact that research has demonstrated time and time again that drinking alcohol, especially in excess, is considered a risk factor for spreading sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV, CDC's prevention funds were used to communicate an entirely counterproductive message.

⁹ "CDC Off Center,"

http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=f016bd58-8e45-45d4-951a-b6b4d1ef3e70.

¹⁰ Winter 1999/2000 STOP AIDS resource magazine for black gay and bisexual men of the San Francisco Bay area entitled "Our Love," page 5.

- Announcing that obesity was the number two killer after smoking, causing 400,000 deaths a year, and generating huge headlines, only to revise those statistics downward by over 1,400 percent nine months later when CDC announced obesity caused only 25,814 deaths a year.¹¹

CDC-Funded Hollywood Liaison

Hollywood Liaison Funds Partially Funded by CDC Communications Budgets

When Dr. Gerberding requested an additional \$1 billion in FY08 and included a plea for more funds to communicate health information to the public, most taxpayers would not have imagined that might translate into an increase in funds for the CDC Hollywood liaison program.¹²

In fact CDC has used its health marketing communications funds as well as its bioterrorism communications funds to pay for a Hollywood liaison program that spent over \$2 million assisting with soap opera and fictitious T.V. show storylines.

Terrorism Funds Among Those Tapped to Fund T.V. Show Liaison:

Over \$2 million in CDC funds have been released so far for the Hollywood liaison program, including \$1.31 million from the Office of the Director's budget, \$338,500 from the Health Marketing budget, and \$80,000 from the Environmental Health and Injury budget.¹³

¹¹ See "CDC Off Center, 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," pages 81-83, http://coburn.senate.gov/ffm/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=f016bd58-8e45-45d4-951a-b6b4d1ef3e70.

¹² "CDC Needs \$1 Billion Budget Increase, Director Says," Cox News Service, May 9, 2007,

¹³ May 11 and 15, 2007 e-mail response from CDC official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office.

Most puzzling, in a time of limited federal funds and agency calls for additional funds to prepare for potential bioterrorism attacks, is the decision to spend \$51,500 from the CDC terrorism account (from the Health Education & Communication allotment), and \$78,386 from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry budget on the Hollywood program.¹⁴

CDC Director Says “Lives Are at Stake,” So Logically Taxpayer Funds Should Flow to Assist “General Hospital” Writers ...

According to news reports, Dr. Gerberding warned congressional budget writers that "the time for action is now" because "lives are at stake — especially those of the most vulnerable people in our society."¹⁵

When lives are at stake most taxpayers would not think of spending money on soap operas, but at the CDC watching and working with soap operas is part of the job description for those with CDC’s Entertainment Education Program.

The CDC Entertainment Education Program collaborates with “entertainment industry leadership to provide accurate depictions of healthy living at all life stages” and also works to provide “public health experts as a resource to entertainment industry writers.”¹⁶ It seeks to “raise awareness and behavioral change” by providing “accurate depictions of healthy living at all stages of life ... to entertainment industry leadership for possible inclusion in television storylines.”

In other words, the CDC spends tax dollars to ensure that when a made up character in a fictitious TV show talks about a health topic, he or she talks about it accurately.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “CDC Needs \$1 Billion Budget Increase, Director Says,” Cox News Service, May 9, 2007.

¹⁶ 2007 CDC Notice of Availability of Funds for Cooperative Agreement for the Development, Operation, and Evaluation of an Entertainment Education Program, CDC-RFA-HM07-702, <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/HM07-702.htm>, accessed May 2007.

Why CDC is Watching Daytime and Primetime Dramas:

According to the CDC, “Popular entertainment provides an ideal outlet for sharing health information and affecting behavior.” CDC says that since many Americans learn about health issues from television, “we believe that prime time and daytime television programs, movies, talk shows and more, are great outlets for our health messages.”¹⁷

A question taxpayers might consider appropriate: should the CDC spend over \$2 million to help Hollywood develop its plotlines, and does this type of assistance justify the use of terrorism funds?

Over \$2 Million CDC Tax dollars Spent So Far in Liaison with Hollywood (In Addition to \$1.5 Million from Three Other Agencies); More in the Pipeline:

CDC’s Entertainment Education Program began a collaborative project with the University of Southern California Annenberg’s Norman Lear Center on September 30, 2001, with \$300,000 in federal funding. The Lear Center announced its “Hollywood, Health & Society” program in an April 2002 press release.¹⁸

The Lear Center program has been the sole award recipient of CDC’s Entertainment Education Program, having won the first round of grants as well as the second 5-year grant awarded in September 2007.

¹⁷ CDC Entertainment Education website,

http://www.cdc.gov/communication/entertainment_education.htm, accessed April 2007.

¹⁸ “Public Health Expertise Brought to Entertainment Industry by USC Annenberg’s Norman Lear Center,” *USC Annenberg News*, April 2, 2002,

<http://annenberg.usc.edu/AboutUs/PublicAffairs/AbergNews/release20020402.aspx>; “AIDS drives plots on TV,” *USA TODAY*, August 7, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2006-08-07-aids-on-tv_x.htm; “A healthy approach to game development; Playing Games,” *Hollywood Reporter*, August 17, 2006, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/hr/search/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003019257.

The total CDC funding awarded to the Lear Center's Hollywood, Health & Society program to date is as follows:

\$300,000 in fiscal year 2001
\$400,000 in fiscal year 2002
\$406,900 in fiscal year 2003
\$281,500 in fiscal year 2004
\$188,544 in fiscal year 2005
\$158,500 in fiscal year 2006
\$ 18,386 in fiscal year 2007 for grant extension
\$ 25,000 in fiscal year 2007 for supplement to grant extension¹⁹
\$223,000 in fiscal year 2007 for new grant, awarded September 18, 2007²⁰

CDC Total: \$2.01 million²¹

The Lear Center has received funding from three other federal agencies in addition to the CDC. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) at the National Institutes of Health added additional taxpayer funds in 2006, along with the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the Health Resources Services Administration's (HRSA) Division of Transplantation.²²

Grants from these four federal agencies to the Norman Lear Center's Hollywood, Health & Society program equaled \$513,500 in 2006 and \$3.51 million from FY01-FY07.²³

The National Institutes of Health's NCI found "left over resources" in its end of the year 2006 budget and used them to send \$250,000 for the Hollywood-based liaison, according to the Institute's response to congressional inquiry. NCI, from 2003 through 2006, has spent \$1.25

¹⁹ In May 2007 CDC told Congress that it spent \$18,386 on a "grant extension" to the Lear Center. In an October 12, 2007 e-mail response to Senator Tom Coburn's office an HHS legislative affairs official noted an additional "supplement of \$25,000 beyond that reported [to Congress] in May" went to Lear Center with FY07 funds.

²⁰ October 12, 2007 email response from HHS legislative affairs official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office.

²¹ May 11, 2007 e-mail response from CDC official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office; October 10, 2007 e-mail response from HHS legislative affairs official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office.

²² Norman Lear Center website, <http://www.learcenter.org/html/projects/?cm=hhs>, accessed April 2007.

²³ May 11, 15, 18 and 30, 2007 e-mail responses from CDC and HHS officials in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office; October 10 and 12, 2007 e-mail responses from HHS legislative affairs official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn's office.

million on the Hollywood, Health, and Society program. Of these funds, \$1.1 million was “for program operations” and \$150,000 was “for evaluation of outcomes.”²⁴

The Hollywood, Health, and Society program received \$55,000 from AHRQ in FY06, an agency which also paid out \$55,000 in FY05 to the program.²⁵

HRSA contributed \$50,000 in 2006 and \$99,999 in 2007 to the Hollywood liaison grant and, according to the agency, its organ transplant experts were able to correct “misinformation” about organ donations in fictitious television storylines such as those on “ER,” “House,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Young & Restless,” and “General Hospital.”²⁶

CDC Spends Approximately \$6,000 per Television Episode Consult:

CDC reported that efforts by the Hollywood, Health & Society program under its cooperative agreement with the CDC have resulted in over 400 television episodes “which have contained public health information” nearly 90 of which “presented public health issues in major storylines.”²⁷

²⁴ May 18, 2007 e-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs regarding NIH’s contribution, in response to congressional inquiry from the office of Senator Tom Coburn. “NCI support of the program has come at the end of each fiscal year, with left over resources being obligated for the CDC contract at the end of the fiscal year.” NCI spent the following funds “FY03: \$300,000 for program operations and \$50,000 for evaluation of outcomes; FY04: \$300,000 for program operations and \$50,000 for evaluation of outcomes; FY05: \$250,000 for program operation and \$50,000 for evaluation of outcomes; FY06: \$250,000 for program operation; FY07 - The availability of funds for obligation to CDC [contract with the Hollywood, Health, and Society program] is still not known. ...NCI does not know if it will have end-of-the-year funds available this year or if funds will be available in FY08. If funds are available, the NCI support would still be provided through the [\$700,000] interagency agreement that CDC is now re-competing.”

²⁵ May 17, 2007 e-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs regarding AHRQ’s contribution, in response to congressional inquiry from the office of Senator Tom Coburn.

²⁶ May 30, 2007 e-mail response from HHS and HRSA officials in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office

²⁷ 2007 CDC Notice of Availability of Funds for Cooperative Agreement for the Development, Operation, and Evaluation of an Entertainment Education Program, CDC-RFA-HM07-702, <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/HM07-702.htm>, accessed May 2007.

In response to congressional inquiry, CDC reported that from September 2001 through August 2006, there were 281 television episodes requiring “CDC Topics and Expert Consultations” and an additional 29 episodes for the remainder of 2006 and the beginning of 2007 that received consultation (though it is not specified which of the four agencies performed these 29 consultations).²⁸ For \$1.78 million in taxpayer funds, CDC’s original cooperative agreement with the Lear Center produced CDC topics and consultations for a total of somewhere between 281 and 310 episodes. This amounts to spending between \$6,335 and \$5,742 to consult per episode.

Sole Award Recipient Is Headed by Former CDC Employee:

The Hollywood, Health & Society program (funded by CDC’s Entertainment Education Program) named Vicki Beck as its first program project director. Beck’s last job just happened to be running the Entertainment Education Program as a CDC employee.²⁹ In fact, not only had Beck run the CDC program, but she is credited with establishing the whole CDC entertainment program in the first place.³⁰

How Beck created an office of entertainment at the CDC, watched as a Hollywood-based grantee won the sole grant from the federal agency, and then months later found herself as director of that very same grantee’s CDC-funded program, is a case study in how it pays to be a former CDC employee.

In response to congressional inquiry, CDC reported that Vicki Beck’s CDC resignation was effective January 15, 2002, and though she was working for the Entertainment Education Program at CDC in September 2001 (when the Lear Center was informed of the CDC

²⁸ May 11, 2007 e-mail response from CDC official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office, “Attachment A - Television Episodes.xls” and “Attachment B - Upcoming Air Dates 2006-2007 TV Season.xls.”

²⁹ Footnote 6, *USC Annenberg News*, op. cit.

³⁰ Norman Lear Center bio on Vicki Beck, http://learcenter.org/incEngine/incEngine_Player_minimum.php?content=cm&inc=PRINT&cm=beck, accessed April 2007.

funding award), she “did not participate in any aspect of the review or grant process.”³¹

The Lear Center’s April 2002 release announcing its Hollywood program’s launch bragged that its new director Beck was “until earlier this year ” directing the Entertainment-Education Program at the CDC’s headquarters in Atlanta.³² The fact that Beck did not personally choose the Hollywood, Health & Society program (that would later employ her) as a grantee, does not overshadow the fact that while she has been directing the Hollywood-based program, it received \$2 million tax dollars from an office she helped create at the CDC.

Hollywood Liaison Grant Was Set to Receive \$700,000 in 2007; And CDC Likely to Send \$820,000 to \$1.2 Million Over Next Five Years:

Responses from the four federal agencies funding the Hollywood, Health & Society program indicate the program has received over \$3.5 million since its inception. But the Hollywood liaison program is not ending after receiving \$2.01 million from the CDC (including from its terrorism budget), \$1.25 million from the NCI, \$100,000 from HRSA, and \$110,000 from AHRQ.

In fact, CDC announced the availability of a one-year, \$700,000 cooperative agreement for 2007 to continue the work begun by the Hollywood, Health & Society program in 2002. The agency solicited grant proposals through June 7, 2007, for a non-profit, state or local government, or tribal entity to work with CDC in a cooperative agreement for a “project period length” of five years.³³ There is nothing that precluded the Lear Center’s “Hollywood, Health &

³¹ May 11, 2007 e-mail response from CDC official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office, “The University of Southern California was informed of the award on September 24, 2001. The budget year started September 30, 2001.”

³² “Public Health Expertise Brought to Entertainment Industry by USC Annenberg’s Norman Lear Center,” *USC Annenberg News*, April 2, 2002, <http://annenberg.usc.edu/AboutUs/PublicAffairs/AbergNews/release20020402.aspx>

³³ 2007 CDC Notice of Availability of Funds for Cooperative Agreement for the Development, Operation, and Evaluation of an Entertainment Education Program, CDC-RFA-HM07-702, <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/HM07-702.htm>, accessed May 2007.

Society” program from winning this next 5-year cooperative agreement. And, in fact, that entity did “win” the funding competition.³⁴

In response to congressional inquiry, CDC reported that the \$700,000 award was to come from four different agencies — CDC, NCI, HRSA, and AHRQ — with CDC contributing approximately \$220,000 of the total amount. CDC’s 2007 portion of the cooperative agreement was to include \$160,000 from its Health Marketing budget and \$60,000 from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) budget. CDC did note in its congressional response that, “it is possible that CDC will increase its funding allocation prior to and after the award date (September 30, 2007).”³⁵ CDC later reported that it awarded an extra \$3,000 to the program, resulting in a total CDC award of \$223,000.³⁶

Despite CDC’s report that three other agencies would join it in funding the \$700,000 grant for 2007, only HRSA had budgeted any funds. HRSA has contributed \$99,999 toward Lear Center grants in 2007. Of the two other agencies that are reportedly part of the interagency grant: AHRQ reported in May 2007 that it had no records “of any funds for this [Interagency Agreement] in FY 2007” and that “There has not been a request submitted” and NCI stated, “The availability of funds for obligation to CDC [contract with the Hollywood, Health, and Society program for 2007] is still not known.”³⁷

In October 2007, NCI updated its congressional response to indicate that “No funds were obligated in FY 2007 [and that] So far no funds have been obligated in FY 2008 and no decisions have been made regarding the obligation of funds for the Hollywood, Heath and Society Program in FY 2008.”³⁸ Similarly, AHRQ reported in October

³⁴ October 10, 2007 e-mail response from HHS legislative affairs official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office.

³⁵ May 15, 2007 e-mail response from CDC official in response to follow-up inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office.

³⁶ October 10, 2007 e-mail response from HHS legislative affairs official in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office.

³⁷ May 11, 15, 18 and 30, 2007 e-mail responses from CDC and HHS officials in response to inquiry from Senator Tom Coburn’s office.

³⁸ HHS Legislative Affairs email correspondence with office of Senator Tom Coburn, October 9, 2007.

it “did not obligate any funds related to the Hollywood, Health and Society Program in FY 2007 and has no plans to obligate funds for FY 2008.”³⁹

So, in total, the Lear Center received \$304,742 in FY2007 funds as part of its new five-year cooperative agreement to once-again run the Hollywood, Heath and Society Program.

When asked in May 2007 how much CDC planned on funding for the remaining four years of this new five-year liaison grant, CDC replied “We expect that CDC funding would be \$150,000 to \$250,000/year.” So together with the \$223,000 first-year award amount, over the next five years CDC expects to spend between \$823,000 and \$1.22 million to ensure that fictional television shows contain accurate health messages in their storylines.

“Best Interest” of the Federal Government?

The CDC’s recent request for applications (RFA) noted the project period length is five years, though continuation of awards for the entertainment industry liaison will be contingent on the “availability of funds, evidence of satisfactory progress by the recipient (as documented in required reports), and the determination that continued funding is in the best interest of the Federal government.”⁴⁰ The RFA does *not* mention how awarding \$700,000 for a Hollywood liaison is “in the best interest of the Federal government.”

How A CDC Employee Started A Hollywood Liaison Office (And Later Becomes an Office Grantee):

CDC employee Vicki Beck “established and was director of an entertainment education program” at CDC “where she conducted research and provided education and outreach to the entertainment

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ 2007 CDC Notice of Availability of Funds for Cooperative Agreement for the Development, Operation, and Evaluation of an Entertainment Education Program, CDC-RFA-HM07-702, <http://www.cdc.gov/od/pgo/funding/HM07-702.htm>, accessed May 2007.

industry.”⁴¹ Though the program was not specifically authorized by Congress, CDC appears to have used its broad mandate to disseminate health messages as a justification for getting involved with Tinseltown.⁴²

Beck’s role at CDC’s entertainment education program included “conducting research on soap opera and prime time viewers,” establishing an awards program for TV shows, and hosting an “agenda-setting conference for entertainment education.”⁴³

CDC Program Began With Soap Opera Awards:

While she was at CDC, Beck started “The Sentinel for Health Award for Daytime Drama” in 1999 to give awards to soap operas that accurately featured health themes. ABC’s “One Life to Live,” CBS’s “The Young and The Restless” and “The Bold and The Beautiful” were among the first to receive the CDC award.⁴⁴ The Award, which started in 2000 and previously went to four soap operas a year, has grown to also include the categories of prime time comedy, prime time drama, prime time minor storyline, and Spanish-language telenovela.

From cruise ship sanitation to genital warts, the CDC Sentinel for Health Awards “recognize exemplary TV storylines that best inform, educate and motivate viewers to make choices for healthier and safer lives.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Norman Lear Center bio on Vicki Beck, http://learcenter.org/incEngine/incEngine_Player_minimum.php?content=cm&inc=PRINT&cm=beck, accessed April 2007.

⁴² 2007 CDC Notice of Availability of Funds for Cooperative Agreement for the Development, Operation, and Evaluation of an Entertainment Education Program, CDC-RFA-HM07-702

⁴³ Norman Lear Center bio on Vicki Beck, http://learcenter.org/incEngine/incEngine_Player_minimum.php?content=cm&inc=PRINT&cm=beck, accessed April 2007; “Summary Report: Setting a Research Agenda for Entertainment-Education, May 23-24, 2000, Atlanta, Georgia, A Conference Sponsored by CDC’s Office of Communication, <http://www.cdc.gov/communication/eersrcha.htm>, accessed April 2007.

⁴⁴ CDC Entertainment Education website, http://www.cdc.gov/communication/entertainment_education.htm, accessed April 2007.

⁴⁵ “Sentinel for Health Awards” webpage at the Norman Lear Center, <http://learcenter.org/html/projects/?cm=hhs/sentinel>, accessed April 2007.

Federal Health Experts Judge T.V. Shows:

According to the Health Awards website, CDC and NCI experts take time out of their busy days controlling, preventing, and studying diseases to judge fictitious television shows for accuracy. Finalists that survive the expert scrutiny then move on to the second round of judging for “entertainment value and potential benefit to the viewing audience.”⁴⁶

What Over \$2 Million Tax Dollars Has Bought In Hollywood So Far:

CDC officials persuaded producers of NBC’s “ER” to place a condom poster on the set “as a roundabout way of getting the health message to TV viewers,” and made sure that a bioterrorism scenario on Fox’s “24” is accurate.⁴⁷ CDC also makes sure the proper federal agency is referenced in a show, trying to correct past mistakes where one show depicted NIH personnel doing tasks that would more likely have been the CDC’s responsibility.⁴⁸ And all these resources are provided to the entertainment industry free of charge, courtesy of four federal health agencies spending American tax dollars.

“We’ve focused on being a resource for TV writers who call us all the time,” Vicki Beck told one reporter. “They’ve got an idea, they want, say, a certain character to suffer from a specific disease, and they need to talk to an expert on that topic to see, in fact, whether that makes sense. We then put them in touch with whomever can best help them, whether that person is with the CDC or UCLA or NCI or NIH, wherever.”⁴⁹

Beck’s federal funded program has worked with writers from “ER,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “House,” the various “Law & Order” and “CSI” shows, “Star Trek,” “Desperate Housewives,” and numerous soap operas such as “General Hospital,” among others.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “A healthy approach to game development; Playing Games,” *Hollywood Reporter*, August 17, 2006.

⁴⁸ “CDC tries to ensure shows get their medical plots right; The agency just wants TV to follow standard doctor advice: First, do no harm,” *The Associated Press*, April 21, 2007.

⁴⁹ “A healthy approach to game development; Playing Games,” *Hollywood Reporter*, August 17, 2006.

From Federally Funded TV to Federally Funded Video Game Consulting?

The former CDC employee, turned CDC grant recipient is now looking to branch out to what she calls “new emerging media” such as video games, especially since the TV networks are putting more and more interactive technologies on their web sites.⁵⁰

Vicki Beck told the *Hollywood Reporter*, “For example, NBC currently has over a dozen games on its Web sites, including ‘Wheelchair Challenge’ on its ‘ER’ Web page, and we want to be a resource for the game makers, to assist them when, say, they need to know how a wheelchair needs to be used. We can put them in touch with the experts who the game developers’ writers need for that sort of information.”⁵¹

CDC is Not Alone in Funding Hollywood Liaisons:

While CDC and its three collaborating agencies (NCI, HRSA, and AHRQ) are paying for the Lear Center Hollywood liaison, federally funded forays into Hollywood do not end there.

Evidently tax dollars also supported a CDC “smoking prevention employee” from 2002 to 2004 to try and get Hollywood movie producers to cut back on on-screen smoking.⁵²

The Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) have all paid federal employees to outreach to Hollywood.⁵³ The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) hired Bobby Faye Ferguson in 2004 as

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Id.

⁵² Id.

⁵³ CRS Memo to the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security/Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, dated May 4, 2007, in response to congressional inquiry, regarding “Offices and Programs in Federal Departments and Agencies That Act as Liaisons to the Entertainment Industry.”

DHS's "liaison to the entertainment industry," a post that carried a yearly salary of over \$100,000.⁵⁴ She is still employed by DHS and spends an additional \$10,000 a year to cover travel, expenses, and equipment/supplies.⁵⁵ Ferguson previously helped fill the Hollywood liaison slot at NASA.⁵⁶

The Department of Defense has an "Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office" and a website entitled, "Wings Over Hollywood."⁵⁷ The Department of the Army uses its public affairs office in Los Angeles as "the entertainment industry's direct liaison to the United States Army."⁵⁸ The CIA has a "Publications & Film Industry Liaison."⁵⁹

Could Media Affairs Office Multitask?

No one is suggesting that CDC not answer questions posed of it from the taxpaying public, including the taxpaying public in Hollywood. In fact, the CDC has a media relations department that fields similar questions and requests for expert interviews from members of the news media.⁶⁰ The Entertainment Education Program at CDC functions to reach out to the "media" of entertainment. One possible solution that would save the taxpayers money, eliminate the need for a CDC entertainment office, and free up potentially millions of dollars in funding, would be to have CDC's media affairs office field questions from the entertainment industry. If many Americans are getting some health news from fictional television shows, as CDC claims, then the media affairs office seems like a logical nexus.

⁵⁴ *USA Today*, March 8, 2005 and March 2004 DHS job posting on www.usajobs.com, as quoted by the House Republican Study Committee's "Department of Homeland Security Hires Hollywood Liaison," May 2005, http://www.house.gov/hensarling/rsc/gov_waste.shtml.

⁵⁵ CRS Memo to the Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information and International Security/Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, dated May 4, 2007, in response to congressional inquiry, regarding "Offices and Programs in Federal Departments and Agencies That Act as Liaisons to the Entertainment Industry."

⁵⁶ *USA Today*, March 8, 2005 and March 2004 DHS job posting on www.usajobs.com, as quoted by the House Republican Study Committee's "Department of Homeland Security Hires Hollywood Liaison," May 2005, http://www.house.gov/hensarling/rsc/gov_waste.shtml.

⁵⁷ "Wings Over Hollywood, The U.S. Air Force Entertainment Liaison Office" website, <http://www.airforcehollywood.af.mil/index2.html>, accessed April 2007.

⁵⁸ "Movie and Entertainment FAQ's," U.S. Army Outreach website, <http://www4.army.mil/outreach/offices/losAngeles/questions/>, accessed April 2007.

⁵⁹ Supra footnote 38.

⁶⁰ CDC Media Relations, <http://www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/index.htm>.

The Army, as noted above, currently uses public affairs employees to work with Hollywood — perhaps the CDC could set up a similar service (without an on-location office).

A Role Best Filled by the Private Sector?

It is hard to argue in this day and age that television producers do not have an incentive, without federal taxpayer involvement, to get their storylines correct. Television shows that are entirely about medicine such as “ER” and “House,” for example, risk losing credibility with their viewers unless they get their medicine and the health storylines correct. Advertisers on those shows, including many related to the health industry, serve as another layer of built-in accountability.

With the multi-billion dollar television industry, million-dollar-per-episode salaries for TV actors, and millions of dollars of revenue from daytime and prime-time dramas, should it be a priority for taxpayers to have CDC-funded Hollywood liaisons to help producers get the health storylines correct?

If there is such an overwhelming need for a liaison to a multi-billion dollar industry, perhaps CDC could use existing personnel whose job descriptions already include connecting health experts with those reporting on health matters. Or, more fiscally prudent, perhaps Hollywood could fund the liaison itself. Conventional wisdom might cause taxpayers to ask, why would Hollywood pay for something if the federal government is giving it to them for free?

CDC Ombudsman

At a time of constrained budgets, growing threats of bioterrorism and disease outbreaks, CDC decided to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on outside contractors to help improve employee morale and the quality of life at CDC. It just happens that the two men hired under a temporary CDC contract are former CDC employees, who work for a firm founded by a former CDC official. The interim ombudsmen recommended that CDC make the morale job a full-time

post, a proposition that would likely cost taxpayers millions of dollars over the next decade. And the CDC wasted little time and began a search for a full-time ombudsman.

On October 1, 2006, the CDC hired two former CDC managers to serve as interim ombudsmen under a one-year, \$259,000 contract.⁶¹ The interim ombudsmen, Joseph McDade and Gerald Naehr, both work for Carter Consulting, a firm founded by CDC's former Deputy Chief Operations Officer Joseph Carter⁶² Their job was to serve "as an additional resource for employees to use in addressing their workplace concerns," to help improve the workplace and also the "quality of work-life at CDC."⁶³

CDC employees could only contact the Atlanta-based office seven hours a day, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.⁶⁴ According to *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC), "The idea of a CDC ombudsman came in part from discussions five former CDC directors had with Gerberding last spring when they raised concerns that poor morale and an exodus of top managers were putting the agency and its public health mission at risk."⁶⁵

Only One Percent of CDC Employees Contact Ombudsman Office:

In a short, e-mailed report from the CDC ombudsmen to all CDC employees, it was reported that from October 2006 through January 2007, the ombudsmen had a total of 26 inquiries involving 38 persons.⁶⁶ They reported that of the 26 inquiries, eight were about personnel problems (pay, promotion, or benefits); eight involved CDC policy or management systems; eight were concerns about the workplace environment; one was about office inefficiency; and one

⁶¹ "CDC to hire full-time ombudsman," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC), January 23, 2007; October 12, 2007 e-mail response from HHS Legislative Affairs Official to office of Senator Tom Coburn.

⁶² Carter Consulting, Inc. website, <http://www.carterci.com/history.htm>, accessed April 2007.

⁶³ "Subject: Report from CDC's Ombudsman Office, January 2007," e-mail from CDC Ombudsman Announcements, published by the AJC, January 23, 2007.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "CDC to hire full-time ombudsman," *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC), January 23, 2007.

⁶⁶ Ibid.; "Ombudsmen Program," e-mail from CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding, January 22, 2007, published by the AJC, January 23, 2007.

was about a technical problem. Nine of the 26 inquiries were resolved; six were referred to other employee resources at CDC; and work on 11 inquiries was reportedly still in progress.

In a March 2007 letter to Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), CDC Director Dr. Gerberding wrote, “Approximately 50 persons, or less than 1 percent of CDC employees, have contacted [the ombudsmen’s] office since September 2006.”⁶⁷

According to an April 2007 report from the ombudsman’s office, “During the period from October, 2006–March 22, 2007, we had 98 visitors to the Ombudsman Office (i.e., persons who contacted us by telephone or e-mail or came to our office to discuss workplace-related problems).” Collectively, these 98 visitors registered 89 concerns.⁶⁸

Taxpayers Foot Bill for Pricey Morale Consultations:

Out of the more than 15,000 CDC employees and contract workers, this contact rate amounts to taxpayers funding the ombudsman’s office for approximately \$2,551 per person visiting or \$2,809 per complaint.

The CDC ombudsman office staff also has visited ombudsman offices at the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the Tennessee Valley Authority (the nation’s largest public power company) “to understand how those offices operate and to identify the best approaches for CDC’s Ombudsman Office” and has met at least once with the CDC director to discuss problems and possible solutions.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Letter from Dr. Julie Gerberding to Senator Charles Grassley dated March 5, 2007, published by the *AJC*, March 23, 2007, <http://alt.coxnewsweb.com/ajc/pdf/cdc/gerberdingletter.pdf>, accessed April 2007.

⁶⁸ “Ombudsman Quarterly Report,” e-mailed report to all CDC employees from the Ombudsman Office, April 4, 2007, published by the *AJC*, April 5, 2007.

⁶⁹ “Subject: Report from CDC’s Ombudsman Office, January 2007,” e-mail from CDC Ombudsman Announcements, published by the *AJC*, January 23, 2007.

The Growth of Government — CDC Posts Opening for Full-Time “Ombuds”:

The interim ombudsmen recommended to the CDC director that the agency establish a permanent CDC ombudsman office with a full-time director to continue their work, and the director indicated that she planned to follow the suggestion. Dr. Gerberding’s spokesman told the *AJC*, “She’s both impressed and pleased with the work to date and is committed to moving forward with the next steps in the creation of the ombudsman’s office.”⁷⁰

On April 9, 2007, the CDC posted a job opening for a new, Atlanta-based CDC ombudsman to be paid at a GS-15 salary level. That salary level was listed as between \$107,800 and \$140,200 per year, which amounts to \$1.1-\$1.4 million over the next 10 years. According to the posting, “The incumbent will serve as an Ombuds for the CDC, and will interact with, listen to, and receive and analyze complaints, problems or questions from customers.”⁷¹

An Expensive Temporary Service Continues:

As of October 12, 2007, CDC reported that it “has not hired a permanent, full time Ombudsman. We continue to try to identify qualified individuals to fill the full time role.”⁷²

Carter Consulting, Incorporated continues to hold the CDC contract for the ombudsman services, though (former CDC employee) Gerald Naehr is now the sole contractor performing the Ombudsman function, according to the CDC.

Though the CDC’s temporary \$259,369 contract with Carter Consulting, Incorporated was to expire on September 17, 2007, CDC

⁷⁰ “CDC to hire full-time ombudsman,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (AJC)*, January 23, 2007.

⁷¹ USAJOBS, Ombudsman GS-301-15, Open Period April 09, 2007 to Monday, April 30, 2007, <http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/getjob.asp?JobID=56080704&AVSDM=2007%2D04%2D09+07%3A50%3A32&Logo=0&q=ombudsman&FedEmp=Y&sort=rv&vw=d&brd=3876&ss=0&FedPub=Y&SUBMIT1.x=0&SUBMIT1.y=0>, accessed April 2007.

⁷² October 12, 2007 e-mail from HHS legislative affairs office to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, in response to request.

has extended the contract through the end of the calendar year with \$110,551 in FY07 funds. That translates to a cost of \$1,053 a day.⁷³

[CDC-Funded Fitness Center Perks](#)⁷⁴



“No Sweat! [CDC employee] gets a sneak peek at the sauna before the opening of the new building and Lifestyle center.”



“As you lie in the zero gravity chair in the quiet room, you can watch a mood-enhancing light show. The chair takes the stress and pressure off your joints and back.”

In June of 2007 a report entitled “CDC Off Center” was released by Senator Tom Coburn reporting on CDC’s waste, fraud, and abuse. CDC Off Center reported that CDC’s Office of Health and Safety purchased \$200,000 in exercise equipment from the agency’s program support funds for a new Atlanta fitness center. Included in that total were the following costs:

- 2 rotating pastel lights (pictured above) at a total cost of \$2,000;
- 2 zero-gravity chairs at a cost of \$1,750 each, for a total of \$3,500;
- 2 “dry-heat saunas” (pictured above) at a cost of \$15,000 each, \$30,000 total.

CDC Defends Mood-Lighting, Zero-Gravity Chairs, and Saunas as Needed to Accomplish its Mission

Instead of admitting to some extravagance in its facility costs, CDC’s spokesman Tom Skinner was quoted in *USA Today* and in various other national publications defending the questionable items:

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Photo captions taken directly “CDC Practices What It Preaches,” *CDC Connects* (employee newsletter), July 19, 2006.

Another building at the campus houses the new fitness center, whose amenities include “quiet rooms” where workers can relax in zero-gravity chairs while watching a show of pastel-colored lights, the report says. Skinner said the buildings and their furnishings aren't a waste of money.

"We have first-rate facilities for first-rate employees," Skinner said. "After years of neglect, we finally have what we need to move forward and accomplish our mission."⁷⁵

CDC's "Modest" \$200,000 Fitness Center:

Keeping America healthy is part of the CDC's core mission. Many federal facilities, including Congress, have fitness centers for their employees to assist them in maintaining healthy lifestyles and many charge employees to use the on-site facility.⁷⁶ Some federal agencies have negotiated discounted rates for their employees at America's numerous private and non-profit sports and fitness clubs. The CDC choose to build a new state-of-the-art fitness center called the Lifestyle Facility, located inside a \$21 million, five-story building on the CDC's Atlanta campus, and give its employees free access.⁷⁷ It is not necessarily the building of a new CDC fitness center that some taxpayers may question, but the decision to spend tax dollars on some of the center's more lavish attributes, such as on light shows, high-tech (and high-cost) mood chairs, and saunas.

The 16,000-square-foot center features a large light-filled training room and over \$200,000 in equipment, including more than 70

⁷⁵ "Senator's report: CDC wastes millions on unnecessary perks," *USA TODAY*, June 13, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-06-12-cdc-coburn_N.htm.

⁷⁶ Congress, unlike the CDC, charges its employees for use of the gym.

⁷⁷ "CDC Practices What It Preaches," *CDC Connects* (employee newsletter), July 19, 2006; photo captions taken directly from newsletter.

strength-training and cardiovascular-priming machines, according to the CDC and the *Associated Press (AP)*.⁷⁸

The center also features: a 12-bike indoor cycling room with images of the Tour de France and other race courses flashing on the walls, an aerobics room with seven Gravity Training System machines, saunas in the locker rooms, and two “quiet rooms,” reminiscent of “Star Trek,” that allow employees to sit in zero-gravity chairs in a dark room listening to music and viewing a panel of changing pastel lights.⁷⁹ The architecture firm TVS used bamboo and river stones “to add extra, welcoming touches,” according to the *AP*.⁸⁰

In February 2006, in response to congressional inquiry regarding the cost of the new CDC buildings, CDC told Congress “The [fitness center] project does not fund any exercise equipment. CDC *will use current fitness center equipment in the new space*” (emphasis added).⁸¹ And yet, not even a year later, CDC admitted to Congress that it spent \$200,000 in taxpayer funds for *new* fitness center equipment.⁸²

According to the CDC, its Office of Health and Safety purchased the \$200,000 in exercise equipment from CDC’s program support funds. Included in that total are the following costs:

- 2 rotating pastel lights (pictured above) at a total cost of \$2,000;
- 2 zero-gravity chairs at a cost of \$1,750 each, for a total of \$3,500;
- 2 “dry-heat saunas” (pictured above) at a cost of \$15,000 each, \$30,000 total;
- 1 sound system, with eight “sound zones” at a cost of \$70,000;

⁷⁸ E-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, dated December 8, 2006; “CDC Opens Model Employee Fitness Center,” *The Associated Press (AP)*, November 27, 2006.

⁷⁹ *AP*, *Ibid*.

⁸⁰ *Id*.

⁸¹ February 13, 2006 HHS response letter to Senator Tom Coburn’s January 11, 2006 written inquiry, signed by Charles Johnson, Office of the Secretary, re: Building #20.

⁸² E-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, dated December 8, 2006.

- 12 bikes at a total cost of \$9,540;
- 9 “spinning certifications” at a total cost of \$2,249.55⁸³; and
- 7 Gravity Training System machines at a cost of \$2,895 each, for a total cost of \$21,143.⁸⁴

According to a CDC employee newsletter, the quiet rooms — which are to be made available by appointment — have “music, and mood lighting, and each has a chair that is designed with a ‘zero gravity’ seating position which helps to relieve muscle tension, increase circulation and reduce pressure on your heart and spine. As you lie in the zero gravity chair in the quiet room, you can watch a mood-enhancing light show.” One employee who had tested the light show reported, “They change from green to blue, very soothing. Color can really affect your mood.”⁸⁵

In response to congressional inquiry, CDC defended these expenditures:

“The rotating pastel lights, sound system, sauna and zero gravity chairs are facility attributes that enhance the overall health and wellness experience for patrons. ...CDC’s new fitness center adheres to Federal guidelines for fitness facilities and is considered a modest facility by government and corporate sector standards. ...The rotating pastel lights, sound system, sauna and zero gravity chairs are comparable to health and wellness attributes at Department of Defense [DOD] Naval Installations at Bremerton and Bangor, the Home Depot Wellness Center, the YMCA – Buckhead in Atlanta, Blue Cross Blue Shield and Merrill Lynch.”⁸⁶

Some taxpayers might question why a taxpayer-funded agency with a limited budget and a mission of fiscal accountability is modeling its fitness center on those of private, for-profit companies. In addition,

⁸³ Spinning is a type of exercise class that uses stationary bicycles. Presumably the certifications are for people to teach these exercise classes at the Lifestyle Facility.

⁸⁴ E-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, dated December 8, 2006.

⁸⁵ “CDC Practices What It Preaches,” *CDC Connects* (employee newsletter), July 19, 2006; photo captions taken directly from newsletter.

⁸⁶ E-mail correspondence from HHS Legislative Affairs to the office of Senator Tom Coburn, dated December 8, 2006.

the DOD Bremerton and Bangor facilities mentioned as models for the new CDC fitness center do not appear to have gone through the regular funding process, but were instead funded through the earmarks of their home state's U.S. Senator.⁸⁷ Earmarked projects are not subject to the regular federal oversight process and the process of earmarking has recently come under intense scrutiny, in part because it diverts funds from agency priorities to projects labeled home-state "pork."

Of the 15,000 CDC employees and contract workers, the gym now sees visits from approximately 600 employees a month.⁸⁸ The new facility replaced an older, out-of-date gym that had only three treadmills (compared to the eight in the new facility), and reportedly frequently had at least one out of order.

A CDC spokesman told the *AP*, "We want this to become a model for companies and others to copy."⁸⁹ The CDC newsletter predicted, "From quiet, meditation rooms for relaxation, to wonderful outdoor spaces for walking and stretching, to the massive strength and cardio areas, this center will turn heads for certain!"⁹⁰

Taxpayers might well question whether or not the CDC's mission of fighting and preventing diseases includes designing employee fitness centers that will turn heads, or be models for private companies.

⁸⁷ Document entitled "Washington State Military Construction Appropriations 1998 – 2005" from the office of Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), which lists two Washington State earmarks in Fiscal Year 1999: "Fitness facility, NAVSUBASE, Bangor \$ 1,117,000" and Fiscal Year 2001: "Fleet recreation center, Bremerton \$1,400,000" with a note that these are "Additions or Increases by Senator Murray," <http://murray.senate.gov/defense/milcon.pdf>, accessed December 2006.

⁸⁸ "CDC Opens Model Employee Fitness Center," *The Associated Press (AP)*, November 27, 2006.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ "CDC Practices What It Preaches," *CDC Connects* (employee newsletter), July 19, 2006.