

**Coburn Amendment #69**—To prohibit Urban Areas Security Initiative grant recipients from funding projects that do not improve homeland security:

**Background:** The CR includes \$500 million for the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI). This is a slight increase over the \$490 million that the program received in FY2012, according to FEMA.

Your December 2012 oversight report, “Safety at any Price,” spotlighted major problems with DHS grant programs and specifically UASI, including:

- 1) **NO CLEAR GOALS:** DHS failed to establish clear goals for how funds should be used to improve homeland security,
- 2) **PORK:** While the 9/11 Commission warned against DHS spending becoming “pork barrel,” UASI has become another pork barrel program providing public safety subsidies to little cities like Tulsa,
- 3) **WASTE:** The lack of clear goals has led state and cities to use UASI funds on wasteful projects—including pay employee overtime, to purchase computer, printers, and televisions, and even to purchase unnecessary equipment like under-water-robots.

**What the Amendment Does:** This amendment would prohibit the \$500 million allocated for UASI to be wasted on items that do not improve homeland security. Specifically, it prohibits funds being spent on: overtime or backfill pay, for security measures at Major League Baseball spring training facilities, to pay for attendance at conferences, or to purchase computers, computer-equipment or televisions.

## **DHS has Spent Billions on Grant Programs like UASI, but does not Know if We are Any Safer as a Result**

We have spent \$35 billion total on all DHS grant programs since 2003.

Within that amount we have spent \$7.1 billion over the same time period on the Urban Area Security Initiative – the program receiving most of the attention in our December 2012 report “Safety at Any Price”.

This bill would authorize \$500 million in more for the UASI (“you-ahh-see”) program—about 10 million more than the program got last year.

Last year, my staff conducted a year-long review of the UASI program. We interviewed FEMA and officials representing more than a dozen states or urban areas.

We found considerable problems with the program:

First, we found that DHS had not established clear goals for the program, which was originally created after September 11, 2011.

Second, we found that a program that was originally intended to help big cities prevent and respond to terrorist attacks had turned into a pork-barrel spending program with funds going to little cities like Tulsa, OK and Bridgeport, CT.

Third, we learned that a lot of the funding was being wasted on unnecessary projects.

## **Congress and DHS's Failure to Establish Clear Goals Has Invited Waste and Unnecessary Spending**

Because the DHS grant programs give states and cities wide latitude over how the funds are spent, federal dollars originally intended for counter-terrorism are being used on routine cost or questionable expenditures.

Many cities used UASI funding for routine expenditure like buying computers or overtime for law enforcement.

New York City used \$24 million in DHS grants to pay overtime and backfill pay for its police Department.

Tulsa, Oklahoma used its UASI grant funding to harden the county jail, making it less vulnerable to a terror attack.

Many other cities or towns are using DHS grant funds (including UASI funding) to purchase equipment or vehicles that may not be necessary. Here are some examples:

- Arizona officials used \$90,000 to improve security at a spring training baseball stadium.
- Many cities have used DHS grant funding to purchase "Bearcat Armored Vehicles", which should not be necessary for many police departments around the country. The small town of Keane, New Hampshire (population: 23,000) said it needed an armored vehicle to defend its annual pumpkin festival.
- Columbus, Ohio bought an under-water robot for \$98,000 using UASI funding.
- At a San Diego spa, DHS grantees used at least \$1,000 each to attend a training conference where they learned how to deal with a "zombie apocalypse."

## **This Amendment Aims to Fix the Problem of Wasteful Spending in the UASI Program**

Specifically, it prohibits any of the \$500 million provided for UASI to be spent on any of the following items:

- Employee overtime or backfill pay,
- For security measures at Major League Baseball spring training facilities,
- To pay for attendance at conferences,
- To purchase computers or televisions,

## **Congress Needs to Have a Candid Conversation with the American People About the Future of DHS and DHS Grant Programs**

With our nearly \$17 trillion national debt, the American people must recognize the limits that we face.

They understand that we will never be able to achieve 100 percent security without sacrificing our constitutionally protected freedoms.

We similarly can't mortgage our children's and grandchildren's future by continuing to fund unnecessary or ineffective programs even if they were originally intended to improve security.

Congress has a responsibility to review the mission of DHS and DHS grant programs like the Urban Areas Security Initiative.

Since this CR is bypassing the traditional process of committee authorizing legislation, this amendment is an attempt to try to prevent UASI funds from being wasted on projects that will not improve security.