

# Public Employees Party-Time on Taxpayer Dime!

Thousands spent on food and party supplies in violation of state law.

## ● Forestry Dept. = \$5,428 in parties:

The Dept. of Forestry spent \$5,428 on birthday cakes, drinks, party decorations, and gift certificates for their numerous retirement and employee appreciation parties.

## ● Aviation Dept. = \$25,000 party:

Party animals at the Department of Aviation spent \$25,000 of tax dollars for a party celebrating the 100 years of flight. Party defenders justified the party as part of the core mission of the agency which is, after all, to promote aviation in the state. State auditors noted that no documentation was provided that demonstrated the party actually increased aviation within the state. See further details. *State Audit 4-18-05.*

## ● Commission Chairman = \$12,900 in food/beverages.

The king of all social-party spenders is former Portland Development Commission chair, Don Mazziotti. Don personally charged \$12,924 in food and drinks to taxpayers to cover 174 social outings. One would think his \$185,000 annual salary and his \$1,250-a-month stipend would be enough. Once the expenses were made public, Don refused to apologize, and then proceeded to throw a \$2,193 Christmas party which he billed to taxpayers. Needless to say, these expenses were made easier to charge taxpayers, thanks in part to changes Don helped enact. *The Oregonian 6-28-05.*

● **Portland subsidizes nightlife:** You don't have to be a public employee to get your party lifestyle funded by tax dollars – you just have to live in Portland. In defense of Portland's giving millions in tax breaks to luxury condos downtown, City Commissioner Erik Sten commented "Having middle-priced rent available downtown is a good thing for the city, no question. Having younger people downtown is good for the stores, for nightlife." Yes, it is official that "nightlife" and all the partying and carousing it entails

is now a government-protected behavior worthy of tax subsidies. To view pictures of Portland's most luxurious condos and their generous tax subsidies, go to the website: [www.saveportland.com](http://www.saveportland.com). *Portland Tribune 11-1-05.*

● **Student parties:** Even our public schools are helping the party atmosphere when students at a local Salem school celebrated "Pimp and Ho" dress-up day. At least they're not celebrating Christmas!?! The final word on partying at public institutions goes to the University of Oregon, where students involved in the designated driver shuttle program were charged with drinking on the job. *Associated Press 5/5/05, Statesman Journal 7-9-05.*

## Half billion in cost overruns!

● The Portland tram costs have jumped from \$15 million to \$55 million – a \$40 million snafu. *Portland Development Commission Report 2/2006*

● The Interstate-5 South Medford Interchange project costs have risen from \$30 million to \$70 million. *Medford Mail Tribune 8-21-05.*

● The cost of the Portland Combined Sewer Overflow Project has soared from \$900 million to \$1.4 billion – a \$500 million increase. *Portland Tribune 4-15-05*

**DHS: \$3.4 Million Empty Office:** The Human Services Dept. wasted \$324,000 a year (or a total of \$3.4 million) leasing four floors of an expensive downtown building during 10 years of vacancy.

## DHS: \$55 million hole.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) had a string of troubles. DHS had a \$55 million budget shortfall which the agency director admitted was "inexcusable". *Associated Press 10-28-05*

## DHS: \$320,000 overpayments

DHS issued \$320,000 in accidental overpayments through the Oregon Supplemental Income Program, with some payments exceeding \$500. The overall error rate was 3.7%. *State Audit 4-28-05.*

## DHS: Manager on driving spree

A manager of the Commission on Children and Families was cited for unauthorized reimbursements and improperly using a state vehicle for personal purposes. The personal purposes included charging mileage for returning from vacation and a 122-mile trip to fetch a gift for a state politician's wife.. *State Audit 4-18-05.*

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***A DHS manager traveled 122 miles to get a gift for a politician's wife at taxpayers expense.***

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## Universities let \$1 million slip away

State auditors targeted the Oregon University System for letting slip as much as \$1.12 million of written-off debt that could have been collected. Of 4,700 debtors, 36% were listed by the state as having jobs. More than 70% of these job holders earned more than the federal poverty level -- one earned \$66,000 a year! *State Audit 3-22-05.*

### Are you on the State Party List?

**Forestry Dept. = \$5,428 in parties**

**Aviation Dept. = \$25,000 party.**

**Commission Chairman = \$12,900 in parties.**



The current Public Employee Pension deficit has been reduced but still remains at \$6.7 billion. It is expected by 2007 that pension costs will make up 28% of all worker salary expenses. *The Statesman Journal 10-5-2005.*

### **Ignored #1: ODOT disregards 21 recommendations .**

In 2001, state auditors gave the Dept. of Transportation Data Center a list of 21 requirements to improve their handling of sensitive data and internal controls procedures. A review four years later shows that nearly half of the recommendations were never acted upon. Only five recommendations were fully implemented. *State Audit 1-14-05.*

### **Ignored #2: Teacher abuse hidden.**

The Salem-Keizer School district never acted on student abuse complaints to former band teacher, Joe Billera. The district never investigated the matter or reported the complaint to the Teacher Standards and Practices Board. Now Billera is accused of new charges involving sex abuse with four underage students. *Statesman Journal 11-4-05.*

### **76 Portland employees make over \$100,000.**

Over 76 employees in the city of Portland make over \$100,000 a year. Some salaries are boosted by rampant overtime uses, which totaled \$21 million. In Gresham, one traffic officer racked up 1,000 hours of overtime. *The Oregonian 9-30-05.*

### **Taxpayers overcharged.**

Many Multnomah County taxpayers were charged 25% fines, instead of 5% for failing to pay their county income taxes. The County does not know how many taxpayers were overcharged. *The Oregonian 11-4-05*

### **Politicians before popes.**

Benton County Commissioner, Annabelle Jaramillo, refused to fly county flags at half staff during the day of Pope John Paul's funeral, citing church/state issues. Many local governments honored the funeral because the Pope was the head of a recognized state (Vatican) and there was an official presidential proclamation issued encouraging flags to be flown at half-mass. *Corvallis Gazette-Times 4-10-05.*

### **\$2 million lost in administration.**

Taxpayers would save \$2.4 million a year in administrative costs if Portland switched their police/fire disability system to the state. *The Oregonian 9-20-05*



## **Government Pork List**

✓ **Jail art:** Taxpayers have paid \$600,000 in art projects for the \$34 million Multnomah County Jail that sits vacant. *Willamette Week 8-10-05*

✓ **Public relations:** The Medford School District paid \$52,000 to a public relations firm to help build its image and communications. *Medford Mail Tribune 10-23-05.*

✓ **Green-grants:** City of Portland is handing out \$1.5 million in grants to environmentally friendly buildings. *Portland Business Journal 11-18-05.*

✓ **Parking lots:** Portland spent \$10 million building a downtown parking garage that sits mostly empty. Only 15 people have bought monthly passes and only 8 people a day buy day-long passes. The place is losing \$10,000 a day. *Willamette Week 11/23/05.*

✓ **Spenny Studies:** Oregon City is planning on spending nearly a million dollars just on studies for three building projects. *The Oregonian 11-24-05.*

✓ **Empty Water Facility:** A newly built Portland \$4.7 million dollar water screening facility has remained unused since 2001 because of start-up problems.

✓ **Business subsidies:** A new OHSU building near the tram is owned by a non-profit company of doctors. They will be exempt from property taxes and Tri-met bus taxes. These same taxes are paid by private clinics in the city that perform the same service. *Portland. Willamette Week 11/23/05, 11/9/05.*

### **\$900,000 in questionable cash.**

The Dept. of Justice Child Support Enforcement had \$963,000 in funds that could not be identified as to its origin or disposition. The overall error rate of

payment distribution to child support recipients was 3.77%, with some specific transactions raising the error rate to 14%. Hundreds of cases did not include required end-dates which resulted in many cases being overpaid beyond their limit. *State Audit July 22 2005.*

### **Failure to rent cost state \$327,000.**

The State of Oregon could have saved \$327,000 if the state had rented instead of owned metered equipment (used for tractors, loaders, rollers, etc.) giving further reasons the state needs to let the private sector be more involved. *State Audit 6-11-05.*

### **Contract problems add up.**

The Department of Corrections was faulted by auditors for nearly a million dollars in misspending related to contract procedure problems and software upgrade overruns. *State Audit 1-14-05.*

## **Government Success Stories:**

### **Device to save DEQ trips.**

Ted Kotsakis of the State Vehicle Inspection Program is working on a \$39 device that attaches to your car that will monitor vehicle emissions and notify DEQ of violations. People who have such devices would not need to go to DEQ or keep paying routine DEQ certification costs.

### **Private sector helps schools.**

The Meyer Memorial Trust and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have awarded the Portland School District \$10 million in grants. The Medford Costco donated a backpack to every student in Patrick Elementary. *Portland Tribune 11-4-05. Mail Tribune 10-10-05.*

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