

MAPPING YOUR EDUCATION TAX DOLLAR

by Adam Andrzejewski, Founder and CEO of OpenTheBooks.com — the largest database of Federal, State and Local government spending. This article is adapted from a talk recently delivered to a private policy group in Colorado.

I am hopeful and optimistic about our future. Why? Because our Founders knew that knowledge is power. Our Founders understood the power of transparency, and they wrote it into the U.S. Constitution. Article I, Section 9 states “. . . a Regular Statement and Account of Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.”

I founded OpenTheBooks.com with the vision to capture and post online every dime taxed and spent at every level of government — federal, state and local — across America. We have had a lot of success. Today, our database is comprised of 4 billion individual transactions, representing approximately \$80 of every \$100 taxed and spent at every level of government. Our Honorary Chairman is Dr. Tom Coburn, the former U.S. Senator from Oklahoma.

For the first time in history, we are harnessing three powerful forces: the Freedom of Information Act, big data, and the latest technology to slice, dice, and display government spending. It's transparency on steroids.

Not only do we open the books, we audit them.

In our oversight of public education we have found that it is not possible to fund a child's education if we are forced to fund an education bureaucracy. Money should follow the child and not the bureaucracy.

In *Forbes*, we published an oversight report showing the 30,000 highly-compensated six-figure educators in Illinois. We found 20,000 six-figure educators actively working and 10,000 who were retired on six-figure lifetime pensions.

Who are some of these Illinois

educators? The Lyons Township School Treasurer hiked his own pay from \$164,000 to \$296,000 in one year. He is now serving a nine-year jail sentence for stealing up to \$1.5 million over a 20-year period.

In Ford Heights, 96 percent of the families are in poverty and only 1 in 5 students are ready for the next level each year. Yet, the superintendent made a salary of \$325,000 last year — and that's a moral outrage.

In the New Lenox school district, taxpayer dollars are not used to educate children — taxpayer dollars are used for doggie daycare! The superintendent built an on-campus doggie daycare facility and gave his dog lifetime benefits. Just last month, the former superintendent was indicted by federal law enforcement. Now the superintendent's annual retirement pension of \$312,000 is in jeopardy.

We did an oversight investigation of the local junior college, the College of DuPage — the second largest college in Illinois. We found an email strategy from the president to the trustees trying to procure a \$20 million state construction grant by working to help the incumbent Democratic governor win re-election. By publishing this email, we were able to stop that grant.

We found that Dupage college spent \$600 million rebuilding the entire physical plant, but they built more office space for the administrators than classroom space for the students. The administration built an upscale French restaurant with a

world-class wine cellar and hired a French sommelier. Then, they billed off hundreds of thousands of dollars in fine dining expenses.

While the college claimed transparency, we found they hid \$100 million over a six-year period — including payments to their chief radio station engineer trading with his own company. We exposed this through the *Chicago Tribune* and the engineer was sentenced to pay back \$400,000



in restitution and spend eight years in prison.

You cannot fund a child's education if you are funding an education bureaucracy.

There's no better example of bureaucracy than the U.S. Department of Education. Republican presidential candidates always run on eliminating bureaucracy, but they never accomplish much reform. The DOE is difficult to unwind because of its size, scope, and power.

Here are some of our OpenTheBooks.com preliminary findings on the Education Department:

Size: the DOE ranks 23rd of 122 federal agencies and independent boards with 4,300 employees.

Highly Compensated Workforce: every ten years, the DOE pays \$5 billion in salaries and bonuses. The average annual salary is \$110,000.

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Total taxpayer annual cost per employee exceeds \$150,000 when adding in perquisites and pension costs.

Power of the Purse: nearly \$1 trillion in grants, direct payments, and stimulus money were distributed through the DOE over the past ten years. This figure does not include student loans.

Lawyered Up: if the DOE were a private law firm, it would rank in the top 75 largest firms in the country. DOE employs 512 lawyers, and 80 percent work in its Civil Rights division.

Armed and Ready: 88 law enforcement officers possess arrest and firearm authority at the DOE. They have purchased buckshot for their shotguns; 40 caliber ammo for their Glocks; body armor; and their spending on guns, ammunition and military-style equipment was up 25 percent during the last two years of the Obama Administration.

The DOE has nearly 1,600 'Program Officers' dispensing billions of grants and direct payments. What are some of the programs they fund?

\$2 million in grants and direct payments flowed to the Professional Golfers Career College to help stu-

dents improve their game.

\$2 billion in grants and direct payments went to 'colleges of cosmetology': where students receive one-year licensure for hair, beauty, nails and massage. Now there is a glut of beauty professionals, and some 'colleges' are charging more for tuition than Big Ten universities because of the federal backstop.

Who knew that the eight Ivy League colleges received \$42 billion in government subsidies, special tax-treatment and federal payments during a six-year period. The richly endowed Ivy League colleges should not get taxpayer funding.

The Ivy League is now more 'government contractor,' with \$25 billion in contracts and grants, than 'educator,' with only \$22 billion collected on student tuition over the last six years. In fact, ranked against the federal funding of state governments, the Ivy League colleges

would out-rank 16 states on the receipt of federal funds!

And the non-profit, charitable Ivies have gamed the system

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TAX-BREAKS AND FEDERAL PAYMENTS
INTO THE IVY LEAGUE COLLEGES,
FISCAL YEARS 2010-2015



HIGHLIGHT FROM THE REPORT:

TOTAL TAXPAYER FUNDED PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS: \$41.59 BILLION

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: \$25.73 BILLION (PAYMENTS)

SPECIAL TAX TREATMENT ENDOWMENT: \$9.56 BILLION (BENEFIT)

LOCAL PROPERTY TAX BREAK: \$3.7 BILLION (BENEFIT)

TAX EXEMPT CONSTRUCTION BONDS: \$1.7 BILLION (BENEFIT)

STATE GOVERNMENT: \$900 MILLION (PAYMENTS) EST.



for personal gain. There are 47 administrators who made more than \$1 million and two of them made \$25 million over a five-year period! That is not non-profit — that is a for-profit compensation package.

All of this despite amassing a \$120 billion endowment. The size of this endowment is equivalent to providing free undergraduate tuition for the next 50 years — without a single new gift.

We need a War on Waste. America Needs a Transparency Revolution!

Americans have no idea where our tax dollars are going. OpenTheBooks.com is the data provider of government spending. We've done the hard work, so you can do the fun oversight work.

We have the privilege of defending freedom and liberty in the greatest nation ever conceived in the history of the world. As a movement, we need to stop venting blindly and start fighting on hard facts. Because when we fight, we win! 

WE HAVE THE POWER TO CHANGE HISTORY

In 1978, Phyllis Schlafly gave my father, John Andrzejewski, a \$500 campaign donation for his Illinois state representative race. My father was a conservative Democrat and was trying to unseat incumbent George Ryan as state representative. Ryan was non-committal on passing the Equal Rights Amendment and was planning to become the next Speaker of the Illinois House. Because of the challenge from his right by my father, Ryan made an unequivocal promise to stop the ERA if he became Speaker.

Incredibly, Speaker Ryan never broke that promise and he did stop the ERA in the forthcoming sessions in the Illinois House. I was in the 4th grade at the time. Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum were absolute heroes to my family. I learned that a small organized group can change the course of history. Eagle Forum's support helped my family hold George Ryan accountable on this issue. Five years ago, I had the pleasure of recounting this story to Phyllis Schlafly, and she sent me a copy of the \$500 check.