



Washington State Auditor's Office

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Integrity • Respect • Independence

Common Cents Commendations

"Sunlight is the best disinfectant"

I created the Common Cents Commendations when I served in the Legislature, inspired by the late U.S. Senator Proxmire's "Golden Fleece Award," to bring to light cases that showed a clear lack (and occasional presence*) of common sense in the use of public resources. This is the fifth year of these awards, and my second year in the role of Washington State Auditor. The initial and continuing intent of the CCC's is to demonstrate Justice Brandeis' observation that "Sunlight is the best disinfectant."

Below are the 2014 CCC's:

Runners Up:

1. Lax oversight of Discover Pass Funds. The State Auditor's Office found that the State Department of Parks and Recreation was not adequately keeping track of the money that paid for Discover Passes at parks, nor did the agency have adequate internal control over fuel purchasing. These conditions create the potential for abuse of the public trust through misuse of public resources.

2. The State Auditor's Office found that agencies were not properly erasing sensitive data before disposing of their computers. In a performance audit examining how state agencies disposed of data storage devices, the State Auditor's Office found numerous instances of personal and confidential information left on equipment being sold to the general public. The cause for this was agencies' not having, or not following, their own procedures for cleaning data storage devices before sending them to surplus. This practice compromised taxpayers' private information and may have led to identity theft, or worse.

And the Winner:

1. The federal regulators' definition of "High Quality Liquid Assets." Proposed federal rules on what constitute solid, liquid assets would exclude local municipalities' bonds but include foreign sovereign debt. This could increase borrowing costs for local governments, and amount to a tax on local governments. These local government bonds are some of the safest investments anyone can make. This is a short-sighted maneuver that would be a win for Wall Street and a loss for Main Street. It will raise borrowing costs at a time when we badly need infrastructure improvements.

*Honorable Mention:

In the spirit of giving credit where credit is due, I wanted to acknowledge a program that actually demonstrated uncommon common sense: The Department of Social and Health Services' Division of Child Support. Because child support is a big issue nationally, we decided to look into it in Washington. Our initial look showed the program to be so cost effective that we didn't need to spend the additional money on a full-blown performance audit, as our initial research shows it to be a well-run program.