



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL TAXPAYERS UNION SUMMER 2010

DOLLARS & SENSE

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INSIDE:
NTUF's
BillTally Report
Exclusive:
Ken Blackwell on
Markets & Morals

Prepare to be ...
Outraged!

AND MORE

GOVERNMENT SAVINGS: NO PIPE DREAM

TAXPAYER ADVOCATES LIKE NTU'S own John Stephenson hear it all the time when they visit with elected officials – “there's no place to cut spending, we have to raise taxes!” We're not buying it, and we're showing them why. The NTU and NTU Foundation team is constantly developing advice and recommendations to policymakers at all levels on ways to make government less costly, more effective, and ultimately smaller. Over the years NTU and NTUF have provided detailed directions for fiscal restraint that can be followed and implemented on the ground, not in some blue-sky budget world of the imagination.

One recent example appeared on our blog, *Government Bytes!*, where we profiled a business consultant whose brilliantly simple auditing techniques showed four Florida cities how they were being overcharged nearly \$400,000 by the state's utility (Florida Power and Light, or FPL) for streetlights that didn't exist.

“In some cases charges for phantom services had been going on for decades,” the consultant, Mike Danvers, observed. “The Florida Public Service Commission was given the scope on FPL's activities with the overcharges; however, they turned their heads too. This is a terrible disservice to the citizens of our state.”

Want more? Consider NTU Issue Brief #176, in which civil engineer (and NTU Adjunct Scholar) Bruce Hollands explores in-depth an infrastructure we rarely think about – water and sewer pipes. Among his conclusions:

- Infrastructure for water, electricity, sewer, and transportation services is all deteriorating at a rate that will

cause all four to need replacement at the same time. At a minimum, this will cost \$6.5 trillion in the next 25 years.

- Corrosion of pipes costs water and sewer systems \$50.7 billion annually, and 17 percent of all water pumped in the United States is lost to leakage from corroded pipes.
- Federal policy over the past 50 years has encouraged the use of plastic and PVC piping that reduces corrosion and minimizes transportation, maintenance, and construction costs to municipalities.
- Pending legislation to address infrastructure renewal does not address corrosion problems or encourage use of more sustainable materials.

“Before simply pouring more dollars into infrastructure, U.S. policymakers must examine how to better spend the money already set aside for municipal water and wastewater initiatives,” Hollands concluded. “Trillions of dollars could be saved on future underground infrastructure renewal.”

Hollands' study has generated a great deal of discussion between other trade groups and his own, as well as among public officials – just the kind of robust debate over how to save, rather than spend, taxpayer money that NTU seeks!

You can help ensure your state and local leaders are part of this debate too. Check out our library of materials on spending restraint at www.ntu.org, including Issue Brief #176, *The Underground Infrastructure Crisis: Rebuilding Water and Sewer Systems without a Flood of Red Ink*. Let's make sure politicians see what they're missing! ★

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Solicitor General Kagan reached a different conclusion. In a hearing involving the case, Kagan was asked how she would respond to a hypothetical scenario where, instead of creating a movie, Citizens United had published a book criticizing Hillary Clinton timed to hit the stands less than sixty days before an election. The question posed to Kagan was: Could the government ban that book? Her answer was, in effect, yes. Ed Whelan, writing for *National Review Online*, pointed to the bizarre consequences of Kagan's reasoning:

As Chief Justice Roberts pointed out, the theory of the First Amendment advocated by Kagan on behalf of the Obama Administration ‘would empower the Government to prohibit newspapers from running editorials or opinion pieces supporting or opposing candidates for office, so long as the newspapers were owned by corporations – as the major ones are’.

What Kagan and her White House colleagues need to realize, and ought to profess, is that all of the guarantees provided in our Bill of Rights – including freedom of speech and assembly – can only be safe in a constitutional order that does not harm human autonomy. We must stand for free markets, but those free markets themselves are supported by respect for those inalienable rights with which we are endowed by our Creator. When those rights are undermined by government, destructive forces are unleashed against free markets as well. ★



Ken Blackwell is a member of the National Taxpayers Union Board of Directors and a fellow at the Family Research Council. His new best-selling

book, *The Blueprint: Obama's Plan to Subvert the Constitution and Build an Imperial Presidency*, was published by Lyons Press.