



Washington Waste Watchers win \$6 million victory for the taxpayers

Following the September 11th terrorist attacks FEMA granted \$12.4 million in funds to the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide counseling services to the victims of the Pentagon attack. One of the beneficiaries of these funds was the Community Resilience Project -- a program that has deviated from the purpose of the grant and offered dozens of

questionable courses and activities free to any interested resident of Northern Virginia. In October the program was brought to the attention of the Washington Waste Watchers and the Republican Study Committee. Congressman Tom Feeney delivered a floor speech on the topic and joined members of the Republican Study Committee in signing a letter to FEMA inquiring about the administration of the grant.

Waste of Tax Dollars

The questionable activities and courses include:

- The screening of three films from Iran about cultural understanding
- "A year long celebration of trees, gardens, and other healing places"
- An "Interactive Class: Using Drama to Improve Life's Performance - Life is a performance. This class will help you "perform" more successfully in life by teaching techniques actors use to improve their performances."
- "Stress Reduction & Personal Growth Classes based on Mindful Meditation Techniques"
- "Future Workshops to address diversity, peace, violence vs. non-violence"

This information is provided by the program's website. See more examples of the questionable programs for yourself at: <http://www.communityresilience.com>

Response to Congressional Spotlight

FEMA took the following oversight actions regarding the Community Resilience Project:

- ✓ ***Reduced request for a 15 month \$7.4 million extension to a 10 month \$1.4 million closeout of the program.***
- ✓ Detailed review of all extension and supplemental obligation requests.
- ✓ ***The Office of Inspector General is currently conducting a formal audit of the Crisis Counseling Program funding provided to the Commonwealth of Virginia.***
- ✓ Reiterated that all program funds and services must be directly related to the attack on the Pentagon.
- ✓ ***Requested Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) to perform an on-site review of the Community Resilience Project.***

As a result of the review FEMA also implemented changes in the administration of Crisis Counseling and Assistance and Training Program:

- ✓ Increased on-site program reviews by FEMA staff
- ✓ Improved monitoring of State grant applications and CMHS recommendations
- ✓ Changes to the application process
- ✓ Random independent program audits by disaster mental health experts

Congressmen Mario Diaz-Balart, Tom Feeney, and Jeb Hensarling are the co-founders of the Washington Waste Watchers, a working group to combat, waste, fraud, and abuse. For more information please contact Charles Cooper (Diaz-Balart), Myal Greene (Feeney), or Russ Vought (Hensarling).



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *108th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

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Except from *Report of Washington Waste Watchers*

October 1, 2003

Rep. Tom Feeney

. . . finally, the Federal Emergency Management [Agency]. A lot of my colleagues understand in the aftermath of tornadoes, wind storms, and the recent hurricane that came up through the east coast, we want an emergency management agency to help people in severe need as they are rebuilding their communities. We want to make sure that police and fire and fundamental services are taken care of. But in response to the most recent wind storm, do you know what the Federal Emergency Management Administration is funding in this part of the world right outside of the Capitol here? Free stress reduction and personal growth classes as a response to the hurricane. They ask questions like, does stress make you feel unbalanced? Do you sometimes feel sad, depressed or empty? Do worrisome thoughts make you feel overwhelmed? By the way, if so, FEMA, the emergency management administration, thinks it has got an answer for you. What does it have? Multicultural initiatives, presenting a series that will allow discussion of who we are, where we are from, why we are here and how we are doing, a Federal program supposedly responding to emergencies in our States.

Multicultural town meetings. We have future workshops to address the issues of diversity, peace and violence versus nonviolence. These may be worthwhile things, but do you think that your tax dollar in the emergency management administration should be spent on them? Finally, anger management programs are being funded with your tax dollars in the Federal Emergency Management Administration.

Lastly, I will tell you that they are using your tax dollars, supposedly used to respond to emergencies, to do things like a yearlong celebration of trees, of gardens and other healing places. Ladies and gentlemen, some of them on the Democratic side still want to raise your taxes.

We are going to go after the waste in government.
