

September 20, 2013

John & Stephanie Venrick
41250 250th Ave SE
Enumclaw, WA 98022

Dear Jack & Stephanie:

It seemed like such a great idea: A glistening, \$300 million hub for all of Washington State's "sensitive electronic information."

Approved in a piece of **stealth midnight legislation**, over the objections of a few fiscal tightwads, the State Data Center would be gloriously innovative—wonderfully efficient and a marvel to behold! Washington State government would be on the cutting edge.

And the big price tag? Well, that's the best part! In the world of government, bigger is better. Just pass the legislation, throw in the money, and see the wonders that follow!

Alas, if only it was so.

Today—four years later—this **Taj Mahal of data storage**, far from being a wonder of the world, is a wonder of waste. It's gleaming, for sure, but also glaringly empty. Three of its four halls—12,500 square feet each—are completely unused! And, unlike the real Taj Mahal, it's not even a tourist attraction.

I was amazed when I first saw this building. Quite frankly, for \$300 million, I expected more. **The Grand Coulee Dam was built for that price**—but that took 12 million cubic yards of concrete! And it actually produces power....

Even liberal Rep. Ross Hunter, who voted for the State Data Center, has admitted, "It's way overbuilt ... I think it was a bad capital budget decision." Better late than never?

Truth is, it's just one *more* multi-million dollar boondoggle approved by our legislators in Olympia. Sadly, bad budget decisions happen more often than we'd like to believe.

Multimillion-dollar blunders like the State Data Center are not just accidents. These decisions come from an underlying belief that government should be the leading innovator and source of enterprise, rather than simply a guardian of our liberty.

Whatever happened to the common sense that tells us you can't tax and spend your way to prosperity?

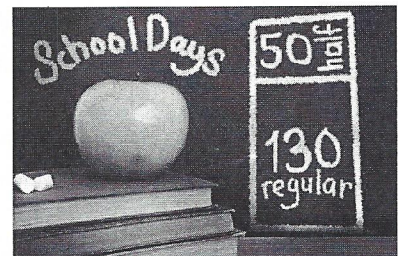
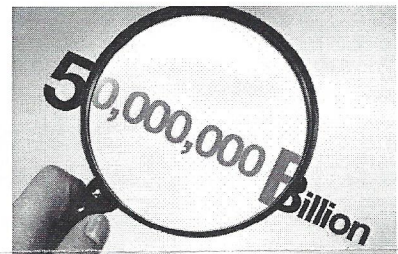
As we see time and time again, the mentality that government can create the next wonder of the world leads to incredible waste. And the officials behind it do not want their folly exposed—that might throw a roadblock in the way of their next boondoggle.

Unless this insidious cycle of waste and cover up is disrupted by someone willing and able to uncover the truth, it simply continues to grow. Officials are emboldened to spend irresponsibly.

It's hard to keep tabs with so much careless spending buried in enormous pieces of legislation. **It takes dogged pursuit of the facts to uncover the mess**, and it takes serious mettle to expose it. When you give to the Freedom Foundation, you help make this happen.

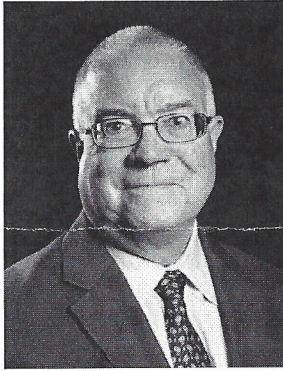
Consider some of what you have already helped to uncover:

- **A Ferry Tale:** Washington State Ferries received \$298 million to build five new boats—but never built a single one! The money is gone, the tax hike remains.
- **A Jail for No One:** Three years ago, Thurston County built a \$45 million dollar jail that still sits empty—and costs taxpayers \$430,000 *a year* to maintain.
- **Missing a Few Zeros:** The state claimed its unfunded pension liabilities were “just” \$5 billion, but we took a closer look and discovered it is actually more than \$50 billion!
- **Inflated wages:** We showed that our state’s “prevailing wage” rates on state-funded projects are often *double* the real market wages—forcing taxpayers to pay more and get less when it comes to new roads and schools.
- **Skippping School:** We found that 40% of Washington school districts skirt the law requiring them to provide 180 days of instruction per year by creating “partial days”—up to 50 per year!



What next? Here is some good news: a brand new member on the team will help us take this to a whole new level. He is a formidable asset for digging out the truth.

Former Washington State Auditor Brian Sonntag is our new Senior Fellow for Government Accountability. Brian served as Washington State Auditor for 20 years and is perfectly suited for this role.



Brian Sonntag

One of our state's most popular officials, he consistently stood up, even against his own party in the Legislature, to ensure taxpayer dollars are used wisely and honestly. *The Seattle Times* called him "one of the best public servants produced by this state." His record speaks for itself.

Among other things, he discovered **\$97.2 million** in wasteful spending at Sea-Tac Airport and \$1.8 million in waste in the Seattle Public Schools. His investigations led to real savings for taxpayers and the resignations, and even prosecutions of some officials.

The timing of Brian's arrival could not be better. One of our top projects this fall is to identify **cities and counties in Washington that are in debt beyond their means**. We will shine a light on jurisdictions that enjoy strong financial management and those that need improvement.

With Brian Sonntag added to our powerful team of expert analysts, we are excited about our upcoming work. Your support is crucial, allowing us to expose waste and hold government officials accountable on behalf of taxpayers.

With your support, we will expose the figurative Taj Mahals of waste, at every level of governance in our state.

Here are two other top objectives for this fall.

- **Exposing Union Undue Influence in Our Politics:** We are tracking down every political dollar spent in the 2012 elections to determine how much came from government unions. We've already discovered that some groups masquerading as minority organizations that are actually fronts for unions.
- **Investigating State Regulators' Attacks on Preschools:** State regulators are unfairly closing preschools that have operated safely for decades, making it more expensive for some parents to raise a child in Washington—and harder on their kids.

You may have seen that we're making waves with these projects. A recent Freedom Foundation meeting was delayed by pro-union, anti-worker protesters. Their obscene and lawless behavior was an eye-opener, but union bosses have reason to be concerned.

You are part of the Freedom Foundation team—a group of more than 5,000 freedom-loving Washingtonians who want to hold government accountable.

A contribution of \$100, \$250, \$1,000—or maybe even as much as \$5,000—today can help to save taxpayers from millions of dollars of waste. This is what our nation's founders intended: citizens freely associating, independent of government, to promote liberty and keep public officials honest!

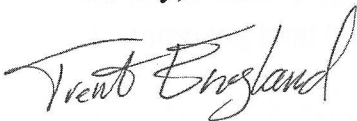
This is urgent and time-sensitive. We must begin right away as new local officials are elected in November and the next legislative session already looming on the horizon. So please send your gift to the Freedom Foundation today. We challenge powerful and entrenched interests at the State Capital, and need all the support you can muster.

You can count on us to do the hard work of exposing and changing how our politicians spend our money. Can we count on you to help fund these projects? I've enclosed a reply form and envelope for your convenience.

In the shadows of excessive Taj Mahals like the State Data Center, let's make this our rallying cry: **No more wonders of waste!** Let's make Washington State a wonder of efficiency, transparency, prosperity, and liberty!

Let's work together to improve self-government in the Evergreen State. Will you join us?

Cordially,



Trent England
Interim Chief Executive Officer

P.S. The Freedom Foundation has exposed waste and abuse for more than 22 years. With the addition of former State Auditor Brian Sonntag, we are becoming even more effective at exposing boondoggles like the \$300 million State Data Center in Olympia. But our work isn't possible without the support of people like you. Please consider making the best gift you can today to fight waste and abuse. Thank you.