

Homosexual Group Fought Against the Marriage-Amendment, Gets \$80,000 in Federal Earmark

by Robert B. Bluey
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Tucked deep inside the mammoth \$388.4-billion spending bill that Congress approved last month is an \$80,000 earmark for the San Diego Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center. The money was allocated for counseling services, but the agency's active political support for gay causes and adamant opposition to the Federal Marriage Amendment are raising questions about the earmark's appropriateness.

Citizens Against Government Waste, an organization that criticizes "pork-barrel" spending, discovered the \$80,000 earmark, which was included in the appropriations bill at the request of Rep. Susan A. Davis (D.-Calif.), whose district includes the LGBT center. Congress approved the 3,016-page bill on November 20.

The LGBT center's chief executive, Delores A. Jacobs, told HUMAN EVENTS the money would be spent on the agency's mental health clinic for counseling services, which range from helping people "come out" to assisting homosexual partners with problems. Jacobs said the LGBT center was the only agency in the San Diego area that could meet those needs.

But the center's involvement in political activity, specifically its opposition to the Federal Marriage Amendment, which defines marriage as a union between a man and woman, has prompted questions as to why a same-sex marriage proponent would be rewarded with an \$80,000 federal gift. Jacobs insists that the money won't be spent on the public policy operations at the LGBT center.

The center has been tremendously successful in securing tax dollars not only from the federal government, but also from state and local government agencies. In its 2003 annual report, the center says it received more than \$100,000 in funding each from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, California's office of AIDS, and the city and county of San Diego.

Earlier this year when the Federal Marriage Amendment was nearing a vote in the U.S. Senate, the center launched a "Marriage Project" with the goal of derailing the amendment. "We need EVERY community member to get involved in this important fight," said the center's April newsletter. "Defeating the Federal Marriage Amendment and promoting marriage equality will take all of us working together."

The center's website lists other legislation it has supported, including California's Domestic Partner Rights and Responsibilities Act.

When a federal judge ruled against a local Boy Scouts chapter, siding with the ACLU in a dispute over the Scouts' lease of San Diego's Balboa Park, the LGBT center responded with a celebratory note in its May newsletter. "We support the young men who wish to join the Boy Scouts, but not the organization's discriminatory guidelines."

Robert H. Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America, said the use of taxpayer money for the LGBT center is inappropriate. "Groups like this take money ostensibly to help people, and then turn around and promote a very partisan agenda," Knight told HUMAN EVENTS. "Even when they counsel people, they're giving them bad advice."

A spokesman for Rep. Joe Pitts (R.-Pa.), chairman of the House's Values Action Team, also questioned the appropriateness of the funding. "A grant like this getting through greatly concerns us in the sense that we never had time to review this omnibus bill," said Derek Karchner, Pitts's press secretary. "It was inserted at the last minute. It's something we need to look at in the future to make sure projects like this are not funded or we have ample time to debate them."

When confronted with these concerns, Jacobs, the center's CEO, told HUMAN EVENTS the money would be spent specifically to bolster the services offered by the mental health clinic, which makes up about one-third of the agency's operations. Jacobs said the clinic employs 12 counselors and services 1,200 people per year. Most come from low-income backgrounds, she said, and are charged a nominal \$20 fee.

"It can only be used for mental health services," Jacobs said of the federal funding. "There's no other purpose, intent or even allowable use."

She added: "We have a public policy department. Not a penny of this money will fund that. Not a fraction of a penny. Like most agencies that have multiple functions, we have a really clear system for what goes where."

Aaron Hunter, a spokesman for Davis, the congresswoman who asked for the \$80,000 earmark, compared the funding to a \$100,000 gift for the Senior Community Centers in San Diego. He downplayed concerns about the LGBT center's political agenda. "A lot of organizations are politically active and they still receive federal funds," Hunter said. "You have to have faith that they're separating the two."

Besides, he said, Davis simply made the request on behalf of one of her constituents, but she didn't insert the language into the bill "It's a Republican Congress, and ultimately they have control over the budget, and they put the money in there," he added. "So the Republican leadership must not have concerns about it."