

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2005

Body Armor or Boondoggle?

Dear Colleague,

Yesterday I offered an amendment (#2005) to the Defense Appropriations bill that would defund the e-travel program known as the Defense Travel System (DTS). DTS is an in house travel system for use by Defense Department and U.S. military personnel.

For the cost of this failed travel system, we could have equipped every combat soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan with body armor.


The federal government has spent \$500 million so far for this system that has not saved money and can not be relied upon to work. DTS costs \$40-50 million per year in operations and maintenance. The DTS utilization rate is about 15 percent. In order to break even, the utilization rate would need to be around 90 percent.

To support DTS alone – just the system – costs \$1,500 per plane ticket (this does not include the actual cost of the ticket). By way of comparison it costs, \$1,500 to outfit each combat soldier with plated vests. Meaning in practical terms, every time one person uses the inefficient DTS (at an average of \$1,500 per transaction based on over cost and utilization), DoD could buy body armor for one soldier in combat.

In reviewing the DTS system in 2002, the DoD Inspector General said it should be shut down unless a cost-benefit analysis was prepared that showed the worthiness of continuing the program. No such analysis has ever been done. At the end of the 7th year of an 8 year contract, a cumulative total of 370,000 travelers had utilized DTS out of 5.6 million annual DoD travelers. We also learned at a Congressional hearing that DTS performed less effectively than any civilian e-travel system.

It has come to my attention that contractors who stand to financially benefit by keeping this flawed and costly system in place have begun contacting Senate offices to oppose my amendment. I hope you will consider these facts and support my amendment that would save tax dollars that could be better spent protecting our troops.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
U.S. Senator