



PRESS RELEASE

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FEDERAL AND STATE OFFICIALS JOIN FORCES TO PREVENT STIMULUS FUNDING FRAUD IN OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – Today, federal and state officials jointly announced their cooperative efforts to prevent, detect, and deter fraud related to stimulus funding. Making the announcement were **John C. Richter**, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma, **David E. O’Meilia**, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Oklahoma, **Sheldon J. Sperling**, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Oklahoma, **James Finch**, Special Agent in Charge for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and **Steve Burrage**, Oklahoma State Auditor and Inspector.

As part of this effort, a new “one-stop” hotline has been created to receive reports of fraud, waste and abuse of federal stimulus funds in Oklahoma:

1-877-259-7337

(7337 = **S**timulus **F**unding **F**raud **P**revention)
(toll free)

With the unprecedented levels of funding being made available comes the significant potential for fraud. The single hot-line number was created to avoid confusion among the public regarding whom to call to report fraud, waste and abuse. With this number, the public (including state and federal employees) need not worry about whether to call federal or state officials, or which agency in the federal or state government to make a report of potential fraud. Reports of fraud will automatically be referred to the appropriate state and federal agency for action.

One of the best sources of detecting fraud is public reports from the citizens of Oklahoma. Whistleblowers are provided protection for reporting fraud, waste and abuse of stimulus funds. For more information, see <http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/whistleblower-information>.

“The history of government is replete with examples of waste, fraud and abuse,” said U.S. Attorney John C. Richter. “The best chance we have for preventing misuse of funds this time is by calling on all citizens to blow the whistle by calling this number.”

“Our aim is to encourage personal responsibility,” U.S. Attorney Sheldon J. Sperling added. “Conforming individual conduct to the requirements of law – not stealing public money – should be a relatively simple matter. As to those who may choose to ignore our message of deterrence, the public shame of investigation and prosecution await.”

“With several billion dollars of stimulus funding coming to Oklahoma, it is of the utmost importance that these funds be used appropriately,” said U.S. Attorney David E. O’Meilia. “Therefore, fraud prevention and detection is a high law enforcement priority. Since stimulus monies are taxpayer dollars, we intend to give citizens the opportunity to report suspected waste, fraud and abuse of these funds.”

“The goal is to prevent fraud and ensure the funding is used for its intended purpose,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Jim Finch. “When the funding is misused, it takes honest citizens to report it and responsible government officials to take action.”

Oklahoma State Auditor and Inspector Steve Burrage praised the cooperative efforts of the state and federal agencies to help detect fraud or waste in the stimulus funds coming into Oklahoma. “Fraud involving stimulus dollars will not be tolerated,” said Auditor Burrage. “By combining our efforts, we greatly improve the chances of not just discovering fraud and waste, but preventing it.”

Federal stimulus funding to Oklahoma through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is being made available in a variety of ways:

- Direct funding from the federal government to Oklahoma-based private and public recipients through contracts, grants and loans/benefits;
- Direct funding to tribes which will distribute funds through grants, contracts, subsidies, loans, contracts, etc.; and
- Funding to the State of Oklahoma who will distribute funds through grants, contracts, subsidies, loans, contracts, etc.

The federal government and the State of Oklahoma have websites that provide information regarding stimulus funding:

- See <http://www.ok.gov/recovery/> for details on Oklahoma’s funding
- See <http://www.recovery.gov/> for details on federal stimulus funding

In Oklahoma, State Auditor and Inspector Steve Burrage is responsible to direct, monitor, and oversee the auditing of the expenditure of funds received through the State of Oklahoma and ensure that the state audits agencies are in compliance with the regulatory requirements. More information on Auditor Burrage’s office can be found at <http://www.sai.state.ok.us/>.

In the federal government, most citizens are familiar with the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in investigating reports of fraud. In addition, each federal department and agency has an Office of Inspector General which is charged with the responsibility to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse of federal funds. The website and hotline numbers to report fraud to these agencies can be found at <http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/agency-fraud-hotlines>.

For more information, contact:

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