

Waste Action Alert

*A publication of the RSC Sunset Caucus from co-chairs Kevin Brady (R-TX) and Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)
Rep. Tom Price (R-GA), RSC Chairman*

Eliminate Taxpayer Subsidies for Political Conventions

November 12, 2009

Program or Item Targeted: Taxpayer subsidies for political conventions

One-Year Cost of Program or Item: \$33.6 million in 2008.

Background on Program or Item to Be Sunseted: Beginning in 1976, taxpayers have subsidized part of the cost of political conventions, with the money derived from the Presidential Election Campaign Fund. In 2008, the Republican and Democrat conventions received a total of \$33.6 million for grants to hold their political conventions (this is in addition to appropriations for security costs). According to [CRS](#), proponents of this funding argue that taxpayer subsidies are a way to “insulate conventions (or other aspects of elections) from undue individual, corporate, or labor influence and from real or apparent corruption stemming from private funds.” However, the host committees for a political convention—even if a political party decides to accept the taxpayer money—may still raise private funds for all sorts of activities at the convention (such as receptions and other entertainment expenses). Consequently, even with taxpayer subsidies, 80% of all spending on political conventions come from private sources. This is true to such a degree that campaign finance expert, and former FEC Chairman Bradley Smith, has joked: “I look forward to the day, by 2008, when Americans can turn on their TVs and watch the Nokia Democratic Convention, or the AT&T Republican National Convention.”

Why This Program or Item Is Wasteful: While the federal budget runs record-setting deficits (last year’s deficit was \$1.4 trillion, three times greater than any previous deficit in U.S. history), the federal government is providing taxpayer subsidies for political conventions. Taxpayers, and their children and grandchildren, should not have to shoulder the burden of subsidies for political conventions, when such conventions could be funded by the respective parties and the political marketplace.

MEMBER ACTION ITEM: RSC Members are encouraged to co-sponsor H.R. 2992, which prohibits the use of public funds for political party conventions—saving taxpayers \$33.6 million every four years. The legislation is authored by Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) and cosponsored by 26 other Members.

If you would like to participate in eliminating wasteful programs with the RSC Sunset Caucus, please e-mail brad.watson@mail.house.gov.

If you have a bill or amendment to highlight in the next Waste Action Alert please contact ryan.tronovitch@mail.house.gov.

Note: Not every item featured in the Waste Action Alerts is necessarily endorsed by the RSC. These Alerts highlight the individual initiatives of members of the RSC Sunset Caucus.

*“The RSC Sunset Caucus uncovers government waste and seeks to eliminate it,
working to sunset programs that taxpayers shouldn’t be paying for.”*