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## **“GOLDEN FLEECE” AWARD TO KNIK ARM BRIDGE AND TOLL AUTHORITY FOR A DECADE OF WASTE CHEERLEADING A BRIDGE IN ALASKA**

*Federal Taxpayers Already on the Hook for \$75 Million to Push for a Bridge that will Cost  
at Least \$1.6 Billion, Little Progress to Show for that Spending*

**WASHINGTON, DC** -- Today, Taxpayers for Common Sense awarded the [Golden Fleece](#) to the Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority (KABATA) in Alaska for a decade of waste resulting from its pursuit of a bridge in Anchorage. The Knik Arm Bridge would cost at least \$1.6 billion to construct, and is the less infamous but no less wasteful sibling of the “Bridge to Nowhere” in Ketchikan. Both received hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in the form of earmarks in the 2005 transportation bill.

**“KABATA has spent millions of federal taxpayer dollars on the Knik Arm Bridge, with virtually nothing to show for it,”** said Ms. Ryan Alexander, president of Taxpayers for Common Sense. **“The recent legislative audit calls into serious question the financial underpinnings of the project, and causes us to question whether KABATA is working in the best interest of taxpayers and Alaskans.”**

In the Golden Fleece report, Taxpayers for Common Sense cited the litany of problems regarding KABATA and the Knik Arm Bridge:

- **Hope Springs Eternal:** The Alaska Legislative Budget and Audit Committee recently reviewed the underlying numbers and concluded KABATA is relying on “overly optimistic” toll and revenue projections to justify the project.
- **Decade of Waste:** Federal taxpayers have doled out \$75 million over ten years on right-of-way acquisition and six-figure KABATA salaries.
- **Putting Taxpayers on the Hook:** In addition to a direct \$113 million investment, federal taxpayers would be asked to back a \$357 million loan and subsidize the sale of \$600 million worth of bonds, based on costs and benefits that appear increasingly uncertain; Alaskans would be on the hook for (increasingly likely) toll revenue shortfalls.
- **Definition of Insanity:** KABATA has been rejected from federal loan and grant programs a total of **nine times**, yet the project’s financing plan still assumes a \$357 million federal loan will be forthcoming.

- **Up, Up, and Away:** More realistic accounting recently caused the estimated cost to jump to \$1.6 billion, a \$500 million increase. Several factors – in particular the as yet unknown difficulties of building in the area’s soil and clay – will likely drive the price tag much higher, perhaps by as much as a billion dollars or more.

**“The nation’s transportation program is already awash in red ink, so we can’t spend billions on a project simply because it’s supported by expensive cheerleaders,” continued Alexander. “KABATA has had ten years to get this project across the finish line, and there are more questions than ever about the costs and benefits of the bridge.”**

The Golden Fleece award was created in 1975 by the late Senator William Proxmire. It is intended to highlight instances of wasteful spending. After retirement, Sen. Proxmire served as Honorary Chairman of Taxpayers for Common Sense's Advisory Board and passed the mantle of the Golden Fleece to the organization in 2000.

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