



ALLIANCE FOR
TOLL-FREE INTERSTATES

DELAWARE RIVER PORT AUTHORITY

Among other responsibilities, Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) owns and operates four interstate bridges serving traffic between Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Until the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's (PANYNJ) recent rate increases, DRPA's truck toll rates were the highest in the country for a bridge crossing. A March 29, 2012, [investigative report](#) by the New Jersey Office of the State Comptroller found "wasteful spending and mismanagement of tollpayer funds due to misguided priorities as well as weak or ignored DRPA policies, procedures and internal controls." The report reveals an organization whose flagrant disregard for its customers, misuse of public funds and disregard for following even basic tenets of public accountability, is a textbook demonstration of the need for greater federal oversight.

The obvious abuses at DRPA over a long period of time were allowed to continue with the knowledge of the state officials who were supposed to provide oversight.

Here are just a few of the report's findings regarding DRPA's operations over the past 10 years:

- \$1.5 million in payments were made to two insurance firms that provided no service or coverage to DRPA.
- \$440 million in "economic development" project grants were made, even though the DRPA Compact prohibits such grants if sufficient money is unavailable for bridge projects. Over the same period, DRPA had to cut back on bridge project funding and take on additional debt to fund economic development projects.
- The economic development project selection essentially relied on the recommendations of elected officials from New Jersey or Pennsylvania, and from DRPA commissioners. Projects were accepted without any evaluation of the benefits to DRPA. No project oversight was instituted.
- Contributions from the DRPA's charitable contributions fund were almost all made to organizations in some way affiliated with the commissioners.
- DRPA commissioners, employees and their friends and family members got free passage EZ Passes, which cost \$1.2 million over 10 years.
- DRPA totally ignored all procedures with regard to expense reimbursement, caps on expenses using DRPA credit cards, etc. The report found evident abuse, citing "meetings" at expensive restaurants and questionable trips and outings, some for elected officials responsible for Authority oversight.

It is clear from the report's findings that the obvious abuses at DRPA over a long period of time were allowed to continue with the knowledge of the state officials who were supposed to provide oversight, most likely because these officials were benefitting from DRPA's largesse.

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