

WATCH OUT FOR SNAILS!

QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** National Science Foundation
- **FUMBLE:** \$50,000 snail card game
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Withdraw the rule; work with Congress to address changes, if needed

Federal waste is on the rise, and unfortunately it is not moving at a snail's pace. NSF provided a \$50,000 grant to support a project named "Killer Snail: An Interactive Marine Biodiversity Learning Tool."³²⁰ This project is intended to target elementary school students through the development of "an eBook dramatic story told from a snail's point of view, and a mobile video game allowing players to experience and explore the life of marine snails."³²¹

Thus far, it appears the grant money has only yielded a physical game. *Killer Snails: Assassins of the Seas* is a card game in which the player has to "collect predatory cone snails that prey on fish, worms and other mollusks, to build a venom arsenal of potentially life-saving peptide toxins. Race your opponents to create the winning venom cocktail and win the game!"³²²

While support for technological innovations in education should be driven by state and local funding along with private enterprise, the federal government also supports the use of technology in education through DOEd. For example, DOEd's Small Business Innovation Research program within the Institute of Education Sciences provides more than \$1 million annually to "small business firms and partners for the research and development of commercially viable education technology products."³²³ Additionally, in October 2014

DOEd and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy hosted an Ed Games week that culminated with the White House Education Game Jam.³²⁴ The event brought together "more than 100 game developers plus 35 teachers, learning researchers, and students gathered together to develop compelling educational software to help teach complex school subjects."³²⁵

The Killer Snail project is hardly a compelling use of NSF funds, especially when the national debt continues to climb to almost \$19 trillion and other agencies support similar causes. Although creativity is admirable, one has to question the allocation of taxpayer funds to a video game and e-book about a snail, no matter how lethal it may be.

RECOVERY

Congress should work with NSF to ensure it does not fund an area already funded by another part of the federal government. Education activities should be handled by DOEd. The money received from American taxpayers should be utilized in the most efficient way possible, which means federal agencies and departments should avoid duplicative funding.

For more information, please visit:

[NSF: I-Corps: Killer Snail: An interactive marine biodiversity learning tool](#)

[American Museum of Natural History: Teen Programs: Killer Snails](#)