



Rhode Island General Assembly

Office of the House Minority Leader

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Minority Leader Patricia Morgan Renews Calls for School Safety Funding

STATE HOUSE -- House Minority Leader Patricia Morgan (R-District 26 Coventry, Warwick, W. Warwick) is once again calling on the Rhode Island Office of Attorney General to release legal settlement funds for school safety upgrades.

“We must work now to improve school security in our state. Our children, teachers and school staff deserve to go to schools that have security measures in place that prevent future tragedies,” said Leader Morgan. “The remaining Google funds are a perfect use for these essential upgrades, which could include bulletproof glass, containment areas, and advanced lock systems.”

The Office of Attorney General received \$60 million from a \$230 million settlement with Google in 2012. It has used the money for a variety of capital improvements, including new buildings and technology updates. The spending includes a new “customer service center” costing nearly \$15 million from the funds; payment of recurring operating expenses, such as, guards, phone, sewer, water, gas, heating, cleaning services, and pest control; over \$100,000 for generator rental, office promotional materials and many other less than critical items.

Leader Morgan commented on the spending. “The Attorney General seems to have spent this huge windfall, which was intended for law-enforcement and safety initiatives, on non-essential and often frivolous items. The new customer service center is an example. Until now, our state has done without a dedicated center. School security is undoubtedly a higher priority. And yet, to date, that office has failed to comment, let alone act to protect our schools.”

Spending from the Google funds was detailed in documents received by the House Minority Office. The Attorney General has purchased \$79,000 worth of top of the line Microsoft Surface Pro tablets. The office separately purchased accompanying Microsoft pen accessories and additional devices. In another charge, the office spent \$3,100 on lapel pins through All Things Considered Promotions. “It seems that the Attorney General is prioritizing inconsequential and wasteful spending over our children’s safety,” said Leader Morgan.

Roughly \$36.9 million of the funds remain unspent, but this does not consider encumbered funds that are committed to be spent. The state budget office estimates that about \$23 million is still available. Of all departments that received settlement funds, about \$33 million is unused.

“Every district is unique and there is no blanket solution to school security. We should make this remaining money available to school districts across the state, allowing principals and superintendents the flexibility to use it on safety measures best tailored to their circumstances.”

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