

## Devaney Lecture

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On Thursday March 7, 2013, The Levitt Center's Security Program sponsored a lecture by former Inspector General of the Department of the Interior, Earl Devaney, entitled "How to Protect \$800,000,000,000 in Public Spending: Oversight of the Stimulus". The director of the program, and Maynard-Cox Professor of Government and Law, Frank Anechiarico, introduced Devaney and spoke of his accomplishments during his public sector career. He has served in Massachusetts State Police, the Secret Service, at the Environmental Protection Agency, and most recently at the Department of the Interior. At Interior, Devaney oversaw a program that sought to drastically reduce fraud when overseeing the implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 or more widely-known as the stimulus package.

Devaney and his team were able to decrease the amount of fraud by instituting a computer program that tracked the grants distributed by the government. This program had been used by Maryland governor, Martin O'Malley to track grants in his state. Devaney contacted O'Malley's contractor who built a similar program for Interior. This was the first program of its kind built for a federal agency. This advance in technology allowed the department to reduce fraud to less than one percent of the grants under the stimulus package by allowing citizens to see where the funds are going and how they are being used in neighborhoods. Devaney emphasized how it easy it can be for average people to use this system. One only has to type in a zip code to see what projects in that area received stimulus funds and the amount of those funds. This program not only serves to make legislation and implementation more transparent, but it can drastically decrease the potential occurrence of fraud.

Devaney believes that this program lessens the amount of potential fraud by creating accountability to recipients of these funds. This central portal where citizens can access information about organizations that received stimulus money signals a revolution in government transparency. It allows agencies to shift their focus from investigating the suspicious use of funds towards methods of preventing fraud before it happens. The analysis of projects became easier as well because the rate of fraud drastically decreased and required less need to examine suspect projects more closely.

By allowing citizens to find information about funding projects that occur in their neighborhoods, citizens can hold these organizations accountable for how they spend tax payer money. Devaney sees great potential for this program. Although he thinks that the program could become more user friendly, he has seen its benefits of decreasing the rate of fraud and shifting the focus of law enforcement from investigation to prevention. Furthermore, Devaney believes this program can be implemented in other areas of government which could reduce waste in tax payer funded projects and allow for greater government transparency.

