



WILPF CALL FOR PEACE RESOURCE GUIDE # 3 (Feb2024)

National Military Spending and YOUR Town. What to do about it!

This federal fiscal year (Oct 2023- Sept 2024) the US military budget as appropriated by Congress to the Pentagon is 870 billion dollars. There is another approximately 500 billion dollars that will be spent on war which is “hidden” in other Federal agencies budgets, such as on nuclear weapons in the Department of Energy, the CIA and interest paid on the increasing war debt. Let’s add those 2 amounts and say 1.37 trillion dollars is being spent on waging war this year, and where did that money come from? from YOU, the tax payer. But wouldn’t you rather that the taxes your town’s tax-payers paid were used to support programs that benefited your town instead of a fancy jet fighter plane or nuclear submarine weaponized to kill?

This resource guide explains how to find out the dollar amount collected from your community’s tax payers that are going into the US military budget and what that amount of money could buy for your community. Then this guide describes how to share this information visually and noticeably with your fellow tax-payers.

Using the National Priorities website to find out how much money your town contributed to the Pentagon’s \$870 billion budget this year

The Institute of Policy Studies has created an amazing website called “NationalPriorities.org”, you can read their mission here: <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/about/mission/> . Using lots of government and public documents they have accumulated a very comprehensive database about military spending by Federal agencies, taxes paid by US taxpayers and typical civilian goods’ costs and salaries. They have built a tool in their website which enables you to find out how much taxpayers money was spent in a year in your town or county or state on a variety of Federal projects such as” Nuclear Weapons and Associated Costs” or “War in 2019”. What this “trade-off” tool shows you, for example, is the dollar amount your town’s taxpayers spent on “Military Contractors” in 2019. It also lists a number of civilian projects that could have been funded with that amount of money, such as many infrastructure jobs for a year.

Here is the webpage where you start your trade-off exploration:

<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/trade-offs/> Go to the two small windows on the left hand side where you use the drop-down lists to choose a location to focus on (such as your hometown). You then will find the cost of a particular military project.

<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/interactive-data/trade-offs/?state=19&program=32&place=1921000> will also show you, for example, how much money the taxpayers in Des Moines, Iowa have paid for war since 2001. The webpage will also show what this \$2.12 B could have bought, e.g. 29,619 elementary school teachers for 1 year or 63,455 scholarships for university students for 4 years

How to inform the public about the military spending supported by taxpayers in your town

The next step in your action is to inform your community about their tax money being spent on weapons and waging war. In a quick and visible way the passers-by will see the basic comparison between military and

civilian budgets. Following an idea from the Grannies Peace Brigade of Philadelphia, PA, we suggest you write the data on large colored sheets of paper and hang the sheets from a clothesline which you stretch across a public space such as between 2 lampposts in a town square or across a corner of a public park, i.e. anywhere you know the public will be walking by. The Grannies had their sheets laminated to add strength and to withstand some rain.

It is up to you to decide what data you want to portray, but make the numbers and text large enough that someone walking by can read them from some yards away. This clothesline and sheets strategy assumes you will have WILPFers standing by to engage the public in conversation about the amount of military spending supported by your town and how that same amount of money could have been spent for human needs in town. (See the photo below.) In addition, an informative leaflet needs to be distributed so that passersby have information to keep. The Grannies found that many people took the leaflet, especially after seeing the display. Your goal is to get their attention and inform them of the enormous amounts of tax-payers' money spent on weapons and war.

The follow up action to this Clothesline project may be to visit or call your town officials to request a meeting to discuss U.S. military spending and how they (the officials) might influence your Congressional Reps who vote on the Federal Military Budget. That could be via a resolution that you develop for your town council to pass. Check this website some sample resolutions: <https://movethemoneyforhumanneeds.org/downloads/>



Photo title: The Greater Philadelphia branch created a clothesline from which hung fact sheets describing how much money Philadelphia taxpayers pay towards the military in a year and the items that money could have bought instead.
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