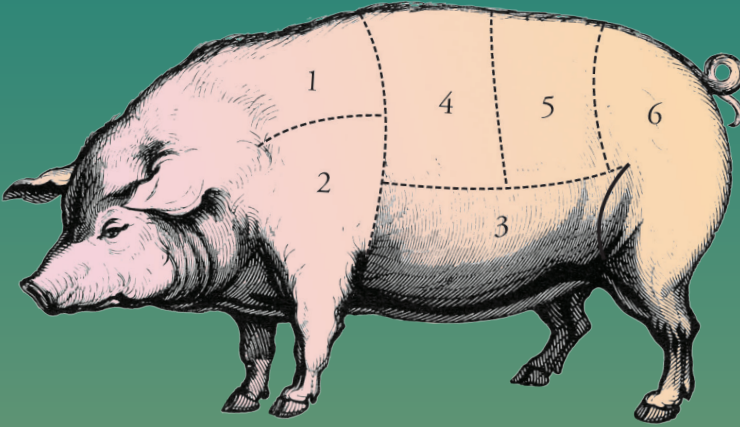


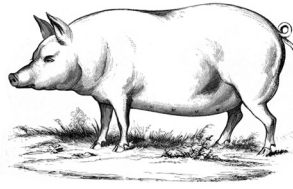
CITIZENS AGAINST GOVERNMENT WASTE



PRIME CUTS[®]

— SUMMARY —

NOVEMBER 2025



INTRODUCTION

The United States is headed toward fiscal insolvency.

The national debt has [surpassed](#) \$38 trillion for the first time and is set to grow at a record pace over the next decade. A January 17, 2025, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) budget and economic outlook [report](#) forecast an increase in the budget deficit from \$1.9 trillion in fiscal year (FY) 2025 to \$2.7 trillion by 2035.

The annual deficits during this period will add \$21.8 trillion to the national debt, an average of \$2.2 trillion annually, bringing it to \$59.3 trillion by FY 2035. According to the CBO, the deficit in 2035 will reach 6.1 percent of gross domestic product, “significantly more than the 3.8 percent that deficits have averaged over the past 50 years.” CBO also noted that federal debt, “held by the public rises from 100 percent of GDP this year [2025] to 118 percent in 2035, surpassing its previous high of 106 percent of GDP in 1946.”

The United States is not in the middle of a World War. Instead, the country is in the middle of a massive and collective failure to take the steps necessary to get spending, the deficit, and the debt under control.

If nothing is done, more money will have to be borrowed to fund federal programs, which will increase interest payments. Interest on the debt has already surpassed the defense budget to become the third largest federal expenditure after Social Security and Medicare.

The fiscal morass has been exacerbated by several massive spending packages, including bills signed into law in response to COVID-19 starting in the first Trump administration, but mostly due to the bills enacted during the Biden administration. Those bills [added](#) \$6 trillion in pandemic-related spending, much of which had nothing to do with the pandemic. The American Rescue Plan Act, which cost \$1.9 trillion and was passed on a partisan basis by a Democratic majority in Congress and signed into law by President Biden, [added](#) as much as 3 percentage points to inflation. This

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excessive stimulus resulted in [higher inflation](#) in the U.S. than the average in 10 Organization for Economic Development countries.

Other legislation has not improved the picture. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA), [signed](#) into law by President Biden on November 15, 2021, came with a price tag of \$1 trillion. Then, on August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law. It was a deceptively labeled bill that [included](#) \$369 billion in climate change/Green New Deal spending, \$80 billion to hire 87,000 new Internal Revenue Service agents, and the establishment of drug cost negotiations that will [result](#) in price caps for drugs purchased by Medicare, crippling innovation by biopharmaceutical companies. President Biden [admitted](#) the bill was misnamed, saying on August 11, 2023, that “it has nothing to do with inflation: it has to do with \$368 billion, the single largest investment in climate change anywhere in the world ...” He said that about the IRA again in [remarks](#) at the White House on September 5, 2024, and added that the IIJA was “a fancy way of saying that \$366 billion for the environment.”

To help mitigate the fiscal tsunami, Citizens Against Government Waste (CAGW) is releasing *Prime Cuts 2025*, which has been published since 1993. The 2025 version contains 512 recommendations that would save taxpayers \$606.2 billion in the first year and \$5.4 trillion over five years. The recommendations were drawn from longstanding and new proposals from CAGW, including some that were set forth by both Democratic and Republican administrations and members of Congress, as well as nonpartisan sources.

Prime Cuts 2025 addresses every area of government spending. For example, the report proposes eliminating the Market Access Program (MAP), which aims to help agricultural producers promote U.S. products overseas. MAP is a corporate welfare program that funnels millions of dollars to large, profitable corporations and trade associations that can afford to pay for their own advertisements. Eliminating MAP would save taxpayers \$871.5 million over five years.

Numerous cuts can be made at the Department of Defense (DOD) without jeopardizing national security, including eliminating the earmarks members of Congress add each year for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter to fund additional planes not requested by the Pentagon. Canceling such earmarks

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would save taxpayers \$282.4 million in the first year and \$1.4 billion over five years. Since FY 2001, legislators have added 39 earmarks for the JSF program, costing \$12.4 billion.

The recommendations also include longstanding proposals to eliminate the sugar and dairy programs; reduce Medicare improper payments by 50 percent; and sell excess federal property.

The *Prime Cuts Summary* contains 19 recommendations, in order of one-year savings, that would save \$31.2 billion in the first year and \$158.2 billion over five years. The full database of recommendations can be accessed at [CAGW.org/Prime-Cuts](https://www.cagw.org/Prime-Cuts).

By following the blueprint provided by CAGW's *Prime Cuts 2025*, wasteful government spending can be reined in, and the nation can begin to chart a path toward fiscal sanity. *Prime Cuts 2025* is essential reading for taxpayers, the media, and legislators alike.



Reduce the U.S. Annual Contribution to the United Nations (UN) by 50 Percent

1-Year Savings: \$6.5 billion

5-Year Savings: \$32.5 billion

The U.S. is the largest contributor to the UN. In FY 2023, the U.S. [provided](#) \$13 billion, or 28 percent of the UN's budget. The FY 2023 contribution represented a 104.7 percent increase over the FY 2009 contribution of \$6.35 billion and a 306.3 percent increase over the \$3.2 billion contributed in FY 2001. Since 2001, the UN's regular budget has more than doubled and its peacekeeping budget has more than tripled, a rate of growth that is much faster than the economies of its member nations.

The Trump administration proposed a 50 percent budget cut for the U.S. contribution to the UN in its FY 2017 budget, which was reduced to a 5 percent reduction, or \$285 million, in the UN's 2018-2019 budget following negotiations with the State Department. On February 4, 2025, the White House [announced](#) the United States' withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East. The announcement called for a review of support for the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which the U.S. [withdrew](#) from on July 22, 2025.

The February 4 announcement noted that while the U.S. helped establish the UN after World War II, the administration has determined that the UN has strayed from its mission to stop future wars and promote peace and instead is acting against U.S. interests. The Trump administration's FY 2026 [budget](#) did not request funding for UNESCO or UN peacekeeping programs.

As the U.S. attempts to grapple with mounting deficits and debt, organizations like the UN should not be spared the knife when it comes to trimming the budget fat. Because UN spending has increased so dramatically and the organization continues to be bloated and inefficient, it makes sense to cut U.S. spending by 50 percent. After all, former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali once [estimated](#) that “perhaps half of the UN work force does nothing useful.”



Reduce Medicare Improper Payments By 50 Percent Over Five Years

1-Year Savings: \$5.4 billion

5-Year Savings: \$27 billion

Because of its chronic vulnerability to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has since 1990 designated the Medicare program as “high risk.” The February 25, 2025, *High-Risk Series* [report](#) noted that, “spending is expected to increase significantly over the next decade as the U.S. population ages and more individuals begin receiving Medicare benefits.” The April 16, 2024, [version](#) of this GAO report noted that, “the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund is projected to be depleted in 2028. At that point, the Medicare program’s revenue would be sufficient to pay about 90 percent of scheduled benefits.” According to a March 11, 2025, GAO [report](#), improper payments for Medicare were \$54 billion in FY 2024, up by \$3 billion from \$51 billion in [FY 2023](#).

In a bipartisan effort to reduce improper payments and help stave off the impending bankruptcy of the Medicare Trust Fund, Congress first implemented a recovery audit contractor (RAC) demonstration project for Medicare Parts A and B that ran from 2005 to 2008 and recovered more than \$900 million in overpayments to providers. In 2010, the program was made permanent and expanded nationwide, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) added Parts C and D.

Since the beginning of the RAC program, \$11 billion has been returned to the Medicare Trust Fund. In FY 2013, RACs collected \$3.65 billion, according to the Medicare Trustees’ report to Congress on the program.

The Trustees’ FY 2013 RAC report called the RAC program, which has an average accuracy rate of 96 percent, “an important initiative in CMS’s goal to reduce improper payments and pay claims accurately.”

Unfortunately for taxpayers, the volume of claims that RACs are now permitted to review was reduced from a high of 2 percent, which is meager to begin with for a \$568 billion agency that processes more than one billion claims per year, to a statistically insignificant .5 percent and the claims areas have dropped from 800-plus to 163. Not surprisingly, the undermining of the program has drastically reduced monetary recoveries to the Trust Fund.

Congress should restore the full scope of the RAC program which would allow CMS to recover tens of billions in improper payments that continue to hemorrhage out of Medicare.



Eliminate Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs)

1-Year Savings: \$3.3 billion

5-Year Savings: \$16.5 billion

In the 1970s, many American cities suffered from destitution and blight. In 1974, Congress created the CDBG program in an effort to revitalize low-income areas in cities across the country. Three years later during the 1977 World Series, swathes of New York's South Bronx burned to the ground as Howard Cosell narrated on national television.

The CDBG program was intended for infrastructure investment, housing rehabilitation, job creation, and public services in metropolitan cities and urban counties. Use of the grants was intended to be flexible, but the more than \$100 billion given away to local governments over the last 35 years has fallen short on both accountability and results. Buffalo, New York, has received more than \$500 million in CDBGs over the last 30 years, with little to show for it. Los Angeles handed out \$24 million to a dairy that went bust 18 months later.

The CDBG formula for eligibility does not take a community's average income into account. As a result, several very wealthy cities with robust tax bases, like Greenwich, Connecticut, have received CDBG dollars. A September 2012 GAO [report](#) found that "some cities with higher unemployment rates received less funding per unemployed person than other cities with lower unemployment rates."

Former President Obama routinely [recommended](#) reducing CDBG funding because "the demonstration of outcomes [is] difficult to measure and evaluate." President Trump's budgets between FYs [2018](#) and [2021](#) recommended eliminating the entire CDBG program. The administration again called for the program's elimination in its FY 2026 budget, stating that, "CDBG is poorly targeted, and the program has been used for a variety of projects that the Federal Government should not be funding, such as improvement projects at a brewery, a plaza for concerts, and skateboard parks. ... For example, the Town of Greenwich in Connecticut's famously affluent "Gold Coast" does not need Federal grants, yet it received nearly \$4 million in CDBG funding in the last five years and spent it on wasteful projects like theater arts programming for students and public swimming pool renovations."

Despite its lengthy record of failing to achieve its objectives and wasting the taxpayers' money, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, signed into law by President Trump on March 27, 2020, provided \$2 billion for the CDBG program, which represents 60.6 percent of the \$3.3 billion appropriated in FY 2024.



Sell Excess Federal Real Property

1-Year Savings: \$3 billion

5-Year Savings: \$15 billion

Due to a combination of negative incentives and unnecessary red tape, selling federal real estate is a long, costly process. Reforms are essential, because Uncle Sam owns more real property than any other entity in America: approximately 267,000 buildings and structures covering 1.9 billion square feet of office space. An October 31, 2017, Congressional Research Service (CRS) [report](#) found that, “In FY 2016, federal agencies owned 3,120 buildings that were vacant (unutilized), and another 7,859 that were partially empty (underutilized).”

The General Services Administration (GSA) [reported](#) total assets of \$89.1 billion in FY 2024, an increase of 47.8 percent from the \$60.3 billion in FY 2023. These [include](#) more than “363 million square feet of space in 8,397 buildings in more than 2,200 communities nationwide.”

When the GSA Public Buildings Service reports a property as excess, that property must first be screened for use by other federal agencies. If another agency wants it, that agency gets it. If the property goes unclaimed by every eligible agency, according to Title 40 of the U.S. Code and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, it must be screened for use by providers of homeless shelters, who can use the property for free. If shelters are not interested, the property is screened for other public uses and sold for up to a 100 percent discount on market value. Finally, if no public use can be identified, the property is auctioned and sold. That process is upside down: The government should first try to sell the property and give it away only if there is no other alternative.

The government’s current leasing practices are also problematic. They have been on the GAO’s [High Risk List](#) since January 1, 2003, and were one of three areas that regressed in the February 25, 2025, High Risk report. GAO found that while the GSA has improved the “accuracy of addresses in its Federal Real Property Profile database, the data are not yet reliable. This makes it difficult to manage federally owned assets.”

A March 2014 GAO [report](#) reviewed case study projects from four agencies that rank in the top 10 in federal real property holdings. The GAO found that the federal government can end up spending more money

on renovation costs and lease payments over the course of a long-term lease than it would if it just paid the initial contract price and bought the building outright. A July 15, 2015, GAO [report](#) found that “GSA’s progress toward a sustainable portfolio is unclear because GSA has not assessed the gap between the performance the portfolio needs to exhibit to be sustainable and its current performance.”

The GSA also operates the [Federal Buildings Fund](#) (FBF), which is funded by rent received from other agencies. FBF revenue, which is used to fund alterations, repairs, and construction projects, increased from \$56 million in FY 2007 to \$13.3 billion at the end of [FY 2024](#), an increase of 23,650 percent.

On December 12, 2016, President Obama signed into law the Federal Property Management Reform Act of 2016. The act [requires](#) federal agencies to assess space that is not fully occupied and provide an annual list of real property under their control, along with their condition, obliges the U.S. Postal Service to annually provide a list of properties with available space for federal agencies, and establishes the Federal Real Property Council to help guide and implement an “efficient and effective real property management strategy,” reduce expenses, and determine how to better manage assets and property. It also requires federal agencies to assess space that is not fully occupied and provide a list of real property under their control, along with its condition. On December 20, 2017, GSA [released](#) an inventory of federal real property. It [identified](#) 5,066 bathrooms, 16,570 parking lots and garages, along with more than 1,500 prisons, nearly 17,000 warehouses, 766 hospitals and 2,427 schools. The transparency provided in this report is a positive step in providing the federal government with the necessary tools to better identify and eliminate vacant, wasteful property.

Unfortunately, progress has been slow. A June 8, 2023, GAO [report](#) found that it took nearly two years to sell any of the 12 properties that the Office of Management and Budget sanctioned for sale in 2019. As of May 2023, 10 of the properties had been sold, raising \$194 million. In the meantime, a startling amount of federal office space remains empty. An October 26, 2023, GAO [report](#) noted that 17 of 24 federal agency headquarter buildings sampled between January through March of 2023 used on average 25 percent or less of their capacity. The Treasury Department was the [only](#) agency with more than 31 percent occupancy. The GAO report noted that

federal agencies spend approximately \$2 billion each year operating and maintaining buildings, regardless of occupancy, and around \$5 billion annually to lease office buildings.

At a September 27, 2024, Senate Committee on Public Works and the Environment Committee [hearing](#), then-Ranking Member Shelly Moore Capito (R-W.Va.) said that this situation is “simply unacceptable.” Then-Committee Chairman Tom Carper (D-Del.) noted that more than 50 percent of current GSA leases will expire by 2027, which provides sufficient time to reduce the federal footprint.



Eliminate Federal Subsidies for Amtrak

1-Year Savings: \$2.4 billion

5-Year Savings: \$12.1 billion

Since Amtrak was created in 1971, it has cost taxpayers more than \$40 billion. The railroad was supposed to earn a profit but has continuously failed to do so. In some cases, it is less expensive to use other forms of transportation. A 2009 study [found](#) that taxpayers paid \$32 in subsidies per Amtrak passenger. By booking a month or more in advance, it is possible to buy a round-trip plane ticket from New Orleans to Los Angeles for less than the \$437.82 that Amtrak loses per passenger on a one-way trip between those same locations.

A January 2018 Ernst and Young [audit](#) found that “the Company has a history of operating losses and is dependent upon substantial Federal Government subsidies to sustain its operations and maintain its underlying infrastructure.” An August 2012 *New York Times* [article](#) reported that Amtrak had lost \$834 million on food service alone since 2002, largely due to employee theft.

Unfortunately, the waste and abuse does not end with food sales. The Amtrak Office of Inspector General (IG) has issued several reports detailing inadequate supervision, including a September 2012 [report](#) that investigated two employees who received fraudulent pay for hours they never worked. One employee was paid \$5,600 in regular and overtime pay “when he was actually off Amtrak property officiating at high school sporting events.” Another employee was observed for 84 days, and it was discovered that “\$16,500 of the \$27,000, or 61 percent of the overtime wages he was paid were fraudulent.” The IG concluded that, since it is likely that this employee had a history of fraudulent overtime pay, the amount of fraudulent pay “would be approximately \$143,300 of the \$234,928 that he was paid.”

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, Amtrak boasted that ridership increased by [3.5 percent a year](#), the majority of which comes from its Northeast Corridor routes. In fact, the Northeast Corridor had the only routes that were [making](#) an operating profit. The long-distance and lesser-used routes perennially cost the most to operate and lose money.

Given this information, any well-managed privately-owned business would have shut down these lines years ago. As a consequence of this

mismanagement, and the impact of COVID-19 on ridership, Amtrak incurred a \$1.8 billion annual [net loss](#) from FYs 2022 to 2024.

Even ignoring the impact of COVID-19 on ridership, Amtrak's prospects for financial success is bleak. Early proponents of Amtrak have voiced skepticism. Former Amtrak spokesman and rail expert Joseph Vranich [asserted](#) that, "Amtrak is a massive failure because it's wedded to a failed paradigm. It runs trains that serve political purposes as opposed to being responsive to the marketplace. America needs passenger trains in selected areas, but it doesn't need Amtrak's antiquated route system, poor service and unreasonable operating deficits." The so-called "Father of Amtrak," Anthony Haswell, also regrets his involvement, [stating](#), "I feel personally embarrassed over what I helped to create."

The only reason Amtrak trains are still running is Congress's handouts over the decades of negative financial results. The 2020 CARES Act awarded Amtrak \$1 billion, or 41.7 percent of the \$2.4 billion appropriated in FY 2024. While this seemed like a significant amount of money at the time, it was quickly dwarfed by the \$66 billion [awarded](#) for passenger and freight rail in the IIJA. This funding included \$44 billion for the Federal Railroad Administration, which manages grants for Amtrak; \$18 billion to [expand](#) service to "new corridors" that could [include](#) President Biden's hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania, where passenger service was eliminated the year before Amtrak was created; \$12.6 billion for modernizing stations and safety improvements in the Amtrak National Network; and \$6.6 billion to improve infrastructure in its Northeast Corridor, including new passenger rail cars.

Opening up the spigot of taxpayer funding to eliminate any need for Amtrak to think about making a profit may keep the trains running and the service expanding, but that will do nothing to address the inherent problems with the railroad, including poor financial management and an inept business model.



Eliminate Earmarks for the Defense Health Program (DHP)

1-Year Savings: \$1.9 billion

5-Year Savings: \$9.7 billion

Members of Congress have for years loaded up the DHP with pork, including \$1.9 billion for 54 anonymous earmarks in FY 2024, the third-most ever earmarked for the program, and although it was an 8.3 percent decrease in cost from the 56 earmarks worth \$2,121,460,000 in FY 2023. The amount earmarked in FY 2024 for the DHP represents 25.6 percent of the total of \$7.6 billion in DOD earmarks. Since FY 1996, members of Congress [have added](#) 966 earmarks for the DHP, costing taxpayers \$22.8 billion.

A March 14, 2012 *Washington Post* [article](#) stated that then-DOD Comptroller Robert Hale proposed decreasing the Pentagon health budget in part by eliminating “one-time congressional adds,” which he said totaled \$603.6 million in FY 2012 for the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program.

The late Sen. Tom Coburn’s (R-Okla.) November 2012 “The Department of Everything” [report](#) pointed out that the DOD disease earmarks mean that “fewer resources are available for DOD to address those specific health challenges facing members of the armed forces for which no other agencies are focused.” According to the report, in 2010 the Pentagon withheld more than \$45 million for overhead related to earmarks, which means those funds were unavailable for national security needs or medical research specifically affecting those serving in the military.

On June 17, 2015, then-Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain (R-Ariz.) [suggested](#) that funding for medical research should only be included in the DOD bill if the secretary of defense determined it was directly related to the military. He said that “over the past two decades, lawmakers have appropriated nearly \$7.3 billion for medical research that was ‘totally unrelated’ to the military.” In a response that explains why legislators continue to believe that they have the knowledge, privilege, and right to earmark billions of dollars for the DHP, Senate appropriator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) claimed that none of the secretaries of defense that he had known, despite being “talented individuals,” were qualified to decide whether any of this research is related to the military.



Reform the 340B Drug Pricing Program

1-Year Savings: \$1.6 billion

5-Year Savings: \$8 billion

Like other federal healthcare programs, the 340B drug discount [program](#) was well-intentioned but has increased costs and has been a prime example of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. Created in 1992, the 340B program requires pharmaceutical manufacturers participating in Medicaid to sell drugs at a discount of 20 to 50 percent to covered entities, including non-profit hospitals and federally funded clinics like community health centers, black lung clinics, tuberculosis clinics, and hemophilia treatment centers.

The legislation that created 340B did not define eligibility or require that savings be passed on to patients. The lack of guardrails on the program has led to a broad interpretation of eligibility and has allowed the program to be used as a way for hospitals and pharmacies to pocket profits rather than providing discounts to patients. It has been referred to as a “reverse Robin Hood” scheme in which hospitals in wealthy communities siphon money from hospitals in lower-income areas.

340B has grown exponentially. According to the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#), in 2005, 340B covered entities purchased \$2.4 billion in drugs. By 2023, drug purchases had increased by 2,662.5 percent to \$66.3 billion. This growth makes 340B the second largest federal prescription drug program after Medicare. A September 2025, CBO [report](#) described the causes of the growth of 340B, including the disproportionate increase in spending on cancer drugs, among others, in the 340B program compared to the overall marketplace, merging of hospitals and outside clinics, expanded eligibility of facilities under the ACA, and increases use of contract pharmacies outside of 340B hospitals. A September 21, 2025, *Wall Street Journal* [editorial](#) described how well-financed 340B hospitals use 340B discounts to finance the acquisition of competing providers that are not eligible for 340B discounts, which increases healthcare market consolidation and raises costs for insurers and patients.

The 340B program has been found to harm both taxpayers and employers through higher costs. A May 2024, Health Capital Group [report](#) found that the increased participation in 340B between 2014 and 2021 raised

Medicaid spending by \$391 per enrollee, or \$32 billion annually, accounting for approximately 10 percent of total Medicaid spending. A March 2024, IQVIA [report](#) found that 340B increased costs by more than \$5 billion annually for employer health plans regulated under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act.

Since 340B was created by a federal statute it is up to Congress to make reforms to the program. An April 24, 2025, Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee [report](#) on 340B recommended clarifying patient eligibility and ensuring that the savings are passed on to the patients. Congress might use this as a starting point, but any [further reforms](#) to the 340B drug discount program should include a clear definition of 340B eligibility and verification at the time the prescription is filled, a relationship between the patient and the covered entity, verification that services were provided within the past 12 months, and increased transparency. By reforming the 340B program, CAGW has made a conservative estimate that taxpayers would save \$1.6 billion in one year and \$8 billion over five years, which is 5 percent of the \$32 billion in annual costs to Medicaid.



Repeal the Davis-Bacon Act

1-Year Savings: \$1.5 billion

5-Year Savings: \$9.8 billion

The Davis-Bacon Act, passed in 1931, requires that contractors pay their employees the “prevailing wage” on federal projects costing more than \$2,000. Davis-Bacon has been touted by labor unions and politicians as essential to ensuring fair compensation for government jobs. In reality, the “prevailing wage” tends to correspond to union wages, especially in urban areas.

This effect is no accident. Davis-Bacon was passed as part of an effort by high-skilled, high-wage, mostly white workers to keep out lower-paid, non-union, minority competition. In 1931, Rep. Miles Allgood (D-Ala.), arguing for the act’s passage, [complained](#) of “that contractor [who] has cheap colored labor which he transports . . . and it is labor of that sort that is in competition with white labor throughout the country.”

Today, Davis-Bacon continues to keep potential new entrants out of the federal contracting market, as they are unable to comply with the law’s onerous rules. This includes many small businesses led by women, people of color, and recent immigrants.

Davis-Bacon supporters have argued that hiring low-wage workers would result in shoddy work. But the federal government is aware that this is not accurate. Davis-Bacon was suspended in the aftermath of Hurricanes Andrew and Katrina to facilitate reconstruction, and the GAO [reported](#) in September 2009 that many stimulus projects were delayed for months because of onerous Davis-Bacon requirements. A January 27, 2010, Heritage Foundation [study](#) found that suspension of Davis-Bacon under the stimulus “would allow the government to build more and hire 160,000 new workers without increasing the deficit.”

Efforts to repeal Davis-Bacon have consistently failed in Congress, requiring taxpayers to shoulder the extra cost of federal construction projects and exacerbating the cronyism, waste, and unfairness that has resulted from coziness between big government and large federal contracting businesses. Davis-Bacon adds about 20 percent to the cost of each federal project. A December 2024 CBO [report](#) estimated that repealing Davis-Bacon would save \$24.7 billion over the next decade.



Eliminate Funding for the M1A2SEP Abrams Tank Upgrade Program

1-Year Savings: \$1.2 billion

5-Year Savings: \$6.2 billion

Over the objections of senior DOD officials, members of Congress have for many years provided funding for the M1 upgrade program. Although the tank plant is in Lima, Ohio, its suppliers are spread across the country, which helps to explain the widespread support. Past versions of the DOD bills, including in FYs 2016 and 2017, hinted at a parochial incentive for the program's continuance: industrial base support. There's nothing like a jobs program disguised as a national security priority.

The continued funding for the program makes it worth revisiting why the Pentagon has long objected to finite resources being wasted on an unwanted project. On February 17, 2012, then-Army Chief of Staff General Raymond Odierno [told](#) the House Armed Services Committee that the U.S. possesses more than enough tanks to meet the country's needs and "our tank fleet is in good shape."

On September 6, 2023, the DOD [announced](#) that it intends to move on from the M1A2SEP, based in part on lessons learned in the fighting in Ukraine. The Army [awarded](#) General Dynamics a contract in June 2025 to develop the M1E3, likely to be fielded in the early 2030s, that will integrate technologies designed to increase survivability and maneuverability.

Since FY 1994, there have been 47 earmarks for the M1 Abrams, requested by at least 13 members of Congress, costing taxpayers \$3 billion. This includes two earmarks for the M1 Abrams upgrade program costing \$518,300,000 in FY 2024. Continuing to commit vast resources to an unnecessary program will inevitably make upgrading the Abrams in the manner the Pentagon prefers much more difficult.



Eliminate the Sugar and Dairy Subsidies

1-Year Savings: \$1.2 billion

5-Year Savings: \$6.1 billion

In 2024, the federal government [paid](#) \$16.4 billion in subsidies to farmers, part of the \$539 billion in handouts since 1995. These expenditures include numerous antiquated agricultural subsidy programs that should be scrapped.

At the top of the list is the sugar program, an outdated, Soviet-style command-and-control program that was first established in the Sugar Act of 1934 and now uses import quotas, loans, marketing allotments, price supports, and tariffs to artificially inflate the price of sugar. The program includes a minimum price for sugar in the U.S., which averages roughly [double](#) the world price. The marketing controls limit how much a small cartel of sugar processors are allowed to sell.

The tariff rate quotas on sugar imports require that 85 percent of sugar purchases be bought from domestic sugar producers and limit the amount of sugar that can be imported each year from 40 countries. Any sugar that is imported beyond the quota is subject to a tariff, contributing to the high cost of sugar in the U.S.

A November 2017 American Enterprise Institute (AEI) [analysis](#) found that, “The welfare transfer to sugar growers and processors is quite large in the aggregate, hovering around \$1.2 billion. Losses to households are diffused, about \$10 per person per year but large for the population as a whole, in the range of \$2.4–\$4 billion.”

The program has been costly to the economy as well. [According](#) to the Department of Commerce, “Between 1997 and 2014, 132,000 jobs were lost in sugar-using industries.” For every sugar-growing job that is protected under the program, about three manufacturing jobs are lost.

Many U.S. companies have decided to close their U.S factories and relocate the jobs to Mexico or Canada where they can avoid paying the artificially high sugar prices. The hardest hit [area](#) has been Chicago, Illinois, which was named the nation’s “Candy Capital” in 1941 and had thousands of manufacturing jobs in the city. Beginning in 2005, three of the most well-known U.S. candy companies, Brach’s, Fannie May, and Mars Wrigley, have

closed their factories in Chicago.

Few examples exist of more conspicuous public regulation for the benefit of entrenched special interests at the expense of taxpayers than the U.S. sugar program. The program should be replaced with market-oriented reforms to help consumers, food manufacturers, taxpayers, producers, and the environment. Eliminating the sugar program would save taxpayers \$1.2 billion in the first year, and \$6 billion over five years.

The dairy subsidy is a close second to the sugar program due to its complex tangle of subsidies and price supports. Through a series of federal Milk Marketing Orders, which are based historically on the distance from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, to where the milk is produced, the government sets minimum prices that dairy processors must pay for Grade A milk. These vary from region to region, and milk producers are forbidden to sell their product in another region.

While taxpayers dodged the worst outcome when the 2014 Farm Bill did not include the proposed Dairy Market Stabilization Program, the conference agreement instead included a new Dairy Product Donation Program, which allows the purchase of dairy products at market prices “for donation to public and private nonprofit organizations that provide nutrition assistance to low-income populations.” The program, which was never considered in the House or Senate, would require the USDA to buy dairy goods when market prices drop below a certain threshold and continue these purchases until market prices resurface above the established threshold.

Instead, the 2014 Farm Bill instituted the dairy margin coverage (DMC) program, which provides monthly payments to dairy farmers when milk prices are low relative to an index of dairy feed prices. DMC payments [milked](#) \$3.3 billion from taxpayers between 2019-2024.

The best solution for taxpayers and consumers is for milk markets to be deregulated and made to resemble other competitive industries. Eliminating the dairy subsidy would [save](#) \$20.5 million in the first year and \$102.5 million over five years.



Eliminate the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI)

1-Year Savings: \$1 billion

5-Year Savings: \$5 billion

CMMI was established as part of the ACA to create new payment and service models that would reduce costs and improve quality of care for Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. It was one of the ways that the ACA supposed to be “paid for.” CMMI is a mandatory program with \$10 billion allocated for each decade. But before any more money is spent, any reasonable assessment of CMMI’s ineffectiveness and cost should lead to the conclusion that it should be eliminated.

A September 2023 CBO [report](#) found that instead of saving an initially projected \$2.8 billion between 2011 and 2020, CMMI cost taxpayers \$5.4 billion, and it will cost another \$1.3 billion through 2030.

Only four of the 49 models created between 2011 and 2020 showed enough potential to save money and improve care that they were continued. The Biden administration in December 2024 [announced](#) the cancellation of the Medicare Advantage Value-Based Insurance Design, which started in 2017 and cost \$4.5 billion over 2021 and 2022, and four other models at the end of FY 2025.

CMMI’s attempts to improve its results include the creation of a new Wasteful and Inappropriate Service Reduction model that will become effective in six states on January 1, 2026. Treatments for Parkinson’s disease, sleep apnea, arthritic knees, and incontinence are on the list that will require bureaucratic “prior authorization” which will constitute another government-controlled encroachment on patient and provider choices.

After 15 years of failure, it is clear that CMMI will not provide any benefit to the American people. Congress should act to eliminate this wasteful and bureaucratic agency as soon as possible.



End the Essential Air Service (EAS)

1-Year Savings: \$587.2 million

5-Year Savings: \$2.9 billion

The EAS was created in 1978 after airline deregulation in an effort to retain air service in smaller communities. Intended to sunset after a decade, the EAS is now in year 44 of operation. Today, it [provides subsidies](#) to 110 rural communities in 33 states and Puerto Rico. Most designated cities are subsidized for more than \$100 per passenger. Over time, what was intended to be a temporary program has morphed into a funnel for subsidies to support largely empty flights that otherwise would never leave the ground.

According to a March 21, 2022 *Forbes* [article](#), eligibility is largely based on those cities where service was provided in 1978: “As a result, tiny Ogdensburg, NY with 10,000 people and Massena, NY with 12,000 people get subsidies. Yet nearby Watertown, NY, with over 25,000 people, gets no subsidies today. People in Watertown must drive the just over one-hour trip to Syracuse, NY for their flights while the much smaller subsidized cities can board at their local airport on the taxpayer’s dime.” Centers of population have changed over time, but EAS eligibility has not.

According to a September 19, 2009, *Los Angeles Times* [article](#), EAS “spends as much as thousands per passenger in remote areas” and “provides service to areas with fewer than 30 passengers a day.” Among the most absurd recipients of EAS subsidies is an airport in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, tirelessly defended by the late Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), from which just 18 flights leave each week. Johnstown is only two hours east of Pittsburgh International Airport by car. Indeed, a 2015 [study](#) from West Virginia University found “strong evidence that subsidies are higher in districts having congressional representation on the House Transportation Committee.”

A May 2012 investigation by Scripps Media “exposed one flight between Baltimore and Hagerstown, Maryland – just about 75 miles apart – [that] was so sparse the captain allowed the only other passenger who wasn’t our producer to sit in the co-pilot’s seat,” and cited two other flights on the same route with just one passenger each. The investigative team found that, “A 19-seat plane from Cleveland to Dubois, Pennsylvania, about 180 miles east, had just one passenger as well.”

The Federal Aviation Administration funding [bill](#) that passed in February 2012 limited EAS funding recipients to airports that are more than 175 miles from a major hub and that move more than 10 passengers a day. Hagerstown was [dropped](#) from EAS in October 2019, but Johnstown still gets funding from the program.

President Trump's FY 2026 budget called for a \$308 million cut and further reforms to the EAS. However, it makes much more sense to eliminate the program entirely.



Eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

1-Year Savings: \$414 million

5-Year Savings: \$2.1 billion

Created in 1965, the NEA and NEH are the perfect examples of the government dabbling in fields that should be left entirely to the private sector. After 60 years, all efforts to reign in NEA and NEH spending have been rebuffed because special interest groups and their political allies have long fought for every drop of funding.

For example, then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) helped defeat H.R. 1, the full-year continuing resolution for FY 2011, which, among other spending reductions, defunded the NEA and the NEH. On March 8, 2011, Sen. Reid described the proposed termination in a Senate floor speech as “mean-spirited,” stating that, were it not for the NEH’s federal money, the Cowboy Poetry Festival and “the tens of thousands of people who come there every year, would not exist.” This earned Sen. Reid CAGW’s [Porker of the Month](#) in March 2011.

Former Sen. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) [identified](#) dozens of absurd NEA and NEH expenditures in his 2016 “Wastebook: Porkemon Go,” like \$206,000 for monkey puppet shows and \$1.7 million for a Hologram Comedy Club. Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) [identified](#) additional silly spending in his 2017 “Federal Fumbles,” like a \$30,000 NEA grant for the production of Doggie Hamlet and \$20,000 for an adult summer camp focusing on climate change art. The 2019 [version](#) of Sen. Lankford’s report disclosed a \$50,400 NEH fellowship paid to a professor at Sonoma State University to examine “the ways Russia used its wine industry to befriend Europe during the Russian Empire and the Soviet eras,” while the 2023 [version](#) reported on a \$100,000 NEH grant to bring Shakespearean plays to virtual reality.

Plays, paintings, pageants, and scholarly articles, regardless of their merit or attraction, should not be forcibly financed by taxpayers. Actors, artists, and academics are no more deserving of subsidies than their counterparts in other fields; the federal government should refrain from funding all of them. Anything else is anathema to taxpayers.

Unfortunately, legislators doubled down on funding for the NEA and NEH in the CARES Act, providing \$75 million for each. The \$150 million

in funding added 36.2 percent to the \$414 million provided for the two entities in the FY 2024 appropriations bills. The relationship between NEA and NEH funding and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has yet to be established.

The Trump administration [rescinded](#) many NEH grants on April 2, 2025, and similarly terminated funding for various [NEA grants](#) on May 2, 2025. In addition, the administration's FY 2026 budget did not request funding for NEA or NEH.



Eliminate Regional Development Agencies, including the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Delta Regional Authority, the Denali Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission.

1-Year Savings: \$289 million

5-Year Savings: \$1.4 billion

The federal government operates independent agencies that provide region-specific grants for infrastructure projects, economic development, and local capacity building. Each of President Trump's budgets from FY 2018 through FY 2021 proposed the elimination of the Delta Regional Authority, the Denali Commission, and the Northern Border Regional Commission, stating that they are duplicative of other federal programs. The FY 2021 budget noted that money for the three commissions, "is set aside for special geographical designations rather than applied across the country based on objective criteria indicating local areas' levels of distress." President Trump's FY 2026 budget request again proposed zeroing out funding for those three regional commissions because it "removes an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy in an already bloated grant-making system to achieve greater efficiencies. ... States and local governments are better positioned to fund and address unique regional and geographic economic development challenges." However, it requested \$14 million for the Appalachian Regional Commission, an increase of \$6 million, or 75 percent, more than the FY 2024 appropriated amount.

The Denali Commission, created by Congress in 1998 to build infrastructure in rural Alaska, has been targeted for elimination by multiple administrations. Former President Obama recommended eliminating funding for the commission in his [FY 2012 budget](#). His administration argued that Denali projects are not funded through a competitive or merit-based system, and that at least 29 other federal programs could fulfill the commission's mandate. The commission's IG, Mike Marsh, [stated](#) in September 2013 that "I have concluded that [my agency] is a congressional experiment that hasn't worked out in practice. ... I recommend that Congress put its money elsewhere."

A September 2014 GAO [report](#) found that the Denali Commission IG provided extremely limited oversight of the commission's major programs during FYs 2011-2013. According to the report, "analysis of the 12

inspections completed by the IG found that the IG provided oversight for \$150,000 of the \$167 million in grant funds disbursed during fiscal years 2011 through 2013.” The amount of funding inspected by the IG added up to less than 1 percent of grants awarded by the Denali Commission over this period.

Given that the state of Alaska’s oil revenues pay for an annual dividend to each resident of the state (in 2024, Alaskans [received](#) \$1,702 each), an additional subsidy is hard to justify. The commission’s statutory authorization expired on October 1, 2009. It is time for the federal appropriation to disappear as well.

The Delta Regional Authority has also been frequently criticized. In addition to being targeted for elimination by the Trump administration, former President Obama’s FY 2017 [version](#) of *Cuts, Consolidations, and Savings* proposed a \$3 million annual cut. Moreover, each of the Republican Study Committee’s budgets from [FYs 2017](#) through [2025](#) called for the termination of regional commissions.

Regular readers of CAGW’s *Congressional Pig Book* know that these programs have long been heavily earmarked. The Appalachian Regional Commission has received 14 earmarks totaling \$413.8 million since FY 1995 for projects in Alabama, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Since FY 2000, members of Congress have added 32 earmarks costing \$349.9 million for the Denali Commission, including Senate appropriator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), former Sen. Mark Begich (D-Alaska), and the late Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska). Since FY 2003, legislators have added 18 earmarks for the Delta Regional Authority costing \$177.9 million.



Eliminate earmarks for the F-35 JSF program

1-Year Savings: \$282.4 million

5-Year Savings: \$1.4 billion

The many problems of the JSF make it impossible to justify Congress adding funding beyond that requested by the DOD. Total acquisition costs of the program now exceed \$428 billion, 84 percent greater than the initial estimate of \$233 billion. According to an April 15, 2024, GAO [report](#), total lifetime costs of the program will now exceed \$2 trillion, or 17.7 percent more than the previous \$1.7 trillion [estimate](#) in September 2023.

In February 2014, then-Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and now Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall [referred](#) to the purchase of the F-35 as “acquisition malpractice.” On April 26, 2016, the late Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who was then chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, [called](#) the JSF program “both a scandal and a tragedy with respect to cost, schedule, and performance.”

The JSF has been dragged down by an array of persistent issues, many of which were highlighted in the FY 2019 DOD Operational Test and Evaluation Annual Report, which [revealed](#) 873 unresolved deficiencies including 13 Category 1 items, involving the most serious flaws that could endanger crew and aircraft. While this was an overall reduction from the 917 unresolved deficiencies and 15 Category 1 items found in September 2018, the report stated that “although the program is working to fix deficiencies, new discoveries are still being made, resulting in only a minor decrease in the overall number of deficiencies.”

In July 2023, the DOD [stopped](#) accepting new deliveries of the JSF from the prime contractor, Lockheed Martin, because of delays in the Technology Refresh-3 program, a \$1.8 billion effort to provide new capabilities. A January 31, 2025, DOD Operation Test and Evaluation (OTE) [report](#) highlighted persistent struggles within the program, including “no improvement in meeting schedule and performance timelines for developing and testing software designed to address deficiencies and add new capabilities.”

The Pentagon began to [refuse acceptance](#) of new JSFs in July 2023 because of shortcomings in TR-3. After the contractor released a “truncated” version of TR-3, which enabled the aircraft’s use in training, but not combat (which

is the sole raison d'être for a fighter jet), the government accepted deliveries again beginning in July 2024. However, the Pentagon is [withholding payment](#) of approximately \$5 million for each aircraft until TR-3 is completed. The OTE stated that, because the JSF program office “has not adequately planned” for testing, “dedicated operational testing of these aircraft will not occur until mid to late FY26, approximately two years after the configuration began delivery to the field.”

In the meantime, the aircraft's current software is not being fixed. According to the OTE report, the JSF program “cannot simultaneously work out solutions” to TR-2 while developing TR-3. The three additional JSFs added via \$282.4 million in earmarks in FY 2024 will not help. Since FY 2001, legislators have added 39 earmarks for the JSF program, costing \$12.4 billion.

Many of the problems with the F-35 program can be traced to the decision to develop and procure the aircraft simultaneously. Whenever problems have been identified, contractors needed to go back and make changes to planes that were already assembled, adding to overall costs. Speaking at the Aspen Security Forum on July 24, 2015, then-Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James [stated](#), “The biggest lesson I have learned from the F-35 is never again should we be flying an aircraft while we're building it.”

The GAO has long reported on the failures of the JSF program. According to an April 15, 2024, GAO [report](#), “We have consistently found that the F-35 fleet is not meeting its availability goals, which are measured by mission capable rates (i.e., the percentage of time the aircraft can perform one of its tasked missions), despite increasing projected costs. No F-35 variant met its performance goals for mission capable rates from fiscal years 2019 through 2023.”

All three versions of the JSF suffer from woeful readiness rates. An April 15, 2024, *Defense One* [article](#) reported a mission capable rate of 51.9 percent for the F-35A, 59.7 percent for the F-35B, and 61.9 percent for the F-35C.

The wide distribution of F-35 supply lines across the country is no accident. According to a map showing the local economic impact of the JSF on Lockheed Martin's [website](#), the only state that does not have at least one supplier for the aircraft is Hawaii. This gives all but four members of

Congress more than enough incentive to keep greasing the wheels.

The deficiencies that have plagued the DOD in recent years have been identified ad nauseum. The Pentagon's track record in addressing its financial shortcomings and procurement failures makes it evident that these problems will continue until members of Congress hold the DOD to a much higher standard of effectiveness and efficiency. An easy place to start would be forgoing earmarks for the struggling program.



Suspend Federal Land Purchases

1-Year Savings: \$187.7 million

5-Year Savings: \$938.5 million

The federal government currently owns roughly one-third of all U.S. land, including more than 80 percent of Alaska and Nevada and more than half of Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. A March 2000 CBO [report](#) stated that the National Park Service (NPS), the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management might better meet “environmental objectives such as habitat protection and access to recreation ... by improving management in currently held areas rather than providing minimal management over a larger domain.”

In 2003, the GAO [reported](#) that the NPS’s maintenance backlog was more than \$5 billion. Since then, federal land acquisitions have accelerated, placing even greater burdens on an inefficient and overstrained system. For FY 2024, the NPS [reported](#) a maintenance backlog of \$23 billion, more than four times the 2003 figure, and 93.3 percent higher than the \$11.9 billion [backlog](#) in FY 2018.



Eliminate the Market Access Program (MAP)

1-Year Savings: \$174.3 million

5-Year Savings: \$871.5 million

Formerly known as the Market Promotion Program, MAP is one of the federal government's most blatant examples of corporate welfare. Over the past decade, MAP has provided nearly \$2 billion in taxpayer money to help agriculture trade associations, farmer cooperatives, and individual companies advertise their products [overseas](#). In FY 2023, MAP [doled](#) out \$174.3 million to successful companies and conglomerates like Blue Diamond (\$2.9 million), Cotton Council International (CCI) (\$14.8 million), National Sunflower Association (\$936,564), Pet Food Institute (\$1.3 million), Sunkist Growers, Inc. (\$1.9 million), Welch Foods, Inc. (\$669,476), and the Wine Institute (\$7 million).

Former President Obama's FY 2012 budget proposed a 20 percent cut in MAP, but an amendment to achieve even that limited objective was [struck down](#) in the Senate.

A June 2012 [report](#) on MAP by former Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) disclosed that some of the \$20 million that was given to the CCI in 2011 was used to create an Indian reality TV show in which designers created clothing made from cotton. The show was intended to promote the use of cotton generally, not necessarily cotton from the U.S. But India does not have any need for U.S. cotton, as it is a net exporter of the product and produces twice the amount of U.S. cotton growers. MAP has provided more than \$204 million to CCI over 14 years.

It is long past time to eliminate MAP.



Eliminate the Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im Bank) and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)

1-Year Savings: \$85 million

5-Year Savings: \$425 million

The Ex-Im Bank is an independent government agency founded in 1934 in an effort to encourage U.S. exports. In FY 2023, the Ex-Im Bank [authorized](#) more than 1,400 transactions totaling \$8.4 billion in taxpayer-backed direct loans, guarantees, and export-credit insurance to private firms and foreign governments. The \$8.4 billion in FY 2024 is a 154.5 percent increase from the \$3.3 billion [authorized](#) in FY 2018.

Ex-Im Bank's supporters claim that the bank does not cost anything. By using the accounting method prescribed by the Federal Credit Reform Act of 1990 to evaluate the bank's cost, proponents claim the bank will save taxpayers \$14 billion over the next decade. However, a May 2014 CBO [report](#) found that when the more traditional fair value accounting method is used, Ex-Im Bank is estimated to have a 10-year cost of \$2 billion.

Proponents also state that the Ex-Im Bank makes loans that private sector lenders would not, creates jobs, and costs taxpayers nothing. Each of these statements is untrue. The largest beneficiaries of the Ex-Im Bank's largesse are major corporations that have no trouble receiving financing from private sources. The bank has become the most egregious example of corporate welfare in the country. It has been [referred](#) to as "Boeing's Bank," partly because Boeing received 65 percent of the Ex-Im Bank's \$15.3 billion in 2010 financing. The Ex-Im Bank has also made loans to Caterpillar, Chevron, Dell, Emirates Airlines, and Halliburton, all of which borrow regularly from private lenders and are stable, profitable concerns.

OPIC attempts to augment the Ex-Im Bank's import insurance program by providing financing and insurance against political risk in countries where American firms invest. In doing so, the U.S. government subsidizes multinational corporations' risky investments in unstable places where they are less likely to pay off. OPIC loans and insurance subsidies go to companies like Kimberly-Clarke, Levi-Strauss, and Magma Copper Company, which have no trouble getting private loans and insurance.

Critics of OPIC range from the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation on the right to Corporate Welfare Watch on the left. Ending taxpayer

support for both OPIC and the Ex-Im Bank would be an essential step away from corporatism toward free markets.

On May 8, 2019, the Senate [confirmed](#) three new members of the Ex-Im board of directors, giving the bank the quorum required to approve larger deals, and the quorum exists to this day. Previously, the bank could not approve any deals over \$10 million. This meant that smaller companies [benefitted](#) the most from the Ex-Im between January 2016 and May 2019. Now, the largest and wealthiest corporations will once again take the lion's share of Ex-Im's taxpayer-funded subsidies.



Eliminate the Heritage Partnership Program (HPP)

1-Year Savings: \$29.2 million

5-Year Savings: \$146 million

The HPP supports the 49 National Heritage Areas (NHAs) created by Congress, and funds have long been earmarked for the program. Operated through the NPS, the HPP has received 56 earmarks costing \$153.4 million since FY 2001, including funding for projects like park improvements, sports complexes, health centers, water quality monitoring, bike paths, sustainable agriculture, and agricultural tourism.

Each of former President Obama's budgets from FYs 2011 through 2017 slashed funding for NHAs. The FY 2017 version of *Cuts, Consolidations, and Savings* recommended trimming the budget by 55 percent, from \$20 million to \$9 million. Three of President Trump's budgets from his first administration proposed eliminating the HPP entirely, saving \$22 million. The 2021 report noted there is no "systematic process for designating Heritage Partnership Areas or determining their effectiveness," and made the same argument that former President Obama made in his FY 2011 budget that funding for the HPP diverted resources from core NPS responsibilities. President Trump's FY 2026 budget request again [recommended](#) eliminating all funds for the HPP.

Unfortunately, members of Congress have continuously ignored these proposed budget reductions, earmarking funding for the HPP in 10 of the last 13 years.

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