

Collections • Government Spending

For whom the taxpayer toils

POSTED: April 17, 2013

By Antony Davies
and James R. Harrigan

Each July Fourth, Americans celebrate their freedom, the result of a revolution over "taxation without representation." This month, we celebrate another type of freedom - from our own tax man. It turns out that taxation with representation is no picnic either.

According to the Tax Foundation, Tax Freedom Day - the day on which the average American has earned enough money to pay off his federal, state, and local tax bills for the year - occurs on Thursday. In 2013, the average American had to give up all of his earnings from Jan. 1 through Feb. 6 to pay his state and local taxes. He then had to work from Feb. 7 through April 18 to cover his federal tax bill. On average, each of us will work 108 days this year only to pay taxes, and we'll spend more, shockingly, on taxes than on food, housing, and clothing combined. This is what government costs.

As calls for increased government spending have become popular, spending levels have climbed steadily. But more spending means higher tax rates, and higher tax rates mean that we all spend more time working to feed the government, leaving us less time to work to feed ourselves. Last year, Americans only worked until April 13 to pay for their share of government. The five extra days this year come as a result of the fiscal-cliff deal that raised income and payroll taxes in January. Was the increase in government spending this year worth 40 hours of your life?

Of course these are only averages. Largely because of different state and local tax rates, residents of the various states celebrate Tax Freedom Day at different times. Mississippi and Louisiana celebrate on March 29, while residents of New York and Connecticut have to wait until May 6 and May 13, respectively. Pennsylvanians will celebrate today, putting us in the last one-third of the states to do so.

The earliest Tax Freedom Day has ever fallen was Jan. 22. That was in 1900, when Americans paid less than 6 percent of their income in taxes, as opposed to almost 30 percent today. Of course, the government provides a lot more services today, and therein lies the rub. Politicians want us to think of government as Santa Claus - a jolly fat man with unlimited resources that it hands out to good little boys and girls. Like Santa himself, this is a myth, and it is time we all grew up and realized it.

The government has no money. Every single dollar our governments - federal, state, and local - spend comes from the people. In essence, the government forces people to spend money on things they would not have bought voluntarily, and that we, very obviously, cannot even afford. The current generation is already taxed at a high rate, and future generations will be taxed even more heavily to pay off the massive debt the government is accruing.

Some will say the government spends money for your own good. Never mind that you might have liked to spend more on food, housing, and clothing than on taxes. You can make your own choices starting in late April. This year.

Antony Davies is associate professor of economics at Duquesne University and an affiliated senior scholar at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. James R. Harrigan is a fellow of the Institute of Political Economy at Utah State University.

0 0 0 @
Like Tweet

We Recommend

Until then, we're all government workers
May 28, 2010

Tea and taxes The federal take is relatively low. What's more worrisome is the deficit, which could hit unsustainable levels.
April 19, 2009

One day to take stock of our giant tax burden
April 26, 2010

The Taxman Goeth - In 3 More Weeks
April 16, 1991

Find More Stories About

- [Government Spending](#)
- [Tax Foundation](#)
- [Tax Freedom Day](#)

FEATURED ARTICLES



Carnival Cruise prices down 20%



Less is more with Michael Mosley's 5:2 diet



Free soft pretzels Friday

More:

Karen Heller: A T-shirt celebrates Philly's rudeness

Toomey: 'I gave this my best shot'

Young cancer patient's good news: 'Total remission!'

Sobering realities of Parkinson's

How area hospitals rate

Camden man pleads guilty in teen's 2003 death

[Index by Keyword](#) | [Index by Date](#) | [About Philly.com](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | Copyright 2013