

National Priorities Project 2024 Tax Receipt

The average taxpayer was forced to subsidize military contractors at the expense of human needs. Here's an item by item look.

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It's spring, and that means Americans are filing their tax returns. Most will know whether they get a refund, but how many know where their tax dollars really go?

Each year at tax time, the National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies produces a [tax receipt](#) that shows where your 2023 income taxes went.

In 2023, the average taxpayer subsidized corporate contractors, including:

- \$1,748 toward Pentagon contractors. That's more than the average [monthly rent in the U.S. \(\\$1,372\)](#).
- \$249 for contracts for Lockheed Martin, the largest Pentagon contractor. That's more than [a week's food expenses for the average American household \(\\$195\)](#).
- \$87 for the Pentagon's contracts with Boeing, the company responsible for the 737 Max's safety failures. That's equivalent to [filling your car's gas tank twice](#).¹
- \$12 for the Pentagon and NASA's contracts with SpaceX, Elon Musk's company. That's more than the cost of three [gallons of milk](#).

Just like our personal expenses, our income tax payments can change our lives for the better — or not. If we put more funds into education, we'll probably see kids and families better off. If we put more into Pentagon contracts, we'll see their CEOs and shareholders better off — and we'll see U.S. weapons used in conflicts around the world.

The military budget is supposed to prioritize security and the troops, but too often it prioritizes profit instead. Our receipt shows that the average taxpayer contributed \$1,748 last year for Pentagon contracts, but that same taxpayer contributed just \$705 for military troops' pay and housing allowances. Entry-level pay for enlistment in the Army is [\\$24,206](#), or the equivalent of \$11.64 per hour — low enough to put [many troops and their families on food stamps](#) and other public assistance programs.

See next page for average taxpayer contributions

¹ Based on a 12-gallon gas tank and average U.S. gas price of \$3.53 per gallon on March 26, 2024.

In 2023, the average U.S. taxpayer contributed:

\$4,308 for Medicare and Medicaid. Thanks to Medicare, [nearly all Americans age 65 and older are insured](#). Thanks to expanded Medicaid enrollment and ACA subsidies, the [number of uninsured Americans hit a record low in 2022](#).

vs. **\$5,109 for militarism and its support systems** - including the Pentagon and war, veterans' programs, deportations and border militarization, and federal spending on policing and prisons.

\$346 for K-12 education. As aid to help kids regain academic ground lost during the pandemic expires, many school districts are facing budget cuts.

vs. **\$2,974 for the Pentagon**, more than half of which went to corporate contractors. The Pentagon budget is set to increase by \$27 billion in 2024.

\$516 for food stamps (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/SNAP), the food access program that served [more than one in ten Americans](#) at a time of rising food costs.

vs. **\$1,748 for Pentagon contractors.** Those contractors [pay their CEOs multimillion-dollar salaries \(at taxpayer expense\), and their spending on dividends and stock buybacks to further enrich their shareholders rose 73 percent](#).

\$110 for the Child Tax Credit, that supports families with children. The recent expansion of this credit [helped cut child poverty nearly in half](#).

vs. **\$249 for Pentagon contracts for Lockheed Martin**, the top Pentagon contractor and maker of the troubled F-35 jet engine.

\$58 for diplomacy to end and prevent wars and negotiate international agreements.

vs. **\$112 to other militaries** for weapons and training that feed conflicts and harm civilians.

\$31.69 for substance use disorder support and mental health programs.

vs. **\$32.29 for federal prisons.** This only scratches the surface – state and local governments [spend far more on prison costs](#).

\$23 for the Federal Aviation Administration, the federal agency responsible for airline safety.

vs. **\$87 for Pentagon contracts for Boeing**, the company responsible for numerous commercial airline safety problems.

\$14 for wildfire management. Wildfires cost upward of \$394 billion in damages every year.

vs. **\$110 for Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and Customs and Border Protections (CBP)**, the agencies responsible for separating immigrant families through detentions and deportations.

\$10.84 for energy efficiency and renewable energy programs to combat climate change.

vs. **\$12 for Pentagon and NASA contracts for SpaceX**, Elon Musk's space travel company.