

# How would you spend a tax dollar?

by Cynthia Peters

Work on this exercise independently or in the context of the articles in this section of The Change Agent. If you choose the latter, consider ways that what you have learned affects how you would allocate tax revenues. How do the government's choices about spending affect your ability to stay in school?

1. Work alone or in pairs. Take 11 strips of paper — about 1 and a half inches wide and 11 inches long. Label each strip at the bottom with the spending categories listed in the box on the right.

2. Now get 100 pennies. This is a “tax dollar,” and it is your job to show how you would spend it if it were up to you to decide.

3. Distribute the pennies into the different categories in whatever way you think makes the most sense.

4. Arrange the pennies vertically on the strip of paper and then arrange the strips of paper in order of how many pennies they have. The result will look something like a bar graph. (Note: if you use a lot of pennies on one strip, you might need to tape on an extra strip of paper to extend the original.)

5. When you are finished, look around and see what other people did. Talk about the similarities and differences. Are there some choices you would change after discussing your spending priorities for your tax dollar?

6. Are you curious to know how the U.S. government spends its tax dollars? Turn the page to find out.



**Military**

**Health**

**Interest on the Debt**

**Income Security**

**Education**

**Veterans' Benefits**

**Nutrition**

**Housing**

**Natural Resources**

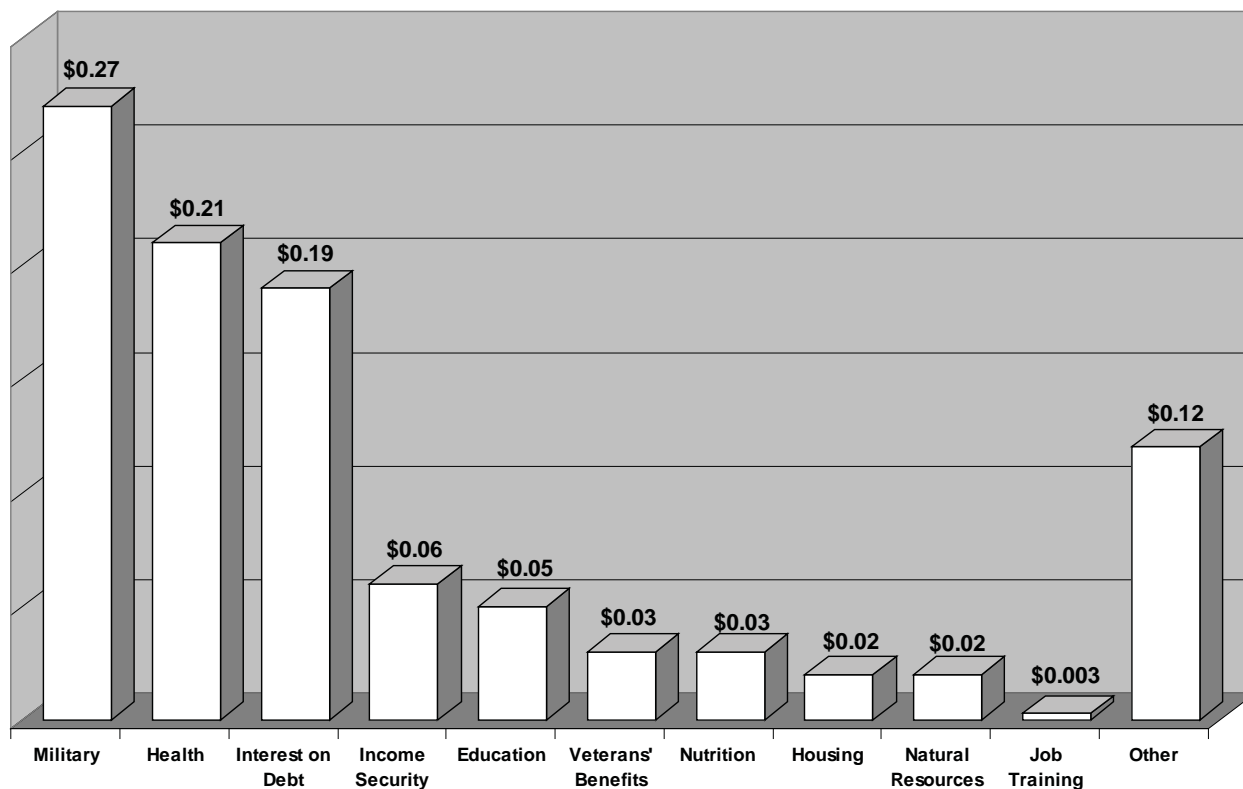
**Job Training**

**Other**

## Students Advocating for Themselves and Each Other

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### Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?



Notes: The military share of Interest on Debt is 9 cents. Numbers may not add up due to rounding. Military includes the government definition of national defense, international security assistance and Iraq-related spending in the Executive Office of the President. Income security includes Supplemental Security Income, tax credit programs, TANF, child care spending and other programs aimed at families. Other includes general science, space and technology, regional development, labor and social services other than job training, justice, general government, and undistributed offsetting receipts. This information comes from the National Priorities Project, 17 New South St., Suite 302, Northampton, MA 01060 <[www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org)>.

### Think About it

What do you notice about the information you see here? Are you surprised?

How much goes to the military if you count the military share of interest on debt (see "Notes")?

How does it compare with the bar graph you made?

If you wanted to influence the government to make changes in spending priorities, what would you do?