



Inside Track

Record Taxes Collected, Record Deficit Recorded

The federal government has collected a record amount of money from Americans in the form of taxes in the first eight months of Fiscal Year 2016, which began last October 1. The new zenith of tax collection is an astronomical \$2.4 trillion.

Despite this high-water mark for the plunder of the producers of the country, the U.S. government's budget deficit continued swelling, reaching another record for the time period: \$407 billion, according to the Treasury Department's monthly statement of receipts and outlays of the federal government.

It is instructive to remember that despite branding themselves as the party of limited government and fiscal responsibility, Republicans have been in control of the House of Representatives — where revenue-raising bills must originate — since 2011, and of both the House and Senate since 2015, and the federal government is flabbier than ever.

For the period ending May 31, 2016, the federal government siphoned more wealth in the form of taxes than during any similar period in the history of the U.S. government, even after adjusting previous totals for inflation. Of the \$2.14 trillion seized by the federal government, half of that amount — \$1.037 trillion — was taken from the income of individual American workers.

The Treasury Department's financial disclosure displays a lack of fiscal fidelity to the Constitution that is astounding even to those aware of the absolute lack of accountability demanded by the people of their elected representatives. For example, there are billions of dollars devoted to funding federal programs, policies, and agencies that are nowhere permitted in the Constitution.

Taking money from a person against that person's will — even if that money is used for an arguably good cause — is theft. And if it is illegal for an individual to do something, it should be equally illegal for government to do that thing, as the government is nothing more than collective organization of the rights of individual members of the society.

Louisiana Re-brands Common Core in Attempt to Dupe Citizens

State officials in Louisiana tried to deceive citizens on June 7 by approving what amounts to, essentially, a glorified name change for the deeply unpopular Common Core education standards pushed by the Obama administration. Basically, policymakers re-branded the scheme as "Louisiana Standards," while pretending that there had been some "revisions" to the widely loathed education-nationalization effort. However, according to experts and activists involved in the process, the politically toxic national education standards imposed on state governments with federal funding and pressure remain almost entirely intact in Louisiana, despite the new name.

Amid an uprising among parents, teachers, taxpayers, and others, Louisiana officials created a "review committee" dominated by Common Core apparatchiks to supposedly "review" the standards and revise them. Officially, the panel changed some 20 percent of the Common Core standards in English and math as part of its revisions. However, according to experts, activists, and an analysis of the changes, less than three percent was actually changed, said educator Ganey Arceneaux, an education activist



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from Lake Charles who runs the Educate Louisiana service and testified against the re-branded Common Core standards.

In Louisiana, amid the debate on the new name for Common Core, teachers were sharply divided on the alleged revisions. Louisiana Association of Educators chief Debbie Meaux, for example, testified that she could not take an official position because members were divided on the issue. Meaux did recommend a yearly review process to uncover and resolve problems. However, for now, analysts say Louisiana appears to be stuck with Common Core.

Of course, Louisiana is only the latest state among many in which policymakers tried to dupe citizens into believing Common Core was gone. Indiana, South Carolina, Missouri, Arizona, Oklahoma, Florida, and numerous other states have suffered from similar fraud. However, parents and teachers have shown no signs of giving up or buying into the deception. Instead, as the horrifying effects of Common Core continue to expand, so does the opposition to the standards. No doubt the same will hold true for Louisiana.

Government to Gather Data From Pacemakers, Appliances, and Toys

Always anxious to expand the size of its surveillance dragnet, the National Security Agency (NSA) is exploring the possibility of seizing data from Internet-connected biomedical devices such as pacemakers, NSA Deputy Director Richard Ledgett said at the 2016 Defense One Tech Summit in Washington, D.C., on June 10. "We're looking at it sort of theoretically from a research point of view right now," he continued.

Ledgett referred to the life-saving devices as "another tool in the toolbox" of the snoops. He agreed with a comment saying that the data that could be gathered from the biomedical devices would be a "signals intelligence bonanza."

At a Senate hearing in February, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said that Internet-connected devices of all sorts could help with "identification, surveillance, monitoring, location tracking, and targeting for recruitment, or to gain access to networks or user credentials."

In a letter to Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), Clapper identified in passing some of the devices that could be hacked by the NSA (or other federal officers) to obtain personal information from a surveillance target: "a refrigerator, a washing machine, or a child's toy."

The dragnet now, apparently, will collect information from everyday appliances and the dolls and trucks played with by our children.

The fact that the chiefs of these major centers of the surveillance state openly admit that they are developing technology to monitor personal data from medical devices and private conversations from toys and household appliances proves that our elected representatives (and the courts, for that matter) have disregarded the Constitution and built a domestic spy apparatus that bears no resemblance whatsoever to the blueprint provided by our Founding Fathers in the Constitution.

The abridgments of fundamental liberties by the NSA are only the tip of the massive surveillance iceberg. Phone calls, texts, social media posts, etc., are already subject to the surveillance and sharing of the executive branch. Now medical devices, appliances, and children's toys are about to be added to



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the list of Stasi-like listening posts.

Suicide Among Active-duty Soldiers Spikes to Record Highs

Suicide rates among active-duty members of the U.S. military are increasing, with Army soldiers suffering from the highest rate of increase among all active-duty service members.

On June 6, HealthDay reported the findings of a survey of suicide among members of the U.S. military: "An analysis of all U.S. military suicides between 2005 and 2011 revealed that the suicide rate among Army members was roughly double that seen among the second highest risk group, the Marines."

The investigation further revealed that guns are the principal cause of most military suicides. Firearms were implicated in more than 62 percent of all suicide cases that have a definitive cause of death, the study found.

Whereas the study seems to implicate the availability of firearms as a contributing factor to the tragedy, the more immediate and quantifiable element is the seemingly perpetual war in which the United States has been engaged since 2001.

"Suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the United States as of 2010. And the current investigation comes amid a rising suicide rate among military personnel throughout the last 15 years of continual war. In fact, the U.S. military has seen its overall suicide rate nearly double between 2001 and 2011.... Psychologist Alan Peterson contended that the suicide differences between the branches of the military 'reflect the tremendous burden accepted and sacrifices made by the U.S. Army over the past 14 years,'" HealthDay reported.

In light of the undeniable attacks on the mental health of our military men, true conservatives should call on Congress to reclaim its authority over war, and insist that the Constitution be followed faithfully and that the thousands of U.S. armed forces personnel currently serving in civil wars that have nothing to do with preserving our own liberty be brought home.

Then, and only then, we might begin to see a steady decline in the number of active-duty servicemen who see suicide as their only way to escape the pain of prosecuting imperial wars.



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