

## Milton Friedman on Personal Independence Day

Bob Bauman (April 20, 2012)

I am indebted to Chris Edwards of the [Cato Institute](#) for reminding me that April 17<sup>th</sup> was not only pay-up-IRS-day this year, but also [Tax Freedom Day](#) (TFD), as calculated by the Tax Foundation.

That's the annual day that American taxpayers are allowed to stop working to pay government as measured by extracted taxes, and finally are allowed to start working for ourselves to pay our own bills and personal expenses.

The TFD is calculated by adding total federal, state, and local taxes, divided by national income to get a ratio representing the share that the average over burdened taxpayer pays in all taxes applied to the 365-day calendar.

This year the tax ratio of income paid to the tax collectors is 29.2% and that means all the income you earned up to April 17<sup>th</sup> went to government — not you.

### ***Personal Independence Day***

But Chris reminded us of another day – the great Nobel Prize economist **Milton Friedman** wrote [a 1974 Newsweek article](#) in which he proposed a "Personal Independence Day." That day would be based on the day total government *spending* ended, which is still larger than total *taxes*.

Indeed, in 2012 Americans will work until May 14<sup>th</sup> to be free from the burden of all combined federal, state, and local government *spending*.

It was typical of Friedman that he hoped that his "Personal Independence Day" would complement our national revolutionary Independence Day of July 4<sup>th</sup>.

I have met many famous people but meeting Milton Friedman was [a memorable encounter](#).

It was in Chicago in 1960 in a group of young conservatives at the Mont Pelerin Society. At a time when young conservatives on American campuses risked ridicule and worse, I was national chairman of Young Americans for Freedom, a youth group that had much to do with drafting Barry Goldwater to run for president in 1964. Professor Friedman was our strong supporter and often spoke at our gatherings.

What impressed me about Friedman was not only his brilliance and logic but his gentle demeanor, even when debating opponents. For the better part of an hour he chatted with us, young college students, as though we were his peers, warmly responding to our views. He made us feel that we were right at home with this great man, as we were.

For all his greatness, I will never forget that Chicago evening where I experienced the real Milton Friedman, a very human being, as well as a champion of human liberty and economic freedom.

Just the kind of American who would advocate a national "Personal Independence Day."

