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Infuriating Revenue Spending

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As we immerse ourselves in that most joyous of seasons, tax time, here are a few examples of how well the government is spending our hard-earned bucks. Pencils ready?

- According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), at least \$72 billion in improper payments were made in 2008.
- The Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank, estimates that Washington spends \$92 billion on corporate welfare (as compared to \$71 billion for Homeland Security). In the same vein, Ted Covey of the Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service found that over half of all farm subsidies go to commercial farms that report an average household income of over \$200,000.
- Auditors have found that Washington spends \$25 billion annually to maintain unused or vacant federal properties.
- George W. Bush's Program Assessment Rating Tool found that in the past five years 22 percent of all federal programs "failed to show any positive impact on the populations they serve." Cost? \$123 billion annually.
- Edwin Mora of CNS News — a conservative news agency — reported May 12 that Washington will spend \$2.6 million to teach Chinese prostitutes to drink more responsibly.
- A GAO audit has found that nearly half of government issued credit cards have been used for lingerie, liquor, gambling, mortgage payments, jewelry and vacations.
- According to Laura Strickler on a CBS News report on April 8, the Securities and Exchange Commission spent \$3.9 million to rearrange desks and offices in Washington.
- Tony Capaccio, in an Aug. 16 Bloomberg report found that the Pentagon spent \$998,798 to ship two 19-cent washers from South Carolina to Texas. It spent \$293,451 to send an 89-cent washer from South Carolina to Florida.
- CBS News reported May 26 that the federal government spent \$3 billion in re-sanding beaches — even as the new sand was washing back into the ocean.
- The GAO found that the Department of Defense wasted \$100 million on unused commercial airline tickets and didn't bother to seek refunds. Want to know where else your taxes are going?

Chuck Shepherd, in our Feb. 4 Ticket "News of the Weird," wrote: "A USA Today analysis revealed that during the first 18 months of the recent recession, beginning December 2007, the number of federal employees with six-figure salaries shot up from 14 percent of the federal workforce to 19 percent. ... The average federal salary is \$71,206, compared with the private sector's \$40,331."

Well, there you have it. Small wonder that a New York Times/CBS News poll released last week found that only 8 percent of Americans say that current members of Congress deserve re-election.

It's all rather taxing, no?