



## Punching above our weight since 1995

Throughout the political and economic changes of the past 20 years, Taxpayers for Common Sense has been a leader. At a time of polarization, we are able to unite people because no one – no matter where they fall on the political spectrum – wants to see tax dollars wasted. The principles that guide our work are common sense values for governing: Don't buy what we don't need; don't give away our assets for below market value; and if it doesn't work, don't fund it.

Yes, we have famous victories – like naming and killing the Bridge to Nowhere and bringing disclosure and accountability to earmarking. But I'm most proud of some of our quieter successes: ways in which we have made technical, nerdy issues salient to the public. We have always treated tax expenditures just like spending programs. We have always searched for hidden long-term liabilities. We have always emphasized prioritization as the important first step, to both frame the difficult decisions and then to actually make them.

I hope you're as proud of the last 20 years as I am. Thank you for your interest and your support. We couldn't do it without you.

Ryan Alexander  
President

*“You guys I find the most non-partisan, non-ideological, credible government waste group in Washington.”*

MSNBC'S CHRIS HAYES  
introducing TCS on “All In”

*“I agree with Taxpayers for Common Sense when they say that “this may be the convenient answer, but it is no way to get our fiscal house in order.”*

SENATOR JEFF FLAKE  
Republican, Arizona



# PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

## Work with Congress

We work extensively with elected officials from both parties. Our positions are cited during debates, and we often testify before congressional committees.

## Sound the alarm in the media

We've been interviewed on every major network, including CNN, MSNBC, C-SPAN and Fox News, and all three broadcast network's evening newscasts.

## Assist grassroots partners

We help grassroots groups fight waste in their communities by assisting them with media coverage and serving as their guide to D.C.

## Engage the public

Through our research, website, and public outreach, we educate the public about government waste and provide opportunities for taxpayers to weigh in.

TCS has been quoted in 90 of the top 100 US newspapers in the past two years, including the front pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*.

The "Weekly Wastebasket" email reaches thousands every week and is a reality check on federal spending. One subscriber called it "the best example of making complicated issues engaging, funny, and understandable."

## If it doesn't work, don't fund it

The Pentagon's new fighter, the F-35, is on pace to be the most expensive weapon in history. Given that the F-35 isn't even operational and certainly isn't being used overseas, we were appalled when the Pentagon tried to pay for 8 of them, at \$1.3 billion each, with Overseas Contingency Operations funds, which is supposed to be for warfighting costs.

A few days after we highlighted this ridiculous request in the *Weekly Wastebasket*, the House Appropriations Committee killed it.

## Cut unnecessary subsidies & corporate welfare

A common sense step on the path to fiscal responsibility is nixing spending on programs that have outlived their purpose or simply pad the pockets of those with special access. To highlight these programs, we produce the Common Sense Cuts series, providing lawmakers a menu of options to craft a more responsible and credible budget.

We helped a coalition cut a \$5 billion-a-year farm payment program sending checks to landowners regardless of market conditions or production.

## Avoid unnecessary liability for taxpayers

Spending choices can have big consequences and create future liabilities that are underestimated by policymakers. Road maintenance is a good example: States are facing \$45.2 billion in costs to bring roads in poor condition up to a state of good repair. In a joint report, TCS and Smart Growth America showed that over three years, if the amount spent on repair vs. new roads had been reversed, the number of roads in bad condition could have been halved or even eliminated by 2014.

TCS has successfully killed several unnecessary road projects, such as I-79.

## Expose and stop corruption

We are often critical of legislated "land exchanges" which are meant to consolidate federal land holdings. These are almost always a bad deal for taxpayers and a corrupting influence on lawmakers and it's pretty clear that Uncle Sam is getting the short end of the stick when lawmakers try to force land swaps.

In 2013, former Congressman Rick Renzi (R-AZ) traded his pin stripes for prison stripes after being found guilty of using land exchanges for extortion and money laundering.

## Ensure fair market value for taxpayer assets

For years, TCS has argued that taxpayers must receive a fair return for resources extracted from public lands and waters. In 2014, we exposed that the oil and gas industry was not paying for oil and gas used in their onsite operations, leading to millions of dollars in lost royalties — the result of a statute the industry wrote themselves.

As a result, lawmakers have expressed interest in eliminating the giveaway. And we're working to strengthen the rule governing royalty payments on federal lands.



# 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS

Clinton

Senate Control

House Control

Bush

Obama

1995 Taxpayers for Common Sense Founded.

February 22, 1996 The first Weekly Wastebasket is sent.

1996 TCS partners with Friends of the Earth to publish the "Green Scissors" report, a bipartisan project that seeks to end wasteful and environmentally harmful federal spending.



## Monkeys in Space?

TCS sends a letter to NASA demanding an end to its \$33.2 million program to launch Russian-owned monkeys into space to gather data on the effects of space on the body. Given tax day is right around the corner, the letter is accompanied by a mock 1040 MONKEY form featuring the "Space Monkey Check-Off Box" and the program is eventually nixed.

1999 Continual agitation on the part of TCSensured that beach replenishment projects are funded with less federal money, stopping our oceans from becoming dumps for federal dollars.

1999 Following up the successful 1996 report, TCS releases "Road To Ruin," documenting the 50 worst and most wasteful road projects in the country. Subsequent reports were released in 2001 and 2004, prompting many of these wasteful projects to be stopped.

## The Golden Fleece Award

Senator William Proxmire asks TCS to revive his "Golden Fleece Award," which was presented to public officials who the Senator felt were wasting public money.



2000 TCS helps kill the \$944 million Auburn Dam for the second time. The wasteful project just won't die. TCS had first helped stop it in 1998, again in 2001, and we finally killed it once and for all (fingers crossed!) in 2006.

2000 A TCS report generates 150+ media hits on the negative impacts of a billion dollars-plus in overzealous wildfire suppression from CNN to NPR.



## The Cost of Corruption

TCS earmark investigations helped uncover patterns of bribes and rewards like those between former Rep. Duke Cunningham and his partners, who pleaded guilty to accepting at least \$2.4 million in bribes and underreporting income. Working with investigative journalists, we also highlighted the earmarking excesses of Rep. Don Young and the late Rep. John Murtha.

2003 A \$16 billion leasing deal with Boeing for tanker jets is put on the no-fly-list after TCS questions the process and charges of corruption prompt the Pentagon to put the program on ice. The contracting officer was eventually convicted of a crime.

2003 After more than 30 years on the books and opposed by every Secretary of Interior since, the Oregon Inlet Jetties boondoggle is jettisoned.

2003 TCS worked round the clock with reporters and staff on the hill to defeat the pork laden, nearly \$100 billion "Hooters and Polluters" Energy bill in 2003.

2004 TCS advocates for the appointment of a Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction to oversee spending, later serving as a model for the subsequent Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

2005 After a disastrous hurricane season, TCS-proposed reforms at the Army Corps of Engineers are adopted, including independent peer reviews of projects. We dug deep into contractors receiving billions in disaster funds, testifying before Congress several times. Today, we continue to track disaster spending and make policy recommendations.



## No Fly List

With a price tag of \$74 billion – that's \$377 million per plane – the Air Force stops buying more F-22 Raptor fighter jets thanks to the work of TCS. Unsurprisingly, the plane is built in the districts of a number of influential and supportive lawmakers.

2008 67 years and \$220 million later, Congress stops pumping money into the Yazoo Pumps project thanks to TCS's constant calls for the project's end.

2009 The Global Nuclear Energy Partnership meets its end, saving a proposed \$100 billion in taxpayer money.



## Farm Funding Follies

TCS documents the shortcomings of CBO's past cost predictions of farm bills, eliciting howls from Congressional staff in the New York Times. The farm bill has already cost taxpayers \$5 billion more than projected and is on pace to be at least an additional \$9 billion more costly over the next ten years, effectively wiping out any projected "savings."

2009 TCS stops a budget meltdown by stopping \$50 billion in taxpayer dollars in high risk nuclear loan guarantees.



## Coal to Kaiserslautern

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees get a *Golden Fleece Award* for funding the absurd practice of sending thousands of tons of coal from Pennsylvania to Germany to power U.S. military bases, a waste that began more than 50 years ago to protect the coal industry. Now we're working with both parties to end this crazy and outdated government subsidy.

2011 The Department of Energy cancels plans to construct the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement – Nuclear Facility, which would have cost taxpayers 10 times its original cost.

2015 FutureGen, a wasteful \$1.65 billion clean coal project first proposed in 2003, is wiped from the budget.

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## Ear·mark (ir-märk/) noun.

Legislative provision that sets aside funds within an account for a specific program, project, activity, institution, or location, normally circumventing merit-based or competitive allocation processes and appearing in spending, authorization, tax, and tariff bills.

TCS advocates that precious taxpayer dollars are instead awarded in a merit-based, competitive, transparent process.

● June 12, 2003 TCS sheds light on the now-infamous "Bridge to Nowhere." Dubbed by TCS and thereafter referred to as the "Bridge to Nowhere," TCS calls for an end to the \$200 million worth of earmarks that flowed to Alaska for the Gravina Island Bridge project.

● November 16, 2005 Curtain falls on the "Bridge to Nowhere." After becoming the focal point in the growing debate on earmarks and a symbol of pork-barrel spending in Washington, Congress votes to kill the project.

● November 29, 2005 TCS releases the first ever real-time cataloging of earmarks in major legislation – the 2005 Transportation Bill – which was instrumental in raising the profile of earmarks in the public consciousness, making us the "go to" organization for information about earmarks.

● January 5, 2007 Congress votes to disclose earmark requesters. The House votes overwhelmingly to make members stand by their earmarks, disclosing sponsors' names next to the projects they requested. The Senate eventually follows suit.

● February 14, 2008 TCS earmark database is made publically available. This includes a new release as each chamber passes its version of an appropriations bill. As a result, the media takes notice, propelling earmarks into the national debate and eventually resulting in tremendous reforms of the earmarking process.

● December 8, 2010 Congress puts a moratorium on earmarks. For the first time in history, Congress suspends the practice of earmarking.

## 2015 and Beyond

The broader debate over government transparency endures. TCS continues to fight for prioritization and accountability at every step of the budget process to protect taxpayer assets.

# HOW TO SUPPORT OUR WORK

## Be Part of the Progress •.....

Your support makes a real and lasting impact. After 20 years of success, it is clear that together we can make government work.

Taxpayers for Common Sense is supported by contributions from hundreds of generous individuals and private foundations. We do not solicit or accept corporate contributions or government grants. (We do accept employer matching funds of individuals' gifts.) We do not accept funding from those with a financial stake in the results of our work.

*Contributions to TCS are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please contact your tax advisor for more details.*

### Give Online

Visit [www.taxpayer.net/donate](http://www.taxpayer.net/donate)

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Washington, DC 20003.

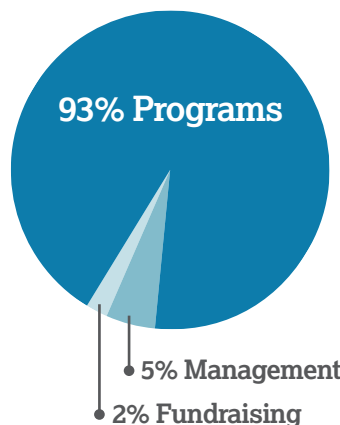
### Other gift options

To make an Electronic Funds Transfer, a gift of Stock, or to arrange a Planned Gift, please contact us at (202) 546-8500 or give at [www.taxpayer.net/donate](http://www.taxpayer.net/donate).

## We Run a Tight Ship

TCS takes financial responsibility seriously. Over 90% of our lean \$1.5 million budget is spent on program expenses. Please contact us for the most recent copy of our financial statements.

We are grateful to the hundreds of individual donors and charitable foundations who have supported our work since 1995.



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Great research by @Taxpayers (Taxpayers 4 Common Sense) on oil/gas industry. Says big oil pays 20% tax rate, on avg...

Heather Long  
@ByHeatherLong

Stock market & economy editor, @CNMMoney

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