

# **Tax Choice USA**

A Tiered Tax Allocation Framework for Structured Taxpayer Agency

A White Paper

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## Section 1: Executive Summary

Americans hold a wide range of views on what their government should fund. That diversity of perspective is not a flaw in the system — it is the system. And yet the federal tax structure treats every taxpayer's contribution identically, offering no structured mechanism for individuals to express whether they believe a given program serves America's best interest.

Tax Choice USA proposes a different approach. At its core, the framework rests on a simple premise: if you believe a program is in America's best interest, you fund it. If you don't, you shouldn't be forced to. This is not an argument for defunding government. It is an argument for building a system that takes seriously the civic interest taxpayers have in how their collective resources are allocated — and creates structured opportunities to express that interest.

The framework organizes federal spending into three tiers based on the nature of the funding obligation.

**Tier 1 — Mandatory Core Funding** encompasses programs essential to national stability, legal obligation, and the continuous operation of government. Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, national defense, net interest on the federal debt, veterans' benefits, SNAP, and critical public safety infrastructure are fully funded through mandatory allocation. No taxpayer choice is introduced. Tier 1 represents approximately \$5.4 trillion, or 76 percent of total federal spending in FY2025.

**Tier 2 — Directed Allocation** covers programs where taxpayers may reasonably disagree on how much funding is appropriate. Each Tier 2 program receives a guaranteed funding floor that ensures operational continuity, plus a taxpayer-directed portion that reflects individual preference. The floor correlates directly with human dependency — the more people rely on a program in real time, the higher the floor. Tier 2 represents approximately \$450 billion annually.

**Tier 3 — Voluntary Funding** applies to programs that meet one of two conditions: they are time-bound and project-based by nature, or they address areas where there is genuine national disagreement about whether the federal government should be involved at all. Tier 3 programs are funded only through voluntary taxpayer support. If you believe the program serves America's best interest, you fund it. If you don't, you're not forced to. Tier 3 represents approximately \$330 billion annually.

While Tiers 2 and 3 represent approximately 11 percent of total federal spending, this translates to nearly \$780 billion annually — a meaningful starting point for structured

taxpayer agency, with the architecture designed to expand as the model matures and public trust in the system grows.

A critical structural principle governs the entire framework: tier classification is a congressional function. This paper proposes the architecture; Congress defines the boundaries. Implementation would require Congressional action to authorize taxpayer-directed allocation mechanisms, consistent with the Constitution's requirement that no money be drawn from the Treasury except through appropriations made by law. This is by design — Tax Choice USA does not seek to circumvent representative government, but to complement it.

Two boundaries deserve emphasis at the outset. First, this framework does not address waste, fraud, abuse, or operational inefficiency within government programs. Those are real problems, but they belong to a different problem space entirely. Tax Choice USA is about allocation, not efficiency. Second, this is an aspirational framework — a starting point for structured debate, not a finished legislative proposal. The tier classifications presented here are illustrative and subject to the congressional process. The goal is to introduce a paradigm worth exploring, not to prescribe a final answer.

Transparency is the prerequisite that makes all of this work. Choice without information is not meaningful choice. The framework assumes — and requires — that taxpayers have access to clear, standardized, and accessible reporting on how funds are used and what outcomes they produce. Without that foundation, the system cannot function as intended.

What follows is a detailed examination of the framework: the problem it addresses, the principles that guide it, the mechanics of each tier, the tradeoffs it introduces, and a realistic path toward implementation.

## Section 2: The Problem — A Disconnect Between Taxpayers and Spending

The United States operates one of the most complex public funding systems in the world. It finances national defense, funds medical care for tens of millions, maintains infrastructure across fifty states, and supports a vast network of programs that touch nearly every dimension of American life. By most structural measures, it works — services are delivered, obligations are met, and the machinery of government continues to function.

But functioning is not the same as alignment. And it is in the gap between a system that works and a system that reflects the people it serves that the core problem emerges.

In a representative democracy, citizens delegate spending authority to elected officials — but delegation is not the same as abdication. Taxpayers have a legitimate civic interest in how collective resources are allocated, and a well-designed system should create structured opportunities to express that interest. Today, no such opportunities exist. The federal budget is assembled through a legislative process that, while representative in theory, offers individual taxpayers no direct mechanism to differentiate their priorities. Every dollar contributed is treated identically. A taxpayer who believes federal education funding is essential and a taxpayer who believes education is a state responsibility contribute the same way, to the same pool, with the same lack of influence over where their contribution lands.

This uniformity creates a compounding disconnect. Taxpayers cannot see, in any meaningful way, where their money goes. They cannot distinguish between programs they support and programs they do not. And over time, this absence of agency breeds frustration — not necessarily with the amount of taxation, but with the feeling that their role in the system begins and ends with the check.

The result is a growing sense among many Americans that the system does not reflect their view of what is in America's best interest. Reasonable people disagree — often sharply — on whether the federal government should fund international aid, subsidize specific industries, invest in space exploration, or maintain its current role in education. These are not fringe positions. They represent genuine, broadly held differences of opinion about the appropriate scope of federal involvement. Under the current structure, those differences have no outlet. Every taxpayer funds every program, regardless of whether they believe the program should exist at all.

This is not a problem that more information alone can solve, though transparency would help. It is a structural problem. The system was designed for an era in which centralized allocation was the only practical option. It has not evolved to accommodate the reality that Americans hold deeply varied — and often deeply considered — views on how their government should spend.

It is also worth naming a dynamic that any discussion of public funding must acknowledge: the free rider problem. Public funding systems — by their nature — distribute costs across a broad population while delivering benefits that are often indirect or shared. This creates an inherent free rider dynamic that no allocation model fully eliminates. Tax Choice USA acknowledges this reality and is designed to work within it, not around it. The free rider challenge is not unique to the current system, nor would it be introduced by a new one. It is a feature of collective funding itself, and any honest framework must account for it rather than pretend it can be engineered away. A more detailed treatment of this dynamic appears in Section 10.

The opportunity, then, is not to dismantle the existing system but to evolve it. To preserve the stability that centralized allocation provides where it is genuinely needed, while creating structured space for taxpayer agency where reasonable disagreement exists. If you believe a program is in America's best interest, you fund it. If you don't, you shouldn't be forced to. That principle — applied carefully, within a framework that protects essential functions — is the foundation of what follows.

## Section 3: Guiding Principles

Any framework that introduces taxpayer choice into public funding must answer a prior question: on what basis are those choices structured? Tax Choice USA is not a market. It is not a menu. It is an architecture for expressing civic preference within a system that still requires stability, continuity, and collective responsibility. The principles below define the boundaries of that architecture.

**Stability where it is required.** Certain functions of government cannot tolerate volatility. National defense, the federal judiciary, Social Security, Medicare — these programs depend on predictable, uninterrupted funding. They serve populations who have no alternative if funding falters, and they operate on planning horizons that demand consistency. The framework begins from the position that these functions must be fully protected from fluctuations in public sentiment. Not everything should be subject to choice, and recognizing that boundary is what makes choice credible everywhere else.

**Choice where it is appropriate.** Where reasonable people disagree — not on whether government should exist, but on the scope and priority of specific programs — choice has a legitimate role. The current system treats those disagreements as irrelevant at the individual level. Tax Choice USA treats them as meaningful. If you believe a program is in America’s best interest, you fund it. If you don’t, you shouldn’t be forced to. This principle does not apply universally. It applies where genuine disagreement exists about the federal role, the appropriate level of investment, or the priority of one program relative to another. The tier structure is the mechanism that determines where that line falls.

**Transparency as a prerequisite.** Choice without information is theater. For taxpayer-directed allocation to function — for it to produce outcomes that reflect considered judgment rather than impulse or ignorance — the system must provide clear, standardized, and accessible information about what programs do, what they cost, and what outcomes they produce. This is not a secondary feature of the framework. It is foundational. Without transparency, the entire model collapses into noise.

**Individual agency within collective responsibility.** Tax Choice USA does not propose that taxpayers opt out of funding government. Tier 1 is mandatory. Tier 2 is mandatory. The obligation to contribute is preserved. What changes is the degree to which individuals can direct a portion of their contribution to reflect their own view of what serves America’s best interest. This is a deliberate distinction — the shift is from “I don’t want to pay” to “I want a voice in where my contribution goes.” The framework

preserves collective responsibility while creating structured space for individual expression within it.

**Flexibility without instability.** The tier structure exists precisely to separate what must remain fixed from what can adapt. Tier 1 absorbs no volatility. Tier 2 introduces flexibility through baseline floors that protect operational continuity while allowing incremental funding to shift with taxpayer preference. Tier 3 is fully voluntary and project-based by design. This layered approach ensures that the system can respond to changing priorities without creating the kind of funding disruption that undermines public trust or program effectiveness.

**Accountability through visibility.** When taxpayers can see where money goes and influence where a portion of it is directed, a natural accountability dynamic emerges. Programs that demonstrate clear value attract support. Programs that do not face a constructive pressure: improve, justify, or evolve. And for programs that consistently fail to earn taxpayer backing, the framework surfaces a question that the current system never asks — whether the program belongs in the federal portfolio at all. Proponents of an unfunded initiative are not silenced; they are redirected. They can take their case to the private sector, to philanthropy, to state and local government — competing for support within the broad market of ideas, where generous funding exists for causes that earn it. The framework does not eliminate programs by fiat. It lets public preference determine which ideas deserve public dollars and which are better pursued through other means.

These principles do not resolve every tension the framework will encounter. They are not intended to. They establish the guardrails within which the specific mechanics of each tier are designed — and they provide a consistent reference point for the design decisions that follow.

## Section 4: The Framework

The Tax Choice USA framework organizes federal spending into three tiers, each reflecting a different relationship between taxpayer obligation and taxpayer agency. The tiers are not arbitrary. They follow a single organizing question: how much genuine disagreement exists about whether — and how much — the federal government should fund a given program?

Where the answer is “virtually none,” funding is mandatory and fully allocated by Congress. Where reasonable people disagree on the appropriate level, taxpayers can direct a portion of their contribution. Where the federal role itself is genuinely contested, funding is voluntary.

Total federal spending in FY2025 is approximately \$7.1 trillion. The framework allocates that spending as follows.

**Tier 1 — Mandatory Core Funding (~\$5.4 trillion, 76% of federal spending)** covers programs essential to national stability, legal obligation, and the continuous operation of government. These programs are fully funded through mandatory allocation. No taxpayer choice is introduced. Tier 1 exists because certain functions cannot tolerate funding variability — disruptions in Social Security payments, gaps in national defense, or lapses in federal debt service would create cascading consequences that no allocation model should risk.

**Tier 2 — Directed Allocation (~\$450 billion)** covers programs where taxpayers broadly agree the program should exist but may reasonably disagree on how much it should receive. Each Tier 2 program has two funding components: a guaranteed floor that ensures operational continuity regardless of taxpayer behavior, and a taxpayer-directed portion that reflects individual preference. The underlying principle is explicit: the floor correlates directly with human dependency. The more real people depend on a program in real time, the higher the floor. Taxpayers must contribute to Tier 2 — the obligation is mandatory. What they can influence is where their directed portion goes. This is a deliberate shift from “I don’t want to pay for this” to “I must contribute, but I can direct my contribution.”

**Tier 3 — Voluntary Funding (~\$330 billion)** applies to programs that meet one of two qualifying conditions: the program is time-bound and project-based by nature, or the federal role in that area is genuinely contested — meaning there is real, broadly held national disagreement about whether the federal government should be involved at all,

regardless of how well the program performs. Tier 3 programs receive funding only through voluntary taxpayer support. They must earn it.

While Tiers 2 and 3 represent approximately 11 percent of total federal spending, this translates to nearly \$780 billion annually — a meaningful starting point for structured taxpayer agency, with the architecture designed to expand as the model matures and public trust in the system grows. To put that figure in perspective, \$780 billion exceeds the GDP of all but roughly twenty countries in the world. This is not a token gesture. It is a substantial starting point for a fundamentally different relationship between taxpayers and their government.

The sections that follow examine each tier in detail — the programs it contains, the mechanics that govern it, and the design choices that shape how taxpayer participation works within it.

## Section 5: Tier 1 — Mandatory Core Funding

Tier 1 is the foundation. It represents the set of programs and obligations that must remain fully funded, fully predictable, and fully insulated from variability in taxpayer preference. No choice is introduced here — not because choice is undesirable, but because the consequences of funding disruption in these areas are unacceptable.

The programs in Tier 1 share a common set of characteristics. They are continuous, requiring uninterrupted funding to function. They are obligatory, rooted in legal commitments or structural necessities that cannot be deferred. They are systemically critical, meaning that disruptions would produce cascading effects well beyond the program itself. And they are unsuitable for demand-based funding — their value does not depend on whether any individual taxpayer chooses to support them in a given year.

These criteria are the gatekeepers. A program does not enter Tier 1 because it is important. Many important programs sit in Tiers 2 and 3. A program enters Tier 1 because the cost of funding instability — to individuals, to institutions, to the nation — is too high to tolerate.

The following table reflects the illustrative Tier 1 classification under this framework, based on approximate FY2025 spending levels.

Program	~FY2025 Spend
Social Security	\$1.3T
Net Interest on Federal Debt	\$1.0T
National Defense	\$917B
Medicare	\$875B
Medicaid	\$600B
Veterans Benefits & Services	\$370B
SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	\$100B
Administration of Justice (FBI, federal courts)	\$85B
CDC / FDA (public safety functions)	~\$60B
Transportation Safety Infrastructure (air traffic control, highway safety)	~\$50B

General Government Operations (IRS, Congress, executive branch)	\$30B
<b>Total Tier 1</b>	<b>~\$5.4T</b>

Several classification decisions warrant brief explanation.

**National defense** is included in Tier 1 in its entirety. While some observers have suggested that certain defense subcategories — procurement, for example, as distinct from operational readiness — might eventually be candidates for taxpayer-directed allocation, this framework does not attempt that split. Defense planning operates on multi-year cycles with complex interdependencies, and introducing funding variability at any level would undermine the strategic continuity the system requires. Congress retains the authority to define boundaries within defense spending as the framework evolves, but for purposes of this proposal, defense remains fully Tier 1.

**Net interest on the federal debt** is a legal obligation, not a policy choice. The government must service its debt to maintain creditworthiness and access to capital markets. At approximately \$1 trillion annually, it represents a substantial and non-negotiable portion of federal spending.

**SNAP** is designated Tier 1 given the immediacy of need and the dependency of millions of households on consistent access to nutrition assistance. The program serves as a direct lifeline for food security, and funding disruption would produce immediate, tangible harm to vulnerable populations. However, as program administration matures and transparency around outcomes improves, a future framework could evaluate whether SNAP — or components of it — might transition to Tier 2 with appropriate baseline funding protections in place. This is not a recommendation for reclassification. It is an acknowledgment that the framework is designed to adapt, and that tier designations are not permanent.

The remaining Tier 1 programs — veterans' services, the federal judiciary, public health safety functions, transportation safety infrastructure, and general government operations — reflect the essential machinery of a functioning federal government. These are not areas where reasonable people disagree about whether the federal government should be involved. They are the baseline without which the government itself cannot operate.

A final note on boundaries. One of the persistent risks in any tiered system is the gravitational pull toward expanding what qualifies as “core.” If every program eventually migrates to Tier 1, the framework loses its meaning. The criteria outlined above — continuity, legal obligation, systemic criticality, unsuitability for demand-based funding — are designed to resist that expansion. Programs must affirmatively meet these

standards to qualify. Importance alone is not sufficient. Many programs that are valuable, effective, and broadly supported nonetheless belong in Tier 2 or Tier 3 because they can absorb a degree of funding flexibility without producing systemic harm. The discipline of Tier 1 is what makes choice credible in the tiers that follow.

## Section 6: Tier 2 — Directed Allocation

Tier 2 is where the framework delivers its central innovation. It introduces structured taxpayer choice into funding decisions — not by making programs optional, but by allowing individuals to influence how a defined portion of their contribution is distributed across programs where reasonable disagreement on funding levels exists.

The distinction is critical. Tier 2 does not ask taxpayers whether a program should exist. It asks how much relative priority that program should receive compared to others in the same tier. Contribution to Tier 2 is mandatory. Direction is not. Taxpayers who prefer not to engage can default to a standard government allocation. But for those who want a voice, the mechanism is there.

Every Tier 2 program has two funding components. The first is a guaranteed floor — a baseline level of funding that the program receives regardless of how taxpayers direct their contributions. The floor ensures operational continuity, protects multi-year planning, and prevents the kind of abrupt funding swings that would undermine program effectiveness. The second component is the taxpayer-directed portion — the share of funding that reflects aggregated individual preference.

The ratio between floor and choice is not arbitrary. It follows a single governing principle: the floor correlates directly with human dependency. The more real people depend on a program in real time — for housing, for income, for food — the higher the floor. Programs where disruption would produce immediate hardship receive the strongest baseline protection. Programs with longer planning horizons or more discretionary characteristics receive lower floors and correspondingly larger choice windows.

The following table reflects the illustrative Tier 2 classification, with approximate FY2025 spending levels and the floor-to-choice ratio for each program category.

Program	~FY2025 Spend	Guaranteed Floor	Taxpayer Choice
Income Security (non-SNAP): unemployment, housing assistance, EITC, TANF	~\$200B	85%	15%
Transportation Grants (Amtrak, general grants)	~\$100B	80%	20%
Agriculture & Farm Subsidies	~\$60B	70%	30%

NIH Research	~\$50B	65%	35%
Established Economic Subsidies	~\$40B	60%	40%
<b>Total Tier 2</b>	<b>~\$450B</b>		

The pattern is deliberate. Income security programs carry an 85 percent floor because the populations they serve — the unemployed, the housing-insecure, families relying on earned income credits — depend on consistent access. A 15 percent choice window introduces taxpayer agency without threatening the lifeline. At the other end, established economic subsidies carry a 60 percent floor and a 40 percent choice window, reflecting the fact that these programs, while valuable, serve populations and industries with greater capacity to absorb funding variability.

Transportation grants sit at 80/20, reflecting the multi-year infrastructure planning cycles that require predictable funding but can accommodate some degree of taxpayer-directed prioritization. Agriculture subsidies at 70/30 account for seasonal planning dependencies while recognizing that farm policy is an area of genuine public debate. NIH research at 65/35 acknowledges the longer-horizon, more discretionary nature of federal research investment — essential work, but work that operates on timelines and with outcomes that differ meaningfully from month-to-month safety net programs.

The default mechanism deserves emphasis. Not every taxpayer will choose to engage in directed allocation, and the framework does not penalize disengagement. Taxpayers who do not make active selections have their Tier 2 contribution distributed according to a standard allocation — likely reflecting current spending proportions or a policy-determined baseline. This ensures that the system functions at any level of participation. High engagement produces a funding landscape that closely tracks public preference. Low engagement produces something closer to the status quo. Both outcomes are acceptable. The framework creates the opportunity for participation without depending on universal adoption to work.

Over time, aggregated Tier 2 allocations produce a signal — a picture of what taxpayers collectively prioritize within the space where reasonable disagreement exists. Programs that attract strong support grow incrementally. Programs that attract less see slower growth or relative decline. No program disappears — the floor prevents that. But the incremental funding layer becomes a feedback mechanism, reflecting where the public sees the greatest value.

This dynamic is intentional, and it comes with tradeoffs. Programs that are easier to understand or communicate may attract disproportionate support. Programs with long-term, indirect benefits may be harder to champion in a system that invites active comparison. These risks are real, and they are addressed more fully in Section 10. But

they do not invalidate the model. They define the design challenge — and they underscore the importance of standardized, accessible information that gives every program a fair opportunity to make its case.

## Section 7: Tier 3 — Voluntary Funding

Tier 3 is where the framework’s emotional origin lives. This is the tier that answers the question that started the entire project: should taxpayers be compelled to fund programs when there is genuine national disagreement about whether the federal government should be involved at all?

The answer Tax Choice USA offers is straightforward. If you believe a program is in America’s best interest, you fund it. If you don’t, you shouldn’t be forced to.

Tier 3 programs receive no guaranteed baseline. They are funded entirely through voluntary taxpayer support. This is not a judgment on their value — many Tier 3 programs address real needs, serve real communities, and produce real outcomes. Placement in Tier 3 is a statement about the nature of the federal role, not the importance of the work.

A program qualifies for Tier 3 if it meets either of two conditions. First, it may be time-bound and project-based — a program with a defined scope, a clear endpoint, and outcomes that can be evaluated on completion. Second, the federal role in that area may be genuinely contested — meaning there is real, broadly held national disagreement about whether the federal government should be the entity doing this work, regardless of how well the program performs. These two criteria are not interchangeable, and many Tier 3 programs satisfy both. But either condition alone is sufficient.

The following table reflects the illustrative Tier 3 classification, with approximate FY2025 spending levels and the qualifying reason for each program category.

<b>Program</b>	<b>~FY2025 Spend</b>	<b>Tier 3 Qualifying Reason</b>
Education & Job Training	\$120B	Contested federal role
Environmental & Conservation Programs	\$88B	Contested federal role
Community & Regional Development	\$85B	Project-based by nature
International Aid (non-military)	\$50B	Contested federal role
Science, Space & Technology	\$50B	Project-based / time-bound
Energy Programs	\$40B	Contested federal role

Experimental Economic Subsidies	~\$15B	Project-based / time-bound
<b>Total Tier 3</b>	<b>~\$330B</b>	

The placement of education in Tier 3 deserves direct discussion, because it is the classification most likely to draw immediate reaction. Education matters. No one involved in building this framework believes otherwise. But the question the framework asks is not whether education is important — it is whether the federal government is the right entity to fund it. And on that question, reasonable Americans disagree. Some believe federal involvement in education is essential to equity and national standards. Others believe education is fundamentally a state and local responsibility, and that federal involvement distorts priorities and undermines local accountability. Both positions are held sincerely, by large numbers of people, and neither is fringe.

That disagreement is precisely what Tier 3 is designed for. Under this framework, the debate is resolved democratically — not by forcing everyone to fund federal education programs regardless of their view, but by letting taxpayers express their position through their contribution. If you believe federal education funding serves America’s best interest, you fund it. If you believe education dollars are better directed at the state level, you are not compelled to subsidize a model you do not support. The program does not disappear — it competes for voluntary support and must make its case on the merits.

The same logic applies across Tier 3. Environmental programs are placed here not because conservation is unimportant, but because the scope and nature of the federal role in environmental policy is genuinely contested. International aid is included because Americans hold deeply varied views on whether foreign assistance is a federal responsibility or a distraction from domestic priorities. Energy programs qualify because federal involvement in energy markets is a live policy debate with principled positions on both sides.

Science, space, and technology programs, along with community development and experimental subsidies, qualify primarily on the project-based criterion. These are areas where federal investment tends to be episodic, targeted, and evaluable — characteristics that make them well-suited to a model where funding is tied to demonstrated public interest.

Tier 3 introduces a dynamic that does not exist anywhere else in the framework: the possibility that a program does not get funded. This is not a bug. It is the mechanism through which the framework honors the principle that started this project. Programs that earn broad support will be funded — potentially generously. Programs that do not will face a choice: adapt, make a stronger case, or seek support outside the federal

system. That discipline is what gives taxpayer agency its meaning. Without the possibility of an unfunded outcome, choice is just theater.

This does not mean Tier 3 is without risk. Popularity bias is real — programs with compelling narratives and visible outcomes will attract support more easily than programs with diffuse, long-term benefits. The “sexy idea” problem, where novel or emotionally resonant initiatives crowd out steady, unglamorous work, is a genuine limitation. These dynamics are explored further in Section 10. But they are tradeoffs inherent to any system that takes individual agency seriously, and they are preferable — within this tier — to the alternative of compelling taxpayers to fund programs whose federal existence they fundamentally question.

## Section 8: Illustrative Examples

The mechanics of each tier are best understood through practical application. The following scenarios illustrate how taxpayers might interact with the system and how funding decisions would play out in practice. These examples are simplified for clarity but reflect the core dynamics of the framework.

**A taxpayer engages with Tier 2.** During annual tax filing, a taxpayer is presented with her Tier 2 allocation options. She reviews the program categories — income security, transportation, agriculture, NIH research, and economic subsidies — alongside standardized descriptions of what each funds and what outcomes it has produced. She feels strongly about biomedical research and believes transportation infrastructure has been underfunded for years. She directs 40 percent of her Tier 2 contribution to NIH research, 35 percent to transportation grants, and distributes the remaining 25 percent across the other categories. Her neighbor, a farmer in central Kansas, makes a different set of choices — directing heavily toward agriculture and income security. Across millions of taxpayers, these individual decisions aggregate into a funding signal that shapes how incremental Tier 2 dollars are distributed. Both taxpayers contributed the same mandatory amount. Both exercised agency over where that contribution landed. And every program continued to operate on its guaranteed floor regardless of either taxpayer's choices.

**A taxpayer opts out.** Not everyone wants to make allocation decisions, and the framework does not require them to. A taxpayer who prefers simplicity selects the default option, and his Tier 2 contribution is distributed according to a standard government allocation. The system functions identically whether 10 percent of taxpayers actively engage or 90 percent do. High participation produces a funding landscape that closely reflects public preference. Low participation produces something closer to the status quo. Both are acceptable outcomes — the framework creates the opportunity for agency without depending on universal adoption.

**A Tier 3 program earns support.** A federal pilot program in workforce development is proposed under Tier 3. It has a defined scope — retraining displaced manufacturing workers in three Midwestern states over a four-year period — a clear budget of \$200 million, and measurable outcomes tied to employment placement rates. The program is presented to taxpayers alongside other Tier 3 initiatives. It attracts broad voluntary support, meets its funding threshold, and launches. Four years later, its outcomes are evaluated. If the results are strong, proponents can make the case for renewal, expansion, or even transition to Tier 2 with baseline funding. The program earned its way in.

**A Tier 3 program does not.** A proposed cultural initiative fails to reach its funding threshold within the designated period. It does not move forward. No taxpayer funds are allocated to it, and the resources remain available for other priorities. This outcome is not a failure of the system — it is the system working as designed. The initiative was given a fair opportunity to earn support. It did not. Its proponents can refine the proposal, build a broader coalition, seek private or philanthropic funding, or bring it back in a future cycle with a stronger case. What they cannot do is compel taxpayers to fund something the public chose not to support.

**Competing priorities produce a visible signal.** In a given year, aggregated Tier 2 allocations show increased support for NIH research and income security, while agriculture subsidies receive a smaller share of incremental funding. This does not mean agriculture programs are cut — their 70 percent floor ensures continued operation. But the signal is clear: taxpayers, in the aggregate, placed higher relative priority on health research and safety net programs that year. Over time, these patterns provide policymakers with something they have never had — a direct, structured expression of where the public sees the greatest value within the areas where reasonable disagreement exists.

These examples illustrate a consistent set of dynamics. Core services remain untouched. Choice operates within defined boundaries. Participation is flexible. And the system produces information — about public priorities, about program value, about where consensus exists and where it does not — that the current structure cannot generate.

## Section 9: Benefits of the Model

The preceding sections have described what the framework is and how it works. This section draws together the benefits that emerge from the model as a whole — not as guaranteed outcomes, but as structural advantages that follow from the way the system changes the relationship between taxpayers and public funding.

**Alignment between funding and preference.** The most direct benefit is that the allocation of public funds begins to reflect, in a structured way, what taxpayers actually prioritize. Under the current system, discretionary spending is determined entirely through a legislative process that, while representative, offers individuals no mechanism to differentiate their views. Tax Choice USA does not replace that process, but it introduces a complementary signal — aggregated across millions of individual decisions — that shows where public support concentrates and where it does not. Over time, this produces a funding landscape that more closely tracks the distribution of public preference rather than relying solely on centralized judgment.

**Restoration of individual agency.** The framework transforms the taxpayer’s role from passive contributor to structured participant. This shift matters not because every taxpayer will engage deeply — many will not — but because the opportunity to engage exists. The psychological and civic distance between “I paid my taxes and have no idea where they went” and “I directed a portion of my contribution toward priorities I believe serve America’s best interest” is significant. It does not require full participation to matter. The existence of the choice, and the knowledge that it is available, changes the nature of the relationship.

**A transparency forcing function.** For taxpayer-directed allocation to work, the system must provide clear, standardized information about what programs do, what they cost, and what they produce. This requirement is not incidental — it is structural. The framework cannot function without it. As a result, Tax Choice USA creates a forcing function for the kind of government transparency that has been discussed for decades but never achieved at scale. The transparency infrastructure built to support this model would benefit the public far beyond the allocation mechanism itself.

**A feedback mechanism for policymakers.** Aggregated allocation data gives policymakers something they have never had: a direct, structured expression of taxpayer priorities within the areas where reasonable disagreement exists. This is not a poll. It is not an opinion survey. It is the revealed preference of millions of people expressed through actual allocation decisions. That signal — which programs attract

support, which do not, and how those patterns shift over time — provides a richer and more actionable input into the legislative process than anything currently available.

**A pathway for innovation.** Tier 3 creates structured space for experimentation that traditional budgeting processes struggle to accommodate. New ideas, pilot programs, and targeted initiatives can seek direct taxpayer support without competing for limited appropriations against established programs with institutional momentum. Programs that succeed can demonstrate their value and build a case for expansion or transition to higher tiers. Programs that do not succeed are not perpetuated on institutional inertia. The result is a system that is more hospitable to new approaches while remaining disciplined about which ones deserve sustained public investment.

**Accountability without bureaucracy.** When taxpayers can see where funding goes and influence where a portion of it is directed, a natural accountability dynamic supplements — without replacing — formal oversight mechanisms. Programs that consistently attract support have a clear mandate. Programs that consistently do not face a question that the current system rarely surfaces: whether the work might be better pursued through other means. This is not a punitive mechanism. It is an informational one. It gives programs, and the policymakers who champion them, a clearer picture of where they stand with the public they serve.

**Reduced perception of misalignment.** A persistent source of friction in the current system is the feeling among taxpayers that their money is being used for purposes they do not support. This is not always a factual claim — much of federal spending goes to programs with broad support. But the perception is real, and it erodes trust. By creating structured opportunities to express preference, the framework reduces this friction. Taxpayers who can direct a portion of their contribution are less likely to feel that the system ignores their views, even if they do not agree with every outcome the system produces.

These benefits are interdependent. Transparency enables informed choice. Informed choice produces meaningful data. Meaningful data improves accountability. And improved accountability builds the public trust that allows the system to expand over time. The framework is designed so that each element reinforces the others — creating a system that gets better, not worse, as participation and transparency grow.

## Section 10: Tradeoffs and Limitations

Any framework that introduces choice into a system built on uniformity will introduce tradeoffs. Tax Choice USA does not claim to eliminate the tensions inherent in public funding — it claims to rebalance them. This section examines the most significant tradeoffs honestly, because a framework that cannot withstand scrutiny of its own limitations is not worth proposing.

**The free rider problem.** Section 2 introduced this dynamic briefly. Here it deserves fuller treatment. Public funding systems distribute costs across a broad population while delivering benefits that are often indirect, diffuse, or shared. This creates an inherent incentive to underinvest individually while benefiting from the contributions of others. The free rider problem is not unique to Tax Choice USA — it exists in the current system and would exist in any system that funds public goods through collective contribution. But it is worth acknowledging that a choice-based model does not solve this problem and may, in some respects, make it more visible. In Tier 3 especially, where funding is entirely voluntary, the gap between those who contribute and those who benefit without contributing becomes more explicit. The framework does not pretend this dynamic away. It accepts free riding as a structural feature of collective funding and designs around it — through mandatory contribution in Tiers 1 and 2, through baseline floors that ensure program continuity, and through the recognition that Tier 3 outcomes will reflect the preferences of those who choose to participate, not the population as a whole.

**The “other people’s money” problem.** Milton Friedman famously observed that people spend other people’s money with less discipline than they spend their own. In the current system, taxpayers have no direct stake in the efficiency or outcome of specific programs because they have no direct relationship with how their contribution is used. Tax Choice USA partially addresses this — by giving taxpayers a structured connection to allocation decisions, it introduces a degree of ownership that the current model lacks. But the dynamic does not disappear. Even in Tier 2, taxpayers are directing funds that are pooled and aggregated, not writing checks to specific programs. The psychological distance between “I chose to prioritize NIH research” and “I am personally accountable for NIH outcomes” remains substantial. The framework narrows the gap without closing it.

**Popularity bias.** In any system where funding is influenced by individual preference, programs with compelling narratives, visible outcomes, and emotional resonance will attract more support than programs with diffuse, long-term, or technically complex benefits. A childhood cancer research initiative will likely outperform a soil conservation

study in a taxpayer-directed model, regardless of the relative long-term value of each. This bias is most acute in Tier 3, where funding is entirely voluntary and programs must compete directly for support. But it also operates in Tier 2, where the taxpayer-directed portion introduces competitive dynamics between program categories. The framework mitigates this through standardized presentation, baseline floors, and the structural separation of tiers — but it does not eliminate it. Popularity bias is a real limitation, and any honest assessment of the model must acknowledge that taxpayer preference and long-term societal value will not always align.

**Engagement inequality.** Not all taxpayers will participate equally. Some will engage deeply with allocation decisions, researching programs and directing their contributions with care. Others will select the default and move on. As a result, the taxpayers who engage most actively will have disproportionate influence over incremental funding in Tier 2 and total funding in Tier 3. This mirrors dynamics that already exist in democratic participation — voter turnout, public comment periods, and political contributions all skew toward more engaged populations. The framework does not introduce this problem, but it does create a new venue for it. Default allocation mechanisms ensure that disengagement does not produce irrational outcomes, but the influence gap between active and passive participants is real.

**Presentation and messaging effects.** How programs are described, positioned, and communicated to taxpayers will inevitably influence allocation decisions. A program with a clear, emotionally compelling description may attract support that a poorly communicated program of equal or greater value does not. This places significant weight on the design of the information layer — the standardized descriptions, outcome reports, and comparison tools that taxpayers use to make decisions. Without rigorous standardization, there is a risk that allocation outcomes reflect the quality of the marketing rather than the quality of the program. This is a solvable design challenge, but it is a real one, and it requires sustained attention.

**Variability in funding levels.** Introducing choice means accepting that funding levels across programs will shift over time. Tier 2 baseline floors limit the range of variability, but incremental funding will fluctuate with taxpayer preferences. Programs that see declining support may experience slower growth or reduced capacity to expand. Programs that see increasing support may grow faster than planned. This variability is a feature of a more responsive system, but it introduces planning challenges — particularly for programs with long lead times or multi-year commitments. The tension between responsiveness and predictability is real, and the framework manages it through the floor mechanism rather than resolving it entirely.

**Administrative complexity.** Implementing a tiered, choice-based allocation system would require new infrastructure: allocation interfaces integrated into tax filing systems,

standardized program categorization, data aggregation and reporting capabilities, and oversight mechanisms to ensure funds are used as directed. These requirements are manageable with modern technology — the technical challenge is not prohibitive — but they represent a meaningful investment and a departure from current processes. Any implementation plan must account for this complexity realistically.

**What this framework does not address.** Tax Choice USA is about allocation — where money goes. It is not about efficiency — how well money is spent once it gets there. Waste, fraud, abuse, and operational inefficiency within government programs are real and important problems. They are also entirely outside the scope of this proposal. This boundary is deliberate. Blurring the line between allocation reform and efficiency reform would dilute both conversations and invite the kind of overreach that undermines credibility. The framework assumes that programs, once funded, will be managed through existing oversight and accountability structures. Improving those structures is a worthy goal, but it is a different project.

These tradeoffs are not reasons to reject the framework. They are reasons to design it carefully. Every allocation model — including the one currently in place — produces tradeoffs. The question is not whether a perfect system exists. It is whether the tradeoffs introduced by Tax Choice USA are preferable to the tradeoffs of a system that offers taxpayers no structured agency at all.

## Section 11: Guardrails and Design Considerations

A framework that introduces flexibility into public funding is only as credible as the boundaries that constrain it. Tax Choice USA works because it defines — clearly and in advance — where choice operates, where it does not, and what structural protections ensure that the system remains stable, fair, and constitutionally sound. These guardrails are not afterthoughts. They are what make the model viable.

**Constitutional authority and Congressional role.** The U.S. Constitution is clear on spending authority. Article I, Section 9 states: “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law.” Implementation of this framework would therefore require Congressional action to authorize taxpayer-directed allocation mechanisms. This is by design — Tax Choice USA does not seek to circumvent Congressional authority. Rather, it proposes a structure that Congress could adopt, defining the boundaries of each tier and the rules governing taxpayer participation. Tier classification is a congressional function. This framework proposes the architecture; Congress defines the boundaries. This principle is not a footnote — it is foundational. Every tier designation, every floor ratio, every eligibility criterion presented in this paper is illustrative. The final determination of which programs sit in which tier, and under what conditions taxpayer direction is permitted, belongs to the legislative process. The framework offers a coherent structure for that process to work within, not a prescription that bypasses it.

**Tier integrity and boundary discipline.** The most persistent structural risk in any tiered system is boundary creep — the gradual expansion of what qualifies as “core” until the tiers that introduce choice are hollowed out. If every program eventually migrates to Tier 1, the framework loses its purpose. Conversely, if programs are pushed into lower tiers for political reasons rather than principled ones, the stability guarantees of Tier 1 lose credibility. Maintaining boundary discipline requires clear classification criteria applied consistently, a structured review process for any proposed reclassification, and resistance to the pressure — which will come from every direction — to make exceptions. The criteria outlined in Section 5 for Tier 1 inclusion, the dependency-based floor ratios in Section 6 for Tier 2, and the qualifying conditions in Section 7 for Tier 3 are designed to provide that discipline.

**Tier graduation.** Tier classifications are not permanent. As programs evolve, as public trust in the system grows, and as transparency improves, Congress retains the authority to reassign programs between tiers. The framework is designed to adapt. A Tier 3 pilot program that demonstrates strong outcomes may build a case for transition to Tier 2 with baseline funding protections. A Tier 1 program whose administration matures and

whose outcomes become more transparent may eventually be a candidate for the kind of structured taxpayer input that Tier 2 provides. The SNAP graduation language in Section 5 offers a concrete illustration of how this might work in practice. What matters is that the pathway exists and that movement between tiers is governed by principled criteria and congressional determination — not by political expediency or institutional lobbying.

**Baseline funding protection in Tier 2.** The guaranteed floor is what separates Tier 2 from a popularity contest. Programs in this tier must maintain operational continuity regardless of how taxpayers direct their contributions. The floor ensures that shifts in taxpayer preference affect incremental funding — the growth, expansion, or relative prioritization of a program — not its ability to function. Design of the floor mechanism must account for the distinction between baseline operations and incremental capacity, protect multi-year planning commitments, and ensure that programs serving vulnerable populations are not destabilized by year-to-year fluctuations in directed funding.

**Standardized information and presentation.** The fairness of the system depends heavily on how programs are presented to taxpayers. If one program has a polished, emotionally compelling description and another has a dry, technical summary, allocation outcomes will reflect the quality of the communication, not the quality of the program. Standardization — uniform descriptions of purpose and scope, comparable outcome reporting, consistent formatting and presentation — is essential. This is not merely a design preference. It is a fairness requirement. Without it, the system introduces bias that undermines the legitimacy of taxpayer-directed outcomes.

**Simplicity and accessibility.** For the system to function at scale, the participation experience must be simple enough that any taxpayer can engage without specialized knowledge or significant time investment. The allocation interface — likely integrated into existing tax filing platforms — should present clear options, provide accessible program summaries, and allow taxpayers to complete their selections quickly. Complexity is the enemy of participation. If the system feels burdensome, engagement will concentrate among those with the most time and resources, amplifying the engagement inequality discussed in Section 10.

**Default allocation.** The presence of a robust default mechanism is critical. Taxpayers who choose not to actively direct their contributions must have their funds distributed according to a standard allocation — one that reflects current spending patterns or a policy-determined baseline. The default ensures that the system produces reasonable outcomes at any level of participation and that the choice to disengage is not penalized. It also provides a natural baseline against which the effects of active participation can be measured over time.

**Oversight and accountability.** New allocation mechanisms require corresponding oversight. Funds directed by taxpayers must be tracked, reported, and verified to ensure they are used as intended. Tier 3 projects, in particular, require clear eligibility criteria, defined funding thresholds and timelines, and post-completion evaluation. These mechanisms are essential to maintaining public trust — a system that invites participation but cannot demonstrate that participation matters will quickly lose credibility. Existing oversight structures — inspector general offices, congressional review, audit functions — remain in place. The framework adds a layer of taxpayer-facing transparency on top of them.

**Privacy and data protection.** The system will generate detailed data about taxpayer allocation preferences. This data has significant analytical value — it reveals public priorities in a way that no survey or election can — but it also carries privacy implications. Individual allocation decisions must be protected. Aggregated data should be published to support transparency and inform policy, but personal allocation records must remain confidential. The design must balance the transparency benefits of open data with the privacy rights of individual taxpayers.

**Setting expectations.** A final guardrail is intellectual honesty about what the system can and cannot achieve. Tax Choice USA introduces structured choice, but it does not eliminate disagreement. It improves alignment between funding and preference, but it does not guarantee universal satisfaction. It enhances transparency, but it does not simplify the inherent complexity of governing a nation of 330 million people. Clear communication of these realities — to policymakers, to the public, and within the system itself — is essential to long-term credibility. Overpromising is the fastest way to undermine a framework that depends on public trust to function.

## Section 12: Path Forward and Implementation Approach

Tax Choice USA is an aspirational framework, not a legislative bill. The distance between a white paper and a functioning system is significant, and closing that distance would require deliberate, phased work that tests assumptions before scaling commitments. This section outlines a realistic path forward — not a detailed implementation plan, but a set of principles and sequencing that would govern how the framework moves from concept to practice.

**Start with a pilot.** The most practical entry point is a limited pilot program that applies the framework to a narrow slice of federal spending. An initial rollout might introduce Tier 2 directed allocation across a small number of program categories, offered to a subset of taxpayers on an opt-in basis during the annual filing process. A parallel Tier 3 pilot could present a handful of clearly scoped, time-bound projects for voluntary funding. The goal of a pilot is not to prove the framework works at full scale — it is to generate real-world data on participation rates, allocation behaviors, administrative feasibility, and taxpayer experience. That data becomes the foundation for every subsequent decision about expansion.

**Build the transparency infrastructure first.** The framework depends on taxpayers having access to clear, standardized information about programs, costs, and outcomes. That infrastructure does not exist today at the level this system requires. Before the allocation mechanism can function meaningfully, the information layer must be built — standardized program descriptions, consistent outcome reporting, accessible summaries designed for a general audience. This is not a parallel workstream. It is a prerequisite. An allocation mechanism without adequate transparency produces noise, not signal, and would undermine public trust before the system has a chance to demonstrate its value.

**Integrate with existing tax systems.** To minimize friction and maximize adoption, the allocation interface should be embedded within existing tax filing platforms — both digital and assisted. Taxpayers should encounter their Tier 2 and Tier 3 options as a natural extension of the filing process, not as a separate system requiring new accounts, new platforms, or new credentials. Integration with existing infrastructure also reduces administrative cost and leverages the filing compliance mechanisms already in place. The simpler the experience, the higher the participation rate — and the more representative the resulting allocation data.

**Keep early phases simple.** The temptation in any new system is to build for completeness from day one. That temptation should be resisted. Early phases should

offer a limited number of Tier 2 categories, straightforward program descriptions, and a clean allocation interface that can be completed in minutes. Complexity can be added as the system matures and as taxpayer familiarity grows. The first priority is establishing a baseline experience that works — one that is intuitive enough that a taxpayer encountering it for the first time can participate without confusion or frustration.

**Define classification governance.** A formal process must govern how programs are assigned to tiers, how classifications are reviewed, and how reclassification decisions are made. This process should be transparent, criteria-driven, and insulated — to the degree possible — from short-term political pressure. The criteria outlined in this paper provide a starting framework, but the governance mechanism itself must be established through legislation. Without it, tier boundaries become a perpetual political negotiation, and the structural integrity of the framework erodes.

**Scale gradually.** Full implementation should occur only after the pilot has been evaluated, the transparency infrastructure has been tested, and the governance framework has been established. A phased expansion might increase the number of Tier 2 categories, broaden Tier 3 project availability, and extend participation to a larger taxpayer base. Each phase should be accompanied by evaluation — of participation rates, allocation patterns, administrative costs, and taxpayer satisfaction — with adjustments made based on evidence rather than assumption. Gradual scaling allows the system to mature while maintaining the stability that public trust requires.

**Coordinate across stakeholders.** Successful implementation requires alignment across federal agencies responsible for program administration, legislative bodies that define tier boundaries and authorize the mechanism, technology providers that build and maintain the allocation infrastructure, and communication channels that explain the system to the public. Misalignment among any of these stakeholders — an agency that resists transparency, a legislative body that undermines tier discipline, a platform that confuses taxpayers — would compromise the system. Coordination is not optional.

**Plan for evolution.** Tax Choice USA is not intended to be implemented as a static reform. It is a framework designed to evolve. As transparency improves, as participation data accumulates, as public trust in the system grows, the scope of taxpayer-directed allocation can expand. Programs may graduate between tiers. New categories may be introduced. The allocation interface may become more sophisticated. The \$780 billion starting point for Tiers 2 and 3 is exactly that — a starting point. The architecture is designed to grow as the system demonstrates its value and as the public develops confidence in the model. That growth should be earned, not assumed.

## Section 13: Conclusion

The Tax Choice USA framework begins and ends with a simple conviction: in a nation of 330 million people, it is neither realistic nor necessary to expect uniform agreement on every dimension of public spending. What is possible — and what this paper proposes — is a system that treats those differences as a feature rather than a problem, and channels them into structured participation rather than leaving them to frustration and disengagement.

The framework does not ask whether government should exist or whether taxes should be paid. Those questions are settled. It asks a narrower, more productive question: within the vast landscape of federal spending, are there areas where taxpayers should have a structured voice in how their contributions are allocated? And if so, can that voice be introduced without compromising the stability of the functions that must remain beyond the reach of individual preference?

Tax Choice USA answers yes to both — and offers a concrete architecture for how.

Tier 1 protects what must be protected. Social Security, Medicare, national defense, the federal debt, and the essential machinery of government remain fully funded, fully mandatory, and fully insulated from the variability that choice would introduce. This protection is not a concession to the status quo. It is the foundation that makes everything else credible.

Tier 2 introduces structured agency where reasonable disagreement on funding levels exists. Taxpayers contribute mandatorily but direct a portion of their contribution across programs with guaranteed floors that preserve continuity. The result is a funding landscape that reflects public priorities — not perfectly, but meaningfully — while maintaining the stability that programs and the people who depend on them require.

Tier 3 honors the principle that started this project. If you believe a program is in America's best interest, you fund it. If you don't, you shouldn't be forced to. For programs where the federal role itself is genuinely contested, or where the work is project-based and time-bound, voluntary funding creates a direct connection between public support and public investment. Programs must earn their way — and those that do will be funded by the people who believe in them.

Together, these tiers represent approximately \$780 billion in structured taxpayer agency — 11 percent of total federal spending, and a sum larger than the GDP of most countries on earth. It is a meaningful starting point, with an architecture designed to expand as the model matures and public trust grows.

This paper does not claim to have solved the challenge of public funding. It has not. The tradeoffs are real — popularity bias, engagement inequality, administrative complexity, and the enduring free rider dynamic that accompanies any system of collective contribution. These limitations have been acknowledged openly, because a framework that cannot withstand honest scrutiny does not deserve adoption.

What this paper does claim is that the current model — in which taxpayers contribute uniformly, receive no structured opportunity to express their priorities, and have no direct mechanism for aligning their contribution with their view of what serves America's best interest — is not the only model available. A better balance between stability and agency is achievable. The architecture presented here offers one way to get there.

Tax Choice USA is an invitation — to policymakers, to policy thinkers, and to the American public — to consider whether structured taxpayer participation in funding decisions is both possible and desirable. It does not require immediate transformation. It requires thoughtful consideration, honest debate, and the willingness to test a new idea against the evidence.

The system we have was built for a different era. It has served well, but it has not evolved. This framework proposes a path forward — one that preserves what works, introduces agency where it belongs, and trusts the American taxpayer to participate in the decisions that shape their government.

That trust is the starting point. Everything else follows from it.

## Appendix: Program Classifications by Tier

*The following classifications are illustrative and subject to congressional determination. Tier placements reflect the framework's guiding principles and are intended to provoke structured debate, not serve as a final legislative prescription.*

### Tier 1 — Mandatory Core Funding (~\$5.4 Trillion, 76% of Federal Spending)

No taxpayer choice. Fully funded through mandatory allocation.

Program	Definition	~FY2025 Spend
Social Security	Retirement, disability, and survivor benefits for eligible Americans	\$1.3T
Net Interest on Federal Debt	Required interest payments on outstanding federal obligations	\$1.0T
National Defense	Military operations, personnel, readiness, and procurement	\$917B
Medicare	Health insurance for Americans 65+ and certain disabled individuals	\$875B
Medicaid	Health coverage for low-income individuals and families, jointly funded with states	\$600B
Veterans Benefits & Services	Healthcare, disability compensation, education, and housing benefits for veterans	\$370B
SNAP	Supplemental nutrition assistance for low-income households	\$100B
Administration of Justice	FBI, federal courts, U.S. Marshals, and federal law enforcement operations	\$85B
CDC / FDA	Disease surveillance, outbreak response, food and drug safety oversight	~\$60B
Transportation Safety Infrastructure	Air traffic control, highway safety systems, and critical transportation oversight	~\$50B
General Government Operations	IRS tax administration, congressional operations, executive branch management	\$30B
<b>Total</b>		<b>~\$5.4T</b>

### Tier 2 — Directed Allocation (~\$450 Billion)

Mandatory contribution with taxpayer-directed portion. Each program has a guaranteed funding floor plus a taxpayer choice percentage. The floor correlates with human dependency — the more people rely on the program in real time, the higher the floor.

Program	Definition	~FY2025 Spend	Floor	Choice
Income Security (non-SNAP)	Unemployment insurance, housing assistance, EITC, TANF, and related safety net programs	~\$200B	85%	15%
Transportation Grants	Amtrak operating support, highway and transit grants, general transportation funding	~\$100B	80%	20%
Agriculture & Farm Subsidies	Crop insurance, commodity programs, conservation payments, and rural development	~\$60B	70%	30%
NIH Research	Biomedical and public health research funded through the National Institutes of Health	~\$50B	65%	35%
Established Economic Subsidies	Ongoing federal subsidies supporting specific industries or economic activities	~\$40B	60%	40%
<b>Total</b>		<b>~\$450B</b>		

### Tier 3 — Voluntary Funding (~\$330 Billion)

Entirely voluntary. Programs qualify if they are time-bound/project-based OR address areas where the federal role is genuinely contested.

Program	Definition	~FY2025 Spend	Qualifying Reason
Education & Job Training	Federal K-12 funding, higher education grants, workforce development, and job retraining	\$120B	Contested federal role
Environmental & Conservation	EPA operations, land conservation, wildlife protection, climate-related programs	\$88B	Contested federal role

Community & Regional Development	HUD community grants, economic development initiatives, regional infrastructure projects	\$85B	Project-based by nature
International Aid (non-military)	Foreign humanitarian assistance, development programs, global health initiatives	\$50B	Contested federal role
Science, Space & Technology	NASA, NSF, and federally funded research with defined project scopes	\$50B	Project-based / time-bound
Energy Programs	DOE programs, renewable energy subsidies, fossil fuel transition initiatives	\$40B	Contested federal role
Experimental Economic Subsidies	Pilot programs testing new approaches to economic development or market intervention	~\$15B	Project-based / time-bound
<b>Total</b>		<b>~\$330B</b>	