

Our Nation's Checkbook

What We Aren't Getting for Our Money

Taxpayers in West Virginia will have paid **\$1,791,717,514 for the Iraq war** by January 2009. If given the choice, West Virginia residents might have rather spent this same amount on:

Human Need	What We Could Have Bought Instead³⁴³	Why We Should Have Bought It Instead
Health care	563,196 people covered by health insurance for one year	14.9% of West Virginia residents, or 254,000 people, were without health coverage in 2007. ³⁴⁴ West Virginia could have covered all of these uninsured people for 2.2 years with the Iraq war budget.
University scholarships	400,294 scholarships for university students for one year	Only 17.3% of West Virginia residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher, leaving 1,458,395 West Virginia residents without a college education. ³⁴⁵ West Virginia could have given 100,074 people the opportunity to attend college for 4 years for what it has spent on the Iraq War.
Job creation	36,060 elementary school teachers (or other jobs of a similar salary range) for one year	4.5% of West Virginia residents, or 79,356 people, are currently unemployed. ³⁴⁶ West Virginia could have employed 45.4% of these unemployed people if the Iraq war money was spent on creating jobs in needed industries.
Renewable energy	1,574,901 homes powered with renewable electricity for one year	1.9% of West Virginia's energy comes from renewable sources, leaving about 865,914 West Virginia residences with nonrenewable energy supplies. ³⁴⁷ For what West Virginia has spent on the Iraq war, these homes could be powered with renewable energy for the next 1.8 years.

³⁴³ All budget trade-off numbers calculated by the National Priorities Project, www.nationalpriorities.org/tradeoffs.

³⁴⁴ Based on U.S. Census Bureau, *2006–2007 Current Population Survey*. www.census.gov

³⁴⁵ Taken from U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey*. www.census.gov

³⁴⁶ Based on Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Local Area Unemployment Statistics," September 2008, www.bls.gov/web/laumstrk.htm.

³⁴⁷ Official statistics from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/solar.renewables/page/trends/table27.html.



Why Are These Trade-Offs Important?

The United States has spent billions on invading and occupying another country while neglecting human needs programs at home. The looming economic recession makes it even more urgent that we end the war in Iraq, allowing U.S. leaders to reclaim the Iraq-war portion of the U.S. military budget as a “dividend” they can invest in the needs of people here at home.

Health Care

In 2007, 15.5 percent of people nationwide lacked health care coverage. Sadly, the United States also spends more on health care and has lower health care standards than any other developed country. For example, the United States has the 29th-highest infant mortality rate in the world, again lower than any other developed country.³⁴⁸ **Support redirecting Iraq war spending** to universal health care coverage and increased funding for the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid, both programs that provide coverage to low-income families.

University Scholarships

Although a university degree has become a prerequisite for most good jobs, 72.5 percent of people in the United States over the age of 25 have not graduated from college. According to a recent report by the Working Poor Families Project, half of all job openings require postsecondary education, and access to a college education is fundamental to overcoming generational poverty in the United States. Unfortunately, the current economic situation is causing many private lenders to tighten college lending, and both public and private universities have shrinking budgets for financial aid. **Support redirecting Iraq war spending** to increasing the availability of Pell Grants and government-subsidized student loans.

Job Creation

Increasing unemployment rates have been the most telling indication of our current economic crisis. The nationwide unemployment rate was 6.1 percent at the end of September 2008, and the nation has lost 760,000 jobs so far this year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that in August, there were 2.9 unemployed people for every available job.³⁴⁹ **Support redirecting Iraq War spending** to an extension of unemployment insurance and job creation in the economic stimulus package Congress will discuss later this month.

Renewable Energy

Energy innovation is essential to addressing the climate crisis and finding sustainable solutions to our nation’s energy needs. Yet only 9.5 percent of the energy that the United States consumes is renewable. **Support redirecting Iraq war spending** to government grants for energy research and to subsidies that encourage businesses and homeowners to use renewable energy.

³⁴⁸ The National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db09.htm.

³⁴⁹ BLS Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey – Seasonally Adjusted, Total Non-farm Openings, September 2008.

