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Briefing Paper

A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON THE FEDERAL BUDGET: A SUMMARY¹

The economic gap between women and men--the wage gap, the gap in occupational representation, the gap in the amount of time spent caring for family members and doing housework--is slowly closing. There have been vast gains in women's earnings and in their entry into better jobs, and there have been small gains in men doing housework and child care. There has also been progress in getting women who head families alone out of poverty, although they still bear a disproportionate share of poverty.

The public policy gap, however, remains large. There has always been a lag between public policy and the reality of people's lives, but the lag appears to be growing. Much public policy in the United States, from the income tax structure to the social security system, is based on a model of a traditional nuclear family, founded on heterosexual marriage between a man and a woman, designed to produce children and last an entire adult lifetime (and in which the woman works at home while the man brings home the paycheck). But no longer is this the reality.

Society must adjust its public policy to new realities. There are many diverse ways of living--alone, in groups, with partners of the same sex or opposite sex, in marriage or not. Today, most married women and mothers also work outside the home, as well as single, childless, and divorced women. As a result of these social changes, the traditional nuclear model applies only to a minority of all families and households, and public policies based on this traditional model fail to meet the needs of the vast majority.

Public policies are, of course, established through the government's expenditures and its tax collections. Thus, knowledge of the federal budget is key to understanding current policy priorities. This summary briefly sets forth a feminist analysis of federal expenditures and proposes a "feminist budget" that would readjust priorities to reflect women's interests.

¹ This paper is based upon a speech given by Heidi Hartmann at the Feminist Expo '96, convened by the Feminist Majority Foundation in February. The budget calculations are based upon the "Help for Working Parents" plan by Barbara Bergmann and Heidi Hartmann, "The Woman's Budget" by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), February 1996, and other sources, adjusted by the author. The main difference between the budget shown here and the WILPF budget is that health care (long term care and universal coverage for low income families) and assistance for working parents (child care and EITC) are increased much more, while basic income supports are reduced somewhat as more parents are expected to be working.

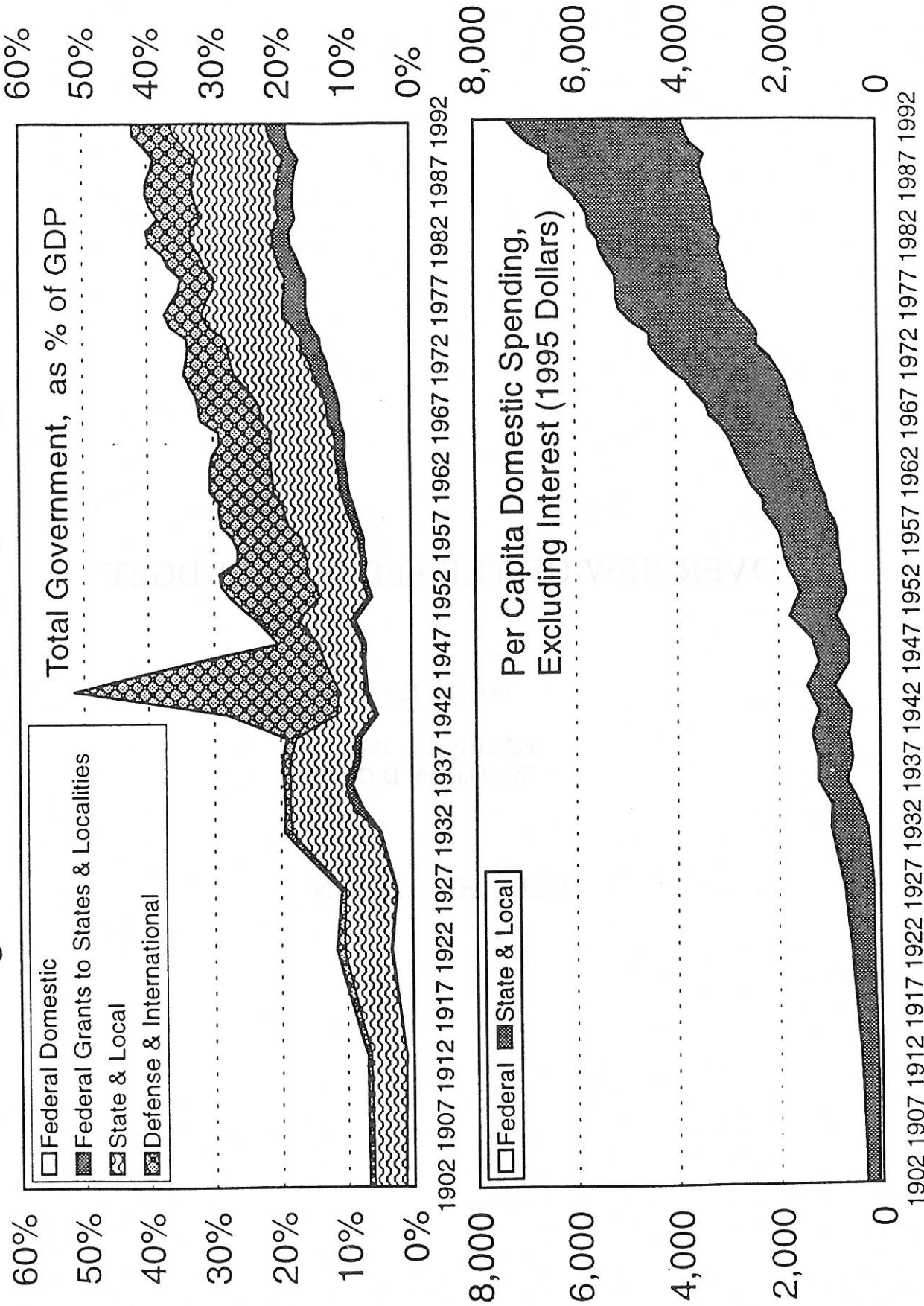
"OVERVIEW OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET"

Feminist Expo

February 2-4, 1996
Washington, D.C.

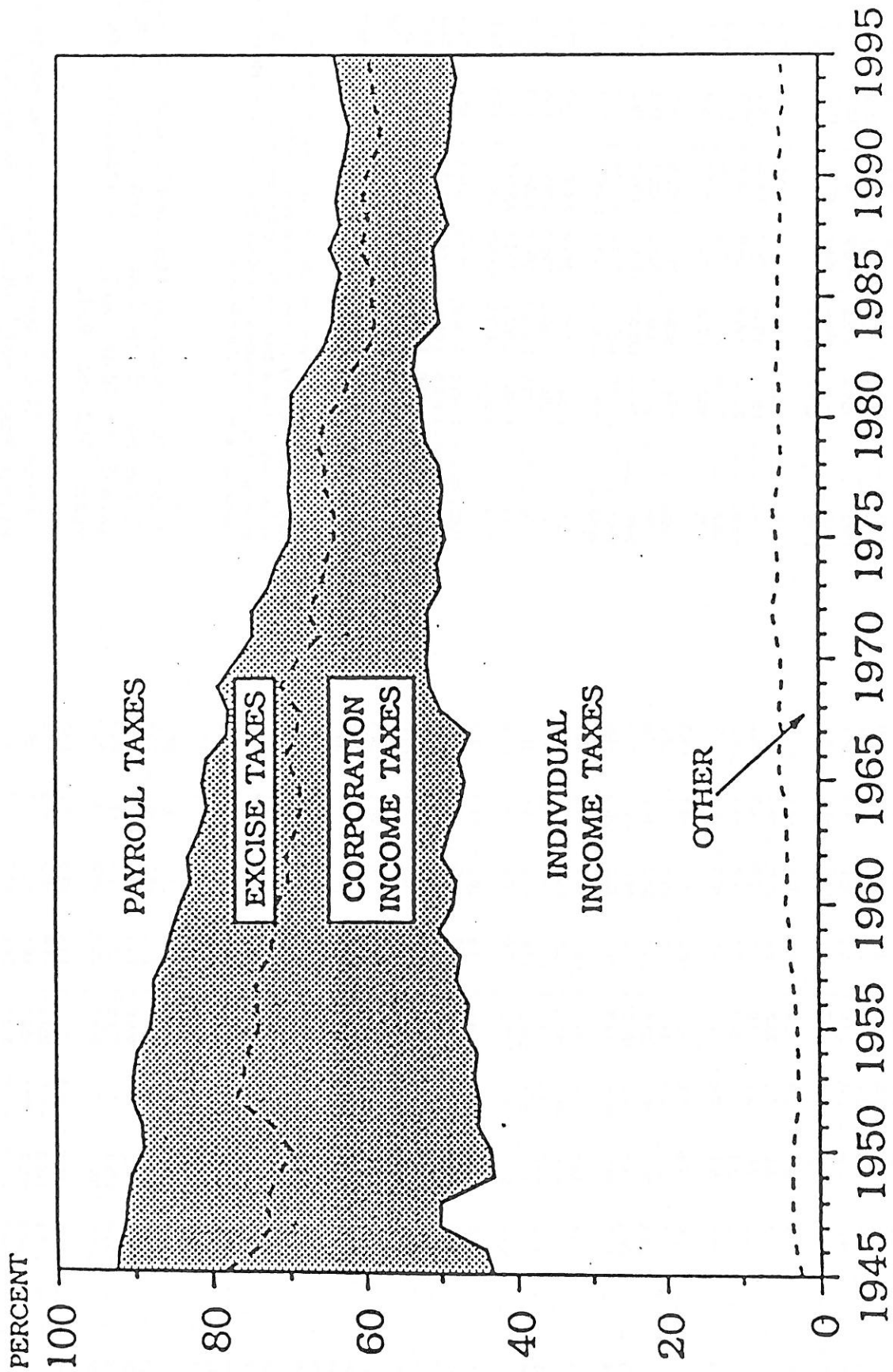
HEIDI HARTMANN

Figure I.2: Government Spending, 1902-1992



Source: THE URBAN INSTITUTE; Government spending does not include utility, liquor store, and postal expenditures. Calculations based on finance and population data from the Bureau of the Census, *loc.cit.*, and GDP and GNP data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, *loc.cit.* Census data does not include the years 1903-1912, 1914-1921, 1923-1926, 1928-1931, and odd years from 1932-1954. The missing values are interpolated.

Chart 1. SOURCES OF FEDERAL RECEIPTS



"A Citizen's Guide To The Federal Budget, Fiscal Year 1996," Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Government Printing Office, ISBN# 0-16-045453-0, p. 7

HISTORICAL BUDGET SUMMARY

Year	In Billions of Dollars				As Percentages of GDP			
	Receipts	Outlays	Surplus or Deficit (-)	Debt Held By the Public ¹	Receipts	Outlays	Surplus or Deficit (-)	Debt Held By the Public ¹
1975	279.1	332.3	-53.2	394.7	18.5	22.0	-3.5	26.1
1976	298.1	371.8	-73.7	477.4	17.7	22.1	-4.4	28.3
TQ	81.2	96.0	-14.7	495.5	18.3	21.6	-3.3	111.4
1977	355.6	409.2	-53.7	549.1	18.5	21.3	-2.8	28.6
1978	399.6	458.7	-59.2	607.1	18.5	21.3	-2.7	28.2
1979	463.3	504.0	-40.7	640.3	19.1	20.7	-1.7	26.4
1980	517.1	590.9	-73.8	709.8	19.6	22.3	-2.8	26.8
1981	599.3	678.2	-79.0	785.3	20.2	22.9	-2.7	26.5
1982	617.8	745.8	-128.0	919.8	19.8	23.9	-4.1	29.5
1983	600.6	808.4	-207.8	1,131.6	18.1	24.4	-6.3	34.1
1984	666.5	851.8	-185.4	1,300.5	18.0	23.1	-5.0	35.2
1985	734.1	946.4	-212.3	1,499.9	18.5	23.9	-5.4	37.8
1986	769.1	990.3	-221.2	1,736.7	18.2	23.5	-5.2	41.2
1987	854.1	1,003.9	-149.8	1,888.7	19.2	22.5	-3.4	42.4
1988	909.0	1,064.1	-155.2	2,050.8	18.9	22.1	-3.2	42.7
1989	990.7	1,143.2	-152.5	2,189.9	19.2	22.1	-2.9	42.3
1990	1,031.3	1,252.7	-221.4	2,410.7	18.8	22.9	-4.0	44.0
1991	1,054.3	1,323.4	-269.2	2,688.1	18.6	23.3	-4.7	47.4
1992	1,090.5	1,380.9	-290.4	2,998.8	18.4	23.3	-4.9	50.6
1993	1,153.5	1,408.7	-255.1	3,247.5	18.4	22.5	-4.1	51.9
1994	1,257.7	1,460.9	-203.2	3,432.2	19.0	22.0	-3.1	51.7
1995 estimate	1,346.4	1,538.9	-192.5	3,640.1	19.2	21.9	-2.7	51.8
1996 estimate	1,415.5	1,612.1	-196.7	3,857.3	19.1	21.8	-2.7	52.1
1997 estimate	1,471.6	1,684.7	-213.1	4,101.2	18.8	21.6	-2.7	52.5
1998 estimate	1,548.8	1,745.2	-196.4	4,334.9	18.8	21.2	-2.4	52.6
1999 estimate	1,624.7	1,822.2	-197.4	4,571.2	18.7	20.9	-2.3	52.5
2000 estimate	1,710.9	1,905.3	-194.4	4,805.4	18.6	20.7	-2.1	52.3

¹ The figures shown under Debt Held By the Public for 1930-1938 are not comparable to those shown for 1939 forward. For the earlier period, the debt figures have only been partially adjusted to exclude debt held by Government accounts and have not been adjusted to reflect current definitions of Federal debt outstanding. All debt figures are for debt outstanding at the end of the fiscal year.

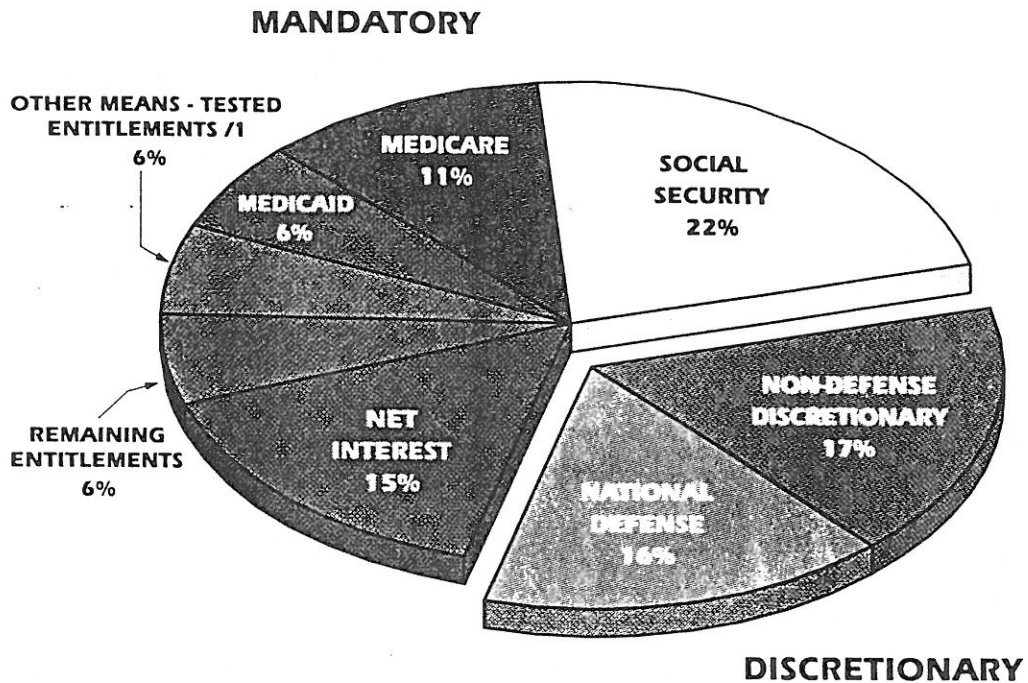
Note: Debt held by the public stood at \$3,432 billion at the end of the fiscal year 1994. Of this amount, \$2,665, or 78 percent, was accumulated between fiscal years 1982 and 1994.

Source: "A Citizen's Guide To The Federal Budget, Fiscal Year 1996," Office of Management and Budget, U.S. Government Printing Office, ISBN# 0-16-045453-0

HISTORICAL BUDGET SUMMARY

Year	In Billions of Dollars				As Percentages of GDP			
	Receipts	Outlays	Surplus or Deficit (-)	Debt Held By the Public ¹	Receipts	Outlays	Surplus or Deficit (-)	Debt Held By the Public ¹
1930	4.1	3.3	0.7	15.4	4.2	3.4	0.8	15.9
1931	3.1	3.6	-0.5	16.5	3.7	4.3	-0.6	19.9
1932	1.9	4.7	-2.7	19.2	2.9	7.0	-4.1	28.7
1933	2.0	4.6	-2.6	22.2	3.5	8.1	-4.6	39.1
1934	3.0	6.5	-3.6	26.7	4.9	10.8	-5.9	44.1
1935	3.6	6.4	-2.8	28.1	5.3	9.3	-4.1	40.9
1936	3.9	8.2	-4.3	33.2	5.1	10.6	-5.6	42.8
1937	5.4	7.6	-2.3	34.9	6.2	8.7	-2.5	40.2
1938	6.8	6.8	-0.1	34.5	7.7	7.8	-0.1	39.3
1939	6.3	9.1	-2.8	41.4	7.2	10.4	-3.2	47.2
1940	6.5	9.5	-2.9	42.8	6.9	9.9	-3.1	44.8
1941	8.7	13.7	-4.9	48.2	7.7	12.1	-4.4	42.9
1942	14.6	35.1	-20.5	67.8	10.3	24.8	-14.5	47.8
1943	24.0	78.6	-54.6	127.8	13.7	44.8	-31.1	72.8
1944	43.7	91.3	-47.6	184.8	21.7	45.3	-23.6	91.6
1945	45.2	92.7	-47.6	235.2	21.3	43.7	-22.4	110.9
1946	39.3	55.2	-15.9	241.9	18.5	26.0	-7.5	113.8
1947	38.5	34.5	4.0	224.3	17.3	15.5	1.8	100.6
1948	41.6	29.8	11.8	216.3	16.8	12.1	4.8	87.7
1949	39.4	38.8	0.6	214.3	15.0	14.8	0.2	81.6
1950	39.4	42.6	-3.1	219.0	14.8	16.0	-1.2	82.4
1951	51.6	45.5	6.1	214.3	16.5	14.5	1.9	68.4
1952	66.2	67.7	-1.5	214.8	19.4	19.9	-0.4	63.1
1953	69.6	76.1	-6.5	218.4	19.1	20.9	-1.8	60.0
1954	69.7	70.9	-1.2	224.5	18.9	19.3	-0.3	61.0
1955	65.5	68.4	-3.0	226.6	17.0	17.8	-0.8	58.9
1956	74.6	70.6	3.9	222.2	17.9	17.0	0.9	53.4
1957	80.0	76.6	3.4	219.3	18.3	17.5	0.8	50.0
1958	79.6	82.4	-2.8	226.3	17.8	18.4	-0.6	50.5
1959	79.2	92.1	-12.8	234.7	16.5	19.2	-2.7	48.9
1960	92.5	92.2	0.3	236.8	18.3	18.3	0.1	46.9
1961	94.4	97.7	-3.3	238.4	18.3	18.9	-0.6	46.1
1962	99.7	106.8	-7.1	248.0	18.0	19.2	-1.3	44.7
1963	106.6	111.3	-4.8	254.0	18.2	19.0	-0.8	43.5
1964	112.6	118.5	-5.9	256.8	18.0	19.0	-0.9	41.1
1965	116.8	118.2	-1.4	260.8	17.4	17.6	-0.2	38.9
1966	130.8	134.5	-3.7	263.7	17.8	18.3	-0.5	35.9
1967	148.8	157.5	-8.6	266.6	18.8	19.8	-1.1	33.6
1968	153.0	178.1	-25.2	289.5	18.1	21.0	-3.0	34.2
1969	186.9	183.6	3.2	278.1	20.2	19.8	0.4	30.0
1970	192.8	195.6	-2.8	283.2	19.6	19.9	-0.3	28.7
1971	187.1	210.2	-23.0	303.0	17.8	20.0	-2.2	28.8
1972	207.3	230.7	-23.4	322.4	18.1	20.1	-2.0	28.1
1973	230.8	245.7	-14.9	340.9	18.1	19.3	-1.2	26.8
1974	263.2	269.4	-6.1	343.7	18.8	19.2	-0.4	24.5

Chart 1
President Clinton's Proposed FY 1997 Budget



Total: \$1.635 Trillion

Note: Numbers do not add due to rounding.

¹ Means-tested entitlements are those for which eligibility is based on income. The Medicaid program is also a means-tested entitlement.

Source: *A Citizen's Guide to the Federal Budget: Fiscal Year 1997*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1996.

