



Want Real Government Efficiency? Try a Scalpel, Not a Chainsaw.

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Government efficiency and cutting wasteful spending are noble goals. In his first few weeks back in office, President Donald Trump has worked to reduce the federal workforce. But we should be reminded how much federal employees do for us and how they're a relatively small portion of federal spending.

In 2022, the Congressional Budget Office reports, compensation of government employees was \$271 billion. About 60% of that was paid to employees in the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Homeland Security, meaning about \$108 billion was paid to civilian employees in non-national defense positions. A billion dollars sounds like a lot, but the federal government is large. It spent more than \$6.3 trillion in 2022. The compensation of those non-defense employees was only 1.7% of total federal spending.

How much is 1.7%? In 2022, the average taxpayer with an adjusted gross income of \$100,000 paid about \$9,000 in federal income taxes. About 1.7% of this tax bill would amount to \$153.