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I've been wanting to express my huge gratitude for the incredible outlet for women's voices you've created. What a treat! It's a feast for the mind, heart and spirit.

- Olga L.

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## A Woman's Irk is Never Done: TAX-IC WASTE

by Kimberly Gadette

Ah, the U.S. Postal Service. A quasi-governmental branch that still answers to Uncle Sam, it took the postmaster three weeks to deliver my tax packet to my accountant. Granted, the packet had to travel a couple hundred miles, and those snails of said "snail mail" don't know how to read a GPS system, but still ... three weeks? In the meantime, I assumed the worst, reconstructed all my tax information and re-sent via Federal Express. Let's see: I paid \$1.59 for the roll-of-the-dice to USPS versus \$10.42 to Fedex for a guaranteed two-day delivery. I guess you get what you pay for—or do you?

Maybe it's the cost of the new postage stamp that's weighing things down. Though it's only two cents more, the increase was meant to improve the system. If donating \$1.59 to USPS gives me service that crawls the gamut from slow to null, then what can be said of my larger donation? Maybe it's no longer about getting what you pay for. Maybe it's more akin to "pay more, get less." And what exactly are we getting with every dollar we spend on income tax?

Pie charts delineating the division of our income tax dollars are as varied as pies behind the glass showcase at Marie Callender's. The official U.S. government pie, a toothsome meringue variation with lots of gooey white stuff that serves as camouflage, says 19 cents of every dollar is allocated for military expenses. But this pie has lots of other slices labeled as "interest" and "discretionary" amounts. Another pie, more of a crustless apple with no cheese, reports that 49 cents of every dollar goes directly to the war. Disclaimer: I'm personally going to have to report an additional five pounds from sampling all the various pies. My commitment to research, as well as my stretch pants, knows no bounds.

Perhaps my Uncle Sam/President Bush is a tad embarrassed about the Iraq war. Like a wealthy benefactor who doesn't want his largesse advertised, maybe he doesn't want to admit how much of the current budget is being allocated toward his personal dustup in the desert. Instead of making the income tax figures available, he asks Congress for "special funding" each year. It's called "supplemental spending."

You say syntax ... I say sin tax. On my own warpath, I was on the verge of dialing Uncle Sam, but the phone bill caught my eye. There it was, a federal excise tax of 3%, month in, month out, which also goes straight to the war chest. Per [www.hanguponwar.org](http://www.hanguponwar.org), this tax raised \$89 billion from 1966 to 2001, and about \$6 billion per year since. How much silicone does a war chest need? And wouldn't it be better if these dollars were spent to treat our current casualties of war, instead of generating more casualties each and every day?

No longer able to stomach the federal program, I took a look into my own Oregonian backyard. Wow. Whoever said, "charity begins at home," must have been referring to this state's corporations.

The Oregon Center for Public Policy ([www.ocpp.org](http://www.ocpp.org)), a liberal think tank based in Salem that does in-depth research and analysis on budget, tax, and economic issues, reported that: "Oregon corporations are now paying less than 5 percent of Oregon's income taxes, down from 18 percent in the mid-1970's." "About two thirds of Oregon's corporations, or 23,000 corporations, pay just the \$10 corporate minimum tax."

Even worse, if corporations such as Bank of America, who does a substantial amount of business in Oregon, can channel its assets through the no-corporate-income-tax state of Nevada, where does Oregon get its tax money for its schools, health care, roads, etc?

With a nod to spring, and seasonal gamboling outdoors, I note the seasonless gambling indoors. Aside from the state lottery and nine Indian casinos, Oregon is one of only five states that offers video lottery terminals, or VLT's. Oregon law permits bars and taverns to have up to six VLT's, with racetracks allowed up to ten. In the latest quarterly revenue forecast, Oregon's lottery revenue for the state's current budget cycle should hit \$1 billion.

So even though the federal and corporate state taxes are funneling monies elsewhere, it's nice to know that someone's paying something into the state—even though that same someone may not be able to pay the rent this month. That same someone who's kind enough to pay for the grammar school down the block may never have had the opportunity to go to school himself. At an annual, per capita loss between \$347 to \$447 (once again, depending on your choice of pie), no matter how you slice it, that's one big helping of wrong. Especially since its proven time and again that the ones who are losing, or shall I say, "donating" to the state's well-being, are the ones who can afford it the least.

Pay more, get less. You're doing a heckuva job, Sammy. Oh, and even though I've personally paid you the postage, if my taxes show up late on your doorstep, I assume you'll be holding me accountable? Of course you will.