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Unmasking the Household Budget Ideology

In contemporary political discourse, politicians routinely invoke the metaphor of the "responsible household budget" to justify fiscal policy. Citizens are told that government must live within its means, balance its checkbook, and curb spending just like an ordinary family. This moralistic narrative presents the public treasury as a neutral household account, disguising the true economic mechanics of the state. When analyzing the consolidated General Government accounts of the United States—a net public sector fiscal footprint of roughly \$11.4 trillion across federal, state, and local tiers, representing nearly 40% of Gross Domestic Product—a stark structural division emerges. Operating deficits are not distributed evenly across the political architecture. Instead, 100% of the nation's net operational budget deficit, reaching \$1.775 trillion in FY2025 and approaching \$1.99 trillion in FY2026, is concentrated entirely at the federal level. Meanwhile, over 90,000 state, county, municipal, and school district entities are legally locked into zero-deficit constraints.

This sharp institutional asymmetry reveals that the capitalist state is not a neutral arbiter managing a communal checking account, but the "ideal personification of the total national capital." Its fiscal system operates as a "giant pump" designed to socialize corporate costs, absorb private financial risks, and guarantee monopoly profits. Through revenue suppression for major corporations, the tax burden is systematically shifted onto wage earners, who shoulder roughly 75% of the annual federal tax bill. Corporate tax rates have been repeatedly slashed, while monopolies utilize legal loopholes, tax credits, accelerated depreciation write-offs, and full research expens-

ing to retain their surplus value. Furthermore, the state budget directly assumes the capital risks of private industry by issuing research and development grants, easy credits, infrastructure subventions, and multi-billion-dollar bailouts to rescue major corporations from financial collapse.

A concrete historical instance of state absorption of corporate costs is the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (H.R. 4346). Passed by the Senate on July 27, 2022 (64–33) and the House on July 28, 2022 (243–187, with 219 Democrats and 24 Republicans voting Yea against 187 Republicans Nay) before being signed into law by President Biden on August 9, 2022, this \$280 billion legislative package allocates \$52 billion directly to semiconductor monopolies over a five-year period (2022–2026), alongside a ten-year horizon for general scientific research. The package includes \$39 billion in direct manufacturing grants for new fabrication facilities, \$11 billion for research and development, and a 25% advanced manufacturing investment tax credit. Rather than semiconductor monopolies funding multi-billion-dollar fabrication plants out of their own private profits, the state steps in to absorb these massive upfront construction and technological risks using public tax dollars—socializing capital expenditures while leaving commercial profits in corporate hands.

Alongside corporate cost absorption, the primary driver of the persistent federal budget deficit—which rose from \$1.695 trillion in FY2023 to \$1.833 trillion in FY2024, \$1.775 trillion in FY2025, and approaches \$1.99 trillion in FY2026—is the continuous expansion of unproductive outlays for military procurement and defense monopolies. Non-competitive government defense orders guarantee sales to arms manufacturers at

fabulously exaggerated prices, yielding profit rates up to 70% higher than civilian manufacturing. Congressional appropriations bills funnel hundreds of billions into naval shipbuilding, including \$4.6 billion for a second Virginia-class submarine and \$5.4 billion for Guided Missile Destroyers, alongside \$7.2 billion for space-based sensors, \$5.6 billion for space-based intercept capabilities, and nuclear triad modernization such as \$4.5 billion for B-21 stealth bombers and \$2.5 billion for Sentinel ICBM risk reduction. In purely economic terms, funneling national capital into weapons of destruction represents an unproductive waste—diverting material resources and scientific talent away from civilian needs without producing consumer supply, while generating an escalating debt baseline that obligates the state to pay hundreds of billions in net interest to Wall Street bondholders.

In stark contrast to federal deficit expansion, the sub-national tier of the public sector is subjected to rigid legal discipline. Operating under statutory and constitutional Balanced Budget Requirements (BBRs) across 49 of the 50 states, state and municipal governments are legally prohibited from carrying operating deficits in their General Funds. State General Funds—which finance public K–12 education, healthcare, social services, and municipal infrastructure—are

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WorkerspartyUSACHicagoBranch@gmail.com

**P.O. Box 25716 - Chicago, IL
60625
(312) 834-7570**

www.workersparty.org

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strictly capped. When economic downturns shrink tax revenues, state BBRs legally force governments to apply "the axe" directly to public consumption, freezing wages, laying off public employees, or raising regressive sales taxes on working-class households. The moralistic "household budget" narrative is thus unmasked as an ideological weapon: it is preached at the state level to enforce social austerity on living labor,

while being completely ignored at the federal level to ensure an uninterrupted flow of public debt to monopolies, financial rentiers, and defense contractors.

Ultimately, the "household budget" ideology functions as a deceptive screen concealing an integrated, two-tiered fiscal mechanism. American fiscal federalism does not represent two separate or conflicting governments, but a unified class appara-

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tus. At the sub-national level, zero-deficit constraints enforce daily austerity and squeeze the social reproduction of the working class. At the federal level, unlimited monetary authority and deficit expansion serve as a capital pump for Wall Street, technology monopolies, and military contractors. Exposing this structural reality dismantles the myth of fiscal morality and reveals the state budget for what it truly is: an instrument of class rule.

The Toll of Day Labor: How Modern Corporations Super-Exploit Contingent Workers

Every day across the United States, millions of people wake up without knowing if they will earn a paycheck. To understand the true scale of this issue, researchers examine two distinct sets of data comparing a daily snapshot against an annual cumulative total.

According to a November 2024 report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 6.9 million people—roughly 4.3 percent of the American workforce—hold temporary jobs on any given day, including 2.8 million on-call workers.

However, a 2024 study published in the Brigham Young University Law Review shows that when counting everyone who relies on temporary agency placements, seasonal jobs, and app-based gig work throughout the year, the contingent workforce swells to nearly 40 million people. That means nearly 25 percent, or one out of every four American workers, experiences job precarity. Earlier benchmark studies, such as the landmark National Day Labor Survey conducted by researchers at UCLA and the University of Illinois Chicago, estimated that over 117,000 day laborers actively look for work on street corners and at worker centers every single day.

This massive workforce faces an ongoing breakdown in basic legal protections. Recent enforcement actions from September and Octo-

ber 2026 reveal how major brand corporations use third-party staffing agencies and digital apps to hire workers while dodging standard employment responsibilities.

For example, an October 22, 2026 federal court filing in Newark, New Jersey, detailed how food fulfillment giant HelloFresh and its staffing agency supervisors subjected temporary warehouse workers to uncompensated standby mandates and supervisor-led labor violations in regional distribution hubs. Around the same time, a September 2026 report from the Illinois Attorney General targeted digital staffing applications like GigSmart and Wonolo for using algorithmic shift scheduling to suppress wages and misclassify workers. These 2026 legal cases highlight a growing national problem where corporations rely on complex subcontracting networks to exploit temporary labor.

For the average day laborer, the workday starts hours before sunrise with no promise of actual pay. Field research on day labor markets, including data analyzed in the UCLA national study, reveals staggering rates of workplace abuse, including a 66 percent wage theft rate and a 53 percent wage underpayment rate across temporary industrial jobs. Many laborers must endure the unpaid "5:00 AM shape-up," standing in early morning lines outside dispatch halls or refreshing phone apps waiting for

shifts. Staffing agencies and host companies treat this long wait as unpaid downtime, keeping a ready reserve of labor on call without paying a single cent for their time. Once assigned to a task, workers are pushed through exhausting quotas, only to find that their final paychecks are missing hours or paid below agreed rates.

On top of lost wages, day laborers are forced to pay for basic operating costs that employers used to cover. Under common staffing practices like the "Handy Andy" model, agencies require laborers to ride official van shuttles to distant jobs and then deduct non-negotiable transit fees directly from their paychecks, often driving net earnings below the statutory minimum wage. Workers are also forced to pay payroll deductions for their own personal protective equipment, such as steel-toed boots, high-visibility vests, and hard hats, before stepping onto the job site. Corporations use multi-tier subcontracting and "permatemping"—keeping agency workers on production lines for months or years without permanent status—to avoid paying health benefits or paid leave. When injuries or wage theft happen, the brand company blames the staffing agency, while the agency blames the client, leaving workers trapped in the middle.