

SPECIAL REPORT

March 2011
No. 190

Tax Freedom Day® Arrives on April 12

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Tax Freedom Day® will arrive on April 12 this year, the 102nd day of 2011. That means Americans will work well over three months of the year, from January 1 to April 12, before they have earned enough money to pay this year's tax obligations at the federal, state and local levels.

Tax Freedom Day arrives three day later in 2011 than it did in 2010, but nearly two weeks earlier than in 2007. This shift toward a lower tax burden since 2007 has been driven by three factors:

- The Great Recession has reduced tax collections even faster than it has reduced income.
- President Obama and the Congress, after a long debate, extended the Bush-era tax cuts for two additional years.

- As part of the extension agreement, the Making Work Pay tax credit was replaced with the 2 percent reduction in the payroll tax.

Despite these tax reductions, Americans will pay more in taxes in 2011 than they will spend on groceries, clothing and shelter combined.

Tax Freedom Day 2011 is later than last year largely because of income changes rather than statutory tax law changes. As the economic recovery continues, individuals' rising income pushes them into higher tax brackets. Corporate tax revenue has also seen a resurgence.

Although these income increases are the main reason for the later Tax Freedom Day, several tax law changes are also partly to blame:

Key Findings

- Tax Freedom Day falls on April 12 this year, which means Americans will spend over three months working before they earn enough to pay their federal, state and local taxes.
- Tax Freedom Day arrives three day later in 2011 than it did in 2010, but nearly two weeks earlier than in 2007. This shift toward a lower tax burden since 2007 is caused by the recession reducing tax collections faster than income and by the extension of the Bush-era tax cuts for two additional years.
- Tax Freedom Day does not count the deficit even though deficits must eventually be financed. If the federal government were planning to collect enough in taxes during 2011 to finance all of its spending, Tax Freedom Day would arrive on May 23. This date for a deficit-inclusive measure is the latest since World War II.
- Each state has its own Tax Freedom Day. Mississippi's is earliest on March 26, and Connecticut celebrates last on May 2. High-income states pay much more in federal taxes, and they often have higher state-local taxes as well. Joining Connecticut in the latest celebrations are New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Washington. Mississippi is joined in early celebration by Tennessee, South Carolina, Louisiana, and South Dakota.

The federal estate tax has returned after a one-year repeal, this time at a rate of 35 percent and with an exemption of \$5 million. In addition, taxes associated with the Patient Protection and the Affordable Care Act continue to be phased in.

The Federal Budget Deficit Day

Tax Freedom Day, like almost all tax burden measures, ignores the current year's deficit. Only taxes that will actually be collected during 2011 count in the tally. In many years the deficit is fairly small as a percentage of total government spending, so Tax Freedom Day gives a good idea of the size of government.

Since 2008, however, deficits have been massive by any measure, and as a result, Tax Freedom Day may give the impression that the burden of government is smaller than it is. If the federal government were planning to collect enough in taxes during 2011 to finance all

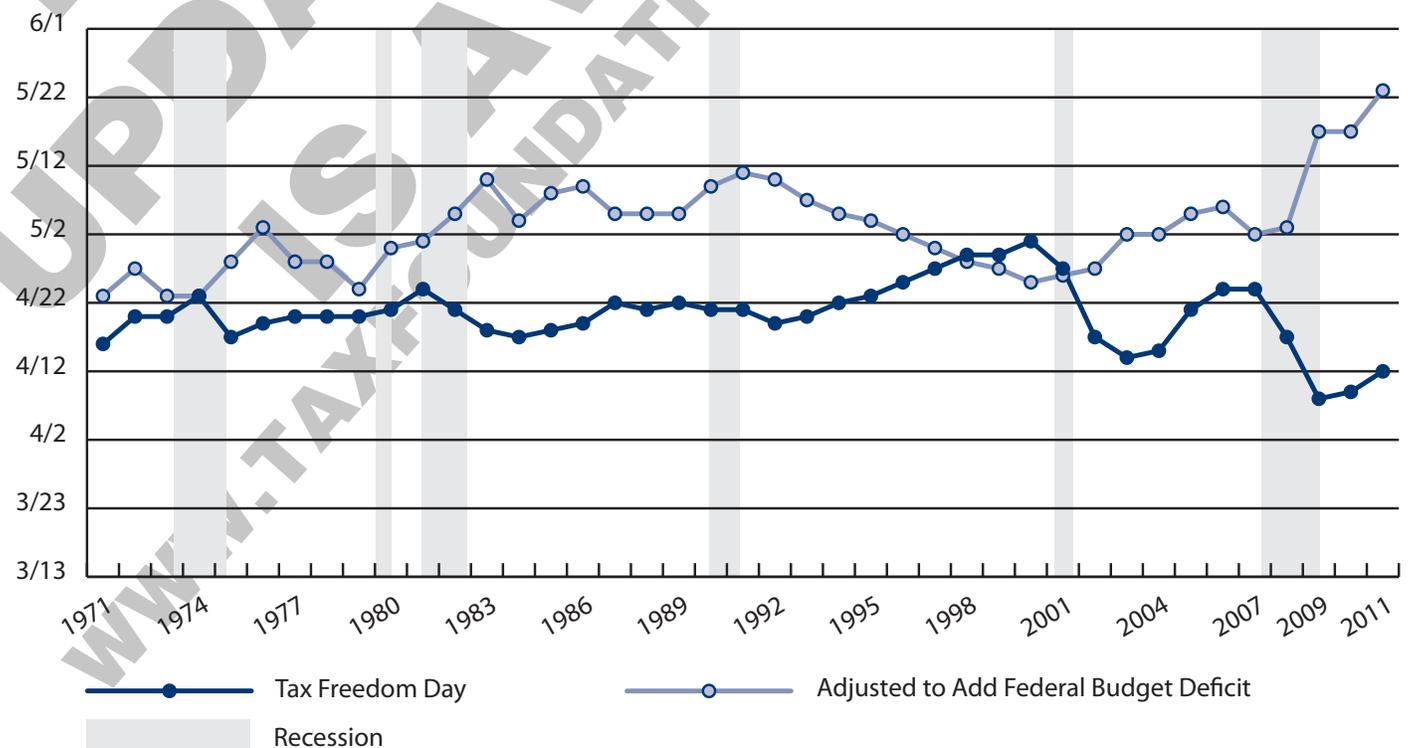
of its spending, it would have to collect about \$1.48 trillion more, and Tax Freedom Day would arrive on May 23 instead of April 12 — adding an additional 41 days to the nation's work for government. This date for a deficit-inclusive measure is the latest since World War II. Figure 1 shows Tax Freedom Day, as traditionally presented and with the inclusion of the federal budget deficit.

The House of Representatives passed H.R. 1 on February 18th of this year. This legislation claims to reduce federal spending by \$61 billion dollars a year. If passed by the Senate, which seems unlikely, and signed into law by the president, also unlikely, it would cause the Deficit Day to arrive two days earlier.

Tax Freedom Day Through the Years

The United States has traditionally been a low-tax nation. From the founding of the country

Figure 1
Tax Freedom Day
1971–2011



Source: Tax Foundation calculations based on data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Congressional Budget Office and Joint Committee on Taxation.

Table 1

*Tax Freedom Day & Total Effective Tax Rate
Calendar Years 1900–2011*

Significant Tax Legislation Noted with First-Year Impact on Tax Burden

Year	Tax Freedom Day	Number of Days Spent Working to Pay Taxes	All Taxes as a Percentage of Income
1900	January 22	22	5.9%
1901	January 21	21	5.8
1902*	January 21	21	5.6
1903*	January 20	20	5.3
1904*	January 21	21	5.7
1905	January 20	20	5.4%
1906	January 19	19	5.1
1907*	January 19	19	5.1
1908*	January 21	21	5.7
1909	January 19	19	4.9
1910*	January 19	19	5.0%
1911*	January 20	20	5.3
1912*	January 19	19	5.0
1913*	January 19	19	5.2
1914*	January 23	23	6.1
1915	January 25	25	6.7%
1916	January 24	24	6.5
1917	January 24	24	6.4
1918*	February 8	39	10.5
1919*	February 7	38	10.2
1920*	February 13	44	12.0%
1921*	February 22	53	14.5
1922	February 11	42	11.4
1923*	February 4	35	9.5
1924*	February 7	38	10.3
1925	February 4	35	9.6%
1926*	February 6	37	10.0
1927*	February 8	39	10.7
1928	February 9	40	10.8
1929*	February 9	40	10.7
1930*	February 12	43	11.7%
1931*	February 15	46	12.4
1932*	February 25	56	15.1
1933*	March 3	62	17.0
1934	March 1	60	16.2
1935	February 26	57	15.6%
1936	February 27	58	15.6
1937*	March 4	63	17.1
1938*	March 6	65	17.8
1939	March 4	63	17.1
1940	March 7	66	17.9%
	<i>The Revenue Act of 1940 (+1.3% of NNP)</i>		
	<i>The Second Revenue Act of 1940 (+1.0% of NNP)</i>		
1941	March 16	75	20.4
	<i>The Revenue Act of 1941 (+3.1% of NNP)</i>		
1942	March 18	77	20.9
	<i>The Revenue Act of 1942 (+6.7% of NNP)</i>		
1943	April 4	94	25.7
	<i>The Current Tax Payment Act of 1943 (+1.4% of NNP)</i>		
	<i>The Revenue Act of 1943 (+0.5% of NNP)</i>		
1944	March 29	88	24.0
	<i>The Individual Income Tax Act of 1944 (–0.3% of NNP)</i>		
1945*	March 30	89	24.2%
	<i>The Revenue Act of 1945 (–2.9% of NNP)</i>		

Continued

until the early part of the twentieth century, the United States was in part defined by its mistrust of government power and its correspondingly low taxes.

In 1900, as Table 1 shows, Americans paid only 5.9 percent of their income in taxes and Tax Freedom Day arrived on January 22. Between 1900 and 1917 the nation's tax burden was steady, never going over 6.7 percent, and the latest date for Tax Freedom Day was January 25.

World War I more than doubled the nation's tax burden. From 1917's January 24, Tax Freedom Day jumped to February 8 in 1918 and February 22 in 1921. Taxes were cut somewhat after the war, but never to pre-war levels.

Tax Freedom Day arrived in February throughout the twenties. It was at this time in our tax history that Justice Holmes famously called taxes the price of civilized society, though the price was significantly lower at the time than it is today.

In 1933, trying to free the country from the Great Depression, President Roosevelt embarked on a massive federal government expansion. His New Deal programs required higher taxes and pushed Tax Freedom Day into March. The tax burden lightened in the mid-thirties, and Tax Freedom Day arrived in February again in 1935 and 1936. But as World War II loomed, spending and taxing surged again, and Tax Freedom Day never saw February again.

World War II was the catalyst that pushed Tax Freedom Day into April in 1943, and it dipped back into March for the last time in 1950. In 1950, it fell on March 31, and after a decade of modest government growth, it arrived on April 11 in 1960.

The "Kennedy tax cut" pushed through by President Johnson in 1964 helped stem the tide of rising taxes, pushing Tax Freedom Day back to April 9 in 1964. Under Johnson and Nixon, the Vietnam War combined with Johnson's Great Society programs to force taxes up in the

Table 1 (continued)

**Tax Freedom Day & Total Effective Tax Rate
Calendar Years 1900–2011**

Significant Tax Legislation Noted with First-Year Impact on Tax Burden

Year	Tax Freedom Day	Number of Days Spent Working to Pay Taxes	All Taxes as a Percentage of Income
1946	March 30	89	24.3%
1947	April 2	92	24.9
1948*	March 27	86	23.3
<i>The Revenue Act of 1948 (-2.1% of NNP)</i>			
1949*	March 22	81	21.9
1950	March 31	90	24.6%
<i>The Revenue Act of 1950 (+1.7% of NNP), The Excess Profits Tax of 1950 (+1.2% of NNP)</i>			
1951	April 7	97	26.3
<i>The Revenue Act of 1951 (+1.8% of NNP)</i>			
1952	April 7	97	26.4
1953*	April 6	96	26.2
1954*	April 1	91	24.8
<i>(The Excise Tax Reduction Act of 1954 (-0.3% of NNP) The Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (-0.1% of NNP)</i>			
1955	April 4	94	25.6%
1956	April 6	96	26.3
1957*	April 7	97	26.4
1958*	April 4	94	25.7
1959	April 8	98	26.7
1960*	April 11	101	27.7%
1961*	April 11	101	27.6
1962	April 12	102	27.7
<i>The Revenue Act of 1962 (0.0% of NNP)</i>			
1963	April 13	103	28.2
1964	April 9	99	26.9
<i>The Revenue Act of 1964 (-1.9% of NNP)</i>			
1965	April 8	98	26.8%
1966	April 11	101	27.5
<i>The Tax Adjustment Act of 1966 (+0.7% of NNP)</i>			
1967	April 12	102	27.9
1968	April 18	108	29.5
<i>The Revenue and Expenditure Control Act of 1968 (+1.9% of NNP)</i>			
1969*	April 23	113	30.8
<i>The Tax Reform Act of 1969 (+0.4% of NNP)</i>			
1970*	April 19	109	29.6%
1971	April 16	106	28.9
<i>The Revenue Act of 1971 (-0.4% of NNP)</i>			
1972	April 20	110	30.1
1973*	April 20	110	30.1
1974*	April 23	113	30.8
<i>The Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974</i>			
1975*	April 17	107	29.1%
<i>The Tax Reduction Act of 1975 (-0.7% of NNP)</i>			
1976	April 19	109	29.8
<i>The Tax Reform Act of 1976 (-0.9% of NNP)</i>			
1977	April 20	110	30.1
<i>The Tax Reduction and Simplification Act of 1977 (-1.0% of NNP)</i>			
1978	April 20	110	30.0
<i>The Revenue Act of 1978 (-0.6% of NNP)</i>			
1979	April 21	111	30.1
1980*	April 21	111	30.4%
<i>The Crude Oil Windfall Profit Tax Act of 1980 (+0.5% of NNP)</i>			
1981*	April 24	114	31.1
<i>The Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (-1.4% of NNP)</i>			

Continued

late sixties and seventies, adding 15 days' work to the price of government. Tax Freedom Day in 1981 arrived on April 24, the latest date ever at that point.

Just as the Kennedy tax cut had done in 1964, the Reagan tax cut in 1981 — the Economic Recovery Tax Act — restrained the tax burden. At the same time, downward pressure on state and local taxes spurred by California's Proposition 13 brought Tax Freedom Day earlier, and in 1984 it arrived on April 17. But a surge in economic growth during the late eighties along with an increase in payroll taxes raised the tax burden, and in 1989, Tax Freedom Day arrived on April 22.

The next significant change in the tax burden came during the mid-to-late 1990s. New, higher tax brackets were added to the federal code in 1993, and the nation's tax burden rose considerably as income surged, pushing people into those higher brackets. By 1997 Tax Freedom Day came later than ever, April 27, and despite a targeted federal tax cut that year, the nation was in for a string of record-setting tax burdens.

The Latest Tax Freedom Day

The latest-ever Tax Freedom Day was May 1, 2000. Over a three-year period, the tech bubble had driven employment and wages higher and capital gains sky-high. In combination with the higher tax rates that had been enacted in 1993, these factors caused tax collections to soar unpredictably. The Congressional Budget Office kept raising its revenue forecasts, but each year's revenue was so much higher than predicted that the government ended up with a surplus.

Predictably, following such a tax surge, American opposition to taxes grew, and President Bush was narrowly elected on a tax-cut platform. The new president delivered on his tax cut promises, which, combined with a recession in 2001 and stagnation in 2002 and early 2003, caused the tax burden to fall considerably. In 2003, Tax Freedom Day arrived more than two weeks earlier than it had in 2000, on April 14. At the time, it was

Table 1 (continued)

Tax Freedom Day & Total Effective Tax Rate
Calendar Years 1900–2011
Significant Tax Legislation Noted with First-Year Impact on Tax Burden

Year	Tax Freedom Day	Number of Days Spent Working to Pay Taxes	All Taxes as a Percentage of Income
1982*	April 22 <i>The Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 (+0.6% of NNP)</i> <i>The Highway Revenue Act of 1982 (+0.1% of NNP)</i>	112	30.4%
1983	April 18 <i>The Social Security Amendments of 1983 (+0.2% of NNP)</i> <i>The Interest and Dividend Tax Compliance Act of 1983 (-0.1% of NNP)</i>	108	29.4
1984	April 17 <i>The Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 (+0.3% of NNP)</i>	107	29.2
1985	April 18 <i>The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (0.0% of NNP)</i>	108	29.5%
1986	April 19 <i>The Tax Reform Act of 1986 (+0.5% of NNP)</i>	109	29.7
1987	April 22 <i>The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987 (+0.2% of NNP)</i>	112	30.7
1988	April 21	111	30.4
1989	April 22 <i>The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1989 (+0.1% of NNP)</i>	112	30.5
1990*	April 21 <i>The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (+0.5% of NNP)</i>	111	30.4%
1991*	April 21	111	30.2
1992	April 19	109	29.8
1993	April 20 <i>The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993 (+0.4% of NNP)</i>	110	30.0
1994	April 22	112	30.5
1995	April 23	113	30.9%
1996	April 25 <i>The Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 (+0.0% of NNP)</i>	115	31.3
1997	April 27 <i>The Tax Relief Act of 1997 (-0.1% of NNP)</i>	117	31.9
1998	April 29	119	32.5
1999	April 29	119	32.5
2000	May 1 <i>The Economic Growth and Tax Reform Reconciliation Act of 2001 (-0.8% of NNP)</i>	121	33.0%
2001*	April 27	117	31.8
2002	April 17 <i>The Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002 (-0.6% of NNP)</i>	107	29.2
2003	April 14 <i>The Jobs and Growth Tax Relief and Reconciliation Act of 2003 (-0.6% of NNP)</i>	104	28.4
2004	April 15	105	28.5
2005	April 21	111	30.2%
2006	April 24	114	31.2
2007*	April 24	114	31.1
2008*	April 16 <i>The Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 (-0.9% of NNP)</i>	106	29.0
2009*	April 8 <i>The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (-0.9% of NNP)</i>	98	26.6
2010	April 9	99	26.9%
2011	April 12 <i>The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization and Job Creation Act of 2010</i>	102	27.7

* Year in which the economy shrank during at least one quarter.

Note: Leap Day is omitted.

Source: Tax Foundation calculations based on data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Congressional Budget Office, Joint Committee on Taxation, Office of Management and Budget, Internal Revenue Service, Congressional Research Service, and National Bureau of Economic Research.

the second-earliest Tax Freedom Day since the Johnson administration (see Table 1).

From 2003 through 2006, corporate income taxes rose quickly, along with rapidly growing corporate profits. Personal income tax receipts also rose sharply, starting in 2004. As a result, Tax Freedom Day was delayed, reaching April 24 in 2006.

Since 2007, stimulus tax cuts and a weakening economy have come together to push Tax Freedom Day earlier. Meanwhile, government spending has continued to grow: this year the federal budget deficit is projected to be \$1.48 trillion.

Income and Payroll Taxes Dominate the Tax Burden

Americans face an array of different taxes in their day-to-day lives. Figure 2 presents a breakdown of the nation's tax bill for 2011 by type of tax. The largest and most visible of these taxes are directly subtracted from Americans' paychecks — individual income taxes and payroll taxes.

Income Taxes

Individual income taxes represent the largest component of Americans' tax bills, and they are the best known for a number of reasons. All workers have a portion of their paychecks withheld to pay federal, state and, in some cases, local income taxes. Each worker then needs to file the famous Form 1040 with the IRS by April 15¹ of each year so the government can find out if too much or too little was withheld over the year.

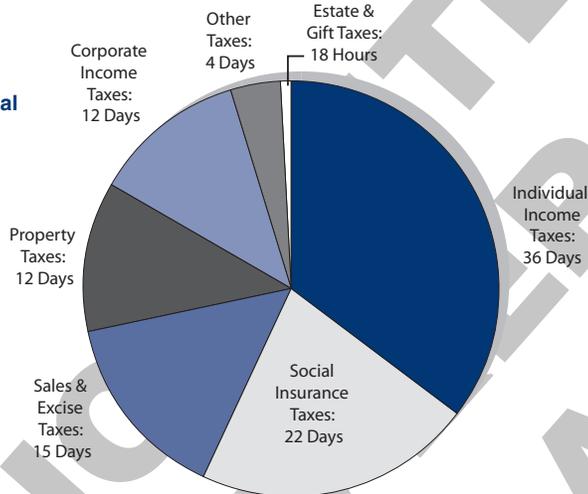
All but seven states levy some sort of income tax on top of the federal income tax, and some localities do as well. When these are added to the federal income tax burden, income taxes are projected to amount to an average of 36 days' worth of work for Americans in 2011.

1 This year Americans must pay their income tax by April 18th. The reason for the extra three days is Emancipation Day in Washington, D.C. Emancipation Day celebrates the day slavery was abolished in the district. Though celebrated on April 16th, it will be observed Friday, April 15th.

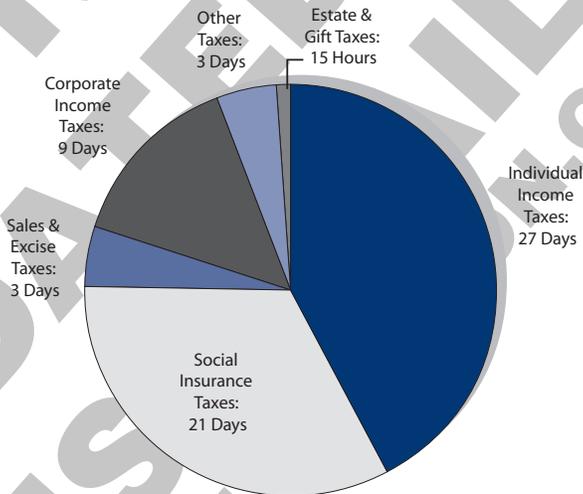
Figure 2

How Long Americans Work to Pay All Federal, State and Local Taxes
Calendar Year 2011

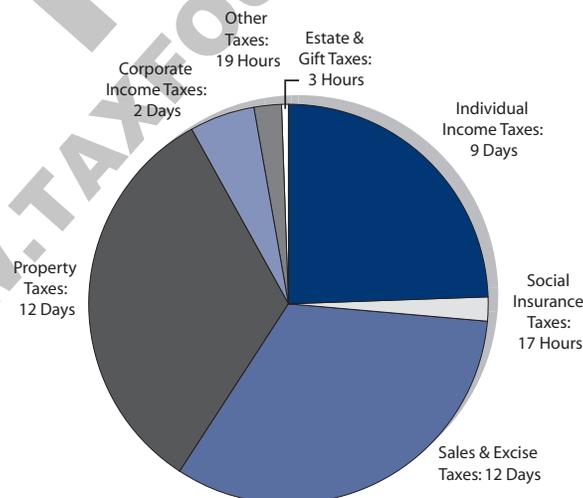
Federal, State and Local Taxes Combined



Federal Taxes



State and Local Taxes



Payroll Taxes

We project that during 2011 Americans will spend 22 days working to afford their payroll taxes, or social insurance taxes — those taxes dedicated to funding social insurance programs such as Social Security and Medicare. Almost all taxpayers are aware of these taxes because they appear as line-item deductions on their pay stubs. This year Americans are seeing a significant drop in payroll taxes thanks to the 2 percent reduction passed as part of the Bush-era tax cuts extension compromise.

Other Taxes

Some taxes are less apparent to the taxpayer than income and payroll taxes because they are difficult to total up. Foremost among these lesser-known taxes are sales and excise taxes. We project that Americans will work 15 days to pay these add-on taxes that are imposed at all levels of government and that raise the prices of nearly all goods and services. Another 12 days will be spent working to pay property taxes, which are primarily levied by local governments but increasingly by states as well.

This year, we project that Americans will have to work an additional 12 days to pay their share of corporate income taxes—down from 14 days when corporate income tax collections peaked in 2006. The reason these taxes are rightly counted as part of the nation’s tax burden is that taxes on businesses are ultimately passed on to individuals: consumers, employees, and shareholders in the form of higher prices, lower wages or employment levels, and lower share value.

Finally, Americans will log four more days to pay other miscellaneous taxes, most notably motor vehicle license taxes and severance taxes.

Tax Freedom Day by State

The total tax burdens borne by residents of different states vary considerably, as illustrated by Figure 3. This occurs not only because residents of different states pay different amounts of state and local taxes, but also because their federal tax payments can vary dramatically. Higher-income states like Connecticut face a significantly higher total federal tax rate than

lower-income states, even before accounting for the fact that many high-income states also have high state and local tax burdens.

Table 2 and Figure 3 rank each state on its Tax Freedom Day and days spent working to pay for government. Residents of Mississippi

*Table 2
Tax Freedom Day and Days Worked in Each State
Calendar Year 2011*

	Days Spent Working to Pay Taxes	Tax Freedom Day	Rank
United States	102	April 12	–
Alabama	92	April 2	43
Alaska	93	April 3	38
Arizona	92	April 2	39
Arkansas	93	April 3	35
California	106	April 16	6
Colorado	98	April 8	24
Connecticut	122	May 2	1
Delaware	100	April 10	21
Florida	101	April 11	16
Georgia	93	April 3	37
Hawaii	96	April 6	30
Idaho	93	April 3	36
Illinois	105	April 15	9
Indiana	95	April 5	32
Iowa	96	April 6	29
Kansas	100	April 10	20
Kentucky	92	April 2	42
Louisiana	90	March 30	47
Maine	94	April 4	34
Maryland	107	April 17	4
Massachusetts	104	April 14	10
Michigan	97	April 7	26
Minnesota	106	April 16	8
Mississippi	85	March 26	50
Missouri	94	April 4	33
Montana	95	April 5	31
Nebraska	102	April 12	15
Nevada	92	April 2	40
New Hampshire	99	April 9	22
New Jersey	119	April 29	2
New Mexico	90	March 31	45
New York	114	April 24	3
North Carolina	96	April 6	27
North Dakota	101	April 11	17
Ohio	96	April 6	28
Oklahoma	92	April 2	41
Oregon	98	April 8	23
Pennsylvania	104	April 14	11
Rhode Island	103	April 13	13
South Carolina	88	March 29	48
South Dakota	90	March 30	46
Tennessee	86	March 27	49
Texas	97	April 7	25
Utah	100	April 10	19
Vermont	100	April 10	18
Virginia	102	April 12	14
Washington	106	April 16	5
West Virginia	90	March 31	44
Wisconsin	106	April 16	7
Wyoming	103	April 13	12
District of Columbia	106	April 16	–

will bear the lowest average tax burden in 2011. Because of their modest incomes and extremely low state and local tax burden, we estimate Mississippi's Tax Freedom Day for 2011 to be March 26. After Mississippi, the four states where Tax Freedom Day will arrive the earliest in 2011 are Tennessee (March 27), South Carolina (March 29), Louisiana (March 30), and South Dakota (March 30).

At the other end of the tax burden spectrum are states with comparatively late Tax Freedom Days. The residents of Connecticut will celebrate last, as usual, working until the 122nd day of the year, from January 1 to May 2, before earning enough to pay all their taxes. Because Connecticut's income per capita is higher than in any other state, its residents pay extraordinarily high federal income taxes. Nearby states New Jersey (April 29) and New York (April 24) are second and third, respectively. Maryland (April 17) and Washington (April 16) round out the top five.

Tax Freedom Day: Origin and Methodology

In calculating Tax Freedom Day for each state, we look at taxes borne by residents of that state, whether paid to the federal government, their own state or local government, or governments of other states. Where possible, we allocate tax burdens to the taxpayer's state of residence. For example, Massachusetts income tax levied on wages of New Hampshire residents will be allocated to New Hampshire, not Massachusetts.

Tax Freedom Day was conceived by Florida businessman Dallas Hostetler in 1948. He performed the calculation himself and promoted his copyrighted concept until his retirement in 1971. He deeded the intellectual property to the Tax Foundation, and since then the Tax Foundation has used historical data to calculate Tax Freedom Day back to the beginning of the 20th century. In 1990 sufficient data became available to calculate a separate Tax Freedom Day for each state.

Tax Freedom Day is a vivid, calendar-based illustration of government's cost, and it gives

Americans an easy way to gauge the overall tax take. We count in the denominator every dollar that is officially part of national income according to the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Economic Analysis, and in the numerator every payment to the government that is officially considered a tax is counted. Taxes at all levels of government are included, whether levied by Uncle Sam or state and local governments.

We assume that the nation starts working on January 1, earning the same amount each day and spending nothing. When the nation has finally earned enough to pay all the taxes that will be due for that year, Tax Freedom Day has arrived.

Determining the national Tax Freedom Day involves calculating an overall average tax rate for the nation. This is done by dividing the nation's total tax payments by the nation's income as projected by the Tax Foundation

for 2011. The following formula presents this calculation for 2011:

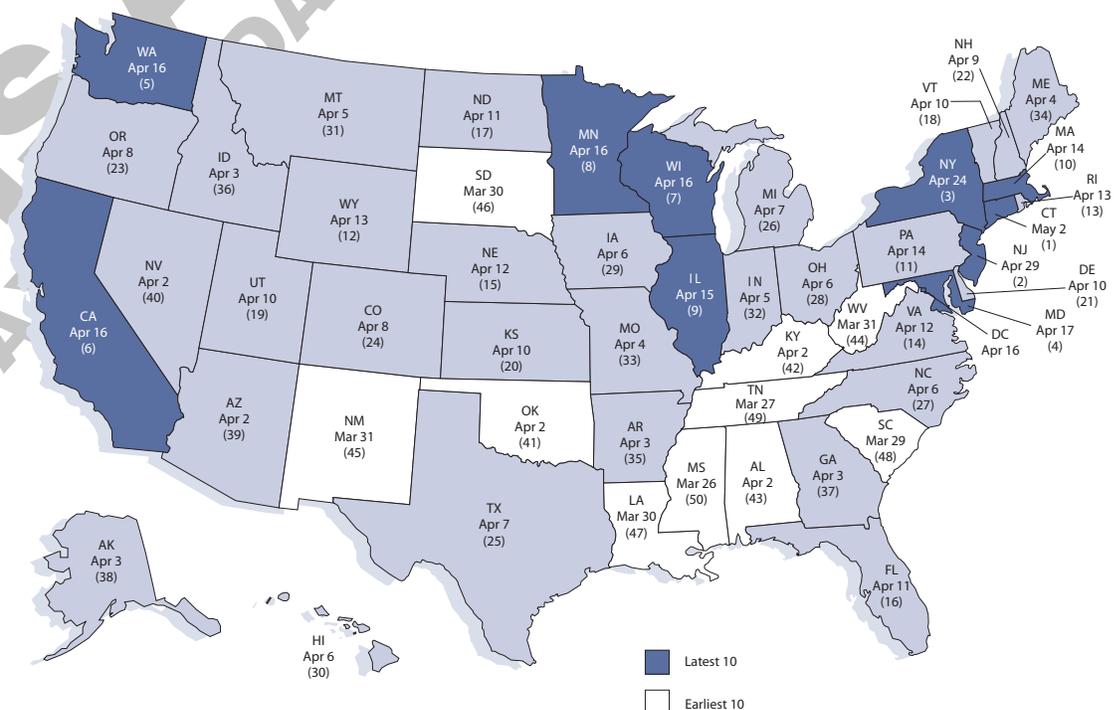
$$\begin{aligned} \text{Federal, state} \\ \text{\& local taxes} &= \$3,628 \text{ billion} = 27.68\% \\ \text{Total income} &= \$13,107 \text{ billion} \end{aligned}$$

$$27.68\% \times 365 \text{ days} = 101.03 \text{ days} = \text{April 12}$$

101.03 days means that Tax Freedom Day falls on April 12, the 102nd day of the year, at 12:45 a.m. Tax Freedom Day is rounded up to the next day; since one day equals an entire 24 hours, any fraction of a day pushes Tax Freedom Day into the next calendar day.

The source for income and tax data is the National Income and Product Accounts published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis in the Department of Commerce. For a more detailed description of Tax Freedom Day's methodology and some questions relating to the timing of tax burdens and income, please see "Tax Freedom Day: How It's Calculated and Addressing Some Methodological Issues."

Figure 3
Tax Freedom Day by State and Rank
Calendar Year 2011



SPECIAL REPORT
(ISSN 1068-0306) is published at least 6 times yearly by the Tax Foundation, an independent 501(c)(3) organization chartered in the District of Columbia.

4–20 pp.
Single copy: free
Multiple copies: \$5 each

The Tax Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research and public education organization, has monitored tax and fiscal activities at all levels of government since 1937.

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