



## How Much Do Our Representatives Want to Spend?

by Amy K. Frantz

How much more of your paycheck would you be sending to Washington D.C. if your Senators and Representative had their way? Members of the House and Senate sponsor or cosponsor legislation they would like to see enacted. Some of those bills reduce government spending, but the vast majority of the bills increase spending.

For over twelve years, National Taxpayers Union Foundation (NTUF) has kept track of the estimated spending increase or reduction of much of the legislation introduced in Congress with their "BillTally" accounting software. NTUF reviews the official title of each bill introduced in the House and Senate. If the bill is estimated to result in a spending increase or reduction of less than \$1 million, it is not included in the study. Some other bills are excluded, such as the 13 appropriations bills that are passed each year in the House and Senate. The sponsor of an appropriation bill is generally the Chair of the committee or subcommittee that generated the bill, and appropriations bills do not have any cosponsors.<sup>1</sup>

For the bills that are included in the BillTally study, NTUF obtains a third-party cost estimate from a credible source whenever possible. If a cost estimate is not readily available from such a source, NTUF will calculate an estimate with the assistance of the bill's sponsor.

This information is cross-referenced with the bills that each Representative and Senator has sponsored or cosponsored. NTUF then calculates the net increase or reduction in overall spending that would occur if all the bills sponsored or cosponsored by each Member were to become law. If a Member sponsors the same spending in more than one bill, it is not counted twice toward the total. Table 1 shows the results for Iowa's Senators and Representatives.<sup>2</sup>

	Increases	Cuts	Net
<b>Iowa Senators</b>			
Charles Grassley	\$43,986	\$116	\$43,870
Tom Harkin	\$85,262	\$0	\$85,262
<b>Iowa Congressmen</b>			
Leonard Boswell	\$167,284	\$1	\$167,283
Steve King	\$54,472	\$10,130	\$44,342
Tom Latham	\$13,211	\$0	\$13,211
Jim Leach	\$32,217	\$890	\$31,327
Jim Nussle	\$3,609	\$898	\$2,711

(All dollar amounts in millions)

A Publication of:

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NTUF Senior Policy Analyst Demian Brady used the BillTally results to report some surprising (or perhaps, not so surprising) findings about the legislation that was introduced in 2003, the First Session of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress:<sup>3</sup>

- Only 13 out of 435 Members of the House of Representatives had a net agenda to reduce spending. Eighty-eight Representatives did not sponsor any bill that would reduce spending.
- Only 3 out of 100 Members of the Senate had a net agenda to reduce spending. Fifty-four Senators did not sponsor any bill that would reduce spending.

If the House of Representatives passed every bill included in NTUF's BillTally, net spending would increase by \$5.5 trillion, or \$50,322 per household. If the Senate did the same, net spending would increase by \$1.3 trillion, or \$11,894 per household.<sup>4</sup> That would necessitate quite a large tax increase! Politicians may say they want to reduce government spending, but for most, their actions speak louder than their words.

#### **ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup>For more information on the methodology used by National Taxpayers Union Foundation for the BillTally study, see <http://www.ntu.org/main/page.php?PageID=27>

<sup>2</sup>Data for Table 1 from Demian Brady, "The First Session of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress: Operation Enduring Deficits – Marshalling Taxpayer Dollars Into New Programs," *National Taxpayers Union Foundation Policy Paper 150 and BillTally Report 108-1*, April 29, 2004, <<http://www.ntu.org/main/misc.php?MiscID=11>>, (May 6, 2004).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

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