

Brother, Can You Spare \$29 Trillion?

Well, it's time for one of those periodic "debt ceiling" fights in Congress. Every so often, American politicians argue over whether to allow themselves to borrow more money, with their promise to beat it out of your hide, plus interest, later, as their collateral.

These fights get dramatic, in the manner of a "professional wrestling match." Sometimes there's even a fake "government shutdown" until one side finally cries uncle and agrees that under no circumstances must the US government live within its means and that more money will just have to be borrowed.

Why? Because they can, that's why. Or, rather, they can for now. But it can't and won't last forever.

Writing at the American Institute for Economic Research ("America's Fiscal History: From Liberty to Paternalism"), Richard M. Ebeling notes that in 1868 (the first year the *World Almanac* made such figures available), the US government spent a whopping \$301 million — adjusting for inflation, \$5.8 billion.

Last year, the US government spent about \$6.6 trillion.

A billion is one-thousandth of a trillion.

Last year, the US government spent about 1,138 times as much as it did 152 years ago — and borrowed \$3.1 trillion of that money.

To put it in different terms, last year the US government spent about \$12.5 million per minute, every minute of every hour of every day, and borrowed about \$5.9 million per minute, every minute of every hour of every day.

According to [USDebtClock.org](https://www.usdebtclock.org), federal spending for 2021 stands (as I write this) at more than \$7 trillion, and federal borrowing at more than \$3 trillion, with three months remaining in the year.

The "national debt" — actually the debt of the US government, but of course the politicians want to fob off responsibility on you, even though you never co-signed their loans — currently stands at nearly \$29 trillion. "Your share," if indeed paying off their bar tab was your responsibility, would come to about \$86,000.

If you haven't already, it's time to face a few unpleasant facts.

Fact #1: At some point, the politicians' creditors are going to decide that loaning money to the US government has become too risky a proposition. It will get harder, eventually nearly

impossible, for the US government to borrow more money.

Fact #2: The politicians' debt is never going to be paid off. The US government is going to default sooner or later, whether openly or through scams like "monetization."

Fact #3: When those things happen, it's going to hurt everyone. Including you. The US government is going to raise taxes, and it's going to cut "services," and the dollars in your wallet are going to buy less.

Silver lining: The above process will likely end with the US government as we know it ceasing to exist. Hopefully, but not necessarily, to be replaced by something better.

But hey, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe American politicians will suddenly become fiscally responsible, refuse to raise the "debt ceiling," and insist on a balanced budget that includes paying down that \$29 trillion principal.

If you believe that, I've got some oceanfront property I'd like to talk with you about.