



Executive Director Report on 2013 Impact

December 2013

www.nationalpriorities.org

About National Priorities Project

National Priorities Project (NPP) is the only nonprofit, non-partisan federal budget research organization in the nation with the mission to make the federal budget accessible to the broad American public. NPP is the people's guide to the federal budget. We believe that everyone can and should understand and participate in critical debates about federal spending and revenue. Our team takes a complex federal budgeting process and cracks it open for ordinary folks – providing the information, tools, and motivation necessary to catalyze strategic citizen action around fiscal issues that affect us all.

National Priorities Project envisions a nation where the American public understands the federal budget choices made by our lawmakers – and where all people, as well as public-serving community and national organizations, have the power and inclination to influence our nation's revenue and spending decisions.

We're Top Rated

In 2013, NPP won 5-star recognition from [GuideStar](#) and [Great Nonprofits](#).

We were also voted one of the [50 nonprofits in the nation for which to be grateful](#) by Nonprofit Tech for Good.

2013 Organizational Goal and Associated Strategies

During 2013, NPP's work has been geared toward realizing "OurBudget" – a vision for the **next social movement our nation needs**. This movement will build a "better federal budget" that more solidly aligns with the priorities of a greater diversity of people, transforming a host of pressing people's issues including health care, the environment, immigration, education, and beyond.

NPP's goal: To manifest an effective and accountable federal government that promotes the values and priorities of the majority of Americans.

- **Strategy 1:** Conduct **high-quality research and rigorous analysis of the federal budget** and make it publicly available in a way that is accessible to ordinary people.
- **Strategy 2:** Increase the frequency of **communication across diverse media platforms and partnerships with key constituencies** by creating material which motivates people to engage and take effective action.
- **Strategy 3:** **Build the capacity of constituents** who are ready to engage in a broad and strategic movement to shift federal budget priorities.

2013 Accomplishments (first three quarters of 2013)

Birdseye metrics comparing the first three quarters of 2012 to the same time period in 2013:

- Website visitors: increased 51.1%
- Number of pages viewed: increased 14.8%
- Unique visitors to our website: increased 80.7%
- Facebook followers gained: increased 45.5%
- Average time on website: increased 43.4%

Research & Analysis

- Our team updated the [Federal Priorities Database](#) with new data from USASpending and key indicators. The next phase of this work will be to expand the database so that it is capable of driving dynamic state-level fact sheets.

- NPP's signature CostofWar.com transitioned to a more comprehensive [Cost of National Security](#) site tracking a variety of spending areas, and linking the counters to NPP's popular [Trade-Offs](#) tool for maximum use and impact. Together, these tools provide a highly sophisticated and nimble set of tools for organizers, policy makers, and the media. The counters track costs per hour for 9,900 cities and towns, and every Congressional District, county, and state.

- NPP's team [issued 17 reports](#) on topics ranging from the fiscal cliff, to sequestration, to the government shutdown. We updated and expanded our annual Competing Visions report to include polling numbers, and issued August Recess action sheets. Our team also [unearthed data on every tax expenditure](#) from 1974 to the present day. Please see the following box which offers greater tax expenditure detail.



Snapshot of Cost of National Security
(nationalpriorities.org/cost-of)

- We have laid the groundwork for the new online and interactive Federal Budget 101 and have broken ground on an updated *People's Guide to the Federal Budget*. It is worth noting that views of NPP's [Budget Basic](#) pages increased 40.2% in the first nine months of 2013 as compared with 2012. NPP remains a go-to source for people seeking accessible budget information.
- Our goal of creating a [zip-code-based mobile tool](#) to track federal spending has a sound and compelling plan. We are currently seeking the necessary resources.

Special Project: The Big Money in Tax Breaks

Time Series Data

Purpose: to facilitate an understanding of tax break costs over time.

Work completed (This is the only [publicly available dataset of tax break costs over time](#)):

- Obtained historical documents that contain Treasury tax break estimates back to 1974
- Converted the estimates to electronic format and standardized the tax break names and the categories assigned by Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
- Augmented that raw data to make it more useful to journalists and researchers by:
 - adjusting for inflation
 - noting percent change from previous year
 - showing tax break costs as % of year's total and as percentage of OMB category total
 - showing tax break costs as % of GDP
- [Open-sourced](#) the raw data and the code used to generate the calculated fields (above)

Report

Purpose: to provide a lay audience with a context for understanding the cost of tax breaks and who benefits from them

Work completed (in an [accessible, three page report](#)):

- Combined tax break cost estimates with analysis of distributional effects, to show how various income levels benefit from the top tax breaks
- Showed the magnitude of tax break costs and provided context by comparing them to other parts of the federal budget, such as discretionary spending and the budget deficit
- Provided context for corporate tax breaks by comparing them to other parts of the budget, such as education spending

Visualization

Purpose: to provide an alternate way into the tax break conversation by visually showing the costs of the top tax breaks over time and who benefits.

Work completed ([interactive visualization](#)):

- Highlighted the top 10 tax breaks in 2013, the corporate v. individual breakdown, and which income levels are benefitting
- For each of the top tax breaks, displayed the costs over time
- For each of the top tax breaks, showed how various income levels benefit (where distributional data is available)

And a webinar, social media-ready data stories, and more!

2013 Accomplishments (first three quarters of 2013), continued

Communications & Networking

- We increased national and regional media coverage of NPP's work by leveraging partnerships with journalists. As compared with the first nine months of 2012, NPP has seen a 394.9% increase in media hits. Within the last year, NPP's research and analysis has been cited and profiled in major national news outlets including: USA TODAY, The New York Times, The Hill, Washington Post, MSNBC, The Guardian, Christian Science Monitor, the Huffington Post, Reuters, The Nation, Bill Moyers, Mother Jones, National Public Radio, Politico, CNN, The Boston Globe, PBS, Democracy Now, Salon.com, and more.
- Our team also increased dramatically opportunities for effective engagement. We partnered with Center for Effective Government and the Sunlight Foundation, among other organizations, to send briefs to Congress, and galvanized our constituents by generating petitions, town meeting and lobby resources, and energizing social media campaigns. Web traffic to our action-related resources increased 180%.
- We expanded [Faces of the Budget](#) (see photo, next page) to collect more human stories about the impact of the budget. Thanks to a tremendous graduate intern, our team has logged 76 moving stories about the human impact of federal spending and revenue decisions. Many more stories have been contributed by visitors to NPP's website.
- NPP's team has logged well-over 100 timely blog entries on our Budget Matters blog.
- We have built relationships with major national partners serving women, youth, and people of color. Our partners include: Roosevelt Campus Network, U.S. Student Association, MomsRising, USAction, Jobs With Justice, National People's Action, Coalition on Human Needs, Grassroots Global Justice, National Women's Law Center, Young Invincibles, Center for Effective Government, Free Press, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and many more. Please also see selected constituent highlights on the following page.
- We will exceed our goal of publishing 12 pieces for external outlets over a 12 month period thanks to strong partnerships with TomDispatch, MomsRising, the Huffington Post, The Hill, and other large-traffic outlets. Please see the box on this page for an example of the leverage provided by external outlets to expand the reach of NPP's analysis.
- NPP's website is now mobile-friendly! It's just in time, as nearly 25% of visitors to NPP's website in October 2013 came via mobile devices. As our demographic grows younger, NPP is mindful of staying current with changing technology.

Spotlight: The Life of One NPP Publication

This year, NPP's team assessed the impact of our external writing efforts. Here's an example of the reach of an NPP blog piece: "Congress Tweeted While America Burned," which imagined what a post-sequestration nation might look like in 10 years. The piece, originally carried by TomDispatch, went viral and was ultimately published by 63 outlets including Huffington Post, The Nation, The Guardian, Alternet, Bill Moyers, Michael Moore, and more. More than 6 million people saw the article and 28,000 people interacted with it online.



People from across the U.S. sent in photos illustrating what the federal budget means to them, as part of our 30th anniversary Faces of the Budget project.

2013 Accomplishments (first three quarters of 2013), continued

Capacity Building

- We hosted trainings, workshops, presentations, and webinars on a variety of budget topics. Like in years past, NPP's team hit the road. To date, we've completed 19 workshops, webinars, speaking engagements. Our constituents have ranged from 200 women state legislators gathered in Washington, DC on the eve of the government shutdown, to 340 elder participants in a regional senior action training day, to 75 student leaders from Roosevelt Campus Network to 23 youth participants in an afterschool program for girls in New York City. In 2014, our team will hit the ground running – traveling in January and February to Arkansas, Wisconsin, and beyond.
- We improved our video-based efforts to popularize federal budget information. In truth, we still have a great deal of work to do in this area. Please see our recent video [Take Back the Federal Budget](#) as an example of a direction NPP would like to pursue, in addition to releasing edgier animations like our [Talking Paycheck](#) video. With added communications staff capacity, we will also be using informal videos more frequently as a social media engagement tool.
- Our team has made modest progress in our work to expand our Educator Toolkit for *A People's Guide to the Federal Budget* and in the production of more action-oriented tools. We will focus more on these early in 2014.

Constituent Highlights

Every single day, NPP's work brings us in contact with amazing people and organizations from across our nation. We're happy to share a few of their stories with you:

Alia Holness

“I’m going to go home and tell people we can make a difference because I learned about the federal budget and came to Washington. Where I come from, people think nothing we do matters. But they’re wrong. I know they’re wrong after today.”

Growing up in Boston, Alia remembers being shocked by the juxtaposition of the State House and homeless people on the Boston Common. She wished there was something she could do to help the people she saw suffering, but she didn’t know how. When she got her first job, she saw the taxes being taken out of her weekly paycheck, and she wondered where that money was going. Was it going to the State House, while the homeless shivered in the cold winters outside?



Alia Holness, past participant in NPP's *If I Had a Trillion Dollars Youth Video Contest*

Alia began to understand the connection between her tax dollars and the services in her community after participating in federal budget trainings provided by NPP as part of the *If I Had a Trillion Dollars Youth Video Contest*, co-organized by NPP and the American Friends Service Committee. She realized that her tax dollars could be spent by the federal government in ways that would improve opportunity and support for struggling families, but that her priorities were not reflected in the decisions being made by her lawmakers about federal spending.

As part of NPP’s training, Alia and dozens of youth from around the country met with lawmakers in Washington, DC. They testified about the challenges facing their families and communities, and told their legislators what they believed should be the priorities for our nation. Alia’s experience changed her profoundly. After years of being told that she could not change anything, she realized that her opinion about federal budget issues mattered and that she can make a difference by speaking up. She reclaimed her power as a citizen in our democracy. Alia has said that NPP’s information, tools, and educational resources provided her with the opportunity to understand that her priorities deserve to be heard.

United States Student Association

“Amazing workshop! More time for NPP, please!”

The United States Student Association is the nation's oldest, largest, and most-inclusive student association fighting for an accessible, affordable education for all. For the last three years, NPP staff members have traveled to Washington, D.C. to help build the capacity of young people from across the country who have come to our nation’s capitol for USSA’s National Grassroots Legislative Conference and National Student Lobby Day. This three-day gathering provides students with the opportunity to broaden their knowledge base, learn new skills, lobby their elected representatives on student issues, march through historic downtown Washington, D.C., and rally on Capitol Hill. Year after year, we are heartened by the rave reviews of our workshops and the ability of our research and training to strengthen the dynamic leaders of future generations.



U.S. Student Association’s Tiffany Dena Loftin, an NPP 2013 Democracy Champion, at the White House.

Minnesota Alternative Arms Spending Project

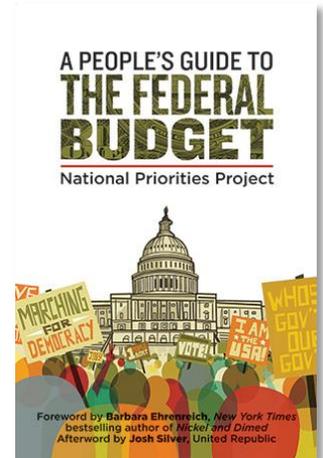
This year this state-wide network in Minnesota took NPP's budget numbers and put them on a billboard on a major interstate highway, and used them to pass upwards of 130 budget priorities resolutions in faith communities, unions, and City Councils across the state. Though they focused on the larger issue of democracy building, they held a central goal focused on cutting Pentagon spending.

Dr. Robert Griffith, U.S. Army Comptroller

Our material is also used by folks like Dr. Robert Griffith, a comptroller for the U.S. Army stationed in Texas. Dr. Griffith emailed and asked to purchase – with a personal check – 15 copies of *A Peoples Guide to the Federal Budget*.

Dr. Griffith is in charge of training the next generation of Army comptrollers. He bought the guide for each member of his incoming class because he said it was the best, most accessible, fun, and engaging book he found to help his students learn about a complex – sometimes overwhelming, sometimes confounding federal budget and budget process – a budget process they would have to steward.

Dr. Griffith said that when he read *A People's Guide* he understood for the first time how he was connected to the budget through his tax dollars. He believes his students will be compelled to do a better job as comptrollers now that the enormous numbers they are charged to deal with have become more real and more personal.



What People Are Saying About National Priorities Project

In honor of our 30th Anniversary, NPP's partners and allies have sent in moving messages regarding the impact of NPP's work over time. The following is a small sample.

Please also see a [selection of video testimonials](#) and a special message to NPP from [Bill Moyers](#).

"All of our work is data-driven – in fact, we may be the only activist movement on earth that uses a data point as its name and rallying cry. And we're grateful to the NPP for their data – in particular, understanding the pernicious role of fossil fuel subsidies has been highly useful. Thanks!" – *Bill McKibben, 350.org*

"MoveOn has often used National Priorities Project data to empower our members to speak knowledgeably and compellingly about huge issues -- from military spending on the Iraq War (or now, the prospect of a military intervention in Syria), to the impacts of the sequester. NPP is a vital resource -- the progressive movement depends on you!" – *Anna Galland, MoveOn.org*

"I've found NPP's work to be an extraordinarily valuable source of insight and analysis with regard to what's at stake for the nation, what our priorities ought to be, and how far we've drifted from those widely-shared goals."
– Robert Reich

"Each year, when the president presents his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year, NPP provides a variety of analyses that help clarify what is in the budget, how that defines the nation's priorities, and how that affects communities and the lives of individuals. NPP provides a very helpful alternative lens to view and understand the federal budget that we turn to every year. There's no way you can make good,

thoughtful decisions and choices without good, thoughtful information and analyses.” – *U.S. Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.)*

“National People’s Action has relied on our partner NPP for the hard data and lucid explanation they provide for everything from educating neighborhood leaders and staff on the budget process to understanding exactly where our affordable housing dollars have gone. We’ve used NPP to help write the signs that are carried at direct action marches on Wall Street and on legislative fact sheets carried on Capitol Hill.” – *Liz Ryan Murray, National People’s Action*

“[NPP is] not only dedicated to having a national impact and providing support to national entities through their activities, but they are also admirably supportive of local efforts and are one of the very few national groups dedicated to providing local networks with data specific to their geographies.” – *Sarita Gupta, Jobs with Justice*

“NPP’s work has demonstrated that another way is possible, and that we could start building it right now with a shift in spending and policy priorities. Whenever we’re faced with a doubter telling us that health care or education or pretty much any social good is just too expensive and we can’t afford it, we pull out numbers from NPP to show them the hard data that we can afford a better future. What we can’t afford is ignoring this data and continuing business as usual.” – *Annie Leonard, Story of Stuff*

“Without NPP the movements for justice and peace would be less likely to win. The stronger NPP becomes, the more likely a more just, equitable and peaceful world will become a reality.” – *Judith Le Blanc, Peace Action*

“Our budget problem is not that we spend too much, but that we spend far too much in areas where we shouldn’t, and far too little in other places, which could do so much to improve the quality of the lives of all Americans. National Priorities Project has consistently been one of the few organizations to draw attention to this point. Providing vital advocacy as we shift away from grossly excessive military spending and into categories that will be far more productive for our quality of life is a great asset, and one that I believe will become increasingly important as we deal with a budget crisis that will only be resolved sensibly if the country pays attention to NPP’s advice.” – *Former Congressman Barney Frank*

Financial Status: Foundation Funders (2013)

Anonymous Family Foundation	\$15,000
Arsenault Family Foundation	\$3,000
Colombe Foundation	\$85,000
Cultures of Resistance Network Foundation	\$5,000
Education Foundation of America	\$10,000
Ford Foundation	\$100,000
Janelia Family Foundation	\$10,000
Open Society Institute	\$100,000
Peace Development Fund	\$15,000
Rockefeller Brothers Fund	\$70,000
Rockefeller Investment Company	\$25,000
Solidago Foundation	\$7,000
Stewart R. Mott Foundation	\$5,000
Susan A. and Donald P. Babson Charitable Foundation	\$2,000

Looking Ahead to 2014

We are urged on by civic strategists such as Brandeis University Professors Siranni and Friedland who have written, “reforming elections and campaign finance, increasing voting, or making our system more inclusive of the great diversity of Americans are unfinished projects that warrant much attention. But civic renewal also entails investing in civic skills and organizational capacities for public problem-solving on a wide scale and designing policy at every level of the federal system to enhance the ability of citizens to do the everyday work of the republic.”

Now more than ever, our nation faces critical budget choices that will affect our communities and families for generations to come. These budget challenges will be with us for the foreseeable future, and the fate of our nation depends on our ability to forge an informed electorate willing and able to press for solutions grounded in the best interests the American public – a citizenry able to do the vital and everyday work of a healthy republic.

NPP’s team is rising to meet this challenge – day after day – thanks to you!

Onward!