



VMUN 2026

United States Senate

BACKGROUND GUIDE



## Vancouver Model United Nations

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Session | January 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Jerry Chen

Secretary-General



Annie Zhao

Director-General

Cindy Yang

Chief of Staff

Erwin Wang

Director of Logistics



Jojo Yang

USG General Assemblies

Bryan Fa

USG Specialized Agencies

Serena Zhang

USG of Regional Councils

Preston She

USG of Committees

Ken Zhao

USG Operations

Mary Lu

USG Conference



Daniel Fu

USG Finance

Adrian Pun

USG Delegate Affairs

Cate Shumka

USG Delegate Affairs

Ryan Xu

USG Design & Media

Dear Delegates,

My name is Justin Guo, and I am honoured to serve as your Presiding Officer for the Historical United States Senate (USS) committee at this year's iteration of Vancouver Model United Nations. I have the extreme privilege of working alongside your Chair Gurjot Dulai and your Assistant Director Jestin Chang. We are incredibly excited to welcome you to a fulfilling weekend of diplomacy and cannot wait to meet all of you on conference weekend!

Being a sophomore at St. George's, my last five years delegating and staffing the non-spectator sport has undoubtedly been instrumental in shaping the person that I am today. While you may almost certainly have heard something similar from others before, my growth from a skeptical sixth grader to someone who wholeheartedly embraces the Model UN experience is something that I wish others can enjoy to the same effect.

For the 103rd United States Congress, senators will be debating and resolving two major era-defining issues: *reducing the federal budget deficit* and *combatting violent crimes*. These topics are broad, nuanced, and have no straightforward solutions. As a result, I strongly encourage delegates to not only read the backgrounder thoroughly, but also to conduct additional research themselves. By understanding the stances of your own constituents, other senators, and specific sub-topics, you will be able to confidently debate your case and reach bipartisan solutions throughout committee sessions.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to reach out to us at [senate@vmun.com](mailto:senate@vmun.com). On behalf of the entire Dais team, we hope that VMUN 2026 will be an unforgettable experience that lights a new passion for Model UN within all delegates!

Sincerely,

Justin Guo

USS Director

# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For USS, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **January 12, 2026, at 23:59 PT**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. The email address for this committee is [senate@vmun.com](mailto:senate@vmun.com).

<b>Budget Deficit Reduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Overview .....	4
Timeline .....	5
Great Depression .....	7
Wartime and Post-War Budgets .....	8
The Great Society and Vietnam War .....	9
Stagflation.....	9
Reagan’s Supply-side Economics .....	10
Past Congressional Action.....	11
Revenue Act of 1964.....	11
Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974.....	11
Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 .....	12
Deficit Reduction Act of 1984.....	12
Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Acts of 1985 and 1987.....	12
Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 .....	13
Current Situation .....	13
Current Economic State .....	13
Structure of Federal Spending .....	14
Structure of Federal Revenues .....	16
Current Situation & President Clinton’s Proposals.....	17
Possible Solutions and Controversies .....	18
Raising Federal Revenue via Taxes .....	18
Reducing Tax Breaks.....	19
Restraining Discretionary Spending.....	19
Reforming Entitlement Programs.....	20
Instituting Budget Enforcement.....	20
Balanced Budget Amendments .....	20
Deficit Reduction by Investing in Economic Growth .....	21
Bloc Positions .....	21
Democratic Senators.....	21
Republican Senators.....	22
Fiscal Moderates.....	23

Discussion Questions .....	23
Additional Resources.....	24
Bibliography .....	25
<b>Combating Violent Crimes.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Overview .....	30
Timeline .....	31
Historical Analysis.....	33
Prohibition and the Emergence of Organized Crime.....	33
Postwar Crime Patterns.....	33
Riots and Rising Tensions of the 1960s.....	34
Rising Violent Crime Rates of the 1970s.....	34
Mandatory Minimum Sentencing and Crackdown on Crime of the 1980s.....	35
Violent Crime Spike of the Early 1990s.....	35
Past Congressional Action.....	36
National Firearms Act (1934) .....	36
Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (1968) .....	36
Controlled Substances Act (1970).....	37
Comprehensive Crime Control Act (1984) .....	37
Anti-Drug Abuse Acts (1986 and 1988).....	37
Crime Control Act (1990) .....	38
State-Level Influence and Federal Incentives .....	38
Current Situation .....	39
National Crime Trends.....	39
Firearms and Illegal Gun Trafficking .....	39
Mass Incarceration .....	40
Strain on Policing and Public Trust.....	40
Court Backlog .....	41
Possible Solutions and Controversies .....	41
Expanding Law Enforcement Capacity .....	41
Community-Based Prevention Programs.....	42
Harsher Sentencing Measures .....	42
Firearms Access and Targeted Gun Regulation.....	43

Sentencing and Reentry Reform..... 43

Bloc Positions ..... 44

    Democratic Senators ..... 44

    Republican Senators..... 44

    Progressives and Civil Rights Advocates..... 45

Discussion Questions ..... 45

Additional Resources..... 46

Bibliography ..... 47

# Budget Deficit Reduction

## Overview

For decades, the federal government of the United States has consistently spent more than it has collected in revenue—in other words, a constant budget deficit exists.<sup>1</sup> This persistent imbalance has fueled a steadily growing national debt, which in turn has increased the share of the federal budget devoted to interest payments.<sup>2</sup> Although deficits have been tolerated at various points in the past, concern has grown that the nation’s current spending trajectory is unsustainable in the long run.

In 1993, lawmakers are facing the challenge of determining how best to address a looming federal budget crisis. For example, by the start of the 103rd Congress, the US had been running deficits of over USD 250 billion per year, with spending during the 1980s resulting in the worst deficit balance since the Second World War. Recently, President Bill Clinton introduced a deficit-reduction plan that combines higher income taxes on wealthier households, an increase in corporate rates, reductions in discretionary spending, and the creation of a new energy tax.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, the proposals have drawn both support and criticism across party lines. For example, the Republicans supported Clinton’s reductions in federal spending while opposing his tax hikes on energy and corporations.

The federal budget, however, is more than a sum of revenues and expenditures. Instead, it reflects political choices about national priorities as well as the balance between what citizens expect from their government and what they are prepared to finance. The composition of federal spending complicates efforts to cut the deficit. A large majority of the budget is considered mandatory, or entitlement, spending. Programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid fall into the category of mandatory spending.<sup>4</sup> These programs operate on automatic formulas based on factors such as income, disabilities, and age of beneficiaries, making them difficult to adjust without significant legislative changes, and they are politically sensitive given their importance to millions of Americans. The remainder of the budget, discretionary spending, covers everything from defence, foreign affairs, education, transportation, and public health.<sup>5</sup> While this category is approved annually and is typically the first to face budget cuts, its relatively limited scope often means that such changes are unable to resolve the budgetary crisis meaningfully. On the other hand, the United States generates revenue primarily from income tax, with payroll taxes coming in second.<sup>6</sup> These sources of income have produced debate over their role in deficit reduction; some believe that tax rate hikes are a necessity, while others warn against their potential adverse effects

---

<sup>1</sup> The White House, “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House,” June 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-resources/budget/historical-tables/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> “The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth,” n.d., <https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-03.html>.

<sup>4</sup> The Financial Management Service [THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE], “Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992,” *Treasury Department* (Department of the Treasury, 1992), <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> The Financial Management Service, “Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992,” *Treasury Department* (Department of the Treasury, 1992), <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

for the economy. Ultimately, the Senate’s debate over deficit reduction demonstrates competing visions of government responsibilities and is likely to have long-term implications.

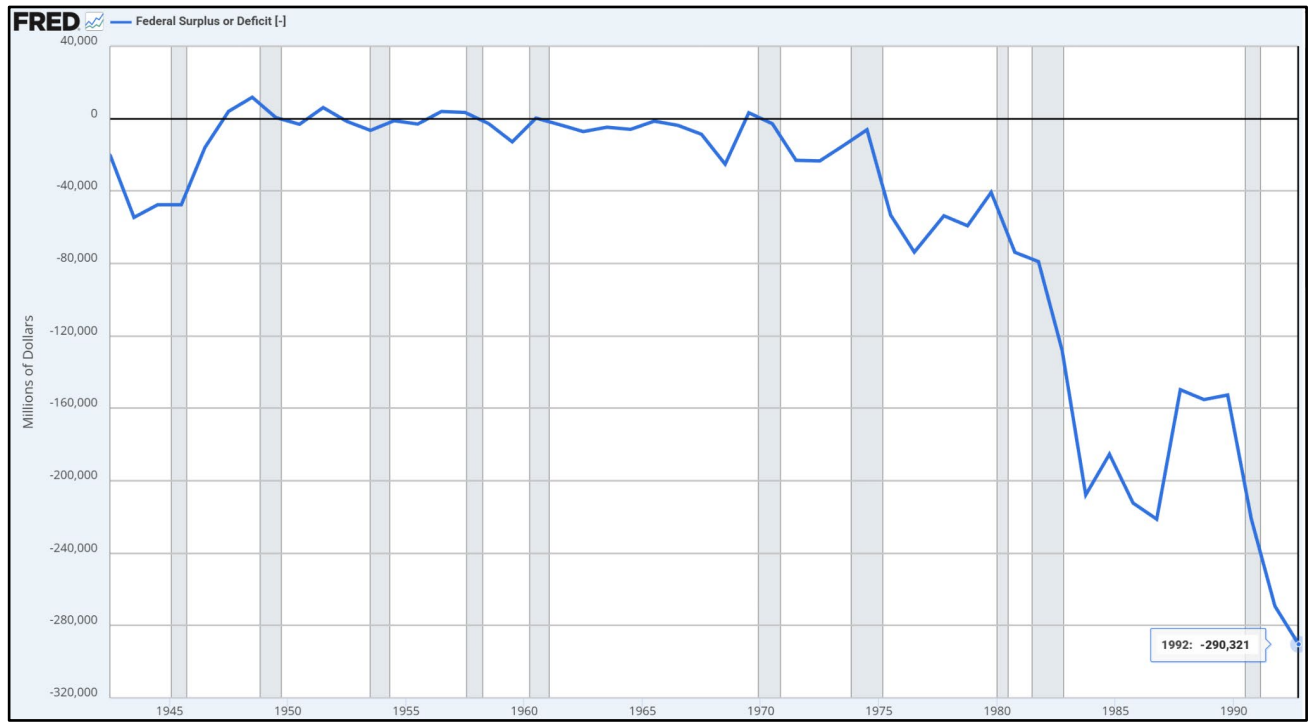


Figure 1: Year-on-Year Federal Surplus/Deficit Trends.<sup>7</sup>

## Timeline

**January 1, 1835** — As part of his campaign platform, President Andrew Jackson pays all federal debts through surpluses generated by tariffs, the selling of government land, and the rejection of spending bills.<sup>8</sup>

**March 4, 1933** — President Franklin D. Roosevelt takes office and launches the New Deal, greatly expanding federal involvement in the economy through public works, relief spending, and financial reforms. For the first time, deficit spending becomes a conventional tool for responding to economic crises.<sup>9</sup>

**June 22, 1944** — The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, or the GI Bill, is signed into law. The bill commits the government to fund large-scale programs for veterans, including education benefits, housing loans, and job training. The legislation is a major success, reintegrating returning veterans into the peacetime workforce and avoiding a potential post-war recession.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “Federal Surplus or Deficit [-],” October 18, 2024. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FYFSD>.

<sup>8</sup> Stacey Vanek Smith, “The Time the US Paid off All Its Debt (Indicator Favorite),” NPR, December 27, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/12/23/1067429082/the-time-the-us-paid-off-all-its-debt-indicator-favorite..>

<sup>9</sup> The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, “New Deal | Definition, History, Programs, Summary, & Facts,” Encyclopedia Britannica, August 12, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/New-Deal>.

<sup>10</sup> “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (1944),” National Archives, May 3, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/servicemens-readjustment-act>.

**February 26, 1964** — The Revenue Act of 1964, proposed under Kennedy and enacted during the Johnson administration, reduces the top marginal income tax rate from 91 percent to 70 percent and cuts corporate tax rates. While the legislation helped stimulate growth, it also reduced revenues during a period when both Vietnam War spending and Great Society programs demanded greater expenses.<sup>11</sup>

**July 12, 1974** — In response to concerns about executive overreach during the Nixon administration, Congress passes the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act. The act establishes the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the modern congressional budget process, including annual budget resolutions and the reconciliation procedure.<sup>12</sup>

**August 13, 1981** — President Ronald Reagan signs the Economic Recovery Tax Act, the largest tax cut in US history to date. The act sharply reduces individual and corporate tax rates. Rooted in supply-side theory, the law contributes to a surge in deficits throughout the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

**July 18, 1984** — The Deficit Reduction Act of 1984, or DEFRA, is enacted as a bipartisan effort to slow deficit growth. By closing loopholes and limiting certain deductions, the legislation helps Congress raise modest amounts of new revenue. While beneficial, it is not sufficient in reversing the overall deficit trend.<sup>14</sup>

**December 12, 1985** — The Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act introduces binding deficit reduction targets and the mechanism of sequestration, which imposed automatic spending cuts if targets were missed. While the GRH marked a major attempt to enforce budgetary discipline, the law was partially struck down by the Supreme Court in 1986. As a result, it was forced to be revised, limiting its effectiveness.<sup>15</sup>

**November 5, 1990** — The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990 (OBRA 90) is passed after tense negotiations between President George H. W. Bush and congressional Democrats. The law raises the top income tax rate to 31 percent and introduces the pay-as-you-go rule, which requires offsets for new tax cuts or mandatory spending increases.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> David W. Sandell, "Revenue Act of 1964," *Washington Law Review*, vol. 39, 1964, <https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1442&context=wlr>.

<sup>12</sup> "The Impoundment Control Act of 1974," U.S. GAO, n.d., <https://www.gao.gov/products/095406>.

<sup>13</sup> "H.R.4242 - 97th Congress (1981-1982): Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/97th-congress/house-bill/4242>.

<sup>14</sup> "H.R.4170 - 98th Congress (1983-1984): Deficit Reduction Act of 1984," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/house-bill/4170>.

<sup>15</sup> "Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act," Britannica Kids, n.d., <https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/Gramm-Rudman-Hollings-Act/311484>.

<sup>16</sup> "Text - H.R.2264 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/2264/text>.

**August 1992** — By the end of fiscal year 1992, annual interest payments on the national debt reaches USD 199 billion. As a result, debt servicing is one of the largest items in the federal budget, demonstrating the costs of sustained borrowing.<sup>17</sup>

**November 3, 1992** — Bill Clinton defeats President Bush on a platform promising both deficit reduction and renewed investments in education and infrastructure. Upon taking office, Clinton inherits a projected 1993 deficit of over USD 300 billion. In a televised address to Congress, he outlines a USD 500 billion plan that combines higher taxes on upper-income earners, introduces discretionary spending caps, enacts adjustments to entitlement programs, and proposes a British Thermal Unit (BTU) energy tax, which would tax fuels based on their energy content.<sup>18</sup>

## Historical Analysis

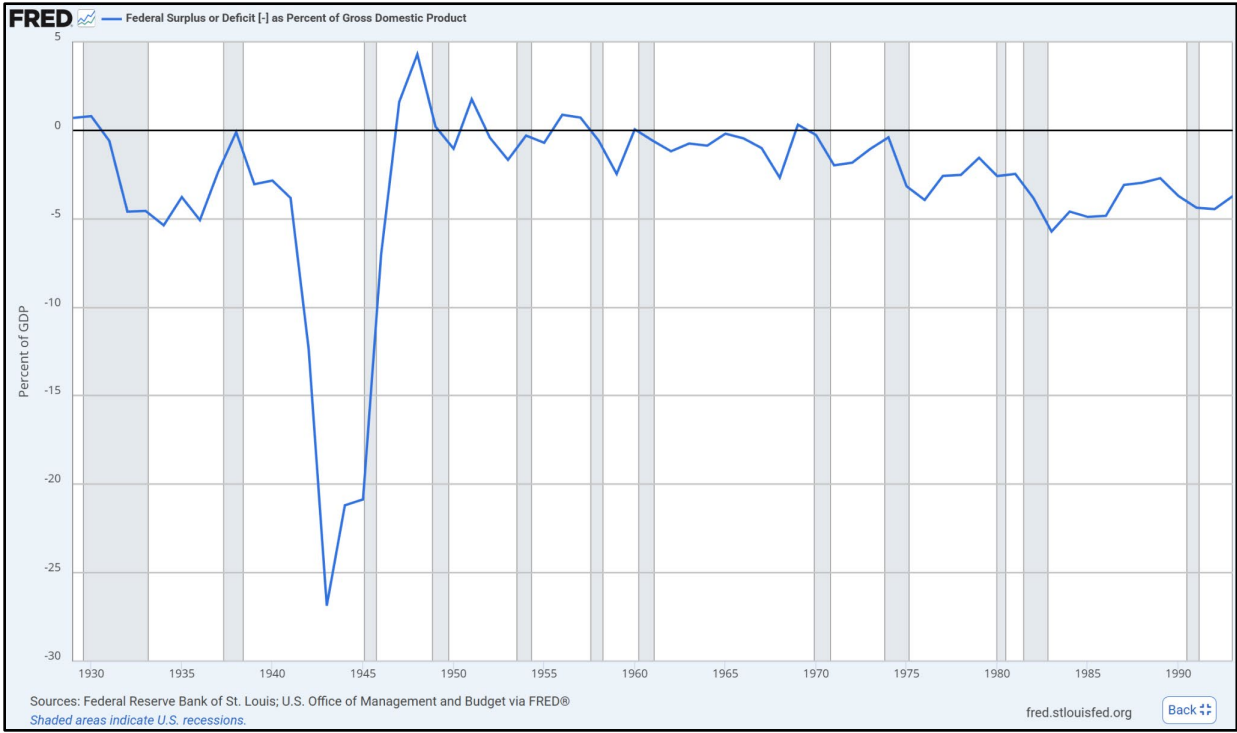


Figure 2: Year-on-Year Federal Surplus/Deficit Trends as Percent of GDP.<sup>19</sup>

### Great Depression

When the Great Depression began in the late 1920s, it fundamentally changed the American perception of the government’s role in the economy. While the 1929 Stock Market Crash is often cited as the main cause, the crisis quickly became more significant as unemployment surged and conventional laissez-faire policies, which opposed

<sup>17</sup> The Financial Management Service [THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE], “Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992,” *Treasury Department* (Department of the Treasury, 1992), <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> “The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth,” n.d.

<sup>19</sup> “Federal Surplus or Deficit [-] as Percent of Gross Domestic Product,” September 25, 2025, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FYFSGDA188S>.

government intervention in the economy, failed to slow the decline.<sup>20</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected in a landslide in 1932, believed that the federal government could not remain passive, and his New Deal made clear that Washington would take responsibility for restoring order.<sup>21</sup> As part of his “deal”, large-scale public works programs were established alongside welfare initiatives such as Social Security. One of the most striking breaks from the past was the willingness of his administration to accept budget deficits.<sup>22</sup> Before the Depression, both parties believed that balanced budgets were essential, even in emergencies. Roosevelt overturned that consensus, as he prioritized relief and recovery even when such measures were funded through unsustainable borrowing. Moreover, economists like John Maynard Keynes argued that aggregate demand, or total spending within an economy, was the primary driver of growth. Soon, Keynesian economic thought, especially the claim that government spending could stimulate demand, gave backing to his approach.<sup>23</sup> For example, government investment in public works programs would put more money into the pockets of workers, which in turn would lead to greater consumption of goods and services. Historians still debate whether the New Deal ended the Depression or whether recovery came only with World War II, but the 1930s firmly anchored an interventionist philosophy in American economic policy.<sup>24</sup> It was clear that government relief efforts in the face of an economic downturn proved exceedingly popular among the American public. Programs ranged from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which supplied young, unemployed men with work involving the conservation and development of nature, to the Social Security Administration (SSA), which provided retirement and disability benefits.<sup>25</sup>

### Wartime and Post-War Budgets

The 1940s forced federal spending to unprecedented heights as the United States entered the Second World War, resulting in a debt-to-GDP ratio of over 100 percent by 1946.<sup>26</sup> At the height of deficit spending in 1943, as visualized in *Figure 2*, the United States undertook a deficit equivalent to 26 percent of total GDP, the highest ever recorded in American history. As a result, the vast majority of the national economy and workforce was directed towards the war effort, and deficit concerns were eclipsed by the urgency of defeating the Axis powers. Consequently, national debt ballooned to extraordinary levels, which raised concerns about a possible fiscal crisis in its aftermath. Following the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan, the mass return of able-bodied veterans prompted severe concerns over an unemployment crisis. However, the successful implementation of the GI Bill reintegrated returning soldiers through various benefits such as education programs and life insurance bonuses to veterans, thereby avoiding economic disaster.<sup>27</sup> Most notable were the educational provisions within the GI Bill: by 1956, 7.8 million veterans had used the bill’s educational provisions, which included post-secondary benefits and job training. As a result, the United States successfully incorporated these men back into the labour force, leading to long-term growth in the post-war years.

---

<sup>20</sup> “Great Depression Facts - FDR Presidential Library & Museum,” n.d., <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/great-depression-facts>.

<sup>21</sup> “What Was the New Deal? | Oklahoma Historical Society,” Oklahoma Historical Society | OHS, n.d., <https://www.okhistory.org/learn/depression3>.

<sup>22</sup> “President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal | Great Depression and World War II, 1929-1945 | U.S. History Primary Source Timeline | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress | Library of Congress,” The Library of Congress, n.d.,

<sup>23</sup> “What Is Keynesian Economics? - Back to Basics - Finance & Development, September 2014,” August 27, 2014, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2014/09/basics.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Allan M. Winkler, Miami University, and U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, “The New Deal: Accomplishments And Failures,” March 31, 2009, <https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/WinklerTestimony33109TheNewDealSenateTestimony.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, “New Deal.”

<sup>26</sup> “Reassessing the Fall in US Public Debt After World War II,” CEPR, October 30, 2023, <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/reassessing-fall-us-public-debt-after-world-war-ii>.

<sup>27</sup> “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (1944),” National Archives, May 3, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/servicemens-readjustment-act>.

In the 1950s, under President Eisenhower, a deliberate return to fiscal restraint took place.<sup>28</sup> His administration avoided many sweeping reforms, kept tax rates high, and sought balanced budgets to preserve stability. While Social Security and earlier programs remained in place, low demand existed for expanding them.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, in 1953, his administration strengthened old age and survivors' insurance laws and brought more than 10 million new Americans into Social Security programs.<sup>30</sup>

## The Great Society and Vietnam War

President Lyndon B. Johnson and his "Great Society" brought another wave of welfare initiatives, which included programs such as Medicare and Medicaid, and broadened the federal role in tackling inequality.<sup>31</sup> For instance, his Great Society's "War on Poverty" led to the establishment of programs such as the Food Stamp Act of 1964, which assisted low-income individuals with the purchasing of food. However, the heavy spending of his domestic agenda placed a heavy strain on the budget.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Johnson increased American troop presence for the Vietnam War, leading to one of the highest post-war defence spending rates at nearly 9.5 percent of total GDP.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the decade, deficits surpassed USD 25 billion per year, accounting for nearly 3 percent of annual GDP, and Congress was forced to implement the Revenue and Expenditure Control Act of 1968.<sup>34</sup> The act levied a temporary 10 percent income tax surcharge on individuals and corporations due to out-of-control spending. These examples of deficit spending demonstrated the difficulty of financing both ambitious social programs and expensive conflicts simultaneously, as well as the need to raise revenue during periods of high spending.

## Stagflation

The 1970s presented new challenges as the economy stalled even as inflation climbed. Significantly, previous Keynesian theory did not account for such a combination, as it suggested that the two were inversely related. For example, rather than jump-starting the economy, conventional government stimulus spending only fueled inflation while having little effect on unemployment.<sup>35</sup> While details are still hotly debated, it is believed that government spending can cause inflation as aggregate demand is driven up, while supply is kept stagnant. Essentially, government expenditures can put more money in the hands of consumers, but if supply is kept constant and unable to keep up, then prices will inevitably rise. Notably, senators should keep this possibility in mind as government spending that targets supply, such as infrastructure or housing development programs, may lower the risks of fueling inflation. Ultimately, due to stagnating growth and high inflation, confidence in the government's ability to manage the economic landscape waned. Later, the dismantling of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 severed the dollar's tie to gold, which only increased instability in global markets.<sup>36</sup> To make

---

<sup>28</sup> "The President's News Conference | the American Presidency Project," n.d., <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-491>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Social Security History," Social Security, n.d., <https://www.ssa.gov/history/ikestmts.html>.

<sup>31</sup> "Lyndon B. Johnson," whitehouse.gov, March 15, 2015, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/1600/presidents/lyndonbjohnson>.

<sup>32</sup> New York Times, "U.S. Spent \$141-Billion in Vietnam in 14 Years," The New York Times, May 1, 1975, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/05/01/archives/us-spent-141billion-in-vietnam-in-14-years.html>.

<sup>33</sup> "U.S. Military Spending/Defense Budget," Historical Chart & Data, n.d., <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/usa/united-states/military-spending-defense-budget>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Bruce Bartlett, "Inflation: The Downfall of Keynesian Economics," SSRN Electronic Journal, January 1, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2839590>.

<sup>36</sup> "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian," n.d., <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/nixon-shock>.

matters worse, oil embargoes in 1973 and 1979 triggered supply shocks that drove up energy prices, thereby further feeding inflation.

As entitlement spending within the national budget was pegged to inflation, its automatic growth only worsened the deficit crisis as revenues fell in real terms. Soon, Congress passed the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which restricted the President's ability to impound, or withhold, obligated spending.<sup>37</sup> By the end of the decade, years of this "stagflation" resulted in widespread skepticism in conventional thinking and prompted the ideological shift of the 1980s.

### **Reagan's Supply-side Economics**

Following Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, his administration promoted supply-side economics. "Reagonomics", as it was called, argued that tax cuts, especially for corporations and higher-income earners, encouraged investment, innovation, and job creation that would ultimately benefit the entire economy over time.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Reagan's foreign policy committed him to increasing US military strength during one of the most tense periods of the Cold War. Specifically, his administration increased defence spending from USD 267.1 billion in 1980 to USD 393.1 billion in 1988. Notably, by the end of his presidency, the Department of Defence constituted 27% of all public expenditures as well as nearly 6 percent of the GDP.<sup>39</sup> Despite a promise to reduce government overreach and spending, the combination of tax reductions and surging defence budgets caused deficits to swell instead.<sup>40</sup> By the late 1980s, the national debt had more than tripled compared to 1980 levels, and annual deficits consistently exceeded USD 200 billion.<sup>41</sup> Congressional legislators attempted to impose discipline through the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act of 1985, which set deficit targets and automatic cuts, but enforcement proved difficult, mostly due to a lack of willingness to maintain balanced budgets in the long term.<sup>42</sup>

President George H. W. Bush inherited both the rising deficits of the 1980s as well as the start of a new foreign conflict in the Gulf War. During his 1988 campaign, he famously pledged that no new taxes would be levied during his presidency.<sup>43</sup> Yet by 1990, confronted with unsustainable deficits, Bush signed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, or OBRA 90. The legislation raised income taxes on higher earners, imposed new excise taxes, and introduced the Budget Enforcement Act (BEA). The latter established general discretionary spending caps on all appropriation bills, which forced Congress to limit its annual appropriations. Moreover, if these caps were breached, the act would force a presidential order to cut spending across the board. Lastly, the BEA also established the "pay-as-you-go", or PAYGO, rule.<sup>44</sup> The PAYGO rule required any new expenditures by Congress to be offset by spending cuts or revenue hikes elsewhere. Even so, deficits remained elevated through the early 1990s. In 1991, sluggish economic recovery limited revenue growth, entitlement programs continued to expand

---

<sup>37</sup> "The Impoundment Control Act of 1974," U.S. GAO, n.d., <https://www.gao.gov/products/095406>.

<sup>38</sup> "Reagonomics - Econlib," Econlib, June 10, 2021, <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Reagonomics.html>.

<sup>39</sup> The White House, "Historical Tables - OMB - the White House," June 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-resources/budget/historical-tables/>.

<sup>40</sup> "Federal Surplus or Deficit [-]," October 18, 2024, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FYFSD>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ed O'Keefe, "Warren Rudman's Legacy Laid Groundwork for 'Fiscal Cliff' Negotiations," The Washington Post, December 1, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/wp/2012/11/20/warren-rudmans-legacy-laid-groundwork-for-fiscal-cliffnegotiations/>.

<sup>43</sup> "The Lesson From George H.W. Bush's Tax Reversal," CEPR, December 22, 2018, <https://cepr.org/voxeu/blogs-and-reviews/lesson-george-hw-bushs-tax-reversal>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

automatically, and public resistance to further tax increases or deep spending cuts limited the options available to lawmakers.<sup>45</sup>

## Past Congressional Action

### Revenue Act of 1964

The Revenue Act of 1964 represented the first major tax reform of the postwar period and was central to the fiscal policy of the 1960s.<sup>46</sup> Although enacted under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the proposal originated in the Kennedy administration as part of a strategy to stimulate growth during a period of sluggish economic activity. The legislation cut the top marginal income tax rate from 91 percent to 70 percent, while also lowering corporate taxes. Moreover, the act represented an early embodiment of the idea that if individuals and businesses had more after-tax income, they would spend and invest more, spurring production and employment.<sup>47</sup> In the short term, unemployment fell, industrial output grew, and confidence in the economy rose. Yet these gains coincided with a sharp increase in federal spending.<sup>48</sup> In the coming years, Johnson's Great Society programs expanded commitments in health, education, and poverty relief, with the escalation of US involvement in Vietnam creating new and costly defence obligations.<sup>49</sup> With revenues diminished by lower tax rates, it became increasingly difficult for the government to balance its commitments, and deficits began to rise rapidly. For instance, by the end of Johnson's presidency in 1969, deficits had surpassed USD 25 billion annually.<sup>50</sup>

### Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974

During his administration, President Nixon regularly exercised the power of impoundment, which restricted the spending of congressionally appropriated funds. However, lawmakers viewed such actions as presidential overreach, as the president often withheld funds from programs he opposed.<sup>51</sup> As a result, Congress responded with the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, which reshaped the budget process.<sup>52</sup> The legislation established the Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan agency that provided independent cost estimates and required Congress as a whole to pass an annual budget resolution.<sup>53</sup> Prior to the act, each congressional committee handled spending separately, leading to disorganized and often conflicting budgetary resolutions. Moreover, before, the president also had significant authority in the "impoundment", or withholding, of congressionally mandated spending. In the end, while the act had little direct effect on reducing deficits, it gave lawmakers stronger tools to plan and oversee fiscal policy.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Mortimer M. Caplin, "REFLECTIONS ON THE REVENUE ACT OF 1964" (Penn Carey Law: Legal Scholarship Repository, 1964), [https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6503&context=penn\\_law\\_review](https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6503&context=penn_law_review).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> New York Times, "U.S. Spent \$141-Billion in Vietnam in 14 Years," The New York Times, May 1, 1975, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/05/01/archives/us-spent-141billion-in-vietnam-in-14-years.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> The White House, "Historical Tables – OMB – the White House."

<sup>51</sup> "The Impoundment Control Act of 1974," U.S. GAO, n.d., <https://www.gao.gov/products/095406>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## **Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981**

Nearly two decades later, tax policy once again became the centrepiece of the federal government's economic strategy. Ronald Reagan's Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 marked one of the most sweeping tax reductions in US history. Backed strongly by Republicans and passing with a degree of bipartisan support, the act cut personal income tax rates across the board, lowering the top bracket from 70 percent to 50 percent,<sup>54</sup> while also granting generous benefits to corporations and investors.<sup>55</sup> The bill was based on the belief that tax relief would unleash investment, innovation, and entrepreneurship, thereby expanding the economy and even offsetting lost revenues. However, these cuts coincided with an increase in military spending during the 1980s, and the deficits skyrocketed to over USD 200 billion annually.<sup>56</sup> Although the economy recovered strongly from the recession at the start of the decade, skepticism remained regarding whether or not the growth generated by tax cuts could cover the resulting budget deficit.<sup>57</sup> Ultimately, senators should consider the budgetary implications of further tax cuts, especially in an environment of unsustainable spending.

## **Deficit Reduction Act of 1984**

Following the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, Congress shifted to prioritize deficit reduction policies, as exemplified by the Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 (DEFRA).<sup>58</sup> Rather than reversing earlier rate cuts, DEFRA targeted revenue losses indirectly by tightening tax loopholes, limiting deductions, and reducing exceptions that narrowed the tax base.<sup>59</sup> The act also introduced limited spending restraints. While DEFRA was unable to effectively reduce the deficit crisis in the long term, it did represent an increased willingness by legislators to sacrifice short-term benefits for stricter budgetary discipline.<sup>60</sup>

## **Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Acts of 1985 and 1987**

The following year saw the passing of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act, commonly called the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Acts after its primary sponsors. This was the first attempt to impose hard numerical limits on deficits. It set annual deficit targets and introduced the novel enforcement mechanism of sequestration, or automatic, across-the-board spending cuts if Congress failed to meet the targets.<sup>61</sup> The law represented a dramatic escalation in fiscal discipline, but its actual implementation ran into obstacles. In 1986, the Supreme Court's *Bowsher v. Synar* decision invalidated part of the enforcement mechanism as unconstitutional and a case of congressional overreach. Among other reasons, it was struck down due to its ability to fire the Comptroller General, the director of the Government Accountability Office, for vague reasons such as

---

<sup>54</sup> "H.R.4242 - 97th Congress (1981-1982): Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/97th-congress/house-bill/4242>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> James R. Anderson, "Bankrupting America: The Impact Of President Reagan's Military Budget," *International Journal of Health Services* 11, no. 4 (1981): 623–29, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45130983>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> "H.R.4170 - 98th Congress (1983-1984): Deficit Reduction Act of 1984," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/house-bill/4170>.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> "H.J.Res.372 - 99th Congress (1985-1986): Balanced Budget And Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-joint-resolution/372>.

“inefficient” and “neglect of duty.”<sup>62</sup> Even with revisions, GRH was largely ineffective at containing deficits.<sup>63, 64</sup> Entitlement programs continued to grow, and the blunt sequestration tool proved politically unpopular and legally challenging. Nevertheless, GRH was important as it introduced the idea of legal enforcement limits and regulations as a potential tool that modern-day lawmakers can use in the 103rd Congress.<sup>65</sup>

## Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990

By 1990, after years of rising debts and mounting interest payments, fiscal pressures once again compelled both parties to address the deficit crisis. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, or OBRA 90, represents the most consequential budget reform legislation to date.<sup>66</sup> Enacted under President George H. W. Bush, it combined revenue increases with new enforcement mechanisms. The law raised the top income tax rate from 28 percent to 31 percent, increased excise taxes, and closed loopholes, directly boosting revenues.<sup>67</sup> More importantly, it introduced the PAYGO rule, which required that any new tax cuts or spending programs be offset by savings elsewhere.<sup>68</sup> OBRA 90 also imposed discretionary spending caps, preventing Congress from expanding programs without restraint.<sup>69</sup> These spending caps were outlined in the Budget Enforcement Act, which mandated across-the-board discretionary cuts if these limits were broken. These provisions helped slow the growth of deficits, with the federal deficit falling to less than 2.8 percent of GDP by 1989. However, Bush’s willingness to break his famous “no new taxes” campaign pledge alienated conservatives and became a major liability in the 1992 election.<sup>70</sup> Still, from a policy perspective, OBRA 90 was a turning point, as it institutionalized PAYGO and demonstrated bipartisan recognition that long-term budgetary discipline required both spending restraint and revenue increases.

## Current Situation

### Current Economic State

The 103rd United States Congress convened after multiple decades of extreme deficit spending. The newly inaugurated president, Bill Clinton, entered office with the highest ever recorded deficit at around USD 300 billion.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, he took office while the US was still recovering from the 1990-91 recession: real GDP growth in 1993 was about 2.8 percent and the civilian unemployment rate was roughly 7 percent.<sup>72</sup> Crucially, the 1992 fiscal year had closed with a shortfall of about USD 290 billion.<sup>73</sup> The national debt had already grown past USD 4 trillion, nearly quadrupling since 1980 and alarming financial markets, credit-rating agencies, and foreign

---

<sup>62</sup> “Bowsher v. Synar, 478 U.S. 714 (1986),” Justia Law, n.d., <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/478/714/>.

<sup>63</sup> Rudolph G. Penner, “Repairing the Congressional Budget Process,” May 2002

<sup>64</sup> “Text - H.R.5835 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/house-bill/5835/text>.

<sup>65</sup> Harry S. Havens, “Gramm-Rudman-Hollings: Origins and Implementation,” Public Budgeting & Finance 6, no. 3 (September 1, 1986): 4–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-5850.00716>.

<sup>66</sup> “Text - H.R.5835 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/house-bill/5835/text>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> “The Lesson From George H.W. Bush’s Tax Reversal!”

<sup>71</sup> John F. Harris, *The Survivor: Bill Clinton in the White House*, Digital (Random House, 2005).

<sup>72</sup> United States. President and Council of Economic Advisers (U.S.), “1993,” January 1, 1993, <https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/title/economic-report-president-45/1993-8092?page=353>.

<sup>73</sup> The White House, “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House.”

investors.<sup>74</sup> Given this, economists warned that these imbalances could undermine American credit, push interest rates higher, and make further borrowing more costly if left unchecked.<sup>75</sup> In 1992, prominent credit rating agencies and politicians alike signalled concern over the federal government’s short and long-term credit outlook. Specifically, persistent borrowing can erode investor confidence and drive up the yield required on Treasury bonds. These higher yields would, in turn, increase federal interest payments and weigh further on the federal budget. The debt-to-GDP ratio, though not yet at crisis levels, had broken 60 percent, serving as a visible reminder that the current fiscal path was unsustainable.<sup>76</sup>

### Structure of Federal Spending

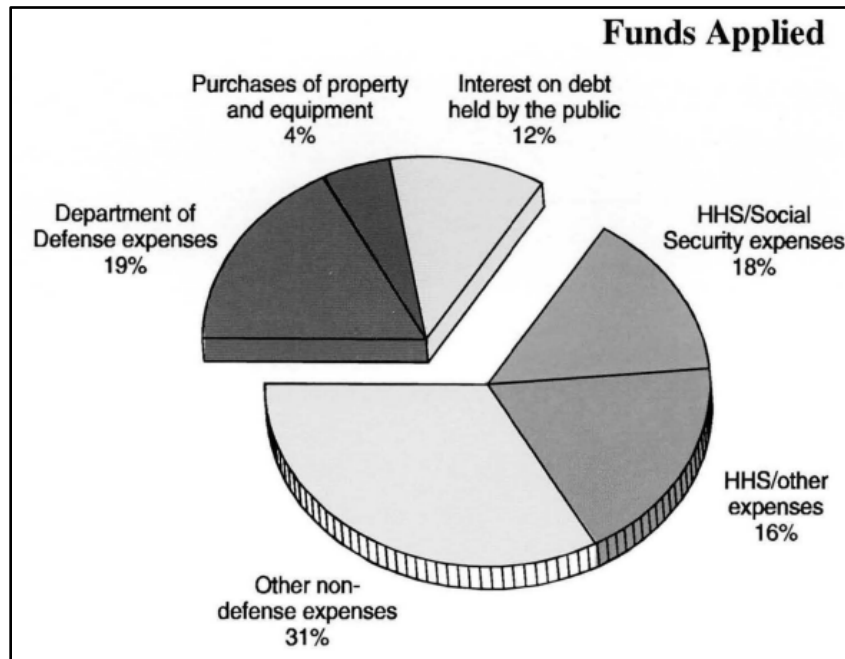


Figure 3: Composition of Federal Outlays in Fiscal Year 1992.<sup>77</sup>

At the core of the federal deficit debate is how the federal budget would be structured. Roughly 60 to 65 percent of all spending in 1992 falls into the category of mandatory spending, or expenditures automatically authorized by existing laws.<sup>78</sup> The largest single component is Social Security, which by the early 1990s accounts for roughly 22 percent of the federal budget.<sup>79</sup> While processes vastly differ from program to program, Social Security is automatically financed via a special payroll tax paid by both employees and employers, totalling 5.6 percent of taxable income.<sup>80</sup> The program provides welfare benefits, which include retirement income to seniors and disability support to workers. The next largest component of mandatory spending is healthcare programs. Medicare and Medicaid represent around 18 percent of spending,<sup>81</sup> respectively ensuring that the elderly and low-

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> “Ratings.Moodys.com/ratings-news/443154,” n.d., <https://ratings.moodys.com/ratings-news/443154>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> The Financial Management Service [THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE], “Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992,” *Treasury Department* (Department of the Treasury, 1992), <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> The White House, “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House.”

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> “Social Security Tax Rates,” Social Security, n.d., <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/progdata/oasdiRates.html>.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

income individuals receive medical coverage. Additional mandatory programs include veterans' pensions, federal retirement benefits, unemployment insurance, and food assistance.<sup>82</sup>

While mandatory spending makes up the largest component of federal expenditures, it is also one of the most sensitive. For example, nearly 37 million Americans relied on Medicare in 1992, while Medicaid benefits another 38.8 million Americans, with nearly 20 million being children and the elderly.<sup>83, 84</sup> Any cuts to mandatory spending will likely entail budget cuts, decreases in quality, as well as the loss of eligibility for certain people. In particular, as these programs operate on eligibility rules rather than annual congressional appropriations, changing them requires new legislation.<sup>85</sup> While specific eligibility rules differ greatly from program to program, they typically rely on factors such as age for Medicare, income for Medicaid, or disability and death for Social Security. Restructuring such programs to curb their costs, while potentially detrimental to public welfare in general, is especially unacceptable to more progressive senators. Ultimately, passing such reforms will require a difficult and politically sensitive process, which often sparks partisan conflict and makes large-scale adjustments difficult.

The next category, discretionary spending, makes up around 30 percent of the budget.<sup>86</sup> Unlike mandatory programs, discretionary programs are debated and approved annually by Congress through the appropriations process.<sup>87</sup> This process involves the Appropriations Committee of the House and Senate, which, in turn, is composed of a number of smaller subcommittees for different expenditure types. Each committee is tasked with the development and drafting of a single unified appropriation bill for each fiscal year.<sup>88</sup> Importantly, unlike mandatory spending, discretionary outlays are determined annually, often with fierce debate from both sides. Discretionary spending covers a wide range of federal activities, but defence expenditures represent the largest component of this category. Nearly half of all current discretionary spending went to the Pentagon, which paid for everything from soldiers' salaries to weapons procurement.<sup>89</sup> The remaining portion, known as non-defence discretionary spending, supported domestic priorities such as education, transportation, housing, environmental protection, and public health.<sup>90</sup> These areas, although comparatively less significant, are often the first targets for cuts during deficit-reduction debates, mainly due to the relative ease of cutting these programs via the appropriations process compared to mandatory outlays. As a result, domestic programs frequently experience disproportionate pressure whenever Congress prioritizes fiscal restraint.<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Franklin J. Eppig and George S. Chulis, "Trends in Medicare Supplementary Insurance: 1992-96," *Health Care Financing Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 201-6, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4194494/>.

<sup>84</sup> MEDICAID ENROLLMENT AND SPENDING TRENDS (1998), <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/medicaid-enrollment-and-spending-trends.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> "What Is Mandatory and Discretionary Spending?," Tax Policy Center, n.d., <https://taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-mandatory-and-discretionary-spending>.

<sup>86</sup> The Financial Management Service [THE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SERVICE], "Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992," *Treasury Department* (Department of the Treasury, 1992), <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> "Fiscal Data Explains Federal Spending," n.d., <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/federal-spending/>.

<sup>88</sup> "The Appropriations Process: A Brief Overview," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47106>.

<sup>89</sup> The White House, "Historical Tables - OMB - the White House."

<sup>90</sup> "Fiscal Data Explains Federal Spending."

<sup>91</sup> Svallarreal, "76 Options for Reducing the Deficit," Peterson Foundation, July 16, 2025, <https://www.pgpf.org/article/76-options-for-reducing-the-deficit/>.

Finally, a growing share of federal outlays went towards interest payments on borrowed debt. By 1993, interest payments consumed more than 14 percent of total spending.<sup>92</sup> Unlike other categories, these payments funded no services or investments; they were required to pay back their contractually obligated interest payments.<sup>93</sup> Rising debt meant interest payments automatically grew each year, even when no additional spending occurred. Economists and policymakers worry that this so-called “dead weight” spending will increasingly squeeze out the government’s capacity to invest in new initiatives or respond flexibly to crises.<sup>94</sup> Already, interest payments on federally held debt had grown from 3 percent of GDP in 1977 to 5 percent in 1991.<sup>95</sup>

### Structure of Federal Revenues

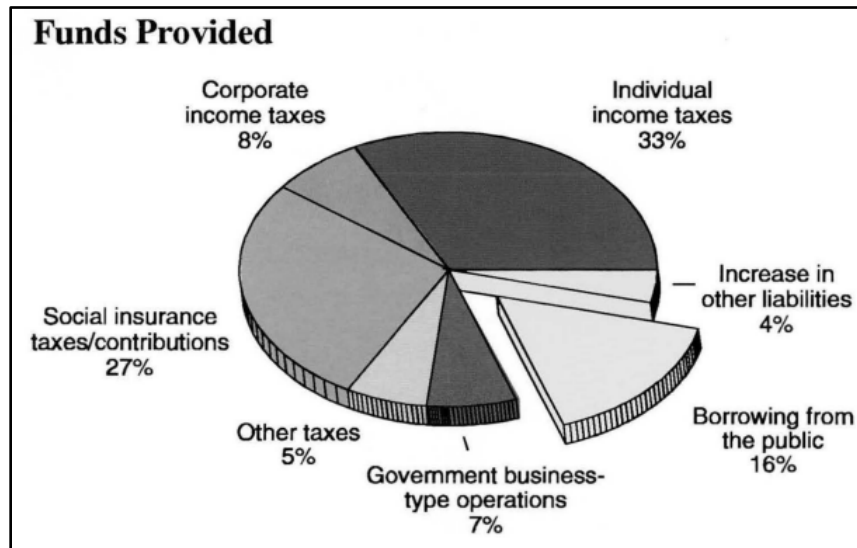


Figure 4: Composition of Federal Revenues in Fiscal Year 1992.<sup>96</sup>

On the revenue side, the federal government relies primarily on taxes, though the specific composition of revenue has shifted considerably over the preceding decades. The largest single source is the individual income tax, accounting for roughly one-third of all federal income.<sup>97</sup> Designed to be progressive, it levies higher rates on higher earners, although the exact brackets have undergone significant change over the years. Inflows are particularly relevant for the current Congressional session due to debates over the role of tools such as taxation in deficit reduction. For example, during the 1992 election, Bill Clinton campaigned on a promise of tax cuts for the middle class by shifting the burden onto the wealthy and upper classes. However, Republicans counter by arguing that excessive taxation will inevitably discourage investment, thereby slowing economic growth.

The second largest source—about 27 percent of revenues—comes from payroll taxes, which fund Social Security and Medicare.<sup>98</sup> These are automatically deducted from workers’ paychecks and matched by employers. While payroll taxes may seem similar to income taxes, there are several key distinctions. Firstly, payroll taxes are directed solely to fund social insurance programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment insurance.

<sup>92</sup> The White House, “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House.”

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> “United States - Credit Rating,” n.d., <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/rating>.

<sup>95</sup> “FRED Economic Data,” n.d., <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/graph/?g=iEiV>.

<sup>96</sup> Financial Management Service, “Consolidated Financial Statements.”

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Moreover, this form of taxation is only applicable to wages and salaries, as opposed to all sources of income. Lastly, taxation is split between employers and employees with a flat rate for all income brackets. While effective at generating revenue, payroll taxes are capped at a certain income threshold, which means high earners contribute a smaller share of their income proportionally.<sup>99</sup>

Corporate income taxes, once a far larger source of government funding, had declined to roughly 10 percent of total revenue by the early 1990s.<sup>100</sup> Multiple rounds of tax cuts, along with the proliferation of deductions, credits, and loopholes, eroded their importance. For instance, in the 1950s, the top statutory corporate tax rate was 52 percent, an extremely high number by today's metrics.<sup>101</sup> However, by the 1980s, globalization led to loopholes that allowed corporations to avoid these high tax brackets, such as by headquartering in a foreign nation with lower rates. In addition to these tax havens, other loopholes prompted the Reagan administration to sign the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which, among other tax cuts, reduced corporate taxes with the hopes of earning back the lost revenue by closing loopholes.<sup>102</sup> In practice, however, these loopholes reemerged, and federal revenue has begun to shift to non-corporate forms.

Most of the remaining federal revenue comes from a combination of excise taxes on goods such as gasoline, alcohol, and tobacco, customs duties on imported goods, and estate taxes on inherited wealth.<sup>103</sup> While these categories provide important supplemental income, they are relatively less significant. However, for the 103rd Congress, excise taxes are resurfacing as part of deficit reduction efforts. Specifically, the British Thermal Unit, or BTU, tax has recently been proposed by President Clinton as part of his fiscal agenda. This tax would levy charges on fuel sources based on their heat content. Unfortunately, lobbying by corporations has made the BTU and other excise taxes unpopular among the general public. As a result, while excise taxes may provide important sources of revenue, senators should also be aware of the potential popular backlash involved with levying increased taxes.

### **Current Situation & President Clinton's Proposals**

As of the early 1990s, the US federal budget is under severe strain, with deficits exceeding USD 290 billion in FY1992 and debt interest consuming 14 percent of annual expenditures.<sup>104</sup> Roughly two-thirds of the federal budget is tied to mandatory programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The remaining third, discretionary spending, covers defence, education, and research. Ultimately, it is impossible to outline which specific categories are of most concern as priorities differ senator by senator.<sup>105</sup> Those who value welfare as a means to support the less fortunate will be less willing to cut mandatory programs, while senators who worry about the long-term viability of deficit spending will be inclined to cut programs when possible.

---

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> "Corporate Tax Rates and Economic Growth Since 1947," Economic Policy Institute, n.d., <https://www.epi.org/publication/ib364-corporate-tax-rates-and-economic-growth/>.

<sup>102</sup> "H.R.3838 - 99th Congress (1985-1986): Tax Reform Act of 1986," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/3838>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> "'THE FISCAL LEGACY OF THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION' TREASURY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC POLICY DAVID W. WILCOX REMARKS TO THE SOCIETY OF GOVERNMENT ECONOMISTS WASHINGTON, DC," U.S. Department of The Treasury, February 8, 2025, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/l51088>.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

President Bill Clinton's administration aims to restore budgetary balance through a mix of progressive tax increases, targeted spending cuts, and domestic investment. For example, his administration also aims to reduce defence spending by roughly USD 100 billion over five years, reallocating savings toward deficit reduction,<sup>106</sup> while raising the top individual income-tax rate from 31 percent to 39.6 percent.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, he aims to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a program that grants low-income families tax breaks, to relieve financially unstable workers while boosting taxes on Social Security benefits for upper-income retirees. In return, Clinton has pledged new "investment" in education, healthcare reform, environmental protection, and infrastructure modernization, alongside initiatives such as the National Service Program (AmeriCorps), an agency that provides stipends for individuals engaged in community service, as well as small-business tax incentives in his proposed "stimulus" for the economy.<sup>108</sup> These initiatives have been heavily criticized by Republicans for their "tax and spend" approach, as they add new avenues of spending instead of contributing to deficit reductions, the budgetary impact of which is only covered by Clinton's tax increases.

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Raising Federal Revenue via Taxes

One of the most immediate tools for deficit reduction is raising revenue through selective tax increases. President Clinton's 1993 budget proposal included several such measures, such as increasing the income tax on individuals earning over USD 140,000 annually, raising the corporate income tax rate on the largest businesses, and introducing a broad-based energy tax that would tax fuels according to their energy content.<sup>109</sup> Supporters of these proposals argue that they are equitable as they weigh primarily on those with the greatest ability to pay, while sparing most middle and lower-income families. They contend that the resulting revenues could reduce the deficit without requiring deep cuts to programs that are widely relied upon.<sup>110</sup> Economists also point out that the US tax burden is lower than that of most other industrialized countries, thereby potentially leaving room for future increases. For example, while the top marginal income tax rate for the US hovered at 31 percent, European equivalents frequently surpassed 50 percent.<sup>111</sup> Critics, however, remain concerned about timing. With the economy only beginning to recover from the early 1990s recession, opponents argue that higher taxes could discourage investment, slow job creation, or place additional burdens on consumers, especially if energy prices rise.<sup>112</sup> Political resistance is strong as well, particularly among senators from energy-producing or rural states whose constituents might be disproportionately affected by an energy tax.<sup>113</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Miller, M., Hall, R., & Myers, B. (1993). The administration's defense budget for 1994. <https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/103rd-congress-1993-1994/reports/93doc05b.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> Scott Greenberg, "Modeling the Economic Effects of Past Tax Bills," Tax Foundation, October 3, 2023, <https://taxfoundation.org/research/all/federal/modeling-economic-effects-past-tax-bills/>.

<sup>108</sup> "The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth," accessed November 30, 2025, <https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-03.html>.

<sup>109</sup> Michael J. Graetz and Columbia Law School, "Tax Policy at the Beginning of the Clinton Administration," YALE J. ON REG. 10 (1993): 561, [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4714&context=faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4714&context=faculty_scholarship).

<sup>110</sup> "The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth."

<sup>111</sup> <http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/files/capital21c/en/pdf/supp/TS14.1.pdf>

<sup>112</sup> William J. Clinton, "Advise the President: WILLIAM J. CLINTON" (National Archives, July 16, 1993), <https://www.clintonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/documents/advise-president-clinton-1993-economy.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

## Reducing Tax Breaks

Another approach to raising revenue without formally increasing tax rates is through eliminating tax breaks or loopholes.<sup>114</sup> Loopholes are provisions that reduce taxable income, often through deductions, credits, or exemptions.<sup>115</sup> While many are defended as serving useful policy goals, such as encouraging homeownership or retirement savings, others are seen as obsolete and unfair. Closing them would broaden the tax base, ensuring that more income and profits are subject to taxation.<sup>116</sup> Possible targets include limiting itemized deductions for high earners, reducing industry-specific tax breaks, and tightening rules on offshore income and corporate shelters. This strategy has the advantage of appearing less intrusive than raising rates, and it has potential for bipartisan appeal.<sup>117</sup> However, experts question whether or not simply closing loopholes is sufficient to make meaningful progress. Moreover, many exceptions are politically costly to eliminate, as powerful lobbyists and interest groups can act as significant obstacles.<sup>118</sup> For instance, business interest groups like the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) strongly opposed Reagan's Deficit Reduction Act (DEFRA) of 1984, as well as other legislation aimed at closing tax exceptions and raising the corporate tax rate.

## Restraining Discretionary Spending

Discretionary spending makes up about 30 percent of the federal budget and is set annually through the appropriations process.<sup>119</sup> As previously mentioned, this category covers a wide range of activities, including defence, education, transportation, public health, housing, and research.<sup>120</sup> Roughly half of all discretionary spending goes to the military. However, in the aftermath of the Cold War, some lawmakers argue that defence spending could be reduced to reflect the new international environment, an idea often labelled as the "peace dividend."<sup>121</sup> Despite this argument, further divisions arise when considering where the surplus money would be put towards. Progressive-minded senators support reappropriating defence funds towards social, environmental, or economic programs, while fiscal hawks stress the importance of using it to offset the current deficit spending. In contrast, others call for limiting the growth of non-defence programs by reducing federal grants, decreasing salaries of federal workers, or trimming departmental budgets. Notably, federal grants fund everything from highway construction to education assistance. Reducing them would mean that states and municipalities receive less funding, forcing local governments to either raise their own taxes or cut services. These measures can generate savings, but just like mandatory programs, any budget cuts can cause issues for citizens via the loss of certain services, as well as taxation hikes.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, discretionary cuts also tend to be politically sensitive, since the services they fund, such as schools, transit, and local infrastructure, are directly impactful to voters.<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> Seito Hayasaki, "The Unlikely Heroes of Progressive Taxation: CEOs' Support for Bill Clinton's Tax Increase Package in 1993," *Journal of Policy History* 35, no. 2 (March 1, 2023): 219–53, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s089803062200032x>.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Susannah Camic Tahk, *Making Impossible Tax Reform Possible*, 81 *Fordham L. Rev.* 2683 (2013). Available at: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol81/iss5/16>.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> "Fiscal Data Explains Federal Spending," n.d., <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/federal-spending/>.

<sup>120</sup> Svillarreal, "76 Options for Reducing the Deficit."

<sup>121</sup> "Finance and Development," *Finance and Development | F&D*, December 1, 2002, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2002/12/gupta.htm>.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

## Reforming Entitlement Programs

Entitlement programs, which include Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, are the most expensive and fastest-growing part of the federal budget, accounting for over 60 percent of spending in the early 1990s.<sup>124</sup> Unlike discretionary spending, these programs operate automatically under existing legislation, with benefits determined by eligibility rules.<sup>125, 126</sup> As the population ages and healthcare costs rise, their growth in scope and expenses is expected to accelerate. As a result, significant reductions in the deficit are impossible without addressing entitlements. Proposals include gradually raising the retirement age, adjusting benefit formulas so wealthier recipients receive less, requiring higher-income seniors to pay more for Medicare, or tightening Medicaid eligibility.<sup>127</sup> An example of this includes calls to raise the taxable portion of Social Security benefits from 50 percent to 85 percent, thereby recouping more revenue for the federal government. Ultimately, while direct cuts to entitlement spending may be an option, more moderate choices, such as reducing eligibility and thus reducing the costs of these programs, are also promising possibilities. Advocates believe that reforms are necessary to preserve these programs for future generations and to slow cost growth.<sup>128</sup> Opponents argue that benefit reductions risk pushing vulnerable groups into poverty or reducing access to medical care, and they emphasize the political dangers of altering programs that millions of Americans depend on.

## Instituting Budget Enforcement

Some lawmakers prefer to avoid incremental debates over specific taxes or programs and instead favour strict, enforceable rules that apply across the budget. Tools such as discretionary spending caps and the “pay-as-you-go” rule, first enacted in the past decade, are examples of this approach.<sup>129</sup> Spending caps limit how much budget can be allocated to different discretionary categories, while PAYGO requires that new tax cuts or spending increases be offset by equivalent savings.<sup>130</sup> These mechanisms enjoyed some initial success in restraining discretionary spending and are now being considered for extension or strengthening.<sup>131</sup> As a result, senators may propose using the previously mentioned enforcement tools in relevant legislation as a harsh but potentially effective tool.

## Balanced Budget Amendments

In addition to budget enforcement, some others go further, advocating for a constitutional Balanced Budget Amendment that would legally require the federal government to avoid deficits.<sup>132</sup> Such an amendment would effectively prohibit Congress from authorizing expenditures greater than revenues in any fiscal year, forcing policymakers to either cut spending, raise taxes, or both in order to maintain balance. Supporters, primarily fiscal conservatives and many Republicans during the 1980s and in the committee’s present day, argue that this measure would impose long-term balance on federal budgeting and prevent the accumulation of national debt. They view

---

<sup>124</sup> The White House, “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> “Trends in Mandatory Spending,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R44641>.

<sup>127</sup> American Enterprise Institute - AEI, “The Path to Entitlement Reform | AEI,” July 1, 2025, <https://www.aei.org/articles/the-path-to-entitlement-reform/>.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> “What Is PAYGO?,” Tax Policy Center, n.d., <https://taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-paygo>.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> United States Congress, “BUDGET ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1990,” P.L. 101–508, 1990, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/HMAN-112/pdf/HMAN-112-pg1099.pdf>.

<sup>132</sup> Briteweb, “Budget Basics: Balanced Budget Amendment — Pros and Cons,” Peterson Foundation, July 15, 2025, <https://www.pgpf.org/article/balanced-budget-amendment-pros-and-cons/>.

it as a safeguard against what they saw as chronic overspending by Congress and the executive branch, particularly following the large deficits of the Reagan and Bush administrations. While these rules appear straightforward, they have practical limitations.<sup>133</sup> Congress has often found ways to suspend caps, adjust baselines, or redefine terms to ease compliance, as seen under the Gramm-Rudman Hollings Act and later budget enforcement acts.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, opponents, including most Democrats and some moderate Republicans, warn that strict enforcement can also reduce flexibility, limiting the government's ability to respond to emergencies or recessions when stimulus spending is required.<sup>135</sup>

### **Deficit Reduction by Investing in Economic Growth**

Another avenue, more popular among progressive Democrats, emphasizes economic growth as the best path to deficit reduction. They argue that expanding the economy will naturally reduce the deficit by raising revenues without the need for steep cuts or tax increases.<sup>136</sup> Advocates call for general investments in education, infrastructure, job training, and research—all areas that can enhance productivity and expand long-term tax revenues. Supporters believe that such investments, though costly upfront, can “pay for themselves” over time by fostering stronger economic performance.<sup>137</sup> Critics note that the results are uncertain and dependent on future growth rates. If the economy underperforms, new spending could worsen the deficit rather than alleviate it.<sup>138</sup> This approach also postpones more immediate choices about the scale and scope of federal commitments, making it controversial in debates where urgency is a central concern.<sup>139</sup>

## Bloc Positions

Although there is broad consensus in the Senate that the federal budget deficit needs to be reduced, agreement on the specific path forward is far less clear. By the spring of 1993, with a new Democratic president and a Democratic-controlled Congress, debates over taxes, spending, and long-term reform are quickly revealing both familiar partisan divides and emerging intra-party differences.<sup>140</sup> As the 103rd Congress begins its sessions, two main blocs, the Republicans and Democrats, are emerging alongside a third and smaller moderate group.<sup>141</sup>

### **Democratic Senators**

As the party in control of both Congress and the White House, most Democrats are aligned with President Clinton's proposal to reduce the deficit through a combination of new revenue and targeted spending cuts. Generally speaking, this group accepts the idea that deficit reduction requires a balanced approach; consequently, they advocate raising taxes on wealthier Americans while maintaining key investments in education, healthcare,

---

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ame Anderson and Economic Policy Institute, “A Progressive FM Deficit to the Anderson” (ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, 1989), [https://files.epi.org/page/-/old/studies/progressive\\_answer-1989.pdf](https://files.epi.org/page/-/old/studies/progressive_answer-1989.pdf).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Democracyjourn, “Public Investment Works,” Democracy Journal, January 5, 2016, <https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/6/public-investment-works/>.

<sup>140</sup> “CQ Almanac Online Edition.”

<sup>141</sup> Karen Tumulty, “Boren Assails Budget Negotiations : Legislation: Senator Calls for Bipartisan ‘summit’ to Develop a New Plan. Clinton Quickly Rejects Conservatives’ Criticism of Joint Panel. - Los Angeles Times,” Los Angeles Times, March 8, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-07-28-mn-17850-story.html>.

and infrastructure. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) and Finance Committee Chairman Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) are leading voices in this bloc, with others such as Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) also offering consistent support, though often tempered by regional concerns.<sup>142</sup> The proposed BTU tax, for example, is particularly sensitive among senators from energy-producing states.<sup>143</sup> For example, Senator Boren of Oklahoma, a state with a major oil industry, has declared that “I am not going to vote for a BTU tax in committee, on the floor or in my next life.”<sup>144</sup> Similarly, members representing states with major military sectors are naturally skeptical of proposed defence spending cuts. Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, both from California, have voiced worry over Californian aerospace layoffs by Lockheed and Northrop due to defence cuts.<sup>145</sup> Moreover, while mainstream Democrats were generally supportive of Clinton’s plan to raise income taxes on the wealthiest 1-2 percent of Americans and introduce an energy tax, some were often cautious about more progressive ideas that could impact the markets and broader economy.<sup>146</sup> While less significant, these progressive ideas were championed by left-leaning senators within the Democratic Party that often differed from mainstream ideology. Some examples include Paul Wellstone (D-MN), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Ted Kennedy (D-MA), and Barbara Boxer (D-CA).

## Republican Senators

Senate Republicans are largely united in opposing Clinton’s framework. While they agree that deficits are a concern, they object strongly to using tax increases as the primary solution. Drawing on arguments shaped during the Reagan era, they emphasize reducing federal spending, limiting government scope, and maintaining a low-tax environment to prompt growth. Minority leader Bob Dole (R-KS) and Budget Committee ranking member Pete Domenici (R-NM) play key roles in leading the caucus. At the same time, figures such as Phil Gramm (R-TX), William Roth (R-DE), and Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS) are pressing for a leaner federal government.<sup>147, 148</sup> Republicans are especially critical of the BTU tax, arguing that it would burden working families and penalize states dependent on energy production.<sup>149</sup>

Although united in opposing higher taxes and the President’s proposed stimulus investments, which would add new avenues of spending, Republicans are less consistent in proposing alternatives. They generally support reductions to Clinton’s new domestic spending to differing degrees, but some additionally favour introducing caps to entitlement spending programs to limit the effect of inflation.<sup>150</sup> Still others have proposed reducing payroll taxes and increasing exemptions while attaching corporate and capital gains taxes to inflation in an effort to encourage economic growth in the vein of Reaganomics.<sup>151</sup> There is the further issue of deciding precisely

---

<sup>142</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “103rd United States Congress,” Wikipedia, August 17, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/103rd\\_United\\_States\\_Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/103rd_United_States_Congress).

<sup>143</sup> Chicago Tribune, “POWERFUL SENATORS TURNED OFF BY CLINTON ENERGY TAX,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 21, 1993, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/1993/05/21/powerful-senators-turned-off-by-clinton-energy-tax/>.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Chicago Tribune, “CALIFORNIA RAILS AGAINST DEFENSE CUTS,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 9, 1993, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/1993/03/09/california-rails-against-defense-cuts/>.

<sup>146</sup> “H.R.2264 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.”

<sup>147</sup> Wikipedia contributors, “103rd United States Congress.”

<sup>148</sup> “H.R.2264 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.”

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Clifford Krauss, “G.O.P. Struggles To Unify Attack On Clinton Plan,” U.S., *The New York Times*, March 2, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/02/us/gop-struggles-to-unify-attack-on-clinton-plan.html>.

<sup>151</sup> David E. Rosenbaum, “Budget Debate: A Primer; Cutting Through Claims and Counterclaims As Senate Ponders Ways to Curb the Deficit,” U.S., *The New York Times*, June 24, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/24/us/budget-debate-primer-cutting-through-claims-counterclaims-senate-ponders-ways.html>.

which areas of discretionary spending may be cut to address the deficit, which may well depend on individual and state priorities. To provide an effective opposition to the Democrats, Republicans will need to consider the possibility of coalescing to formulate a coherent alternative budgetary plan.

### Fiscal Moderates

Between the two official blocs, an unofficial group of centrists exists, spanning both sides of the aisle. Their primary concern is the long-term sustainability of federal finances, and many frame deficit reduction in terms of fairness to future generations. They argued that persistent deficits will only increase the burden on the government later on; they believed that it is better to control national debt now rather than later. This group consisted mainly of Democrats from conservative rural states, such as Sam Nunn (D-GA), David Boren (D-OK), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Richard Bryan (D-NV), Bennett Johnson (D-LA), and Richard Shelby (D-AL).<sup>152</sup> Occasionally, this bloc would either directly include or be supported by moderate Republicans like John Chafee (R-RI) and Jim Jeffords (R-VT).<sup>153</sup> These senators are more open than many of their colleagues to considering reforms to entitlement programs such as Medicare or Social Security, which they view as essential to controlling long-term costs.<sup>154</sup> At the same time, the bloc is typically cautious about major tax increases, such as the BTU tax, preferring a mix of reducing proposed tax breaks and across-the-board spending discipline.<sup>155</sup> For example, many members of this bloc supported the OBRA 90 deal under President Bush and emphasized pragmatism in any potential solution.<sup>156</sup> Within OBRA 90, solutions such as excise taxes, income tax hikes, and Pay-As-You-Go rules remain popular within this bloc. However, notably, they also stress the need to limit government spending when possible. While this group is numerically smaller, their votes often held the deciding factor in the passage of final legislation; thus, their support is crucial for any proposed solution.

### Discussion Questions

1. Austerity measures are defined as harsh tax hikes and/or budget cuts that governments implement to reduce deficits. Should the United States enact such measures to reduce the budget deficit?
2. How do the specific needs of your constituents or state influence your decision in legislative policy? Are there any meaningful differences between your individual stance and the stance of your party?
3. Are new legislative standards and enforcement mechanisms necessary for maintaining a balanced budget?
4. How important is the long-term sustainability of the budget compared to the social and economic benefits derived from its expenditure?
5. Is raising taxes or cutting spending a more preferable method to fix deficits?
6. What historical actions from the period leading up to the 103rd Congress remain relevant for current discussions about debt and fiscal policy?

---

<sup>152</sup> Karen Tumulty, "Boren Assails Budget Negotiations : Legislation: Senator Calls for Bipartisan 'summit' to Develop a New Plan. Clinton Quickly Rejects Conservatives' Criticism of Joint Panel. - Los Angeles Times," *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-07-28-mn-17850-story.html>.

<sup>153</sup> John K. Iglehart, "Politics and Compromise: Senator Jim Jeffords," *Health Affairs* 16, no. 4 (July 1, 1997): 82–90, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.16.4.82>.

<sup>154</sup> Tumulty, "Boren Assails Budget Negotiations."

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> "U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 101st Congress - 2nd Session," [https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_votes/vote1012/vote\\_101\\_2\\_00326.htm](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1012/vote_101_2_00326.htm).

## Additional Resources

Complete Financial Statements for FY 1992: <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Economic Data:  
<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/>.

Federal Budget Composition Explainer:  
<https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/federal-spending>.

## Bibliography

- American Enterprise Institute - AEI. "The Path to Entitlement Reform | AEI," July 1, 2025. <https://www.aei.org/articles/the-path-to-entitlement-reform/>.
- Anderson, Ame and Economic Policy Institute. "A Progressive FM Deficit to the Anderson." ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE, 1989. [https://files.epi.org/page/-/old/studies/progressive\\_answer-1989.pdf](https://files.epi.org/page/-/old/studies/progressive_answer-1989.pdf).
- Anderson, James R. "BANKRUPTING AMERICA: THE IMPACT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S MILITARY BUDGET." *International Journal of Health Services* 11, no. 4 (1981): 623–29. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45130983>.
- AP News. "Social Security and Medicare: Troubling Math, Tough Politics | AP News," February 20, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/biden-politics-government-programs-florida-business-fdfbfad568d0f0fb2963ceb139f8ac70>.
- Bartlett, Bruce. "Inflation: The Downfall of Keynesian Economics." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January 1, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2839590>.
- Briteweb. "Budget Basics: Balanced Budget Amendment — Pros and Cons." *Peterson Foundation*, July 15, 2025. <https://www.pgpf.org/article/balanced-budget-amendment-pros-and-cons/>.
- CEPR. "Reassessing the Fall in US Public Debt After World War II," October 30, 2023. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/reassessing-fall-us-public-debt-after-world-war-ii>.
- CEPR. "The Lesson From George H.W. Bush's Tax Reversal," December 22, 2018. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/blogs-and-reviews/lesson-george-hw-bushs-tax-reversal>.
- Chicago Tribune. "CALIFORNIA RAILS AGAINST DEFENSE CUTS." Chicago Tribune, March 9, 1993. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/1993/03/09/california-rails-against-defense-cuts/>.
- Chicago Tribune. "POWERFUL SENATORS TURNED OFF BY CLINTON ENERGY TAX." Chicago Tribune, May 21, 1993. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/1993/05/21/powerful-senators-turned-off-by-clinton-energy-tax/>.
- Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.J.Res.372 - 99th Congress (1985-1986): Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-joint-resolution/372>.
- Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.R.2264 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/2264>.
- Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.R.4170 - 98th Congress (1983-1984): Deficit Reduction Act of 1984," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/house-bill/4170>.
- Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.R.4242 - 97th Congress (1981-1982): Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/97th-congress/house-bill/4242>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "Text - H.R.5835 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/house-bill/5835/text>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "Text - H.R.15414 - 90th Congress (1967-1968): Revenue and Expenditure Control Act of 1968," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/90th-congress/house-bill/15414/text>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "S.1770 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A bill to provide comprehensive reform of the health care system of the United States, and for other purposes." n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1770>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "Trends in Mandatory Spending," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R44641>.

D. "VA.gov | Veterans Affairs," n.d. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>.

Devroy, Ann, and Eric Pianin. "CLINTON YIELDS ON ENERGY TAX." *The Washington Post*, March 2, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/06/09/clinton-yields-on-energy-tax/0e886555-0425-4ccd-94f6-7daf91cb05a6/>?

Econlib. "Federal Budget - Econlib," September 21, 2021. <https://www.econlib.org/library/enc/federalbudget.html>.

Econlib. "Reaganomics - Econlib," June 10, 2021. <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc/Reaganomics.html>.

Eppig, Franklin J., and George S. Chulis. "Trends in Medicare Supplementary Insurance: 1992-96." *Health Care Financing Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 201–6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4194494/>.

"Federal Surplus or Deficit [-]," October 18, 2024. <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/FYFSD#>.

Fessenden, Helen. "1965: The Year the Fed and LBJ Clashed." *Richmond Fed*, January 17, 2025. [https://www.richmondfed.org/publications/research/econ\\_focus/2016/q3-4/federal\\_reserve](https://www.richmondfed.org/publications/research/econ_focus/2016/q3-4/federal_reserve).

Finance and Development | F&D. "Finance and Development," December 1, 2002. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2002/12/gupta.htm>.

"Fiscal Data Explains Federal Spending," n.d. <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/americas-finance-guide/federal-spending/>.

Graetz, Michael J. and Columbia Law School. "Tax Policy at the Beginning of the Clinton Administration." *YALE J. ON REG.* 10 (1993): 561. [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4714&context=faculty\\_scholarship](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4714&context=faculty_scholarship).

"Great Depression & New Deal - FDR Presidential Library & Museum," n.d. <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/great-depression-new-deal>.

"Great Depression Facts - FDR Presidential Library & Museum," n.d. <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/great-depression-facts>.

- Hayasaki, Seito. "The Unlikely Heroes of Progressive Taxation: CEOs' Support for Bill Clinton's Tax Increase Package in 1993." *Journal of Policy History* 35, no. 2 (March 1, 2023): 219–53.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s089803062200032x>.
- "Historical Tables – OMB – the White House," June 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-resources/budget/historical-tables/>.
- Hood, Rich. "Dole fires at Clinton during return to NH," 1993.  
[https://dolearchivecollections.ku.edu/collections/news\\_clippings/c017\\_roll2\\_125.pdf](https://dolearchivecollections.ku.edu/collections/news_clippings/c017_roll2_125.pdf).
- Iglehart, John K. "Politics and Compromise: Senator Jim Jeffords." *Health Affairs* 16, no. 4 (July 1, 1997): 82–90.  
<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.16.4.82>.
- Krauss, Clifford. "G.O.P. Struggles To Unify Attack On Clinton Plan." U.S. The New York Times, March 2, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/02/us/gop-struggles-to-unify-attack-on-clinton-plan.html>.
- Levit, Mindy R., D. Andrew Austin, Jeffrey M. Stupak, and Congressional Research Service. "Mandatory Spending Since 1962." Report. Congressional Research Service, March 18, 2015.  
<https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL33074.pdf>.
- Levy, and Michael. "United States Presidential Election of 1992 | George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton & Ross Perot, Campaign, & Results." Encyclopedia Britannica, June 23, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1992>.
- MEDICAID ENROLLMENT AND SPENDING TRENDS. 1998. <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/medicaid-enrollment-and-spending-trends.pdf>.
- "Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations - Office of the Historian," n.d.  
<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/nixon-shock>.
- Nelson, Jack. "Clinton Yields to Opponents of Energy Tax : Economy: President Will Scale Back Controversial Levy in Favor of 8-cent-a-gallon Gas Tax Hike, Sources Say. Move Is Aimed at Saving Deficit-cutting Plan in Senate. - Los Angeles Times." *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-05-29-mn-41277-story.html>.
- O'Keefe, Ed. "Warren Rudman's Legacy Laid Groundwork for 'Fiscal Cliff' Negotiations." *The Washington Post*, December 1, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/wp/2012/11/20/warren-rudmans-legacy-laid-groundwork-for-fiscal-cliff-negotiations/>.
- Oklahoma Historical Society | OHS. "What Was the New Deal? | Oklahoma Historical Society," n.d.  
<https://www.okhistory.org/learn/depression3>.
- Peters, Katelyn. "Tax Reform Act of 1993: Meaning, History, Impact." Investopedia, January 29, 2024.  
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/tax-reform-act-of-1993.asp>.
- Pianin, Eric, and David S. Hilzenrath. "SENATE PASSES CLINTON BUDGET BILL, 51-50, AFTER KERREY RELUCTANTLY CASTS 'YES' VOTE." *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2024.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/08/07/senate-passes-clinton-budget-bill-51-50-after-kerrey-reluctantly-casts-yes-vote/e9c37591-86f5-4ca8-ad84-f6e8368999cb>.

“Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process.” *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, October 28, 2024. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/introduction-to-the-federal-budget-process>.

“Ratings.Moodys.com,” n.d. <https://ratings.moodys.com/ratings-news/443154>.

Riedl, Jessica. “How to Successfully Negotiate Deficit Reduction in the U.S. Budget | Manhattan Institute.” Manhattan Institute, March 3, 2023. <https://manhattan.institute/article/getting-to-yes-a-history-of-why-budget-negotiations-succeed-and-why-they-fail>.

Rosenbaum, David E. “Budget Debate: A Primer; Cutting Through Claims and Counterclaims As Senate Ponders Ways to Curb the Deficit.” U.S. *The New York Times*, June 24, 1993. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/06/24/us/budget-debate-primer-cutting-through-claims-counterclaims-senate-ponders-ways.html>.

Sablik, Tim. “Recession of 1981-82.” Federal Reserve History, n.d. <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/recession-of-1981-82>.

“SOI Tax Stats - Historical Table 23 | Internal Revenue Service,” n.d. <https://www.irs.gov/statistics/soi-tax-stats-historical-table-23>.

Svillarreal. “76 Options for Reducing the Deficit.” *Peterson Foundation*, July 16, 2025. <https://www.pgpf.org/article/76-options-for-reducing-the-deficit/>.

Tahk, Susannah Camic. “Making Impossible Tax Reform Possible.” FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History, n.d. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol81/iss5/16>.

“The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth.” Accessed November 30, 2025. <https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-03.html>.

The Financial Management Service. “Consolidated Financial Statements of the United States Government Prototype 1992.” *Treasury Department*. Department of the Treasury, 1992. <https://fiscal.treasury.gov/files/reports-statements/financial-report/cfs-1992.pdf>.

“The President’s News Conference | the American Presidency Project,” n.d. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-491>.

The White House. “Historical Tables – OMB – the White House,” June 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-resources/budget/historical-tables/>.

Tax Policy Center. “What is mandatory and discretionary spending?,” n.d. <https://taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-mandatory-and-discretionary-spending>.

Tumulty, Karen. “Boren Assails Budget Negotiations : Legislation: Senator Calls for Bipartisan ‘summit’ to Develop a New Plan. Clinton Quickly Rejects Conservatives’ Criticism of Joint Panel. - Los Angeles Times.”

*Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-07-28-mn-17850-story.html>.

“United States - Credit Rating,” n.d. <https://tradingeconomics.com/united-states/rating>.

United States Congress. “BUDGET ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1990.” *P.L. 101–508*, 1990. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/HMAN-112/pdf/HMAN-112-pg1099.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Defense. “Defense Spending as a % of Gross Domestic Product (GDP),” n.d. <https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2002099941/>.

“U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 101st Congress - 2nd Session.” [https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_votes/vote1012/vote\\_101\\_2\\_00326.htm](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1012/vote_101_2_00326.htm).

“U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 103rd Congress - 1st Session,” August 15, 2023. [https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll\\_call\\_votes/vote1031/vote\\_103\\_1\\_00247.htm](https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1031/vote_103_1_00247.htm).

“What Is Keynesian Economics? - Back to Basics - Finance & Development, September 2014,” August 27, 2014. <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2014/09/basics.htm>.

Whitehouse.gov. “Lyndon B. Johnson,” March 15, 2015. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/1600/presidents/lyndonbjohnson>.

Winkler, Allan M., Miami University, and U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. “THE NEW DEAL: ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND FAILURES,” March 31, 2009. <https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/WinklerTestimony33109TheNewDealSenateTestimony.pdf>.

Writer, Times Staff. “GOP Calls Budget a Job Killer.” *Tampa Bay Times*, January 10, 2020. <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1993/08/04/gop-calls-budget-a-job-killer/>.

# Combating Violent Crimes

## Overview

Violent crime has become one of the most pressing domestic concerns in the United States. The national violent crime rate more than doubled between 1960 and 1991, peaking at 758 offences per 100,000 people in 1991 alone.<sup>157</sup> With high profile cases dominating media headlines, the years of steadily increasing crime rates has led widespread public fear, causing communities to lose confidence in public safety as they demand stronger government action. Although offence rates have slightly stabilized since, the burden on law enforcement agencies, courts, and local governments remains substantial.<sup>158</sup>

Congress has spent decades experimenting with a mix of enforcement and reform-oriented policies. Early measures, such as the National Firearms Act of 1934, focused on implementing regulations and control; federal involvement later expanded in the 1960s through the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which created the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) and established federal grant programs for local police departments.<sup>159, 160</sup> By the 1980s, congressional action shifted toward more punitive measures, including mandatory minimum sentences and increased incarceration under the Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988.<sup>161</sup>

As the 103rd Congress begins, many law enforcement agencies, particularly those in large cities, are operating under strained resources, causing declines in homicide clearance rates (reflective of the percentage of crimes solved) and fueling mistrust among communities they serve.<sup>162</sup> The judicial system is also overwhelmed, with heavy backlogs forcing prosecutors and defence attorneys to rely heavily on plea bargains, typically at the expense of proper due process.<sup>163</sup> Recent incidents, such as the 1991 Rodney King beating and the 1992 Los Angeles riots, have furthered tensions between the public and police.<sup>164</sup>

As a response to the violent crime wave, President Clinton and many Democratic senators advocate for a two-pronged solution that combines tough-on-crime policies with investments in community-based social services.<sup>165</sup> Meanwhile, Republicans are pushing for harsher sentencing and fewer conditions on law enforcement grants, as

---

<sup>157</sup> Statista, “Reported Violent Crime Rate in the U.S. 1990-2023,” November 14, 2024,

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/>.

<sup>158</sup> Charles Wellford and James Cronin, “Clearing up Homicide Clearance Rates,” by National Institute of Justice, National Institute of Justice Journal, April 2000, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/jr000243b.pdf>.

<sup>159</sup> “National Firearms Act | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives,” n.d., <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/national-firearms-act>.

<sup>160</sup> “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d., <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/omnibus-crime-control-and-safe-streets-act-1968>.

<sup>161</sup> “Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Disastrous War on Drugs,” Brennan Center for Justice, May 17, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/race-mass-incarceration-and-disastrous-war-drugs>

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Dylan Palmer, “How Plea Bargaining Has Impacted the Criminal Justice System,” Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University, spring 2019, <https://jewlscholar.mtsu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/1b8b6966-9691-4d5d-87ba-0350f5faf610/content>.

<sup>164</sup> Lee Sigelman et al., “Police Brutality and Public Perceptions of Racial Discrimination: A Tale of Two Beatings,” Political Research Quarterly 50, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 777–91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/106591299705000403>.

<sup>165</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “The Clinton Administration’s Law Enforcement Strategy: Combating Crime With Community Policing and Community Prosecution,” 1999, <https://www.justice.gov/archive/dag/pubdoc/crimstrategy.pdf>.

well as displaying deep opposition to any potential gun regulation policies.<sup>166</sup> In contrast, another group of more progressive senators are skeptical of increased policing and believe that social programs, rehabilitation, and reintegration are key to avoiding a cycle of incarceration.<sup>167</sup> Ultimately, reducing violent crime rates is a complex topic that does not have an easy solution, with proposals often bogged down by deep partisan divides.

## Timeline

**June 26, 1934** — In response to Prohibition-era violence and gang-related killings, Congress passes the National Firearms Act, one of the first major federal gun control laws. It imposes regulations and taxes on machine guns, sawed-off shotguns, and silencers.<sup>168</sup>

**1960s** — A wave of civil unrest sweeps through American cities, sparked by incidents of police violence and fueled by long-standing racial and economic inequality. Major riots in Watts (1965), Newark (1967), and Detroit (1967) leave dozens dead and thousands arrested. These events force Congress to focus not just on policing, but also on inherent civil rights issues.<sup>169</sup>

**June 19, 1968** — The signing of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act creates the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), which provides federal grants to police departments, promotes criminal justice research, and introduces wiretap rules. It reflects bipartisan concern over urban unrest and crime.<sup>170</sup>

**June 29, 1972** — In the *Furman v. Georgia* Supreme Court decision, the court rules that the death penalty, as applied at the time, is unconstitutional. The Supreme Court determines that the usage of the death penalty in this case is highly subjective, and that differences in judgements resulted in an unfair system. Executions are effectively halted nationwide. This ruling triggers a major push from Congress and states to revise capital punishment statutes in order to comply with the court rulings.<sup>171</sup>

**July 2, 1976** — After states adopt new sentencing procedures, the Supreme Court rules in *Gregg v. Georgia* to reinstate the death penalty and end the temporary pause in executions. This leads Congress to renew discussions on capital punishment, particularly in murder and terrorism cases.<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> “H.R.3355 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Violent Crime Control And Law Enforcement Act of 1994,” Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/3355>.

<sup>167</sup> Billie Weiss et al., “An Assessment of Youth Violence Prevention Activities in USA Cities,” June 2008, <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/UNITY%20Assessment%20of%20Youth%20Violence%20Prevention%20in%20usa%20cities%20full%20article.pdf>.

<sup>168</sup> “National Firearms Act | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives,” n.d., <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/national-firearms-act>.

<sup>169</sup> “How The 1960s’ Riots Hurt African-Americans,” NBER, n.d., <https://www.nber.org/digest/sep04/how-1960s-riots-hurt-african-americans>.

<sup>170</sup> “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d., <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/omnibus-crime-control-and-safe-streets-act-1968>.

<sup>171</sup> “*Furman V. Georgia*, 408 U.S. 238 (1972),” Justia Law, n.d., <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/408/238/>.

<sup>172</sup> “*Gregg V. Georgia*, 428 U.S. 153 (1976),” Justia Law, n.d., <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/428/153/>.

**February 2, 1984** — As part of President Reagan’s law-and-order platform, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act passes. It imposes stricter sentencing guidelines, eliminates parole for federal prisoners, expands bail rules, and creates new categories of federal crimes. It also strengthens federal prosecutorial tools against violent offenders.<sup>173</sup>

**October 27, 1986** — The passing of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act introduces mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses, many of which also involve violent crime. It defines new federal offenses, expands federal funding to law enforcement, and formalizes the “three strikes” rule.<sup>174</sup>

**November 18, 1988** — The 1988 successor to the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 establishes the Office of National Drug Control Policy and adds stricter penalties for drug trafficking, firearms violations, and violent drug-related crimes. It also increases asset forfeiture powers and funds task forces. Most importantly, the 1988 act officially restores the use of the death penalty by the federal government.<sup>175</sup>

**1990s** — The United States experiences the highest rates of violent crime in modern history, with nearly 25,000 homicides reported in 1991 alone. Cities like New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. see unprecedented levels of gang violence, drug-related shootings, and public fear. The crisis pushes violent crime to the top of the political agenda and leads to urgent calls for both tougher enforcement and long-term reform.<sup>176</sup>

**March 3, 1991** — A video of LAPD officers beating motorist Rodney King after a high-speed chase sparks national outrage. This event, and many other similar ones, demonstrate a growing trend of outrage over police brutality and racial discrimination within law enforcement. Most consequently, events of police brutality continually undermine public confidence and cooperation in law enforcement, especially in African-American communities.<sup>177</sup>

**January 20, 1993** — President Clinton presents his platform for the reduction of violent crimes in America at his inauguration. Among other policies, he calls for the hiring of 100,000 new police officers, tying federal aid to community policing, and increasing federal support for local agencies.<sup>178</sup> Clinton’s policies mark a new turn within the Democratic party, one that places crime reduction towards the top of their priorities. The public are generally supportive of his “harsh-on-crime” rhetoric, although some experts raise concerns about potential mass incarceration crises.

---

<sup>173</sup> “S.1762 - 98th Congress (1983-1984): Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/senate-bill/1762>.

<sup>174</sup> “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d., <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/anti-drug-abuse-act-1986>.

<sup>175</sup> “H.R.5210 - 100th Congress (1987-1988): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/100th-congress/house-bill/5210..>

<sup>176</sup> “Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime and Justice Data Online,” n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20110720192206/http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/StateCrime.cfm>.

<sup>177</sup> “HISTORY.com Editors, “LAPD Officers Beat Rodney King on Camera | March 3, 1991 | HISTORY,” HISTORY, May 27, 2025, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/march-3/police-brutality-caught-on-video>.

<sup>178</sup> “H.R.3355 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): Violent Crime Control And Law Enforcement Act of 1994,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/3355>.

## Historical Analysis

While violent crimes have always existed to some degree throughout American history, their rapid rise over the course of the 20th century and the various ways in which the federal government attempted to respond offer important insights in addressing the present-day crisis.<sup>179</sup> It is most commonly currently believed that poor socioeconomic conditions are the most significant root cause for crime. Despite this, both politicians and members of the public have disagreed for decades over the appropriate solution.

### Prohibition and the Emergence of Organized Crime

The emergence of a new wave of organized crime occurred starting in the early years of the Prohibition era. The 18th Amendment went into effect in 1920, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages in the United States.<sup>180</sup> Despite its moral and public health goals, organized criminal syndicates began to take hold of the illegal production, distribution, and sale of alcohol and other illegal substances.<sup>181</sup> Cities like Chicago became infamous for gang-related shootings, bombings, and other forms of gang-related violence. Local police forces, many of which were underfunded or lacked jurisdiction across city or state lines, could barely manage.<sup>182</sup> The scale of the growing crime wave prompted Washington to expand its crime-fighting capacity. For example, organizations such as the Bureau of Investigation, which would later become the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), received increased funding and responsibilities in handling the national crisis.<sup>183</sup> Congress passed the National Firearms Act in 1934 to regulate weapons commonly used to carry out gang-related killings, such as machine guns and sawed-off shotguns.<sup>184</sup> This was one of the first clear examples of the federal government stepping in to deal with violence that local agencies could not contain, and although the federal role was still fairly limited, it set a precedent that would be built on in later decades.<sup>185</sup>

### Postwar Crime Patterns

Following the conclusion of the Second World War, crime was still mostly seen as a state-level or local issue; however, cities were changing quickly, and the socioeconomic pressures that came with change had a noticeable effect on public safety.<sup>186</sup> Many cities saw population booms due to returning veterans and the Great Migration of Black Americans from the South to urban centers in the North and West.<sup>187</sup> Rapidly growing demand for housing, jobs, and public services—especially in neighborhoods where minority populations were most significant—went unmet.<sup>188</sup> While trends related to violent crimes had not spiked significantly, it was clear that social concern over issues such as juvenile delinquency was growing.<sup>189</sup> Often, these problems were sometimes

---

<sup>179</sup> “The 1994 Crime Bill and Beyond: How Federal Funding Shapes the Criminal Justice System,” Brennan Center for Justice, n.d., <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/1994-crime-bill-and-beyond-how-federal-funding-shapes-criminal-justice>.

<sup>180</sup> Gregory Marose, “Prohibition and the Rise of the American Gangster,” Pieces of History, February 27, 2019, <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2012/01/17/prohibition-and-the-rise-of-the-american-gangster/>.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> “Timeline,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, June 10, 2025, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/timeline>.

<sup>184</sup> Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence, “Key Federal Regulation Acts | GIFFORDS,” GIFFORDS, January 22, 2025, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/other-laws-policies/key-federal-regulation-acts/>.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ying Shi et al., “The effects of the Great Migration on urban renewal,” *Journal of Public Economics* 209 (n.d.): 104647, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2022.104647>.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

framed as evidence of moral decline or cultural instability, shaping policy debates and media coverage.<sup>190</sup> The federal government began funding studies and offered technical support to police departments, taking a slightly more active interest in how crime was being handled at the local level.<sup>191</sup>

## Riots and Rising Tensions of the 1960s

The 1960s marked an important turning point in how Americans perceived violent crimes. A series of riots broke out in response to police actions and poor living conditions, including major uprisings in Watts, Newark, and Detroit, injuring thousands and causing thousands more to be arrested.<sup>192</sup> While these events typically began with a single incident, they were often driven by much deeper frustration over racism, poverty, and distrust of government institutions. However, the scale of the violence and property destruction in these riots brought crime and urban unrest into the national spotlight in a new way.<sup>193</sup> Around the same time, politicians began using phrases such as “law and order” more frequently, and concerns over rising crime rates began influencing elections, including the 1968 presidential campaign.<sup>194</sup> Ultimately, while violent crime itself was on the rise in some areas, public concern often grew faster than the numbers alone would justify. High-profile incidents dominated news coverage, resulting in greater public focus on criminal trends.<sup>195</sup>

## Rising Violent Crime Rates of the 1970s

During the 1970s, violent crime rates increased across much of the country,<sup>196</sup> with cities seeing more homicides, aggravated assaults, and gun-related incidents. Rising unemployment in manufacturing and rising inflation made life much harder in urban areas. At the same time, state and local law enforcement struggled with outdated systems and budget limitations.<sup>197</sup> Moreover, the Supreme Court ruling in *Furman v. Georgia* deemed the usage of the death penalty unconstitutional due to inconsistent sentencing.<sup>198</sup> Many states rewrote their laws to create more standardized procedures, and the Supreme Court upheld those new rules in *Gregg v. Georgia* in 1976.<sup>199, 200</sup> The federal government continued to provide funding and support through the LEAA and related programs.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>190</sup> Cleveland Community Police Commission, “Policing in the 1940s & 1950s - Cleveland Community Police Commission,” October 31, 2023, <https://clecpc.org/100-years-project/1940s-1950s/>.

<sup>191</sup> Olatunde C.A. Johnson and Douglas D. Scherer, “Recent Supreme Court Employment Law Developments,” Scholarship Archive, n.d., [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/3496/](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3496/).

<sup>192</sup> E. Hinton, “‘a War Within Our Own Boundaries’: Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and the Rise of the Carceral State,” *Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (June 1, 2015): 100–112, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jav328>.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Jill Lepore, “The Rise of the Victims’-Rights Movement,” *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/21/the-rise-of-the-victims-rights-movement>.

<sup>195</sup> John Gramlich and Kirsten Eddy, “The Link Between Local News Coverage and Americans’ Perceptions of Crime,” Pew Research Center, May 7, 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/08/29/the-link-between-local-news-coverage-and-americans-perceptions-of-crime/>.

<sup>196</sup> “The 1970s Crime Wave,” Mercatus Center, November 12, 2024, <https://www.mercatus.org/marginal-revolution-podcast/1970s-crime-wave>.

<sup>197</sup> “CLEVELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT | Encyclopedia of Cleveland History | Case Western Reserve University,” Encyclopedia of Cleveland History | Case Western Reserve University, November 11, 2020, <https://case.edu/ech/articles/c/cleveland-police-department>.

<sup>198</sup> “Supreme Court Finds Death Penalty Unconstitutional 50 Years Ago in *Furman V. Georgia* | Defender Services Office - Training Division,” n.d., <https://www.fd.org/news/supreme-court-finds-death-penalty-unconstitutional-50-years-ago-furman-v-georgia>.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice, National Academies Press eBooks, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.17226/26705>.

## Mandatory Minimum Sentencing and Crackdown on Crime of the 1980s

In the 1980s, violent crime rates remained high, and the national response became more focused on punishment.<sup>202</sup> While much of the conversation focused on drug use, violent crime often went hand in hand with drug-related activity, and the policy responses addressed both. The Reagan administration attempted to limit judicial subjectivity by implementing mandatory minimum sentencing laws, requiring judges to impose a minimum penalty on offenders depending on their offense.<sup>203</sup> The Anti-Drug Abuse Acts of 1986 and 1988 similarly created stricter sentencing guidelines and increased support for law enforcement at every level.<sup>204</sup> These policies contributed to a growing prison population; even non-violent offenders were increasingly caught in the same system.<sup>205</sup> News stories during this period often focused on high-profile murders, gang violence, and crime waves.<sup>206</sup> Combined with political campaigns that emphasized safety and order, they reinforced public support for more aggressive responses.<sup>207</sup> Many opponents have argued that the new pieces of legislation were too broad and ignored the root causes of violence, while others defended them as necessary given the scale of the problem.<sup>208</sup> Regardless, crime rates were still rising, albeit at a much slower pace, which complicated judgements of the effectiveness of these new federal actions. By now, the idea that the federal government had a responsibility to act was widely accepted.<sup>209</sup>

## Violent Crime Spike of the Early 1990s

By the start of the 1990s, violent crime had reached record levels. In both 1991 and 1992, the United States recorded more than 1.9 million violent crimes per year, up more than 25 percent from 1982.<sup>210</sup> The homicide rate reached nearly 25,000, the highest it had been in decades.<sup>211</sup> However, police departments in major cities were overwhelmed, and public trust in the justice system was declining. The 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers and the 1992 riots in response to their acquittal raised new questions about justice, accountability, and the use of force.<sup>212</sup> By early 1993, polls showed that crime had become the number one issue for American voters.<sup>213</sup> President Clinton entered office with a plan to respond, including hiring 100,000 new police officers, banning certain types of firearms, and funding community-based programs aimed at prevention.<sup>214</sup> The decisions lawmakers make will not only reflect current sentiments around crime but also decades of debate on how best to address violence.

---

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> “Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Disastrous War on Drugs,” Brennan Center for Justice, May 17, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/race-mass-incarceration-and-disastrous-war-drugs>.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Kara Gotsch et al., “After’ the War on Drugs: The Fair Sentencing Act and the Unfinished Drug Policy Reform Agenda,” 2011, [https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Gotsch\\_-\\_After\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Drugs\\_0.pdf](https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Gotsch_-_After_the_War_on_Drugs_0.pdf).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> “Federal Crime Control: Background, Legislation, and Issues,” CRS Reports, October 27, 2008, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL32824.html>.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> “Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime and Justice Data Online,” n.d., <https://web.archive.org/web/20110720192206/http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/StateCrime.cfm>.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Chelsea Matiash and Lily Rothman, “The Beating That Changed America: What Happened to Rodney King 25 Years Ago,” TIME, March 3, 2016, <https://time.com/4245175/rodney-king-la-riots-anniversary/>.

<sup>213</sup> Fox, Richard. Gender Dynamics in Congressional Elections, 1997. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483327839>.

<sup>214</sup> “The 21st Century Policing Initiative,” n.d., <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/New/html/19990114-2088.html>.

## Past Congressional Action

Although state and local governments have historically handled violent crime, Congress has steadily taken on a more active role, especially as crime rates are reaching a breaking point.<sup>215</sup> Over the years, federal legislation has shifted from limited regulatory efforts to larger-scale funding programs.<sup>216</sup> These laws have often followed public demand for stronger responses to crime.<sup>217</sup> The result is a policy environment that mixes federal guidance, funding incentives, and, in some cases, direct intervention.

### National Firearms Act (1934)

The National Firearms Act of 1934 was one of the earliest examples of federal legislation that addressed violent crimes directly.<sup>218</sup> It came in response to the wave of organized crime violence during Prohibition, in which gang members frequently used automatic weapons and sawed-off shotguns in violent shootings.<sup>219</sup> The law did not ban these weapons outright, but required their registration and imposed heavy taxes on their sale and transfer.<sup>220</sup> Although this legislation was relatively narrow, it was one of the first times the federal government used its power to regulate firearms to reduce violent crime. It also set a precedent for later gun control debates, the themes of which would return in the 1990s.

### Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (1968)

By the late 1960s, violent crime rates were climbing, and political attention on the issue had increased. Following several years of urban riots, high-profile assassinations, and rising crime statistics, Congress passed the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act in 1968.<sup>221</sup> This law marked a significant shift in federal crime policy. It created the LEAA, which provided grants to local police departments and state governments to support hiring, training, and equipment upgrades.<sup>222</sup> The act also expanded wiretapping authority for federal investigators and placed new limits on the purchase of handguns by minors and those with felony records.<sup>223</sup> While supporters hailed the LEAA for helping modernize many local law enforcement agencies, its opponents argued that the act and subsequent administration encouraged overly-aggressive policing tactics without sufficient investment in prevention or reform.<sup>224</sup> Still, the bill marked the beginning of long-term federal involvement in local law enforcement and opened the door for future grants-based partnerships between Congress and state-level criminal justice systems.

---

<sup>215</sup> “Federal Crime Control: Background, Legislation, and Issues,” CRS Reports.

<sup>216</sup> “The Federal Funding That Fuels Mass Incarceration,” Brennan Center for Justice, June 14, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/federal-funding-fuels-mass-incarceration>.

<sup>217</sup> “Overview and Reflections - Crime Bill,” n.d., <https://counciloncj.foleon.com/reports/crime-bill/overview-and-reflections>.

<sup>218</sup> “National Firearms Act | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives,” n.d., <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/national-firearms-act>.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d., <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/omnibus-crime-control-and-safe-streets-act-1968>.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> “Reorganizing LEAA,” The Washington Post, March 2, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/04/13/reorganizing-leaa/898a724f-8615-4266-b615-82d9ec82ea37/>.

## **Controlled Substances Act (1970)**

Though technically focused on drug regulation, the Controlled Substances Act had lasting implications for how violent crime would later be addressed.<sup>225</sup> It created a classification system for drugs, introduced harsher penalties for drug-related offenses, and laid the foundation for the so-called "War on Drugs" that would follow under future administrations.<sup>226</sup> As drug markets became more closely tied to violent crime, especially in urban neighborhoods, the federal response to drugs became inseparable from its approach to violent offenses. Many of the laws passed in the 1980s and 1990s used this earlier legislation as a legal foundation.<sup>227</sup>

## **Comprehensive Crime Control Act (1984)**

Passed during the Reagan administration, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984 marked another step towards stricter federal sentencing.<sup>228</sup> It established truth-in-sentencing requirements—which aimed to reduce parole eligibility for federal offenders—and created the U.S. Sentencing Commission.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, one of its core goals was to make it harder for repeat offenders and organized groups to fund or conceal criminal activity.<sup>230</sup> The act expanded the ability of federal agencies to seize assets connected to criminal enterprises, a measure that was meant to target drug traffickers but also used in violent crime cases.<sup>231</sup> Despite initial widespread bipartisan support on Capitol Hill, many Progressives soon criticized the act for contributing to the rise in incarcerations without adequately addressing the root causes of violent crimes.<sup>232</sup>

## **Anti-Drug Abuse Acts (1986 and 1988)**

Though these laws are often remembered for their role in the federal drug war, they also had a significant effect on how violent crimes were prosecuted and punished. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 introduced mandatory minimum sentences for a range of offenses, including drug trafficking and violent crimes connected to drug activity.<sup>233</sup> It also established a major sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine, which would later be challenged for its disproportionate impact on Black communities.<sup>234</sup> Specifically, there is little to no pharmacological difference between crack and powder cocaine, and yet crack cocaine is penalized 18 times harsher than powder cocaine. Crack cocaine is predominantly used by African American communities, while powder cocaine is typically consumed by non-Black individuals, thereby raising concerns over the discriminatory implications behind such a discrepancy.<sup>235</sup>

---

<sup>225</sup> "The Controlled Substances Act (CSA): A Legal Overview for the 119th Congress," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45948>.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Alex Kreit, "Controlled Substances, Uncontrolled Law," n.d., [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2369673](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2369673).

<sup>228</sup> "Comprehensive Crime Control Act | EBSCO," EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | [www.ebsco.com](http://www.ebsco.com), n.d., <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/comprehensive-crime-control-act>.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Elizabeth Hinton, "Why We Should Reconsider the War on Crime," TIME, March 20, 2015, <https://time.com/3746059/war-on-crime-history/>.

<sup>233</sup> "Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Disastrous War on Drugs," Brennan Center for Justice, May 17, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/race-mass-incarceration-and-disastrous-war-drugs>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> "Princeton Policy Advocacy Clinic Students Release Analysis of Federal Crack-Powder Cocaine Sentencing Disparities, Draw Bipartisan Praise | Princeton School of Public and International Affairs," Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, n.d., <https://spia.princeton.edu/news/princeton-policy-advocacy-clinic-students-release-analysis-federal-crack-powder-cocaine>.

The 1988 version of the law expanded these provisions further, creating the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It introduced new criminal penalties, including ones related to firearms possession during a drug offense.<sup>236</sup> Because so many violent incidents during the late 1980s were tied to the drug trade, these laws served as the legal basis for prosecuting violent offenders at the federal level.<sup>237</sup> Supporters of the bills argued they were needed to keep neighborhoods safe and reduce gang violence. However, others have pointed out that the mandatory minimums reduced judicial discretion and led to extremely long prison terms, even in cases where violent behavior was not the primary offense.<sup>238</sup>

## Crime Control Act (1990)

Passed during President George H. W. Bush's term, the Crime Control Act of 1990 continued the trend of federal engagement with both drug and violent crime.<sup>239</sup> It included provisions that increased penalties for firearms offenses, particularly for repeat offenders, and expanded funding for state and local police.<sup>240</sup> The bill also strengthened laws related to domestic violence and child abuse, although these were still treated somewhat separately from broader violent crime legislation.<sup>241</sup> It was one of several incremental efforts to toughen penalties, improve coordination among law enforcement agencies, and send a political signal that Congress was taking crime seriously. It did not include sweeping reforms, but laid the groundwork for what would become much larger crime legislation in the years ahead.

## State-Level Influence and Federal Incentives

During the 1980s and early 1990s, states adopted "three strikes" laws, expanded death penalty eligibility, and reduced parole options for violent offenders.<sup>242</sup> In many cases, federal grants encouraged these state policies by tying funding to sentencing changes or policing reforms.<sup>243</sup> This approach allowed Congress to influence how crime was addressed without fully federalizing law enforcement. However, it also gave rise to concern that federal funding might lead states to prioritize punitive measures over community investment or rehabilitation, especially when the latter's outcomes were harder to measure in the short term.<sup>244</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> Henry R. Wray, U.S. Department of Justice, and National Institute of Justice, "DRUG CONTROL: THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY--STRATEGIES NEED PERFORMANCE MEASURES," 1993, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/147267NCJRS.pdf>.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> "Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Disastrous War on Drugs."

<sup>239</sup> "CQ Almanac Online Edition," n.d., <https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac//document.php?id=cqal90-1113148>.

<sup>240</sup> Congressional Research Service, "Crime Control: Federal Initiatives," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, December 11, 1993, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/148292NCJRS.pdf>.

<sup>241</sup> "H.R.5269 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): To Control Crime.," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/house-bill/5269>.

<sup>242</sup> Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy, "THREE STRIKES LAWS: FIVE YEARS LATER," 1998, <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/sp/3strikes.pdf>.

<sup>243</sup> Pamela K. Lattimore, "Reflections on Criminal Justice Reform: Challenges and Opportunities," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 47, no. 6 (December 1, 2022): 1071–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-022-09713-5>.

<sup>244</sup> Hanna Liebman Dershowitz, "Today's Legislative Addiction to Criminalization Feels Like Déjà Vu," Reason Foundation, September 16, 2024, <https://reason.org/commentary/todays-legislative-addiction-to-criminalization-feels-like-deja-vu/>.

Taken together, these laws reflect a steady buildup of federal involvement in violent crime.<sup>245</sup> Most past legislation has focused on expanding enforcement and toughening sentencing, often in response to public concern over crime rates or specific events.<sup>246</sup> What Congress has not done, at least to the same degree, is pass large-scale legislation aimed at prevention, community support, or root-cause intervention.<sup>247</sup>

## Current Situation

### National Crime Trends

By the present day, violent crime persists at a rate that keeps it near the top of the national agenda; not just for politicians and policymakers, but for the general public as well.<sup>248</sup> While law enforcement remains primarily a state and local responsibility, the persistent rise in violence over the past several years has made it increasingly difficult for the federal government to remain on the sidelines. The data so far in 1993 suggest that the trend is continuing, with the national homicide rate holding at around 10 per 100,000 people.<sup>249</sup> Firearms, especially handguns, are involved in the majority of these killings, and the people most often caught in the middle, either as victims or suspects, continue to be young men living in under-resourced, high-poverty neighborhoods.<sup>250</sup>

### Firearms and Illegal Gun Trafficking

Most homicides and violent crimes involve firearms, and the ease with which guns—especially handguns—can be acquired remains a serious obstacle to reducing violence.<sup>251, 252</sup> A notable example is the inconsistent firearm regulations across state lines; weapons purchased in a state with looser legislation can be used in crimes in another state.<sup>253</sup> Subsequently, Progressives and centrists alike have pushed for tighter controls, but their efforts are limited by the fact that interstate borders are not regulated and controlled, thereby allowing firearms to cross state lines easily. Several cities have attempted implementing buyback programs or tightening their own rules, but discrepancies in firearm laws at the local level will significantly reduce the effectiveness of these initiatives.<sup>254</sup> The federal government is currently discussing more unified options for firearm regulation. Democratic senators,

---

<sup>245</sup> “Federal Crime Control: Background, Legislation, and Issues,” CRS Reports, October 27, 2008, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL32824.html>.

<sup>246</sup> “The Federal Funding That Fuels Mass Incarceration,” Brennan Center for Justice, June 14, 2021, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/federal-funding-fuels-mass-incarceration>.

<sup>247</sup> Christian Rodriguez, “Improving Public Safety Through Better Accountability and Prevention,” Center for American Progress, May 15, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/improving-public-safety-through-better-accountability-and-prevention/>.

<sup>248</sup> Drew DeSilver, “Lower Support for Death Penalty Tracks With Falling Crime Rates, More Exonerations,” *Pew Research Center*, April 14, 2024, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/03/28/lower-support-for-death-penalty-tracks-with-falling-crime-rates-more-exonerations/>.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> U.S. Department of Justice et al., “Handgun Crime Victims,” 1990, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/hcv.pdf>.

<sup>251</sup> “Firearm Violence in the United States | Center for Gun Violence Solutions,” Center for Gun Violence Solutions, n.d., <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/research-reports/gun-violence-in-the-united-states>.

<sup>252</sup> Marianne W. Zawitz and Bureau of Justice Statistics, “Firearms, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Guns Used in Crime,” report, Office of Justice Programs (U.S. Department of Justice, July 1995), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/GUIC.PDF>.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> Matt Vasilogambros, “Gun Buybacks Are Popular. But Are They Effective?,” *Stateline*, June 6, 2023, <https://stateline.org/2022/08/30/gun-buybacks-are-popular-but-are-they-effective/>.

along with certain moderate Republican senators, have advocated for bans on assault weapons as well as background checks on purchasers and waiting periods for the sale of certain guns.<sup>255</sup>

### **Mass Incarceration**

After years of policies such as mandatory minimum sentences, reduced paroles, and longer sentences, many American prisons are facing overcrowding.<sup>256</sup> Strict legislation has had some success in locking up violent criminals, but simultaneously, crackdowns have resulted in high incarceration rates with prisoners having limited access to rehabilitation. Critics argue that these acts have produced a prison system that is expensive to maintain and neglected long-term issues such as the reentry of released inmates.<sup>257</sup> However, the general public remains largely supportive of strict measures and Republican senators strongly believe that harsh penalties will deter future crime.<sup>258</sup> While harsh sentencing is politically popular, senators need to address the growing concerns expressed by experts on the long-term viability of such a system.

### **Strain on Policing and Public Trust**

Police departments, particularly in high-crime urban areas, have been facing capacity issues for years.<sup>259</sup> Investigative and patrol staffing levels have not kept pace with escalating crime.<sup>260</sup> The clearance rate, or the rate of crimes that lead to arrests, imprisonments, or other disciplinary actions, declined from roughly 93 percent in 1962 to about 64 percent by 1993.<sup>261</sup> These declines reflect increasingly overburdened detective units and widespread staffing shortages, which many police leaders attribute to inadequate local budgets and recruitment challenges.<sup>262</sup> In response to public pressure and declining rates of solved homicides, several departments began experimenting with community policing models starting around 1993.<sup>263</sup> However, cities still grappling with fallout from the 1991 Rodney King beating and the 1992 Los Angeles riots view law enforcement with deep skepticism. This may affect community willingness to assist police even after reform initiatives are launched.<sup>264</sup> In the long run, without addressing both staffing and public relations challenges, programs may fail to achieve meaningful reductions in violent crime.

---

<sup>255</sup> “The Brady Bill: A Bill Becomes Law | William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum,” n.d., <https://www.clintonlibrary.gov/education/brady-bill-bill-becomes-law>.

<sup>256</sup> Alex Resney, “Mass Incarceration in the United States - Ballard Brief,” Ballard Brief, October 16, 2024, <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/mass-incarceration-in-the-united-states>.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Charles Wellford and James Cronin, “Clearing up Homicide Clearance Rates,” by National Institute of Justice, National Institute of Justice Journal, April 2000, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/jr000243b.pdf>.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Brian J. Ostrom, Neal B. Kauder, and Court Statistics Project Staff, Examining the Work of State Courts, 1993 (National Center for State Courts, 1995), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ewsc93-npscp.pdf?>.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> “What Is CAPS? – Chicago Police Department,” n.d., <https://www.chicagopolice.org/community-policing-group/how-caps-works/what-is-caps/>.

<sup>264</sup> “Race & Policing - the Legacy of Rodney King | PBS - L.a.p.d. Blues | FRONTLINE | PBS,” November 18, 2015, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/race/king.html>.

## Court Backlog

The judicial system is currently under severe pressure, particularly in larger jurisdictions.<sup>265</sup> In 1993, state courts received a record 90 million new cases. State jurisdictions process some 85 times more criminal cases than US District Courts, but with only 14 times as many judges, resulting in significant delays.<sup>266</sup> As a result, more cases are being resolved through plea bargains—where a defendant pleads guilty to some of the original charges in exchange for a lighter sentence or the dismissal of other charges. This may offer a short-term solution, but raises valid concerns about fairness and whether justice is being fully served. These delays and changes affect not only defendants, but also victims and their families, many of whom are left in prolonged periods of uncertainty while awaiting trial outcomes and a sense of closure. As the judicial system becomes increasingly backlogged, public confidence in the justice system may erode further.

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Expanding Law Enforcement Capacity

A prominent element of the policy conversation in 1993 focuses on how the federal government can provide greater support to law enforcement agencies.<sup>267</sup> Since the majority of violent crimes are prosecuted and managed by city or county departments, additional personnel, better training, and modernized equipment are essential in enhancing police responsiveness and deterrence.<sup>268</sup> President Clinton’s proposal to fund 100,000 additional officers is one example of this approach, emphasizing the value of increasing visible patrols and strengthening local departments through direct federal investment.<sup>269</sup> This type of investment will likely be structured through grant programs, potentially similar to the model used by the former Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, where federal funding was tied to certain prerequisites and conditions.<sup>270</sup> Adoption of community policing and reforms related to officer conduct and accountability can be important conditions for grant funds to municipalities and states.<sup>271</sup>

Still, questions remain about whether increased law enforcement capacity, on its own, can meaningfully reduce violent crime.<sup>272</sup> For example, more left-leaning senators may oppose such moves, recognizing that policing contributes to public safety but caution against an overemphasis on enforcement. They argue that a lack of focus on root causes of violence, particularly in communities facing long-standing challenges, can render subsequent legislation ineffective.<sup>273</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, conservative lawmakers support increased funding

---

<sup>265</sup> Brian J. Ostrom, Neal B. Kauder, and Court Statistics Project Staff, *Examining the Work of State Courts, 1993* (National Center for State Courts, 1995), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ewsc93-npsc.pdf>?

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “The Clinton Administration’s Law Enforcement Strategy: Combating Crime With Community Policing and Community Prosecution,” 1999, <https://www.justice.gov/archive/dag/pubdoc/crimestrategy.pdf>.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> Janet Reno, “STATEMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 1994 BUDGET REQUEST,” April 22, 1993, <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ag/speeches/1993/04-22-1993a.pdf>?

<sup>271</sup> “Federal Register, Volume 60 Issue 11 (Wednesday, January 18, 1995),” January 18, 1995, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1995-01-18/html/95-1114.htm?>

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

for law enforcement but oppose attaching requirements to how those funds are used.<sup>274</sup> They argue that such conditions, often related to community policing or officer conduct standards, can limit departments' flexibility and fail to address crime directly.<sup>275</sup> In their view, the focus should be on deterrence through stronger enforcement, not federal oversight or experimental reforms.<sup>276</sup>

### **Community-Based Prevention Programs**

Public concern has shifted toward the social and economic drivers of crime; preventing crime before it happens has become a priority for some senators.<sup>277</sup> Prevention programs typically include job training, youth mentoring, conflict mediation, after-school activities, and access to mental health services.<sup>278</sup> Advocates argue that programs aimed at adults lower crime rates drastically, but they also claim that initiatives designed for children and adolescents, especially in school environments, may result in an even greater effect.<sup>279</sup> These initiatives are rooted in the idea that individuals are less likely to engage in violent behavior when they have access to well-funded resources and support.<sup>280</sup> In several urban centers throughout the nation, early efforts to support youth outreach workers and community-based mediators have demonstrated promising outcomes, particularly when those delivering services come from the same neighborhoods as those they aim to serve.<sup>281</sup> However, there are practical challenges to scaling prevention programs. Measuring success can be difficult, especially in political environments that reward immediate results.<sup>282</sup> A reduction in shootings or assaults may take months or years to materialize, making it harder to build consensus around funding these programs at the federal level. Moreover, while numbers vary greatly from a case-by-case basis, experts, such as the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, have estimated such programs to cost USD 1,000 to USD 5,000 per person for multiple years or even decades.

### **Harsher Sentencing Measures**

There exists some degree of bipartisan consensus to increase penalties for violent offenders, apply the death penalty more broadly, and expand mandatory minimum sentencing. At the same time, nearly all conservative lawmakers have called for legislation to limit judicial discretion, arguing that lenient sentencing and prolonged appeals undermine the deterrent effect of punishment and weaken public trust in the justice system. Their central proposals involve reducing the number of appeals available to death row inmates and setting time limits on federal habeas corpus petitions—actions that allow a court to review the legality of a person's imprisonment or detention—which can extend death penalty cases for over a decade.<sup>283</sup>

In addition to death penalty reform, many Republicans in the Senate have championed federal laws imposing mandatory minimum sentences for repeat violent offenders, including “three strikes” provisions that would

---

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> C-Span, “User Clip: 1993 Republican Crime Legislation,” C-SPAN.Org, April 13, 2025, <https://www.c-span.org/clip/news-conference/user-clip-1993-republican-crime-legislation/5160445?>

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> “Violence: School-Based Programs | the Community Guide,” n.d., <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/violence-school-based-programs.html?>

<sup>280</sup> Weiss et al., “An Assessment of Youth Violence Prevention Activities in USA Cities.”

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> “S.1441 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A Bill to Reform Habeas Corpus,” Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1441>.

impose life sentences after a third serious felony conviction.<sup>284</sup> They also advocate for limiting parole eligibility and expanding federal sentencing guidelines to reduce variability across jurisdictions.<sup>285</sup> Supporters argue that such measures will keep dangerous individuals off the streets and restore confidence in the justice system's ability to deliver consequences.<sup>286</sup> Critics, however, have pointed to research showing that increased severity does not always translate to lower crime rates, and warn that overly rigid sentencing laws may disproportionately impact marginalized communities and overwhelm prison systems.

## Firearms Access and Targeted Gun Regulation

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, firearms are involved in about 70 percent of homicides in the United States.<sup>287</sup> Proposals under consideration in Congress include expanded background checks, restrictions on the sale of high-capacity magazines, waiting periods for handgun purchases, and limits on certain semi-automatic weapons.<sup>288</sup> One example of such proposals is the Brady Bill: if passed, the act would require a five-day waiting period and background checks for handgun purchases.<sup>289</sup> Other proposals include licensing requirements for gun ownership and more federal resources to support the tracing of illegally trafficked firearms.<sup>290</sup> While gun regulation remains controversial, lawmakers see room for compromise around policies that focus on public safety without restricting lawful ownership. Nevertheless, the scale of gun violence has prompted increasing public backlash and has made some form of federal action increasingly difficult to avoid. Ultimately, firearm regulations remain divided along partisan lines: Democrats support gun control, while Republicans, especially those from rural and more conservative states, oppose such acts.

## Sentencing and Reentry Reform

Decades of policies emphasizing incarceration have led to a sharp increase in prison populations, raising concerns about both effectiveness and equity.<sup>291</sup> Advocates say that minimum sentences, "three strikes" laws, and reduced judicial discretion have contributed to long sentences, even for offenses that may not pose a long-term risk to public safety.<sup>292</sup> Reform-minded lawmakers are calling for sentencing frameworks that allow more flexibility, particularly for nonviolent offenders or individuals with mitigating circumstances.<sup>293</sup> There is also growing attention to what happens after incarceration.<sup>294</sup> Reentry programs that provide housing assistance, employment training, addiction treatment, and family reunification services have been shown to reduce repeat offenses in

---

<sup>284</sup> Helen Dewar, "SENATE APPROVES LIFE SENTENCE FOR THREE FELONIES," *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/09/senate-approves-life-sentence-for-three-felonies/a65bedd4-8fe6-4089-96ae-8d286c6488b3/>.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> "Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2023 | Bureau of Justice Statistics," Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d., <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/trends-and-patterns-firearm-violence-1993-2023>.

<sup>288</sup> "Brady Law | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives," n.d., <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/gun-control-act/brady-law?>

<sup>289</sup> "The Brady Bill: A Bill Becomes Law | William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum," n.d., <https://www.clintonlibrary.gov/education/brady-bill-becomes-law>.

<sup>290</sup> John Veen et al., "The BJA Firearms Trafficking Program: Demonstrating Effective Strategies to Control Violent Crime," n.d., <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/166818.pdf?>

<sup>291</sup> National Research Council, *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States*, National Academies Press eBooks, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.17226/18613>.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> Nathan James and Congressional Research Service, "Offender Reentry: Correctional Statistics, Reintegration Into the Community, and Recidivism" (Congressional Research Service, January 12, 2015), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL34287.pdf>.

several studies.<sup>295</sup> However, these programs often receive limited funding and lack coordination between respective agencies.<sup>296, 297</sup> As Congress considers changes to sentencing, many are also advocating for stronger support systems that reduce the likelihood of reoffending, ultimately lessening the strain on both the criminal justice system and affected communities.<sup>298</sup>

## Bloc Positions

### Democratic Senators

Among the Democrats in the 103rd Senate, there is general agreement on a strategy that combines increased law enforcement funding with community-based crime prevention.<sup>299</sup> Lawmakers such as Senator Joe Biden (D-DE) have become central voices advocating for expanded policing alongside increased investment in youth programs, drug treatment, and community crime prevention.<sup>300</sup> Most Democratic senators are also aligned with Biden's stances on social issues, emphasizing the need to reassure the public on crime while not abandoning the social policy side of the debate.<sup>301</sup> They support proposals to fund the hiring of tens of thousands of new police officers and are for sending federal aid to municipal departments for training and modern equipment.<sup>302</sup> However, there is a concurrent push for reforms that ensure police departments apply those resources responsibly.<sup>303</sup> Most Democratic senators support gun control measures such as background checks and waiting periods, but more extreme proposals such as bans and confiscation programs divide members.<sup>304</sup> On sentencing policy, most mainstream Democrats favor some degree of harsher penalties, although more extreme measures are likely to be met with skepticism.<sup>305</sup> In the end, Democrats tend to seek a balanced approach; however, it is common for senators to lean towards greater policing and disciplinary efforts.

### Republican Senators

Republican senators value law and order highly, viewing strong enforcement and harsh penalties as the solution to violent crimes.<sup>306</sup> Most support mandatory sentencing measures and expanded prison capacity.<sup>307</sup> Many in this group are also opponents to proposed gun control measures, often arguing that they infringe upon constitutional

---

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> "Beyond the Prison Bubble | National Institute of Justice," National Institute of Justice, n.d., <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/beyond-prison-bubble?>

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Rashawn Ray and William A. Galston, "Did The 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?," Brookings, August 28, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/did-the-1994-crime-bill-cause-mass-incarceration/>.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> "Text - S.1607 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A Bill to Control and Prevent Crime.," Congress.gov | Library of Congress, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1607/text>.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> Helen Dewar, "SENATE VOTES FOR PROPOSAL TO CURTAIL SPREAD OF ASSAULT WEAPONS," The Washington Post, January 5, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/10/senate-votes-for-proposal-to-curtail-spread-of-assault-weapons/c9b288f2-af7b-4973-b711-00012f0f2ab9/>.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

rights and distract from the need to strictly enforce existing laws.<sup>308, 309</sup> These senators typically reject calls for softer sentencing policies or reductions in incarceration, framing such ideas as part of a broader trend that undermines accountability, wastes taxpayer resources, and works alternatively as welfare packages.<sup>310</sup> They favor increased funding for police departments and grants with few conditions attached,<sup>311</sup> and preventive strategies such as school programs or community grants are often seen as secondary to deterring and punishing crime through firm disciplinary consequences.<sup>312</sup>

## Progressives and Civil Rights Advocates

Progressive Democrats have consistently raised concerns over strict policing initiatives that may disproportionately affect the less fortunate. Senators such as Paul Wellstone (D-MN), Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH), and Carol Moseley Braun (D-IL) represent a wing of the party concerned about over-policing, racial disparities, and mass incarceration.<sup>313, 314</sup> They generally argue that crime policy should also address systemic inequalities and social investment. This bloc is highly supportive of community reinvestment initiatives and calls for stronger oversight of police misconduct, diversion programs, and funding for mental health and housing services.<sup>315</sup> They are typically the most supportive of stricter gun laws, often advocating for broader regulatory reform as part of a public health approach to violence.<sup>316</sup> They oppose expansions to mandatory sentencing as well as the “three-strikes rule” and have expressed skepticism about proposals to increase prison construction or limit parole opportunities.<sup>317</sup> Lastly, most members of the Congressional Black Caucus identify as a part of this bloc due to concerns regarding disproportionate incarceration of African-Americans; however, they remain supportive of Clinton’s community-based policing programs, which have the potential to reduce the pervasiveness of crime within the community.<sup>318</sup> Though numerically small, this bloc has influenced legislative language on civil rights protections and community-based alternatives.

## Discussion Questions

1. Should the federal government play a leading role in dealing with violent crimes, or should the responsibility be left to local governments?
2. How can law enforcement reestablish trust between communities where relations have broken down? Are these efforts even necessary?

---

<sup>308</sup> “CQ Almanac Online Edition,” n.d., <https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal00-834-24302-1082242>.

<sup>309</sup> Helen Dewar, “SENATE VOTES FOR PROPOSAL TO CURTAIL SPREAD OF ASSAULT WEAPONS,” *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/10/senate-votes-for-proposal-to-curtail-spread-of-assault-weapons/c9b288f2-af7b-4973-b711-00012f0f2ab9/>.

<sup>310</sup> “Congressional Record, Volume 140 Issue 122 (Tuesday, August 23, 1994),” August 23, 1994, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1994-08-23/html/CREC-1994-08-23-pt1-PgS16.htm>.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> Mr. SIMPSON, Senators DOLE, and Senators PACKWOOD, “CONGRESSIONAL RECORD-SENATE,” CONGRESSIONAL RECORD-SENATE, October 19, 1993, <https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/VAWA-Lghist-CRSenate-11.19.93.pdf>.

<sup>314</sup> “Actions - S.1607 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A Bill to Control and Prevent Crime.,” *Congress.gov | Library of Congress*, n.d., <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1607/all-actions>.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> “Bill Clinton Takes on Protesters in Philadelphia,” April 8, 2016, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/analysis-black-leaders-supported-clinton-s-crime-bill-n552961>.

3. To what extent does increasing policing reduce crime rates?
4. Are gun-related killings due to the weapons themselves or the specific user? Is there a constitutional way to regulate firearms at all?
5. How important is rehabilitation efforts, especially towards violent criminals?

## Additional Resources

Criminal Victimization 1992: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/criminal-victimization-1992>.

Bureau of Justice Statistics Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1993:  
<https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/scjs93.pdf>.

## Bibliography

- “Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/anti-drug-abuse-act-1986>.
- Beshay. “The Link Between Local News Coverage and Americans’ Perceptions of Crime.” *Pew Research Center*, May 7, 2025. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/08/29/the-link-between-local-news-coverage-and-americans-perceptions-of-crime/>.
- “Bill Clinton Takes on Protesters in Philadelphia,” April 8, 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/analysis-black-leaders-supported-clinton-s-crime-bill-n552961>.
- “Brady Law | Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives,” n.d. <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/gun-control-act/brady-law?>
- “Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime and Justice Data Online,” n.d. <https://web.archive.org/web/20110720192206/http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline/Search/Crime/State/StateCrime.cfm>.
- Brennan Center for Justice. “Race, Mass Incarceration, and the Disastrous War on Drugs,” May 17, 2021. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/race-mass-incarceration-and-disastrous-war-drugs>.
- Brennan Center for Justice. “The 1994 Crime Bill and Beyond: How Federal Funding Shapes the Criminal Justice System,” n.d. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/1994-crime-bill-and-beyond-how-federal-funding-shapes-criminal-justice>.
- Brennan Center for Justice. “The Federal Funding That Fuels Mass Incarceration,” June 14, 2021. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/federal-funding-fuels-mass-incarceration>.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics. “Trends and Patterns in Firearm Violence, 1993-2023 | Bureau of Justice Statistics,” n.d. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/trends-and-patterns-firearm-violence-1993-2023>.
- Campaign for an Effective Crime Policy. “THREE STRIKES LAWS: FIVE YEARS LATER,” 1998. <https://static.prisonpolicy.org/scans/sp/3strikes.pdf>.
- “CDE,” n.d. <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>.
- Center for Gun Violence Solutions. “Firearm Violence in the United States | Center for Gun Violence Solutions,” n.d. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/research-reports/gun-violence-in-the-united-states>
- Cleveland Community Police Commission. “Policing in the 1940s & 1950s - Cleveland Community Police Commission,” October 31, 2023. <https://clecpc.org/100-years-project/1940s-1950s/>.
- “Crime in the United States, 1993: Uniform Crime Reports | Office of Justice Programs,” n.d. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/crime-united-states-1993-uniform-crime-reports>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "S.1441 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A bill to reform habeas corpus.," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1441>

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "S.1762 - 98th Congress (1983-1984): Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1984," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/98th-congress/senate-bill/1762>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "Text - S.1607 - 103rd Congress (1993-1994): A bill to control and prevent crime.," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/senate-bill/1607/text?>

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "The Controlled Substances Act (CSA): A Legal Overview for the 119th Congress," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45948>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.R.5210 - 100th Congress (1987-1988): Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/100th-congress/house-bill/5210>.

Congress.gov | Library of Congress. "H.R.5269 - 101st Congress (1989-1990): To control crime.," n.d. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/101st-congress/house-bill/5269>.

Congressional Research Service. "Crime Control: Federal Initiatives." *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, December 11, 1993. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/148292NCJRS.pdf>.

"Congressional Record, Volume 140 Issue 122 (Tuesday, August 23, 1994)," August 23, 1994. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-1994-08-23/html/CREC-1994-08-23-pt1-PgS16.htm>.

Council, National Research. *The Growth of Incarceration in the United States. National Academies Press eBooks*, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.17226/18613>.

Dershowitz, Hanna Liebman. "Today's Legislative Addiction to Criminalization Feels Like Déjà Vu." Reason Foundation, September 16, 2024. <https://reason.org/commentary/todays-legislative-addiction-to-criminalization-feels-like-deja-vu/>.

DeSilver, Drew. "Lower Support for Death Penalty Tracks With Falling Crime Rates, More Exonerations." Pew Research Center, April 14, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/03/28/lower-support-for-death-penalty-tracks-with-falling-crime-rates-more-exonerations/>.

Dewar, Helen. "SENATE APPROVES LIFE SENTENCE FOR THREE FELONIES." The Washington Post, January 5, 2024. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/09/senate-approves-life-sentence-for-three-felonies/a65bedd4-8fe6-4089-96ae-8d286c6488b3/>.

EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | [www.ebsco.com](http://www.ebsco.com). "Comprehensive Crime Control Act | EBSCO," n.d. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/comprehensive-crime-control-act>.

EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | [www.ebsco.com](http://www.ebsco.com). "Law Enforcement Assistance Administration | EBSCO," n.d. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/law-enforcement-assistance-administration>.

- Encyclopedia of Cleveland History | Case Western Reserve University. "CLEVELAND POLICE DEPARTMENT | Encyclopedia of Cleveland History | Case Western Reserve University," November 11, 2020.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. "Timeline," June 10, 2025. <https://www.fbi.gov/history/timeline>.
- Giffords: Courage to Fight Gun Violence. "Key Federal Regulation Acts | GIFFORDS." GIFFORDS, January 22, 2025. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/other-laws-policies/key-federal-regulation-acts/>.
- Gotsch, Kara, American Constitution Society, The Sentencing Project, Robert Gibbs, Marc Mauer, and Ryan S. King. "'After' the War on Drugs: The Fair Sentencing Act and the Unfinished Drug Policy Reform Agenda," 2011. [https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Gotsch\\_-\\_After\\_the\\_War\\_on\\_Drugs\\_0.pdf](https://www.acslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Gotsch_-_After_the_War_on_Drugs_0.pdf).
- Hinton, E. "'a War Within Our Own Boundaries': Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and the Rise of the Carceral State." *Journal of American History* 102, no. 1 (June 1, 2015): 100–112. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jahist/jav328>.
- Hinton, Elizabeth. "Why We Should Reconsider the War on Crime." *TIME*, March 20, 2015. <https://time.com/3746059/war-on-crime-history/>.
- Hparkins. "Prohibition and the Rise of the American Gangster." *Pieces of History*, February 27, 2019. <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2012/01/17/prohibition-and-the-rise-of-the-american-gangster/>.
- James, Nathan and Congressional Research Service. "Offender Reentry: Correctional Statistics, Reintegration Into the Community, and Recidivism." Congressional Research Service, January 12, 2015. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/RL34287.pdf>.
- Johnson, Olatunde C.A., and Douglas D. Scherer. "Recent Supreme Court Employment Law Developments." *Scholarship Archive*, n.d. [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/3496/](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3496/).
- Justia Law. "Furman V. Georgia, 408 U.S. 238 (1972)," n.d. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/408/238/>.
- Justia Law. "Gregg V. Georgia, 428 U.S. 153 (1976)," n.d. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/428/153/>.
- Justice Department. "The Clinton Administration's Law Enforcement Strategy: Combating Crime With Community Policing and Community Prosecution," 1999. <https://www.justice.gov/archive/dag/pubdoc/crimestrategy.pdf>.
- Kreit, Alex. "Controlled Substances, Uncontrolled Law," n.d. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2369673](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2369673)
- Lattimore, Pamela K. "Reflections on Criminal Justice Reform: Challenges and Opportunities." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 47, no. 6 (December 1, 2022): 1071–98. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-022-09713-5>.
- Lepore, Jill. "The Rise of the Victims'-Rights Movement." *The New Yorker*, May 14, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/05/21/the-rise-of-the-victims-rights-movement>.

- Matiash, Chelsea, and Lily Rothman. "The Beating That Changed America: What Happened to Rodney King 25 Years Ago." TIME, March 3, 2016. <https://time.com/4245175/rodney-king-la-riots-anniversary/>.
- Mercatus Center. "The 1970s Crime Wave," November 12, 2024. <https://www.mercatus.org/marginal-revolution-podcast/1970s-crime-wave>.
- National Institute of Justice. "Beyond the Prison Bubble | National Institute of Justice," n.d. <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/beyond-prison-bubble?>
- NBER. "How The 1960s' Riots Hurt African-Americans," n.d. <https://www.nber.org/digest/sep04/how-1960s-riots-hurt-african-americans>.
- Office of Justice Programs. Examining the Work of State Courts, 1993. National Center for State Courts, 1995. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ewsc93-npscp.pdf>.
- Office of Justice Programs. "Clearing up Homicide Clearance Rates." National Institute of Justice Journal, April 2000. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/jr000243b.pdf>.
- Office of Justice Programs. "The BJA Firearms Trafficking Program: Demonstrating Effective Strategies to Control Violent Crime," n.d. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/166818.pdf>.
- Ostrom, Brian J., Neal B. Kauder, and Court Statistics Project Staff. Examining the Work of State Courts, 1993. National Center for State Courts, 1995. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/ewsc93-npscp.pdf>.
- Palmer, Dylan. "How Plea Bargaining Has Impacted the Criminal Justice System." Honors College of Middle Tennessee State University, March 2019. <https://jewlscholar.mtsu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/1b8b6966-9691-4d5d-87ba-0350f5faf610/content>.
- Ray, Rashawn, and William A. Galston. "Did The 1994 Crime Bill Cause Mass Incarceration?" Brookings, August 28, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/did-the-1994-crime-bill-cause-mass-incarceration/>.
- Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice. National Academies Press eBooks, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.17226/26705>.
- Reno, Janet. "STATEMENT OF ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO BEFORE THE SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 1994 BUDGET REQUEST," April 22, 1993. <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ag/speeches/1993/04-22-1993a.pdf>.
- Resney, Alex. "Mass Incarceration in the United States - Ballard Brief." Ballard Brief, October 16, 2024. <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/mass-incarceration-in-the-united-states>.
- Rodriguez, Christian. "Improving Public Safety Through Better Accountability and Prevention." Center for American Progress, May 15, 2025. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/improving-public-safety-through-better-accountability-and-prevention/>.

- Shi, Ying, Daniel Hartley, Bhash Mazumder, and Aastha Rajan. "The Effects of the Great Migration on Urban Renewal." *Journal of Public Economics* 209 (April 8, 2022): 104647.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2022.104647>.
- SIMPSON, Mr., Senators DOLE, and Senators PACKWOOD. "CONGRESSIONAL RECORD-SENATE." CONGRESSIONAL RECORD-SENATE, October 19, 1993. <https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/VAWA-Lghist-CRSenate-11.19.93.pdf>.
- Statista. "Reported Violent Crime Rate in the U.S. 1990-2023," November 14, 2024.  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/191219/reported-violent-crime-rate-in-the-usa-since-1990/>.
- Team, Research. "U.S. Murder Rate by Year | Trend Chart (2025)." ConsumerShield, June 11, 2025.  
<https://www.consumershield.com/articles/murder-rate-by-year>.
- The Washington Post. "Reorganizing LEAA," March 2, 2024.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/04/13/reorganizing-leaa/898a724f-8615-4266-b615-82d9ec82ea37/>.
- The Washington Post. "Reorganizing LEAA," March 2, 2024.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/04/13/reorganizing-leaa/898a724f-8615-4266-b615-82d9ec82ea37/>.
- The Washington Post. "SENATE VOTES FOR PROPOSAL TO CURTAIL SPREAD OF ASSAULT WEAPONS." *The Washington Post*, January 5, 2024.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/10/senate-votes-for-proposal-to-curtail-spread-of-assault-weapons/c9b288f2-af7b-4973-b711-00012f0f2ab9/>.
- U.S. Department of Justice, Michael R. Rand, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Joseph M. Bessette. "Handgun Crime Victims," 1990. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/hcv.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Justice. "The Clinton Administration's Law Enforcement Strategy: Combating Crime With Community Policing and Community Prosecution," 1999.  
<https://www.justice.gov/archive/dag/pubdoc/crimestrategy.pdf>.
- Veen, John, Stacie Dunbar, Melissa Reuland, and John Stedman. "The BJA Firearms Trafficking Program: Demonstrating Effective Strategies to Control Violent Crime," n.d. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/166818.pdf>.
- Wellford, Charles, and James Cronin. "Clearing up Homicide Clearance Rates." *National Institute of Justice Journal*, April 2000. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/jr000243b.pdf>.
- Wray, Henry R., U.S. Department of Justice, and National Institute of Justice. "DRUG CONTROL: THE OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY--STRATEGIES NEED PERFORMANCE MEASURES," 1993. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/147267NCJRS.pdf>.

