We Love Taxes   
(Value of General Welfare)  
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Affirmative Case by Thomas Keith

**Summary**

All this case says is that the resolution gives us taxes and that leads to general welfare. The first contention is designed to adopt a holistic approach to the kinds of things taxes are necessary for, and the second contention is designed to paint a taxless society as an incredibly stupid suggestion. The broad buffer value combined with a simple narrative is intended to focus the debate on giving Aff as many impacts as possible to outweigh the Negative with.

Feel free to argue Neg’s case as much as you want, give the judge some good value clash, but do not detract the debate away from those impacts. Keeping a strong link between the problems of getting rid of taxes and the resolution you’re debating is the most important aspect of this case. Hammer home the reasoning throughout both Aff Rebuttals on why public needs being valued over property rights leads to taxes, and be sure to focus most of your time on the five applications in your first contention.

While that link between the resolution and your impacts is the most important aspect of your case, it’s also the weakest. Expect Negatives to argue in some way that taxes don’t violate property rights, and thus aren’t a consequence of the resolution. One way they’re expected to try is by using the social contract: You agreed to surrender your taxes by living in society, so it’s not actually violating your property rights. Social contract theory is powerful because it’s simple, intuitive, and too few debaters understand how to communicate its problems in a clear and simple way. Thus, when using this case, be prepared to beat social contract theory.

Another way they may try to punch a hole in the “taxes violate property rights” narrative is the idea that taxes actually protect private property. After all, they fund the courts and police forces that are necessary for property rights to exist. The problem with this is simple: By justifying property theft with protection of property rights, the Negative is literally saying that police forces and court systems should be designed to protect property rights and nothing else.

So, focus the debate on the impacts, make sure that those impacts are firmly linked to the resolution, and you’ll be able to win on your value and most likely on your opponent’s as well.

We Love Taxes   
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Look around you. Our markets, our culture, our society, our country. None of these things could have been built without humanity’s natural tendency to interact with one another—to create homes, towns, cities, and nations. The order that keeps this interaction going is preserved by an implicit agreement that we all share—that we will act for the good of others and not of ourselves. That is why we allow ourselves and our actions to be regulated so we do not kill, steal, or enslave one another without fierce repercussion.

The glue that holds all of this together is simple: Logistics. The logistics of a police force that preserves order in our society so we can go about our daily lives. The logistics of a judicial system that preserves justice in our society. The logistics of public infrastructure that are necessary for all of us to maintain quality of life. Without the necessary ingredients for these logistics, our society will fall apart.

Those ingredients can only be provided at the expense of property rights, which is why I stand *Resolved: The needs of the public ought to be valued above private property rights.*

# Definitions

In order to prevent confusion, I will define the following terms:

Needs of the Public: The Needs of the Public are operationally defined as “that which is necessary for a society to exist and flourish.”

Private Property Rights: Private Property Rights are operationally defined as “The basic rights of individuals to the peaceful possession, control and enjoyment of the things they own as well as their rights to make contracts to rent, sell or give away all or part of their various ownership rights over these possessions to any other people willing to accept the owners' terms.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

# Value: General Welfare

The value in today’s round should be General Welfare, defined operationally as “the health and well-being of people in a society.” The reason this should be the value in today’s round you can tag as:

## Value Link: Robust Measure

Public needs and private property rights are broad concepts that dabble in a wide range of areas. As a result, we need a value that is broad enough to allow us to fully understand the implications of this resolution, and that’s exactly what the value of “General Welfare” provides. Let’s explore why Public Needs best meets this value, starting with

# Contention 1: Public Needs Improves General Welfare

We could probably stand here all day and list every minor and insignificant policy that values public needs over private property. I’m not here to do that. While other debaters quibble on things like eminent domain and nuclear weapons confiscation, I’m here to focus this debate on what matters: the underpinnings of society itself.

The most obvious and most important conflict between public needs and property rights is taxes. Without taxes, the needs of the public could not be met. Without violating your right to private property by confiscating your money, we couldn’t have taxes. So what we see here is that the very existence of taxes comes from affirming this resolution, because it’s literally taking property for the sake of public needs. In the next few applications, we’re going to explore just a few of the many ways that General Welfare depends on taxes, and thus public needs.

## Application A: Court System.

We take for granted that if someone steals from us, we have the right to ensure that they’re punished for breaking the law. Without taxes, however, we don’t have the funds necessary to keep records, conduct investigations, assign lawyers, and pay judges. This means that unless we affirm the resolution, we lose the ability to enforce the basic principles of justice that are necessary for a free society.

## Application B: Public Infrastructure.

The roads and bridges that we drive on to get to work, transport goods, and trade with people across the country and around the world were built by affirming this resolution. Without taxes, our roads’ maintenance cannot be ensured and their production cannot come about. Unless we affirm this resolution, we lose the ability to preserve and maintain the very things that drive our prosperity and our success as a country.

## Application C: Police Departments.

The moment a child gets kidnapped or a murder takes place, we expect the perpetrators to be held responsible. But without the money necessary to build prisons, hire officers, and ensure they have the capabilities to stop crime, they won’t be able to. That is the consequence of negating this resolution: facilitating crime and undermining our rule of law.

## Application D: National Defense.

Whether big or small, the ability to defend one’s self is an imperative for any nation. Time and time again throughout history, we have seen that when a nation neglects its military it will be destroyed and its people oppressed. But we aren’t just neglecting it when we negate the resolution, we’re cutting off all of its funding—which guarantees leaving a society wide open to attack. Maintaining a military is important, and it can only come when we affirm this resolution.

## Application E: Education

An educated populace is foundational to society. Without a public education system, many children lacking access to education will grow up illiterate and without the tools they need to succeed in this world and become educated citizens. Unfortunately, unless we have taxes to pay for adequate schools, teachers, and supplies, our society will lose the potential of millions of brilliant minds who we had the opportunity to cultivate, but didn’t. Education protects the future of this country, and we only get that protection by affirming this resolution.

What we see here is that because choosing to value public needs over private property rights is necessary for taxes to exist and for governments to obtain revenue, then the only way to maintain the underpinnings of an lawful, free, and prosperous society is to affirm this resolution.

# Contention 2: Property Rights Hinder General Welfare

Your money is your property. Anyone who tells you otherwise is trying to rob you. When that money is taken from you—whether by a thief or a government—your right to that property was violated. Therefore, a society that fails to value public needs over private property are the ones that choose to abandon taxes.

Now, while at first glance the prospect of not having to pay taxes may seem like a good thing, the problem is that it creates devastating consequences for you and the rest of society. Not only do we lose all of the things that I mentioned in my previous contention—such as law, order, justice, freedom, and prosperity—but a society loses its ability to function on its own.

## Application A: The Republic of Cospaia

The idea that any society can survive for long without taxes is nothing short of a pipedream. Only one country has ever done it, and it didn’t turn out very nicely. There’s very little that’s notable about the 350-person Republic of Cospaia except that it came about from a mapmaking error, it had no taxes, and as a result was completely lawless. Not only did they have no public infrastructure, no laws, no police, and no courts,[[2]](#footnote-2) but they became infamous for smuggling tobacco and other contraband items into the Papal states.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Because Cospaia wasn’t willing to sacrifice private property rights for the sake of public needs, they refused to tax their citizens, and thus created for themselves a haven for smugglers and lawbreakers. Societies will fall if we negate this resolution, and if they don’t they will create something much worse.

Thank you.

Negative Brief: We Love Taxes

This case is designed to do one single thing: Outweigh anything that Neg can come up with. Focusing the debate on the applications will do nothing more than strengthen Aff's advocacy. Instead, the Negative needs to find some way to delink the resolution from the impacts of losing taxes. One way to do this would be to clash values and say that the impacts are irrelevant, but as a good friend of mine once said: "1 star out of 5. Would Not Recommend." It will be extremely difficult to find a value that both eliminates the holistic impacts of taxes while still being able to outweigh general welfare.

Instead, a better argument would be that taxes don't violate private property rights. Ask the judge, "Does it make sense to you that the United States at its founding, with all of its property protections, constitutional restrictions, and focus on individual liberty, secretly didn't like private property rights all because it had a tax code?" Of course not.

There are multiple reasons that you can provide for why not. One of these is social contract theory: Taxes aren't violating private property rights because you've already surrendered the right to your taxes in exchange for protection. It's voluntary, thus not a violation. To apply this Biblically (don't do this in a debate round), the taxes are already Caesar's, not yours. Another reason could be to draw a distinction between currency and property: Currency is loaned to you by the government, whereas you can stumble across land anywhere. Thus tax dollars aren't actually your property.

Another line of thought to go down would be the general idea that taxes actually protect property rights. They fund police stations and court systems that are necessary for property rights to exist, and thus are morally justified. This is an argument commonly used by libertarians to justify taxes, but Negs who use it had better watch out—Affs can easily point out that if we justify taxes with property rights, then any use of taxes that don’t explicitly protect property rights must be eliminated. Goodbye, murder laws.

Another way to go about it would be to argue against involuntary taxes. Argue that not all taxes have to violate your private property—that there are other ways to fund the government. Voluntary donation to the government would be one example of how this could be done. A more reasonable source of funding (but slightly more tenuous) would be customs duties & fees, arguing that things like tariffs and border taxes aren't actually violating private property—it involves peoples' choice to enter you country, and that's merely the cost.

One way to turn the case against itself would be to utilize the application of Cospaia. The taxes case makes the village-country out to be a lawless den of smugglers, but there are plenty of websites that paint the country in a favorable light, observing that the quality of life there was generally higher than neighboring countries.[[4]](#footnote-4) Be careful when turning the application, though: argument itself is essentially that anarchist states work, so we don't need taxes, and if phrased improperly it will hurt your credibility.

1. Glossary of Political Economy Terms <http://www.auburn.edu/~johnspm/gloss/private_property_rights> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Federico Fioravanti. “The incredible story of Cospaia.” August 19, 2015. <http://www.umbriatouring.it/en/lincredibile-storia-di-cospaia/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bill Thayer. “Cospaia.” The main bibliographical reference is Filippo NATALI's *Lo stato libero di Cospaia nell' alta valle del Tevere [1440‑1826]* Umbertide, stab. tip. Tiberino, 1892. 176pp. <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Umbria/Perugia/S.Giustino/Cospaia/home.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Anthony Caprio. “Cospaia — The Anarchist Republic.” Ludwig von Mises-institutet I Sverige, March 24, 2015.

   <http://www.mises.se/2015/03/24/cospaia-den-anarkistiska-republiken/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)