



The 2001 Turkey Watch Report

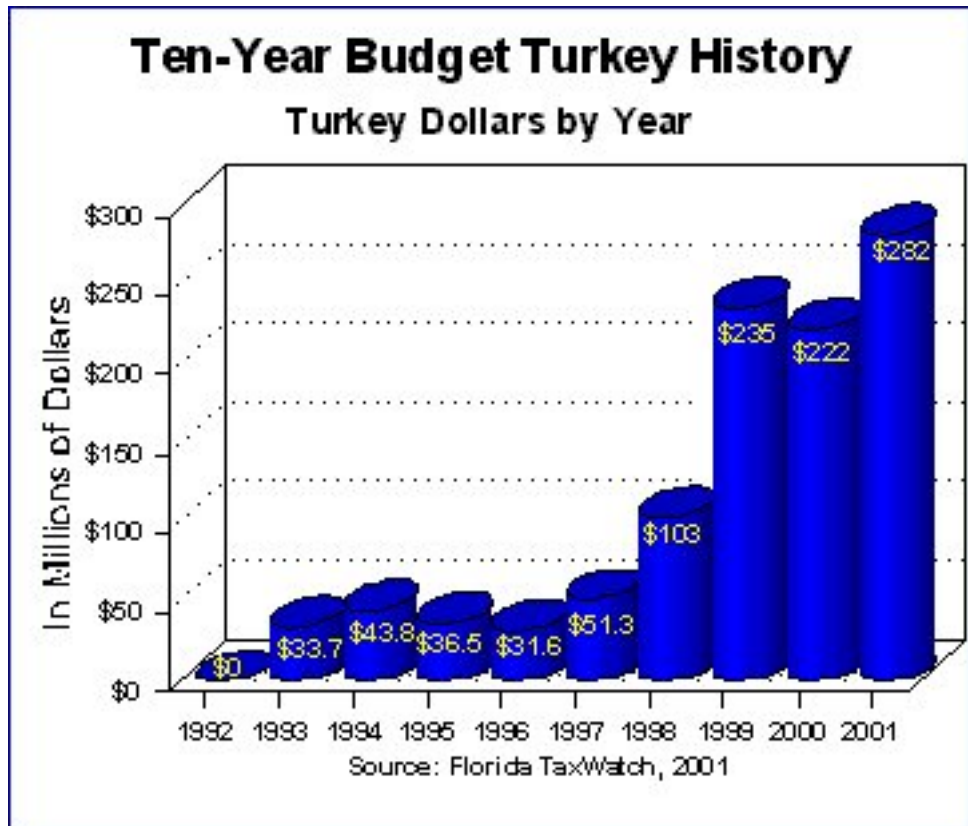
The 2001-2002 State Budget Contains 528 Items Worth \$282 Million

June 2001

This year, Florida TaxWatch has identified 528 items placed in the budget valued at \$282.8 million. Of the total appropriated for budget turkeys, \$129.9 million were found in General Revenue and \$152.9 million in trust funds. This year's budget turkeys cost \$46 for each Florida family and cost every man, woman and child in Florida \$18. (Please see [Attachment A](#) for a county-by-county breakdown of turkey dollars that could be more wisely spent.)

In the 18 years of Florida TaxWatch Turkey reviews, this year sees the largest flock of turkeys, exceeding the previous record of \$234.7 million set in

1999. In number, this year's 528 just passes 1999's total of 526. This confirms that turkeys are back in full force after a few years of relatively small turkey numbers in the early 1990s (see chart).



What Is A Budget Turkey?

Florida TaxWatch has been declaring war on budget turkeys since 1983, and the battle continues. As in previous years, it is important to note that the "budget turkey" label does not denote condemnation of a budget item's worthiness. The term merely suggests that, with the state's vast and pressing needs and limited resources, the question must be asked, "Is this the best use of Floridians' state tax dollars?" The priorities of all citizens must be considered. This and previous Turkey Watch reports are not attempts to record only government waste or inefficiency. While in some cases that may be a factor, this report offers an independent assessment about the honesty, integrity and public review of the state's \$48.3

"Budgeting Without Discipline"

*"Florida voters who place greater importance on projects within their community, at the expense of what are clearly more critical needs of the state majority, must share in the responsibility of the turkey fiasco. Legislators, however well-intentioned and noble when first elected, learn very swiftly that petty parochialism pays off when voters tally the score of the legislative sessions. Those who reward turkey-prone lawmakers with re-election are no less guilty of abuse of the state's trust than are the lawmakers themselves."
-- Florida TaxWatch*

billion 2001-2002 budget.

Turkeys are added onto the budget during the legislative process, some very late in the session. This maneuver circumvents normal planning and budgeting processes which, by necessity, require close scrutiny by state agencies, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budgeting, legislative committees, staff and meaningful citizen input. Florida TaxWatch's Turkey Watch criteria make allowances for a considerable amount of legislative initiative. Too often, the normal processes are bypassed or given less than full consideration.

TaxWatch Turkey Criteria

- 1.** Projects or programs that did not go through a legitimate review process allowing for proper evaluation: agency budget requests, governor's recommended budget or legislative committee hearings.
- 2.** Appropriations that were inserted in the Budget Conference, meaning they did not appear in either the Senate or House final budget.
- 3.** Subsidies to private organizations, councils or committees which can and should obtain funding from private sources.
- 4.** Local government projects benefitting local area residents but lacking significant local funding support and/or overall benefit to the state as a whole.
- 5.** Appropriations which circumvent competition and mandate that a specific vendor or project receive funding.

6. Low priority projects that get funded over higher priority items.

7. Inappropriate sources and questionable appropriations e.g., only partially funded with a large annualized cost in subsequent years, funded from inappropriate sources and/or duplicative of existing programs.

This year Florida TaxWatch has provided for some additional legislative prerogatives, with very limited exceptions, by not designating any appropriation that was in both the House and Senate final budgets as a turkey.

Parochial projects may or may not have merit, but such spending can undercut the spirit of true performance-based program budgeting. Moreover, such spending circumvents accountability, disrupts logical program prioritizations and subordinates statewide concerns to the localized needs or desires of exclusive areas of the state.

What Else Could a Turkey Buy?

One of the best arguments for stopping turkeys is the many urgently needed state services that the funds spent on turkeys would otherwise purchase. Florida TaxWatch investigated other funding opportunities for the revenue appropriated to this year's turkey crop. To show the magnitude of this spending, \$282 million could be used to purchase any of the following critically needed social service, educational and statewide needs:

- ▶ A merit increase of \$500 for the state's top 25% teachers (\$18.6 million)
- ▶ Hire 10,000 new teachers (\$263 million)
- ▶ \$120 in additional funding for each K-12 student
- ▶ Double the number of children being fed in subsidized day care (\$71 million)
- ▶ Fully serve the 170,000 Healthy Start clients (\$25.5 million)
- ▶ Add 50,000 elderly persons to Community Care for the Elderly (\$133 million)

Such projects crowd out legitimate, prioritized items that did compete in a merit-based process. They reduce citizen confidence in the appropriations process and equitable methodology (Whoever has the

million)

▶ Provide a general tax reduction of \$46 per household

*most votes, wins,
regardless of merit,
when "political might
makes right.").*

UPDATE

On June 15th, Governor Bush delivered his veto message on the 2001 - 2002 Budget. On the Governor's list were **302 items (57.1% of the total items)** identified by Florida TaxWatch for a total amount of **\$179 million (62.7% of the total amount)**.

*"That most delicious of all privileges--spending other people's money."
- John Randolph, Early 19th Century Member of Congress*

*Public money ought to be touched with the most scrupulous conscientious of honor.
It is not the produce of riches only, but of the hard earnings of labor and poverty."
- Thomas Paine*

See the 2001 Turkey List [HERE](#).

See the 2001 Turkey List Alphabetized by County [HERE](#).

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