TRUST IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS: THE TRUST FUNDS THAT BUILT THE INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM AND CONSERVED AMERICA'S LANDSCAPES

Abstract

Influential politicians and participants in democratic government are always on the lookout for means of ensuring that their preferred programs or activities are durable. One mechanism of making a commitment that lasts through expected changes in the political climate is establishing a trust fund. The linkage of a revenue stream to a spending activity builds public trust because there is a legislative history and a structure that provides the necessary money to conduct the program. However, the public, and lawmakers themselves, should only expect as much trust from these programs as they are willing to give them at enactment and when reexamined. The level of trust afforded by Congress is dependent on the political sway of the program and its supporters. Because Congress is traditionally unwilling to make dramatic fiscal commitments, these programs do not have complete trust. Therefore, are trust funds durable, worthy, and valuable federal mechanisms, in that they are more effective than their defects? To answer the question, this thesis examines the Highway Trust Fund and the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which were created in the years after World War II when Keynesian fiscal policy played a major role in government budgeting. Despite their tying of revenue to spending, these programs have legislative or political defects. These defects, which can be solved with serious consideration and difficult decision making, will be enumerated in describing their creation and undertaking over decades. Trust funds are important tools for enabling federal action, because the political support afforded and commitment allowed by the public and Congress provides time and space for the federal government to perform complicated, modern, and national tasks. Trust was critical to these programs being created, replacing inadequate funding systems, and is behind their fruitful operation over decades. It is also necessary for them to be successful in the future.

URI
http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/37309

Collections
ETD -- Graduate theses

Related items

Showing items related by title, author, creator and subject.

Trust and the African Slave Trade: A Study of the African-European Relationship of Trust during the height of trade 1600-1800
Priolo, Chantel (2008-06-03)
This study explores how the customary sequence of trading procedures between European slave traders and African royalty established a relationship of trust. The paper focuses on the experience of European traders on the ...

Trust Her Not. Duet.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (lyricist); M. W. Balfe (composer) (Oliver Ditson & Co., 277 Washington St., [n.d.])
This Highway Trust Fund Primer is designed to provide basic information about the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). It describes how the fund works, its sources of revenue, what the balances are, funding levels, and budgetary constraints on spending levels. It does not address, in any detail, the Mass Transit Account of the HTF. C The Byrd test: The Byrd test requires an across the board reduction in Federal-aid apportionments if the Highway Account balance, plus estimated income for the next 2 years, is insufficient to cover outstanding commitments in a given fiscal year. No Byrd test reductions are anticipated in the foreseeable future.