

Is there a better way to spend \$91 billion dollars?

Karen Donahue, RSM

Last month, several news outlets including [NPR](#) and [The Guardian](#), reported on the growing reliance on nuclear weapons by the world's nine nuclear-armed states - China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States. [In a report released on June 17, 2024](#), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize) noted that the nuclear states spent \$10.8 billion more (a 13.4 percent increase) on their nuclear arsenals in 2023 than they did in the previous year, for a total of \$91.4 billion. This comes to a shocking \$2,898 per second!

At a time when the world is facing multiple crises, including endemic poverty and catastrophic climate change, it is difficult if not impossible to justify this level of spending on weapons that must never be used. Over the past five years (2019-2023) the nuclear powers have spent \$387 billion to build and maintain their nuclear arsenals. By comparison, in 2021 the Director of the UN World Food Program stated that it would be possible to end global hunger if the world would spend \$40 billion a year over the next nine years (\$360 billion). This is \$27 billion less than the nuclear states have spent on nuclear weapons in just five years.

While the report itself is lengthy (86 pages), it is worth perusing. It is heavy on graphics that are very informative. There is a section devoted to each nuclear power (the U.S. in on page 19). Another section looks at the major defense contractors and notes what they spend on lobbying, the number of lobbyists hired and what think tanks they support. Major U.S. - based contractors include Boeing (page 30), General Dynamics (page 34), Lockheed Martin (page 48) and Northrup Grumman (page 50).