Deficit Reduction Made Easy:
Change Tax Day

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As I pondered o’er my forms
Seeking haven from tax storms
I reached judgments quite severe
’Bout the pols who put me here.

Taxes are beyond the ken
Of any of us mortal men
Schedules we can’t comprehend
Calculations without end.

Cross-reference leads to cul-de-sac
Definitions double back
Instructions that do not instruct
All to take my usufruct.

How can ordinary Joes  
Deconstruct IRS prose?  
Who (save those with MBAs)  
Can navigate this maddening maze?  

1040 is the hardest part  
But that, alas, is just the start  
States, of course, must have their say  
Each taxing in a different way.  

Heaven help the folks like me  
Who live in A and work in B  
Then New York City, for my pains,  
Takes a piece of what remains.  

As soothsayer, I must estimate  
Or be fined next year for paying late  
If, God forbid, dependents work  
I file more forms — a parent’s perk.  

I guess I have myself to blame  
For playing in this ghastly game  
I could have hired a CPA  
To get me through this dismal day.  

But since I trod those many miles  
Compiling records, forms, and files  
It seemed that I should be the one  
To frolic in this springtime fun.
Justice Holmes said long ago
(When governments small kept taxes low)
Tax was civilization's price
Purchasing what Holmes found nice.

'Tis true enough, but Holmes omits
To mention that those benefits
May cost us more than they repay
When politicians join the fray.

They love to spend our hard-earned wealth
It buys them votes - but not by stealth
For we, like fish, respond to lures
The more one gleams, more it obscures.

Those lures add up to deficit
And though it's dropping bit by bit
Fiscal balance - 'o halcyon day
Is always several years away.

We warm to politicians' smile
Their promises do us beguile
We forget that bills come due
(1 pray mine will go to you).

The problem's ancient, I suppose
Yet simple answer I propose
The goal? Forge links 'twixt choice and cost
Tightening discipline we have lost.
How, you ask, can this be done?
Can deficit wars be truly won?
Can voters learn that what they buy
Is what on Tax Day makes them cry?

Reform our calendar - this I urge
It separates what we should merge
Election Day is too remote
We should pay tax just `ere we vote.

Like hanging, as Sam Johnson said,
We'd focus on both hope and dread
As we voted in November
Just-paid taxes we'd remember.

No six months lapse would dissipate
The pain we felt on payment date
No April songbirds, budding trees
Would salve that wound or suffering ease.

A Tax Day on November first
Would regulate the voters' thirst
By entering the polling booth
With tax in mind, we'd vote the truth.

Memory on Election Day
Would limit wants for which we'll pay
By sharpening our civic nerve
We'd get the government we deserve.