A State in Class

Rules summary

Who Pays for Us All?
6 to 8 players · 8 rounds · 45-60 min

Each player gets a role with their income and their costs. Round by round, the table votes in secret on **how much tax is paid** and **which public services it goes to**. Everyone tries to reach their savings goal; but if the country breaks down (Failed State), everyone loses. Everyone's money stays secret until the end.

A round

Before round 1: the opening pact (page 2); then the roles.

1. **Event.** The round's event is read out (table on page 2).
2. **Debate** (2 minutes). Which tax suits you? Talk, negotiate, make promises.
3. **Tax vote**, in secret: A, B, C or D. The option with most votes wins.
4. **Pay day.** Everyone receives their Income and pays the tax and their Cost of Living. Anyone who can't pay hands over everything, drops to 0, gets an **Exclusion token** and Tension goes up by 3.
5. **Budget vote**, in secret: Health, Education or Social Shield. The money raised is shared out 3-2-1.
6. **End of round:** Tension is adjusted (page 2).

The taxes

What each player pays, by class:

Option	Upper	Middle	Working	Raised (table of 8)
A Flat tax	2	2	2	16
B Proportional	5	2	1	19
C Progressive	7	3	1	26
D Maximum effort	10	4	2	38

Ties: the deciding vote goes to the player with the lowest Income (and, if equal, the lowest class) who voted for one of the tied options. If nobody votes, the previous round's tax carries over.

The budget: 3-2-1 split

The votes rank the three services 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The money is shared out in turns: **3 coins to the 1st, 2 to the 2nd and 1 to the 3rd**, until it runs out. E.g. 26 coins → 14, 8 and 4.

The coins go into each service's **fund** and are never lost. When a fund reaches the **price of a level**, the service goes up one level (from 1 to 5):

Players	8	7	6
Price of a level	10	9	8

A service already at 5 passes its share on to the next in the order. Services with no votes go last (the lowest level first), but they still receive coins.

What the services give

Health ≥ 4: Cost of Living −1 for everyone.

Education ≥ 3: the middle and working classes earn 1 more.

Social Shield ≥ 3: the working class pays no Cost of Living.

At the **Midlife Crossroads** (round 4), everyone draws a card that helps or hurts them depending on the level of the service it measures: a good public system protects you; a weak one doesn't.

How to win

When round 8 ends, each player adds up:

- **Public dividend:** (Health + Education + Shield) × 2. Everyone gets it.
- **Legacy:** +5 for everyone if the three services add up to 12 or more.
- **Your life,** according to your role's goals: −4 if you don't reach Get By, 0 if you get by, +8 if you live well, +12 if you thrive.
- **−5** for each Exclusion token.
- **Final Tension** 5-7: −2 for all; 8-9: −5 for all.

The highest score wins; tied players share the win. With Legacy, **the whole table wins as a country**.

The opening pact

Before seeing their role, everyone gets **3 coins** and secretly puts in as many as they like; the rest are theirs. The total put in sets the **starting Tension**:

Put in by everyone	8 players	7 players	6 players
Tension 1	20+	18+	15+
Tension 2	17-19	15-17	13-14
Tension 3	13-16	11-14	10-12
Tension 4	< 13	< 11	< 10

Social Tension

If it reaches **10**, it is a **Failed State**: the game ends at once and everyone scores 0.

What happens	Tension
Someone can't pay (Exclusion token)	+3
Exclusion token at the Midlife Crossroads	+2
At the end of the round, from round 2: for each service at level 1	+1
The Great storm (round 6)	+1
At the end of the round: all three services at level 4 or above	−1

At the end of rounds **3 and 6** comes **obsolescence**: all three services go down one level (the coins in the funds stay).

Optional: hidden layer

For groups who already know the game: as well as a role, each player secretly gets an **ideology** with a goal (+5 points if achieved) and a **power** they can use once. See the 'Hidden layer' sheet.

The events

Round	Event	Effect
1	Economic boom	Everyone earns 2 more.
2	Seasonal flu	If Health ≤ 2: Cost of Living +2 for everyone.
3	Cost-of-living crisis	If Shield ≤ 2: Cost of Living +2 for everyone.
4	The Midlife Crossroads	No votes: pay day and one card each.
5	Tech breakthrough	If Education ≥ 3: middle and working classes earn 2 more until the end.
6	Great storm	Tension +1. If Health ≤ 2 and Shield ≤ 2: −3 for everyone; otherwise, −1.
7	Social peace	If Tension ≤ 3: 15 more coins for the budget.
8	The Legacy	Last round; then the final count.

The Midlife Crossroads (round 4)

No debate, no votes and no Cost of Living. Everyone receives their Income and draws a random card from the deck of 12. The cards are read **one by one** and each one measures a service at that moment:

- **Health**: serious illness, a mother who can no longer cope alone, 'you hit rock bottom', the waiting list.
- **Social Shield**: eviction, nine months out of work, your daughter is born, the inheritance.
- **Education**: your job becomes obsolete, your daughter's degree, the civil service exam. These can make you **move up or down a class**.
- Card 12 measures all three services at once.

With the service at level 1-2, the card usually costs a lot of money (and a token if you can't pay); at level 3, a little; at level 4-5, nothing, or even an advantage.

Anyone who changes class takes the spare role of their new class (Landlord, Nurse or Waiter) and keeps their money. There is only one spare per class: the first player who needs it keeps it.