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Point/Counterpoint: Taxes

Mike A. Cobb, *Liberty University*



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By Mike Cobb

There are lots of good things that the government could do, but should they? Must those who actually pay taxes be forced to keep paying more until every perceived need is met? It may be that some problems are being paid for but not being met simply because of poor management. Also, a tax system that charges higher rates the more you make is a penalty on the successful. Additionally, being charged a tax on your estate seems just flat greedy. I think that as more people get government at no cost, there's less pressure and accountability on government to restrict costs. Taxes on corporations simply raise our costs and make those businesses less globally competitive. Finally, instead of calling for higher taxes, why not encourage more charitable giving through greater tax deductions, and restrict expansion of an already bloated government?

First, let's skip the rhetoric that without taxes schools will shut down and prisoners will be released to roam the streets. Can't government officials start by cutting their benefits before our needs? We obviously need to pay some taxes, but how do we know whether the existence of a pothole is because of insufficient funds or because of inept management?

Second, why is it that the more money you make, the higher percentage you need to pay in taxes? A book by Obama's new chief of staff states: "Democrats want a progressive tax code that rewards work and asks the most of those who have been blessed with the most. . . ." Interesting way to state it but a progressively higher tax system rewards work only to a point, and then they punish work by charging a higher rate on those who make more. For their higher rate, do the rich get an additional vote on how the money is spent? Do they get different streets to drive on or different water lines to their house? A graduated tax system seems a bit like taxation without equal representation when compared to those who pay no taxes.

Third, why do some people get free government? It's representation without taxation. Not counting those in poverty, what do you do with all those who pay no taxes at all? One report used IRS statistics for 2006 to deduce that some 45.6 million tax filers—one-third of all filers—have no tax liability after taking their credits and deductions. The trend seems higher as that is a 57 percent increase since 2000. When someone's meal is all expenses paid do they order steak and lobster or grilled cheese? When it comes time for a new government program, what will the response be from the people who get benefits at no cost? For those 45.6 million filers, someone else pays for their police force, teachers, and road improvements. Instead of complaining and pressuring the rich to pay even more, maybe what the "rich" need is a thank you since they're covering our costs.

Fourth, why are we taxed on our earnings once, and then taxed again when we will our estate upon our death? Why penalize someone for what they've saved and given to their children? Why not call it the success tax and charge it right away instead of when someone dies? Once someone gets too successful, immediately fine them – for that's what this tax is. I think instead that if someone's worked, saved, and built up a nice gift for their children, we don't need to punish them and should drop the tax altogether. Being taxed once should be enough.

Fifth, higher taxes on the "rich" and especially "big corporations" are often a tax on small businesses and companies who simply pass those charges on to us as their cost of doing business. Additionally, research shows that with the exception of Japan, America's top business tax rate is the worst among our 30 largest trading partners. We should cut the rates to stimulate growth.

Sixth, for those claiming an urgent need for more taxes, is it so great that you're currently giving the IRS extra money? Does it match those who freely give to charities? Let's give greater tax deductions for charitable contributions instead of forcing more "contributions" to Washington. People could freely choose to directly support groups that efficiently, effectively, responsibly meet societal needs. Why involve Washington? Are they normally efficient or responsible?

Taxes shouldn't be raised during a recession, and neither should tax cuts be cancelled. Research shows that we'll be faced with a hefty new tax bill beginning in 2011, should many current tax breaks be allowed to expire. One Representative suggested as a stimulus a two month tax holiday where we simply don't pay taxes for two months. We'd certainly have the money sooner. For those not paying for their government, thank a "rich" person before demanding that they pay even more. Smart tax policy encourages behavior that is beneficial to society (savings, children, education, etc.). It also encourages us to meet many of society's needs ourselves, without Washington's interference. Finally, it just might be the case that Washington spends too much too foolishly, not taxes too little.