

## Tax reform opinion and ideas

1. Update and simplify the current tax code. It has become a tangled mess that even the IRS and well respected tax accountants can't fully understand. It is far too complicated and has far too many loopholes. Eliminate the numerous tax credits and exemptions but embrace charitable donations as a write-off, especially local ones. This would allow the government to reduce social/welfare programs over time and allow charities to build and/or enhance successful programs to help those in need. It would also allow them to be more specific to the needs of their communities. Every community has people with very different needs. Lastly, if someone does not have earned income, they can't get a refund through credits. That only compounds the problem and it is very unfair to those who work hard. If you put zero in, you shouldn't get money back.
2. Raise the minimum wage over the next few years & then tie it to inflation. Get the States to adhere to the amount as well. During the same time lower and fix the welfare social programs. This will do two things. First, it will give people incentive and a reason to work. Work instills pride and dignity but people must be paid a fair amount to do so. The current minimum wage can't do that. If it was near \$11/hour, that would give a single person almost \$23,000 a year with full time work. A family with 2 working adults will have a fair wage to build a family and buy items needed. They won't be rich but they will begin to be productive overall. This will in turn help the entire economy. Adjusting the tax code will be needed so that those same people can keep more of their take home pay and not pay it to income taxes. It would also allow them to save a bit for their future if they can manage their income & expenses.
3. Give a direct tax write-off for individuals who buy long-term care insurance and eliminate the current possible deduction if someone itemizes and qualifies. This will reduce the legal maneuvers to artificial impoverish oneself which in turn hurts Medicaid and those that really need it. It will also reduce the burden on Medicaid over time. Embrace the partnership policies.
4. Give a federal tax incentive to save for a college education or other schooling beyond high school. The 529's are great vehicles and many States have tax incentives but it could be enhanced on the federal level. College debt is now second behind mortgages and ahead of credit cards.
5. Lower corporate tax rates. The United States needs to be competitive in a global economy with tax rates. This is why corporations use accounting schemes and maneuvers to pay tax overseas. They are still paying tax, just not here. Bring it down into the 25-28% range and you will see tax revenues paid in the U.S. and not in some foreign country.
6. Fix Social Security. Increase the amount of wage income or add surtax on the amount over \$118,500, just like you do for Medicare. It won't increase a high wage earners benefit but it will help the overall program. Also, increase the full retirement age by 1-2 years for those under age 25. Lastly increase the 12.4% by 1% for each side (employee & employer) and make it 14.4%. All of these small tweaks will shore up the overall system.
7. Think about an overall federal sales tax. There are a lot of people and business' that hide or work in cash. They may not claim it but they certainly will spend it. It's an easy source of tax revenue. Exempt the necessities so that the lower income citizens aren't punished. You will need to rework the tax brackets lower for this to happen politically, as long as it is a positive adjustment from a revenue standpoint.
8. Make all schools teach basic financial planning skills to every child before they graduate. Understanding how money works, budgeting, loans, etc. is something that every person needs to know because every person will face it. Better fiscal understanding and responsibility by our citizens will pay dividends for our future.

9. Fix health care insurance. We spend more than any other developed country but have one of the highest overall coverage cost and we don't even cover all citizens! That's crazy and just plain unacceptable. Bureaucratic abuse in administrative and overhead costs needs to stop. We don't need to recreate the wheel. Look at other countries (like in Europe) programs and use their models to build a universal plan. I understand that this will need revenue, but I think that everyone would agree that a universal plan that covers everyone with the same basic care is fair and needed. The plan needs to be the same for everyone though, including congress. If you want to allow people to buy a supplemental plan for "extras" that would work. Corporations would need to pay a certain percentage for their employees and all U.S. citizens would need to pay as well.

I believe it is important that prudent tax reform look at many areas overall and how they would impact the entire United States. In other words, how do all the small parts impact the big picture? Any and all reform needs to bring back the American Dream of years past. This great nation was built on hard work, grasping opportunity and rewarding success. However, we are slowly becoming a nation of dependency. Regulations and social programs that are in place are becoming more of a trap for people and businesses, which in turn lose work habits and job skills. We need to help people up and not hold them down or keep them in a dependency status. It's becoming a disincentive to work and there needs to be a change in this behavior in exchange for the benefits. Some people truly need the help, while others are taking advantage of our current systems. Congress must control spending and be more fiscally responsible. We also cannot afford as a nation to add to our current deficit and continue our spending patterns. All of these opinions I have above will make an impact when done together and build a better future for everyone to pursue the American Dream.

I am a self-employed financial planner/advisor. I'm registered independent and see both sides (right & left), pay my fair share in taxes, but I'm fed up with no one leading this great country! I volunteer on local boards as well as being a trustee on a local municipal board. We seem to get things done for our community. Stop pointing fingers and find common ground. I understand numbers and this doesn't need to be complicated and fixing many of our nation's problems isn't rocket science. You just need to make prudent and fair decisions. Good luck and thank you for allowing the public to have input!