

To whomever it may concern,

I am writing to you with regard to the unfair tax laws imposed on all Americans living abroad. According to current law, American citizens are required to file their U.S. taxes even if they are living, working, and earning income abroad. In other words, despite not benefitting from the resources available to Americans living locally, Americans living abroad are required to essentially pay a citizenship fee. Other than Eritrea, the United States is the only country in the world to impose a tax on its non-resident citizens. Further, it is the only country to tax its non-residential citizens the same as its residential citizens despite the fact that non-residential citizens are denied many of the benefits of a residential citizen, including access to federally-funded educational facilities, eligibility for certain federally-funded scholarships and fellowships, access to roadways and public services funded by the taxpayers, etc.

This broken tax system indiscriminately taxes its citizens abroad, double-taxing Americans who even face higher costs of living abroad. For example, as a Swiss resident, I am faced with paying both Swiss and U.S. taxes despite the fact that my rent and dining costs have more than doubled compared to my costs living in the United States. In Switzerland, many of the costs that are typically covered or subsidized by income-tax funds in the U.S. are charged separately. For example, traffic and roadway costs are funded by Swiss residents who are required to purchase a permit to drive on Swiss roads. Although one may argue that the Swiss income tax may be lower than the U.S. income tax, neither this argument nor the current tax system accounts for the added indirect costs of this lower Swiss income tax. Whereas non-American Swiss residents pay lower income tax and added permit fees, American Swiss residents must pay these added fees in addition to the higher U.S. income tax.

Therefore, simply by being American, U.S. non-residents are faced with a lower quality of life than their European, Asian, South American, African, and Australian counterparts working the same job with the same salary. Beyond this financial disparity, Americans are being denied the same services as their counterparts simply because of the abnormal U.S. tax system. For example, typical tax preparation agents are unable to offer their services to Americans, who often have to resort to specialized agents that charge 2000-3000 dollars for their services. Banks openly deter and even deny Americans their investment services. Americans are also discouraged from living in high-value residential areas, where the high rent is offset by subsidized municipal tax benefits that Americans do not receive since, with the current tax system, these benefits are essentially paid back in the form of increased U.S. taxes.

These unfair U.S. tax laws are notorious within the international community; the same passport that has gathered much admiration from the international community during my vacation travels, now stirs a sense of pity from community members that are sympathetic to the perceived burden of being an American living abroad. And all of this, this financial inequality (both domestically and abroad), this discriminatory access to services, this need to seek specialized and overpriced tax services, and worst of all, this negative international perception of having a U.S. citizenship, is all to raise only 3-6 billion dollars in revenue, less than 0.2% of the total income tax revenue and less than the operating cost of the government over few hours.

In summary, the disadvantages of the current tax system far, far outweigh the short-term, marginal financial benefits of double-taxing Americans living abroad. Fairness in taxation is one of the founding principles of this country. The same unfair tax laws that motivated the Colonists to break away and form this nation are ironically driving away thousands of some of our most successful Americans every year through citizenship renunciations. Taking into account the resources that enabled these Americans to establish successful international careers, this country is losing more than just a few extra bucks in the budget.

Sincerely,

Ardemis Boghossian