

Spotlight on Economic Justice

Presidential candidates warn about ongoing threats to Americans' access to economic opportunity and financial dignity. Sen. Kamala Harris (D-CA) finds “sexism, racism, and corporative favoritism” are persistent barriers for working families, and instead she’ll give them up to \$6,000 in tax credits.¹ Former VP Joe Biden, sees “economic inequality...pulling this country apart,” and vows to end special interest tax breaks and multimillionaire loopholes.² To level the playing field for every American, Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s (D-MA) ultra-millionaire tax includes “a...2% tax on...fortunes over \$50 million.”³ New taxes on Wall Street would fund Sen. Bernie Sanders’ (I-VT) “21st-century economic Bill of Rights”⁴ and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand’s (D-NY) “Family Bill of Rights.”⁵ Mayor Pete Buttigieg (D-IN) describes an economic gap rooted in systemic racism that can be addressed by “A Comprehensive Investment in the Empowerment of Black America.”⁶ Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH) holds that “the biggest myth going is...we’ve got a booming economy,”⁷ and joins other candidates who also support rolling back tax cuts and expanding tax credits for working families like Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO), Gov. Steve Bullock (D-MT), former HUD Secretary and Mayor Julian Castro (D-TX), former Rep. John Delaney (D-MD), Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), former Gov. John Hickenlooper (D-CO), and Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA).⁸ Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) would trade President Trump’s \$1.5 trillion tax cut for a \$1 trillion infrastructure investment to “create millions of good-paying American jobs.”⁹ Candidates Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and tech entrepreneur Andrew Yang propose direct payments such as “baby bonds...to combat wealth inequality”¹⁰ and “a universal basic income for every American adult.”¹¹ New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio vows to “not rest until this government serves working people,”¹² including a 70% tax rate for wealthy Americans.¹³ Gov. Jay Inslee (D-WA) calls for an “end [to] tax breaks for private jets...[that are]...a massive, wasteful giveaway to the wealthy.”¹⁴ Almost a dozen other candidates have specifically called on the wealthy to “help level the economic playing field and generate revenue for programs to help middle- and lower-income families,”¹⁵ including Miramar Mayor Wayne Messam (D-FL), former Rep. Beto O’Rourke (D-TX), and author Marianne Williamson, in addition to newcomers activist Tom Steyer, former Sen. Mike Gravel (D-CA), and former Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA).¹⁶

Republican candidates exploit economic insecurity, and support more tax cuts for the nation’s elite. President Trump boasts, “When you have the best unemployment,...best economy that we’ve ever had,...how the hell do you lose this election.”¹⁷ Emboldened by an inequitable economy created from his \$1.5 trillion tax cut¹⁸, the President is exploring executive actions to bypass Congress to deliver another \$200 billion tax cut for wealthy Americans.¹⁹ The White House wants “to ensure...[it] takes effect before...reelection 2020,”²⁰ but stands by its call for billions of dollars in cuts for public schools.²¹ Former governor and Trump challenger William Weld (R-MA) admits “the president’s decision to be divisive...was a cynical move...but it...had some success...there was a certain amount of economic insecurity out there.” Despite their differences, he offers, “I liked the tax bill...I always like taking money off the table so the government can’t spend it.”

NEA Believes

Working families and students are paying the price for big tax cuts for the wealthy. Reports show that “income-inequality...is largely due to massive educational inequalities, combined with a tax system” that favors the top 1%.²² Data also confirm that “far too many people are poor in a country that is so rich.”²³ True fiscal leadership requires solutions grounded in the most important needs of the community, such as public education, affordable housing, and health care, not that of wealthy investors and corporate interests.

¹ “Our America: Economic Justice,” [Kamala Harris for the People](#), accessed 7/16/2019

² “Rewarding work, not just wealth,” [Biden for President](#), accessed 7/16/2019

³ “Exclusive-Elizabeth Warren: Level the Playing Field for Black Entrepreneurs,” [Black Enterprise](#), 6/14/2019

⁴ “Bernie Sanders Calls His Brand of Socialism a Pathway to Beating Trump,” [The New York Times](#), 6/12/2019

⁵ “2020 Election: Tax Plans for All 24 Democratic Presidential Candidates,” [Kiplinger](#), 6/25/2019

⁶ “How Pete Buttigieg would fight systemic racism,” [Politico](#), 7/11/2019

⁷ “2020 Hopeful Tim Ryan Pledges to Represent ‘Forgotten Communities,’” [90.9 WBUR](#), 5/22/2019

⁸ “2020 Election: Tax Plans for All 24 Democratic Presidential Candidates,” [Kiplinger](#), 6/25/2019

⁹ “Klobuchar lays out ‘bold, trillion-dollar infrastructure plan,’” [CNN Politics](#), 3/28/2019

¹⁰ “Cory Booker wants to give ‘baby bonds’ to every newborn,” [CNBC](#), 4/25/2019

¹¹ “Presidential candidate Andrew Yang to give Iowa family \$1,000 a month,” [CBS News](#), 6/11/2019

¹² “9 Things to Know about Bill de Blasio,” [The Center for Public Integrity](#), 5/16/2019

¹³ “Bill de Blasio call for 70 percent tax rate on wealthy in Dem debate,” [Fox News](#), 6/26/2019

¹⁴ “2020 hopeful Jay Inslee unveils plan to boost US role in climate future,” [The Hill](#), 6/5/2019

¹⁵ “Wealth Taxes,” [Politico](#), 7/15/2019

¹⁶ “2020 Election: Tax Plans for All 24 Democratic Presidential Candidates,” [Kiplinger](#), 6/25/2019

¹⁷ “The strong US economy is Trump’s safety blanket,” [CNN Politics](#), 7/5/2019

¹⁸ “Donald Trump’s Tax Cuts,” [Newsweek](#), 2/15/2019

¹⁹ “Trump is considering the most useless and regressive tax cut ever,” [The Washington Post](#), 6/28/2019

²⁰ “White House Considers Capital Gains Tax Break That Would Benefit Wealthy,” [Bloomberg](#), 6/27/2019

²¹ “Trump administration proposes \$7.1 billion funding cut to Education Department,” [ABC News](#), 3/11/2019

²² “One chart that shows how much worse income inequality is in America than Europe,” [Vox](#), 7/29/2018

²³ “The Range of Poverty in America,” [U.S. News and World Report](#), 9/12/2018