Nader '08 Gonzalez

ISSUE STATEMENT
Fiscal Policy - Fair Tax

The complexity and distortions of the federal tax code produces distributions of tax incidence and payroll tax burdens that are skewed in favor of the wealthy and the corporations further garnished by tax shelters, insufficient enforcement, and other avoidances.

Corporate tax contributions as a percent of the overall federal revenue stream have been declining for fifty years and now stand at 7.4% despite massive record profits. A fundamental reappraisal of our tax laws should start with a principle that taxes should apply first to behavior and conditions we favor least and pinch basic necessities least, such as the clearly addictive industries (alcohol and tobacco), pollution, speculation, gambling, extreme luxuries, instead of taxing work or instead of the 5% to 7% sales tax food, furniture, clothing or books.

Tiny taxes (a fraction of the conventional retail sales percentage) on stock, bond, and derivative transactions can produce tens of billions of dollars a year and displace some of the taxes on work and consumer essentials. Sol Price, founder of the Price Clubs (now merged into Costco) is one of several wealthy people in the last century who have urged a tax on wealth. Again, it can be at a very low rate but raise significant revenues. Wealth above a quite comfortable minimum is described as tangible and intangible assets. The present adjustment of Henry George's celebrated land tax could also be considered.

Over a thousand wealthy Americans have declared, in a remarkable conflict against interest, that the estate tax, which now applies to less than 2 percent of the richest estates, should be retained. The signers of this declaration included William Gates, Sr., Warren Buffett and George Soros. Ralph Nader does not believe that "unearned income" (dividends, interest, capital gains) should be taxed lower than earned income, or work, inasmuch as one involves passive income, including inheritances and windfalls, while the latter involves active effort with a higher proportion of middle and lower income workers relying on and working each day, some under unsafe conditions, for these earnings.

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