



The Best Tax Plan: \$300 in Every Pot

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Here are three rules for understanding how Washington works: Not everything Congress does has to be complicated. The more complicated a piece of legislation, the worse it is for average Americans. The simpler the legislation, the fairer for all Americans.

Now take those rules and apply them to tax cuts. Vermont's Bernie Sanders, the only Socialist member of Congress, wins hands down. Sanders, joined by Ohio's Dennis Kucinich, California's Barbara Lee, New York's Jerry Nadler, Oregon's Peter DeFazio and 48 other members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, have unveiled an across-the-board tax cut plan which is stunning in its simplicity and cunning in its appeal. It makes George Bush's tax cut look like a snarled ball of yarn which nobody can untangle.

How much money would your family get back under Bush's mammoth tax cut? Who knows? In fact, I defy you to figure it out. His plan has so many variables and is stretched out for so long, nobody really knows who gets how much, when. And, of course, the whole Bush tax cut is premised on continued economic growth and an ever-expanding surplus, neither of which now looks likely. Bush himself, in fact, keeps warning us that our economy is in trouble.

Compare that vast unknown with the clear world of Bernie Sanders. Who gets tax relief under the Sanders plan? Every man, woman and child in America. How much does each person receive? \$300. No more, no less. What is the difference between tax brackets? There is none. Every man, woman and child gets the same \$300, no matter how much money they make. Bill Gates gets the same as the man who washes his car. God bless America!

How much will the total tax cut cost? \$900 billion over 10 years. How long does the tax cut last? As long as there is a surplus. No surplus, no tax cut. This plan is so simple, there must be something wrong with it. Not so. Just the opposite.

There are several advantages to the Sanders tax plan, aside from the fact that everybody can understand it. For one thing, it treats everyone equally: a principle which democracy preaches but does not often practice. To underscore that point, the Progressive Caucus calls their proposal: the American People's Dividend. "There is a surplus," Sanders told me in an interview. "The American people have worked hard to build that surplus. So, we're going to return it to them in a fair way. We will give the same dividend to every American, because every American is an equal shareholder in America."

Another advantage: there are no favorites. Renters get the same break as homeowners. Rich are no more pampered than the poor. Seniors and students, no longer or not yet in the work force, receive the same benefit as those who are. Joe Lunchbucket in Boise, Idaho, who's never been to Washington, gets the same \$300 check as Jimmy Fatcat, who has a paid lobbyist roaming the halls of Congress. So do his wife and three kids.

And now the best part of all. By distributing his tax cut evenly across-the-board, Sanders manages to put the money in the hands of those who need it and where it will do the most good. Under Bush's plan, the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans - those who need, or deserve, a tax cut the least - snare 40 percent of the goodies. Under Sanders's plan, the wealthiest 1 percent would receive their fair share: 1 percent. No more, no less. The bottom 95% of the population - working poor and middle-class families - would receive 95% of the tax cuts.

That distribution is not only fair, it's the best way to stimulate the economy. \$300 means nothing to Bill Gates. He'd blow it on an overpriced bottle of wine. But \$1,500 for a middle-class family of five is a real windfall, and will be immediately pumped back into the economy for basic human needs: food, clothing, housing, health care and education.

By any measure, the Progressive Caucus has produced the best tax plan of them all. Sanders sums up its merits: "It is fair. Everybody gets the same. It is simple and easily understood. And it is responsible. When the economy's good, we return money to the people. When it's not, we don't."

If that sounds revolutionary, it is. Remember how we started? "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." It's time to apply that formula to tax cuts.