

GOP rewards the rich, rips off the rest of us

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Republican leaders in Congress make no secret of prioritizing tax cuts for their wealthy donors and corporate allies over the needs of people who work for a living. Donald Trump presented himself as a different kind of Republican—a populist who would look out for ordinary Americans. But, with the president's full-throated support, Republicans are poised to pass a reverse Robin Hood tax plan that lavishes benefits on corporations and the very wealthy at the expense of Americans just trying to get by.

Americans get it, even though the GOP has tried to keep them in the dark. Republicans in Congress have rushed to ram through the most sweeping tax overhaul in three decades without a single hearing, before the final bill has been scored or even seen except by a select few, and without one Democratic vote in favor. Why the hurry? Why not wait—as President Obama did after Republican Scott Brown was elected to take Edward Kennedy's Senate seat—until Sen.-elect Doug Jones can be seated?

That would respect the will of voters, and it would allow for transparency so the details of this far-reaching tax cut legislation for the wealthy can be examined. But GOP leaders are digging in: They know that time, sunlight and their dwindling Senate majority all work against them, so they're operating as swiftly and secretly as they can. Even so, only 26 percent of voters approve of their plan.

A key reason is that for all the talk of this being a "middle-class tax plan," this is a tax *increase* plan for millions of middle-income Americans. Even with the deductions that Republicans have been shamed into restoring, such as those for high medical expenses, taxes could go up for 87 million middle-class families, including 67 million making less than \$100,000 annually. It will strip 13 million Americans of their health insurance and raise premiums on the individual market by an average of \$2,000 per year. That doesn't even count the automatic Medicare cuts of \$25 billion next year this corporate tax cut bill triggers, as well as hundreds of billions of dollars in automatic cuts to other social services over the next decade.

It's estimated that more than 60 percent of the tax cuts will go to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. The plan lowers the top tax rate for upper-income households and slashes the corporate tax rate. While union members will no longer be able to deduct their dues, people who own private jets will get a break. This is an obscene transfer of wealth upward at a time of record corporate profits and income inequality, while sticking it to wage earners, whose incomes have been stagnant for decades.

Perhaps worst of all, the GOP plan pays for corporate tax cuts by eviscerating the deduction for state and local taxes, which pay for public education, public colleges, public safety and infrastructure. Millions of people will pay more taxes and, as a result, that will make it harder for states and communities to raise money for these public investments. Squeezing funding for public schools and services is especially cruel at a time when at least 29 states are spending less on public education than before the Great Recession.

which is how you tackle the debt and the deficit." Translation: Blow up the deficit though tax cuts, then use the debt as an excuse to slash education, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, housing and hunger programs—shredding the social safety net.

The AFT and our members have worked around the clock to mitigate some of the most harmful elements in earlier versions of this legislation. But given the rushed, dark-of-night process the GOP has used, we are still discovering new ways the

The "middle-class tax plan" could *increase* taxes for up to 87 million middle-income families.

Raising taxes on ordinary Americans still won't cover all the breaks for corporations and the wealthy, so the GOP is mortgaging America's future—by jacking up the federal deficit by at least \$1 trillion. This will limit our ability to invest in the infrastructure, health, education and retirement programs the country needs, and will saddle ordinary Americans with the tab for generations to come.

Republican lawmakers' erstwhile aversion to deficits may be gone for now, but not for long. House Speaker Paul Ryan already has said, "We're going to have to get back next year at entitlement reform,

bill will harm working families, such as parents of college students likely seeing a larger tax increase under the bill than taxpayers in general. Sadly, most but not all Republican lawmakers have sided with donors and turned their backs on their constituents. They have made the calculation that between tweetstorms, the holidays and the 24-hour news cycle, Americans won't notice or won't object to this reprehensible rewarding of the rich at the expense of everyone else. But GOP lawmakers' hypocrisy and contempt for people who work hard for a living will not go unnoticed—now or in November.



Weingarten at a Nov. 29 news conference with Republican legislators and business leaders who oppose the GOP leadership's tax overhaul.

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