

Jerry Hanson: We must end the wealthy tax advantage in America

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Our tax code contains two sets of rules. One for most of us where our income is in the form of paychecks, with taxes deducted at the time they are issued and totals reported to the Internal Revenue Service. Those at the top of the income pyramid have income not from employment but from their wealth generating financial gain. Their income is not readily visible and taxes are not withdrawn in advance. Earnings of \$800 million in capital gains pay a lower top tax rate than a an ordinary income of \$90,000 a year.

It is reported that this has resulted in a “tax gap” of \$7 trillion over the past decade. That leaves the top 1% of Americans responsible for \$163 billion a year that should be going to roads, schools, healthcare and the like. Working people are at a perpetual disadvantage against the already wealthy.

The IRS estimates that it misses about 15% of the taxes owed each year with almost all that amount from the wealthiest 1% of taxpayers. Our tax policies reward wealth over labor. Even workers earning a respectable wage keep less of their income than someone who lives off their investments. This two-tiered system overwhelmingly benefits rich people.

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Tax policy should not be a reason for those at the top to oppress those beneath them. We need elected officials to pass tax policies that materially creates fairness for working Americans. There are 7 trillion reasons to do so.

The single most popular item in the Build Back Better bill is prescription drug

reform. It is number one in polling with 84% to 88% support by all of the public. It appears it can't be passed by Congress. With more than 8 out of 10 Americans wanting it; 100% of Republican lawmakers oppose it and not even all of the Democrats support it.

This is the poster child of the true state of American democracy today. We can only get what the rich and powerful will allow us to have. Big pharmaceutical political donors dictate the votes of our elected officials on this issue. It is emblematic of most proposals that has the public's support but can not pass through Congress.

No matter that it would save our government hundreds of billions of dollars. It would save untold lives. It would save American families huge sums of money that they can use on other needs.

No other country in the world pays anywhere close to what Americans are forced to pay for pharmaceuticals; because their governments supports their people. America's government doesn't.

This will only change when we stop returning incumbent legislators to office who time after time place their political party above the people's needs.

- Hanson is a member of the Walworth County Democratic Party.