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The SALT Deduction Cap Makes it Harder for Communities to Recover.

To help our communities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout, Congress has a historic opportunity to rebuild our economy and create a sustainable future for all Americans by enacting President Joe Biden's full Build Back Better agenda — an agenda that will improve the lives of everyday people by investing in well-paying jobs, health care, infrastructure, public schools, higher education, child care, elder care and more.

Congress should go one step further to incentivize communities to invest in themselves by reversing former President Donald Trump's cap on deductions for state income tax and local property taxes, the so-called SALT cap, which limits these governments' ability to invest tax revenue in public schools, higher education, public health, police, firefighting and emergency medical services.

Reviving the SALT deduction is especially important for our frontline workers — firefighters, teachers, and public health workers who have helped our country survive the pandemic, keeping our schools open, our hospitals running and our communities safe — and those they serve. SALT is not just another tax break for the wealthy, as some claim; it's an opportunity for many everyday people to offset the taxes they pay for the services our communities rely on.

Here's the math: An average two-income family with a firefighter and a teacher makes between \$100,000 and \$200,000 annually. If they claim the SALT deduction — which more than 85 percent of families in that tax bracket do — they receive an average tax break of \$15,859. When the SALT deduction is capped, those same middle-class families see a tax increase of \$5,000.

That means, even as they are paying more in taxes, the budgets for their schools, hospitals and firehouses are being cut.

The SALT deduction is a tax break you receive for supporting your community: providing schools the resources necessary to meet our children's needs; ensuring that our public health system can confront a deadly pandemic; keeping us from shutting down firehouses; preparing the next generation of adults for their careers without saddling them with debt, and supporting a safety net for when people experience job loss or homelessness. The deduction helps ensure the collective funding of these programs, making it easier for state and local governments to provide these services that benefit all of us. It effectively puts money in everyday taxpayers' pockets to help keep up with the rising costs of basics like gas and groceries.

Allowing taxpayers to deduct the full amount of their state and local taxes on their federal tax returns is one of the federal government's most powerful tools for incentivizing states and local governments to invest in critical public services. Lawmakers have long recognized this: The Revenue Act of 1913 introduced the federal income tax and provided a deduction for state, county, schools and municipal taxes. Years later, the Revenue Act of 1964 specified that real and personal property, income and general sales taxes could be deducted from federal taxes. As the Government Finance Officers Association pointed out in 2017:

“The SALT deduction reflects a partnership between the federal government and state and local governments. The deduction is fundamental to the way states and localities budget for and provide critical public services, and a cornerstone of the U.S system of fiscal federalism. It reflects a collaborative relationship between levels of government that has existed for over 100 years. Currently, the SALT deduction is an accepted part of the tax structure that is critical to the stability of state and local government finance.”

As cities, towns and families continue to recover from the pandemic, Congress should be making things easier on state and local governments and the people who pay taxes to fund them. The American Rescue Plan, the American Jobs Plan and the American Families Plan are major steps in the right direction but reforming the SALT cap would go a long way toward helping working families access a more robust recovery.

THE HILL

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