

EDITORIAL

Trump's big giveaway

BY THE EDITORIAL BOARD

President Donald Trump, the self-proclaimed champion of American workers, promised in a tweet to announce “Big TAX REFORM AND TAX REDUCTION.”

What he delivered Wednesday was tax simplification of a sort, but focused far more on tax cuts that would be a huge bonanza for big business and the 1 percent, and that would cost many middle-class Californians big money.

Trump didn't even unveil the tax plan him-

self, but dispatched his chief economic adviser and treasury secretary to hand out a one-page outline that largely repeats his campaign proposals:

- Slash the top corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 15 percent, even though many companies already take advantage of loopholes and creative accounting to pay far less.
- Grant that lower rate to many business partnerships that file personal tax returns and now pay a top rate of 39.6 percent. They range from mom-and-pops to hedge funds and real estate empires like Trump's.
- Repeat the alternative

minimum tax, created in 1970 to stop the rich from using loopholes to avoid paying taxes. The AMT added \$31 million to Trump's own tax bill in 2005, which otherwise would have been only \$5 million on \$150 million.

● End the 3.8 percent surtax on investment income that helps fund Obamacare, a proposal also part of his failed Trumpcare. That's another big tax break for the wealthy.

● Kill the estate tax, saving the heirs of family fortunes \$300 billion over a decade, perhaps even the Trump clan.

Treasury Secretary

Steven Mnuchin made clear again that Trump has no intention of releasing his tax returns, so Americans can see how much he would benefit from his own tax plan.

For most of us, Trump's tax blueprint would be a mixed bag.

It would double the standard deduction, eliminating federal taxes on the first \$24,000 of income a year for a married couple, and increase the write-off for child care.

But the plan would end all itemized deductions except for mortgage interest and charitable donations. That would be a big hit for Californians who deduct state and local taxes. In 2013, 5.8 million taxpayers in the state deducted an average of \$5,624.

The big simplification is

to reduce the seven individual tax brackets to three – 35 percent, 25 percent and 10 percent.

Besides being unfair, Trump's tax plan could explode federal deficits.

According to tax think tanks, cutting the corporate rate to 15 percent would reduce revenues by about \$2 trillion over the first 10 years, and extending that lower rate to “pass-through” businesses by another \$1.5 trillion over a decade.

That wouldn't nearly be offset by revenue brought in by a one-time lower tax rate of 10 percent on the estimated \$2.6 trillion in profits that U.S. multinational corporations have stashed overseas.

Mnuchin claims the tax cuts would pay for themselves by boosting eco-

nomics growth and generating “trillions of dollars” in additional tax revenue. That sounds suspiciously like the supply-side economics of the Reagan years that produced massive federal deficits.

This is an important point because a tax cut bill that adds to the deficit requires 60 votes to pass in the Senate under current rules, and that would require some Democratic votes. Republicans worried about the federal deficit aren't jumping on board yet, either.

Given the lack of detail and groundwork, the president's “big” announcement seems more about adding to his list of “accomplishments” in his first 100 days than putting forward a serious proposal on tax reform and economic growth.

VIEWPOINTS

Data shows the way to a cleaner future

Unlike Gov. Jerry Brown, I don't “like to think about catastrophe” when considering how the world is addressing climate change.

However, I second his statement made at a climate change conference in San Francisco during Earth Week, that “we've got to go against the flow.” Last weekend, countless millions asserted just that at Earth Day Marches for Science around the world. And the supporters will come out again April 29, for People's Climate Marches around the country.

In this era of fake news, I am energized by such overwhelming support for science and data. Both, combined with such activism, will ultimately play a pivotal role in stemming climate change and managing our natural resources more wisely.

Groundbreaking global commitments were made less than two years ago to end business as usual, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Accord. Now is the time to come to grips with the reality that we face, beyond the toothless promises, the grand statements, the misleading stories.

This is true of greenhouse gas emissions in particular and ecological resource management in general. Just this month, Global Footprint Network, our international research organization, launched an open data platform that details the Ecological Footprints of more than 200 countries and regions. A country's Ecological Footprint aggregates all the productive areas needed for food, timber, fiber; built-up space for infrastructure like cities, roads and housing; and forests to absorb excess carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels. A country's Ecological Footprint can be compared to its own productive areas.

Based primarily on United Nations data sets, our Footprint data show that humanity currently consumes 70 percent more in a given year than the Earth is able to replenish over the same period. Our global Ecological Footprint is that of 1.7 Earths. Carbon emissions make up 60 percent of it.

If everyone around the world lived like the average American, we would need five Earths to sustain the global population, according to the data. Our



BY MATHIS WACKERNAGEL
Special to The Bee

2015 study of the Ecological Footprint of the 50 states found it would take eight Californias to support California residents' Ecological Footprint.

But there is good news, too: The total Ecological Footprint of the United States declined 14 percent from a peak in 2005 to 2013 (the latest year U.N. data is available), while the overall economy grew. This is the largest Ecological Footprint reduction for any country over the same period – in fact, it is equivalent to the entire Ecological Footprint of Germany.

What is driving this footprint reduction? The carbon footprint of the United States declined 20 percent from 2005 to 2013. In California, that number is likely even greater, given that almost 25 percent of the state's electricity came from renewable sources in 2014, according to state Energy Commission estimates. Overall carbon emissions in California are poised to continue declining through renewable energy use and other policies, such as the stricter tailpipe emission regulations recently reaffirmed by the California Air Resources Board, in stark contrast to hints that President Donald Trump will weaken fuel standards.

Later this summer, Trump is set to unveil a \$1 billion infrastructure plan to create jobs. This represents an opportunity to build a green future or deepen our reliance on fossil fuels.

We applaud Brown for vowing to make California a world leader in addressing climate change. After all, the choice is clear: sticking with laggards stuck in the 20th century or stepping up to what is technologically possible and economically superior to build a fossil fuel-free, robust future, where humanity thrives within the ecological budget of our one planet. Trust data to point the way.

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Case for a Republican governor? Not so fast

ANOTHER VIEW

My good friend, Jim Brulte, the chairman of the California Republican Party, in a recent opinion piece stated that previous generations of political leadership accomplished great things, but now a lot of things are wrong in our state, due to Democrats, and that's why California needs to elect a Republican governor next year (“The case for a Republican governor in 2018” (Viewpoints, April 16).

Nice try! Jim applauded a previous governor for creating the UC system and building our freeways and the aqueduct, but it was



BY BOB MULHOLLAND
Special to The Bee

Democrat Gov. Pat Brown who did all that.

Republicans have held the governorship for 32 years, that's two-thirds of the last 50 years.

Let's review Jim's complaints: Our water and road infrastructure has fallen behind. It took 50 years for bridges, roads and dams to deteriorate, not the last few. Why didn't Republican gover-

nors do the needed upgrades, like with the Oroville Dam spillways? And the Republicans didn't build the Sites Reservoir, in Colusa County, which will hold 1.8 million acre-feet of water. If Republican Gov. George Deukmejian or Pete Wilson or Arnold Schwarzenegger had built Sites, this year would have filled it and all Californians, especially farmers, would have benefited for years. Gov. Jerry Brown is moving the Sites Reservoir process forward.

Jim failed to mention that the reason California had budget deficits was the Great Recession, caused by President George W. Bush's economic policies that cre-

ated big deficits at the national level and across America. And the new taxes at the state level – they were passed by the voters, not the Democrats in the Legislature.

Yes, California has people below the poverty level and that's why Democrats have increased the minimum wage, while Republicans voted against the increases and then claimed that CEOs getting millions of dollars in bonuses are good for the economy.

Democrats will continue helping the middle class with job protections, expanding health care, and educational opportunities and new jobs, which are being created at record levels under Brown.

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Glyphosate-based herbicides are OK

BY JEN LISTELLO
Special to The Bee

We get it: An editorial about the controversy surrounding glyphosate is great click-bait. And we understand that when you lay out all the facts – the unanimous backing from regulatory authorities, the 40-year history of safe use, the significant benefits to agriculture, etc. – the story loses its intrigue.

With that, my colleagues and I are not surprised by how badly The Bee's editorial “Maybe just pull those dandelions by hand” (April 10) misrepresents the safety of glyphosate. It follows the

increasingly popular and unfortunate trend of sensationalizing the topic. We just hope the following information will help address any concerns.

First, glyphosate does not cause cancer. No regulatory authority in the world considers glyphosate a carcinogen. Any discussion to the contrary stems from one place: a controversial French-based working group called International Agency for Research on Cancer, which, in March 2015, erroneously classified glyphosate as a “probable carcinogen.”

While IARC's classification has attracted media attention and been used repeatedly as a fearmongering tool by organiza-

tions opposed to modern agriculture, regulators around the world continue to support the safe use of glyphosate. In fact, since IARC classified glyphosate, regulatory authorities in the United States, Europe, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and Korea have reaffirmed that glyphosate does not cause cancer.

Scientists at the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment also concluded glyphosate does not cause cancer. Still, OEHHA has proposed adding glyphosate to the Prop. 65 list based on IARC's flawed classification – another example of the confusion generated by IARC.

Much of the online chatter would lead you to believe the science is still out on glyphosate safety. The reality is that glyphosate is the most extensively tested pesticide on the market. Over the past four decades, glyphosate has undergone comprehensive and routine evaluations by the Environmental Protection Agency and other regulators. The overwhelming conclusion of experts worldwide has been that glyphosate can be used safely.

Feel free to pick those dandelions by hand, but if you choose a glyphosate-based herbicide, you'll be OK.

Jen Listello is a molecular biologist at Monsanto Regulatory Affairs. Follow her on Twitter @sciencemomjen.