

2017

Making the Connection: Bringing

# Tax Wonks



# Grassroots Activists

Together to End Inequality

# Making the Connection: Bringing Tax Wonks and Grassroots Activists Together to End Inequality

**Authors:** *Jeremie Greer (Prosperity Now),  
Chris Brown (PolicyLink), Chad Bolt (Prosperity Now) and  
Alexandra Bastien (PolicyLink).*

## Acknowledgements

The authors thank several members of the Prosperity Now staff for their thoughtful contributions and edits to this report, including Roberto Arjona, Pamela Chan, Vanna Cure, Jocelyn Harmon, Myrto Karaflos, Sean Luechtefeld, David Newville and Fatima Schoemaker Minardi. We also thank the people we interviewed and those who participated in the convening that served as the foundation for this report; those participants are listed in Appendix A. Finally, we extend our deep gratitude to the Ford Foundation for their generous support for the development and production of this report.

## About Prosperity Now

Prosperity Now (formerly CFED) believes that everyone deserves a chance to prosper. Since 1979, we have helped make it possible for millions of people, especially people of color and those of limited incomes, to achieve financial security, stability and, ultimately, prosperity. We offer a unique combination of scalable practical solutions, in-depth research and proven policy solutions, all aimed at building wealth for those who need it most.

## About PolicyLink

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by Lifting Up What Works. Founded in 1999, PolicyLink connects the work of people on the ground to the creation of sustainable communities of opportunity that allow everyone to participate and prosper. Such communities offer access to quality jobs, affordable housing, good schools, transportation, and the benefits of healthy food and physical activity.

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*“As free citizens in a political democracy, we have a responsibility to be interested and involved in the affairs of the human community, be it at the local or the global level.”*

*Paul Wellstone*

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**A** defining characteristic of our democracy is the foundational role that everyday people play in driving public policy change in Washington.

An exchange between A. Phillip Randolph, a civil rights leader and community activist, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during Roosevelt’s presidency is emblematic of this feature of our democracy. As the story goes, Randolph was meeting with President Roosevelt to gain his support for an agenda aimed at improving the living conditions of African Americans. Reports of this interaction vary, but many historians agree that the President listened intently to Randolph’s arguments and responded, “I agree with you, now go make me do it.”

Whether to change corporate labor practices, ensure civil rights for women and people of color, or create affordable and high-quality housing in distressed communities, our field has largely taken up this call to “make them do it” by mobilizing activists to shift the balance of power from the wealthy elite to working people.

In the face of absurd and unprecedented income and wealth inequality, our country is in dire need of activism. Presently, a powerful contingent of elite actors with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo are fighting for an economic system that intensifies inequality by funneling government resources to the very wealthy while leaving hard-working families farther and farther behind.

The most powerful lever being pulled by those actors to drive this inequality is the U.S. tax code.

The U.S. tax code is the single largest governmental vehicle used to direct resources to and enhance the prosperity of U.S. households. Most think of the tax code exclusively as the way the government collects revenue, but it is also used to directly support the expansion of wealth to U.S. households. It is where most government resources are spent to help households increase their income, cover their housing costs, enhance their retirement savings and buttress the rising cost of higher education.

Unfortunately, nearly all the benefits provided by the tax code are distributed to the wealthiest U.S. taxpayers. As a result, the tax code exacerbates inequality, rather than alleviating it. The good news, however, is that reforming the tax code could solve many of the challenges contributing to inequality. By shifting benefits distributed through the tax code to working families, this powerful lever could increase the value of work, make housing more affordable, and enhance the overall standard of living for all families, especially the millions currently living paycheck-to-paycheck.

This paper seeks to identify how—as a field—we can more effectively harness the power of activists to impact tax policy. To examine this opportunity, we spoke directly to activists in three venues: during in-depth interviews, through a survey and during a convening hosted in April 2017 in Washington, DC. These conversations were meant to glean insights about why local advocates do and do not engage in advocacy related to tax policy. Ultimately, this paper shares those insights with the objective of recommending an advocacy strategy that advances tax reform that enhances the economic well-being of working families.

Although that strategy is described in detail in the final section of this paper, the following findings emerged from the conversations we engaged in with advocates and potential advocates:

- To finally eliminate the pervasive wealth and income inequality plaguing our country, advocates must see taxes as “their fight.”
- The urgency of the inequality problem suggests that the time for our fight for equitable tax reform is now, and thus advocates must understand this urgency.
- To communicate the urgency of the need for equitable tax policies, advocates must understand that new tax policy is made in every single session of Congress, and that the current Congress is poised to pass major tax legislation that, without the voice of working families, will continue to drive benefits to the incredibly wealthy while simultaneously decreasing investments in the economic well-being of working families.

These findings and more are discussed in the remainder of this paper.

## **Understanding the Potential of the U.S. Tax Code to Solve or Exacerbate Inequality**

The U.S. tax system has one major purpose: to direct investments that advance the interests of the nation and its population. It accomplishes this mission in two ways. First, and most widely known, the tax code is the vehicle with which the government collects the revenue necessary to operate. Among other things, this includes funding for government agencies that ensure critical infrastructure, health care, affordable housing, worker training, national defense and income supports for U.S. households.

Second, and less known, our tax code invests directly in U.S. households through tax spending programs (what experts refer to as *tax expenditures*) to enhance their wealth and economic well-being. For example, the tax code provides monetary benefits to parents raising dependent children through provisions like the Dependency Exemption, the Child Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

The only difference between tax spending and traditional government spending is that tax spending is distributed through the tax code, rather than through federal agencies. These tax spending programs put money directly into the pockets of U.S. households to support wealth-building activities, such as taking out a mortgage to buy a home, saving for retirement, growing income through education and job training, and investing in children's education.

In 2016, the federal government spent \$677 billion through the tax code to help Americans build wealth. That's more than the combined budgets of all 14 federal agencies except for the Department of Defense. For example, while the government gives approximately \$90 billion in tax breaks to support homeownership through tax programs like the Mortgage Interest Deduction and the State and Local Tax Deduction, the total budget for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in FY 2017 was just \$38.8 billion.<sup>1</sup>

Activists fighting to allocate money to enhance the wealth and economic well-being of working households should look no further than the U.S. tax code, as this money is hiding in plain sight in the tax code. Advocating for equitable tax policy has the potential to drive resources directly to working families through the system itself, as this system has the potential to address resource constraints in other critical programs for low-income people.

<sup>1</sup> *Summary of HR 244, FY 2017 Omnibus Appropriations* (Washington, DC: U.S. House of Representatives, 2017), [https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.01.17\\_fy\\_2017\\_omnibus\\_-\\_transportation\\_housing\\_and\\_urban\\_development\\_-\\_summary.pdf](https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.01.17_fy_2017_omnibus_-_transportation_housing_and_urban_development_-_summary.pdf). [https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.01.17\\_fy\\_2017\\_omnibus\\_-\\_transportation\\_housing\\_and\\_urban\\_development\\_-\\_summary.pdf](https://appropriations.house.gov/uploadedfiles/05.01.17_fy_2017_omnibus_-_transportation_housing_and_urban_development_-_summary.pdf).

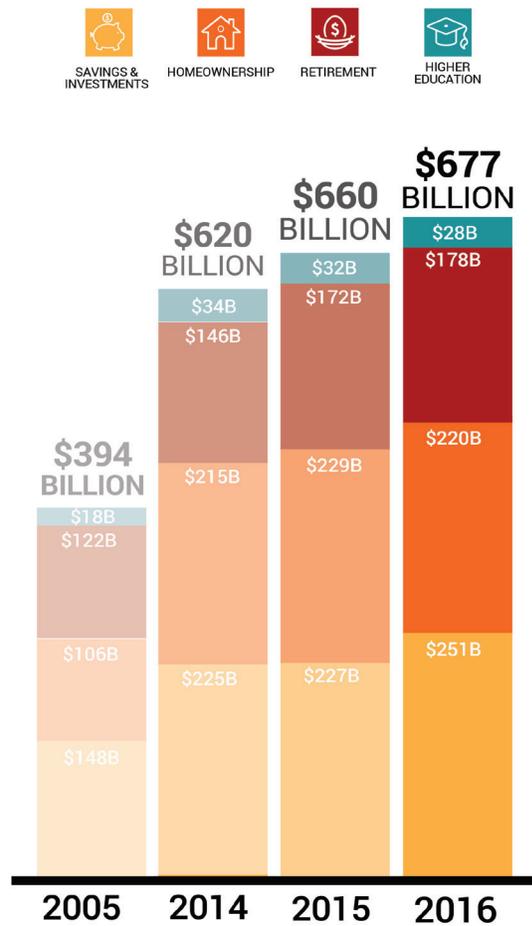
# The Tax Code is Driving Deeper Income and Wealth Inequality

If the tax code is making such enormous investments in U.S. households, then why do we have such crippling wealth and income inequality? Why do the top 1% of Americans have more wealth than half of the population?<sup>2</sup> And why is the wealth gap especially wide for people of color, with the wealthiest 400 Americans owning more wealth than all African Americans and a third of all Latinos combined?<sup>3</sup>

The answer is that tax spending serves as a driver that exacerbates, rather than reduces, wealth and income inequality. In 2016, the top 1% of U.S. households received more in federal tax spending than the bottom 80% of taxpayers combined. All told, the average tax benefit for a millionaire in 2015 was nearly \$150,000; for a working family, it was only about \$175.<sup>4</sup>

These regressive outcomes are not achieved by accident. Rather, they are the product of intentionally designed features embedded in the tax code. For example, the process of itemizing deductions allows taxpayers to take certain living expenses (such as mortgage interest, state and local taxes, medical expenses and charitable deductions) and subtract them from their income, thus reducing their tax liability. Each year, a taxpayer has the choice of either taking the standard deduction (\$12,600 for a married couple in 2016) or itemizing their deductions if they add up to more than the standard deduction. Only about 13% of taxpayers earning less than \$50,000 a year itemize, meaning they miss out on the tax benefits that come with owning a home, giving to charity or covering out-of-pocket medical expenses. The picture of inequality is even starker when looking at how the benefits of certain tax provisions, such as income exemptions and special tax rates for capital

## Rising Cost of Tax Programs



Source: Calculations based on data from the Office of Management and Budget (2016) and Tax Policy Center (2013). Totals include cost estimates of 27 individual expenditures and cuts to the estate tax.

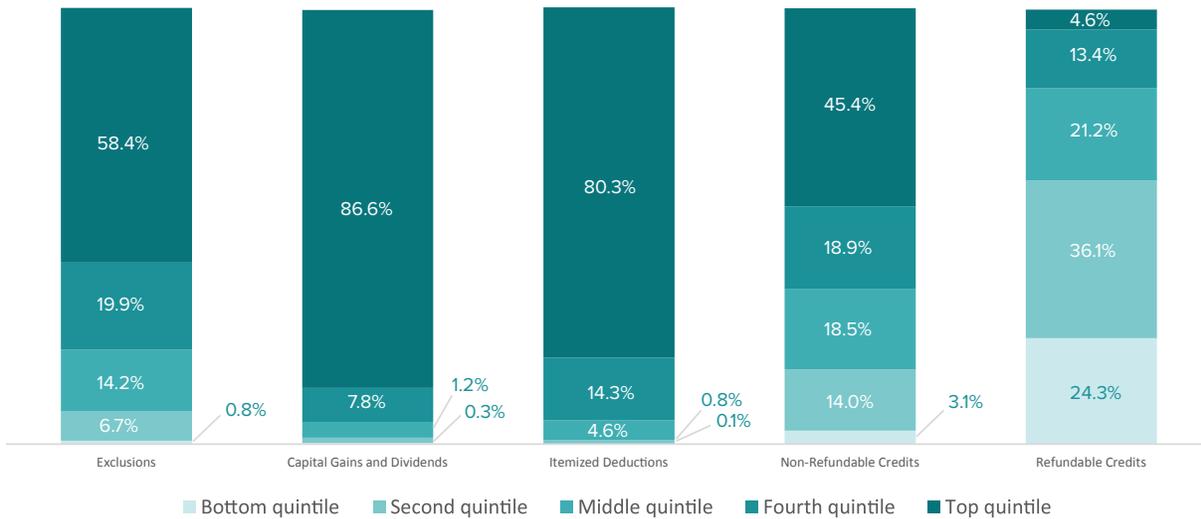
<sup>2</sup> Ezra Levin, Jeremie Greer and Ida Rademacher, *From Upside Down to Right-side Up: Redeploying \$540 Billion in Federal Spending to Help Families Save, Invest and Build Wealth* (Washington, DC: CFED, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, Chuck Collins, Emanuel Nieves and Josh Hoxie, *The Ever-growing Gap: Without Change, African-American and Latino Families Will Not Match White Wealth for Centuries* (Washington, DC: CFED, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Prosperity Now calculations based on data from the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center (2015). "Working Family" is defined as a family with \$50,000 or less in income. Dollar amounts reflect the average benefit in 2015 from several tax programs for tax units in the two income categories.

gains and dividends, are distributed across income levels. Most are distributed to the wealthiest taxpayers. Tax credits, particularly refundable ones, are the exception, since they are more equally distributed to working families on the lower end of the income scale. The graphic below shows how the benefits of different tax provisions are distributed across the income spectrum.

**Share of Tax Subsidies, by Income Quintile (2015)**



Source: Building an Equitable Tax Code: A Primer for Advocates, PolicyLink.

## What Are Advocates Doing in Response?

Traditionally, activists have confronted the policy challenges impacting working families through civic engagement. From the New Deal to the War on Poverty to the contemporary fight for a \$15 minimum wage, advocates have historically sought to engage grassroots constituencies in an effort to force the government to live up to its responsibility to serve those on the economic ledge.

Unfortunately, advocacy efforts to change the U.S. tax code have been largely absent in large-scale policy campaigns, although the tax code is the largest government-sponsored driver of inequality. For this reason, Prosperity Now and PolicyLink partnered to seek a better understanding of how we, as a field, can more effectively mobilize activists to impact tax policy.

One tax expert we interviewed shared that, “Unfortunately, progressive advocates do not see taxes as their fight.” While we seek to understand why this is the case, the result of this disconnect is clear. Special interest groups that represent the interests of the very wealthy have the halls of Congress all to themselves when it comes to influencing the structure and benefits provided through the tax code. In our interviews, we heard from a congressional staffer working in a progressive Democrat’s office that they “never hear from anti-poverty advocates or constituents on tax policy.” Since the government is most responsive to those who advocate on their own behalf, the voices of working families must be heard by their representatives if we want to make the tax code more equitable.

## What Insights Do Advocates and Policymakers Have for Mobilizing Constituents?

To develop an advocacy strategy aimed at advancing tax policies that benefit working families, We:

- Conducted discovery research (12 stakeholder interviews and a review of background literature) to gain insights into the state of civic engagement around tax policy, identify potential stakeholders and formulate initial hypotheses about barriers and opportunities for mobilizing.
- Surveyed the tax preparation, tax policy and asset-building fields to deepen our understanding of civic engagement and tax policy. In total, 183 respondents answered questions like: “Have you taken any of the following actions in the past regarding [any issue / tax policy]?” and “In your opinion, what makes it challenging for a person to take action on tax policy or tax services?”
- Hosted a convening with 30 leading tax policy experts and community organizers to discuss opportunities to engage advocates on tax policy and brainstorm potential next steps for the field.<sup>5</sup>

We gained three important insights from these activities, which are shared in the remainder of this section.

### KEY INSIGHT: ENGAGING ON TAX POLICY COMES WITH UNIQUE BARRIERS

The people we interviewed shared that there is a “knowledge deficit” preventing people from advocating for a more equitable tax code. Additionally, many people did not see how the tax code would impact their lives or, if they did, they did not believe they could affect meaningful change.

**The “Knowledge Deficit”:** A clear barrier to getting advocates engaged in tax policy is a lack of the information necessary to effectively advocate on the issue. In fact, 80% of survey respondents indicated they lacked sufficient knowledge about tax policy to be an effective advocate. Throughout our interviews, stakeholders often referred to taxes as confusing and reported that advocating without full information on the subject can be “intimidating.” Other advocates stated that people just “don’t know where to start.”

**Lack of Personal Connection:** To overcome this knowledge deficit, there was a prevailing belief among the national advocates and tax experts we interviewed that more could be done to connect tax issues to people’s day-to-day struggles. A direct service provider working with low-income taxpayers shared that people “don’t think their bottom line will change.” The provider further explained that many of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) recipients they serve know they get a refund, but they have no idea it is due to the EITC. Another stakeholder explained that many people don’t understand the connection between the taxes they pay and the roads they drive on or the schools their children attend.

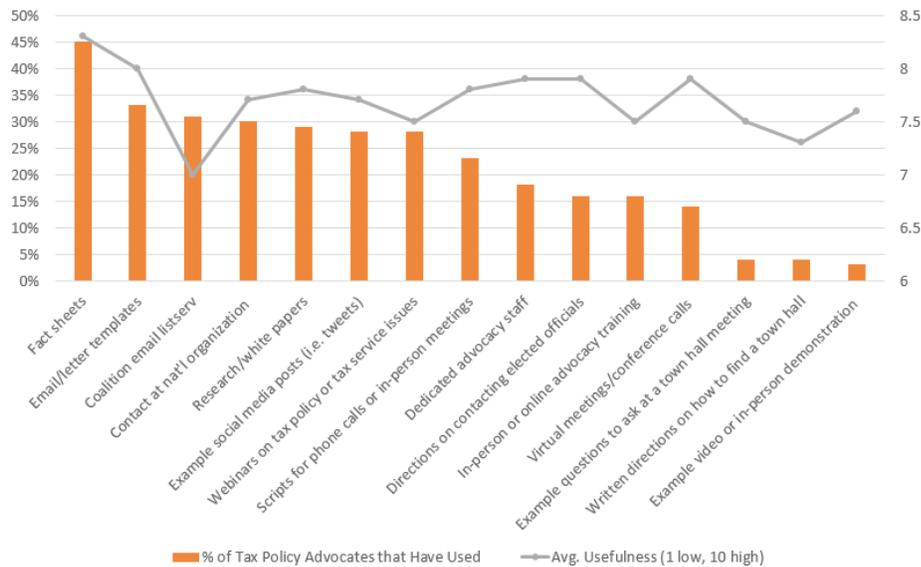
<sup>5</sup>Please see Appendix A for the full list of participants we engaged throughout our process.

**Sense of Powerlessness:** Finally, many of those we interviewed believed that people have a low sense of efficacy on policy issues generally, but especially on tax policy. Almost half of the respondents to our survey said they have a sense of hopelessness when it comes to advocating on tax policy. Others we interviewed thought that tax reform “just affects the wealthy,” that “their voices don’t matter” or that “Congress and the President are not responsive” to the people who could benefit from a more equitable tax code.

**KEY INSIGHT: ADVOCATES NEED TOOLS TO EMPOWER THEIR ADVOCACY**

In order for advocates to influence federal tax policy, they need better tools to address both their “knowledge deficit” and sense of efficacy. Stakeholders noted during our convening and through interviews that organizations should listen to advocates to identify which tools best meet their unique needs.

Survey respondents were asked to identify advocacy tools that they found effective. The figure below shows the percentage of survey respondents that have used specific advocacy tools and, on a scale of 1-10, how useful they rated the tools to be.



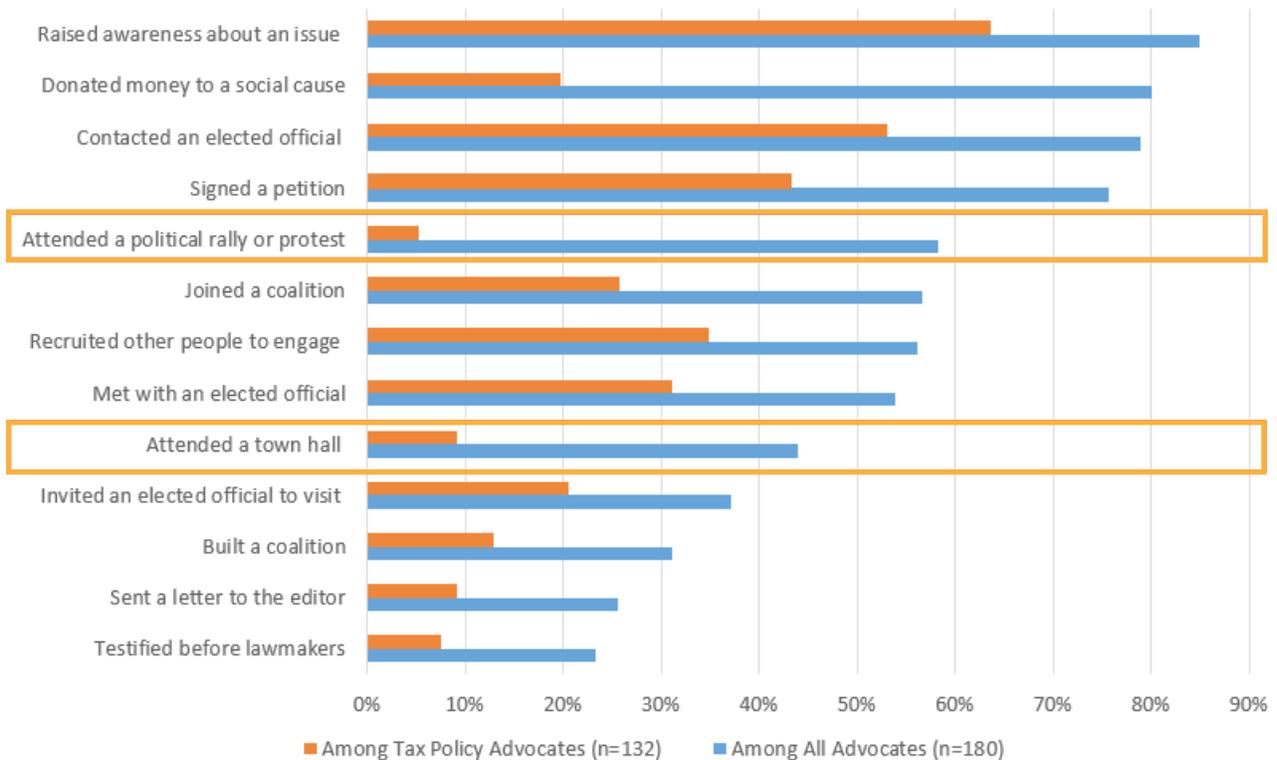
In summary, fact sheets, email/letter templates, research/white papers and sample social media posts were rated as significantly useful by the survey respondents (i.e., they are used often and are considered useful).

The survey also revealed that directions on contacting elected officials, virtual meetings/conference calls, and example videos or in-person demonstrations are tools worth testing (i.e., they may not be used often, but they are considered highly useful).

Finally, we learned that coalition email listservs are not considered useful and should be deprioritized as an advocacy tool.

**KEY INSIGHT: THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE LOCAL ADVOCACY ON TAX POLICY BY LEVERAGING WIDELY USED ADVOCACY TACTICS**

While 99% of survey participants indicated that they had recently taken some form of action on a policy topic, only 72% reported that the action they took related to tax policy. The gap between civic engagement related to general anti-poverty issues and advocacy on tax policy is clearer when broken down by type of action. The figure below shows the thirteen policy actions included in our survey. The blue bars show the percentage of respondents that took an action on any issue, and the orange bars show the percentage of respondents that took an action related to tax policy. The data reflect the largest percentage difference in advocacy type for two actions: attending a town hall and attending political rallies or protests. Though less pronounced, there was also a notable difference between those signing petitions and contacting an elected official in relation to policy issues in general versus on issues related to tax policy. This seems to indicate that there is opportunity to employ several widely used advocacy tactics for tax policy.



## A National Strategy to Strengthen Working Families

We believe that to address wealth and income inequality, activists need a national strategy that leverages the tax code to advance the economic mobility of working families. The lessons learned through the interviews and survey summarized above can help inform this strategy and ensure its effectiveness.

A successful strategy should seek to influence tax policies that achieve two essential outcomes: investing directly in working families to enhance their wealth and financial well-being, and diverting government resources toward critical investments in the government systems that create opportunities for working families. This strategy should be multifaceted, multi-sectored and, above all, should seek to leverage the constituent power of local activists who have proven to be incredibly adept at mobilizing constituents on behalf of working families.

Below are strategies that have the potential to engage a broader set of activists to advance meaningful tax reform.

### TAX POLICY GUIDANCE AND TOOLS TO CLOSE THE “KNOWLEDGE DEFICIT”

There are a growing number of national organizations expanding the field’s rapidly developing knowledge base in tax policy. This includes organizations that have historically focused on tax and budget issues, such as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy/Citizens for Tax Justice (ITEP\CTJ). Further, organizations that have more recently prioritized tax issues as a driving policy focus, such as Americans for Tax Fairness, Prosperity Now (formerly CFED) and PolicyLink, can also contribute to closing the “knowledge deficit.” It is important that these national organizations find effective methods of sharing their insights with experienced local advocates so they can become effective spokespeople for progressive tax reform. Below are strategies that should be prioritized to close the knowledge gap.

**Provide Local Tax Data:** Utilizing local data has proven to be an effective advocacy tool to demonstrate the impact of programs and policies. Taxes should not be any different. Organizations like ITEP/CTJ and the Brookings/Urban Tax Policy Center have performed federal- and state-level distributional analyses to measure how specific tax policies impact households at different income levels.

Since these data already exist, more can be done to package the data in a digestible format for local advocates. Many organizations specialize in this type of work. Groups like Prosperity Now, PolicyLink and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities specialize in developing tools and resources that package data in a format that local advocates can use to advance policy. For example, through its *Scorecard*, Prosperity Now provides a one-stop resource for data tools on the financial health of U.S. households at the national, state and local levels, as well as actionable information on federal, state and local policies. Similarly, PolicyLink produces the *Equity Index*, a tool for advocates that provides data to track, measure and make the case for inclusive growth in America at the state, regional and national levels. In both cases, advocates can use these tools

to analyze, customize and visualize data for advocacy purposes. Similar tools could be used to highlight the local impact of tax policies.

***Simplify the Tax Policy Debate:*** Tax policy touches almost every aspect of a family’s household budget. However, we talk about it as if it is completely disconnected from the budgetary gymnastics that families regularly perform. An effective tax policy advocacy strategy should seek to make tax policy more concrete, relatable and explicitly aligned with the concerns of working families. One strategy offered by the participants of the convening was to break down the tax code into “bite-sized” components and educate advocates through an issue lens that aligns with their areas of expertise, such as housing, income supports or education.

National networks of local advocates, such as the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, the State Priorities Partnership, the Asset Building Policy Network and many others, have a proven track record of engaging local organizations to advocate for national policy issues. In fact, a number of these groups have demonstrated early success engaging organizations in “bite-sized” tax provisions, such as the Mortgage Interest Deduction or the EITC. These key stakeholders could serve as a channel to disseminate educational materials to close the knowledge deficit, as well as to explain the importance of tax policy in language that can be easily repeated to local partners. If successful, the constituents of these groups in the aggregate could potentially represent an army of local tax experts advocating for an inclusive federal tax code.

***Leverage Popular Organizing Tactics to Engage Advocates in Tax Policy:*** A guiding tactical imperative of this strategy should be to meet advocates where they are. Local activists typically do not have the resources to come to Washington and are often largely focused on local issues. To get their attention, we must meet with them in their community and, as stated above, clearly connect how tax reform could solve the local problems they are trying to address. Once we are in these communities, there is no need to reinvent the wheel; there are a variety of advocacy education frameworks utilized by organizations that support local advocacy. Organizations like the Center for Community Change, National People’s Action and RESULTS have developed incredibly effective models of engagement that should be utilized to mobilize activists towards creating an inclusive tax code.

## DEVELOPING BETTER MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATION

A consensus perspective expressed by those interviewed for this report was that tax policy has a messaging problem. A common perception among advocates and the public is that taxes are complex, unapproachable and downright boring. Changing this sentiment will require a strategic messaging campaign to raise awareness among advocates and the public about how tax policy impacts the financial well-being of working families. If successful, this campaign will create a more fertile environment to aid activists in influencing policymakers to enact inclusive tax policies.

***Changing the Narrative:*** The common narrative on taxes and budgets is that “wasteful government spending” goes to poor and undeserving people through social programs, while “tax breaks” are provided to hard-working, deserving households. We need to develop compelling and concise messages that push back against these frames and replace them with a new narrative on tax policy. We should counter this false narrative with poll-tested messages that aim to shift advocate and

public perception on the need for progressive and inclusive tax policy. For example, Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF) has performed public opinion polling to test tax policy language and message frames, and has distributed the results widely among advocates. ATF's findings indicate that most taxpayers are receptive to a message of increasing taxes on the wealthy and redirecting the added revenue toward investments in working families. We must do more of this work if we hope to create a receptive advocacy environment for tax reform that benefits working families.

**Spread the Tax Gospel:** Earned and paid media are powerful forces that define the public discourse on contemporary political debates. However, there is a lot of noise in our current political environment. It is critically important that we find communication channels that deliver a new message directly to the audiences that local grassroots activists would seek to mobilize.

In addition to traditional media, we should seek to leverage social media and email marketing to carry our message to potential advocates. The Women's March, the Tax March, the Indivisible movement and the Movement for Black Lives have demonstrated the effectiveness of social media in mobilizing advocates and shifting public discourse.

## CONTINUE TO USE TRADITIONAL ADVOCACY TACTICS WHILE TESTING NEW ONES

Closing the "knowledge deficit" and advancing a strategic communications agenda will only matter if it translates to political pressure that influences federal policymakers. This will require strong alignment between the grassroots efforts we are seeking to bolster and traditional "inside the Beltway" advocacy on tax issues. It will also require helping advocates feel like they have the power to push for meaningful change.

**Utilizing Advocacy Tools:** The respondents to our survey confirmed that there are a variety of advocacy tactics with which local advocates have experience. However, our survey also found that some tactics are more useful than others. Focusing on employing a mix of proven tools and testing emerging but innovative tactics could facilitate the type of advocacy action we are looking to achieve. For example, proven tools such as facilitating congressional visits, organizing in-district town hall meetings and providing simple fact sheets on tax policy issues should continue to be employed. To have the widest impact, however, we should mix in methods such as sending direct email or organizing action through social media and online petitions, as these methods have proven potential but deserve more testing.

**Educating Candidates for Elected Office:** While there can be limitations on how nonprofits engage in candidate education, engaging in this form of advocacy can catalyze important victories. Many elected officials spend much of their time working to get re-elected in the next election cycle. Organizations that have successfully married issue campaigns to electoral advocacy, such as get-out-the-vote efforts, candidate issue scorecards and hosting issue debates, have seen success in getting their issues squarely placed on the agendas of elected officials. Unfortunately, our field has little experience in this area. However, we should explore opportunities to leverage the electoral process to influence tax policy.

## Conclusion

Lifting the voices of working families is the greatest strength of our field. While we lack the money or resources to simply play the “inside the Beltway” political game, our field has effectively leveraged this strength to achieve significant policy change that has positively impacted working families across the nation.

Advancing inclusive tax reform that puts working families first presents an opportunity to curb the unprecedented income and wealth inequality that plagues our economy. Our current tax code has been intentionally designed to perpetuate this inequality by enhancing the interests of the very wealthy, while providing little benefit to the working families that require the most support. We can advance reforms to the tax code that place working families at the center and help them achieve financial stability, wealth and prosperity. Marrying our field’s capacity to mobilize activists at the grassroots level with our ability to develop actionable tax policy solutions is the clearest pathway toward achieving this goal.

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**The time to act is now. We cannot let this moment pass us by.**

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# APPENDIX A

To gain the insights described in this report, Prosperity Now interviewed staff from nonprofit organizations and think-tanks, as well as advocates at the national, state and local levels. This appendix provides a comprehensive list of people we spoke with throughout this project.

## Interview Participants

**Frank Clemente**  
Americans for Tax Reform

**Meredith Dodson**  
RESULTS

**Robin McKinney**  
CASH Campaign of Maryland

**Liz Nichols**  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**Steve Taylor**  
United Way Worldwide

**Meg Wiehe**  
Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy

**Casey Goldval**  
Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality

**Kelly Hernandez**  
Young Invincibles

**Amanda Jackson**  
Americans for Financial Reform

**David Mitchell**  
Aspen Institute Financial Security Program

**Kelley Lou**  
National Coalition of Asian Pacific American Community Development

**Caleb Quakenbush**  
Urban Institute

## Convening Participants

**Evan Ashey**  
National Urban League

**Cara Baldari**  
First Focus

**Alexandria Bastien**  
PolicyLink

**Emily Chatterjee**  
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

**Anj Chaudry**  
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development

**Soncia Coleman**  
United Way Worldwide

**Meredith Dodson**  
RESULTS

**Steve Savner**  
Center for Community Change

**Jeremy Smith**  
Aspen Institute Financial Security Program

**Deborah Swerdlow**  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**Joe Valenti**  
Center for American Progress

**Yuqi Wang**  
UnidosUS

**Carrie Welton**  
Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)

**Jamie Worker**  
Center for Community Change

**Kyle Williams**  
National Urban League

