



## MEDIA BRIEFING MEMO

To: Reporters, Editors and Columnists

From: Frank Clemente, Executive Director, Americans for Tax Fairness

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### WHY NEW YORK ASSEMBLY SHOULD SUPPORT TRUST ACT

*U.S. Congress Needs to Know if Trump Violated Tax Laws*

This week, the New York Assembly may vote on whether the U.S. Congress will get to obtain President Trump's tax returns. In light of Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin's refusal to abide by a lawful request to provide six years of Trump's tax returns to the House Ways & Means Committee, the TRUST Act now being considered by New York lawmakers may be the best solution.

The TRUST Act would authorize state officials to share tax return information upon a request from three committees in the U.S. Congress. Since Trump is a resident of New York, which is also headquarters of The Trump Organization, the state tax returns could be as revealing as his federal returns. The TRUST Act passed the New York Senate last week by a wide bipartisan margin of 39 to 21. It is expected to be taken up by the Assembly as early as this week.

We urge you to write an editorial or column in support of the measure. As we pointed out in our report [The Case for Congress Obtaining Trump's Tax Returns](#), Trump has broken 40 years of precedent by becoming the only president to keep his tax information private. (A summary of the report is presented in this [testimony to the Ways and Means Committee](#).) Obtaining Trump's tax returns is an important public policy objective and a legitimate exercise of Congress's oversight authority.

Our report explains why Trump's tax returns would be invaluable tools for two distinct and equally important investigations:

- As guides to the complex financial structures and tax loopholes used by the wealthy, including President Trump, to determine if they are avoiding their fair share of taxes through unfair special breaks and how laws should be reformed to stop such tax avoidance and/or evasion.
- As the best source of answers to vital questions about Trump's presidency, including whether there are any conflicts of interest and/or foreign influences that could be adversely affecting his exercise of official duties.

As revealed in a [recent article in the New York Times](#), Trump – a self-proclaimed billionaire – has gone at least eight out of 10 years without paying federal income taxes. Credible media reports have chronicled instances of [unethical tax avoidance and even tax fraud](#) by President Trump and his family. The public has the right to know if he has in fact committed such acts; if so, has he ever been held accountable for them and does the IRS have the authority and capacity to hold him accountable now?

The principal source of Trump's wealth—real estate—is infamous for the special treatment it receives under the tax code, as recently [chronicled in the New York Times](#). Reviewing if and how Trump has exploited real estate tax loopholes would provide a useful roadmap for reform. (Also, see the options for

closing or ending real estate industry tax loopholes and tax breaks in our report [Fair Taxes Now: Revenue Options for a Fair Tax System.](#))

Despite his claims to the contrary, President Trump and his family probably benefitted greatly from the tax legislation he promoted and signed into law in 2017, known as the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. (A critique of that law is [available here.](#)) Most of the tax breaks, which will cost nearly \$2 trillion over 10 years, accrued to corporations and the wealthy, who own most corporate stock. The real estate industry also generously benefitted. The public has a right to know if the president's support for the law was influenced by personal financial gain.

Again, we urge you to editorialize in favor of the TRUST ACT to ensure transparency, honesty, integrity and freedom from conflicts of interest in government. All elected officials, no matter their standing, must be held to the highest ethical standards.

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