



## MAJOR ACTIVITIES IN 2019-2020

As of February 2020

### SUMMARY

In 2019 and early 2020, ATF has been engaged in the following major areas of work:

1. **Staffing and providing strategic direction and coordination to a coalition of more than [400 national and state endorsing organizations](#).** We run a dynamic campaign of coalition building, polling and messaging research, national and state communications strategies, field mobilization, development of tax policy and production of public education materials.
2. **Prosecuting the case against the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA)**, the tax cuts rammed through Congress by President Trump and the GOP in Dec. 2017, which are costing nearly \$2 trillion that is mostly benefiting the wealthy and corporations.
3. **Initiating and building support for progressive tax reforms** that get proposed and debated by policymakers that could raise \$5-\$10 trillion over 10 years to create an economy that works for all Americans. The revenue could be used to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and to make new major investments in health care, housing, childcare, education, clean and renewable energy, rebuilding public infrastructure, and more.
4. **Playing the lead role in shaping messaging in favor of progressive tax reform** and serving as the communications hub for coalition activities.

### PROSECUTING THE CASE AGAINST THE TRUMP-GOP TAX CUTS

It is critical to prosecute the case against the Trump-GOP tax cuts because:

- It is a failed economic policy that Trump bills as [his most important legislative achievement](#), and “the reason the economy is so good.”
- It will be a central narrative that Trump and conservatives in Congress promote throughout 2020. And it will be used to justify new tax cuts he is proposing to make in September before the election.
- We need to discredit forever the conservative narrative that has dominated our politics and budget debates since President Reagan: that trickle-down supply side tax cuts for the rich and corporations are great for the economy and working people.

To succeed at the above, ATF has produced a steady stream of polling, policy and public education materials for the progressive community, the media and lawmakers; has constantly generated social media content for the entire progressive community to make this case; and has mobilized the progressive community on Tax Day 2019 and again on the two-year anniversary of the TCJA in December 2019 for concentrated public education activities. Some examples of our work include:

- [GOP’s Corporate Tax Cuts Have Failed to Deliver Promised Benefits for Workers, Economy](#), Testimony to the House Ways and Means Committee, Feb. 25, 2020
- [Chartbook: Trump-GOP Tax Cuts Failing Workers & The Economy](#), Feb. 2020
- [Trump-GOP Tax Cuts Two-Year Anniversary Materials](#), Nov. 27, 2019: Materials included a report, fact sheet, talking points, polling, digital organizing toolkit, model op-ed and letters to the editor for national and state-based groups to use on the two-year TCJA anniversary.
- [Opinion: The Trump tax cut has amounted to nothing but broken promises for the middle class](#), ATF op-ed in the Los Angeles Times, Jan. 1, 2020. ATF generated a steady stream of press releases and editorial board memos to media outlets across the country throughout the year.
- [Tax Day 2019 Toolkit](#): Materials included talking points, polling, a fact sheet, digital organizing toolkit, model op-ed and letters to the editor.
- ATF’s [TrumpTaxCutTruths.org](#) website provided original research on hundreds of corporations showing that their TCJA tax cuts were not trickling down to employees.

## INITIATING AND BUILDING SUPPORT FOR PROGRESSIVE TAX REFORMS

To make the case that progressive tax reform is needed to raise \$5-\$10 trillion over 10 years for major new investments ATF undertook the following activities:

- Developed a menu of progressive tax reform options for policymakers and advocacy groups to choose from that were detailed in a major 70-page report, [Fair Taxes Now: Revenue Options for a Fair Tax System](#), released ahead of Tax Day. It identified about 40 progressive tax reform and revenue options, which if fully implemented could raise about \$10 trillion. ATF's [online calculator](#) allows users to pair tax increases on the rich and corporations with investment options.
- Although it was not the purpose of the report, many of these options have been adopted by leading presidential candidates. [Five top candidates have released plans](#) that would raise between \$3.4 trillion and \$10 trillion (not counting Medicare for All taxes) to fund new investments. ATF's [op-ed in the Des Moines Register](#) the Sunday before the Iowa debate ahead of the caucuses brought attention to these developments.
- ATF launched several proposals with key members of Congress to help achieve our revenue goals:
  - **Millionaires Surtax:** This is a more moderate approach to taxing the very wealthy designed to garner more mainstream support. It would assess a 10% surtax on taxpayers earning at least \$2 million a year, which would apply equally to wages, salaries and investment income. It could raise \$635 billion over 10 years. Leaders of this effort are Senators Chris Van Hollen (MD) and Sherrod Brown (OH), and Rep. Don Beyer (VA). ATF maintains a separate [website](#) for this effort, which has been endorsed by [72 national groups](#).
  - **Significantly strengthen the estate tax:** This policy proposal would return the estate tax back to its 2009 levels before it was severely weakened by the TCJA. The thresholds for taxing estates would start at \$3.5 million for singles rather than the current \$11 million threshold. It would also establish graduated higher tax rates for estates worth tens of millions of dollars and more than \$1 billion. It could raise about \$300 billion. Sen. Bernie Sanders (VT) and Rep. Jimmy Gomez (CA) are leading this effort. So far, [80 national organizations](#) have signed onto this policy change.
  - **Fairness in Taxation proposal:** This will launch in the Spring of 2020 and tax the wealthy by raising federal income tax rates to 59% on income above \$10 million; equalizing the tax rates on income from wealth (investments) and income from work (salaries and wages); requiring the wealthy to pay taxes every year on the income from their assets just like workers pay taxes on their wages and salaries; replace the estate tax with an inheritance tax; and repeal the 20% deduction on pass-through business income. It could raise \$3 trillion or more over 10 years. Leaders of this effort are Rep. Jan Schakowsky (IL) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY).

## PLAYING THE LEAD ROLE IN SHAPING MESSAGING IN FAVOR OF PROGRESSIVE TAX REFORM

ATF continued its robust and very successful communications efforts during the grant period to shape the narrative around the TCJA and to promote a proactive Fair Share Taxes agenda for the progressive community to support. We did this through:

- **Polling and messaging:** ATF conducted two polls last year. The first, [2019 Tax Message Survey](#) in March 2019, showed policymakers and allies the strength of public support for pursuing a tax fairness agenda and the best messages to use to promote that agenda. The [second poll](#) showed very strong support for the Millionaires Surtax among all voters (73%) and among independents (76%) and Republicans (53%). The survey also assessed public attitudes about taxing income from investments, which is a top priority of progressive tax reformers but has been untested in polling.
- **Media Coverage:** ATF secured 500 media hits in 2019 [highlighted here](#). We did this through rapid response to developments, issuing reports, placing op-eds, and shaping editorials and columns.
- **Digital Media Presence:** ATF provided direction and leadership to our allies in the progressive digital ecosystem through a well-trafficked [website](#), 750,000-person email list, [200,000 Facebook fans](#) and [10,500 Twitter followers](#). Besides providing high-quality fresh content every day, we also regularly coordinated joint actions (email petition efforts, tweet storms, call-in days) with allies.