

## CTJ Issue Brief: The Bush Tax Cuts in California

In his first three years, President George W. Bush has presided over three rounds of major tax cuts, including special tax breaks for capital gains and dividends, reductions in personal income tax rates, estate tax repeal and an array of corporate tax loopholes. This issue brief summarizes the findings of several previously released CTJ analyses of the Bush tax cuts, focusing on their impact on Californians at different income levels and on how California residents are affected by the ballooning federal debt.

### California's Wealthiest Residents Benefit Most From Bush Tax Cuts

The Bush tax cuts that have taken effect so far are heavily tilted toward the very wealthiest taxpayers—and the tax cuts will become even more regressive in the future. The following table shows the impact of the Bush tax cuts on Californians in each year from 2001 to 2006.

- In 2003, the top one percent of Californians, with average incomes of \$1,334,000, get 33.1 percent of the Bush tax cuts that go to Californians, with an average tax cut of \$67,994. By 2006, this group will get 43.2 percent of the tax cuts.
- In contrast, the poorest sixty percent of California residents, with average incomes of \$25,000, collectively get only 14.2 percent of the Bush tax cuts in 2003.
- The poorest twenty percent of Californians, with an average income of \$11,000, get an average of \$140 from the Bush tax cuts in 2003. This is only 1.3 percent of the total tax cuts for Californians.
- The average tax cut for the middle twenty percent of Californians in 2003 is \$846. That falls to \$583 in 2006.

Impact of the Bush tax cuts enacted so far on Californians, 2001-2006

Calendar years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
<b>California Income Group</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>Ave tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	<b>% of tax cut</b>	
Lowest 20%	\$ 11,000	\$ -94	\$ -124	\$ -140	\$ -148	\$ -131	\$ -135	4.0%	2.1%	1.3%	1.3%	1.8%	1.9%
Second 20%	\$ 24,000	-318	-401	-518	-539	-449	-456	13.6%	6.8%	4.9%	4.7%	6.3%	6.5%
Middle 20%	\$ 39,000	-402	-564	-846	-877	-570	-583	17.2%	9.5%	8.0%	7.7%	8.0%	8.3%
Fourth 20%	\$ 63,000	-557	-927	-1,577	-1,670	-1,058	-1,057	23.9%	15.6%	14.9%	14.6%	14.8%	15.0%
Next 15%	\$ 112,000	-770	-1,619	-3,495	-3,683	-2,082	-1,663	24.8%	20.5%	24.7%	24.1%	21.8%	17.7%
Next 4%	\$ 240,000	-1,043	-3,762	-6,991	-7,385	-3,380	-2,609	8.9%	12.6%	13.1%	12.8%	9.4%	7.4%
Top 1%	\$ 1,334,000	-3,400	-37,752	-67,994	-77,495	-52,760	-58,819	7.5%	32.9%	33.1%	34.9%	38.0%	43.2%
<b>ALL</b>	<b>\$ 67,000</b>	<b>\$ -463</b>	<b>\$ -1,177</b>	<b>\$ -2,104</b>	<b>\$ -2,276</b>	<b>\$ -1,422</b>	<b>\$ -1,396</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>ADDENDUM:</b>													
Poorest 60%	\$ 25,000	\$ -271	\$ -363	\$ -501	\$ -521	\$ -383	\$ -391	34.9%	18.4%	14.2%	13.6%	16.1%	16.7%
Top 20%	\$ 201,000	\$ -959	\$ -3,910	\$ -7,517	\$ -8,228	\$ -4,954	\$ -4,799	41.2%	66.0%	70.9%	71.8%	69.2%	68.3%

## Increased Debt More than Offsets the Impact of the Bush Tax Cuts

While the three Bush tax cuts enacted so far are targeted to the wealthy, the explosion in federal debt that accompanies the tax cuts will fall on the backs of all Californians. When the added debt burden and the tax reductions are netted together, the Bush tax cuts are even more clearly a bad deal for Californians at all but the top income levels:

### Net Burden of Bush Fiscal Policies 2001-2006, California Taxpayers

Total	\$342.5 Billion
Per Person	\$ 9,752
Per Family of Four	\$ 39,010

- Between 2001 and 2006, California taxpayers will receive \$133 billion in tax cuts—but will face \$475.5 billion in added federal debt, for a net added burden of \$342.5 billion.
- This means that the net impact of the Bush fiscal policies so far is an added burden of \$9,752 per California resident—or \$39,010 for a California family of four.
- For the middle 20 percent of California taxpayers, the net burden of Bush’s tax and budget policies will average \$21,484 over the six-year period.

### The Bush Debt Buildup versus Tax Cuts: Six-Year Totals by State

Calendar years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	01-06 total
<b>Impact on All Californians (\$Billions)</b>							
Total Tax Cuts	\$ 6.7	\$ 17.3	\$ 31.4	\$ 34.4	\$ 21.7	\$ 21.5	\$ 133.0
Added Debt	48.2	71.0	89.9	85.7	86.2	94.5	475.5
<b>Net Added Burdens</b>	<b>\$ 41.5</b>	<b>\$ 53.7</b>	<b>\$ 58.5</b>	<b>\$ 51.3</b>	<b>\$ 64.5</b>	<b>\$ 72.9</b>	<b>\$ 342.5</b>
<b>Average Impact on Middle 20% of Californians</b>							
Average tax cuts	\$ -402	\$ -564	\$ -846	\$ -877	\$ -570	\$ -583	\$ -3,840
Average added debt	\$ +2,640	\$ +3,850	\$ +4,823	\$ +4,556	\$ +4,537	\$ +4,919	\$ +25,325
<b>Average net added burden</b>	<b>\$ +2,239</b>	<b>\$ +3,286</b>	<b>\$ +3,977</b>	<b>\$ +3,679</b>	<b>\$ +3,967</b>	<b>\$ +4,336</b>	<b>\$ +21,484</b>

## Most Taxpayers Receive Less than \$100 from the 2003 Tax Cuts

President Bush describes his 2003 round of tax cuts as “on average, a tax cut of \$1,126” a year. This statistic is misleading, since most Californians get far less than this “average.” In fact, almost half of Californians get less than \$100 from the 2003 Bush tax cuts in 2003—and most will get less than \$100 a year after 2004.

- In 2003, 49 percent of Californians will get less than \$100 from the 2003 tax bill.
- By 2006, 13.4 million California taxpayers—87 percent of all state residents—will receive less than \$100 in tax cuts as a result of the latest Bush tax cut.

California Taxpayers Getting \$100 or Less from the Bush 2003 Tax Cut Program, 2003-2006							
<\$100 in 2003		<\$100 in 2004		<\$100 in 2005		<\$100 in 2006	
#-000	% of TPs	#-000	% of TPs	#-000	% of TPs	#-000	% of TPs
7,234	49%	7,193	48%	10,632	70%	13,447	87%

## Child Credit Expansion Bypasses Many California Families

One of the mostly highly touted provisions of the 2003 Bush tax cut, the temporary increase in the per-child tax credit to \$1,000, actually provides no benefit for many California families with children. In particular:

### How the \$1,000 Child Credit Affects California Families with Children Under 17 in 2003

# of Families Not Helped	1,287,224
% of Families Not Helped	31%
# of Kids Not Helped	2,409,404

- More than 1,287,000 California families—with 2,409,000 children under 17—will get zero benefit from the 2003 boost in the child credit.
- These families represent 31 percent of California families with children under 17 (excluding the small number of families ineligible for the child credit because their incomes are too high).

#### CTJ Fifty-State Analyses of the Bush Tax Cut on the Internet: Where to Find Them

Distributional Impact of the 2003 Tax Cuts by State: [www.ctj.org/html/gwb03st.htm](http://www.ctj.org/html/gwb03st.htm) .

Net Impact of Added Debt and Tax Cuts, First Three Bush Tax Cuts: [www.ctj.org/pdf/debt0903.pdf](http://www.ctj.org/pdf/debt0903.pdf) .

Taxpayers Receiving Less than \$100 from 2003 cuts: [www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statecut.pdf](http://www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statecut.pdf) .

Child Credit Expansion Bypasses Many Families: [www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statekid.pdf](http://www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statekid.pdf) .