

CTJ Issue Brief: The Bush Tax Cuts in Georgia

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 Georgians at different income levels and on how Georgia residents are affected by the ballooning federal debt.

Georgia'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 Georgians in each year from 2001 to 2006.

- In 2003, the top one percent of Georgians, with average incomes of \$810,000, get 27.3 percent of the Bush tax cuts that go to Georgians, with an average tax cut of \$44,052. By 2006, this group will get 33.6 percent of the tax cuts.
- In contrast, the poorest sixty percent of Georgia residents, with average incomes of \$20,000, collectively get only 15.7 percent of the Bush tax cuts in 2003.
- The poorest twenty percent of Georgians, with an average income of \$9,000, get an average of \$90 from the Bush tax cuts in 2003. This is only 1.1 percent of the total tax cuts for Georgians.
- The average tax cut for the middle twenty percent of Georgians in 2003 is \$787. That falls to \$576 in 2006.

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

Calendar years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Georgia Income Group	Ave tax cut	Ave tax cut	Ave tax cut	Ave tax cut	Ave tax cut	Ave tax cut	% of tax cut	% of tax cut	% of tax cut	% of tax cut	% of tax cut	% of tax cut	
Lowest 20%	\$ 9,000	\$ -68	\$ -83	\$ -90	\$ -97	\$ -104	\$ -109	3.0%	1.8%	1.1%	1.1%	1.8%	1.9%
Second 20%	\$ 19,000	-290	-345	-429	-446	-400	-409	12.9%	7.5%	5.2%	5.1%	6.9%	7.2%
Middle 20%	\$ 33,000	-429	-546	-787	-809	-570	-576	19.1%	11.8%	9.5%	9.1%	9.9%	10.2%
Fourth 20%	\$ 54,000	-564	-800	-1,340	-1,393	-873	-882	25.2%	17.1%	16.1%	15.7%	15.1%	15.5%
Next 15%	\$ 94,000	-725	-1,299	-2,833	-2,998	-1,856	-1,724	24.2%	21.5%	25.5%	25.4%	24.1%	22.8%
Next 4%	\$ 188,000	-1,007	-3,133	-6,341	-6,669	-3,552	-2,500	9.0%	13.6%	15.2%	15.0%	12.2%	8.8%
Top 1%	\$ 810,000	-2,847	-24,180	-44,052	-48,692	-33,565	-36,951	6.5%	26.5%	27.3%	28.4%	30.0%	33.6%
ALL	\$ 52,000	\$ -442	\$ -911	\$ -1,643	\$ -1,747	\$ -1,142	\$ -1,122	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ADDENDUM:													
Poorest 60%	\$ 20,000	\$ -262	\$ -325	\$ -437	\$ -452	\$ -358	\$ -365	35.1%	21.1%	15.7%	15.3%	18.6%	19.3%
Top 20%	\$ 149,000	\$ -889	\$ -2,804	\$ -5,660	\$ -6,084	\$ -3,828	\$ -3,698	39.7%	61.6%	68.1%	68.8%	66.3%	65.2%

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 Georgians. When the added debt burden and the tax reductions are netted together, the Bush tax cuts are even more clearly a bad deal for Georgians at all but the top income levels:

Net Burden of Bush Fiscal Policies 2001-2006, Georgia Taxpayers

Total	\$81.9 Billion
Per Person	\$ 9,570
Per Family of Four	\$ 38,281

- Between 2001 and 2006, Georgia taxpayers will receive \$27.2 billion in tax cuts—but will face \$109.1 billion in added federal debt, for a net added burden of \$81.9 billion.
- This means that the net impact of the Bush fiscal policies so far is an added burden of \$9,570 per Georgia resident—or \$38,281 for a Georgia family of four.
- For the middle 20 percent of Georgia taxpayers, the net burden of Bush’s tax and budget policies will average \$20,796 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
Impact on All Georgians (\$Billions)							
Total Tax Cuts	\$ 1.6	\$ 3.4	\$ 6.3	\$ 6.8	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.5	\$ 27.2
Added Debt	11.1	16.3	20.6	19.7	19.8	21.7	109.1
Net Added Burdens	\$ 9.4	\$ 12.9	\$ 14.3	\$ 12.8	\$ 15.3	\$ 17.2	\$ 81.9
Average Impact on Middle 20% of Georgians							
Average tax cuts	\$ -429	\$ -546	\$ -787	\$ -809	\$ -570	\$ -576	\$ -3,717
Average added debt	\$ +2,557	\$ +3,728	\$ +4,668	\$ +4,409	\$ +4,390	\$ +4,760	\$ +24,513
Average net added burden	\$ +2,129	\$ +3,182	\$ +3,882	\$ +3,601	\$ +3,820	\$ +4,183	\$ +20,796

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 Georgians get far less than this “average.” In fact, many Georgians 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, 53 percent of Georgians will get less than \$100 from the 2003 tax bill.
- By 2006, 3.6 million Georgia taxpayers—90 percent of all state residents—will receive less than \$100 in tax cuts as a result of the latest Bush tax cut.

Georgia 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
2,037	53%	2,017	52%	3,069	78%	3,585	90%

Child Credit Expansion Bypasses Many Georgia 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 Georgia families with children. In particular:

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

# of Families Not Helped	333,576
% of Families Not Helped	28%
# of Kids Not Helped	567,378

- More than 334,000 Georgia families—with 567,000 children under 17—will get zero benefit from the 2003 boost in the child credit.
- These families represent 28 percent of Georgia 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 .

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

Taxpayers Receiving Less than \$100 from 2003 cuts: www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statecut.pdf .

Child Credit Expansion Bypasses Many Families: www.ctj.org/pdf/2003statekid.pdf .