

CTJ Issue Brief: The Bush Tax Cuts in Washington

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

Washington'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 Washingtonians in each year from 2001 to 2006.

- In 2003, the top one percent of Washingtonians, with average incomes of \$1,330,000, get 33.8 percent of the Bush tax cuts that go to Washingtonians, with an average tax cut of \$76,865. By 2006, this group will get 41.6 percent of the tax cuts.
- In contrast, the poorest sixty percent of Washington residents, with average incomes of \$25,000, collectively get only 14.3 percent of the Bush tax cuts in 2003.
- The poorest twenty percent of Washingtonians, with an average income of \$10,000, get an average of \$120 from the Bush tax cuts in 2003. This is only 1.1 percent of the total tax cuts for Washingtonians.
- The average tax cut for the middle twenty percent of Washingtonians in 2003 is \$987. That falls to \$652 in 2006.

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

Calendar years	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Washington 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%	\$ 10,000	\$ -76	\$ -105	\$ -120	\$ -127	\$ -106	\$ -111	3.2%	1.8%	1.1%	1.0%	1.3%	1.3%
Second 20%	\$ 24,000	-276	-392	-510	-524	-384	-392	11.4%	6.7%	4.5%	4.3%	4.7%	4.5%
Middle 20%	\$ 39,000	-445	-642	-987	-1,031	-639	-652	18.4%	11.0%	8.8%	8.5%	7.7%	7.5%
Fourth 20%	\$ 62,000	-592	-963	-1,650	-1,729	-1,065	-1,083	24.5%	16.4%	14.5%	14.2%	12.8%	12.5%
Next 15%	\$ 100,000	-756	-1,531	-3,378	-3,587	-2,182	-2,229	23.2%	19.6%	22.2%	21.9%	19.6%	19.1%
Next 4%	\$ 201,000	-1,035	-4,308	-8,451	-9,056	-5,764	-5,601	9.0%	14.9%	15.2%	15.2%	14.3%	13.5%
Top 1%	\$ 1,330,000	-4,980	-34,471	-76,865	-84,919	-65,325	-71,824	10.3%	29.5%	33.8%	34.8%	39.6%	41.6%
ALL	\$ 62,000	\$ -474	\$ -1,149	\$ -2,233	\$ -2,397	\$ -1,630	\$ -1,703	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ADDENDUM:													
Poorest 60%	\$ 25,000	\$ -266	\$ -381	\$ -541	\$ -562	\$ -377	\$ -386	33.0%	19.5%	14.3%	13.8%	13.6%	13.4%
Top 20%	\$ 182,000	\$ -1,026	\$ -3,735	\$ -8,089	\$ -8,775	\$ -6,097	\$ -6,421	42.5%	64.0%	71.2%	72.0%	73.5%	74.1%

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

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

Total	\$55.5 Billion
Per Person	\$ 9,147
Per Family of Four	\$ 36,587

- Between 2001 and 2006, Washington taxpayers will receive \$27.3 billion in tax cuts—but will face \$82.8 billion in added federal debt, for a net added burden of \$55.5 billion.
- This means that the net impact of the Bush fiscal policies so far is an added burden of \$9,147 per Washington resident—or \$36,587 for a Washington family of four.
- For the middle 20 percent of Washington taxpayers, the net burden of Bush’s tax and budget policies will average \$21,274 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 Washingtonians (\$Billions)							
Total Tax Cuts	\$ 1.3	\$ 3.2	\$ 6.3	\$ 6.8	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.9	\$ 27.3
Added Debt	8.4	12.4	15.6	14.9	15.0	16.4	82.8
Net Added Burdens	\$ 7.1	\$ 9.2	\$ 9.4	\$ 8.1	\$ 10.3	\$ 11.5	\$ 55.5
Average Impact on Middle 20% of Washingtonians							
Average tax cuts	\$ -445	\$ -642	\$ -987	\$ -1,031	\$ -639	\$ -652	\$ -4,397
Average added debt	\$ +2,670	\$ +3,902	\$ +4,887	\$ +4,619	\$ +4,601	\$ +4,992	\$ +25,671
Average net added burden	\$ +2,226	\$ +3,259	\$ +3,900	\$ +3,588	\$ +3,962	\$ +4,339	\$ +21,274

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 Washingtonians get far less than this “average.” In fact, many Washingtonians 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, 46 percent of taxpayers will get less than \$100 from the 2003 tax bill.
- By 2006, 2.5 million Washington taxpayers—85 percent of all state residents—will receive less than \$100 in tax cuts as a result of the latest Bush tax cut.

Washington 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
1,282	46%	1,268	45%	2,019	70%	2,472	85%

Child Credit Expansion Bypasses Many Washington 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 Washington families with children.

In particular:

- More than 130,000 Washington families—with 245,000 children under 17—will get zero benefit from the 2003 boost in the child credit.
- These families represent 17 percent of Washington families with children under 17 (excluding the small number of families ineligible for the child credit because their incomes are too high).

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

# of Families Not Helped	129,801
% of Families Not Helped	17%
# of Kids Not Helped	244,786

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 .