



Taxes

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room. And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so be prepared to hear a different point of view. Listen first, and focus on the facts.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- About half (51%) of [federal government revenue](#) comes from individual income taxes; another 31% comes from Social Security and Medicare taxes as part of payroll.
- The top rate for individual income taxes has ranged from [28% to 70%](#), and the rate on corporate income has ranged from [1% to 52.8%](#).
- In 2018, [144.3 million taxpayers](#) reported earning \$11.6 trillion in adjusted gross income and paid \$1.5 trillion in individual income taxes.

Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Is our tax code overcomplicated? If so, how can it be simplified?
- **Government:** Do you think tax revenues or spending restraint is more important in addressing the federal debt?
- **Business:** Businesses file taxes differently than individuals; how does compliance affect businesses?

Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify how tax policies are affecting your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
2. **Explore the impact of tax codes in your community.** Search the [National Council of State Legislature's State Tax Actions Database](#) or for more general information, the [Internal Revenue Service](#). You can also search for tax policy in your state on [Ballotpedia](#).
3. **Explore community programs in your state.** Search on your state or municipality's website for your local Department of Revenue or Treasury, using keywords such as "tax code."
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on tax law, and their vision for how to tackle spending and revenue challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on the ACA in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [The Federal Debt](#)
 - [Economic Growth](#)
 - [Entitlements](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.