



House of Representatives

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Taxing services would hurt everyday Georgians

By Rep. Pedro Marin

The recommendations of a special commission on tax reform, now under consideration by the House of Representatives in the form of HB 385, contain many radical changes to Georgia's tax structure. These include imposing new sales taxes on groceries, sales of automobiles from one individual to another and 50 personal services not currently taxed – covering a broad range of everyday needs, such as public transportation, haircuts, dry cleaning, automobile repair and family pet care.

Placing an additional tax on daily necessities would disproportionately hurt Georgians who are least able to afford it: middle-class working families, the unemployed, the elderly and others at the lower end of the income scale. These citizens are having a hard enough time avoiding home foreclosure, buying their prescribed medication and keeping food on the table without having more money taken out of their wallets by the state government during a time of economic distress.

If increasing the costs for food and personal services is not enough, HB 385 would also slap a new tax on Sam's Club, Costco and AAA memberships – services that help Georgians save money on shopping and emergency roadside assistance. Medical patients would begin paying sales tax on prescribed items including diabetic care supplies, oxygen and prosthetic devices.

Because they hit those who are nearest the edge of financial disaster the hardest, these proposed tax increases could very well contribute to forcing many individuals and families onto the public assistance rolls, rather than the intended purpose of bringing in more revenue to balance the annual state budget.

HB 385 also includes a provision that would eliminate the current sales tax exemption on nonprofit charity fundraisers in our state, penalizing some 24,000 organizations. These organizations, many of which are faith-based, are largely made up of volunteers who are simply trying to help others in their communities. I cannot believe serious consideration is being given to taxing these efforts and, ultimately, those who would be helped.



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Also specifically included in the tax bill are popular, time-honored American traditions of Girl Scouts cookie sales and Boy Scout popcorn sales. As someone who has served for many years as a Scout leader with the Atlanta Area Council and Executive Board member of the Northeast Georgia Council of Boy Scouts of America, I can attest that requiring our Scouts to collect sales tax is neither feasible nor fair.

It is no exaggeration to say the overall economic impact of this new tax on Georgia's Scouting councils would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars each year, thus denying leadership, camping and community service programs for many young people, especially those in rural or financially distressed areas. I will be working with my House colleagues, hopefully in a bipartisan effort, to protect Scouting activities from the implementation of any new sales tax.

I truly do not believe further shifting the tax burden to middle- and lower-income Georgians, as well as those who serve in and are served by community organizations was what the legislative majority had in mind when it created the special commission on tax reform and "fairness." I urge the legislative leadership to consider the negative impact of placing extra financial burdens on our citizens and refrain from enacting new sales taxes on the essential items and services that meet Georgians' everyday needs.

- *Rep. Pedro "Pete" Marin (D-Duluth) represents District 96 in the Georgia House of Representatives. Contact him at 404-656-0314 or marinstatehouse@aol.com.*