We Need Pro-Family Tax Policies

by Phyllis Schlafly

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Why did Senator Rick Santorum suddenly surge to the status of a leading candidate for the Republican nomination for President after having been treated like a not-to-be-taken-seriously contender in the many television debates? It's not only because a significant segment of conservatives voted by a super majority to back him at a meeting in Houston last week.



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It's because Santorum has sensibly addressed the intersection of fiscal and social issues. He has put on the table a consistent conservative economic and social message.

The majority of Americans, and certainly the big majority of Republican voters, say they support traditional marriage: the union of a husband and a wife. So why are we permitting our fiscal policies to discriminate against traditional marriage and against the right and need of children to have a father and a mother married to each other?

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Don't let anyone tell you that federal policy should be neutral about marriage, children and the family. There is no such thing as a neutral tax or a neutral deduction or a neutral credit. Every part of our income tax return is a manifestation of some social policy.

The whole concept of a progressive income tax is social policy. We as a nation adopted the social policy that those with more income must pay federal income taxes at higher rates than those with less income.

It's a decision of social policy that we can deduct gifts to religious and charitable organizations, and for retirement savings. It's a decision of social policy to promote home ownership by being able to deduct mortgage payments.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), overwhelmingly passed by Congress in 1996 and signed by Bill Clinton (now under attack by the Obama Administration and supremacist judges), not only protects state marriage laws. DOMA also protects the 1,138 federal laws that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) says depend on the traditional definition of marriage.

Traditional marriage was specifically favored in the federal income tax when the great Republican 80th Congress created the joint income tax return over President Harry Truman's veto in 1948. This enabled single-earner married couples to file their income tax return as two people, which they certainly are.

Social policy honoring and benefitting the fulltime homemaker has been an essential feature of the Social Security system since its creation in 1935. Under the Carter Administration, the feminists pursued a three-alternative plan to deprive fulltime homemakers of this benefit, but they were not successful.

The feminists, however, have largely achieved their goal of driving fulltime homemakers into the paid labor force by transferring millions of good middle-class jobs to other countries. High U.S. corporate taxes, the highest in the world, are a major factor making U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.

Our current policy imposes high business taxes on profits from domestic manufacturing, while taxes on overseas profits can be postponed indefinitely. The products made by U.S. plants in foreign countries enter the U.S. with little or no U.S. tax ever paid.

The biggest issue in 2012 is unemployment. Santorum has the best of all jobs plans in calling for an end to business taxes on domestic production.

Unfortunately, fiscal-social policy in the income tax code and in government spending has steadily devalued marriage and subsidized non-marriage. Unmarried persons with children are permitted to file as "head of household" and are eligible for the

same per-child credits and deductions as married couples.

Marriage has been discriminated against by the vast expansion of the welfare state launched by Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in the 1960s. The enormous subsidies handed out from the U.S. Treasury through more than 70 means-tested programs, mostly to unmarried moms with children, now cost U.S. taxpayers more than $800 billion a year, which is more than the defense budget.

Liberals want to continue these handouts because they subsidize non-marriage, illegitimacy, dependency on government, and votes for Democrats. Some free-market economists argue that the tax code should be neutral about raising children, and both sides are wrong.

Marriage absence is the biggest cause of poverty and a major cause of unbalanced budgets and our colossal national debt. Any candidate who claims to be pro-marriage should favor eliminating the sections of the tax code that reward non-marriage with lower taxes; family allowances and child credits should be reserved for married parents who are raising their own children.

A candidate cannot establish his pro-marriage, pro-family credentials by merely saying he supports a federal constitutional marriage amendment, which would take years to be enacted and may never happen. Thanks to Rick Santorum for making the taxpayers confront the fact that conservative economic policy means making our tax system pro-marriage.