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The Justin Harter Tax Plan

Avid readers of my column will remember a column I wrote recently about my lack of good timing during my move into my new home. This week, I share with you an elaboration of one point I made in that column regarding income taxes.

I knew my income taxes would be going up as I was moving from Hamilton to Marion County. I just didn't know how much. A few weeks ago at work when I received my pay stub I turned to a few co-workers and we figured out the rate that we're all being taxed. I'm being taxed at a rate 13% higher than a married woman with a working husband and 10% higher than a single woman living in an adjacent county. I have two cats. One of them may need to go hungry for a while next year when the new taxes come into play. At that point, my total annual contributions to the City of Indianapolis, State of Indiana, FICA/Social Security and the US Government will total over \$4,000 a year. That's *with* a deduction applied to my income.

I'm 20 years old. I don't drink. I don't smoke. I likely won't ever get to use Social Security in my lifetime because a bunch of other people all decided to have babies at the same time. I'm not married and can only live off my single income. I'm going to school and receive bills for thousands of dollars to go to a public university funded in part by my own tax dollars.

I ask the question: "All for what? This utopia will call America?" I've officially had it with all things taxable. The government – local, state and federal – tax me for schools, roads, hospitals, police and fire protection. I live in Indianapolis so schools evidently aren't a priority. IPS has five schools in its ranks with more dropouts than graduates. Our roadways are choked to the shoulder with cars and are full of potholes and faded paint lines. The hospitals cost too much even though they are subsidized to an extent and our police and fire protection are swell to have – just when you need them. It's not everyday I call the fire department. Frankly, I'd rather pay to have the fire department show up and get a doctor for free. My car insurance is too expensive, gas is pricey (although, it takes a lot to refine gasoline so I can't complain too much) and college should be dirt cheap or free.

Here now, I present to you a part of the Justin Harter Tax Plan. Governor Daniels has his, House Speak Pat Bauer (D-South Bend) has his and now it's time for someone to hear mine.

My plan works like this: eliminate the entire budge. Delete it. Pretend it never existed and start from scratch. Now that we're starting over, figure out how much money it takes to provide acceptable mass transit where useful, decent hospitals and police and fire

protection and make that the base amount needed so we can figure out what rate to tax people.

Require all students to finish high school. No one finishes with anything less. I don't care if you're 30 and sitting in a senior English classroom. Dropouts cost this state in millions of dollars in lost income taxes.

Eliminate city governments for any "city" less than 10,000 people. Sorry David Bower, but your and your staff's salary aren't helping. Making Salem a town means that there would be no full-time staffers like a Mayor. You pay a few guys a few thousand dollars a year for meeting every Tuesday night to make up some laws. In areas like Washington County, Salem is so closely tied to the economy it doesn't even make sense to have a City and a County Council. Merge the two and leave it staffed with seven members. Take it further and merge the police, too.

Additionally, universities should be paid for out of corporate taxes only. Corporations and firms want to hire talented people with lots of skills. It's only fair that they should pay for the skills they desire. If they want someone to design a magazine cover then send someone to design school and pay for it. Most people only go to college so they can make a little more money in the long run anyway.

My plan also calls for building real mass transit so people can sell or save on cars, gas and insurance. Then you don't need as many roads, either. That should save you thousands of dollars.

It's better if we all pitch in a few bucks to receive something greater. It works very well for some things now, like water works. To pay for better services, each taxing unit has to behave like I do: if you don't need it, put it back. I wouldn't at all be surprised to learn that the city pays thousands of dollars for things of no real benefit: like a mural for City Hall.