

9 Feb 05

PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY
PANEL
ON FEDERAL TAX REFORM

The Honorable John Breaux, Vice Chairman
Advisory Panel on Tax Reform
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20502

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Dear Senator Breaux:

I would like to suggest that the following simple, general principle be enshrined in the tax code: a person should not be compelled by government to financially support programs that are counter to that person's religious and/or moral beliefs. To do so, after all, is nothing less than a violation of religious freedom, pure and simple.

I am not advocating that a person should be able to beg off tax liability on religious grounds. Rather, I am simply saying that we should be able to assure any given citizen that the tax revenue he or she provides is not being used for a purpose offensive to their beliefs.

As a member of the Religious Society of Friends, I have long been a supporter of the idea of the "Peace Tax Fund," with which you are no doubt familiar. (If you aren't, please see the website <http://www.peacetaxfund.org> for more information.) But I have come to understand that for me to have an opportunity such as the Peace Tax Fund available, my fellow citizens who may have different beliefs would also deserve the opportunity to have their beliefs taken into account in similar fashion. So, a more conservative person may wish to not have their tax revenue spent on family planning programs, say, or on stem cell research, or on support for the arts. I think these desires should be respected, as I would like my desire to not support military spending to be respected. I believe that in both cases there are sufficient numbers of taxpayers who do not share those beliefs strongly enough to ask for similar restrictions, and therefore overall funding levels for these various programs would in all probability not be significantly affected.

I believe that having such provisions in place will encourage greater compliance with tax laws, save the government the expenses of prosecuting anti-war and other morally-based tax protesters, and reaffirm the government's understanding of and respect for religious belief in this country.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion, and good luck with the work of your Advisory Panel.

Sincerely,



Walter S. Mendler
POB 368
Honesdale, PA 18431

cc: Mr. Jeffrey F. Kupfer *inter alia*