

Pew's Subsidyscope Compiles All Tax Expenditure Estimates for First Time from U.S. Treasury and Joint Committee on Taxation

Federal Data is Released in Sortable and Downloadable Format

WASHINGTON— The Pew Charitable Trusts' Subsidyscope project released a first-of-its-kind database today that allows users to view, compare and sort income tax expenditures across more than a dozen economic sectors, including health, agriculture, education, energy, housing, transportation and defense, among others. Pew's Tax Expenditure Database is a Web-based tool that includes estimates from both the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Congress' Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT).

"Transparency about tax expenditures will prove to be increasingly important for policy makers as they face difficult decisions about federal priorities," said Lori Metcalf, project manager of Subsidyscope. "Pew's Tax Expenditure Database provides them with a new tool to analyze how federal resources are being allocated through the tax code."

Comparing tax expenditures across sectors and over time provides insight regarding which government priorities have been subsidized through the tax code for the last decade, and which activities are projected to be supported, under current law, for the next four to six years (JCT currently projects figures until 2014 and the Treasury until 2016).

Subsidyscope has compiled data from more than 20 budget documents into a single database. This allows users to compare the Treasury and JCT estimates for specific tax expenditures and to see approximations of the total revenue lost. Researchers also can download the data into ".csv" (comma-separated values) files and sort the information in a variety of ways.

The Pew Tax Expenditure Database shows that:

- The four largest sectors account for nearly 82 percent of spending through the tax code in FY 2010, using the Treasury estimates. In order from largest to smallest, these are: commerce and housing; health; income security; and education, training, employment and social services.
- The Treasury and JCT have different estimates for some tax expenditures, often due to different methodologies, assumptions or presentations of data. For instance, there is a \$54 billion difference in the estimates of excluding employer contributions for health care, health insurance premiums and long-term-care insurance premiums (\$160 billion by the Treasury and \$106 billion by JCT in FY 2010).
- In some years, tax expenditure estimates total more than discretionary spending.

The data on the energy, housing and transportation sectors were released in January. Today's release incorporates 15 more sectors and completes the Pew Tax Expenditure Database.

Subsidyscope organizes information by type of spending (grants, contracts, loans and loan guarantees and tax subsidies) and by economic sector. For more information, visit www.subsidyscope.org.

The Pew Charitable Trusts' economic policy work aims to encourage an informed debate and promote practices that strengthen the U.S. economy. Pew (www.pewtrusts.org) is a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life.

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