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THE TAX LAWYER

As Congress Debates Taxes, Here Are 13 Clever Quips About Paying Them

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May 18, 2025

The present and future of the tax law is currently being debated in Congress, and it seems all but certain that big changes will be made before the end of 2025 when the so-called Trump tax cuts are scheduled to expire. We all have to pay taxes, and that will remain a constant, though very few of us enjoy the annual drudgery associated with tax return filings, much less the constant record-keeping and the nagging fear of audit. Most of us don't especially like parting with some of our hard-earned dollars either.

It doesn't help that our tax system is enormously complicated, and can seem arbitrary and unfair. Some people say that its byzantine nature practically encourages taxpayers to be creative and aggressive. In some circles, maneuvering to legally pay lower taxes can seem like a national pastime. It's okay to legally try to delay or avoid paying taxes. (*Evading* taxes is different and is not something you want to do.) As Judge Learned Hand of the Second Circuit Court of Appeals famously observed in 1934:

- "Any one may so arrange his affairs that his taxes shall be as low as possible; he is not bound to choose that pattern which will best pay the Treasury; there is not even a patriotic duty to increase one's taxes." [Helvering v. Gregory, 69 F.2d 809 \(2d Cir. 1934\)](#)

As you fret about minimizing your taxes, it might provide a modicum of relief to know that you are not alone. More than a few public figures, great minds, and clever observers have made their views about taxes clear. Here are a few:

- "For a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."--Winston Churchill
- "Income tax returns are the most imaginative fiction being written today."--Herman Wouk
- "I am proud to be paying taxes in the United States. The only thing is I could be just as proud for half of the money."--Arthur Godfrey

- “A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man, which debt he proposes to pay off with your money.”--G. Gordon Liddy
- “The taxpayer: that’s someone who works for the federal government, but doesn't have to take a civil service examination.”--Ronald Reagan
- "The income tax created more criminals than any other single act of government."--Barry Goldwater
- "Collecting more taxes than is absolutely necessary is legalized robbery."--Calvin Coolidge
- “This is too difficult for a mathematician. It takes a philosopher. The hardest thing in the world to understand is the income tax.”--Albert Einstein
- “The difference between death and taxes is death doesn’t get worse every time Congress meets.”--Will Rogers
- “In 1790, the nation which had fought a revolution against taxation without representation discovered that some of its citizens weren’t much happier about taxation *with* representation.”--Lyndon B. Johnson
- “Why does a slight tax increase cost you two hundred dollars and a substantial tax cut save you thirty cents?”--Peg Bracken
- “You must pay taxes. But there’s no law that says you gotta leave a tip.”--Morgan Stanley advertisement.