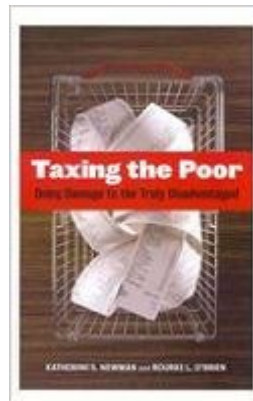


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Taxing The Poor: Doing Damage To The Truly Disadvantaged (Wildavsky Forum Series)



Synopsis

This book looks at the way we tax the poor in the United States, particularly in the American South, where poor families are often subject to income taxes, and where regressive sales taxes apply even to food for home consumption. Katherine S. Newman and Rourke L. Oâ™Brien argue that these policies contribute in unrecognized ways to poverty-related problems like obesity, early mortality, the high school dropout rates, teen pregnancy, and crime. They show how, decades before Californiaâ™s passage of Proposition 13, many southern states implemented legislation that makes it almost impossible to raise property or corporate taxes, a pattern now growing in the western states. *Taxing the Poor* demonstrates how sales taxes intended to replace the missing revenue—taxes that at first glance appear fair—actually punish the poor and exacerbate the very conditions that drove them into poverty in the first place.

Book Information

Series: Wildavsky Forum Series (Book 7)

Paperback: 264 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (February 27, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520269675

ISBN-13: 978-0520269675

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,115,115 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #100 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Economics > Unemployment #794 inÂ Books > Business & Money > Taxation #1153 inÂ Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Specific Topics > Labor & Industrial Relations

Customer Reviews

Students of poverty in America have searched for its roots in many areas, including racism, culture, genetics, personal responsibility, and social policy. Taxes, by contrast, have received little attention. In *Taxing the Poor*, Katherine S. Newman and Rourke L. Oâ™Brien respond to this oversight with an illuminating survey of how tax policy in the South has contributed in major ways to the poverty endemic in the region on both sides of the color line. Compared to the rest of the country, the states of the old Confederacy depend to a great extent on sales taxes as a source of revenue. Similarly,

the South imposes much lower corporate and progressive income taxes. The result is that the burden of funding the government falls disproportionately on those least able to pay. One of the major consequences of these policies is that the states of the region are significantly underfunded, especially in providing services for the poor. Another is that high sales taxes – especially on groceries and other necessities – drain a substantial portion of the poor’s meager income, putting them at a great disadvantage even when compared to the poor in other regions. However, as the authors make clear, it’s not simply taxes per se that lie at the heart of this problem. Like California, where Proposition 13 has made it virtually impossible for state or local government to raise new taxes by imposing a supermajority rule on both legislation and popular initiatives, the states of the South have their own supermajority rules. Significantly, though, those rules were adopted decades before 1978, when Proposition 13 was passed.

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