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## Grover Norquist's Real Game: Shifting Power and Wealth to the 1 Percent

*Norquist's real mission has been government that serves corporate America.*

December 20, 2011 | Grover Norquist is fast becoming the man everyone loves to hate – except those who fear him. Norquist, the leader of Americans for Tax Reform, is both the architect and enforcer of the Republican Party's obsessive opposition to all taxes – an obsession that threatens to drive America off a fiscal cliff.



Every Republican running for president (except John Huntsman) has signed Norquist's no-tax pledge. So have 13 governors, 1,300 state legislators, 40 of the 47 Republicans in the Senate, and 236 of the 242 Republicans in the House.

Politicians who refuse to sign Norquist's pledge –

or who violate it after getting elected by voting for tax increases -- risk facing his wrath in the next election. To avoid getting branded as pro-tax, they sign. Few candidates have wanted to appear "soft" on taxes since Ronald Reagan beat Walter Mondale in 1984 after the Democrat said that, if elected, he'd raise taxes.

Norquist refuses to identify his donors, but, clearly his anti-tax small-government rhetoric is just a clever cover story to help his corporate benefactors. Last year Norquist supported the Republicans' plan to extend the Bush tax cuts on the wealthy and to cut payroll taxes, which President Obama reluctantly agreed to. Norquist still embraces tax cuts for the rich. At recent meeting with GOP lawmakers, Norquist said that permitting the expiration of the Bush temporary tax cuts on the wealthy would violate the no new taxes pledge. But, he said, allowing this year's payroll tax cut to expire wouldn't breach the no tax dogma.,

Apparently, Norquist's no-tax pledge doesn't apply when it's a tax on middle class families. In 2011, the payroll tax cut put \$120 billion into the hands of millions of middle and working class Americans.

In 2011, the richest one percent of Americans will get an average tax break of \$66,384, thanks to the Bush cuts. That's larger than the **the average income of the other 99 percent -- \$58,506.**

Norquist's real agenda is obvious. Speaking for his corporate funders, he brands ending tax cuts for the rich as an outrageous tax increase while claiming extending payroll tax relief for working families is typical Democratic fiscal irresponsibility.

Norquist claims that he is committed to smaller government. He once famously said that he wanted to reduce the size of government to the point that he could drown it in a bathtub. But his hypocrisy on extending tax cuts -- OK for the rich but not for average working families -- reveals Norquist's true colors. He's a front man for the 1%.

How did Norquist become the Machiavelli for the mega-rich? After earning his MBA at Harvard, Norquist served as was executive director of both the National Taxpayers Union and the College Republicans, then went to work as a speechwriter at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. In 1985, Donald Regan -- the former CEO of Merrill Lynch before becoming Ronald Reagan's chief of staff -- plucked Norquist out of the Chamber and installed him as head of Americans for Tax Reform.,

Since then, Norquist's real mission has been government that serves corporate America. He's supported government subsidies for ethanol and has lobbied on behalf of Microsoft, Seagrams and the gambling industry.

As the head of Americans for Tax Reform he shilled for the tobacco industry. In 1993, tobacco giants Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds worried that taxes on tobacco products might be included as a source of funding for health care reform. Norquist was an experienced warrior against taxes and had a network of state-level contacts that could be mobilized. The tobacco firms gave grants to ATR's educational arm and made payments for ATR's lobbying services. It was a marriage of convenience and opportunity for both and another example of Norquists's real agenda behind his no-tax pledge: Shift more wealth and power to the already wealthy and powerful.

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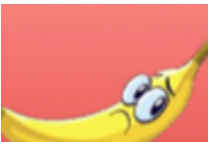
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