

# TRUMP'S BROKEN PROMISES TO WISCONSIN FAMILIES

President Donald Trump has harmed the workers and middle-class families for whom he pledged to fight, instead helping the rich get richer by catering to the interests of large corporations and the wealthy. This fact sheet outlines how President Trump's broken promises have harmed Wisconsin families—from sabotaging affordable health care to weakening protections for workers.

## Sabotaging health care

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump regularly claimed that “everybody’s got to be covered” by health insurance and promised that uninsured individuals would “be taken care of” under his leadership.<sup>1</sup> Since taking office, however, Trump has worked relentlessly to strip health care from millions of Americans and gut protections for those with preexisting conditions.<sup>2</sup> Trump and his allies in Congress attempted to pass legislation to fully repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and damage critical programs such as Medicaid, while simultaneously giving more tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires.<sup>3</sup> After failing to gain sufficient support for these dangerous bills—even in a Republican-controlled Congress—Trump took his war on health care to the courts.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice has filed multiple briefs in support of an ongoing Texas lawsuit to invalidate the entire ACA, including provisions that currently protect 2.4 million Wisconsinites with preexisting conditions.

**“We got the  
individual  
mandate**

...  
**Now we’re  
going for  
the rest.”**

— PRESIDENT TRUMP,  
APRIL 26, 2019<sup>5</sup>

## THE ACA REMAINS IN JEOPARDY AS LONG AS TRUMP IS PRESIDENT

In recent months, Trump has renewed his commitment to taking health care away from millions of Americans while offering no viable replacement plan. Below are several ways Wisconsinites would be harmed if Trump fully repeals the ACA:

- 153,000 individuals would lose coverage, causing the state’s uninsured rate to increase by 35 percent.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.4 million individuals with preexisting conditions would face higher premiums or be barred from coverage altogether—a discriminatory practice that the ACA outlawed.<sup>7</sup>

- 972,000 individuals would face cost limits on employer-based coverage.<sup>8</sup>
- The state of Wisconsin would lose \$1 billion in federal Medicaid funding, and demand for uncompensated care would increase by \$412 million.<sup>9</sup>

## **TRUMP HAS ALREADY UNDERMINED KEY COMPONENTS OF THE ACA MARKETPLACE**

Trump has stated<sup>10</sup> that “the best thing [Republicans] can do, politically speaking, is let Obamacare explode,” and he has done everything in his power to impair the law at the expense of Wisconsin families. To undermine the insurance market, his administration expanded the availability of limited, short-term plans that do not cover essential benefits such as prescription drug coverage and mental health services.<sup>11</sup> Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress also eliminated an integral component of the ACA in order to finance tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans. This deliberate sabotage of the insurance market has prompted uncertainty for insurers as well as increased health care costs for working families.

This year alone, Trump’s ACA sabotage will cost the average family of four in Wisconsin an additional \$4,600.<sup>12</sup> Trump’s most recent budget would slash \$777 billion from Medicaid and ACA subsidies,<sup>13</sup> which would be harmful for Wisconsin’s 1 million enrollees.<sup>14</sup> The Trump administration has also enabled punitive so-called work requirements for Medicaid that could threaten health care coverage for as many as 66,000 Wisconsinites.<sup>15</sup>

## **PRESCRIPTION DRUGS PRICES HAVE CONTINUED TO SKYROCKET UNDER TRUMP’S WATCH**

After promising to lower prescription drug costs and claiming that the drug industry was “getting away with murder,”<sup>16</sup> Trump appointed pharmaceutical lobbyists to key roles directing health policy in his administration.<sup>17</sup> With foxes guarding the hen house, it is no surprise that drug companies have continued to raise prices. Nearly 30 drug companies announced price increases that will take effect this year.<sup>18</sup> While Wisconsinites continue to face the difficult decision to skip essential medications due to high costs, the same large pharmaceutical companies spent billions on stock buybacks to enrich their own executives following the tax breaks they received with the passage of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA).<sup>19</sup> Trump’s proposed trade deal also favors Big Pharma by effectively protecting these companies’ monopolies on brand-name patents, stifling competition, and preventing consumers from accessing lower-cost generic biologics.<sup>20</sup>

## Giving tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans

On the campaign trail, Trump repeatedly claimed<sup>21</sup> that no one would gain more from his tax plan than low- and middle-income Americans. Rather than keep this promise, he and congressional Republicans designed the TCJA, a law that showered massive tax breaks on large corporations and wealthy individuals—including Trump himself—who were already receiving a disproportionate share of the economy’s gains.

### PROMISE VERSUS REALITY

**“This is going to cost me a fortune, this [tax bill]—believe me. Believe me, this is not good for me.”**

— PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, NOVEMBER 29, 2017<sup>22</sup>

**“Trump stands to save millions under new tax measure, experts say”**

— THE WASHINGTON POST, DECEMBER 20, 2017<sup>23</sup>

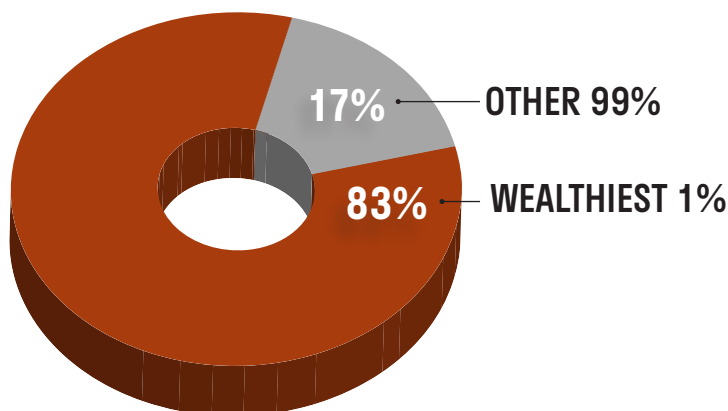
### TRUMP’S TAX PLAN IS NEITHER PRO-WORKER NOR PRO-FAMILY

The TCJA gave significantly larger tax cuts to the wealthy than to low- and middle-income workers.<sup>24</sup> In fact, 330,000 Wisconsin households either received no tax cut or experienced a tax increase after the law’s passage.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, Wisconsin-based corporation WEC Energy Group and 60 other Fortune 500 companies paid zero federal income taxes in 2018.<sup>26</sup> Instead of spending this windfall to improve workers’ wages or on capital investment—as the tax bill’s supporters claimed they would—these companies spent billions on stock buybacks to enrich executives and shareholders. Annual U.S. stock buybacks hit a record high in 2018 following Trump’s corporate tax breaks.<sup>27</sup> The tax bill’s provisions for workers and families expire over time, while its benefits for corporations were made permanent.

FIGURE 01

**The wealthiest 1 percent received an enormous share of the tax bill’s benefits**

Distribution of federal tax change for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, by income group, 2027



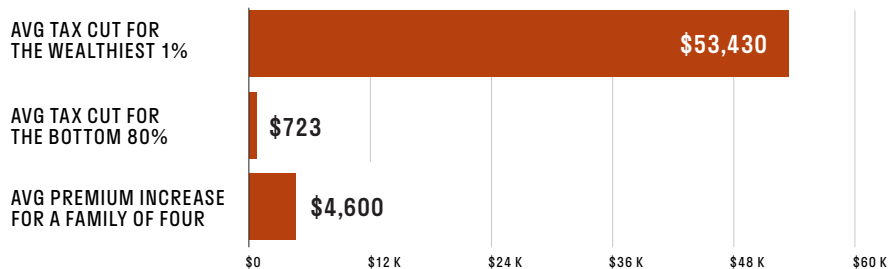
Source: Tax Policy Center, “Distributional Analysis of the Conference Agreement for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act” (Washington: 2017), available at <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/publications/distributional-analysis-conference-agreement-tax-cuts-and-jobs-act>.

To pay for the enormous tax breaks for the wealthiest 1 percent, Trump and congressional Republicans eliminated the ACA's individual mandate, undermining the insurance market and raising health care costs for Wisconsin families.<sup>28</sup> The average tax cut that working- and middle-class Wisconsinites received was less than half the additional premium costs for families due to Trump's health care sabotage.<sup>29</sup>

FIGURE 02

**Tax cuts received by Wisconsin middle-class families did not even cover the cost of President Trump's health care sabotage**

Average 2019 tax out received by income group, and estimated 2019 health care premium increase for a family of four due to ACA sabotage



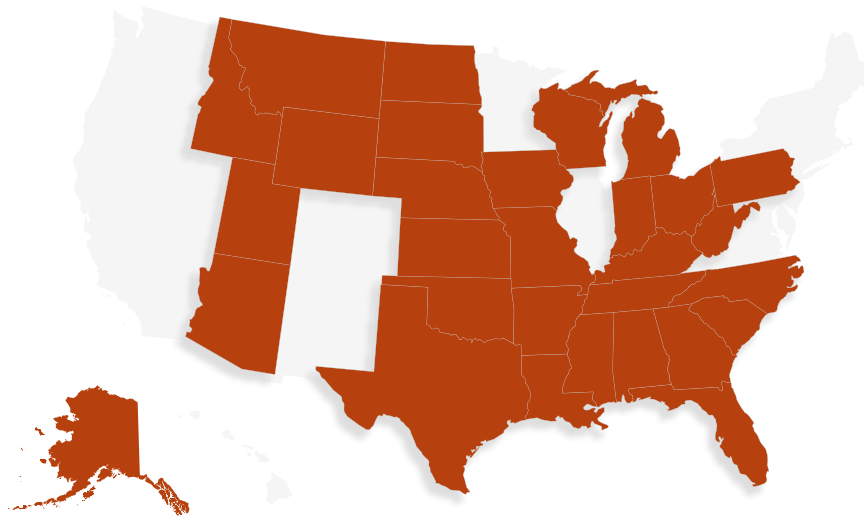
Source: Tax Policy Center, "Distributional Analysis of the Conference Agreement for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act" (Washington: 2017), available at <https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/publications/distributional-analysis-conference-agreement-tax-cuts-and-jobs-act>.

**AN AMERICA-LAST TAX PLAN**

On the campaign trail, Trump promised to punish companies that moved U.S. factories to other countries. His tax plan incentivizes companies to outsource jobs and keep profits overseas, however, by creating new loopholes that reward companies for relocating operations and assets overseas.<sup>30</sup>

FIGURE 03

**In 2019, foreign investors would receive \$5 billion more from the final congressional GOP tax bill than working- and middle-class families in these states, combined**



Note: For the purposes of this map, working- and middle-class families are defined as tax units in the bottom 80 percent of the income distribution in these states.  
 Source: Authors' calculation using Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, "The Final Trump-GOP Tax Plan: National and 50-State Estimates for 2019 & 2027" (2017), available at <https://itep.org/finalgop-trumpbill/>.

Trump's tax breaks delivered \$5 billion more in benefits to foreign investors than it did to all of the working- and middle-class families in every state that elected him president.<sup>31</sup> This year, foreign investors are expected to gain \$48 billion from the bill, while the bottom 99 percent of Wisconsinites will only receive \$3.8 billion.

## Making the American dream increasingly out of reach

Due to stagnant wages and increasing income inequality, the American dream and the middle-class lifestyle associated with it are under threat. While the United States remains one of the world's most prosperous countries, recent economic gains have fallen into the hands of very few. For more and more Americans, traditional hallmarks of the middle-class lifestyle are out of reach, including upward social mobility, homeownership, aspirations toward college education, and earning wages to ensure family economic security. The share of 30-year-olds earning more than their parents has declined from 90 percent in 1970 to just 50 percent today.<sup>32</sup> The share of adults in middle-class households has decreased from 61 percent in 1971 to 52 percent today.<sup>33</sup>

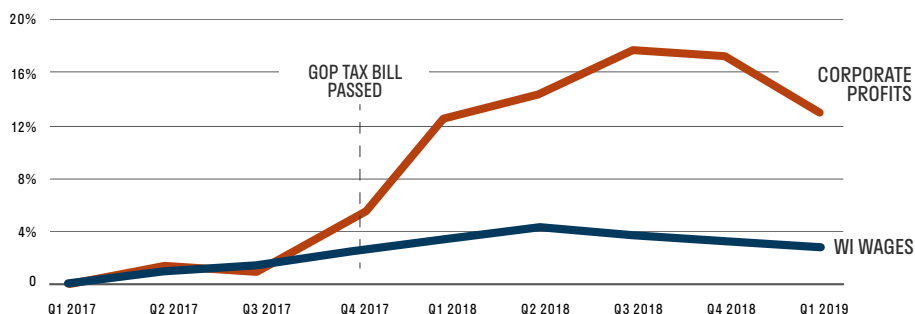
### STAGNANT WAGES

The average income of the top 1 percent—those earning more than \$350,000 a year—is 19 times greater than the average income of the rest of the Wisconsin population. Since the Great Recession, the top 1 percent has captured 20 percent of all income growth in Wisconsin. During the same period, incomes for the top 1 percent of earners in the state grew by 21 percent, while the rest of the Wisconsin population only experienced a 16 percent increase in average income.

FIGURE 04

#### In Trump's economy, wages are stagnant while corporate profits soar

Percentage growth since January 2017 in after-tax corporate profits and average hourly earnings of private employees



Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, "Corporate Profits After Tax with Inventory Valuation Adjustment (IVA) and Capital Consumption Adjustment (CCAdj)," available at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CPATAX> (last accessed May 2019); Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, "Average Hourly Earnings of All Employees: Total Private," available at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CEU0500000003> (last accessed May 2019). Data were adjusted using Federal Reserve of St. Louis, "Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items," available at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CPIAUCSL> (last accessed May 2019).

As wages have failed to keep pace with rising costs of living, 27 percent of Wisconsinites have a debt that has been sent to collections.<sup>34</sup> Among these consumers, the average person in Wisconsin has \$5,300 in debt collections.

Trump promised voters that he would prioritize the interests of the middle class. Instead, his administration is rewriting the rules to reward corporate interests and making it harder for working Americans to get ahead<sup>35</sup>:

- The Trump-appointed director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau proposed rolling back restrictions on predatory payday lenders that require them to ensure borrowers can repay loans.<sup>36</sup>
- The Trump administration abandoned a rule designed to ensure that middle-class workers are properly compensated for working overtime, lowering the Obama-era income threshold so that fewer workers are covered. Under Trump's proposed threshold, 120,000 Wisconsinites would lose overtime protections, costing them a projected \$19 million in lost wages each year.<sup>37</sup>
- Trump's administration weakened U.S. Department of Labor rules that required financial advisers to act in the best interests of their clients. Now, sophisticated investment advisers can effectively exploit consumers by offering conflicted financial advice, costing Wisconsin retirement savers an estimated \$449 million per year.<sup>38</sup>

## **COSTLY HIGHER EDUCATION**

Within one generation, the average cost of public four-year education has tripled, and the cost of a public two-year education has doubled.<sup>39</sup> In Wisconsin, 45 percent of student loan borrowers owe more than \$20,000, and 37 percent of all borrowers are more than 34 years old.<sup>40</sup>

Trump has repeatedly promised to address the rising cost of college education. Instead, however, he has allowed for-profit education corporations to exploit vulnerable students, including 7,800 students currently enrolled at for-profit colleges in Wisconsin.<sup>41</sup> For example, Career Education Corporation, a for-profit university, deceived thousands of students about its program costs and graduate outcomes.<sup>42</sup> The company then settled with the Trump administration and saw record earnings within months.<sup>43</sup> The U.S. Department of Education—led by Secretary Betsy DeVos, a major Trump donor with little relevant expertise—has not conducted proper oversight<sup>44</sup> of for-profit education corporations, even as these companies have failed to make millions in financial aid payments to students.<sup>45</sup>

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY CRISIS

In La Crosse, Milwaukee, Oshkosh, Racine, and Whitewater, more than half of renting households spend more than one-third of their income on rent; 1 in 4 households spends more than half of their income on rent.<sup>46</sup> The median price for a single-family home in the Madison metropolitan area is now \$285,000.<sup>47</sup> In order to qualify for a mortgage, residents must have an annual household income of about \$69,000, but the median income<sup>48</sup> is only \$66,600, leaving homeownership out of reach for many. Rather than help solve this housing affordability crisis, Trump has proposed slashing federal funding for housing assistance to pay for more tax breaks.<sup>49</sup>

## Energy and climate

Since taking office, Trump has undermined public lands and the renewable energy economy by catering to special interests. For example, Trump selected Andrew Wheeler, a coal lobbyist,<sup>50</sup> to lead the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and filled the department's staff with fossil fuel industry allies.<sup>51</sup> Trump has also proposed using emergency executive authorities to bail out and subsidize coal power plants, which would raise consumers' energy prices.<sup>52</sup> Trump's proposed budget cuts to the EPA would threaten Wisconsin's access to clean water and hinder ongoing research that supports clean energy innovation in the state.<sup>53</sup>

Trump's efforts to prop up the fossil fuel industry could have a harmful effect on Wisconsin's developing clean energy economy. Nearly 10 percent of Wisconsin's utility-scale net electricity generation comes from renewable resources, and the state is one of the nation's top producers of ethanol, with capacity to produce more than a half billion gallons each year.<sup>54</sup> Wisconsin's outdoor economy currently supports 168,000 jobs and \$18 billion in consumer spending annually.<sup>55</sup>

## Enforcing inhumane immigration policies

Throughout his campaign and since taking office, Trump has vilified immigrants, portraying them as a burden on the nation's economy and a U.S. security threat. Trump, however, has also relied on a large immigrant workforce to operate his businesses and exploited the U.S. immigration system for his financial gain by paying undocumented workers lower wages.<sup>56</sup>

The Trump administration has significantly expanded the use of private prisons in the U.S. immigration enforcement system, lining the pockets of prison industry officials—many of whom donated to Trump’s 2016 campaign.<sup>57</sup> Today, private prison corporations operate more than 70 percent of U.S. immigration detention centers. As thousands of immigrant children remain separated from their parents in U.S. custody, the administration now plans to expand the use of family detention.<sup>58</sup>

Trump’s divisive rhetoric about immigrants flies in the face of reality. Immigrants are a vital part of the nation’s social fabric and its shared prosperity. Each year in Wisconsin, Dreamer households pay \$131 million in federal taxes; pay \$79 million in state and local taxes; and provide \$580 million in spending power to their communities.<sup>59</sup>



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