



RP tax season wish list: Trump's taxes

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In his first 100 days, President Donald Trump has flip-flopped on a lot of things: China, military action in Syria, the ratio of how many days one should spend on the golf course versus in the West Wing.

So in honor of Tax Day this week, we'd like him to reverse one more stance: Releasing his tax returns.

To be clear, we're not wanting to see tax returns because we're some hippy-dippy group of liberals we want access to them because we're United States citizens who want those who govern an institution that is closely woven into our lives to be open and transparent with us about their wealth, in order to ensure you're working in our best interests, not yours.

This is not a partisan issue – if Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, Bernie Sanders, John Kasich or the like had claimed the presidency and had failed to file their tax returns, we would be writing the same exact op-ed, under the same pretenses that our democracy is in need of open and transparent leaders.

Finances and taxes are the best indicator of what kind of person you are, and what you value. Publicized tax returns allow for the citizens, who may we add, are now your boss, allow for us to see what stocks you have holdings in, the parts of the world you invest in and the industries you support the most.

We're grateful that we at least have the financial disclosure Trump released to the Federal Elections Commission in 2015 to go off of, where we can see that his stock portfolio is at least \$33.4 million. However, because the financial disclosure only requires an estimated range of asset worth, and doesn't include information about whether their assets are later placed in a blind trust, which ensures that public servants aren't using their position of power to prop up industries that benefit them.

The fact that Trump has investments in numerous industries isn't the problem. The problem lies in the fact that we have no idea if he's still profiting off of them in his actions as the POTUS.

A perfect example of where there's room for concern in his mostly undisclosed earnings is in his Raytheon stock. Raytheon is a company that produces equipment for military operations.

Military operations like last week's tomahawk missile strike in Syria could have benefitted Trump financially, as stock in the company rose after the action.

Are we speculating on whether Trump earned money off of his actions in Syria? Maybe, but again, there's one way to disprove us. Without tax returns, we can't for sure guarantee this decision was made without Trump's assets in mind.

One of President Trump's most controversial acts since election day has been his ban on immigration from seven Muslim-majority countries. According to CATO Institute no American had been killed on U.S. soil by any citizen from these seven countries since 1975. Trump has no business ties to these countries. However, the Middle Eastern countries Trump has business ties to, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Egypt were left off the banned-list. According to the same CATO Institute study, nearly 3,000 Americans were killed on U.S. soil by citizens of those three countries since 1975. If Trump's ties to business affect his foreign policy, why would it be different for domestic policy?

Additionally, without his tax returns, the federal legislators can't pass the tax reforms Trump promised throughout his candidacy –like the elimination of the estate and real estate taxes – and be certain that those moves aren't motivated by Trump's desire to lessen his tax payout, rather than benefit the middle and lower class-earners in our country.

In addition to Trump releasing his tax returns, we need state legislatures to take action. States need to pass statutes requiring a candidate to release their tax returns in order to be placed on the presidential election ballot. The interest in this law would be compelling – laws ensuring tax disclosure would ensure that the citizens of your state are being represented at the federal level by a public servant who has their best interest in mind.

Trump, hiding your tax information as a public servant from the citizens in a democracy is not the type of blind trust we're looking for.