



Written by [Brian Koenig](#) on December 22, 2011

White House on Payroll Tax: What Does \$40 Mean to You?

A new graphic emerged on WhiteHouse.gov this week featuring a "countdown clock" and the headline, "What \$40 Means," followed by the alluring statement, "Tell us what that money means to you." Reinforcing its persistent drive to extend the payroll tax cut, the Obama White House has showcased a countdown ticker on its website heralding the days, hours, minutes, and seconds left until the payroll tax benefit expires, prefacing it with, "If the House doesn't act, middle class taxes increase in..."



In an effort to fuel public outcry, the Obama White House also integrated an online submission form which allows "working" people to express how an increase in the payroll tax will affect their financial standing. "Tell us what \$40 per paycheck would mean for you and your family," the website [reads](#). "What would you have to give up? We'll highlight your stories publicly so that they're part of the debate here in Washington." Moreover, the website avers:

If Congress fails to extend the payroll tax cut, the typical family making \$50,000 a year will have about \$40 less to spend or save with each paycheck. Over the year, that adds up to about \$1,000.

Opponents of the payroll tax cut dismiss its impact by insisting \$40 isn't a lot of money, but that's not the case for many families who are already working hard to make ends meet. Forty dollars buys a tank of gas or a fridge and pantry full of groceries. It covers a water bill or the cost of a prescription.

WhiteHouse.gov also illustrates how people can employ social media tactics to express their concerns relating to the legislation: For Twitter, the website suggests, use the hashtag #40dollars and Tweet your message; for Facebook, update your status and share your thoughts on the White House Facebook page; and for YouTube, post a video response describing what \$40 means to you and your family, with the title, "This is what \$40 means to me."

The White House's "What does \$40 mean to you?" campaign is rather timely, as the Republican-led House just [rejected](#) a plan backed by Obama that would have extended the payroll tax benefit for two months. "If the House Republicans refuse to vote for the Senate bill, or even allow it to come up for a vote, taxes will go up in 11 days," the President warned Tuesday. "I saw today that one of the House Republicans referred to what they're doing as 'high-stakes poker.' He's right about the stakes, but this is not poker, this is not a game."



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Payroll taxes fund Social Security, and critics, namely House Republicans, suggest that siphoning money from the retirement trust fund would be imprudent, particularly considering the federal government's anemic fiscal state. Meanwhile, Republicans are imploring President Obama to call the Senate back into session. "A formal House-Senate conference committee can resolve the differences between our year-long tax cut extension and Democrats' short-term bill," [suggested](#) House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio). "We can avoid a needless tax hike on middle class families if Senate Democrats will work with us and appoint negotiators to extend the payroll tax cut for another year and help create new jobs."

Some prominent Senate Republicans have turned on their House colleagues, one being Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who said that the GOP-led House's failure to pass the Senate bill "is harming the Republican Party" and the American public's already feeble opinion of Congress. "We've got to get this resolved and with the realization that the payroll tax cut must remain in effect," McCain alleged Tuesday on a CNN program.

Sen. Scott Brown (R-Mass.) also joined in the fray, [charging](#) that a refusal to pass the bill "threatens to increase taxes on hard-working Americans and stop unemployment benefits for those out of work." He continued, "During this time of divided government, both parties need to be reasonable and come to the negotiating table in good faith."

Many Senate Republicans have echoed Obama's sentiments over the tax extension, with a harmonious theme that rings around the President's "What does \$40 mean to you?" campaign.

However, not every "working person" is impressed with Obama's public rallying ploy, and many have expressed their discontent through the very social media channels which Obama recommends using. Indeed, one Twitter user, @dcseth, who paints himself as "the Bitter Clinger Obama warned you about" and exhibits a profile picture of himself with Mitt Romney, [wrote](#) that \$40 "means I'm still \$34,960 short for a ticket to an Obama fundraiser."



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