

Putting the tax cut to work: A proposal

From the Editors in the [June 20, 2001](#) issue

In a few months, most taxpayers will be getting a check from Washington —up to \$300 for single people, up to \$600 for couples. This will be the first part of the massive federal tax cut passed by Congress and signed by President Bush. Their aim is to return \$1.35 trillion in government revenues to taxpayers over 11 years. Supporters of the tax cut insist that the rebates are just the first fruits of a program to send money back to the people who know better how to spend it than do the folks in Washington. Critics regard that argument as spurious political rhetoric that attempts to disguise fiscal irresponsibility. It can't be denied, however, that there is something attractive about the thought of money starting to flow back to the people.

The question is: what we should we do with the rebates? We need to decide before those checks hit our mailboxes in late August or early September. Do we pay off a credit card debt, or save for the winter heating bills, or set aside college payments for the kids? The less practical among us might determine that this is a good time to add a new television set to the family room or plan a bonus vacation trip.

We propose a different option. Whether you regard the rebate as merely political sugarcoating for a tax cut that will benefit the richest 1 percent or as a sound way to stimulate the economy, there is good way to spend your money—and it's a Bush-endorsed, community-supporting and (if you wish) faith-based way.

Pledge your tax rebates to a specific nonprofit institution or program—a congregation, an environmental group, food pantry or refugee relief agency, to name just a few options. The result will be a massive outpouring of funds to serve others.

Consider the math: If 500 families combine their rebate checks, they will immediately add in the range of \$300,000 to the budget of the group or project of their choice. One thousand families would generate a combined gift of around \$600,000.

Think about that option of combined giving as you plan how to spend your tax rebate. This is money you didn't expect. So don't spend it on a vacation or television set. Don't keep it. Give it away. This will be compassionate conservatism in action.