

Overall Message:

We build thriving communities with investments in good schools, strong public pensions, modern infrastructure and other foundations of an economy that works for all Kentuckians. We know what we want, and we know that we're worth the investments for good jobs, clean air and water, quality education, and healthy, vibrant communities. This Kentucky is possible, but we need to reform our state taxes to make this vision a reality.

When legislators choose to reduce funding for such public investments while providing tax breaks to the wealthy and special favors for special interests, they are actively making a choice. Giving away more tax breaks and special treatment to powerful interests will gut investments in the communities of our Commonwealth.

Pensions:

- State elected leaders are attempting to pass legislation on Kentucky's public pension system that presents a false choice – cut pension benefits or cut education funding. There is another way.
- The reason pensions are underfunded is because the state has underfunded them for years. We do not have adequate revenue to support vital public services and includes benefits for public servants.
- Retirees, current employees and new hires have already been subject to reforms that lowered their benefits and increased the amount they pay into the system. We should be strengthening our public pensions and expanding those benefits so Kentucky can continue to hire the best and the brightest public servants.
- It is time for legislators to fund their portion of the needed pension contributions and make up for the payments missed in the past by enacting comprehensive tax reform that closes special interest tax breaks to raise the necessary revenue.

Revenue and Tax Reform:

- We already spend too much on tax breaks - \$13 billion in tax breaks compared to \$10 billion in investments each year - and letting powerful interests insert more giveaways into our tax code for their own gain will further erode investments in our communities.
- Some of these tax breaks include not taxing limo rides, golf club fees, armored car services, dry cleaning, and many other luxury services that mainly benefit the wealthy.
- Kentucky's income tax has not kept up with the modern income trends that has seen the wealthiest 1% increase their incomes by over 60% since 1979, while the other 99% of Kentuckians have seen their real income actually decrease in the same time period. We need to modernize our income tax to ensure that the wealthy pay their fair share.

Kentucky's Budget:

- Kentucky has had 19 rounds of budget cuts since 2008. We've cut billions of dollars out public services and public investments as a result. More cuts could devastate Kentucky communities
- Workers and working families benefit greatly from publicly funded programs and services, like public pension payments, Head Start, public transportation, public schools, Meals on Wheels, etc., and these critical lifelines to working folks will be hardest hit by budget cuts and bad tax reform.
- When Bevin has been asked if he plans on taxing groceries and medicine or raising the sales to raise more revenue in response to Kentucky's budget crisis, he has said that "everything is on the table." Taxing groceries, cutting funding to critical public services, and raising sales taxes will hit working families and those living on fixed incomes the hardest.

How to Tell Your Legislators: Public Pension Underfunding Shows Need for Revenue

1. *Bevin's pension plan **breaks the promise** made to state employees, lowers their wages, and devalues their public service. [#APensionIsAPromise](#)*
2. *Reducing benefits will cause instability in the workforce as people retire or look for jobs in other states with better benefits. This will hamstring public investments and will **directly impact the quality of the essential programs we all rely on.** [#DontCutItFundIt](#)*
3. *We want you to focus on the **real problem** which is **declining revenue**. We want you to reform the tax code to raise more revenue by closing loopholes and handouts for corporations and millionaires. [#FindFundingFirst](#)*
4. *We want you to vote **NO** on any pension proposal that reduces benefits for current or future public workers. By raising additional revenue through tax reform, we can stabilize our public pension system and prevent dangerous budget cuts during the 2018 General Assembly. [#UnitedWeStand](#)*
5. *We taxpayers **WANT** to fund the services that **support the public good and make Kentucky great**. It is possible to reform the tax code to be more fair and sustainable. The Kentucky Forward Plan, currently filed as **House Bill 29** and sponsored by Rep. Jim Wayne, can serve as a starting point for tax/pension reform discussions. [#WeAreKentucky](#)*

Speaking to the Public: Good words/phrases to use

- Public investments
- Thriving communities
- Tax shifting, not tax reform (regarding Bevin's proposals)
- Our public workers
- We all need to pitch in
 - To pay for all public services such as- parks, schools, roads,
 - We all do better when we all do better
- The majority of people believe...
- Everyone should pay their fair share
 - Kentucky's upside-down tax system where the middle class pays almost twice as much as a share of their income compared to the wealthiest 1%
- Commonwealth means we provide for the common good

Speaking to the Public: Words/phrases to avoid

- Instead of tax code, use tax system
- Anything that conveys an anti-tax ideology (such as taxes being a "burden")
- Anything overly jargony - try to think of an adequate replacement word that more people can understand ("tax breaks" instead of "tax expenditures", "raise more public funds" instead of "raise more revenue")
- More money in the pockets of taxpayers....
- "I don't want anyone to mess with my taxes...." but if they leave you alone then they know they can go after a different, less powerful group. Lift up your story but also remember solidarity.
- Saying that the government is spending "taxpayer dollars" or "our money" -- is a frame that actually supports right-wing ideology
- Pension Crisis - this reinforces Gov. Bevin message
- Waste, fraud, and abuse (used by those opposing public investments to discredit public institutions, then use those seeds of distrust to justify privatizing public services)