

To the Editor:

In the July 12 *Politico* column, “Time to Fix the charitable deduction,” Howard Husock seems to be wandering in a maze of tax reform complexities. I applaud him for his readiness to reevaluate his previous assertions, but I challenge his basic contention that all charities are deeply intertwined with government.

What’s ironic in this discussion is that many of the charities providing critical services to the public not only eschew government funds, they are filling in the gaps caused by government cutbacks.

Rescue missions—ministries that work with the country’s most desperate and destitute—are a case in point. The more than 275 independent members of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions receive virtually no financial support from the government. As much as 95 percent of their income is derived from private donations. Almost all rescue missions report that a greater number of people have been seeking their services in recent years due to the disappearance of the government-subsidized providers their clients have used in the past.

This is just one reason we believe that imposing the kind of limitation on the charitable deduction Mr. Husock suggests would make a difficult situation far worse. Removing the charitable deduction from comprehensive tax reform would do nothing to alleviate the government’s burdens. It would, however, place discouraging restrictions on generosity in America and harm the men, women, and children that benefit daily from rescue missions’ services.

Simply put, the charitable deduction has worked for nearly 100 years because it encourages giving that makes a positive difference in people’s lives at every level of society. For every \$1 a donor can claim for their donation, the public receives approximately \$3 of benefit. No other tax provision generates that kind of positive public impact.

As much as some in Washington would like it to, government cannot meet community needs on its own. The charitable or independent sector plays an essential role, just as it has done for well over two centuries. Rescue missions, for example, not only help people deal with physical poverty, they help people address and solve spiritual and relational poverty—something the government cannot and should not do.

The current charitable deduction is not a loophole as some have claimed. It is a lifeline and must be fully protected.

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