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Economy

Despite Setback, Gov. Brownback Stays Focused On Making Kansas' Already Regressive Tax System Even Worse

By **Pat Garofalo** on May 31, 2011 at 10:15 am

Gov. Sam Brownback (R-KS) has been pushing to implement what he calls "tax reform" in the Sunflower State — with the main thrust of his effort focused on reducing the Kansas' income tax:

"I think there's a combination of things that need to be looked at, but to me the tax that's one of the most sensitive for economic growth is the state income tax," Brownback said after an event in LeCompton. "To look at the total picture is what we want to do, with an eye toward getting the state income tax down."



But cutting the state income tax would make Kansas' already regressive tax system significantly worse. As the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy noted, Kansas' tax system already requires the poorest 20 percent of residents to pay nearly 10 percent of their income in taxes, while the richest one percent of residents pay less than six percent.

In fact, the only tax in the state that requires the rich to pay more than the poor is the income tax, the one that Brownback is intently focused on lowering. As Citizens for Tax Justice pointed out, the effort Brownback has in mind will "reduce the equity and sustainability of Kansas's tax system."

Brownback is moving this plan forward even though Kansas' state Senate isn't very interested in going along. After all, the Kansas state House already passed a bill that would have eliminated the state's income tax and cut the corporate tax rate in half, but that was too much for the Senate, as the cost of the tax cuts was \$739.4 million over two years. That revenue would have been foregone at the same time that Kansas is cutting its public school funding by nearly six percent.

But Brownback is not giving up, saying that he wants a plan for an income tax cut in place by the end of the year. "That would be great if the governor would facilitate that," said House Speaker Mike O'Neal (R). However, the state senate is still very much on the fence, with Senate President Steve Morris (R) saying, "I don't think that we're at that point...It was not exactly well received."