

Connecticut's Tax System

Staff Findings, Recommendations, and Policy Options	
Criteria/Definition	Summary
I. Complementary	
Objectives of tax system should be consistent and system must recognize limitations and responsibilities of local government	<p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p><i>Connecticut has a complementary system, with no overlap in taxing authority, but policymakers do not have an accounting of the cost impact of state mandates on towns, and the state does not fully fund its obligations to municipalities.</i></p> <p><u>Staff Recommendation:</u></p> <p>1. Amend C.G.S. Section 2-79a to require the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to identify and describe each unfunded and partially funded state mandate affecting municipalities, quantify the actual cost of major mandates, and determine the effect of eliminating or reducing any such mandates. ACIR shall submit a report to the legislature every four years.</p> <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Increase State Grant Funding B. Remove Barriers to Increased State Grants C. Review Nonprofit Tax Exemptions
II. Balanced	
The major taxes (personal income, sales, and property) should be contributing a nearly equal proportion to total revenues	<p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p><i>By most measures, Connecticut is heavily reliant on the property tax and therefore, the state's revenue structure does not meet the principle of a balanced tax system.</i></p> <p><u>Policy Options</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reduce Property Tax Proportion of State and Local Revenues B. Increase Local Taxing Authority C. Redistribution of the Sales Tax D. Enact Local Tax and Expenditure Limitation (TEL)

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	E. See Policy Option A under Complementary Principle
III. Reliable	
Revenues produced by a tax system should be stable, certain, and sufficient. Revenues should be relatively constant and predictable over time and at levels adequate for balancing the budget each year and adapting to desired spending changes.	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Connecticut's state tax revenues are volatile and some state taxes are prone to frequent revision. Local property tax growth is relatively slow but steady and adds stability to Connecticut's overall revenue structure.</i></p> <p><i>In total, state and local tax revenue growth is well above the rate of inflation and generally keeps pace with growth in the economy. State revenue collections, however, do not always match state spending levels, large General Fund budget shortfalls have occurred during severe economic downturns, and deficits are forecast within the next five years.</i></p> <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Maintain Stronger Reserves B. Improve Sales Tax Reliability C. Increase Participation in the Streamline Sales Tax Project
IV. Equity	
The overall tax system should minimize regressivity and not place an unfair burden on people with lower incomes.	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Connecticut's tax system is similar to the rest of the nation in terms of the state's overall tax burden. However, Connecticut places less burden on the top income group than the U.S. average. Property taxes in Connecticut take a larger share of the incomes of the lower and moderate income taxpayers than most other states.</i></p> <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Earned Income Tax Credit B. Modify Personal Income Tax Structure C. Property Tax Refund Program D. State Sponsored Property Tax Deferral Program E. Single Motor Vehicle Tax Rate
V. Economically Competitive	
Tax burden in a state should not be very different from other states, especially	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Taxes on businesses in Connecticut have been reduced significantly, and by most measures, are not considered</i></p>

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<p>burdens in neighboring states.</p>	<p><i>more burdensome than other states. However, in Connecticut businesses pay a greater share of the sales tax than in most states. The effective property tax rates on industrial and commercial property in Connecticut's cities are not competitive.</i></p> <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. See Policy Options for Corporate Income Tax Presented under the Neutral Principle B. Tax Final Consumption not Business Inputs C. Reduce or Eliminate the Tax on Manufacturer's Equipment and Machinery D. See all Policy Options under Balanced Principle to reduce property tax reliance overall.
VI. Neutral	
<p>A tax system should not be used to influence economic decisions on spending or investments.</p>	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Connecticut has been more restrained than most states in using tax policy to influence economic behavior or in creating dedicated funds. The major exception is that Connecticut has used the corporate income tax to attempt to promote economic development. Connecticut also has an estate tax, which can influence taxpayers' investment and location decisions.</i></p> <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reduce the Corporate Income Tax Rate and Eliminate Credits B. Replace the Corporate Income Tax with a Broad-Based Tax on Gross Receipts and Eliminate Credits C. Modify Corporate Tax by Changing Certain Factors D. Eliminate the Connecticut Estate Tax E. Replace Current Estate Tax Threshold with an Exemption
VII. Promotes Compliance	
<p>A tax system should be easy to understand and comply with and minimize compliance costs for taxpayers and tax program administrators.</p>	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>The vast majority of state tax revenue in Connecticut is collected through voluntary compliance. However, DRS does not have the capability to measure the difference between tax liability (what is owed under full compliance with all tax laws) and taxes voluntarily paid, and the results of the department's special compliance projects are</i></p>

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	<p><i>not formally tracked, compiled, or reported. In addition, DRS does not use all the enforcement tools it should to deter non-compliance.</i></p> <p><u>Staff Recommendations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Once ITAS is fully in place, DRS should make estimating and reporting of tax gap a priority of future agency research. A more precise picture of the extent and areas of non-compliance should assist DRS in developing an overall strategy to promote compliance and deter tax avoidance. 3. DRS should conduct a cost benefit analysis of each major tax compliance initiative, including amnesty programs, and report the results to the appropriations committee. 4. DRS should publicly report the results of tax compliance efforts on its website. Such efforts assure the taxpaying public that non-payers are being detected and promote overall compliance. 5. Amend the statutes to require that any person or entity doing business with the state must be in compliance with state tax laws. Any state agency, before issuing a contract or grant, should check with the Department of Revenue Services, to ensure the person or entity is in compliance with all relevant state tax laws. 6. Amend C.G.S. Section 12-7a to require the Department of Revenue Services should post on its website significant tax delinquents in all major state tax areas, in addition to the personal income tax. Such lists should be updated quarterly. 7. The Department of Revenue Services should notify credit reporting agencies when a state taxpayer is delinquent in paying a state tax.

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VIII. Accountable	
<p>A tax system should be explicit in how revenues are raised, changes should be well publicized, and the costs and benefits of tax policies should be examined</p>	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Accountability is strongest for local property tax; state taxes are less transparent. The state has minimal capacity for tax policy research, and little is known about the distribution of tax liability within Connecticut's revenue system or its component taxes.</i></p> <p><u>Staff Recommendations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. DRS should take immediate steps to formally establish an agenda for its research office. It should begin this task by identifying, assessing, and prioritizing both currently required reports and projects and internal and external requests for new or expanded research products. Based on this assessment, DRS should also determine the types and sources of data required and how ITAS will be used to support these research efforts. 9. Amend the statutes to require the Department of Revenue Services to include information on total local property tax collections each year for the most current five-year period available in its annual statistical report. 10. The Office of Policy and Management should include in the municipal fiscal indicators report it publishes each year information on trends in local property values and taxes such as: the average and median single-family home tax bills and percent change in those amounts over time; town-by-town information on the availability and use of local option property tax exemptions; and measures that indicate the accuracy and uniformity of local revaluations (e.g., sales assessment ratios, coefficient of dispersion, price related differentials). <p><u>Policy Options:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A. Conduct Regular Tax Incidence Analysis B. Provide Legislature with Tax Change Impact Notes

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IX. Fairly and Efficiently Administered	
<p>The provisions of a tax system should be easy to understand and implement and be uniformly applied. The proportion of revenues used to assess and collect taxes, enforce laws, and audit compliance should be minimized.</p>	<p><u>Findings:</u></p> <p><i>Connecticut's personal income and sales tax provisions are relatively simple, making them less prone to errors and avoidance and easier to manage than the complicated state corporate income tax. The Department of Revenue Services operating budget accounts for a very small portion of total state tax collections, but the lack of good quality performance data make it difficult to assess the agency's administrative efficiency or effectiveness.</i></p> <p><u>Staff Recommendations:</u></p> <p>11. DRS should formally establish an internal working group to: i) identify agency-wide management information needed from ITAS; and ii) coordinate and oversee development the system's ability to track and report performance measures. The group should ensure ITAS will collect and produce data that allow monitoring of key activity trends and outcomes and consider including a capacity to track selected benchmarks developed by the Federation of Tax Administrators.</p> <p>12. DRS should assign agency resources to develop and maintain a current strategic plan for accomplishing its mission and goals.</p> <p>13. The statutes should be amended to lower the current interest rate, or at least the rate charged on cases under appeal, to the same rate the IRS uses, which is the federal short term interest rate plus 3 percent. DRS should update the rate quarterly based on changes in the IRS rate.</p> <p>14. The homepage of the DRS website should prominently display a link to the agency's description of the Connecticut's "Taxpayer Bill of Rights."</p>

CONNECTICUT'S STATE AND LOCAL TAX SYSTEM

A figure showing the composition of the state and local tax system as of state fiscal year 2002-03, the most recent year with data available for both state and local tax collections, is presented below.

FY 03 Total State and Local Tax Collections: \$15.772 Billion

Revenues from Major Taxes

- Local Property: \$6.265 Billion
- Personal Income: \$4.263 Billion
- Sales and Use: \$3.026 Billion
- Excise (Alcohol, Tobacco, Motor Fuels): \$757 Million
- Corporate: \$508 Million
- Inheritance and Estate: \$184 Million

FY 03 Tax System Composition

