

## Tax reform? Not likely

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U.S. Sens. Judd Gregg, R-N.H. and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., may be looking in the right direction even if they're stepping the wrong way. And they sure won't allow things to go the necessary distance.

The two senators, earlier this week, unveiled a bipartisan plan that they say will streamline the IRS tax code, raising the minimum tax bracket from 10 to 15 percent, but bringing about an overall tax break, they say, for the middle class.

Streamlining the IRS tax code is a good thing. Indeed, even IRS Chairman Douglas Shulman said a month ago that he has to get his taxes done by a professional because the code is too complex for him to do his taxes himself.

Now granted, Mr. Shulman's income is likely based on more than what might show on his government issued W-2. But if the tax code is too complicated for him, it must be even more frustrating for the average person who has a small business, or even just a regular job with a number of exemptions.

It's being reported that the number of tax brackets would be reduced to three under the proposed plan—15, 25 and 35 percent—and would, according to a Wall Street Journal story by Patrick Yoest, "alleviate the headache the tax code causes individuals and businesses trying to sort through its minutiae."

The report also said, "Messrs. Gregg and Wyden assert that the average individual or family earning less than \$200,000 would do 'as well or better' under their plan than current tax law, in large part because the plan would nearly triple the standard deduction.

"Many taxpayers who currently itemize will find it more advantageous to switch to the standard deduction which will both reduce their tax bills and eliminate the burden of maintaining records and receipts needed to document itemized deductions," the plan states. Most taxpayers would be able to use a one-page form to submit their taxes, according to Messrs. Wyden and Gregg."

Such may or may not be the final result of the bill. The other members of Congress have yet to get their hands on it and twist it out of shape, as they are wont to do.

And such a goal may not be as lofty an idea as many might think. The easier it is for a person to file and pay taxes, the easier it is for government to get our hard-earned dollars. And this is a nation that's trillions of dollars in debt, with no agreed upon plan to get out of debt. Some members of Congress don't even think there should be any rush to get out of that debt.

We agree with U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas. The income tax itself should be repealed and replaced by nothing. Mr. Paul recently said that the income tax accounts for 45 percent of the federal government's income, yet to cut the size and cost of government by 45 percent would mean only that the size would be the same as under the Clinton administration.

While we would like to see the elimination of both the income tax and the debt, we don't suggest anyone hold their breath. For that matter, don't hold your breath for the Gregg/ Wyden measure either.

