Tax burden unacceptable - Knollenberg, panel

The average American family

The average American family last year spent more money on taxes than for food, clothing and housing, said U.S. Congressman Joe Knollenberg during Wedneschap night's Tax Day panel discussion at the Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

"And I don't think that's acceptable," said Knollenberg, Resouther State of the Mollenberg, Resouther State of the World of the Wallace Smith Theatre, reiterated his desire to see tax relief for Americans – perhaps as he outlined in the 1997 Taxpayers Relief At legislation that would cut federal taxes by \$170 billion over the next five years and change Tax Day from April 16 to Nov. 1. The current tax rate of





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current, convoluted, complicated ax system and the fact that, on average, Americans do not begin earning money for themselves every year until May.

"It's got to be simpler, fairer and a reduction from where we sit today," said David Sowerby, vice president and portfolio manager for Loomis, Sayles & Co. and a Farmington Hills resident. "Tax Freedom Day is May 9th. This presidency talks about the 1960s and Camelot ... Tax Freedom Day then was in early April."

John Mach, director of tax at Planto & Moran, said criticism of the current tax system is woildeserved, simply because it is one that cannot be understood

nearly 40 percent could be sliced to 17 percent over that span if a flat tax system were implemented.

Meanwhile, other panelists also expressed concerns over that such that the said, in 1995, americans used tax preparers like him to do their annual income tax forms.

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Maderstor Paul Welday Knol.

Moderator Paul Welday, Knolenberg's chief of staff, asked the panel why there are some 50 pages of Schedulo D, one of the more-complicated forms mentioned by Mach. By comparison, with the flat tax system as proposed, complying would be as easy as filling out a postcard.

There are many special interests who don't want to change anything, absolutely nothing," Knollenberg explained. "And they're going to be the obstruction, the hurdle that you have to go over. It's just going to take time before we educate the American people."

During the subsequent portion of the forum where panellists answered questions from the audience, several took Knollenberg to task for not following through on earlier premises to help get the beleaguered Social Security system back on track.
"... Over a year ago, I asked you about the injustice of being

taxed on income I paid taxes on all my life, said one clearly agitated audience member, looking in Knollenberg's direction. "I was hoping to see you on TV ... exorting your colleagues to do something. But ... you've left me in the lurch."

Also discussed was the notion Also discussed was the notion that there isn't any solution, be it a flat tax or national sales tax (also discussed at the forum), to help eradicate the huge national debt.

"The public is being misled," opined one audience member, about the talk of a balanced budget. "We'll still add \$170 billion

my?" Sower-

Sowerby Joo Knollenberg
sized that the debt is fout there,
it's nebulous. I tell people it's a
black hole that sucks out your
money to pay for government.
Your ... mortgage rate could be
At 5 or 5 percent today if we did
n't have all of that debt."

Taxes from page A1

The government's spending frenzy in Washington, D.C., is the main culprit. Hubbard said it is the tax-paying public that foots the bill.

"What's driving this whole tax issue is the spending process in Washington is out of control," said Hubbard, who was one of the relatively few younger persons in the anditorium. The crowd was predominantly over 50 years old. "So the hunt and search for revenue is obsessive. This has been 30, 40, even 50 years in the making." Empathy found

Empany found
The forum provided Hubbard with some empathy for Knollenberg and other legislators concerning the arduous road toward getting a bill passed.
"To get 280 people to agree is difficult," he said, "Getting four buddies to agree as amounts."

buddles to agree on something on a weekend is tough."

Hubbard also said that, until

Hubbard also said that, until federal government spending is contained, the ongoing debate between going to a flat income tax (essentially charging every-body the same amount, regard-less of income bracket) or other tax-cutting measures is mean-ingless. "It's like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic." GROCK IN Livonia Mall...And it is Bect.

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One of the subjects discussed by the panel was to move the fil-ing deadline to November. According to Hubbard, that might have a positive impact. "That would metivate people the thick that the theory was

to think about who they're vot-ing for," Hubbard said. "It might be a start."

has to the audience member at Wednerday's forum was Mike Hayes of Livonia. He said he backs implementing a national sales tax instead of a flat tax, and abolishing the income tax: "With a national sales tax, it would be easier (for the government) to draw in revenue" from new national sales and sales in the sales of the sales of the government) to draw in revenue from new national sales as the sales of th

ment) to draw in revenue* from now untapped sources.

Hayes said he was disappoint-ed that more people under age 50 didn't attend the forum, par-ficularly since the flawed Social Security system was one of the hot topics.

"In order for there to be real changes that impact my life and

Security system was one of the topics.

"In order for there to be real changes that impact my life and yours," he said, "we need more people from our age group to get active."

Southfield's Roger Hane said the program was beneficial because he learned more about tax logislation attempting to make its way through Washington and into law.

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"It was good to hear the other panelists (besides Knollenberg) talk about their concerns about the tax system," Hane said.
He also likes the idea of a flat. at "for sheer fairness. (But) it has to work backwards from what the (federal) budget is. So the budget has to be addressed as much, if not more, than they are rate."

wixom Mayor Michael McDon-ald was one of the last to leave the auditorium.

'Lot of guts'

"It took a let of guts to hold this on April 18th," McDonald said. "A let of people sent their checks out today."

McDonald also thinks a flat tax, possibly 17 percent, might make the most sense. He also agreed with the panelists about letting local and state government, including school districts, do more for their constituents than federal government.

"No, I don't want to send money to Washington so they can send it back to me," McDonald continued. "I'd rather spend it locally."

That can be attained with "fewer federal mandates and more local control."

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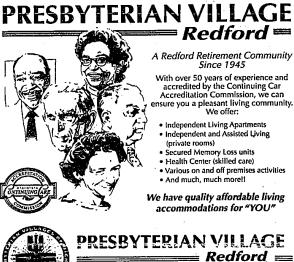
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