

# Opinion: The great tax debate that wasn't

By Jim Toedtman

At midnight this New Year's Eve, unless Congress intervenes, the U.S. tax code does a reverse somersault, upending a decade of tax law and reverting to its alignment of 2001, a tax hike costing \$4 trillion over 10 years.

The unyielding calendar dictates that Congress must act quickly. That is an irresponsible option and a wasted opportunity for the nation.

It means a \$4 trillion decision after a debate that hasn't been worth two cents.

What should have been a thoughtful discussion of what we want government to do, followed by selecting the best, most efficient and equitable ways to pay for it, has instead been reduced to a bumper sticker war of words: "Bush tax cuts: keep 'em or kill 'em."

Our tax code barely reflects the 21st-century world. Instead, vast changes have been accommodated by piecemeal patches and tweaks and an ever-growing list of tax breaks and loopholes that now total \$1 trillion a year.

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