

# A rose is still a rose - and so is a tax increase

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by By Carl Von Epps

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House Bill 385 is up for consideration in the General Assembly. This proposed legislation is being described as an "overhaul or modernization" of Georgia's antiquated tax system. Call it what you will, this bill still amounts to new tax increases. Among this humongous document of added levies on goods, products and services is one proposal that thousands are finding it hard to believe: a tax on Girl Scout cookie sales.

Not only does the bill increase personal tax liabilities, but here in Georgia, the home state of the Girl Scouts of America's national founder, Juliette Gordon Low, when young girls sell the famous Do-Si-Dos or Thin Mints to loyal customers, they also will be tasked with charging and keeping up with sales tax on each box sold. This and other tax increases are from the majority party in the state House of Representatives, which promotes itself as a no-tax governing group.

The Girl Scout cookie tax and hundreds of others were proposed by the 2010 Special Council on Tax Reform and Fairness for Georgians. This group was created by legislation and signed into law June 1 by former Gov. Sonny Perdue. Pursuant to OCGA 28-12-2 (HB1405), this council was established to "conduct a thorough study of the state's current revenue structure and make a report of its findings and recommendations for legislation to the speaker of the House and the lieutenant governor no later than Jan. 10, 2011." Thus HB 385 was born. Individual taxpayers, organizations and small businesses were warned to keep a close eye on the actions and suggestions in its developmental stage.

The tax recommendations and amendments put forth by this group, if adopted, would mean increases and in some instances new taxes for goods and services touching nearly every aspect of our everyday lives. Some other examples of these never-before-taxed-items include barber and beauty shop visits, i.e. haircuts, perms, shampoos, styles and coloring. Services around your home are also among this taxation proposal, not excluding gardening and lawn maintenance. Automotive maintenance, repair and services, auto memberships and roadside service will be taxed. Additionally, recreational and lifestyle memberships such as golf courses, country clubs, health clubs, swimming pools, fitness and weight-loss centers, as well as social organizations are part of this "tax code modernization" proposition. A complete copy of this proposed legislation listing other products, services and goods that may be taxed can be found online at [www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011\\_12/sum/hb385.htm](http://www1.legis.ga.gov/legis/2011_12/sum/hb385.htm).

Most recently, the last president to hold office who was also a member of the

majority ruling party in the General Assembly is quoted as saying, "Keeping taxes low and restraining spending leads to a vibrant economy; it leads to new jobs; it leads to better opportunities; and it leads to a shrinking deficit." If we are to hold the this statement as true, then what will these hundreds of new taxes do to Georgia's already struggling economy?

The Girl Scouts have a stellar reputation in molding young girls into great women. Let's hope that clearer minds will prevail and a thorough, critical review and consideration is especially given to this organization and others, as the financial impact of this tax will hurt its service goals. Many of the other categories recommended for taxation will force small-business owners to cut in other areas such as human resources to make up for lost customers who will opt to do it themselves or self-serve rather than come up with the additional costs created by these taxes.

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