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Tax policy shouldn't penalize the people who drive the economy

The premise of the editorial "Tax cuts for plutocrats" (April 30) criticizing President Donald Trump's tax plan for being unfair is laughable. Why is it such a travesty that the upper 1 percent, 10 percent and 20 percent should finally get a breath of fresh air after footing 39 percent, 70 percent and 84 percent of the tax bill, respectively, throughout the Obama years?

This notion that the rich owe us something and it's a humanitarian offense if they pay income taxes more proportionate to their earned income is simply absurd. A progressive tax system isn't the worst thing in the world, but why is it such a sin to propose that part of the solution to balancing the budget could come from means other than just milking the main drivers of our economic system that has helped provide the best living conditions for any population in the history of the world?

The editorial is perhaps also a bit too harsh on supply-side economic theory — given the fact that it worked during the terms of Presidents Warren G. Harding, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan after they made cuts — but I agree that our top marginal rates at the moment are probably too low already to really be affected by the theorized Laffer curve that supply-side policy is based on. I doubt it will increase revenue even in the slightest, but budget cuts and crackdowns on government waste could offset this or at least limit its effect to some degree.

The bottom line is that less financial penalization for citizens who serve as the embodiment of American opportunity and success could be a lot of things. Maybe reckless, or too drastic — but definitely not unfair.

John Henke • Cottleville

Target tax cuts to the consumers who spend the money

Regarding the editorial "Tax cuts for plutocrats" (April 30):

How many times are the Republicans going to get away with the canard of passing a huge tax cut for people who do not need a tax cut in the name of economic stimulus? It did not work under Presidents Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush, and it is not going to work this time either.

During the Reagan years, the boost in the economy resulted not from the tax cut but rather from an approximate 50 percent reduction in interest rates combined with massive government spending through the defense buildup. Heck, Reagan ended up raising taxes.

During the Bush years, the ill-considered tax cut not only did not stimulate the economy, it blew a massive hole in the deficit, erasing the positive effects realized by the fiscal responsibility of the Bill Clinton years when taxes were raised even as the economy grew. All Bush's tax cut

tax plan: Plant beans and wait for the beanstalk" (April 30) has the subheadline "The impact would be to make federal budget deficits soar, adding as much as \$4 trillion to the debt."

I am not in any favor of any proposal that increases the deficit. However, where was Robinson's disdain at President Obama's increasing the debt by trillions over his eight-year term? Robinson should abide by his own words in his support of the Obama presidency: "Anyone who supports this mess automatically forfeits the right to be a deficit scold ever again."

J. Olszowy • Fenton

U.S. lags the civilized world in ending the death penalty

Regarding "Should death chamber be silent?" (April 26):

Lost in the Arkansas executions is the issue of Trump appointee Justice Neil Gorsuch's virgin vote to deny the request for a stay of execution. That vote guarantees our place as a conspicuous laggard in the civilized world's struggle to end the death penalty.

Internationally, progress appears to be well under way. In 1977, the year after we reinstated capital punishment, less than 10 percent of the world's countries had abolished it. Today 70 percent have done so. Among the world's eight leading industrialized nations, Japan is currently the only other nation with capital punishment.

If a majority of our Supreme Court is not inclined to see the light, states' rights under the 10th Amendment offers more than a glimmer of hope for the concept of "equal justice under law;" as 19 states, excluding Missouri, have eliminated the death penalty on their own.

Remember the horrific 1989 Central Park Five case in which five teenagers from Harlem found themselves convicted of assaulting and raping a jogger. At that time, citizen Donald Trump took out newspaper ads calling for the death penalty. In 2002, after all five had completed their sentences, they were exonerated because the actual perpetrator was identified and arrested. If Trump's specious logic confusing execution with "tough on crime" and "law and order" had prevailed, they would now be the Central Park "Zero."

Given the staggering number of exonerations since reinstatement and the accompanying toll on our judicial process, the risk of another wrongful imprisonment would seemingly sound the death knell for the death penalty. But with dog whistle politics substituted for the rational discussion of facts, President Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions as principal decision makers, and Gorsuch on the Supreme Court, don't hold your breath waiting.

Lou Horwitz • St. Peters