

Testimony of Congressman Jamie Raskin (MD-08)
Prepared Statement for the House Committee on Ways and Means
Members' Hearing Day June 4, 2019

Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing today and for providing Members who are not on the Committee with the opportunity to share our thoughts on issues that are within the Committee's jurisdiction.

I would like to communicate to you all some concerns expressed by dozens of my constituents who are part of the nine million U.S. citizens currently residing overseas. I often hear from overseas constituents who encounter complex and frustrating challenges when dealing with the tax system, from double taxation and barriers to retirement savings, to out-of-proportion tax filing costs and unnecessary red tape. As someone who has lived abroad, I sympathize deeply with their situation. Americans living abroad feel they are being treated unfairly--taxed first by their local tax authority, and then again by the United States. No other countries tax their citizens abroad, with the exceptions of North Korea and Eritrea. Yet in 2017, Congressional Republicans chose to ignore the nine million voices of red, white and blue American citizens seeking help and relief, and instead passed a wholesale tax cut for the wealthiest people and multinational corporations.

Many Americans living abroad are forced to hire exorbitantly expensive tax return preparers who are well-versed in both their local tax system and our U.S. system. Americans who have a U.S. tax liability must then pay tax twice on the same dollar amount of income. In addition to the double taxation of income, the Internal Revenue Code treats non-U.S. retirement accounts as ordinary unearned income, fully taxable at the marginal rate, which presents a big headache for people who are simply trying to invest and save for their futures. My constituents and the millions of U.S. citizens based overseas urge the Committee to consider the bipartisan concept of residency-based taxation and other reforms that will ease the burdens on Americans living overseas. U.S. citizens living abroad should not be forced to choose between two terrible outcomes: draining their life savings simply to pay their taxes or renouncing their citizenship to escape this outrageous double taxation. Let us resolve to help our constituents who are living abroad and desperately want and deserve expat tax reform.

Thank you, Chairman Neal and Ranking Member Brady for holding this hearing, and thank you to all of the Members of this Committee for your time today. I look forward to the opportunity of working with all my colleagues to provide tax reform relief and attention to all Americans residing overseas. Thank you.