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Contacts:

Robert Kraig, (414) 322-5324, robert.kraig@citizenactionwi.org

Claire Zautke, (414) 940-3375, claire@citizenactionwi.org

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NEW REPORT: 50% JUMP IN WISCONSIN BILLIONAIRE WEALTH—ALMOST ALL TAX-FREE—SHOWS NEED FOR BIDEN'S INVESTMENT & TAX PLANS

8 State Tycoons Have Enjoyed a \$20 Billion Increase in Wealth Since Pandemic Began; Their Rise in Riches Alone Could Fund 12% of the Cost of Lowering ACA Health Insurance Premiums for 9 Million Americans Over 10 Years

Groups Call on Senator Tammy Baldwin, Reps. Kind and Moore, to Support \$3.5 Trillion Investment Agenda Now Before Congress Paid for by Taxing the Wealthy and Corporations

Milwaukee, WI — Wisconsin's eight billionaires increased their wealth during the pandemic by half or 50%—from \$39.4 billion at the start of the COVID crisis on March 18, 2020, to \$59.2 billion on August 17 of this year, according to a report from Americans for Tax Fairness (ATF) and Health Care of American Now (HCAN) analyzing *Forbes* wealth data, and released by Citizen Action of Wisconsin. [See table on page 2.]

This billionaire bonanza demonstrates what is wrong with our current economic and tax systems, as Democrats in Congress try to remedy some of the glaring inequities by advancing a [\\$3.5 trillion budget package](#), which has passed the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House. If the budget package becomes law through the budget reconciliation process this fall, it will invest tens of billions of dollars in Wisconsin communities and working families by [making healthcare, eldercare, childcare, housing and education more affordable](#), investing in clean energy, expanding the Child Tax Credit and providing 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave. It will be paid for by making the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share of taxes, and it will not raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000 a year.

The report also found that U.S. billionaire wealth overall grew by 62% during the pandemic, or by **\$1.8 trillion**, rising from \$2.95 trillion on March 18, 2020, to \$4.77 trillion on Aug. 17, 2021, when there were 708 billionaires. (The [full data set is here](#).) That increased wealth, which will not be taxed unless billionaires sell their assets, would pay for more than half of Biden's 10-year **\$3.5 trillion** investment package.

“This report shows why we need the entire state congressional delegation, especially Senator Tammy Baldwin and Representatives Ron Kind and Gwen Moore who both sit on the House tax-writing committee, to support President Biden’s Build Back Better plan being debated in Washington right now,” said Claire Zautke, Health Care for All Director, Citizen Action of Wisconsin. “That plan will invest \$3.5 trillion in working families and our communities by making the rich and corporations pay their fair share of taxes. It will provide the funding we need to create thousands of good-paying jobs in Wisconsin and help people afford healthcare, eldercare, childcare, education, housing and more.”

Billionaire	Net Worth Mar. 18, 2020 (\$ Millions)	Net Worth Aug. 17, 2021 (\$ Millions)	17 Month Wealth Growth (\$ Millions)	17 Month % Wealth Growth	Wealth Source	Industry
WISCONSIN TOTAL	\$39,400	\$59,235	\$19,835	50.3%		
John Menard, Jr.	\$11,500	\$17,070	\$5,570	48.4%	home improvement stores	Fashion & Retail
Diane Hendricks	\$6,900	\$11,144	\$4,244	61.5%	roofing	Construction & Engineering
Herbert Kohler, Jr.	\$5,900	\$8,845	\$2,945	49.9%	plumbing fixtures	Manufacturing
Judy Faulkner	\$2,500	\$6,676	\$4,176	167.0%	health IT	Technology
James Cargill, II.	\$2,700	\$4,692	\$1,992	73.8%	Cargill	Food & Beverage
Helen Johnson-Leipold	\$3,300	\$3,610	\$310	9.4%	cleaning products	Manufacturing
S. Curtis Johnson	\$3,300	\$3,610	\$310	9.4%	cleaning products	Manufacturing
H. Fisk Johnson	\$3,300	\$3,588	\$288	8.7%	cleaning products	Manufacturing

Sources: March 18, 2020 data: Forbes, "[Forbes Publishes 34th Annual List Of Global Billionaires](#)" March 18, 2020
 August 17, 2021 data: Forbes, "[The World's Real-Time Billionaires. Today's Winners and Losers](#)," accessed August 17, 2021

“It’s time Wisconsin billionaires and big corporations step up to the plate and pay their fair share,” said Dr. Robert Kraig, Executive Citizen Action of Wisconsin. “It’s time that lawmakers prioritize working people by rewarding work not wealth and closing huge tax loopholes. President Biden’s plan levels the playing field and ensures that everyone in America, not just the rich and corporations, can get a fair shot at a good-paying job, affordable health care and a real opportunity at a better future. Biden’s plan won’t raise taxes on anyone earning under \$400,000, meaning that 99% of Americans and 97% of small business owners won’t pay any more in taxes while the rich and corporations will finally pay a fairer share.”

The state’s billionaire wealth bonanza over the past 17 months is all the more appalling when contrasted with the devastating impact of covid-19 on working people. In Wisconsin: 1,516,693 [have lost jobs](#), at least [650,000 have been sickened](#), and [8,400 have died](#) from it.

[President Biden’s investment proposals](#) contained in the Senate and House-passed budget resolutions would significantly improve Wisconsin residents’ health by making private insurance in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) exchanges more affordable; expanding Medicare to cover dental, vision and hearing benefits; increasing long-term care benefits to help people afford home and community-based services; and lowering the cost of prescription drugs by giving Medicare the authority to negotiate lower prices with drug corporations.

Biden’s proposed investments would [reduce health insurance premiums for 9 million people](#). An average 60-year-old in Wisconsin making \$55,000 annually would [save nearly \\$600 on their monthly premium](#) for an ACA insurance policy. The cost of extending these subsidies is [\\$163 billion over 10 years](#), per the

Treasury Department. That means the \$20 billion increase in Wisconsin billionaire wealth over the last 17 months could pay for 12% of the entire 10-year cost of making healthcare more affordable for 9 million people.

While these investments in healthcare would benefit millions of Americans and save money in the long run, the ballooning wealth of billionaires benefits no one but the super-rich. That is because the current tax code is riddled with loopholes and special breaks that allow the super wealthy to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

Due to one of the tax code's biggest loopholes, increased wealth enjoyed by Wisconsin billionaires can go untaxed forever. The same is true for all asset growth, which is the primary source of income for the rich. The virtual tax-free status of billionaire wealth growth was highlighted recently by a [report from ProPublica](#). The report estimated that 25 top billionaires paid on average just 3.4% of their wealth-growth in federal income taxes and that several, including Jeff Bezos (worth \$188 billion on August 17, 2021) and Elon Musk (worth \$175 billion), went multiple recent years paying zero federal income tax.

Even when taxed, the top tax rate on income generated from wealth (such as the sale of stock or a business or a famous painting) is only about half that of wage income—20% vs. 37%. President Biden would [end those special breaks](#) on the wealth-growth income of millionaires and billionaires as part of his tax-reform package. Following are Biden's tax reforms expected to be a part of budget reconciliation legislation to be voted on in the fall, many of which will ensure Wisconsin billionaires start paying closer to their fair share to taxes:

- **Tax wealth like work.** People with more than \$1 million a year in income will have to pay a top tax rate on the sale of stock and other assets that is the same as the top rate workers pay on wages. Biden also will close a loophole that often allows the wealthy to avoid paying taxes on investment gains for their entire lives. These reforms will [raise \\$325 billion](#).
- **Restore the top individual tax rate to 39.6% and stop avoidance of taxes by wealthy business owners that are used to fund healthcare.** These two reforms will together [raise \\$370 billion](#).
- **Crack down on tax evasion by the wealthy, which will [raise \\$700 billion](#).**
- **Raise the corporate tax rate from 21% to 28%, leaving it still far below the 35% rate in 2017.** Corporate taxes are largely paid by the owners of corporations, the stockholders. Billionaires are among the wealthiest 1% that own [over half of all corporate stock](#). This reform will [raise nearly \\$900 billion](#).
- **Curb offshore corporate tax dodging by eliminating incentives to outsource jobs and shift profits to tax havens.** This reform will [raise more than \\$1 trillion](#).

A more direct way to tax billionaire wealth is to tax the wealth itself instead of just its growth. If the wealth tax proposed by Senator Elizabeth Warren had been in effect in 2020, the nation's billionaires alone would have [paid \\$114 billion for that year](#)—and would pay an estimated combined total of \$1.4 trillion over 10 years.

[Poll after poll](#) shows that Americans of all political persuasions and by large majorities believe that the wealthy and big corporations need to start paying their fair share of taxes. A June poll by ALG Research and Hart Research shows [62% of voters support Biden's proposed \\$4 trillion](#) (at the time) investments in healthcare, childcare, education, clean energy and more—paid for by higher taxes on the rich and corporations.

*March 18, 2020 is used as the unofficial beginning of the coronavirus crisis because by then most [federal](#) and [state](#) economic restrictions responding to the virus were in place. March 18 was also the date that *Forbes* picked to measure billionaire wealth for the 2020 edition of its annual *billionaires' report*, which*

provided a baseline that ATF and HCAN compare periodically with real-time data from the Forbes website. [PolitiFact has favorably reviewed](#) this methodology.

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