



## **Tax Regressivity Has Grown Since 1989**

The study also examined the impact of changes in the regressivity of Rhode Island taxes since 1989, when the last cycle of state government shortfalls began. The study's findings include:

- Tax burdens have risen generally in Rhode Island, but the largest increases fell on low- and middle-income families.

“Low- and middle-income taxpayers in Rhode Island were not helped by the cut in the sales tax because of other regressive hikes,” said McIntyre. “As lawmakers consider budget-balancing strategies in 2003, they should remember that their past actions have served to shift a greater share of the tax burden onto low-income taxpayers.”

### **Two pages of tables detailing the Rhode Island findings of the study follow**

The Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy is a nonpartisan Washington-based research group. The full *Who Pays?* report is available in PDF format at [www.itepnet.org](http://www.itepnet.org). Printed copies can be ordered by calling ITEP at 202-737-4315.

*Who Pays?* examines the tax systems of all 50 states and the District of Columbia, using the Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy Microsimulation Tax Model. The ITEP Model is similar in methodology and data sources to the elaborate computer models used by the U.S. Treasury and the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, except that the ITEP Model adds state-by-state estimating capabilities.

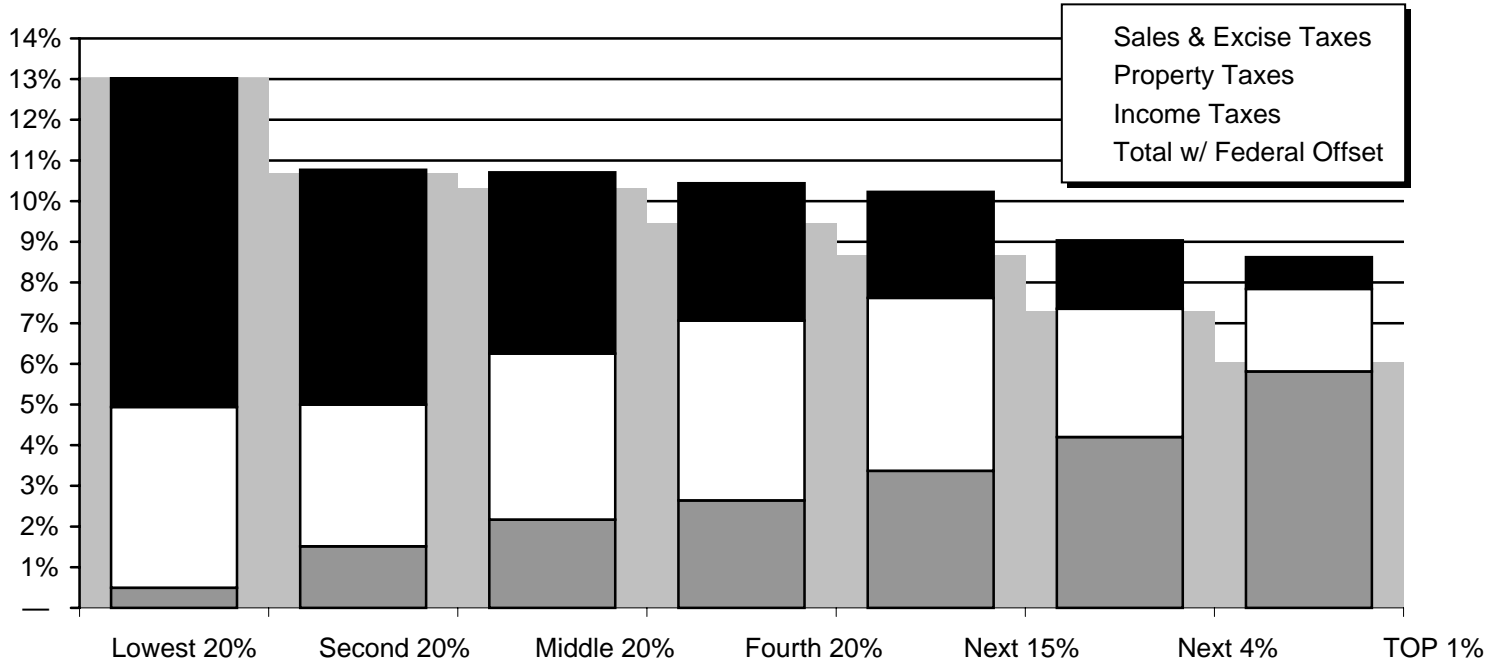
The findings published in the study detail state and local taxes paid by non-elderly couples and individuals. The study includes all major state and local taxes: personal and corporate income taxes, property taxes, and sales and excise taxes.

MORE . . .

# Rhode Island

## State & Local Taxes in 2002

Shares of family income for non-elderly taxpayers



| Income Group                    | Lowest 20%         | Second 20%          | Middle 20%          | Fourth 20%          | Top 20%              |                       |                   |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
|                                 | Next 15%           | Next 4%             | TOP 1%              |                     |                      |                       |                   |
| Income Range                    | Less than \$15,000 | \$15,000 – \$29,000 | \$29,000 – \$47,000 | \$47,000 – \$71,000 | \$71,000 – \$144,000 | \$144,000 – \$272,000 | \$272,000 or more |
| Average Income in Group         | \$8,400            | \$21,500            | \$36,000            | \$57,900            | \$96,100             | \$189,000             | \$757,000         |
| <b>Sales &amp; Excise Taxes</b> | 8.1%               | 5.8%                | 4.5%                | 3.4%                | 2.6%                 | 1.7%                  | 0.8%              |
| General Sales—Individuals       | 3.2%               | 2.6%                | 2.1%                | 1.7%                | 1.4%                 | 0.9%                  | 0.4%              |
| Other Sales & Excise—Ind.       | 3.0%               | 1.7%                | 1.3%                | 0.9%                | 0.6%                 | 0.4%                  | 0.1%              |
| Sales & Excise on Business      | 1.9%               | 1.5%                | 1.1%                | 0.8%                | 0.6%                 | 0.4%                  | 0.2%              |
| <b>Property Taxes</b>           | 4.4%               | 3.5%                | 4.1%                | 4.4%                | 4.3%                 | 3.2%                  | 2.0%              |
| Property Taxes on Families      | 4.3%               | 3.3%                | 3.9%                | 4.2%                | 4.0%                 | 2.7%                  | 1.3%              |
| Other Property Taxes            | 0.1%               | 0.2%                | 0.1%                | 0.2%                | 0.3%                 | 0.4%                  | 0.7%              |
| <b>Income Taxes</b>             | 0.5%               | 1.5%                | 2.2%                | 2.6%                | 3.4%                 | 4.2%                  | 5.8%              |
| Personal Income Tax             | 0.5%               | 1.5%                | 2.2%                | 2.6%                | 3.3%                 | 4.1%                  | 5.7%              |
| Corporate Income Tax            | 0.0%               | 0.0%                | 0.0%                | 0.0%                | 0.0%                 | 0.1%                  | 0.1%              |
| <b>TOTAL TAXES</b>              | <b>13.0%</b>       | <b>10.8%</b>        | <b>10.7%</b>        | <b>10.4%</b>        | <b>10.2%</b>         | <b>9.0%</b>           | <b>8.6%</b>       |
| Federal Deduction Offset        | —                  | -0.1%               | -0.4%               | -1.0%               | -1.6%                | -1.8%                 | -2.6%             |
| <b>TOTAL AFTER OFFSET</b>       | <b>13.0%</b>       | <b>10.7%</b>        | <b>10.3%</b>        | <b>9.5%</b>         | <b>8.7%</b>          | <b>7.3%</b>           | <b>6.0%</b>       |

Note: Table shows 2002 tax law at 2000 income levels.

# Rhode Island Tax Trends

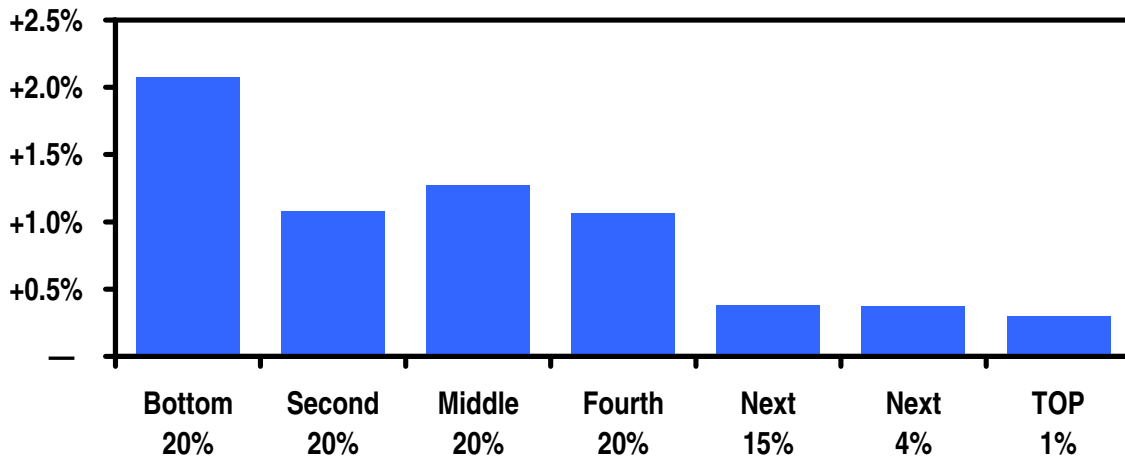
## Progressive Features

- ✓ Income tax based on progressive federal tax

## Regressive Features

- ✗ High sales tax rate
- ✗ One of the highest cigarette taxes in the nation

## Changes in Taxes as Shares of Income, 1989 – 2002

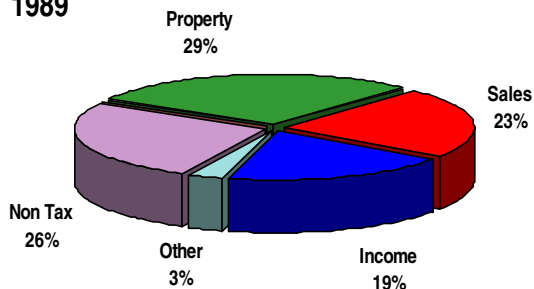


|                       | Bottom<br>20% | Second<br>20% | Middle<br>20% | Fourth<br>20% | Top 20%      |              |              |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                       |               |               |               |               | Next 15%     | Next 4%      | TOP 1%       |
| Sales & Excise        | +1.6%         | +0.8%         | +0.6%         | +0.4%         | +0.3%        | +0.2%        | +0.0%        |
| Property              | +0.6%         | +0.5%         | +0.7%         | +0.9%         | -0.0%        | -0.5%        | +0.1%        |
| Income                | -0.1%         | -0.2%         | +0.1%         | +0.3%         | +0.5%        | +0.6%        | +1.0%        |
| Federal Offset        | —             | -0.0%         | -0.2%         | -0.5%         | -0.3%        | +0.0%        | -0.9%        |
| <b>Overall Change</b> | <b>+2.1%</b>  | <b>+1.1%</b>  | <b>+1.3%</b>  | <b>+1.1%</b>  | <b>+0.4%</b> | <b>+0.4%</b> | <b>+0.3%</b> |

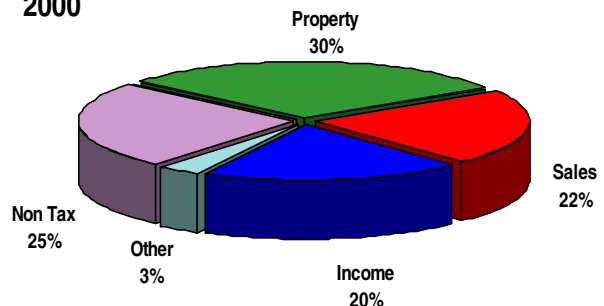
Until the state decoupled from the federal system in 2001, Rhode Island state income tax was calculated as a percentage of federal income tax. This simple tax system became more progressive in the 1990s as the federal tax became more progressive, and Rhode Island maintained its strong progressivity by using the tax brackets as they stood before the regressive 2001 rate reductions. Unfortunately these progressive changes in the income tax were not enough to offset a regressive 1% hike of the general sales tax and an enormous cigarette tax hike of \$1.24.

## Composition of Revenues

1989



2000



Source: Government Finances, US Department of Census