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## **Progressive Maryland and partners gather at Baltimore Main Post Office on Tax Day with message for Washington: Invest in America's Future, Not War in Iraq**

***Activists, advocates release damning reports on federal tax policies and misspending of resources that would otherwise be invested here***

BALTIMORE—On Tax Day, Tuesday, April 15, Progressive Maryland, UNITE-HERE, ACORN, True Majority and other partners gathered at Baltimore's main post office to talk with tax-filers and release a series of reports detailing the Bush Administration's misplaced priorities of tax breaks for the rich and corporations while dumping billions of dollars every week into a needless war in Iraq – leading directly to the slashing of vital investments in America, including education, health care, transportation, and community revitalization.

The reports accompanying this press release are:

- 1) **Maryland Cost of War Report:** Maryland taxpayers' share of the Iraq War is now \$10.1 billion, and will rise to \$14.5 billion by the end of FY2009. The total cost of the war now exceeds \$500 billion, and Joseph E. Stiglitz, a Columbia University economics professor and Nobel Laureate, has estimated that the total cost of the war will top \$3 trillion.
- 2) **Maryland Tax Dollars Report:** The median-income Maryland family paid the federal government \$5,693 in 2007 income taxes.
- 3) **Citizens for Tax Justice "Tax Day Report":** At the same time President Bush is ringing up an enormous tab on a completely unnecessary war, he gave \$1.4 trillion in tax breaks mostly to the richest one percent of Americans, those earning over \$462,000 annually. This along with the war has contributed to a \$3 trillion increase in the federal debt since Bush took office inheriting a budget surplus in 2001. To reduce this deficit, Bush is proposing cutting federal investment in Medicare by 9%, community revitalization by 62%, transportation by one-third, environmental programs by 25%, education and social services by one-fifth, and veterans' assistance by 9%.
- 4) Finally, the New York Times reported last week that **average working families have seen their incomes go down since Bush took office.** This is the first time that a period of economic expansion has ever resulted in a decline in family incomes, due to Bush's policies.

The groups called on our leaders in Washington to reverse the current administration's upside-down priorities by ending the war and the tax breaks for millionaires so we can invest in America's future.

UNITE-HERE Political Director Charly Carter said, “With the cost of living skyrocketing and people losing their homes, it’s time to end the Bush Administration’s reckless war and tax policies and invest in solutions to end the economic downturn and restore progress for average working families, whose median income has declined from \$61,000 in 2000 to \$60,500 in 2007 in inflation-adjusted terms.” (New York Times, April 9, 2008: “For Many, a Boom That Wasn’t”).

Progressive Maryland Baltimore Region Director Matthew Weinstein commented, “Last fall Maryland debated tax increases and cuts in school funding to close a deficit of \$1.7 billion a year. That’s about what we’re spending in Iraq every week! That money should have been kept here at home. The American middle-class standard of living used to be the envy of the world. Now, thanks to the policies of the Bush Administration, working families here live shorter, less healthy, less wealthy lives than our counterparts in other nations. It’s time to see our federal taxes going toward fixing that problem, not making it worse.”

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Progressive Maryland has fought for working families since 2001, raising Maryland’s minimum wage and making Maryland the first state in the nation to enact a living wage requirement for state contracts. Progressive Maryland is the state affiliate of USAction, which opposed the 2003 invasion of Iraq and now leads a national coalition to end the war, cancel tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations and invest in America’s future.