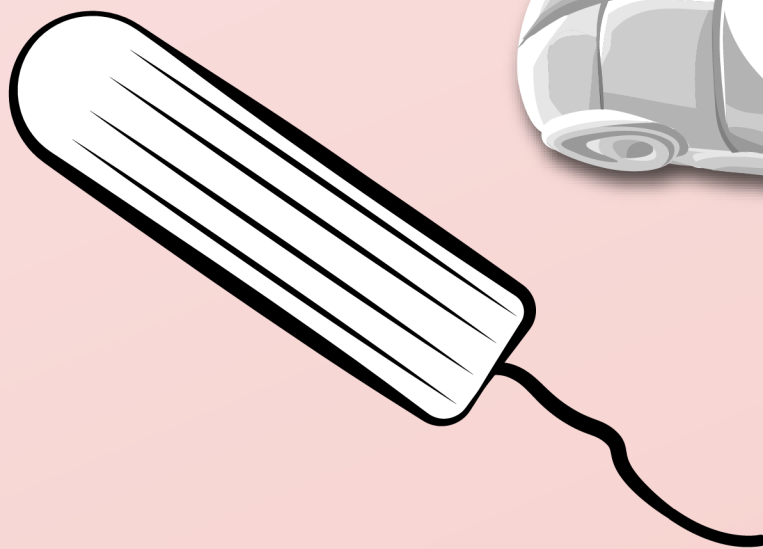


TAMPON TAX

NEWS



PAY \$7.50

How the tampon tax affects families and
furtheres the unspoken truth of period poverty

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Chainsaws, cowboy boots, and newspaper ink. All of these items have the same thing in common: they are not taxed in one or more states. But menstrual products such as pads, tampons, and menstrual cups? These items are taxed in 33 states.

Menstrual products are taxed as “non-necessary luxury items” in a tax frequently referred to as the tampon tax (despite covering more than just tampons). Generic federal assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—which provides food stamps—as well as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) do not allow usage of those funds for menstrual products since they fall under the label of “non-essential products”, unlike food and medicine, despite being classified as medical devices. However, there are numerous nonprescriptive medical devices and over-the-counter medicines that are allowed under SNAP and WIC and thus are not taxed.

Georgia is one of the 33 states that tax tampons. The current sales tax on menstrual products is 4%, but since 2018, Georgia House of Representatives Democrat Debbie Buckner of the 137th district has led several other representatives to get rid of the tax. One of the biggest critics of this repeal, however, is the highest-ranking woman in the state House, Republican Jan Jones of the 47th district. Jones’ reasoning is that the ban is an unnecessary effort that solves a nonexistent problem. In other words, getting rid of the tax would not suddenly make these products affordable to low-income women. Buckner, however, emphasizes that the effort is not only about supporting those who are financially in need but also to support basic human dignity. Buckner’s supporters explain that while the

tax and cost of tampons might not seem like much, it certainly is when a constituent is trying to choose between, for example, giving a child lunch money or buying a box of pads.

The tampon tax affects people of all ages, including high school students. According to the National Hospital System of the United Kingdom, most females get their periods between the ages of eight and 15, and according to the National Center for Children in Poverty, 45% of teens worldwide live in low-income families. Many students are passionate about eliminating this disparity, including two members of the Feminism Empowers Me (FEM) club at Northview—junior Inaara Jadavji, sophomore Casey Wong, and sophomore

are very obviously not essential,” Wong said. “And then, by having this opportunity gap in having to pay this extra tax for essential items just doesn’t make sense to me.”

Jadavji views the tampon tax as additionally encompassing the pink tax, an upcharge on products that differ only in size or in scent in hopes of targetting female consumers. While the pink tax does not necessarily equal the tampon tax, the two are commonly paired together, as consumers who buy pink or scented products often deal with both taxes. This makes buying basic necessities, such as menstrual products, difficult.

“They are charging women more for no reason other than they want us to follow cer-

tain gender normative and societal standards that we shouldn’t have to follow,” Jadavji said. “We shouldn’t have to follow certain colors on packaging or scents or tastes or whatever they think a woman would desire or make a woman smell desirable. Stuff like that doesn’t matter.”

For Cato, these are not just socie-

tal concerns, but personal ones too. Cato has been a Girl Scout since elementary school, and now as a Senior Girl Scout, she and her troop are working on more service projects to give back to their communities. Recently, they completed a badge in Women’s Health after creating care packages of menstrual products that included pads, tampons, and panty liners for a local homeless shelter that serves the majority, women. Cato believes that if she is able to alleviate even a little bit of the stigma associated with periods, then her projects have been a success.

“I was inspired to host this drive because I know how hard it is to have my period and I

“They are charging women more for no reason other than they want us to follow certain gender normative and societal standards that we shouldn’t have to follow.”

Inaara Jadavji

Sarah Cato, a Girl Scout whose troop recently hosted a drive for menstrual products for homeless women.

Wong categorizes the tampon tax as an opportunity gap, in that having to buy these products monthly lessens what the families may spend on food or put in a retirement fund. Wong also notes that the difference in menstruation between people whose periods are light and last a few days as compared to people with chronic illnesses who may experience periods that last weeks or even months may also have a bearing on the opportunity gap.

“There are things that are tax-exempt yet



			CHANCE		BLEED RAILROAD
\$2 BILLION	17,000 TAMPONS		?	1 IN 5 WOMEN	
amount of money Americans spend on menstrual products every year	average number of tampons and pads a person uses in their lifetime			portion of women who cannot afford period products	pay

can access everything I need so I can't imagine how hard it is for homeless women who have nothing," Cato said.

Cato, Jadavji, and Wong recognize that school systems and individual schools could do so much more to help all of their students that experience periods including those from low-income families that may not be able to get period supplies anywhere else. All three feel that solutions could be as easy as putting pads and tampons in the bathroom.

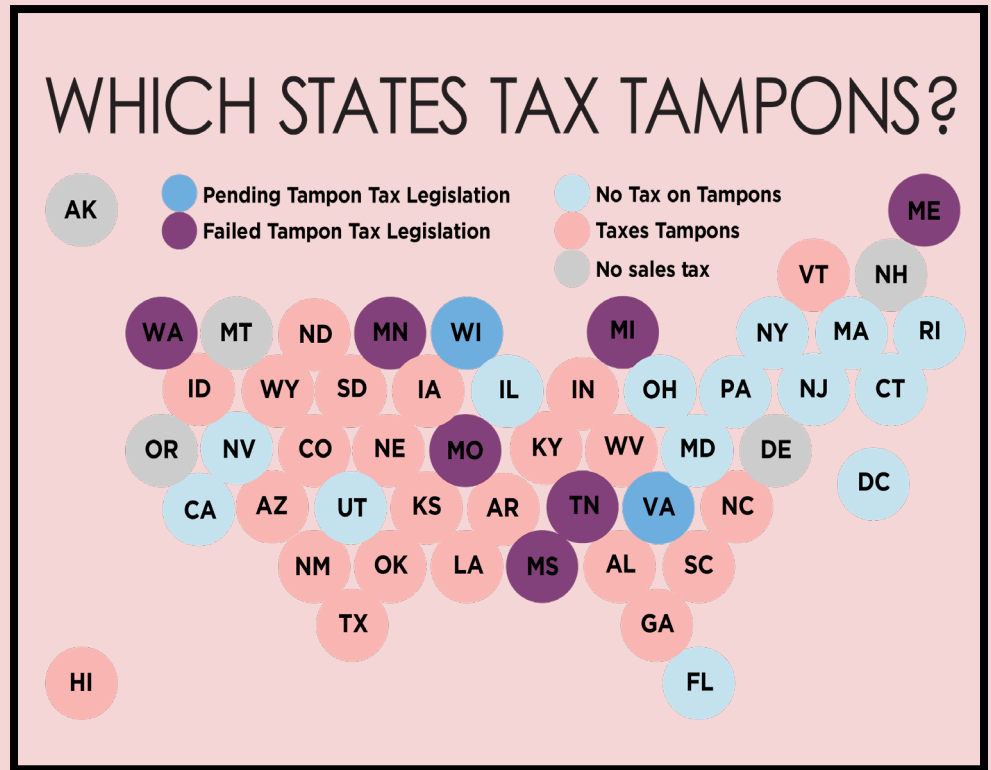
"Just like of course there is toilet paper or paper towels or soap in the bathroom there should be tampons and pads," Wong said.

It is common for women to forget a pad or a tampon or have an irregular period. For students, they may head to the nurse's office where there are a variety of menstrual products, including panty liners, pads, and tampons. Jean Apps, who leads the clinic at Northview, helps girls with whatever they may need. Throughout her years as a nurse in the clinic, she has seen the effects of the pink tax firsthand, including a few students who have not been able to afford menstrual products. Luckily, through donations to the clinic and other help, they are able to get such supplies.

Along with helping students who are not able to afford products, they also help the average student who may have been surprised or forgotten. There is a basket in the clinic restroom dedicated to housing these supplies. Students are allowed to take what they may need, without any questions being asked.

Despite its seeming accessibility, the clinic is also another place where the tampon tax poisons menstrual health. The higher the prices of tampons or pads, the less they are able to provide for students, and a chain reaction ensues. Despite dealing with the tax, Apps and the other nursing staff are helping to create a space in the clinic where students can get what they need without monetary concern.

"We just try to be very sensitive and very private if that's what they want, whatever makes them the most comfortable because we certainly don't want anyone to be embarrassed or ashamed. We want this to be a really safe



place for everyone," Apps said.

The clinic at school is not the only place that receives donations. Many women's shelters and domestic abuse shelters need them as well. On Feb. 12, FEM, along with Beta Club, hosted a donation drive for Partnership Against Domestic Violence. Menstrual products were not the only thing accepted—shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste were also included in the drive. Jadavji believes that one way to greatly help those in need and those affected by the tampon tax is through such donations.

"FEM is trying to work with woman's shelters and domestic abuse shelters, and just women's rights organizations as a whole to work on menstrual products drives," Jadavji said.

Though the tampon tax is still the law of the land in Georgia, this does not mean there is no hope for anti-tampon tax advocates. Buckner is still championing for the abolishment of the tax. Even at a local level, there may

be a change coming. It was brought to principal Brian Downey's attention that low-income families may be struggling to purchase these products and he was eager to help. Fulton County and the schools distribute food to low-income families and it was suggested about handing out period supplies in a similar fashion.

"That is a decision made above my head and I am not going to have control over that type of budgetary item, but that should not stop us from doing it at the local level," Downey said.

The tampon tax has a long way to go to be completely removed in every state; however, many are working to create such change. Several organizations, companies, representatives, and even citizens are challenging the tax in an effort to break the cycle of period poverty. One day, the choice between feeding your family and affording these essential items may become a thing of the past. ♣

<p>WALKING ROAD</p>	<p>TAMPON TAX</p> <p>♦</p> <p>PAY 7% OR 2¢ A TAMPON</p>	<p>500 PERIODS</p> <p>average number of periods a person has in their lifetime</p>	<p>COMMUNITY CHEST</p> <p>FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ON TOP CARD</p>	<p>INFORMATION SOURCES</p> <p>review news, Reuters, digital hub, tax free period</p>	<p>PERIOD</p>	<p>POVERTY</p>
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