



## March 2020 Newsletter

*This is a monthly newsletter of updates from OpenRG Experts.*

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Don Boyd

*Don is Co-Director of the State and Local Government Finance Project at Rockefeller College, SUNY Albany, and a consultant, Open Source Policy Center.*

- With colleagues Gang Chen and Yimeng Yin, released a paper on fiscal issues and risks associated with the New York City Teachers' Retirement System, based on a stochastic simulation model. Boyd and colleagues are seeking funding to create an open-source web-accessible version of this model.
  - Consulted with and advised policymakers in New York on the potential implications of COVID-19 on governmental tax revenue.
  - Prepared an initial draft of a *Quantitative Note*, to be completed in early April, on synthetic tax microdata.
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Jason DeBacker

*Jason is an Associate Professor of economics at the University of South Carolina and a core maintainer of the open source models [Cost-of-Capital-Calculator](#) and [OG-USA](#), which model business taxes and macroeconomic effects of tax policy, respectively.*

- Jason is now a Nonresident Fellow with the Tax Policy Center
- Updated the [Cost-of-Capital-Calculator](#) to allow users to model changes to tax policy through 2030.
- [OG-USA](#) default parameters received an update and now represent a calibration of the U.S. as a large open economy by default.

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Richard Evans

*Richard is Associate Director and Senior Lecturer at the University of Chicago M.A. Program in Computational Social Science, Director of the Open Source Economics Laboratory, and President of OpenRG. He is also a core maintainer of [OG-USA](#), a macroeconomic model for fiscal policy analysis in the U.S.*

- Accepted a new position as Advisory Board Visiting Fellow at the [Baker Institute for Public Policy](#) at Rice University, starting May 1, 2020
- Rick is now a Nonresident Fellow with the [Tax Policy Center](#)
- Rick is Senior Editor at [Center for Growth and Opportunity](#) at Utah State University
- Published an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, "[We might see a coronavirus baby blip -- not a boom](#)"
- [Quantitative Note 2020-1](#) on the historic response of stock prices to the coronavirus

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Weifeng Zhong

*Weifeng is a Senior Research Fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. Weifeng is a core maintainer of the open-source [PCI-China](#) and [PCI-Crackdown](#) models.*

- Continue to brief US lawmakers and policymakers on the PCI projects;
- Published a paper, "The 'Value' of Propaganda: Machine Predictions of Rare Events Based on Text Data," in the [Yale Journal of International Affairs](#);
- Published an op-ed, "I Built a Bot That Predicts Policy Changes in China After the Coronavirus Pandemic Ends," in [The National Interest](#);
- Had a paper, "On the Observational Implications of Knightian Uncertainty," joint with Kevin A. Hassett, accepted by the *B. E. Journal of Theoretical Economics*. (The working paper version is available [here](#).)
- Started a new project, the PCI-Outbreak, which aims at estimating the severity of China's COVID-19 outbreak based on how its official media covered the pandemic.