



December 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.

- Prepared, with OpenRG founder Matt Jensen, a draft report on the impact of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) on the federal income tax liabilities of taxpayers in New York and eight comparison states. The report uses a microdata file of income tax returns weighted to represent New York, the comparison states, and the United States as a whole. Boyd and Jensen anticipate release of the report early in the new year.
 - Prepared, with colleagues Gang Chen and Yimeng Yin at Rockefeller College's [State and Local Government Finance Project](#), a draft policymaker guidebook on public pension risk-sharing policies. This work is funded by Arnold Ventures.
 - Panelist on the Manhattan Institute program, [Turning the Fiscal Tide: Fixing New York City's Finances](#).
 - Prepared, with colleague Yimeng Yin, a draft report for the Society of Actuaries on the impact of a sustained low-interest rate environment on retirement security.
 - Participated in a Pew Charitable Trusts advisory group in relation to the Trusts' technical assistance to state governments on financial planning and management.
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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.

- Presented research on how tax preparers affect compliance at a workshop for the Tax Administration Research Center at the University of Exeter.

Anderson Frailey

Anderson is an economics PhD student at the University of Virginia and a core maintainer of the open source [TaxData](#) and [Tax-Brain](#) projects.

- Presented how to use Tax-Brain for individual income tax policy analysis as part of the PSL demo-days series

Max Ghenis

Max is President of the UBI Center and a core maintainer of the open source [microdf](#) project.

- Published [research](#) on the distributional effects of replacing the US tax code with a flat income tax and universal basic income, and trends of how OECD countries reduce inequality between taxes and transfers.
- Drafted a [report](#) on a Canadian experiment that gave cash transfers to people experiencing homelessness.

Jonathan Pycroft

Jon is an economic modeler and public finance economist based in Seville, Spain. He has experience building and working with computable general equilibrium models, overlapping generations models, and microsimulation models of tax and pension policies in Europe and Africa.

- Contributed to the Inception Report for the EU study on distributional impact assessment of budget reforms across Member States.
- Improved the consumption tax closure and the income tax functions for the EDGE-M3 model.

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](#), [PCI-Crackdown](#), and [PCI-Outbreak](#) models.

- Continue to brief US lawmakers and policymakers on the PCI project.
- The PCI project was “up in the air” again, appearing on the Buck Sexton Show and the Mike Slater Show.

- The research paper behind the [PCI-Outbreak](#), “Words Speak Louder Than Numbers: Estimating China’s COVID-19 Severity with Deep Learning,” was [released](#) as part of the *Mercatus Working Paper* series.
- The PCI-Outbreak was [featured](#) in a *National Review* article, “Uncovering the Chinese Government’s Pandemic Deception,” by Jimmy Quinn.
- Published [commentary](#) “The Pandemic’s Phantom Trade Collapse” in the Observer Research Foundation’s blog.