

Leslie Anne Johnston

April 7, 2013

ATTN: International Tax Reform Working Group

Dear Representative Nunes and Blumenaur,

I am writing to ask that the International Taxation Committee of the Ways & Means Committee for Tax Reform seriously consider the ACA proposal for reform to Residency-based taxation RBT. Please see the link for more information: <http://americansabroad.org/files/6513/6370/3681/finalsubrbtmarch2013.pdf>

I have lived abroad since 2001, primarily to pursue my dream of using my business skills to help poor people in developing countries to help themselves. I attach my resume to give you more information on my specific experience. Over the past 13 years, I have largely worked for not-for-profit organizations, earning a decent (but not excessive) salary that has enabled me to support my family of four. I am committed to helping those less fortunate than myself, and in my current position as the head of a foundation here in Switzerland, I help entrepreneurs in Africa, Central America, and Eastern Europe start businesses that ultimately generate income for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Yet I have personally suffered from the United States' current citizen-based taxation in several ways:

- **Significant burden of taxation on “non-cash” benefits.** Despite having what I felt was a decent salary here in Switzerland, I currently struggle to cover the costs for my family of four. Why? Because I am taxed by the U.S. on the non-cash benefits offered by my employer, including the high school fees that my employer covers. (I am lucky that I do not have to pay the fees of over CHF 50,000 per year for my two children, but the tax to the U.S. on this benefit severely decreases my disposable income. This is in addition to the taxes that I pay in Switzerland, making it difficult for me to cover the family's expenses.)
- **Inability to find a financial advisor who will assist me.** When I first moved to Switzerland in 2011 (from having spent nine years in Africa), I looked for a financial advisor that would assist me in basic financial planning. I met with several who concluded that they are unable to advise me. I am on my own as a result.
- **Inability to participate in non-savings bank accounts.** I was able to open an account with UBS, one of the few which still allows Americans to open an account here in Switzerland, but was told that I could not park any savings in a money market account. Rather, my funds had to sit in a savings account that earned very little interest. Granted, this is less of an issue, as I do not have significant funds to invest, but it is frustrating that being American means that I cannot access the same banking products open to the rest of the world.

Please note that, several years ago, I also was in the situation where I lived in an African country that did not have a tax equalization agreement with the United States. Had my employer not agreed to cover my local tax payments, I would have faced a tax bill of over 65% of my earnings.

In short, I feel that this current taxation approach ultimately hurts people like myself who are really just trying to earn a decent living, support their families, and in my case, ultimately do what I can to help others help themselves. I beg you to please seriously consider the RBT proposal submitted by American Citizens Abroad (ACA). A move towards a residence-based system, like the rest of the world, not only would it be simpler and fairer for Americans living abroad, but it would actually bring in more tax revenue than the current system.

I hope that my story above can influence a positive change, and I am available at any time to provide further details (please see my cell phone number below). Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Leslie Anne Johnston

Leslie Anne Johnston

Leslie A. Johnston is a senior manager with 18 years of experience across multiple sectors including nonprofit management, corporate philanthropy, agribusiness, and tourism. With her significant management experience in both the private and not-for-profit sectors, she offers a number of strengths, including:

- **Keen business sense** honed through consulting for McKinsey & Company, starting up an IT firm, and advising aspiring African entrepreneurs on business fundamentals
- **Motivational people manager**, directly overseeing team of 30 international staff and indirectly managing 200+ staff
- **Continuous focus on results** through able management of an \$8.9 million USAID grant, tracking return on (social) investment and delivering on impact targets (e.g., jobs created, revenues generated)
- **Diverse experience in developing agricultural value chains** in Africa, with particular knowledge in fruits/vegetables, beef, dairy, cotton, handicrafts, staples and agro-forestry
- **Proven ability to build trust-based relationships** with senior leaders, including Ambassadors, Ministers, and CEOs
- **Passion for social change** with board membership in Gone Rural BoMake, Junior Achievement Swaziland, Rotary Club of Mbabane-Mbuluzi, and The Business Place Swaziland

Education:

- 1995 - 1997 **M.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown School of Foreign Service** Washington, DC
- Full tuition scholarship, graduated with highest honors
 - MBA Coursework in Finance, Financial Statement Analysis, Strategy, Cost Accounting
 - Selected to serve as Teaching Assistant, History of Western Civilization (1996-7)
- 1992 - 1993 **Education Abroad Program at Institut d'Etudes Politiques** Grenoble, France
- 1990 - 1994 **B.A. in Political Economy and French (2 degrees) from UC Berkeley** Berkeley, CA
- Phi Beta Kappa, Golden Key Honor Society, Magna Cum Laude

Experience:

- 2011 - current **Executive Director** (Argidius Foundation.) Zug, Switzerland
- Leads strategic direction for the Argidius and other corporate giving initiatives to ensure the maximum impact of the annual EUR 30+ million in social investments
 - Identifies, vets, and manages multiple implementing partners across Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe who help the foundation achieve its mission
 - Develops and implements policies and procedures to increase the efficiency, efficacy and transparency of the foundation's investments
- 2009 – 2011 **Deputy Director, West & Southern Africa** (TechnoServe, Inc.) Cape Town, South Africa
- Provided strategic and operational leadership to the West and Southern Africa division, overseeing 10 countries, over \$20 million in annual programming and 200 employees
 - Led the business development for new and existing country programs, including managing core donor relationships, overseeing proposal writing, and negotiating contracts
 - Structured innovative partnerships with corporates, other implementing partners, and new donors in order to increase TechnoServe's impact among the rural poor

Leslie Anne Johnston

- 2006 – 2009 **Swaziland Country Director** (TechnoServe, Inc.) Mbabane, Swaziland
- Designed and managed a \$8.9 million, 6-year comprehensive enterprise development program to identify, develop and grow small- and medium-sized Swazi companies
 - Developed and implemented innovative solutions to SME finance, including facilitating a \$25 million loan guarantee facility and a new equity program for promising Swazi companies
 - Recruited, trained and managed team of 30 Swazi and international staff and oversaw programmatic, administrative and financial management of the Swaziland Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Program (SWEEP)
- 2003 - 2005 **Director of New Business Development** (TechnoServe, Inc.) Maputo, Mozambique
- Managed team of professional Mozambican staff and oversaw programmatic, administrative and financial management functions for a USAID-funded \$7.5 million, three-year agribusiness development program
 - Developed and implemented TechnoServe strategy for creating rural income through the development of new sectors, including high value horticulture, tourism and wood products
 - Designed and implemented \$1.5 million, three-year mentorship program between Mozambican entrepreneurs and leading corporations, including McKinsey, Liz Claiborne and Cargill
- 2001 - 2003 **Independent Consultant** (Various Clients)
- Developed an online membership-based resource for the European transport sector for Global Europe Consulting Group (Brussels, Belgium)
 - Develop and implemented fundraising strategy for European fitness association for Global Europe Consultant Group (Brussels, Belgium)
 - Advised Government of Jamaica on the marketing and pricing strategy for online land titling as part of Carana Corporation's New Economy Project (Kingston, Jamaica)
 - Developed the business case and implementation plan with PriceWaterhouseCoopers for helping small businesses improve their financial management through an Internet-based solution (Kingston, Jamaica)
- 1999 - 2001 **Director of Business Development** (Abilizer Solutions) San Francisco, CA and London, UK
- As the 3rd employee in a start-up which would grow to over 200 employees, contributed to developing company's business strategy, helping it reach over 2 million corporate users
 - Led development of the company's partnership strategy, negotiating and supporting over 2000 corporate partnerships
 - Co-led 5-person client team to develop software implementation strategy for its first international client, a major UK bank
- 1997 – 1999 **Business Analyst** (McKinsey & Company) Washington, DC and Johannesburg, RSA
- Analyzed profitability of wholesale lending portfolio for a major US commercial bank and recommended rebalancing to save \$50 million
 - Assessed viability of a South African steel plant based on potential to redesign pricing structure
 - Developed differentiation strategy for a major electric utility in a deregulating environment
 - Developed call center strategy for a bank to decrease advisor-assisted calls by 20%
- 1995 - 1996 **Insurance Department Intern** (Overseas Private Investment Corporation) Washington, DC
- Assessed risk profiles of Central Asian countries and recommended investment strategies
- 1994 - 1995 **Productivity Enhancement Program Manager** (Center for Citizen Initiatives) San Francisco, CA
- Developed alliances with US companies to mentor promising Russian entrepreneurs

Other Relevant Information:

Languages: Native English, Proficient French and Portuguese, Fair Russian
Passions: Traveling, enjoying good food and wine, reading, hiking, writing