Pandemic Fortune: Maryland Billionaires’ Wealth Jumps $12.4 Billion While Ordinary Marylanders Struggle to Make Ends Meet

ANNAPOLIS — The 9 Maryland billionaires for which data is available collectively saw their wealth increase by $12.4 billion, a nearly 50 percent gain, since restrictions were imposed in March 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the same time period, more than 11,000 Marylanders died and 575,000 fell ill from COVID-19, and hundreds of thousands of Marylanders have faced losing their jobs and housing while struggling to get unemployment insurance, food, health care and other basic needs.

This new analysis from the Maryland Fair Funding Coalition and Our Maryland is based on Forbes billionaires data compiled by Americans for Tax Fairness and covers the period from March 18, 2020—the rough start date of the pandemic shutdown when most federal and state economic restrictions were in place—through October 15, 2021.

As of October 15, 2021, the 9 Maryland billionaires for which data was available had a combined net worth of $37.4 billion, up from $25 billion in March 2020, a nearly 50 percent gain. Nationally, America’s billionaires have grown $2.1 trillion richer during the pandemic, their collective fortune skyrocketing by 70 percent — from just short of $3 trillion at the start of the COVID crisis to over $5 trillion on October 15 of this year.

According to Federal Reserve Board estimates, the $5 trillion in wealth now held by 745 billionaires is two-thirds more than the $3 trillion in wealth held by the bottom 50% of U.S. households.

Three Maryland billionaires—Mitchell Rales, David Rubenstein, and Kevin Plank—saw their wealth grow by 87.9%, 79.5% and 68.5%, respectively. Much of their gains stem from their corporate holdings and investments. Plank is founder and executive chairman of Under Armour. Notably, according to public reports, Under Armour paid no state corporate income tax in 2017, while receiving $8.3 million in state tax credits.

Private equity billionaire David Rubenstein of the Carlyle Group, who saw his wealth grow by $1.5 billion over the pandemic, has been a leading advocate for protecting the “carried interest” loophole, a special interest tax break for private equity and hedge fund managers.
*Doesn’t include Keith Dunleavy and family or Anthony Casalena since their net worth on 03/18/20 was not available. Casalena and Keith Dunleavy and family have a net worth of $1.8 and $2.26 billion respectively as of October 15th, 2021.

Sources:
Forbes, “Forbes Publishes 34th annual List of Global Billionaires” March 18, 2020

To put the 9 Maryland billionaires’ increase in wealth during the pandemic in context, their $12.4 billion in gains represents more than 10 times the $1.12 billion allocated for vulnerable populations and seniors in the state’s Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

Also according to the FY2021 state budget, the $12.4 billion wealth increase is comparable to:

- 80 percent of the entire $15.6 billion for various health programs for Maryland residents.
- About 30% more than the $8.8 billion awarded to local governments for K-12 public education and local libraries.
- Approximately 75% more than the $7.1 billion invested in higher education.
- Nearly five times the $2.5 billion budgeted for public safety.
- Over 10 times the $1.08 billion dedicated to protecting our environment and preserving our natural resources.

According to polling over the past two years, Marylanders want a fairer tax system where the wealthiest individuals and corporations pay their fair share toward public investments in education, transportation, jobs, housing, health care and public safety. Polls also show that
Marylanders overwhelmingly want the state to do more to help people with the pandemic and economic stress.¹

- 75% of Marylanders are worried about their own household financial situation.
- About 60% believe that large corporations and wealthy individuals are paying too little in state taxes.

“It’s immoral that billionaires are getting richer and richer while countless Marylanders are simply trying to survive and recover from the pandemic,” said Rev. Dr. Kevin Slayton, campaign manager for the Maryland Fair Funding Coalition. “Ordinary Marylanders are facing tough challenges now and they are counting on their state and local governments to help through a system where the wealthiest pay their share for the common good.”

The Maryland Fair Funding Coalition, of which Our Maryland is a member, has called on state legislators to create a fairer tax system by closing loopholes that benefit the ultra-rich and large multinational corporations at the expense of Maryland families and small businesses. Marylanders also strongly support these state legislative solutions.²

- 79% of Marylanders support closing corporate loopholes like “combined reporting.”
- 73% support a tax on individuals making at least $1 million per year.
- 70% would eliminate the special “carried interest” loophole for hedge fund and private equity managers.
- Almost three-fourths of Marylanders would feel better about paying their own taxes if Maryland had a fairer tax system.

“Our elected officials – and those seeking office in 2022 - need to catch up with ordinary Marylanders who overwhelmingly support closing large corporate tax loopholes and requiring the wealthiest individuals to pay their fair share,” said Larry Ottinger, Board Chair of Our Maryland. “If Texas, Kansas and Montana can close these corporate tax loopholes, then Maryland certainly can and must.”
