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*Joseph A. Pechman*  
*1918–1989*

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OUR FRIEND Joe Pechman died on August 19th. He had been on the research staff at Brookings since 1960 and was director of its Economic Studies program from 1962 to 1983. As director, he enthusiastically endorsed the idea for the Brookings Panel on Economic Activity when Art Okun and I first broached it 20 years ago, and remained a vigorous supporter of the Panel thereafter. It is fitting that we pay our respects to Joe at this meeting today.

Joe grew up in New York City and attended City College there before going on to graduate work at the University of Wisconsin, where he received his Ph.D. in 1942. After serving as a meteorologist in the Army during World War II, Joe started his professional career at the Treasury Department. Washington remained his professional home thereafter, though he frequently moved back to the academic world for a semester or two of teaching. Before coming to Brookings he served on the staff of the Council of Economic Advisers and then the Committee for Economic Development.

Joe was a prolific scholar. He authored or coauthored 12 books—including five editions of his indispensable *Federal Tax Policy*—and edited 22 more. In addition, he published numerous professional articles, testified before Congress, and contributed frequently to newspapers' opinion pages. Whatever the forum, Joe's writing was expert, clear, and relevant, and where appropriate, reflected his abiding concerns with income distribution and with the needs of the least fortunate. Joe never

confused equity and efficiency. More important, he never forgot that tax policy was about both.

Besides his own writing, Joe launched and directed the *Studies in Government Finance* series that produced 55 volumes of research studies over a quarter of a century. Under his stewardship, Brookings inaugurated the program on the economics of government regulation, whose research output informed the public debate that led to the elimination of much unneeded regulation starting in the 1970s. And as I mentioned, he was a vigorous supporter of the Brookings Panel from its inception.

Joe was closely associated with two important innovations in public finance laws. The first came in the 1960s when, together with his longtime friend Walter Heller, then President Johnson's CEA chairman, Joe developed a plan for sharing federal revenue with states and localities. Although not embraced by President Johnson, revenue sharing got on the political agenda and became law in 1972 under President Nixon.

The second, more important, innovation was the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Joe had long recognized that tax preferences erode the income tax base, necessitating inefficiently high marginal tax rates and increased reliance on more regressive sources of revenue. He was an early and tireless advocate of tax reform that would enlarge the tax base and permit lower marginal tax rates. The political movement for such tax reform, which first surfaced in the early 1980s with the Bradley-Gephardt plan and then became the 1986 tax act, probably owes more to Joe than to any other single economist.

Joe's many contributions to economics were recognized in his election as president of the American Economics Association for this year. He was still a highly energetic and productive scholar, planning, at the time he died, a conference to compare tax systems around the world.

Joe was the perfect director for the Economic Studies program at Brookings and will always be remembered as its father. He made running the department seem effortless and spared the rest of us the tedium of academic committees and department meetings. He was always supportive of his staff and especially looked after its younger members. We his colleagues marveled at his efficiency, were refreshed by his enthusiasm, and were warmed by his friendship. We will miss him very much.

GEORGE L. PERRY