To: Robynn Wilson, Chair
    Members of MTC Income & Franchise Tax Uniformity Subcommittee
From: Shirley Sicilian, General Counsel
Date: November 4, 2011
Subject: Model Compact Art. IV.9 Amendments

This memorandum provides:
- current factor weightings used by the states (Part I and Attachment A),
- legal and policy considerations for new factor weighting (Part II and Attachment B), and
- options for factor weighting amendment drafted by the drafting group\(^1\) (Part III and Attachment C).

I. Current Factor Weighting Across the States

Art. IV section 9 of the Compact calls for an equal-weighting of the property, payroll and sales factors:

All business income shall be apportioned to this state by multiplying the income by a fraction, the numerator of which is the property factor plus the payroll factor plus the sales factor, and the denominator of which is three.

But as of November 2011, only eight jurisdictions exclusively require the equal-weighted formula: Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and District of Columbia. Five of those eight are Multistate Tax Compact members. Although states are moving away from the three-factor equal-weighting, they are at least moving away in the same direction – toward more heavily weighting the sales factor. Thirty-nine states now at least double weight the sales factor. And fourteen of those thirty-eight states apportion based on the sales factor only: Alabama, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Wisconsin. Five of these fourteen are Multistate Tax Compact members. Attachment A shows factor weightings by state.

II. Policy Considerations for New Factor Weighting

With less than 25% of states adhering to the equal-weighted formula, the Commission suggested this provision is worthy of study and an attempt to find a workable rule that states can adopt. A list of factors to consider in developing an alternative rule is provided in Attachment B. The legal and policy considerations on that list that are most relevant to factor weighting are discussed in detail below.

\(^1\) The drafting group includes Ben Miller and Melissa Potter (CA-FTB), Ted Spangler (ID), Gary Humphrey and Janielle Lipscomb (OR), Michael Fatale (MA), Joe Garrett (AL), and Commission Staff Shirley Sicilian and Bruce Fort. The drafting group has been regularly joined by Wood Miller (MO), Donnita Wald and Mary Loftsgard (ND), and Phil Horwitz (CO). In addition, the group has received helpful input from Diann Smith, Sutherland.
A. Legal Considerations

No apportionment formula is going to reflect all of a taxpayer's activities in the various states in which it is doing business. The idea behind the three-factor equal-weighted formula is that it reflects three significant activities – property investment, labor, customers – in equal parts. In 1983, the United States Supreme Court noted that this equal-weighted formula not only meets with the Court’s approval, but has become “something of a benchmark against which other apportionment formulas are judged.” So, what are the criteria by which formulas are judged?

1. Due Process Clause

The U.S. Supreme Court has interpreted the due process clause of the U.S. Constitution to require that an apportionment formula be “fair,” and has said that for a formula to be “fair” it must be internally and externally consistent.

Internal consistency means that “if applied by every jurisdiction, [the formula]... would result in no more than all of the unitary business’ income being taxed.” Any formula that uses one or more of the three factors, regardless of the weightings, would clearly meet the internal consistency test. For example, if all jurisdictions used a single factor formula, all business income would be taxed and no more.

External consistency requires “that the factor or factors used in the apportionment formula must actually reflect a reasonable sense of how income is generated.” Undoubtedly, all activities of a unitary business contribute something to the realization of its income. Of course no apportionment formula could, or even attempts to, include all factors reflecting all activity. And a legal requirement to do so would certainly defeat the usefulness of formulary apportionment as a “rough approximation.” Even the UDITPA three-factor formula includes only three types of taxpayer activity: property, payroll and sales. These three factors do not exhaust the entire set of factors arguably relevant to the production of income. And none of these three factors is included in its entirety. Yet, the Supreme Court has acknowledged that the “[t]he standard three-factor formula can be justified as a rough, practical approximation of the distribution of either a corporation’s sources of income or the social costs which it generates.”

The Supreme Court also recognized that “[s]ome methods of formula apportionment are particularly problematic because they focus on only a small part of the spectrum of activities by which value is generated.” Nonetheless, even a single factor formula provides a reasonable “rough approximation” of income attributable to a state, and the Supreme Court has “generally upheld the use of such formulas...”

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2 Container Corp. of America v. Franchise Tax Board, 463 U.S. 159, 160.
3 Id.
4 Id.
5 Id.
7 Id. at 271. See also,
8 The property factor excludes intangible property; the payroll factor may exclude independent contractors; and the sales factor reassigned sales made to the U.S. government on the basis of origination rather than destination.
10 Container Corporation at 170.
11 Id., citing to Moorman Mfg. Co. v. Bair, supra (upholding a single sales factor formula and its application to a specific taxpayer); Underwood Typewriter Co. v. Chamberlain, supra (upholding a single property factor formula, which did not
Most state’s apportionment formulas fall somewhere on a continuum between the relatively robust spectrum of activity included in a three-factor formula and the more circumspect spectrum of activity included in a single factor formula.

Any formula, whether a single sales formula or the “benchmark” UDITPA three-factor formula, will occasionally over-reflect or under-reflect income attributable to a state for a particular taxpayer. To be sure, the more narrow the spectrum of activity included in an apportionment formula, the more likely the formula will fail to reflect particular taxpayers’ activity in the taxing state. But the Supreme Court held in Hans Rees’ that “when the [jurisdiction] has adopted a method not intrinsically arbitrary, it will be sustained until proof is offered of an unreasonably and arbitrary application in particular cases.” Indeed, the Court has “on occasion found the distortive effect of focusing on only one factor so outrageous in a particular case as to require reversal.” As long as the formula is not “intrinsically arbitrary”, it will be applied unless, with respect to a particular taxpayer, it is “out of all appropriate proportion to the business transacted by the [taxpayer] in that State.”

In Container, the Court also addressed the weighting of various factors. It recognized that, with the three-factor equal-weighted formula, the relationship between the activity reflected by a particular factor and the income that activity generates is assumed to be roughly the same for the included factors: “The three-factor formula ... is based in part on the very rough economic assumption that rates of return on property and payroll – as such rates of return would be measured by an ideal accounting method that took all transfers of value into account – are roughly the same in different taxing jurisdictions.” But a state may also – constitutionally – reach a policy conclusion that including of property, payroll, and sales in equal proportion would not be the best reflection of relative rates of return attributable to the various factors and the state.

2. Dormant Commerce Clause

The dormant commerce clause prohibits taxation that results in “discrimination against interstate or foreign commerce.” And the Supreme Court has long-identified the potential for multiple taxation as the essence of discrimination and burden on interstate commerce. The dormant commerce clause might have been construed to impose a requirement on the states that the combination of different state apportionment formulas never result in a tax burden higher than what the taxpayer would have incurred if its business were limited to any one of the jurisdictions in which it operates. But in Container, the Supreme Court acknowledged that “at least in the interstate commerce context ... the antidiscrimination principle has not in practice required much in addition to the requirement of fair apportionment.”

B. Policy Considerations

include intangible property, and its application to a specific taxpayer). See also, Hans Rees’ Sons, Inc. v. North Carolina, supra at 134 (holding a single tangible property factor to be “fair on its face,” but rejecting its application to a specific taxpayer in a particular case as distorting.)

12 Id. at 133 (emphasis added)
15 Id. at fn. 20.
16 Container Corporation, supra at 170, citing Mobil Oil Corp., supra, at 444.
18 Container Corporation, supra at 170-171. See also Japan Lines.
As uniform apportionment developed, the policy issue of the day was whether the model formula should include property, payroll, and sales, or just property and payroll. Of course, ultimately, the model formula included all three factors. In 1957, William J. Pierce, who was one of the original UDITPA drafters, noted that “the uniform act appears to be equitable in that it represents a compromise between the positions of consumer and manufacturing states.” But in 1964, the Special Subcommittee on State Taxation of Interstate Commerce of the house Committee on the Judiciary (the “Willis Committee”) disagreed and “evoked a storm of virtually unanimous protest” from the states when it recommended federal legislation imposing only a two-factor equal-weighted formula that included property and payroll, but no sales. Professor John Swain explains that “the Willis Committee’s recommendation to abandon the sales factor was based largely on considerations of administrative convenience and costs of compliance.”

Several economists testified before the committee that market states do not have a legitimate claim to tax the income of businesses merely selling, but not producing products within their borders. The opposing point of view, which also has been expressed by public finance experts, is that demand is as necessary as supply in the creation of income, and that governments in market states are entitled to extract a tax from sellers in the marketplace that they foster.

Id. at 12.

And Professor Swain cites to Peggy Musgrave, who concludes that, from an economic perspective, there is no definitive answer as to whether sales should be included in an apportionment factor.

Either of two approaches can be taken ... The first is a supply approach which says that income has its source where the factor services which generate that income operate, a concept of value added at origin. The second is a supply-demand approach which holds that market value is created through interplay of supply and demand, by both blades of the Marshallian scissors... There seems to be no straightforward economic basis for choosing between the two or for assigning respective weights under the supply-demand approach.

Id. at 12-13; citing to Peggy B. Musgrave, Principles for Dividing the State Corporate Tax Base, in THE STATE CORPORATE INCOME TAX 234 (Charles E. McLure, Jr., ed. 1984)

Over the years, the debate has shifted from whether sales should be included to the weight it should be given. As shown above, the states have been moving toward more heavily weighted sales. The impetus for this trend is two-fold. First, there is a desire to at least equalize the recognition given to market vs. production states. An equal-weighted formula assigns greater value to the contributions of the production state relative to the market state because two of the three factors – property and payroll, are

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19 In 1929, three states apportioned using a single property factor; but by 1953 no states were using property alone. See Willis Committee Report Part II (income taxes), Chapter 5 (development of state corporate income taxes), Section f, Table 5-7 (apportionment formulas in use 1929, 1953, 1963).
20 William J. Pierce, The Uniform Division of Income for State Tax Purposes, Taxes, the Tax Magazine (October, 1957; Vol. 35, No.10)
intended to reflect the factors of production. When a state double weights the sales factor, it is giving equal weight to the contributions of the production and market states. Second, some states have chosen to emphasize the sales factor, and de-emphasizes the property and payroll factors, to encourage taxpayers to move property and payroll (i.e., investment and jobs) to their state. Of course, if all states employed the same single-sales weighting, the comparative advantage for any particular state would disappear.

As the movement intensifies, despite acceptance by the U.S. Supreme Court, some authors have criticized the single sales factor formula that results when the trend is taken to its extreme:

The three-factor formula based on payroll, property, and sales probably does fairly well at reflecting where income is earned, whether or not sales are double-weighted. By comparison, it is obvious that sales-only apportionment generally does not reflect where income is earned; it would be an unusual economic activity in which neither payroll nor property played a significant role in the creation of income. Indeed, I believe that any weight on sales greater than 50 percent is likely to be too great.

Charles McLure; A Comprehensive and Sensible UDITPA; State Tax Notes (Sept. 26, 2005)

John Warren, who represented California during the original drafting of UDITPA, recently wrote that:

[T]he biggest setback to what UDITPA has accomplished is the growing tendency of states to seek a competitive edge in the business location market by changing the apportionment to overweight the sales factor or even make it a single factor. To me, there is a right way and a wrong way to apportion income. You should do it the right way; if you want to adjust the tax burden, you can do it by adjusting the tax rates. That’s the only way you can attain fairness between local businesses and multistate businesses.


III. New Factor Weighting Options

At its July meeting, the Subcommittee reviewed a preliminary list of options. The Subcommittee asked the drafting group to further develop these options and an additional option that would allow taxpayers to elect a factor weighting. The work of the drafting group is in Attachment C.
attachment a –

note that Alabama is now single sales factor

state apportionment of corporate income

(formulas for tax year 2011 -- as of January 1, 2011)

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source: compiled by FTA from state sources.

notes:
The formulas listed are for general manufacturing businesses. Some industries have a special formula different from the one shown.
* State has adopted substantial portions of the UDITPA (Uniform Division of Income Tax Purposes Act).
slash (/) separating two formulas indicates taxpayer option or specified by state rules.
3 Factor = sales, property, and payroll equally weighted.
Double wtd Sales = 3 factors with sales double-weighted
Sales = single sales factor

(1) Beginning with the 2011 tax year, California taxpayers may elect to use a single sales factor.
(2) Minnesota is phasing in a single sales factor which will reach 100% in 2014.
(3) Mississippi provides different apportionment formulas based on specific type of business. A single sales factor formula is required if no specific business formula is specified.
(4) Formula for franchise tax shown. Department publishes specific rules for situs of receipts under the CAT tax.
(5) Taxpayers are allowed only 80% of the reduced taxes from a single sales factor.

FEDERATION OF TAX ADMINISTRATORS -- MARCH 2011
1. Conceptual foundation: Does the proposal reasonably reflect a sound theoretical concept?

2. Ease of Administration
   a. Can the elements of the factor be located geographically?
   b. Will the proposal minimize cost of administration for both taxpayers and the state?
   c. Is the information required readily available to the taxpayer? To the state?

3. Transparency and Compliance: Is the proposal simple and workable such that taxpayers can comply? Does the proposal minimize the opportunity for manipulation of the apportionment result?

4. Constitutionality
   a. Nexus: Will the factors source to states where the taxpayer is doing business and thus has nexus? Will the definition of apportionable income reflect a rational relationship between the item of income subject to apportionment and the business activity conducted, in part, in the taxing state? See, e.g., Allied Signal v. Dir., Div. of Taxation, 504 U.S. 765 (1992).
   c. Fair Apportionment
      i. Internal Consistency: If applied by every jurisdiction, will the proposal result in no more than 100% of the unitary business income being subject to tax? Does the proposal help assure that income is taxed once and only once - avoiding “nowhere income” and duplicative taxation See, e.g., Container Corporation of America v. Franchise Tax Board, 463 U.S. 159, 169 (1983).
ii. External Consistency: Will the proposal reasonably reflect the manner in which income is earned? See, Container, id.

d. Fair Reflection of the Benefits: Will the measure of the tax reasonably reflect the relative extent of the taxpayer’s presence or activity in the state so that the taxpayer shoulders only its fair share of supporting the State’s provision of government services? See Commonwealth Edison v. Montana, 453 U.S. 609, 610 (1981).

5. Equity and Reasonableness

a. Will the proposal promote horizontal equity by treating taxpayers in the same situation similarly?

b. Will the proposal promote vertical equity by distinguishing among taxpayers in a relevant way?

c. Is the proposal reasonably economically neutral? Will it minimize economic distortions that could arise from, e.g., creating incentives for taxpayers to use one type of production process over another?

d. Would transition to the proposal have an acceptable fiscal impact to the states and taxpayers?
Option A: Re-commit to the current factor weighting

Art.IV.9  All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by a fraction, the numerator of which is the property factor plus the payroll factor plus the sales factor, and the denominator of which is three.

Option B: Double weight the sales factor

Art.IV.9  All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by a fraction, the numerator of which is the property factor plus the payroll factor plus two times the sales factor, and the denominator of which is four.

Option C: Single sales factor

Art.IV.9  All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by the sales factor.

Option D: Each State’s Choice

The model could list optional weightings to acknowledge states’ differing tax policies regarding appropriate factor weighting. For example:

COMMITTEE OPTIONS INCLUDE

Art.IV.9  All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by [[EACH STATE CHOOSE EITHER

a fraction, the numerator of which is [X times] the property factor plus [Y times] the payroll factor plus [Z times] the sales factor, and the denominator of which is [the sum of X, Y, and Z].

Or

a fraction, the numerator of which is [X times] the [insert “property,” “payroll,” or “sales” factor] plus [Y times] the [insert “property,” “payroll,” or “sales” factor, but not the factor inserted previously] and the denominator of which is [the sum of X and Y].

Or

the [insert “property,” “payroll” or “sales”] factor.]]

OR

All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by the apportionment formula provided for [Cite to state factor weighting statute].

OR

All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by an apportionment formula utilizing some or all of the factors provide for in Sections 10 through 17 of this Act.
**Option E. Taxpayer Election**

The model could include an election by which a taxpayer could choose a weighting which will allow it to file uniformly in all (or some threshold percentage) of states in which it is doing business. The concept of a taxpayer election is not unprecedented. Model Compact Article III.1 currently allows a taxpayer to elect to apportion “in the manner provided by the laws of such States ... without reference to this compact, or ... in accordance with Article IV [UDITPA].” The Art.III.1 election can be made for any tax year and for any one or more of the States that have adopted it. An election that specifically addresses Article IV.9 could be either an addition to, or a substitute for, Article III.1.

Diann Smith, Sutherland, speaking on behalf of various telecommunications, cable, and technology companies, commented to the drafting group that an election is generally a good idea, but (1) it should not be limited to factor-weighting, (2) it should not contain a requirement that all income (non-business as well as business) be subject to apportionment, and (3) it should not contain a requirement that the election be made in a high-number of states, rather it would ideally be a state-by-state election.

Here is the drafting group’s example of options for an election:

Art.IV.9:
(a) All business income shall be apportioned to this State by multiplying the income by a fraction the numerator of which is the property factor plus the payroll factor plus two times the sales factor, and the denominator of which is four (OR COMMITTEE CHOOSE whatever the general rule should be)
(b) A taxpayer otherwise required to apportion pursuant to Art.IV.9(a) may, as an alternative, make an election [binding for X years] to apportion all [business] income to this state by

**COMMITTEE CHOOSE election formula, for example**

a fraction, the numerator of which is a multiple of the property factor plus a multiple of the payroll factor plus a multiple of the sales factor, and the denominator of which is the sum of the factor multiples; provided that no factor shall have a multiple less than 1 or greater than 8, and further provided:

**OR**

either (1) a fraction the numerator of which is the property factor plus the payroll factor plus the sales factor, and the denominator of which is three; or (2) the sales factor; provided:

**AND COMMITTEE CHOOSE one or more (or none) of the following election prerequisites**

(i) the election is made on an originally filed return by the taxpayer [and all related affiliates],

(ii) the taxpayer [and all related affiliates] apportions all [business] income using an identical apportionment fraction computation in each state in which the taxpayer [or any related affiliate] is taxable as defined in Art.IV.3(1) [and such an apportionment fraction computation is allowed, and

(iii) either (1) an identical election is allowed in at least [X] states, or (2) an identical apportionment fraction computation is allowed in at least 90% of the states in which the taxpayer [and related affiliates] is taxable as defined in Art.IV3(1).]