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I am a U.S. citizen who has been living in Germany for over 50 years and the FBAR filing requirement for expats like me has made our already burdensome tax situation even worse. I can understand that the U.S. government has a legitimate interest in catching criminals who hide their assets in foreign accounts to avoid being taxed on them, but American citizens living abroad are not criminals and they are not opening foreign accounts to avoid taxation. They need them, really need them, just to go about their normal daily lives, to pay their bills and receive their salaries and manage their investments the way their foreign neighbors do.

The filing requirements for the taxpayers themselves are bad enough, but the filing requirements for the banks and brokers who maintain accounts are so troublesome and onerous that they simply won't accept U.S. persons as customers. This essentially excludes American expatriates from a large chunk of economic life in their country of residence. For example, I have an investment account with one of the few German brokerage services who were prepared to take me as a customer and who actually use an American broker to carry out trades and file the required reports with the IRS. But they still tried to close my account last year when they changed their terms of business to require an affirmation that one was not a U.S. person. A friend of mine had to gift his investments to his German wife to keep his bank from closing his account. And my daughter discovered very recently that she cannot buy ETFs in Germany because their required reporting to the IRS is deemed insufficient.

This is unacceptable and intolerable and is the result of a taxation system which is pure madness because it not only requires American citizens abroad to put in hours of work to file returns, when that work is done the United States doesn't even benefit financially. If I were taxed as a non-resident, which is the international standard, the United States would still collect tax on my American income (and Germany would give me a tax credit for it). But currently the double taxation rules mean that Germany has the primary right to all of my taxes and the US keeps only the amount which exceeds the German tax, usually nothing. Nobody else is silly enough to do things this way (except for that shining beacon of democracy, Eritrea).