Congressional Update

News for members of Congress and their staffs – March 2025

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IRS tools and resources make filing taxes easier

Individuals should make IRS.gov their first stop to find IRS **online tools**. The tools are easy-to-use and available 24 hours a day. Millions of people use them to help file and pay taxes, find information about their accounts and get answers to tax questions.

The IRS offers several **free filing options**. Also, on IRS.gov, taxpayers can use the **Let us help you** page that covers most topics for filing season and beyond. People can get free help online with **self-service options**. There's also **step-by-step help** about filing a personal federal income tax return.

Free tax filing options

IRS Free File - Eligible taxpayers and families with income of $84,000 or less in 2024 can use guided tax software to prepare their tax return. Free file is available through October 15. **IRS Free File Fillable forms**, a part of this program, is available at no cost to any income level and provides electronic forms that people fill out and e-file themselves, also at no cost.

Direct File - Now open in 25 participating states, taxpayers can use Direct File to file online directly with the IRS for free 24/7. It is a free web-based service – available in English and Spanish – that works on cell phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers.

Taxpayers answer a series of questions to prepare their federal tax return step-by-step. Get help from IRS Direct File customer support through live chat in English and Spanish. IRS Direct File is always free. After completing federal returns, Direct File guides taxpayers to their state's tool for free state tax filing.

Taxpayers can check their eligibility at **directfile.irs.gov**.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). The VITA program offers free tax help to people who generally make $67,000 or less, persons with disabilities and taxpayers whose preferred language is not English. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation and electronic filing to qualified individuals.

In addition to VITA, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program offers free tax help, particularly those who are 60 and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement-related issues unique to seniors.

To find the closest VITA or TCE site, individuals can use **VITA Locator Tool** or call 800-906-9887.

Choose a trusted tax professional

More than half of taxpayers turn to a tax professional for help filing a tax return. While most tax preparers deliver exceptional and professional service, selecting the wrong preparer can lead to financial harm.

Taxpayers should review the **tips for choosing a tax preparer** and learn how to avoid unethical "ghost" return preparers. Taxpayers can also use the **IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications** to find trusted professionals. The IRS also reminds taxpayers that choosing someone affiliated with a **recognized national tax association** is always a good option.

Tracking a refund is easy

Please remind your constituents that they can quickly and easily track their **refund** by:

- Checking their individual IRS **online account**
- Using **Where's My Refund**
- Downloading the **IRS2Go** app.

To process a refund, it usually takes:

- Up to 21 days for an e-filed return
- 4 weeks or more for amended returns and returns sent by mail
- Longer if the return needs corrections or extra review

And remember, the fastest way to get a refund is using **direct deposit**. Taxpayers can deposit their refund into their checking, savings, or retirement account. They can even split their refund into up to 3 accounts.

Options to pay 2024 taxes

Individuals who owe taxes can pay using:

Electronic fund withdrawal: Taxpayers e-filing using a tax preparation software or a tax professional, can use their bank account to pay their balance due with no processing fee.

IRS Individual Online Account: Individuals can sign into their account and pay their balance due, make estimated tax payments or pay on an extension of time to file with no processing fee.

Direct pay: Individuals can make a payment using a checking or savings account with no processing fee.

Pay by card or digital wallet: Individuals can pay using a payment processor by credit card, debit card or with a digital wallet. Third party payment processor charge a fee for this transaction. For more information on payment processor fees, **see pay your taxes by debit or credit card or digital wallet**.

Cash: Cash payments are accepted at over 60,000 participating **retail locations** nationwide.

See **payments** for more information.

Can't file by April 15?

Individuals needing additional time to file can request an automatic six-month extension – giving them until October 15 to file their return. The three ways to apply for an extension to file are:

- **Online payment option**: Pay the tax amount owed and check the box indicating the payment is part of filing for an extension. There is no need to file a separate extension form, and a confirmation number is provided.
- **IRS Free File**: Electronically file for an extension to file and there is no income limit when filing for an extension.
- Mail Form **4868, Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return**, along with payment for any taxes due, no later than April 15.

Beware of tax scams

Be aware of scammers, who can become more active during tax season. They will attempt to mislead people about tax refunds, credits and payments. They pressure people for personal, financial, employment information or money.

Watch out for:

- **A big payday**. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Bad tax advice on social media may convince people to lie on tax forms or mislead them about credits they can claim.
- **Demands or threats**. Impersonators want people to pay “now or else.” They threaten arrest or deportation. They don’t let people question or appeal the amount of tax they owe.
- **Odd or misspelled website links**. Odd or misspelled web links can take people to harmful sites instead of IRS.gov.

Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses stolen personal information, including Social Security numbers, to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund. If a person suspects they are a victim of identity theft, they should continue to pay their taxes and file their tax return, even if they must file a paper return. Visit **Identity Theft Central** to find out more.

EITC 50th Anniversary

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was signed into law by President Gerald Ford on March 29, 1975. Over the years, EITC has grown into the federal government’s largest refundable tax credit program for economically challenged workers. In 1975, the EITC had a maximum credit amount of $400. For tax year 2024, the EITC can be up to $7,830 for a family with three or more children or up to $632 for taxpayers who do not have a qualifying child.

Through numerous legislative changes over the past 50 years, the credit has helped working families across the nation. Spreading the word and educating taxpayers about the EITC is a venture between the IRS, its partners and other key stakeholders.

IRS conducts outreach and education related to EITC year-round, either directly through the IRS or through leveraged partnerships. If your office is interested in hosting events

or any other promotion of the Earned Income Tax Credit over the next year, please reach out to your IRS District Liaison.

EITC: 50 years of strengthening America's working families

Additional information on IRS.gov:

Celebrating EITC 50th Anniversary: **50 Years of Earned Income Tax Credit | Earned Income Tax Credit**

Tax Professionals get answers to their questions using IRS' new chatbot feature

The IRS continues to see success in our efforts to help taxpayers by spurring innovation and driving improvement across our organization. This includes enhancing assistance to tax professionals by expanding the availability of chatbot technology to our **e-Services** support to give tax professionals, software developers and transmitters easy access to answers to their most frequently asked questions.

The IRS' Electronic Products and Services Support (EPSS) chatbot simulates human interaction in English and Spanish by providing customers with self-help options to resolve common issues related to:

- Electronic Filing Systems (i.e. the Information Returns Intake System (IRIS))
- e-Services tools (i.e. TIN Matching and the Transcript Delivery System (TDS))
- the IRS e-file Application
- Transmitter Control Codes (TCCs)

The customer simply selects their topic and the chatbot provides information in a chat feature. At the end of the conversation, if the customer has more specific account questions, they can request to chat with a live assistor.

IRS e-Services customers can access the chatbot by visiting our **e-Services page on IRS.gov**.

Taxpayer service remains a top IRS priority. On IRS.gov, taxpayers can find the information they need using online tools available 24 hours a day. Our goal is to increase self-service capabilities for general inquiries so that people with more complex issues can get through to live assistors on the phone.

IRS Tax Tips: Helpful taxpayer information on a variety of topics

Gathering records is the first step of tax preparation: Taxpayers should start gathering and organizing records to get ready for filing their 2024 federal tax return.

The Taxpayer Bill of Rights: Fundamental protection for all taxpayers: All taxpayers have rights any time they interact with the IRS. These ten rights are outlined in the Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

How taxpayers can protect themselves from gift card scams: Taxpayers should be aware of gift card scams and take steps to protect themselves. Scammers may target taxpayers by asking them to pay a fake tax bill with gift cards. People should remember that the IRS never asks for or accepts gift cards as payment for a tax bill.

Additional information on IRS.gov

- **Tax relief in disaster situations**
- **Tax Time Guide 2025: Essentials needed for filing a 2024 tax return**
- **IRS reminds eligible 2021 non-filers to claim Recovery Rebate Credit before time runs out**
- **Need to respond to a letter or notice? Use the Document Upload Tool**
- **Where's My Refund?**
- **Resources and guidance for Puerto Rico families that may qualify for the Child Tax Credit**
- **Get an Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN)**
- **Processing status for tax forms**

- Get your tax record

Help on IRS.gov

Filing – Payments – Refunds – Credits and Deductions – Forms and Instructions – Tax Questions

IRS in other languages

Basic tax information is available in 21 languages, including English

IRS on social media

YouTube – X – Instagram – Facebook - LinkedIn

Follow TAS on social media

YouTube – X – Facebook – LinkedIn – Blog

IRS2Go **is the official mobile app of the IRS, available in both English and Spanish.**

The *IRS Congressional Update* is a monthly newsletter prepared by IRS Legislative Affairs. For information on resolving taxpayer account issues, visit the Taxpayer Advocate Service.