

HAVE YOU FILED YOUR TAX RETURNS?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FILE TAX RETURNS?

Did you know that, with just a few exceptions, the law requires taxpayers to file federal income tax returns every year? If you do not file, the IRS is authorized to prepare a federal income tax return for you based upon the information sent to the IRS from your employers. This may result in the IRS sending you a bill for taxes that it thinks you owe. If you do not file and pay your taxes on time, the IRS charges late filing penalties and late payment penalties. If you are required to file a federal income tax return and you intentionally do not, you could be charged with a crime. If you are convicted, you can be fined up to \$25,000 and even receive a prison sentence!

If you owe the IRS from a previous year, and you can't afford to pay, the IRS will not let you enter into a payment plan or any other collection alternative until you file all your outstanding tax returns for each year in which you were required to file.

If you are a Virginia resident, the law requires you to file your state income tax return and attach your W-2 forms to get credit for any state income taxes withheld from your paychecks. If you do not file a Virginia income tax return, the Department of Taxation may think that you owe taxes until you file your return and receive credit for your withholding.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM REQUIRED TO FILE?

If you are unmarried, head of household, or a surviving spouse, you must file a federal income tax return unless your gross income (and your spouse's gross income if filing Married Filing Jointly) is equal to or less than your standard deduction plus your personal exemption. For 2004, if your income is greater than the income in the chart below for your filing status, you must file a return.

Filing Status	Maximum Income for No Filing Requirement
Single	7,950.00
Married Filing Separately	7,950.00
Married Filing Jointly	12,800.00
Qualifying Widower	12,800.00
Head of Household	10,250.00

SHOULD I FILE A RETURN EVEN IF I'M NOT REQUIRED TO FILE?

Even if you did not earn enough to have a filing requirement, it may be to your advantage to file anyway. If you had taxes withheld from your paychecks, you may claim a refund of these taxes. You may also be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a special tax credit for low-income working families. For qualifying families in 2004, the maximum amount of Earned Income Tax Credit a taxpayer could receive was over \$4,000. You may be entitled to the Earned Income Tax Credit even if you don't owe any taxes.

Did You Know? If you were entitled to a refund in a prior year but did not file a return, you may still be able to get your refund by filing your late return.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE MY W-2 INFORMATION?

If you've lost your W-2 information, you have several options. You can contact your previous employers to see if they still have a copy of your W-2. You can also request the information directly from the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS will **not** send you a photocopy of your W-2. Instead, it will send you a printout of your income information, including the federal income tax withheld, so that you can file your federal income tax returns. There is no fee for requesting this information. However, the information does not contain information about the state income taxes withheld from your paychecks.

HOW DO I GET MY W-2 INFORMATION FOR PRIOR YEARS?

You can call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 and request that the IRS send you a list of all of the income that was reported by your employers. This includes W-2 information, 1099 information, retirement and pension information.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP FILNG MY RETURNS?

If you need to file tax returns for 2004, you may be eligible for free income tax preparation at a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Site. You may call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 and a representative can tell you which sites are closest to you. Volunteers trained by the IRS to prepare taxes will prepare your return for free. If you are entitled to a refund, you can receive it in only a few days if you have it direct deposited into a bank account. If you do not have a bank account, some of the sites are staffed by volunteers from local banks who can help you set up a bank account at no charge.