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New Tax Reform Update

Now that Tax Reform is a reality, I want to devote most of this issue to the steps each taxpayer should take to examine their own tax situations before we file your 2018 Tax Return early in 2019. The vast number of changes in deductions, exemptions, standard deduction and tax rates enacted by the New Tax Reform Provisions could cause dramatic changes in refunds or balance dues for unexpected taxpayers. Let's plan-ahead so that there are no surprises!

We will first look at withholding taxes under the New Tax Reform Provisions and then at the overall comparison of the New Reform Provisions vs. the old law.

✓ Federal Tax Withholding Tune-Up

2018 is more than half gone. This is a good time to ask yourself, "How am I doing?" Are you safe to presume your tax issues will be like 2017? Of course not! The recently enacted Tax Reform Provisions have dramatically changed how each taxpayer will calculate their taxable income in 2018 and the amount of taxes that are required to be withheld or paid through estimated payments. There is still plenty of time left in the tax year to enact plans which will affect your overall tax situation.

Major tax reform was approved by Congress in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on Dec. 22, 2017. One change directly affected the rate at which taxes are withheld from paychecks. You should

have noticed this if you are still working for an employer and receiving a paycheck. Our federal income tax is a pay-as-you-go tax system and there are two ways to pay as you go, either through withholding or estimated tax payments.

If you are an employee, your employer may withhold income tax from your pay. Your pay includes your regular pay, bonuses, commissions, vacation pay and other amounts. When the withholding rates change, it changes the amounts that are paid to the IRS on your behalf. To ensure that enough withholding is paid and to avoid owing a balance due and possible penalties, it is recommended that everyone do a "Federal Tax Withholding Tune-up" now.

I recommend that taxpayers check the amount withheld each year; particularly when the rates you pay change or your family situation changes.

It's especially important for taxpayers with more complicated financial situations to verify they are withheld as the law also changed the standard deduction, removed personal exemptions,

increased the child tax credit limited or discontinued certain deductions and changed the tax rates and brackets. Married taxpayers who both work, taxpayers who work multiple jobs and taxpayers who work part of the year are some of the groups that are particularly subject to tax withholding amounts

(from the IRS Tax Withholding Charts) which may not properly reflect the tax necessary to be withheld.

You can use the IRS Withholding Calculator on IRS.gov. This tool is designed to help you determine the right amount of tax to be withheld from your paycheck.

The amount of income tax your employer withholds from your regular pay depends on two things: the

Withholding Tax

W-4 to change the amount withheld. If you need help, call me.

Tax may also be withheld from certain other income – including pensions, social security payments, bonuses, commissions, and gambling winnings. In these cases, the amount withheld is usually calculated at a set percentage of the payment and is paid to the IRS in your name. These withholding amounts should also be reviewed for changes brought about by the recent tax reform provisions.

More "Tax Reform" on Page 2 >

TAX REFORM UPDATE



amount you earn, and the information you give your employer on Form

W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate. If your employer isn't withholding the proper amount to cover your taxes under the new rates provided to them by the IRS, you may need to complete a new Form

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Tax Reform Update - 4 Examples

The previous review of your wage tax withholding gives you part of your overall picture. The following four examples of how taxpayer's overall tax will compare under the New Tax Reform Provisions vs prior law will give you another piece. How do your new withholding taxes compare to taxes withheld last year? Will that increase/decrease be offset by the following tax situations (if similar to your own) illustrated below?

✓ Example 1: Two Wage Earner Family Of Four: Saves \$3,559 In Federal Tax

Facts: ▶▶ Family of four (married couple with two children under 17) ▶▶ Homeowners ▶▶ Combined wages of \$150,000 ▶▶ Itemized deductions totaling \$22,000 (\$7,000 state/local tax; \$4,000 real property tax; \$1,000 personal property tax; \$8,000 mortgage interest; \$2,000 charitable contributions)

➡ What would change under the Tax Reform

Provisions: ▶▶ Itemized vs. standard deduction. Under prior law, the family's itemized deductions totaled \$22,000. Under the new Tax Reform Provisions, the expanded standard deduction of \$24,000 is more advantageous for the family. The deduction for state and local income tax (or sales tax if taxpayer chooses), real estate tax and personal property tax is capped at \$10,000 – reducing the family's allowable itemized deductions to \$20,000. However, the reduction of these deductions is more than offset by the higher standard deduction. ▶▶ Tax rate. The family is in the 22 percent tax bracket, compared to the 25 percent tax bracket under prior law. ▶▶ Tax credits.

Under prior law, this family would not receive a Child Tax Credit (CTC) due to income phaseouts. This family is eligible for a CTC of \$4,000.

▶▶ Exemptions. While personal exemptions are eliminated, a combination of the increased standard deduction, increased CTC and lower rates make up for the loss of \$16,600 in exemptions.

Results: *Even with the removal of exemptions, this family would save \$3,559 compared with prior law. The savings are due to an increased standard deduction, lower tax bracket, and a more generous CTC.*

✓ Example 2: Lower-Income Head Of Household With Two Children: Saves \$1,802

Facts: ▶▶ Family of three (single parent with two children under 17) ▶▶ Renters ▶▶ Wages of \$45,000 ▶▶ Used standard deduction of \$9,550 under prior law

➡ What would change under the Tax Reform

Provisions: ▶▶ Standard deduction. Because this family uses the standard deduction, the higher standard deduction of \$18,000 is \$8,450 more favorable. ▶▶ Tax rate. The family is in the 12 percent tax bracket, compared to the 15 percent tax bracket under prior law. ▶▶ Tax credits. The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is expanded and increases from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per qualifying child. With 2 qualifying children, this taxpayer receives a CTC of \$4,000 versus a \$2,000 credit under prior law.

▶▶ Exemptions. While personal exemptions are eliminated, a combination of the increased

standard deduction, increased CTC and lower rates make up for the loss of \$12,450 worth of exemptions.

Results: *Even with the loss of \$12,450 worth of exemptions, this family would save \$1,802 compared with prior law because of the increased standard deduction, lower tax rates, and the increased CTC.*

✓ Example 3: Middle-Income Single Filer: Saves \$101

Facts: ▶▶ Single filer ▶▶ Homeowner ▶▶ Wages of \$120,000 ▶▶ Itemized deductions totaling \$22,500 (\$10,000 state/local tax; \$5,000 real property tax; \$6,000 mortgage interest; \$1,500 charitable contributions)

➡ What would change under the Tax Reform

Provisions: ▶▶ Itemized vs. standard deduction. The deduction for aggregate state and local income tax and property tax would be capped at \$10,000. This taxpayer's combined real estate tax, and state and local income tax is \$5,000 over the \$10,000 maximum. However,

the total of the \$10,000 allowable state and local tax deductions, mortgage interest deductions, and charitable contributions exceed the expanded standard deduction of \$12,000 for a single filer. Therefore, itemizing is still more advantageous by \$5,500.

▶▶ Tax rate. This filer is in the 24 percent tax bracket compared to the 28 percent tax bracket under prior law.

▶▶ Exemptions. This taxpayer's \$4,150 personal exemption is eliminated.

Results: *This single filer would have a \$101 decrease in taxes. The rate reductions make up for the loss of \$5,000 in*

itemized deductions (\$22,500 - \$17,500) and the loss of the personal exemption of \$4,150.

✓ Example 4: High-Income Single Filer: Pays \$6,470 more

Facts: ▶▶ Single filer ▶▶ Owns condo ▶▶ Wages of \$500,000 ▶▶ Itemized deductions totaling \$135,000 limited to \$128,001 due to limitation for high earners (\$46,000 state/local income tax; \$24,000 real property tax; \$55,000 mortgage interest; \$10,000 charitable contributions) ▶▶ Would pay AMT under prior law.

➡ What would change under the Tax Reform

Provisions: ▶▶ Itemized vs. standard deduction. The deduction for aggregate state and local income tax and property tax would be capped at \$10,000. This taxpayer's combined real estate tax and state and local income tax is \$60,000 over the \$10,000 maximum. As a result, itemized deductions are limited to \$75,000. This taxpayer is still itemizing.

▶▶ Tax rate. The taxpayer is in the 35 percent tax bracket, compared to the 33 percent tax bracket under prior law. However, the taxpayer would pay AMT under prior law and will not under the New Tax Reform Provisions.

Results: *This taxpayer will pay \$6,470 more tax compared with prior law, due to the \$10,000 cap for state and local tax and the higher marginal tax bracket.*

Child Tax Credit Is Expanded And Increases From \$1,000 To \$2,000 Per Qualifying Child

Extensions Expire October 15
A few of you have not filed for 2017. Please make every effort to find remaining missing forms or information. We have little time remaining to file your return. Contact me as soon as possible.

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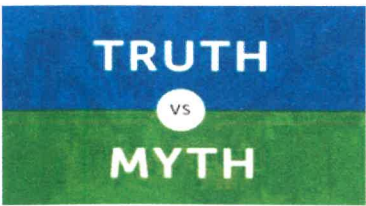
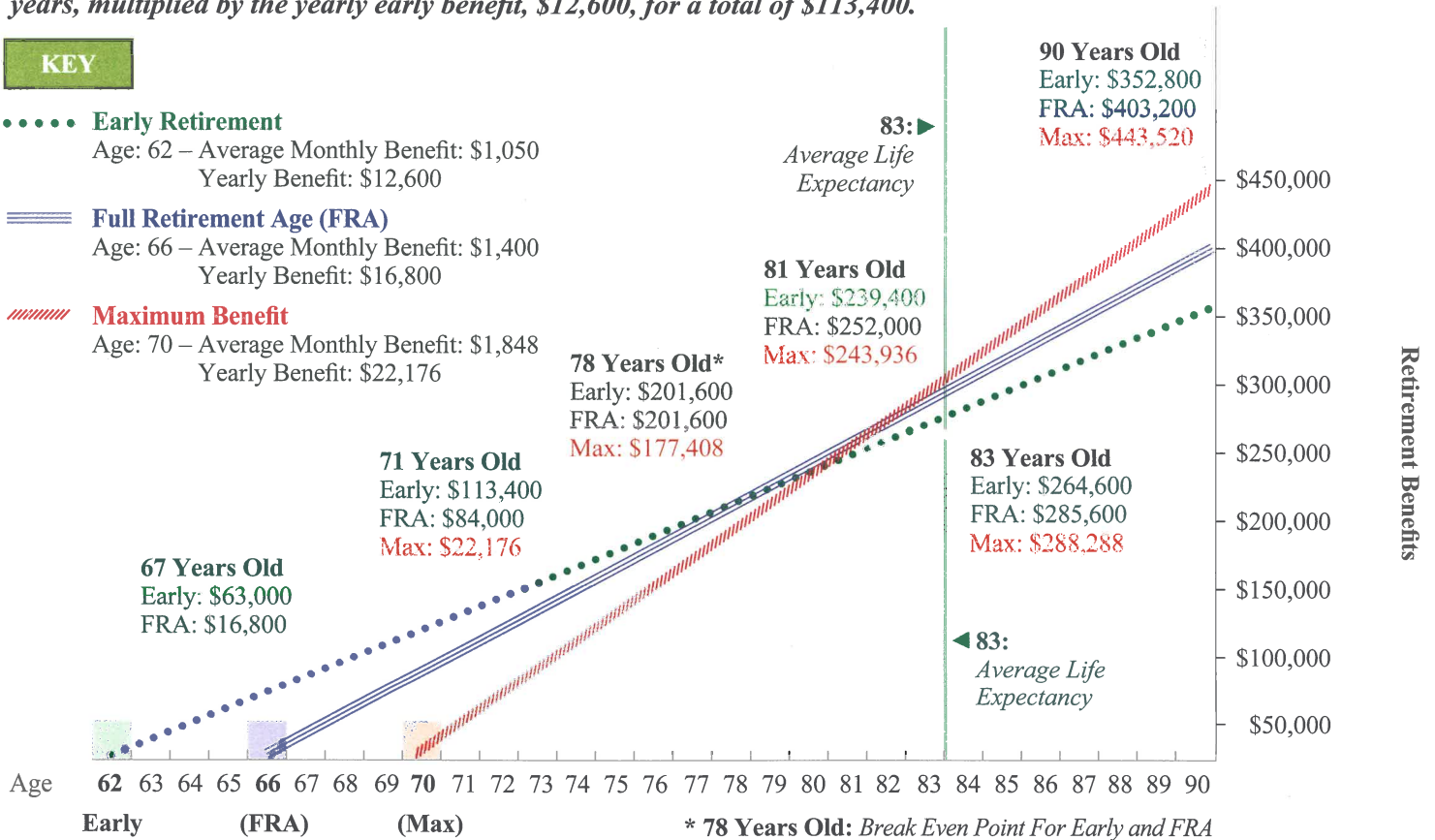
Tax Tips For You... Now!

The debate continues... Should I start taking my social security benefits early (age 62), at full retirement age (currently age 66) or wait for the maximum at age 70? The chart below illustrates the current average benefits at each starting point (ages 62, 66 & 70) and their cumulative amounts over the years, up to age 90.

The Break Even Point — What Is The Best Age To Start Receiving Social Security Benefits?

If you decide to wait for your full retirement age (66) but your co-worker of the same age chooses to retire early (62), how long will it take for you to match the benefits paid to your colleague? What if you wait until you're 70 to collect the maximum benefit?

Boxes on the graph below indicate total amounts received. *Example: At 71, the early retiree has collected benefits for nine years, multiplied by the yearly early benefit, \$12,600, for a total of \$113,400.*



Myth: Borrowers no longer can deduct interest on home equity loans.

Truth: For many people with home-equity loans, the interest deduction was eliminated. But some borrowers still will be able

Truth: The personal exemption of \$4,050 has been eliminated for the taxpayer, spouse and dependents. However, the newly expanded child tax credit will help to offset that.

The tax credit for children under age 17 has doubled to \$2,000, plus there's a new \$500 credit for other dependents. So older kids or even your parents who are dependents can qualify for a new credit.

The income levels for eligibility have also risen dramatically, meaning many additional families will benefit.

Myth: I can deduct my unreimbursed employee automobile expenses used for business as a miscellaneous itemized deduction.

Truth: Tax Reform means that unreimbursed employee expenses are no longer deductible by the employee.

to make use of this tax break. It really boils down to how loan proceeds are used.
As long as the borrowed amount is used to buy, build or substantially improve a home, the interest remains deductible.
Myth: Tax Reform means parents no longer will receive tax breaks for their kids.