



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Important Information for Personal Income Tax Filers

ANDREW J LANZA March 5, 2012

| ISSUE: **TAXES**

Dear Neighbor:

I recently sponsored and passed a personal income tax cut for hardworking, middle class Staten Islanders -- **bringing the tax rate to the lowest level in 58 years**. This tax cut will help make New York's economy more competitive, while also saving you money.

Another good way to save money is to make sure that you take advantage of any deductions and tax credits that may be available to you and your family.

With tax preparation season now underway, it's a good time to make sure you get the facts you need to save money for you and your family. A great resource in this regard is the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance website, which is loaded with information to help you file your taxes accurately, on-time, and in the most cost-effective way possible. Simply click on the link below to visit their website, which includes information on:

- The new personal income tax rates;
- Easy-to-use Free-File and e-File features;
- How to request an extension; and
- How to get your refund safely and quickly through use of a debit card or direct deposit.

You can visit the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website at <http://www.tax.ny.gov>.

Additionally, **taxpayers who made \$57,000 or less in 2011 can prepare and e-file their federal tax returns for free through IRS Free File.** <http://www.irs.gov/freefile/> IRS Free File provides free access to the industry's top tax preparation software, as well as a comprehensive suite of online tax forms.

Participating taxpayers can also have their tax refunds direct deposited in as little as 10 days.

Additional developments at the department of taxation and finance for the 2012 personal income tax filing include:

Tax Forms and e-file Requirements for Individual Taxpayers

Over 75% of New York's taxpayers file electronically or use software to prepare and mail their returns. Consequently, the tax department no longer mail paper tax forms automatically. Forms are available at Senator Lanza's office, www.tax.ny.gov, at local libraries, or by calling (518) 457-5421.

A New Way to Receive State Tax Refunds: Prepaid debit cards

In addition to either direct deposit or paper check, taxpayers may now request to receive their tax refunds on a debit card. Prepaid debit cards provide us with an efficient, cost-effective way to disburse tax refunds. These cards deliver value to cardholders and save government agencies – and taxpayers – money. While

direct deposit remains the fastest and easiest way for taxpayers to get their tax refunds, the prepaid card is particularly useful for taxpayers without bank accounts. The state-administered prepaid card enables these taxpayers to avoid expensive check-cashing fees. There's no charge to the taxpayer for using the card to make in-network ATM cash withdrawals or purchases, or to receive their refund in cash at any MasterCard-affiliated bank in one bank teller transaction. For additional information regarding the new debit card program, please visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/file/debit_cards.htm

Elimination of the IT-150 Short Form

Full-year residents will no longer need to determine whether they must complete the IT-150 Resident Income Tax Return or IT-201 Resident Income Tax Return (long form). All full-year resident taxpayers will now use the IT-201. Taxpayers who use software or professional tax preparers will likely not experience any change in their filing experience.

****ORGANIZATIONS OFFERING FREE PREPARATION SERVICES TO STATEN ISLANDERS THIS YEAR****

Food Bank

The Food Bank for New York City has arranged for IRS-certified volunteers to provide free tax preparation and advice to low-income households.

In order to qualify, borough residents must earn \$50,000 or less with dependents, or \$18,000 or less without dependents.

On Staten Island, the Food Bank is providing tax assistance at El Centro de Hospitalidad, 1546 Castleton Ave. in Port Richmond (Tuesday-Wednesday, noon to 7 p.m.), and Sovereign Bank, 15 Hyatt St. in St. George (Thursday, noon to 7 p.m.; Friday, noon to 5 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.).

Liberty Tax

Liberty Tax Service is offering free tax preparation to new customers who are teachers, school employees and bus drivers.

The service is only good during "Educator Appreciation Days," which runs through Sunday at the Liberty Tax office, located at 3153 Victory Blvd., Bulls Head.

"Employees of our education systems deserve a tax break," said owner Vincent Ferrara. "We have 'Appreciation Days' to show our respect for the teaching profession and those employed by the schools."

For more information, call the office at 718-698-8299.

As always, if you have any questions, my staff and I are here to help. Please feel free to contact my office at 718-984-4073 or e-mail me at lanza@nysenate.gov and we'll do whatever we can to get you the answers you need.

Sincerely,

ANDREW LANZA

Senator

P.S. Don't forget tax day this year is April 17 and the deadline to apply for STAR exemptions is Thursday, March 15!

