



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Introducing Legislation to Create Free Online Tax Prep For All

BRAD HOYLMAN April 15, 2013

I marked Tax Day, April 15, by introducing legislation (S4570) directing the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance to create an online program to allow all New Yorkers to prepare and file their federal and state income tax returns free of charge.

Currently, New York only has limited free online tax preparation services, all of which are provided by outside vendors with a profit motive. So-called “free file” programs are run by for-profit third parties, include hidden fees and are available only to taxpayers who meet income guidelines.

Many years into the digital age, and one hundred years after the Sixteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution authorized Congress to levy an income tax, government is entirely capable of offering its own free online tax preparation program and electronic filing.

Like many New Yorkers, I’m happy to pay my share of taxes but I don’t see the justification for the fees charged by for-profit tax prep and e-filing companies, which serve as unnecessary middlemen in the digital age. Numerous government services can be easily accessed on government websites -- from registering to vote to applying for public benefits to making complaints about local issues -- and there is no reason that filing tax returns should be any different. In fact, there’s even greater onus on government to make online tax

prep and filing available and easy to use because filing taxes is a fundamental obligation.

Government should continue to be embracing technology and disrupting the old ways of doing things. My legislation will enable New Yorkers to pay what they owe in taxes and nothing more.

My bill was endorsed by New York Daily News editorial board, which wrote in the April 15, 2013 edition:

"Gov. Cuomo must order tax Commissioner Thomas Mattox to publicize the 'Free File' program far more aggressively — and demand that tax preparers make it clearly and readily available.

Next, Mattox must create New York's own free electronic system for filing taxes. The IRS offers a version of such a service to federal taxpayers; the state should go one better by developing a user-friendly program that walks taxpayers through the complexities of filing and does all the math.

Manhattan state Sen. Brad Hoylman is proposing legislation to do just that, declaring, 'Middle-class taxpayers deserve a break.'"

Please see the complete Daily News editorial [here](#).