



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Tax Info Presented at Senator Sanders' Community Clergy Breakfast

JAMES SANDERS JR. January 26, 2018



With the arrival of tax season, Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) hosted a Community Clergy Breakfast on January 18, 2018 to train our clergy leaders on tax preparation and provide information about new tax updates and resources. Guest speakers included representatives from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Office of the NYC Taxpayer Advocate. Dozens of faith-based leaders attended event, which was held at St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church in Jamaica.

“We are here to provide you with vital information that can both save you money and prevent headaches when it comes to filing your taxes,” Sanders said. “This training will give you answers that you as shepherds can pass onto your flock.”

The IRS representatives stressed the importance of going to a reputable tax preparer when filing one’s taxes, such as a certified public accountant or tax attorney. They also advised to accurate bookkeeping and saving receipts in order to document deductions.

“Don’t be afraid of the IRS,” said Brenda Stuart-Luke, IRS Senior Stakeholder Liaison. “We are your friends.”

Some of the resources discussed included Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA), a free, IRS-sponsored program to help low and middle-income workers have their federal and State personal income taxes prepared and filed electronically for free, explained IRS Tax Specialist, Sandra Bishamp. It also ensures that workers receive all the tax credits to which they are entitled.

Another resource is the Taxpayer Advocate Service. TAS is an independent organization within the IRS that helps taxpayers by ensuring that they are treated fairly and ensuring that they understand the protections provided under the Taxpayer Bill of Rights - ten basic rights that all taxpayers have when dealing with the IRS.

Similarly, the Office of the Taxpayer Rights Advocate provides free and independent tax-problem assistance, assists with problems causing undue economic harm, helps resolve long-standing tax problems and recommends administrative and legislative reforms.

Also discussed was the Earned Income Tax Credit, a benefit for working people with low to

moderate income. They must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they do not owe any taxes and are not required to file. The EITC reduces the amount of taxes one may owe and may result in a refund.

The NYC Office of the Taxpayer Advocate went over the steps to appeal a property assessment, including the grievance process, which includes both an administrative and judicial reviews. The representatives also discussed what to do if you believe your Notice of Property Value (NOPV) is incorrect. In that case, you can challenge the assessed value by filing an appeal with the NYC Tax Commission. This can result in a reduction in your property tax, change its tax class and adjust exemptions.

Senator Sanders' Community Clergy Breakfasts are aimed at educating clergy and giving them the tools and information they need to help themselves and their congregations. The next breakfast will be held on February 15, 2018. More details to be announced.