



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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**MAYOR EMANUEL ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE
INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE**

Earned Income Tax Credits helps Chicago's working families receive millions of dollars back in refunds

Chicago –Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Tax Prep Chicago are marking Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day and the official start of tax season today by reminding residents to take advantage of the City of Chicago's free tax assistance program.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a benefit for working families with low to moderate income. Last year, Tax Prep Chicago helped over 20,000 families and individuals receive nearly \$30 million in tax refunds and credits.

"EITC is one of the most important tools we have to reduce poverty in our country; however, far too many families either don't know that they are eligible or need help applying for it," said Mayor Emanuel. "The City is committed to ensuring that hardworking Chicagoans have access to free tax services to file their returns and claim the refunds they deserve. These returns help support families, sustain local businesses and fuel our economy. That's why I've been an advocate from EITC and the recent increases in the Senior and General Homestead exemptions."

The City will be partnering with the Center for Economic Progress, Ladder Up and City Treasurer's Office again this year to provide the free service for eligible residents.

"The EITC program has a proven record of uplifting people communities across the country and across our City. I am proud to partner with these organizations that are strengthening the outreach of these free resources to make them more accessible across the City of Chicago for its residents to access them," said City Treasurer Kurt Summers. "We need to be investing more in EITC resources because it helps working families here in Chicago with additional money to support their local neighborhood economy."

EITC day is a nationwide effort to alert millions of low and moderate-income workers who may be missing out on this significant tax credit. In 2017, 963,000 Illinoisan workers received more than \$2.4 billion in EITC refunds.

"EITC is what it is today because of the Mayor's work to expand the credit in 1993, which has been shown to be one of the most successful tools we have in reducing poverty. And we will continue working to provide these types of services to residents and families throughout our city," said Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler

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Volunteer tax preparers, certified through an Internal Revenue Service (IRS), will assist residents with federal and state income tax returns for the 2017 tax year and in many cases, can help with prior-year returns and amendments. Volunteers will also help taxpayers filing for or renewing an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

“Our community volunteers help you get EITC and any other credits you’re due to help you get the best refund possible. Our goal is to help you get it and get it right. This is money you can save or use to pay off bills, buy that car to get to work or make a down payment on a home. Let us help make your life a little easier,” said Jennifer Lambert, Tax Assistance Program Manager at Ladder Up.

This year, IRS is also promoting other refundable tax credits including the American Opportunity Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit and the Additional Child Tax Credit. Eligible individuals and families with children could receive over \$6,300 from the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits alone, not including other valuable credits.

“We want to make sure every Chicagoan has the resources they need to get the tax credits they have earned,” said David Marzahl CEO from the Center for Economic Progress. “Everyone deserves to have a trusted tax provider and we have a number of new services to meet people where they are.”

Taxpayers, who qualify for the EITC and/or the Additional Child Tax Credit, will receive refunds after February 15, so residents are encouraged to file early. Residents are also urged to be cautious of predatory lenders and stick with people you trust.

Cook County homeowners may also take advantage of several valuable property-tax-saving exemptions. There are currently four exemptions that must be applied for or renewed annually: The Homeowner Exemption, Senior Citizen Homestead Exemption, Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze Exemption, and the Home Improvement Exemption. For more information, contact the Cook County Treasurer’s Office at www.cookcountytreasurer.com/exemptions.aspx

The deadline for filing taxes is April 17, 2018.

Tax Prep Chicago is an initiative of the City of Chicago that enables qualified Chicagoans to access free income tax return services at sites located throughout the city. Two nonprofit partners, the Center for Economic Progress and Ladder Up, train hundreds of volunteers each year to provide free preparation and e-filing of Federal and Illinois returns for eligible families and individuals.

For more information about how to access free tax assistance or for a complete list of EITC locations:

- Visit the City’s tax assistance website at www.TaxPrepChicago.org
- Call the City’s 311 helpline
- Visit the Center for Economic Progress at www.economicprogress.org or call (312) 252-0280
- Visit Ladder Up at www.goladderup.org or call (312) 409-4719
- Visit the IRS at www.irs.gov

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About the Center for Economic Progress

For more 25 years, CEP has been on the forefront of turning tax time into an opportunity for low-income workers and their families to get ahead. Since 1990, CEP has served more than 400,000 hard-working, low-income families and individuals in Illinois, returning over \$620 million and counting in tax refunds to clients. During the 2017 tax season, CEP put over \$30 million back into the pockets of over 17,000 Illinois families, including over \$11 million in the federal and state Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC). For more information, visit www.economicprogress.org.

About Ladder Up:

Ladder Up is a Chicago-based nonprofit organization committed to helping hardworking families and individuals access the financial resources they need to move up the economic ladder. The organization offers free programs to help Chicagoland clients prepare their tax returns, learn about and apply for financial aid for college, and develop a foundation for sound financial decision making. Since 1994, Ladder Up has served more than 297,000 clients and helped them secure over \$529 million in financial benefits. For more information, visit www.goladderup.org.

About AARP Foundation

AARP Foundation is working to win back opportunity for struggling Americans 50+ by being a force for change on the most serious issues they face today: housing, hunger, income and isolation. By coordinating responses to these issues on all four fronts at once, and supporting them with vigorous legal advocacy, the Foundation serves the unique needs of those 50+ while working with local organizations nationwide to reach more people and make resources go further. AARP Foundation is a charitable affiliate of AARP. Learn more at www.aarpfoundation.org.