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MAYOR EMANUEL URGES RESIDENTS TO PLAN AHEAD ON FILING FEDERAL INCOME TAXES WITH NEW AD CAMPAIGN

City continues free tax prep services for the coming year, reminding residents that federal law changes are expected to cause delayed refunds for many

The City of Chicago, with The Center for Economic Progress and Ladder Up, is launching a new ad campaign this week reminding Chicagoans to plan ahead as they budget for the holidays. In addition to its delivery of free tax preparation services citywide, the City is reminding Chicagoans to prepare for delayed refunds in 2017, as a result of recent changes to federal law.

Though tax refunds for taxpayers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or the Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) will be delayed, the City will continue supporting residents with trusted tax services at designated locations citywide beginning in January. Last year, Tax Prep Chicago services assisted 20,000 residents and families in securing \$31 million in tax refunds and credits.

“As families across the city prepare for the holiday season, we want them to know about recent changes that could affect the tax refunds that they are counting on,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “But they can rest assured that the City will continue to provide free services through Tax Prep Chicago, where residents can access trusted tax guidance to help maximize refunds and support their families.”

Earlier this year, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced a new law requiring additional screening for fraud and identity theft, delaying refunds for EITC and ACTC claimants until February 15, 2017, at the earliest. However, the IRS cautions taxpayers that these refunds likely won't arrive in bank accounts or on debit cards until the week of February 27th, assuming there are no processing issues with the tax return and the taxpayer chose direct deposit. This additional period is due to several factors, including banking and financial systems needing time to process deposits.

“We understand that people dread income tax filing and that the new federal laws may be confusing. We are here to help,” said David Marzahl of Center for Economic Progress. “No one can speed up your tax refund, but we can offer free assistance to those who qualify.”

Starting January 21st, through [Tax Prep Chicago](#), low- and moderate-income families and individuals can receive free income tax preparation and assistance from non-profit partners the Center for Economic Progress (CEP) and Ladder Up. The goal of the partnership is to help Chicago residents get their federal and state income tax returns prepared accurately and free of charge so they can get all of their tax refund when they need it.

The City is also calling for the help of volunteers to take part in an IRS-certified training to provide these services. The four- to seven-hour tax training is free. Volunteers are only asked to commit from 12-30 hours of their time serving clients at tax sites. Volunteering as a certified tax preparer is a unique and highly impactful way to help fellow Chicagoans and give back to the community. Those who are interested in volunteering can visit www.taxprepchicago.org.

“Volunteers are the lifeblood of the program and we look forward to working with our partners again to train and certify over 2,000 civic-minded individuals to help their neighbors,” said Christine Cheng of Ladder Up.

In addition to the changes to processing time this year, a new federal law will also require some taxpayers to renew their Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs), especially before they file their 2016 tax returns. The ITIN is a tax processing number issued by the IRS to individuals who do not have a Social Security Number. ITINs are issued regardless of immigration status because both resident and nonresident aliens may have a U.S. filing or reporting requirement under the Internal Revenue Code. Preparation of returns using ITINs is one of many services offered each year by Tax Prep Chicago for families earning up to \$55,000 and individuals earning up to \$30,000 annually.

Each year, thousands of eligible households in the City do not claim the EITC and other key credits, leaving as much as \$200 million in unclaimed dollars that could help individuals and families meet basic needs. For more information on federal requirements and the resources available for tax preparation this season, please visit www.taxprepchicago.org.

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