



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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**WITH TAX DAY 2013 NEARLY HERE, MAYOR EMANUEL REMINDS CHICAGOANS OF
EXPANDED HOURS AND DAYS FOR CITY'S FREE TAX ASSISTANCE SERVICES**

With \$230 million in unclaimed EITC funds each year, Mayor Emanuel encourages Chicago families to take advantage of additional services

Mayor Rahm Emanuel reminded Chicagoans of city-sponsored income tax assistance sites are available and provide a safe and free alternative to predatory tax preparation businesses that can charge exorbitant fees. The city invested additional funds to allow several hundred additional EITC eligible working families to take advantage of these services after a recent investigation assessed 195 tax preparation businesses with \$200,000 in fines for violating the law. Each year 100,000 people, nearly 25% of eligible families in Chicago, do not take advantage of the EITC, leaving over \$230 million in unclaimed refunds.

"Each and every year too many families either don't know they are eligible or need help applying for the EITC, and this year the challenge is even greater because of the shortened tax season," said Mayor Emanuel. "With tax day just around the corner, we are offering expanded hours to ensure that more eligible Chicagoans stop leaving money on the table."

The Mayor, Department of Business and Consumer Protection (BACP), and the city's community partners, such as Ladder Up, have worked together to ensure families in Chicago have access to the information and resources they need to take advantage of these critical funds.

Earlier this year, Mayor Emanuel announced that the City of Chicago invested an additional \$500,000 in funding to expand current tax assistance offers. The funds allowed Ladder Up



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and the Center for Economic programs to expand the hours and number of days at sites allowing 7,000 more families to have access to free tax preparation services over the next two years. This investment by the City will lead to over \$16 million in additional refunds for working families and stimulate over \$26 million in local economic activity.

For the last two weeks of tax season, Ladder Up and the Center for Economic Progress are offering expanded hours and additional days at tax prep sites throughout the city. The expansion of these no cost tax assistance centers follows the results of a large scale investigation of commercial tax preparers to ensure compliance with the tax preparer ordinance. The ordinance protects consumers from unscrupulous tax preparers that prey on low income families with outrageous fees. Of the 203 businesses investigated, 96 percent were not in compliance with the ordinance and issued violations. The City made the investment of funds in additional hours and days following the assessment of over \$200,000.00 in fines.

Since 1994, Ladder Up and the Center for Economic Progress have returned \$805 million to over 487,000 hardworking clients, helping them move up the economic ladder.

To find the closest free tax preparation site, file taxes online for free, learn more about the EITC, and provide important information about consumer rights when using a paid tax preparer, individuals and families can visit the City's website www.taxprepchicago.org.

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