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NEW YORK CITY KICKS OFF TAX SEASON WITH THE 5th ANNUAL EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT CAMPAIGN

Free Tax Filing Sites Open Citywide

Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today kicked off New York City's 5th Annual Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Campaign to help working families and individuals earning less than \$38,000 claim refunds of as much as \$6,000 when filing their taxes. (**Download a Campaign Fact Sheet in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).**)

Coordinated by the DCA, New York City's EITC Campaign is the most comprehensive effort in the country, comprised of more than 150 not-for-profit, government and private partners to boost filings of the critical Federal, State, and City tax credit. The Mayor's Commission on Economic Opportunity called on the City to build on the success of the EITC campaign and take it to the next level, an effort that begins today. Department of Finance (DOF) Commissioner Martha Stark, Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications (DoITT) Commissioner Paul Cosgrave, and representatives from the New York City EITC Coalition, including the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), leading not-for-profit organizations and private partners were on hand for the announcement at the 311 Customer Service Center in Lower Manhattan.

"The Mayor has put in motion a far-reaching set of initiatives that are attacking the pervasive problems of poverty in new and innovative ways," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "The work of this coalition is a springboard for progress in the lives of the many working people they support. I want every single person eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit to receive it. Each time the credit is claimed small investments are made in the future of New Yorkers that will pay large dividends down the line."

"With Mayor Bloomberg's strong leadership and the continued dedicated efforts of the City's 150 Coalition partners, New York City continues to push the envelope to help workers with low incomes claim as much as \$6,000 in EITC tax refunds," said Commissioner Mintz. "Whether it's the Finance Department's initiative reaching out to past eligible workers who didn't file – or the 2006 dollars waiting to be claimed this tax season – call 311 to find out how to file for your money at a free tax site, or what to ask your tax preparer. The IRS can send your money quickly through direct deposit, so there's no need for high-interest loans - just claim the money you deserve."

New Yorkers can get information about more than 40 free tax filing locations citywide, EITC eligibility requirements, as well as request materials in 11 different languages by calling 311 or visiting www.nyc.gov/eitc. Additionally, this year the New York City Department of Finance has mailed completed tax forms to approximately 95,000 EITC eligible New Yorkers who filed returns in tax years 2003 and 2004, but did not claim the EITC, making it easier than ever to claim these dollars.

"This year the Department of Finance took an unprecedented step by looking back and correcting tens of thousands of tax returns in the hope of reaching those hard working New Yorkers who were qualified for the EITC but did not claim it," said Finance Commissioner Stark. "Today we are happy to stand with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the EITC Coalition looking forward as they continue their effort to help low-wage earners claim their credits for 2006 and make sure money is going into the

hands of those who deserve it."

"The work by New York City and Mayor Bloomberg to reach out to people who may qualify for EITC deserves recognition and sets a high standard for other cities," said IRS Commissioner Mark W. Everson. "Whether it is using tray liners at a fast food restaurant, translating EITC information into 11 languages or sending teams throughout the five boroughs, the efforts by the Department of Consumer Affairs to spread the word about EITC are innovative and impressive. We appreciate their support."

Each year the EITC returns millions of tax dollars to working families and individuals. Qualifying New Yorkers can file retroactively for up to three years, often doubling or tripling their refunds. Full-time and part-time workers, including self-employed workers, who are legally authorized to work in the United States, are eligible for the tax credit. During the 2005 tax season, New Yorkers claimed more than \$2 billion in total EITC tax credits. Over the past four years, the NYC EITC Coalition has helped nearly 80,000 New Yorkers get more than \$100 million in EITC refunds at free partner sites alone. Calls to 311 about the EITC were three-times higher last year than the year before – totaling 22,000 – and Coalition partner FoodChange runs the busiest non-military free tax site in the nation, located in Harlem.

In addition to available free tax sites, and to ensure all New Yorkers eligible for the EITC have access to filing options, the DCA has once again secured discount agreements from private tax preparers including H&R Block, Jackson Hewitt, and Liberty Tax Service on basic preparation. Clients of the Robin Hood Foundation, participating unions (Professional Staff Congress, AFSCME DC 1707, UNITE HERE!, CWA Local 1182, NYC Hotel-Motel Trades Council, OPEIU, Teamsters Local 237, USWU Local 74), and select City workers will receive 50% discount vouchers with the total cost capped at a maximum of \$75 for eligible filers and prohibiting the use of any Refund Anticipation Loan products and other warranties.

New York City's EITC campaign is an essential part of the DCA's newly established Office of Financial Empowerment, serving as a model for other initiatives to help increase individuals' financial capacity. As the first program to be implemented from the Commission on Economic Opportunity recommendations, the Office of Financial Empowerment is part of Mayor Bloomberg's aggressive efforts to fight poverty and aims to educate, empower, and protect workers with low incomes so they can make the best use of their financial resources. Ensuring consumers and businesses benefit from a fair and vibrant marketplace, the DCA licenses 55 different categories of businesses operating within the five boroughs, enforces the City's Consumer Protection and Weights and Measures Laws, and works with trade groups and community partners to educate the public.

"We're excited about replicating the EITC Campaign model in the newly created Office of Financial Empowerment to reduce poverty through additional innovative programs and strategic partnerships," added Commissioner Mintz.

For more information on the EITC, whether you qualify, or to locate the free tax assistance site most convenient, call 311 (or 212-NEW-YORK) or go online to www.nyc.gov/eitc. The EITC Campaign is supported in part by donations made to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. The Mayor's Fund is a not-for-profit organization established to strengthen public programs serving the needs and general welfare of New Yorkers. To learn more about the Mayor's Fund, or to make a contribution to the EITC Campaign, visit www.nyc.gov/fund or call 311.