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MAYOR MICHAEL R. BLOOMBERG LAUNCHES CITYWIDE CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF NEW YORKERS WHO FILE FOR THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

Department of Consumer Affairs Coordinates Coalition of Government Agencies, Corporations, and Community Organizations to Increase Awareness

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, joined by New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra, New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, and representatives from government agencies, corporations, and community organizations, today launched a citywide campaign to increase the number of qualifying New Yorkers who file for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC returns federal and state government dollars to filers either through tax credits or as cash refunds to working families who earn less than \$34,178. There are approximately 230,000 New York City residents who qualify for the federal and state EITC but do not file. When the 25% state match was included, the average combined EITC credit for 2002 was \$2,107 and some families received a credit of \$5,278.

"If everyone who is eligible filed for the EITC, it would put \$500 million into the pockets of New Yorkers who need it the most," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Drawing on the vast resources of our public and private partners, the City's EITC coordinated campaign will ensure that New Yorkers are aware of the benefits to which they are entitled, and have access to free tax filing assistance at sites throughout the City. This partnership is the result of City agencies, corporate and community organizations working together and committed to increasing awareness so that those who need the credit most receive it."

"We are thrilled to coordinate a program that can directly benefit thousands of New York City residents and businesses," said DCA Commissioner Gretchen Dykstra. "From placemats in every McDonalds and inserts in Con Edison's utility bills to volunteer recruitment to the provision of space, our partners have made valuable contributions to the City's EITC campaign."

"The Earned Income Tax Credit is one of the most successful anti-poverty initiatives ever devised," said New York City Council Speaker Gifford Miller. "By rewarding work and easing the tax burden on working families, the Earned Income Tax Credit will provide economic stimulus for hard working people when the City is still recovering from recession and the destruction of the World Trade Center. As members of the City Council, we have the responsibility to educate and inform our constituencies about the critical resources that are available to them. This campaign will help us get the word out to as many taxpayers as possible. If everyone who's eligible takes part in this program, the whole City will benefit."

The City's EITC campaign aims to inform eligible New Yorkers about the benefits of filing for the EITC through mass outreach and make free tax preparation centers available throughout the City. Participating partners include, but are not limited to, eighteen New York City agencies, the



New York City Council, dozens of community and not-for-profit organizations, and corporate sponsors including Con Edison, KPMG, Washington Mutual Bank, McDonald's, Marriott, Keyspan, Time Warner Cable, Independence Community Bank, Radio WADO/Latino Mix/Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation, Forest City Ratner, El Diario la Prensa, and MediaCom.

As part of the campaign's major outreach effort, advertisements featuring New York workers with the tagline "EITC: It's Your Money, Come and Get It" will launch in January and run through the tax season on television, radio, in newspapers, in utility company mailings, and other targeted outlets. In addition, volunteer tax assistance centers will be available throughout the City to assist qualifying filers with tax preparation.

"As a working parent earning \$18,500 for the first year I was employed, I qualified for the EITC, but did not know it," said Regina Johnson, a payroll clerk at the New York City Department of Health. "I was ecstatic to find out I'd be receiving \$3,000 back after amending my 2001 tax return. That money will go a long way in paying bills and other necessities like buying my daughter's college books, especially during tough economic times."

"The EITC is an important, refundable tax credit for low income taxpayers," said Mike McCormick, Territory Manager for the Internal Revenue Service. "The effort being undertaken by New York City and this coalition of government, not-for-profit, and for-profit organizations will provide the information and assistance needed for eligible taxpayers to properly claim the credit."

"A large number of New York City residents primarily speak a language other than English," said Jorge Ayala, Director of Sales, El Diario la Prensa. "Studies show that the most common reason people do not file for the EITC is simply because they don't know about it. As part of the effort to inform the City's diverse population about the EITC's benefits, the campaign partners are committed to spreading the word as widely as possible. Es tu dinero, ven a buscar lo."

"New York City is facing a tough time, and, as employers, we recognize the difficulties workers face," said Mike Stengel, General Manager of New York's Marriott Marquis, a representative of Marriott International. "The EITC can help many of our customers and employees, as well as our City. On behalf of other corporate partners we are pleased to do our part."

"The United Way represents New York City's diverse community based organizations," said Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, President of the United Way of New York City. "More than 300 of our organization's members serve the newest immigrants and the oldest residents. We commend the City for taking on this initiative and recognizing the lowest paid workers who can both help their families and the community."

"As part of the citywide EITC campaign, eligible New Yorkers will have access to free tax assistance at sites throughout the City," said Richard Murphy, Executive Director of the Community Food Resource Center. "These volunteer income tax assistance sites will enable filers to keep the full share of the credit they receive, as opposed to a commercial alternative."



"Volunteering is one of the most important things you can do," said Veda Stanley, President of the National Association of Black Accountants. "With the campaign partners, we are committed to providing a team of volunteers to assist in running the multiple tax centers that offer free assistance to qualifying filers."

Those eligible for the EITC are working families with more than one child earning less than \$34,178 annually, families with one child earning less than \$30,201 annually and individuals 24 years of age and older making less than \$11,060 annually. In 2002, the combined EITC, which includes the 25% match from New York State, paid a maximum of \$479 to childless taxpayers, \$3,195 to taxpayers with one child and \$5,278 to taxpayers with two or more children. The average combined EITC credit is \$2,107. Eligible New Yorkers could receive almost \$500 million in credits if they filed for the EITC.

For more information on the EITC, please contact the DCA hotline at (212) 487-4444 in English, (212) 487-4481 in Spanish or www.nyc.gov/consumers.