

January 26, 2011

MAYOR BLOOMBERG, CONSUMER AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER MINTZ AND FINANCE COMMISSIONER FRANKEL ANNOUNCE THAT NEW YORKERS MAKING LESS THAN \$57,000 HAVE MORE OPTIONS THAN EVER TO CLAIM THEIR TAX REFUNDS

Qualifying New Yorkers Can File Their Taxes Online For Free, Visit A Free Tax Assistance Site, Or For the First Time Get Their Taxes Done At Participating H & R Block Locations For Only \$29 With New City-Sponsored Coupon

Department Of Finance Pro-Actively Putting \$5.7 Million In Earned Income Tax Credits Through Amended Returns Into The Pockets Of 7,000 Hard-Working New Yorkers

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, [Department of Consumer Affairs](#) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz, and [Department of Finance](#) Commissioner David M. Frankel today launched a new city-sponsored discount tax preparation program with H&R Block as part of New York City's 9th Annual Tax Credit Campaign, which offers New Yorkers more ways than ever to file their taxes and claim their tax refunds for free or at very low cost. Last year's Tax Credit Campaign helped over 72,000 New Yorkers file their taxes for free and claim more than \$117 million in tax credits and refunds. The Finance Department will also continue its groundbreaking effort to ensure New Yorkers receive the Earned Income Tax Credits they are entitled to. This week, Finance will send out more than 7,000 amended tax returns to New Yorkers worth \$5.7 million in Earned Income Tax Credits. The Mayor also announced the launch of SaveUSA, an expansion of the City's successful tax-time saving program SaveNYC. SaveUSA is one of five Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) programs to be replicated in cities nationwide through a federal Social Innovation Fund grant awarded to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City and the Center for Economic Opportunity. The Mayor was also joined by the City's Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford, Center for Economic Opportunity Executive Director Veronica M. White, Food Bank of New York City President and CEO Lucy Cabrera and Ariva Deputy Director Diana Breen.

"This year, we're making it easier than ever for New Yorkers to file for tax refunds and receive money they've already earned," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Since 2002, our City's network of free and low-cost tax preparation options has helped New Yorkers collect more than \$700 million in tax credits and refunds and it has provided savings tools for those struggling to put their financial lives on solid ground."

"For many New Yorkers, their tax refund is the single biggest check that they will receive all year," said Consumer Affairs Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "With more ways than ever to file your taxes for free or at very low cost, we are encouraging all New Yorkers to file soon and claim every dollar of tax credits that you are due. Visit nyc.gov/taxprep and go get your refund!"

"Not only does this program help put money back in the pockets of hard-working low income New Yorkers, but it puts Federal and State money back into New York City's economy," said Finance Commissioner Frankel. "Tax and revenue agencies don't often get the chance to administer a program where we tell people what we may owe them, and we are incredibly excited to continue this groundbreaking effort."

Free or Low Cost Tax Preparation

The City's Annual Tax Credit Campaign, which increases awareness about tax credits that can put money back in the pockets of working New Yorkers, will help qualifying New Yorkers file their taxes online for free, visit a free tax assistance site, or get their taxes done at participating H & R Block locations for just \$29 using a new City-sponsored coupon. With all of these options, New Yorkers can find out if they qualify for important tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the New York City Child Care Tax Credit. These offerings will not include Refund Anticipation Loans or other loans.

New Yorkers who earn less than \$50,000 with children or \$18,000 for those who do not have children can visit a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site in the five boroughs where a certified volunteer will prepare

their taxes for free. New Yorkers can also have their tax returns prepared at a participating H&R Block office with a new City-sponsored coupon for just \$29. To qualify for the H&R Block discount, residents must earn less than \$41,000 with children or \$31,000 if they have no children. Those interested should visit the City's website www.nyc.gov to print out the coupon. New Yorkers who qualify for H&R Block discount tax preparation in 2011 will receive the same \$29 offer next year if they are eligible.

New Yorkers earning less than \$57,000 can also file their taxes online for free through the City's free tax-prep website on www.nyc.gov. New Yorkers earning less than \$48,000 can visit 19 participating sites where they can prepare their taxes for free online with assistance from trained guides. A list of participating sites is available on the City's website.

Volunteer Tax Preparation

NYC Service – the Mayor's comprehensive program to promote volunteerism and target volunteers towards the city's needs – works in coordination with the Department of Consumer Affairs to provide opportunities for volunteers to help their fellow New Yorkers gain critical income management skills. Volunteers serve in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program during tax season, preparing basic Federal and State tax returns for free, and helping qualifying low- and moderate-income New Yorkers claim tax credits. Volunteers must complete an online and in-person training and commit to three to four hours of income tax assistance each week for 12 weeks, at one of 62 sites throughout the five boroughs.

Last year, the program engaged 655 volunteers in tax assistance, who helped prepare 20,000 tax returns for an estimated \$86,852,425 in returns for New Yorkers. This year, *NYC Service* and the Department of Consumer Affairs, along with the Food Bank for New York City and New York Cares, aim to engage 700 volunteers for tax prep assistance.

"If you are looking for way to have a real and direct impact on New Yorkers in need, volunteering to provide tax filing assistance is a great way to give back," said Chief Service Officer Diahann Billings-Burford. "NYC Service aims to target volunteers to where they can make a measurable difference and we expect the free tax preparation program to have an even greater impact this year."

SaveNYC becomes SaveUSA New York City

The City's successful tax-time savings program, *SaveNYC*, spearheaded by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Office of Financial Empowerment will now be replicated in four cities through the Social Innovation Fund awarded by the Corporation for National and Community Service to the Mayor's Fund and the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). The program, now called *SaveUSA*, will be offered to eligible tax filers at select Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites in New York City, Tulsa, OK, San Antonio, TX and Newark, NJ. In New York City participants could receive a 50 percent match, up to \$500, if they deposit at least \$200 of their tax refund into a *SaveUSA* account and maintain the initial deposit for one year. Residents are encouraged to file early as this program is only available while funds last.

The *SaveUSA* program was developed based on promising findings from the *SaveNYC* program, launched by Consumer Affairs in 2008. *SaveNYC* attracted approximately 2,200 savers in its first three years of operation, 25 percent of whom did not have a bank account, and 50 percent of whom reported having no savings account when they entered the program. To date, participants living in some of New York's poorest neighborhoods accumulated more than \$1.4 million in savings. The majority of participants—80 percent—saved for at least one year and received the match funds and 70 percent continued to save even after receiving the match.

SaveUSA will include the first large-scale study of matched, tax-time savings, and will use the rigorous random assignment evaluation method. Interested tax filers will be randomly assigned to be part of either a *SaveUSA* group, eligible to open a *SaveUSA* account or a comparison group, not eligible for the account. MDRC, a nonpartisan education and social policy research organization will study and compare the two

groups over time to determine whether, and to what extent, SaveUSA produces changes in people's total assets, debt, and overall financial well-being.

"The NYC Center for Economic Opportunity is pleased to partner with the Office of Financial Empowerment, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and cities across the country to pilot the SaveUSA program," said Center for Economic Opportunity Executive Director Veronica M. White. "The Office of Financial Empowerment's work to expand the EITC campaign, to offer financial counseling in neighborhoods across the city, and develop new programs contributes greatly to City residents' financial health and stability."

The Social Innovation Fund programs, including SaveUSA, are reliant on private support. To donate contact the Mayor's Fund by calling 311. For more information on the other Social Innovation Fund programs please visit the Center for Economic Opportunity online at www.nyc.gov.

EITC Assistance from the Department of Finance

The Department of Finance will be pro-actively sending amended returns to everyone in New York City who they believe is eligible for the 2007 Earned Income Tax Credit, but did not apply. In the 2007 tax year, 880,263 New Yorkers filed for the credit receiving over \$2.3 billion in local, state and federal EITC refunds.

In order to reach the New York households that did not file for the credit that year, the Department of Finance used data submitted to the Federal government to locate the 7,093 remaining households and determine the amount of credit they could be eligible for. Tax filers have up to three years to file for the Earned Income Tax Credit, so this is their last chance to claim the credit. Finance has also supplied envelopes addressed to Federal and State tax filing facilities, all recipients have to do is finalize the forms, sign, stamp, and send them in.

The Department of Finance administered this first-of-its kind program in 2007 and 2008 and it has since been duplicated in Maryland and California. This year, the City's Department of Finance has reinstated their effort, which put \$14 million in the pockets of New Yorkers who mailed back 23,000 amended returns during the two years it previously administered the program. The State and the Federal government will pay for the bulk of this benefit at a cost of \$775,000 and \$4.8 million respectively. The City, which has had its own Earned Income Tax Credit since 2004, will contribute an additional \$139,000 in tax credits. More than \$4.2 million in EITC will go to taxpayers with dependents.

New York City's Tax Credit Coalition Campaign

New York City's Tax Credit Coalition Campaign is spearheaded by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) and supported in part by donations made to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City. Funders include Single Stop USA, Bank of America, Citi, and Con Edison. The campaign includes the following partners: H&R Block, Deloitte, Intuit Inc., Internal Revenue Service (IRS), One Economy Corporation, the New York City Human Resources Administration, the New York City Housing Authority, and additional partners who assist with promoting the City's tax season options (please visit www.nyc.gov for a full listing). The Online Tax Assistance Site Partners include Ariva, Goodwill Industries, CAMBA, Food Bank for New York City, New York Urban League, 1199 SEIU, Brooklyn Public Library, New York Public Library, NYC Department of Education Office of Adult Continuing Education, and the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

"As we rebound from tough economic times, it's vital for all New Yorkers to know that they can file their taxes and claim tax refunds for free or at very low cost throughout the five boroughs," said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "A tax refund could be worth as much as two-month's income – that kind of money means the world to working families. I want to thank our partners in government, Mayor Bloomberg, Consumer Affairs Commissioner Mintz, and Finance Commissioner Frankel as well as our partners at the Food Bank for New York City, Ariva, H&R Block, and Capital One for making these essential services available to New Yorkers who need them."

"New Yorkers deserve every penny of the tax credits available to them," said City Council Member Dan Garodnick, chair of the Consumer Affairs Committee. "Where we can help them claim those credits, provide free and low-cost tax services and steer them away from predatory refund anticipation loans, we are doing an excellent service. I congratulate the Mayor, Commissioner Mintz and Commissioner Frankel for expanding an already successful program to help New Yorkers recover and save their money."

"The Earned Income Tax Credit is the Nation's best anti-poverty program because it promotes and rewards work," said HRA Commissioner Robert Doar. "We at HRA remain fully committed to promoting work support programs like the EITC to the New Yorkers we serve,"

"NYCHA is proud to partner with the Office of Financial Empowerment for the 2011 tax season initiatives," said New York City Housing Authority Chairman John B. Rhea. "These days, we know all too well how hard it is for many of our families to cover basic expenses as well as raise a family. Fortunately, with the EITC and other tax credits, many of our residents are able to receive a refund that not only helps them to stabilize their finances; also it makes it a little easier to put something aside to save. NYCHA is committed to making sure residents have access to free and affordable high quality financial products and services; we are excited to partner with the Office of Financial Empowerment and others to ensure that NYCHA residents are informed and have the opportunity to get the tax refunds that they are entitled to."

"At a time when 3 million New Yorkers are struggling to put food on the table, the Earned Income Tax Credit can make life a lot easier," said Lucy Cabrera, President and CEO of the Food Bank for New York City. "During tax season, we have an opportunity to connect tens of thousands of New Yorkers to the refunds and tax credits to which they are entitled through our free tax services, which last year put more than \$60 million back into the pockets of low-income New Yorkers. We are especially pleased to build on some of our key partnerships including with the IRS, without whom the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Free File programs would not be possible, and with the City's Department of Consumer Affairs, with whom we're working to empower tax filers who have uncomplicated returns to prepare them on their own, and also to help low-income tax filers save with SaveUSA accounts."

"Ariva is honored to help lower-income New Yorkers achieve economic stability through providing free tax preparation, asset building, benefits access and financial education," said Diana Breen, Deputy Director at Ariva. "In 2010, Ariva served more than 7,000 clients - 47 percent of whom earned less than \$10,000 - and returned more than \$12 million in refunds to the South Bronx and other struggling neighborhoods. In 2011, through SaveUSA, Ariva is especially thrilled to help our low-wealth clients build savings for a rainy day or for their children's education as well as ultimately contribute to a better understanding of how progressive savings programs can benefit the populations we serve."

"We expect more individuals and working families will be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit and other tax savings this year," said B.J. Duffy, Brooklyn Market President for Capital One Bank. "Capital One Bank is proud to partner once again with the City of New York and the Food Bank for New York City, and we hope this event will increase tax savings and bring more tax refunds to the working families across our community."

SaveUSA is being implemented with the support of the federal Social Innovation Fund, a new public-private initiative administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service. This new grant is designed to address major social issues and develop evidence for effective strategies and organizations. SaveUSA is one of five Center for Economic Opportunity programs to be replicated in cities nationwide with the support of the Social Innovation Fund, the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, and the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity. MDRC, a nonpartisan education and social policy research organization, will conduct an evaluation.

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 Tax Credit Coalition Campaign, visit www.nyc.gov or call 311 and ask about making financial contributions to New York City

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Ensuring a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses, DCA licenses more than 71,000 businesses in 57 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment is the first municipal office of its kind in the nation with a mission to educate, empower and protect New Yorkers with low incomes. DCA's OFE administers a citywide network of Financial Empowerment Centers and other products and services that help these New Yorkers make the best use of their financial resources to move forward economically. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at www.nyc.gov.

The New York City Department of Finance is the fifth largest taxing jurisdiction in the nation, responsible for collecting more than \$35 billion a year and administering the City's treasury. Finance administers fifteen different taxes, in addition to four City taxes administered by the State. Finance adjudicates parking violations fees and fines, assesses values for over one million parcels of real property and administers more than 760,000 exemptions worth \$12.4 billion annually, audits business, personal and sales tax returns, oversees the Sheriffs Office, and keeps records of title to property. For more information, Call 311 or visit Finance online at www.nyc.gov.

2011 Tax Preparation Required Documents

When having someone prepare your taxes in person, bring:

- Proof of identity, such as a driver's license or other photo ID
- Social Security cards for yourself, your spouse, and your dependents and/or a Social Security Number (SSN) verification letter from the Social Security Administration OR Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) letter for all names on the return (original or copies)
- Birth dates for yourself, your spouse, and the dependents on the return
- Wage and earning statement from your employer(s): Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1098 and 1099)
- A copy of your 2009 federal and state returns, if available
- Proof of any other income, e.g., lottery winnings
- Total paid for child care provider and the provider's Taxpayer Identification Number or SSN (if you are claiming the New York City Child Care Tax Credit)
- Bank account and routing numbers (if you are directly depositing your refund). Note: If you use direct deposit, you should receive your federal tax refund in only 8 to 14 business days.
- To file a Married Filing Jointly return, both spouses must be present to sign required forms.

When preparing taxes online, you'll need:

- Social Security Number (SSN) OR Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for yourself, your spouse, and the dependents on the return
- Birth dates for yourself, your spouse, and the dependents on the return
- Your 2009 Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) or Self-Select PIN number. (AGI is the amount shown on your 2009 Form 1040, line 38; Form 1040A, line 22; or Form 1040EZ, line 4. The Self-Select PIN is the five-digit PIN you used to electronically sign your 2009 return.) If you cannot find this information, call the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) at 1-800-829-1040.
- Wage and earning statement from your employer(s): Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1098 and 1099)
- Proof of any other income, e.g., lottery winnings
- Total paid for child care provider and the provider's Taxpayer Identification Number or SSN (if you are claiming the New York City Child Care Tax Credit)
- Bank account and routing numbers (if you are directly depositing your refund). Note: If you use direct deposit, you should receive your federal tax refund in only 8 to 14 business days.