



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Gov. Blagojevich announces free tax preparation counseling and services for low-income families

Officials urge Illinois workers to apply for the expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and new homeownership opportunities

CHICAGO – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today encouraged working families to use free tax counseling services to maximize their tax refunds and apply for the recently expanded Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). This year’s tax counseling plan marks the first time that low income families are encouraged to connect tax refunds and credits to matched savings accounts for homeownership. Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Carol L. Adams, PhD., and Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Director Brian Hamer today joined with the Center for Economic Progress and the Tax Assistance Program to announce the innovative plan and urged more people to take advantage of free tax preparation services, and the newly expanded Illinois EITC. This year, Governor Blagojevich signed legislation which made 100,000 more Illinoisans eligible for the Illinois EITC.

“Our goal is simple. We want to help families apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit and use their tax returns to help buy a new home.” said Gov. Blagojevich “We are offering low-income families the tax counseling and opportunity to take the cash from their tax to pursue the dream of homeownership.”

At the tax counseling sites, families throughout the state of Illinois will be invited to participate in the Asset\$Illinois Homeownership Initiative, which provides a \$1 for \$1 match on savings up to \$2000 towards the purchase of a first home. Other families will be offered access to student financial aid along with tax counseling services, a benefit that can yield more than \$10,000 in federal and state student assistance. IDHS hopes to provide more than 1000 Illinois families with access to both of these programs this tax season.

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Income tax return assistance/page two

As workers prepare to file their income returns, Illinois Department of Revenue Director Brian Hamer is reminding workers to see if they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which can help boost their take-home pay, and to take advantage of newly-expanded tax preparation services being offered for free through the state.

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich signed legislation in August expanding eligibility for the Illinois EITC refund to an additional 100,000 hard-working Illinoisans. The new law ended the provision that required individuals to qualify for federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money in order to receive an Illinois EITC refund.

"Every dollar counts when you are living on a modest income; that's why the free tax counseling and assistance programs are so important to families," Director Hamer said. "This year we are encouraging taxpayers to avoid high interest refund anticipation loans which can siphon off a large portion of their refund. Taxpayers should file electronically either at home or with a tax professional in order to get their Illinois tax refund in about a week."

The Earned Income Tax Credit, the major federal benefit for low and moderate-income families, can be worth as much as \$4,716 to a family with two or more children. In addition, the state EITC can provide up to \$235 in state income tax relief. Together, these benefits put money back into the pockets of Illinois' working families.

Secretary Adams said IDHS is reaching out to the people it serves, as well as those who have left IDHS programs for jobs. IDHS is encouraging these individuals to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and free tax counseling provided by the Tax Counseling Project and the Tax Assistance Program. Most sites will open on January 26 and provide services through April 12.

IDHS provides funding to the Tax Assistance Program and the Tax Counseling Project, which is administered by the Center for Economic Progress. This year the state will support free tax counseling at 64 locations across the state, the most ever. These programs offer free tax assistance and promote the EITC to low-income workers. The services are provided free of charge to families with incomes less than \$40,000 and to individuals with incomes under \$15,000. Last year, nearly 30,000 Illinoisans received free income tax preparation assistance worth \$43 million in refunds.

"The tax refund is the largest single payment of any kind that working families receive all year. And with the right help, families can use the tax refund as a stepping stone from falling behind to getting ahead," said David Marzahl, Executive Director of the Center for Economic Progress. "For more than a decade, the Center for Economic Progress has helped 175,000 low-income families get the max from tax time. We offer free tax help in 40 communities throughout Illinois. We make sure families claim all the benefits and credits they are entitled to and we have financial coaches at our tax sites to teach families how to use that refund wisely."

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Income tax return assistance/page three

Low-income working families, many of whom may be new to the workforce, often do not have access to affordable, professional tax preparation. Many taxpayers use tax preparation services that charge high fees. Some are also persuaded to apply for “rapid refund” loans with high interest rates and fees which can greatly reduce their actual benefits.

“For many households, these benefits are critical to rising out of poverty and making the transition from dependency to lasting self-sufficiency,” Secretary Adams said. “We are continuing to make as many Illinois workers as possible aware of the EITC and how to apply for it. Additionally, the EITC does not affect eligibility for IDHS benefits.”

The Tax Counseling Project trains volunteers to provide free tax services to families and individuals at 15 locations in Chicago and 19 other sites throughout Illinois. DHS also funds the Tax Assistance Program (TAP), which has 25 locations in Chicago and the suburbs. TAP recruits tax professionals to volunteer to assist low-income families.

Volunteers will prepare federal and state returns for the current year and, if necessary, for the past tax years. Volunteers also provide counseling and advise workers about withholding allowances, filing status, and other tax benefits (such as the Child Credit and the Child Care Credit) for which they may qualify.

For more information on the Tax Counseling Project, contact the Center for Economic Progress in Chicago at 312-630-0273 or call the toll free statewide number at 888-827-8511. For information on the Tax Assistance Program call 312-409-1555. Details are also available on the IDHS website at www.dhs.state.il.us and the Department of Revenue site at www.revenue.state.il.us.

A complete listing of the tax help sites and their hours of operation follows. Electronic filing is available at many locations.

Tax Counseling Project

Chicago Sites:

AUBURN GRESHAM

Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

St. Sabina Employment Resource Center
7909 S. Racine
Mon & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

CHINATOWN
Only open Saturday, Feb. 2 & 9
Cathay Bank
222 W. Cermak Road
10am – 3pm

BACK OF THE YARDS

Immaculate Heart of Mary Hall
4521 S. Ashland
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm

HUMBOLDT PARK
Association House
1116 N. Kedzie
Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

BRONZEVILLE

Abraham Lincoln Centre
3858 S. Cottage Grove
Mon, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm

LAWNDALE

Homan Square Community Center

3517 W. Arthington Street
Mon & Wed, 6pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

LOOP
Harold Washington College
30 E. Lake
Mon – Thurs, 10am – 1pm
Mon – Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

PILSEN
Instituto del Progreso Latino
2570 S. Blue Island Avenue
Mon, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

ROGERS PARK
Loyola Park Fieldhouse
1230 W. Greenleaf
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

SOUTH CHICAGO
Olive Harvey College
South Chicago Campus
3055 E. 92nd Street
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

UPTOWN
Truman College
1145 W. Wilson
Mon – Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm
North Side Credit Union
1011 W. Lawrence Avenue
Tuesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm

WEST GARFIELD PARK
Bethel New Life Center
4006 W. Lake
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

WEST HAVEN
Malcolm X College
1900 W. Van Buren
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

WOODLAWN
Woodlawn Preservation & Investment Corp.
6101 S. Evans Avenue
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays 10am – 1pm

CHICAGO SUBURBS & NORTHERN IL
AURORA
Waubonsee Community College
5 East Galena Blvd.
Wednesdays 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

CRYSTAL LAKE
McHenry Community College
8900 U.S. Highway 14, Building A
Crystal Lake, IL 60012
Wednesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays: 10am – 1pm

ELGIN
Gail Borden Library
270 N. Grove Ave.
Mon & Tues, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 1pm – 4 pm

HARVEY
Harvey Public Library District
15441 Turlington Avenue
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

JOLIET
University of St. Francis
College of Nursing Bldg.
605 Taylor Street
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

ROCKFORD
Northwest Community Center
1325 N. Johnston Avenue
Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

WAUKEGAN
Only open Saturday, Feb. 23, Mar. 1, & Mar. 15
YWCA – Lake County
2133 Belvedere Rd
10am – 3pm

DOWNSTATE

ALTON
Service begins January 19
Illinois Employment Training Ctr.
90 N. Port Drive
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

BLOOMINGTON

Closed Mon, Wed after Feb. 27
Site closed after April 12
Bloomington Housing Authority
104 E. Wood Street
Mon- Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 9:30am – 12pm

Miller Park Pavillion
1020 South Morris Ave
Mondays, 9am – 2pm

CHAMPAIGN

Service begins February 2
Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation
302 N. 1st Street
Wed & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 9am – 3pm

DECATUR

Site open only on Saturdays after March 8
Decatur Public Library
130 North Franklin Street
Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 9:30am – 2:30pm
**Site Closed February 12*

EAST ST. LOUIS

Site open only on Tuesdays and Saturdays after
March 15
New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church
5803 Belmont Avenue
Tues, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

MARION

Man-Tra-Con Corp.
3000 W. Deyoung, Ste. 800-B
Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

MOLINE

Site open Jan. 29 – Feb. 16
Illinois Employment Training Ctr.
4703 16th Street, Ste. H
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm**
Saturdays, 9am – 2pm
**Appointment only on weekdays, call 309-793-6391*

NORMAL

Site open Jan. 25 – Apr. 11
Normal Senior Center
1 Normal Plaza – 1110 Douglas
*Fridays, 9:30am – 2:30pm**

**Appointments served first,*
Walk-ins welcome.
Call 309-888-9099

Site open Jan. 28 – Apr. 7
Normal Public Library
206 W. College Avenue
Mondays, 5:30 – 8pm

PEORIA

Carver Community Center
710 W. 3rd Avenue
Tuesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 9am – 3pm

Friendship House

800 NE Madison
Mon & Thurs, 5pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

ROCK ISLAND

Martin Luther King Center
630 Martin Luther King Drive
Mon & Tues, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

SPRINGFIELD

Service begins January 23
Springfield Learning Center
1507 E. Cook
Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm
Saturdays, 9am – 2pm
**Site Closed Mar. 8, 10, & 12*
One-Day Only Tax Help Available In:

CARMI

Southeastern Illinois College
1700 College Avenue
Carmi, IL 68281
Saturday, February 2
9:00am - 4:00pm

DANVILLE

Danville Area Community College
2000 E. Main Street
Lincoln Hall Rooms 219 & 220
Danville, IL 61832
Sunday, February 10
9:00am - 4:00pm

JACKSONVILLE

Jacksonville Public Library
201 West College Ave

Lower Level Meeting Room
Jacksonville, IL 62650
Sunday, January 27
12:00pm - 5:00pm

KARNAK
Shawnee Development Council
530 W. Washington Street
(State Route 169)
Karnak, IL 62956
Sunday, February 3
8:30am - 3:00pm

MACOMB
Macomb Jr.-Sr. High School

Tax Assistance Program

Chicago

(TAP programs open Saturdays January 26 – April 12 8:30 to 11:30 am. Closed March 10)

City Hall
121 N. LaSalle St., Room 100
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. from Jan. 22 - Feb.
28 & Tues. from Mar. 4 - Apr. 8, 5:30 - 8:30 PM*

McCormick Boys & Girls Club
4835 N. Sheridan Rd.
(Lawrence & Sheridan)

Roberto Clemente Community Academy
1147 N. Western Avenue
(Division and Western)
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. in Feb, 5:30 –
8:30pm*

WIC Food Center - Armitage
3110 W. Armitage Ave.
(Armitage & Kedzie)

WIC Food Center - Diversey
4624 W. Diversey Ave.
(Cicero & Diversey)

Reilly Elementary School
3650 W. School St.
(Belmont & Central Park)
Only open Jan. 26 - Mar. 1

5th Congressional District
3742 W. Irving Park Rd.
(Irving Park & Hamlin)

1525 S. Johnson Street
Entrance K
(Commons entrance off Circle Drive)
Macomb, IL 61455
Saturday, February 9
8:00am - 3:00pm

SPARTA
Sparta Public Library
211 W. Broadway Street
Sparta, IL 62286
Sunday, February 10
10:00am - 5:00pm

Wilbur Wright College
4300 N. Narragansett Ave., Room L 127
(Montrose & Narragansett)
Closed Mar. 22

Holy Angels Church
607 E. Oakwood Blvd., Basement
(40th & Oakwood)
Closed Jan. 26

WIC Food Center - Western
5332 S. Western Ave.
(53rd & Western)

Kennedy-King College
6401 S. Halsted St., Building Y, Room Y 109
(63rd & Halsted)

St. Columbanus Church
331 E. 71st St., The Glass House
(71st & King)
Only open Jan. 26 - Mar. 1

Paul Revere Community School
1010 E. 72nd St.
(72nd & Ellis)
Only open Feb. 2, 9, 16

Chicago Vocational Career Academy
2100 E. 87th St.
(87th & Jeffery)

Olive-Harvey College
10001 S. Woodlawn Ave.
(103rd & Woodlawn)

Benito Juarez Community Academy
2150 S. Laflin Ave.
(Cermak & Ashland)
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. in Feb., 5:30 - 8:30
PM*
Closed Feb. 16, Mar. 1, Mar. 22

West Side Technical Institute
2800 S. Western Ave.
(28th & Western)

WIC Food Center - Kedzie
2400 S. Kedzie Ave.
(24th & Kedzie)

Piotrowski Park
4247 W. 31st St.
(31st & Pulaski)

Austin Town Hall
5610 W. Lake St.
(Lake & Central)

AURORA
Cowherd Middle School
441 N. Farnsworth Ave.

VILLA PARK
Illinois Dept. of Human Services
146 W. Roosevelt Rd.
Also open on Mar. 8

PLAINFIELD
Office of House Minority Leader Tom Cross
530 W. Lockport St., Suite 204

WAUKEGAN
Park Place Senior Center
414 S. Lewis Ave.
Site open 9 AM - 12 PM

MAYWOOD
Maywood Public Library
121 S. 5th Ave.
Site open 9 AM - 12 PM

CICERO
Unity Junior High School
2100 S. Laramie Ave.