

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

The following tax rates and amounts are effective for 2020:

1. OASDI rate for employees remains at 6.2%. The wage base increases to \$137,700.
2. Medicare rate remains at 1.45% for employers. The employee portion is 1.45%, and a 0.9% Medicare surtax on earned income will be calculated on single filers with wages over \$200,000 and married filers with wages over \$250,000 as part of health care reform.
3. Social Security payments will increase by 1.6% beginning in January 2020. The maximum earnings one can earn before Social Security benefits will be completely withheld is \$48,600 for those who reach full retirement age during 2020. Those between age 62 and age 66 can earn \$18,240. For each \$2 earned above that, \$1 of benefits is lost. There is no limit on earnings for those older than 66. The retirement age for Social Security continues to rise this year. Those turning 62 this year are affected. They will get reduced benefits if they start receiving payments before they attain age 66 and 8 months.

The Tax Reform Bill passed in late December 2017 made some important changes to individual, business, estate and gift taxation beginning in the 2018 tax year. Many of these provisions sunset after 2025. Items 4 through 25 address changes specific to the new Tax Reform Bill, which continue in 2020. While this list is not all inclusive, it represents the items that we feel are of greatest interest to our clients.

4. Personal and dependency exemptions have been eliminated under the new tax law. The IRS has established a revised Form W-4 to reflect this. Your employer's payroll department may request that you complete the new W-4 form.
5. Standard deduction increases to \$24,800 for married filing joint couples, plus \$1,300 for each spouse 65 or older, or blind or disabled. The standard deduction for a single filer increases to \$12,400, plus \$1,650 if you are 65 or older, blind or disabled. Head of household's standard deduction increases to \$18,650. For children who must file returns, it remains at \$1,100.
6. There will still be seven tax brackets consistent with 2019. Income tax rates will be 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35%, and 37% for single taxpayers earning over \$518,400 or married taxpayers earning over \$622,050. The 20% top rate for long term capital gains and qualified dividend starts at a higher level for 2019; singles with taxable income over \$441,451 and joint filers above \$496,601. For those earning less than the thresholds, the tax rate has remained at 15%. Under the 2010 health care law, the new 3.8% Medicare net investment income tax remains effective for single taxpayers earning more than \$200,000 and married taxpayers earning more than \$250,000.
7. Significantly less taxpayers are expected to be subject to the Alternative Minimum Tax as a result of changes under the new tax law. 200,000 individuals as opposed to 5,000,000. Alternative Minimum Tax exemption increases slightly in 2020, from 2019. Exemptions from the minimum tax will rise in 2020 to \$113,400 for couples and \$72,900 for singles. The phase-out levels for the exemptions were raised to \$1,036,800 for joint filers, up from \$1,020,600; and to \$518,400 for individuals, up from \$510,300.

8. The exemption from the Kiddie Tax for 2020 remains at \$2,200. The first \$1,100 of unearned income is tax-free. The next \$1,100 is taxed at the child's rate. If the Kiddie Tax applies, the child's net unearned income exceeding \$2,200 would be taxed using the parent's rate. The kiddie tax treatment under the Tax Reform Bill was repealed by the SECURE Act.
9. Bonus rate or flat rate withholding for supplemented wages less than \$1,000,000 remains at 22%. If more than \$1,000,000 the rate is 37%.
10. High income taxpayers can continue to convert their IRAs to ROTHs. The \$100,000 AGI cap is gone. Under the new tax law, the ability to undo a Roth IRA conversion after it has been completed is no longer available.
11. Federal estate, gift and generation skipping tax exemption increases to \$11,580,000. It applies to the estates of people who die after Dec. 31, 2018 but before Jan. 1, 2026 and to gifts made during this time period. The maximum Estate and Gift rate remains at 40%.
12. The federal deduction for state and local income and sales taxes, combined with property taxes has been capped at \$10,000, the national average.
13. The deduction for mortgage interest has changed under the 2018 Tax Reform Act. Previously, taxpayers could deduct mortgage interest on principal balances up to \$1 million for multiple homes. A taxpayer could also deduct home equity mortgage interest on principal up to \$100,000. Under the new law, the deduction for mortgage interest is capped at \$750,000 of principal and limited to two homes. Home equity loan interest is no longer allowed. Home purchases prior to December 15, 2017 are grandfathered in under the prior laws, as are existing mortgage balances.
14. Mandatory health care payments under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) which were effective after 12/31/13 are no longer required since the tax for being uninsured has been reduced to zero under the new tax law.
15. In 2020, a taxpayer may deduct medical expenses when they exceed 10% of adjusted gross income.
16. The child tax credit remains at \$2,000 per child and will be refundable up to \$1,400. The phase-out for the credit, begins with adjusted gross income of more than \$400,000 for married filing joint couples and more than \$200,000 for all other taxpayers. The phase-out is not indexed for inflation. The definition of the child tax credit has been expanded to include dependents who are not children. The new law tax includes a \$500 nonrefundable credit for dependents who are not children.
17. Pass thru business owners are eligible to deduct 20 percent of their Qualified Business Income from a partnership, S corporation and sole proprietorship. In 2020, this deduction begins phasing out for the deduction that begins at \$163,300 of individual adjusted gross income and \$326,600 of adjusted gross income for couples filing jointly. The deduction does not apply to specified service businesses, except when the income of those taxpayers fall below the phase-out thresholds described above. A new tax form will be filed in 2019 for those claiming the QBI deduction.
18. Qualified withdrawals from 529 plans have been expanded to allow up to \$10,000 to be withdrawn annually for private secondary school expenses. In 2017 and prior, 529 plan qualified withdrawals were only allowed for higher education expenses. Note that many states, including New York, do not follow this new rule. New Jersey does allow these withdrawals.
19. Investment fees, tax preparation fees, and unreimbursed employee business expenses will not be deductible as Federal Miscellaneous Itemized Deductions. Previously, these items were deductible but subject to a 2% of adjusted gross income threshold. Some states still allow them.

20. Casualty losses continue in 2020 to only be deductible if they are caused by a Federally declared disaster. Personal losses, such as thefts and a house fire not caused by a Federal declared disaster, would no longer be deductible. We suggest you review your insurance policies to see if you have adequate coverage.
21. Alimony payments for divorce agreements entered into after January 1, 2019 will not be deductible. Alimony payments received will not be taxable. Special rules exist for those wishing to modify divorce agreements entered into prior to that date but maintain the deductibility of their alimony payments.
22. Moving expenses continue to generally not be deductible in 2020. Some exceptions apply to members of the military.
23. The domestic production activities deduction has been repealed for C Corporations beginning January 1, 2019. Pass thru entities already had the deduction repealed in 2018.
24. Business meal deductibility remains at 50%. Business entertainment deductibility continues to be repealed.
25. The Tax Reform Bill increased the maximum amount a taxpayer may expense under Sec. 179 to \$1,040,000, up from \$1,020,000 and increased the phase-out threshold to \$2.59 million. Bonus depreciation continues to be extended and modified to deduct 100% of eligible property placed into service through 2022. The amount of allowable bonus depreciation will then be phased down over four years: 80% will be allowed for property placed in service in 2023, 60% in 2024, 40% in 2025, and 20% in 2026.
26. Back up withholding rate is 24%.
27. 401(k), 403(b), and 457 contribution pay-in limitation increases \$500 to \$19,500, with \$6,500 additional for employees 50 and older. Ceiling on SIMPLE plans increases to \$13,500 but folks age 50 or older can put in an additional \$3,000 in 2020.
28. Maximum level of pay on which pay-ins to plans can be based upon increases to \$285,000 from \$280,000 with the maximum pay-in for defined contribution plans increasing to \$57,000. Percentage of compensation that can be put in remains at 100%. Profit Sharing percentage remains at 25%.
29. Phaseout for Traditional IRA deductions start at \$104,000 and ends at \$124,000 for couples. Phaseout for singles is from \$65,000 to \$75,000. If only one spouse is covered by a plan, the phaseout zone for deducting a payin for the spouse who is not covered begins at \$196,000 of AGI and ends at \$206,000. Phaseout for Roth IRA deductions start at \$196,000 for couples and end at \$206,000, and start at \$124,000 and end at \$139,000 for singles. Contribution limit remains at \$6,000. If 50 or older, can contribute up to \$7,000.
30. The interest exclusion on U.S. Savings Bonds redeemed to pay qualified higher education expenses starts to phase out at AGI above \$123,550 for marrieds.
31. Eligible portion of long term care premium rises to \$5,430 for those age 71 and older, \$4,350 between ages 60 and 70, \$1,630 between ages 50 and 60, \$810 from 41 to 50 and \$430 for age 40 and under, deductible as medical expenses. Limit for tax-free payouts remains at \$360 per day.
32. Medicare Part B premium is \$144.60 monthly for most singles with AGI under \$87,000, although many taxpayers will pay less than that. The maximum premium rate is \$491.60 per month.
33. The Nanny tax threshold increases \$100 to \$2,200 in 2020. No social security tax is due for domestics paid \$2,200 or less this year. It is not indexed for inflation. FUTA is still due whenever a domestic employee is paid \$1,000 or more in a calendar quarter in the current or prior year.

34. Low and middle income savers can still get a tax credit of up to \$1,000 for contributions made to IRAs and qualified plans. Credit disappears for marrieds when AGI hits \$65,000, \$32,500 for singles.
35. Adoption tax credit increased to \$14,300 of expenses, from \$14,080. Phaseout starts at \$214,520 AGI.
36. The Lifetime Learning credit phaseout for MFJ starts at \$118,000, \$59,000 for singles.
37. Gift tax exclusion remains at \$15,000 per donee for gifts made in 2020.
38. The limit on deducting payins to Health Savings Accounts increases to \$7,100 for family coverage and \$3,550 for individual coverage. Account owners age 55 and older can put in an additional \$1,000. Ceiling on out of pocket cost increases to \$13,800 for family coverage and \$6,900 for individual coverage. HSAs can be rolled into IRAs.
39. Monthly limitation on contributions to transit flexible spending accounts for tax-free parking and transit increases \$5 to \$270.
40. U.S. taxpayers working abroad have a higher exclusion, \$107,600, up from \$105,900.
41. Federal minimum wage remains unchanged at \$7.25, food service employees, \$2.13. New Jersey increased to \$11.00 as of January 1, 2020 and New York increased to \$11.80, \$13.00 in Long Island and Westchester and \$15.00 in New York City. Different rates apply for the New York hospitality industry. Connecticut minimum wage increased to \$11.00. Pennsylvania minimum wage remains at \$7.25 with tipped employees \$2.83.
42. Credit and Debit Card companies will continue to issue 1099s on payments made to merchants in 2020. Third party networks, such as PayPal, will issue 1099s to payees with over 200 sales transactions and more than \$20,000 in sales income.
43. S Corporations and partnerships will owe a penalty of \$205 per owner or partner per month for up to 12 months for failure to file on time. This includes returns that are required when no business activity takes place.
44. Nearly all businesses must wire tax deposits to the IRS.
45. Standard mileage allowance for business declines 5¢ to 57.5¢ per mile. The rate declines to 17¢ a mile for medical purposes and job related moves. Remains at 14¢ per mile for charitable driving.
46. Tax-free direct payouts from IRAs to charity of up to \$100,000 for individuals age 72 and older continue to be allowable.
47. Professional development costs continue to be deductible as part of the \$250 of teacher classroom supplies deduction.

Secure Act

The “Setting Every Community Up For Retirement Enhancement”, or SECURE ACT was signed into law in January 2020. Some highlights of the bill include:

48. Small business tax incentives are available for small businesses to set up automatic enrollment in retirement plans for its workers, or join multi-employer plans.
49. The maximum age cap for worker contributions to Traditional IRA accounts has been removed.
50. The required minimum distribution age increases from 70½ to 72 for those individuals who have not yet turned 70½ in 2020.
51. Stretch IRA rules have changed. Non-spousal account inheritors could previously stretch distributions over their lifetime. The Secure Act changes the withdrawal rules to be 10 years. This will boost the tax obligations of those inheritors, potentially in their prime earning years.

Investment Management Performance Reports

All of our investment management clients are automatically enrolled in Albridge, which is a sophisticated financial aggregation software. One of the abilities of Albridge is to be able to provide performance reports for various periods of time.

The most common period of time for performance reporting is the preceding year. The most common performance report metric is the benchmark chosen that you want to be compared to. Our chosen benchmark is one created by us, is the one that we think most closely approximate that of a balanced portfolio, that is one that has income (bond) and growth (equity) characteristics. Our benchmark is 40% income (Barclay's Bond Aggregate) and 60% growth (Standard & Poors 500 Index), which is commonly used for balanced portfolios.

If you would like to see how your portfolio did in 2019, and as against the benchmark, we encourage you to go to the Albridge website and use your password information to enter and then go to Reports. Once in Reports, you should choose Last Year's performance, Program 1 and composite Benchmark 40/60, which you will be able to view. Of course, now that you know how to run a report, you can choose other time periods to run your own reports. If it is too difficult or cumbersome for you to do this, you can send us an email affirmatively authorizing us to prepare the report either on a one time basis or annually and provide us with the email address you would like the report sent to. This is necessary in order to satisfy both Compliance and Privacy concerns.

If you have any questions about this additional benefit, we are providing to you free of charge, please call us.

NJ Doubles Veterans Income Tax Exemption

to \$6,000 for 2019. Veterans should check their eligibility and pre-certify to make claiming the exemption easier during tax filing season. So far, the state has pre-certified approximately one-third of the almost 400,000 eligible veterans.

Applicants need only apply the first year they claim the exemption. A veteran's spouse or civil union partner who is also a veteran can take the exemption if they are filing a joint return. However, a veteran cannot claim this exemption for a domestic partner or dependents.

Veterans who file paper returns must enclose a copy of Form DD-214 with their tax returns the first time if they claim the exemption. Check the oval on the return that indicates the veteran is taking the exemption.

Veterans who electronically file should pre-certify for this exemption by sending the necessary documents before filing taxes.

The state also has the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption which allows honorably discharged veterans who are 100% permanently disabled as a result of active wartime service to qualify for an annual property tax exemption.

As always, if you have any questions about these or any other matters, do not hesitate to call us.

Remember, We're Here For You!