

H&R Block Opens 10,000 Offices Nationwide, Ready for Tax Season

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Refund delay, tax refund fraud, ACA compliance and extended deadline top list of tax concerns

KANSAS CITY, MO -- (Marketwired) -- 01/03/17 -- H&R Block (NYSE: HRB), the nation's largest consumer assisted tax preparation company, has opened its 10,000 offices nationwide to serve clients for the 2017 tax season.

This tax season, some taxpayers will face a delay in getting their tax refunds due to a new law meant to help combat tax refund fraud. Others will deal with the increased threat of tax identity theft and uncertainties around the Affordable Care Act. In addition, due to the observance of a federal holiday, the filing deadline will be on April 18.

The IRS expects 153 million tax returns this year with approximately three-fourths of those returns receiving a refund. This year, the average refund should be approximately \$2,900.

"We know taxpayers want to do more than just get their taxes done, which is why we are here to make sure they get their taxes won," said Karen Orosco, senior vice president of H&R Block U.S. Retail Sales and Service organization. "There are many reasons to turn to the industry's most trusted tax preparation services company for your tax filing needs."

1. PATH Act to cause delays for some early filers

A possible refund delay, due to the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act, passed by Congress for the 2016 tax year, could impact as many as 15 million taxpayers. While the goal of the new law is to fight tax identity refund fraud, it has other implications for taxpayers, including:

1. **Many refunds will be delayed.** Taxpayers who claim the [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#) or [Additional Child Tax Credit \(ACTC\)](#) who file early in the season will have their refunds delayed. The IRS has indicated that the impacted taxpayers, for a variety of reasons, may have to wait until the week of Feb. 27 for refunds to deposit.
2. **Less room for error when filing.** The PATH Act has set stiff penalties on top of the already existing ones to prevent false claims made on taxes, including refundable credits. The PATH Act also gives the IRS authority to act on certain tax return errors without a formal audit of an affected taxpayer.
3. **New tax benefits.** The PATH Act expands tax benefits that make it easier for taxpayers to save. From education to retirement to rolling over funds from employee-sponsored retirement plans, the PATH Act provides several new tax advantages for taxpayers.

"The PATH Act is complicated, holding both opportunity and caution for taxpayers," Orosco said. "To get every tax advantage, as well as receive their refunds as early as possible, taxpayers should not delay in making an appointment to file with their H&R Block tax professional."

2. Tax refund fraud a growing concern

While the IRS has made considerable progress fighting tax identity refund fraud in recent years, it is an ongoing battle as identity thieves create new ways to steal personal information. The problem has become so serious that the IRS is opening a tax refund fraud center in 2017 to report, manage and track fraud cases.

Among the challenges for identity theft victims, they can lose access to the refund they are due for four months or more, as it takes multiple steps with the IRS to file a completed tax return.

"One of the best ways for taxpayers to fight [tax identity theft refund fraud](#) is by visiting a local H&R Block tax office to file their taxes as soon as possible and register for our industry-exclusive Tax Identity Shield[®] product," says Orosco.

3. Dozens of exemptions exist to reduce or avoid the ACA penalty

The penalty for being without health insurance has increased substantially since 2014 when the Affordable Care Act (ACA) first went into effect for individuals.

For the 2016 tax year, taxpayers will pay a penalty of \$695 per uncovered adult plus \$347.50 per uncovered child up to a maximum of \$2,085, or 2.5 percent of their household income over the filing threshold, whichever is greater. Simply put, a family of four earning \$60,000 would pay a penalty of more than \$2,000.

"In some cases uninsured taxpayers may [*qualify for one of several exemptions*](#) to reduce or eliminate that penalty," said Kathy Pickering, vice president and executive director of [*The Tax Institute*](#) at H&R Block. "Many exemptions can be claimed right on the tax return."

Summary

"We have 80,000 tax professionals ready to serve the needs of all taxpayers," Orosco said. "For more than six decades, H&R Block has been a tax advocate for its clients, ensuring they receive every tax break they are due."

For more information on H&R Block, or to make an appointment, go to www.hrblock.com or call 1-800-HRBLOCK.

About H&R Block

H&R Block, Inc. (NYSE: HRB) is a global consumer tax services provider. Tax return preparation services are provided by professional tax preparers in approximately 12,000 company-owned and franchise retail tax offices worldwide, and through H&R Block tax software products for the DIY consumer. H&R Block also offers adjacent Tax Plus products and services. In fiscal 2016, H&R Block had annual revenues of over \$3 billion with 23.2 million tax returns prepared worldwide. For more information, visit the H&R Block Newsroom at <http://newsroom.hrblock.com/>.

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