



# Client Newsletter

2020 TAX HIGHLIGHTS  
WITH COMPLIMENTS  
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## A publication of the Minnesota Association of Public Accountants

*The Minnesota Association of Public Accountants has prepared this newsletter. It is not intended to be inclusive.  
Any questions concerning the contents or other tax questions should be directed to your MAPA Accountant.*

### INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS

#### WHEN DOES A DEPENDENT HAVE TO FILE A RETURN

A dependent has to file a return if the dependent has:

1. Earned income only and the total is more than \$12,400.
2. Unearned income only (i.e. income which is not compensation for services) and the total is more than \$1,100.
3. Both earned and unearned income and the unearned income is more than \$350 or the total income is more than \$12,400.

#### KIDDIE TAX

Children who have investment income greater than \$2,200 may be subject to tax based on their parent's income. This tax has been expanded in a very complex manner to potentially apply to children under age 24 as of year-end. This extended version of the kiddie tax targets two groups who have attained age 18: 1) those who reach their 18th birthday during the year, and 2) those in full-time student status for at least five months of the year who attain their 19th through 23rd birthday during the tax year. There is a further test for those in the age 18-23 groups. The kiddie tax only applies if the earned income of the child (wages and self-employment income) does not exceed one-half of the child's support for the tax year. In calculating support, amounts covered by scholarships are not taken into account. The tax does not apply to a child who is married and files a joint return for the tax year.

#### NET INVESTMENT INCOME TAX

For 2020, an additional 3.8% Net Investment Income Tax (NIIT) will be assessed on taxpayers with a modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) exceeding \$250,000 for those filing jointly, or surviving spouse, \$200,000 for head of household and single, \$125,000 for those filing married filing separately. The tax is 3.8% of the lesser of net investment income or the excess of MAGI over the threshold amount.

#### ADDITIONAL .9% MEDICARE TAX

An individual is liable for additional Medicare tax if the individual's wages, compensation, or self-employment income (together with that of his or her spouse if filing a joint return) exceed the threshold amount for the individual's filing status. The threshold amounts are: \$250,000 for married filing jointly, \$125,000 for married filing separately, and \$200,000 for all others.

## STANDARD DEDUCTIONS

Filing Status:	Standard Deduction	Additional for elderly and/or blind
Single	\$12,400	\$1,650
Head of Household	\$18,650	\$1,650
Married Filing Joint	\$24,800	\$1,300
Married Filing Separately	\$12,400	\$1,300

If an individual can be claimed as a dependent on another taxpayer's return, the regular standard deduction is limited to \$1,100 or the dependent's earned income plus \$350 up to the regular standard deduction. If the individual is over 65 years of age and/or blind, the additional deduction will be added to the above.

## ITEMIZED DEDUCTIONS

Beginning in 2018 through 2025 taxpayers are no longer required to phase out their itemized deductions under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

## STANDARD MILEAGE ITEMIZED DEDUCTION RATES

The standard mileage rate allowances for 2020 are 14 cents for charitable miles and 17 cents for moving and medical.

## STUDENT LOAN INTEREST

Taxpayers paying qualified education loans may be able to deduct up to \$2,500 of interest on the loans in 2020. There is a phase out that begins for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income above \$70,000 for single taxpayers and \$140,000 for married filing joint taxpayers.

## PREMIUM ASSISTANCE CREDIT

Beginning in 2014, certain low-income and moderate-income individuals are eligible for a refundable income tax credit to help pay for the health insurance coverage in a qualified health plan purchased through a Health Insurance Marketplace also known as the Exchange. Individuals can elect to have the estimated credit amount paid directly to the insurer to help pay monthly health insurance premiums during the calendar year. These are called advance payments. Generally, taxpayers eligible for the credit have household income for the tax year of at least 100%, but not more than 400% of the federal poverty line, and do not have access to employer-sponsored affordable coverage that provides a minimum value. A taxpayer whose advance credit payments exceed the final premium tax credit owes the excess as an additional income tax liability. The IRS has placed limits on the amount of the credit the taxpayer has to pay back based on household income.

## CHILD TAX CREDIT

In 2020, the credit for each child under the age of 17 is \$2,000. For taxpayers with incomes above \$200,000 (\$400,000 married filing joint), the credit is phased out by \$50 for each \$1,000 of adjusted gross income above the threshold amount. For taxpayers whose tax liability is not large enough to fully utilize the allowable credit, a portion of the unused credit is refundable to the extent of 15% of the taxpayers earned income in excess of \$2,500.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act created a new credit that starts in 2018 called the family credit. This is a \$500 credit for each qualifying relative. Unlike the child tax credit, the family credit is nonrefundable.

## ADOPTION CREDIT

The adoption credit can now be taken on expenses up to \$14,300. The phase out applies for filers with AGIs between \$214,520 and \$254,520. For 2020, the adoption credit is nonrefundable. That means that the credit can be claimed only up to the amount of your tax liability.

## AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 created a \$2,500 higher education tax credit that is available for the first four years of college. The credit is based on 100% of the first \$2,000 of tuition and related expenses (including books) paid during the tax year and 25% of the next \$2,000 of tuition and related expenses paid during the tax year, subject to a phase-out for AGI in excess of \$80,000 (\$160,000 for married couples filing jointly). 40% of the credit is refundable.

## LIFETIME LEARNING CREDIT

If a taxpayer, spouse, or dependent is a student, the taxpayer may be eligible for a nonrefundable credit of up to \$2,000 (20% of the first \$10,000 of qualified tuition and expenses). The credit is allowed for an unlimited number of years on a per taxpayer basis. It covers all 4 years of post-secondary education as well as graduate school and courses to improve job skills. There is a phase out for taxpayers with modified adjusted gross income above \$59,000 (\$118,000 married filing joint).

## RESIDENTIAL ENERGY EFFICIENT PROPERTY CREDIT

Taxpayers are allowed a 26% credit for the purchase of qualified property placed in service during 2020 including:

- Qualified solar energy property used to generate electricity.
- Qualified solar water heating property.
- Geothermal heat pumps.

## PENALTY FREE IRA WITHDRAWALS

Penalty free withdrawals (prior to age 59 ½) from all IRA's are permitted for 1) undergraduate and graduate expenses (tuition, books, and room and board) for taxpayer, spouse, children or grandchildren; 2) up to \$10,000 for first-time homebuyers, defined as taxpayer(s) who has not owned a home for two years; 3) payment of medical expenses greater than 7.5% of AGI; and 4) certain hardship exceptions. An IRA withdrawal is still subject to income tax. Be aware that if you opened your ROTH IRA less than five years prior to a distribution, the 10 percent penalty can be avoided but there may be tax on the earnings that are withdrawn.

Qualified birth or adoption distributions made after December 31, 2019 have been added as a new exception to the 10% additional tax. New parents can withdraw \$5,000 out of retirement funds (per individual, per birth or adoption) and not be subject to the 10% penalty

## CORONAVIRUS-RELATED DISTRIBUTIONS

The CARES Act allows qualified individuals impacted by the coronavirus pandemic to pay back funds withdrawn from a qualified retirement plan over a three-year period. The law also temporarily waives the 10% penalty for coronavirus-related distributions. A coronavirus distribution is any distribution: 1) up to \$100,000; 2) made on or after January 1, 2020 and before December 31, 2020; 3) from an eligible retirement plan; 4) to a qualified individual.

## COVERDELL EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (FORMERLY EDUCATION IRA)

Up to \$2,000 per beneficiary per year can be contributed to an education savings account for a beneficiary under age 18, regardless of whether the contributor or the beneficiary has any earned income. It is nondeductible and is phased out pro rata as modified adjusted gross income increases from \$95,000 to \$110,000 single (\$190,000 to \$220,000 married filing joint). A Coverdell ESA can be used to pay elementary and secondary, as well as higher education expenses.

## HOME OFFICE EXPENSES - This is mainly for self-employed activity! Federal does not allow this deduction for employees.

Expenses related to a home office are generally deductible if, 1) you use the office exclusively on a regular basis as your principal place of business or a place patients, clients, or customers use in meeting or dealing with you or 2) you use it exclusively and regularly for administrative and management activities of your business if there is no other fixed location to perform such activities.

Effective for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2013, the IRS allows a safe harbor business use of home deduction at a rate of \$5 per square foot for the portion of the home used in the qualified business, but not to exceed 300 square feet.

## ESTIMATED TAX PAYMENTS

No penalty for failure to pay estimated tax applies for taxes payable of less than \$1,000. Household taxes must be included in estimates. If you don't meet this exception, you are required to pay the lower of: 1) pay at least 90% of the tax shown on the current year return, or 2) pay 100% of the tax shown on the prior year's return. For individuals with adjusted gross income for 2020 in excess of \$150,000, the estimated payments should be 110% of the prior year tax liability.

## SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS LIMITS

The earnings limit for 2020 is \$18,240 for retirees ages 62 up to full retirement age (FRA). One dollar must be repaid for every two dollars earned over this figure. For those reaching FRA in 2020, the earnings limit for the months prior to reaching FRA is \$48,600. Starting in the month that you reach your FRA, there are no limits on your earnings.

## TAXABLE SOCIAL SECURITY INCOME

Social Security income may be taxable depending on other income received. The maximum amount of Social Security income that can be included in taxable income is 85%.

## SOCIAL SECURITY PAID BY WAGE EARNERS AND SELF-EMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Social security withheld from employee wages and calculated on self-employment income is composed of two parts: FICA (Federal Insurance Compensation Act) of 12.4% and Medicare of 2.9% which has basically remained unchanged since 1990. Half of this is paid by the employee and the other half by the employer. Self-employed individuals pay the entire amount. For tax year 2020, the FICA limit is \$137,700. Wages and self-employment income over \$137,700 are subject only to the Medicare tax.

## GAIN FROM SALE OF PRINCIPAL RESIDENCE

A taxpayer generally may exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 on a joint return) of gain realized on the sale or exchange of a principal residence. The taxpayer must have owned and occupied the residence as a principal residence for at least two of the five years before the sale or exchange.

The IRS Reform Act says homeowners can receive a portion of the exclusion based on how long they live in the home as long as the move is due to a change in place of employment, health, or unforeseen circumstances.

If a second home or rental property is converted to a principal residence after January 1, 2009, be aware that prior depreciation and/or some of the gain may be taxable.

## CAPITAL GAINS FOR INDIVIDUALS

In 2020 the capital gains rates for sales of long-term capital assets (held more than 12 months) will be determined by income instead of by tax bracket. Rates are shown in the following table.

Long-term Capital Gain Rate	Annual Income			
	Single	Married Filing Jointly	Married Filing Separately	Head of Household
0%	\$0-\$40,000	\$0-\$80,000	\$0-\$40,000	\$0-\$53,600
15%	\$40,001-\$441,450	\$80,001-\$496,600	\$40,001-\$248,300	\$53,601-\$469,050
20%	Over \$441,450	Over \$496,600	Over \$248,300	Over \$469,050

For 2020, qualified dividends will continue to be taxed at the same rates as long-term capital assets.

## INDIVIDUAL IRA CONTRIBUTIONS (TRADITIONAL OR ROTH)

If you and/or your spouse have taxable compensation (earnings subject to FICA and Medicare tax), you may be able to contribute to an Individual Retirement Account. The maximum Traditional IRA or ROTH IRA contribution for 2020 is \$6,000 if under the age of 50 and \$7,000 if age 50 or older as of the end of the year. Taxable deductions for contributions to a Traditional IRA may be limited if you or your spouse are covered by an employer provided retirement plan and if your income exceeds certain levels. Starting in 2020, the age limit of 70 ½ was removed for making contributions to a traditional IRA. ROTH IRA contributions may be limited by your filing status and income. Contributions to any IRA account can be made up to the filing deadline of your tax return without extension. Excess contributions and income earned on the excess amount are subject to penalty if not withdrawn prior to the due date of your individual income tax return (including extension).

## REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS

The SECURE Act made several changes for RMDs required to be made after December 31, 2019. The required beginning date is now generally April 1 of the calendar year following the calendar year in which the individual attains age 72. RMDs after the death of the plan participant generally requires the remaining account balance to be distributed to the designed beneficiaries within ten years after the date of death. For most qualified retirement plans, the CARES Act has waived RMD requirements for calendar year 2020.

## NEW CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION TAX BREAKS 2020

You can claim an above-the-line deduction of up to \$300 for cash donations to qualified charities. For taxpayers who itemize, the 2020 cash contributions may be deducted up to 100% of your adjusted gross income. This amount is usually limited to 60% of your income.

## HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT CONTRIBUTIONS (HSA)

If your health insurance meets the guidelines, you may be able to contribute to a Health Savings Account. For 2020, the maximum HSA contribution for a single taxpayer plan is \$3,550 with a minimum deductible of \$1,400. The maximum HSA contribution for a family plan is \$7,100 with a minimum deductible of \$2,800. There is an additional allowed contribution of \$1,000 if you are age 55 or older as of the end of the year. Contributions to an HSA account can be made up to the filing deadline of your tax return without extension. Excess contributions are not deductible and are subject to penalty unless the excess contributions are paid out to the account holder before the tax return deadline including extensions.

## BUSINESS HIGHLIGHTS

### STANDARD MILEAGE AND PER DIEM RATES

The standard mileage rate allowance under the optional method for vehicle expense for 2020 is 57.5 cents per business mile.

The IRS has provided optional per diem allowances for lodging and meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) while traveling for business and away from home. These are calculated using a high-low method based on the locality visited. The 2020 and 2021 daily rate is \$297 and \$292, respectively, for travel to any “high-cost locality”, which includes a \$71 M&IE component for both years and \$226 (2020) and \$221 (2021) for lodging.

The 2020 and 2021 daily rate is \$200 and \$198, respectively, for travel to any “low-cost locality”, which includes a \$60 M&IE component for both years and \$140 (2020) and \$138 (2021) for lodging. The 2020 and 2021 rates are effective for per diem allowances that are paid to an employee on or after October 1, 2019 or October 1, 2020, respectively, for travel away from home on or after October 1, 2019 or October 1, 2020 respectively.

The special M&IE rate for the transportation industry is \$66 per day in the continental US and \$71 per day outside the continental US.

### HEALTH DEDUCTION FOR SELF-EMPLOYED

The self-employed health insurance deduction for 2020 is 100%. Effective March 30, 2010, the self-employed health insurance deduction may also be claimed by a taxpayer with respect to a child who has not attained age 27 by the end of the tax year.

In early 2011, the IRS has revised its guidance and reversed its position by stating in the 2010 Form 1040 instructions that “Medicare Part B premiums can be used to figure the deduction.” IRS guidance would suggest that Medicare Part D premiums would also qualify.

### SECTION 179 (DEPRECIATION)

Subject to a dollar limit, the election allows you to deduct, in the tax year for which the election is made, the cost of qualifying property placed in service during the tax year. The immediate deductions allowed are in lieu of capitalization and later depreciation deductions. The annual deduction limit is \$1,040,000 for 2020. The deduction is phased out (i.e., gradually reduced) if more than a specified amount of qualifying property is placed in service during the tax year. The amount is \$2,590,000 for 2020. The annual deduction limit and qualifying dollar limitation is now indexed for inflation.

## **SPECIAL DEPRECIATION ALLOWANCE (BONUS DEPRECIATION)**

Legislation passed in December of 2017 extended the bonus depreciation and increased the amount to 100% for assets purchased between September 27, 2017 and December 31, 2022. The bonus depreciation rate will be phased down by 20% per year beginning in 2023. This applies to new and used purchased property. The following types of property qualify for the 100% special depreciation allowance.

- MACRS property with a recovery period of 20 years or less.
- Water utility property.
- Computer Software.
- Certain long production period and transportation property.
- Qualified plant property.
- Qualified film, television and theatrical production.

## **SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH CARE TAX CREDIT**

This credit is for small employers, less than 25 full-time workers who cover at least 50% of the cost of health care coverage for some of its workers based on the single rate. The employer must pay average annual wages below \$55,200. This credit is worth up to 50% of a small business' premium costs in 2020. However, for tax years beginning after 2013, the credit is only available if the employer purchases health insurance coverage for its employees through an Exchange.

## **MONTHLY PAYROLL DEPOSIT THRESHOLD**

If your Form 941 payroll tax liability is under the \$2,500 threshold, employers in a return period are not required to make monthly deposits. All tax deposits must be paid online through EFTPS.

## **QUALIFIED BUSINESS INCOME (QBI) DEDUCTION – SECTION 199A**

For the years 2018 through 2025, small business can deduct 20% of the lesser of qualified trade or business income or taxable income after eliminating net capital gains. If taxable income exceeds certain thresholds additional tests apply such as W-2 wages; type of business; and business investment intangible, depreciable personal or real property.

## **MINNESOTA HIGHLIGHTS**

Rules used to determine Minnesota tax are based on the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) as amended through December 31, 2018. Since that date, many federal laws were enacted containing provisions affecting tax year 2020. Minnesota has not adopted these changes, so Minnesota returns must be adjusted for these items. On May 24, 2019, the Minnesota Legislature passed a bill that conforms many of Minnesota's tax laws with several federal tax law changes including the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). Here is a summary of the notable changes:

### **For Individuals:**

- Changes the starting point for determining individual income taxes from federal taxable income (FTI) to federal adjusted gross income (FAGI).
- The standard deduction has increased to match the federal.
- Allows for a dependent exemption deduction of \$4,300 per dependent, but eliminates the personal exemption.
- Minnesota itemized deductions are allowed if they exceed the Minnesota standard deduction. The itemized deductions follow the federal rules and Minnesota allows an itemized deduction for unreimbursed employee expenses which exceed 2% of adjusted gross income.
- Expanded the eligibility for the Working Family Credit.

### **For Business:**

- Minnesota will continue to require that 80% of certain federal accelerated depreciation (i.e. Section 179, bonus depreciation) be added back to Minnesota taxable income and then deducted pro-ratably over five years.
- The Minnesota corporate NOL deduction is limited to 80% of the corporation's taxable income. Minnesota law does not distinguish between NOL carryovers generated before December 31, 2018.

## **NEW FOR 2020**

Minnesota tax laws were changed to provide conformity with federal business expensing rules under Section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). Signed into law October 21, 2020, this update includes:

- Full conformity for all Section 179 expensing for tax year 2020 and beyond.
- Retroactive conformity to Section 179 for tax years 2017, 2018, and 2019 for certain business property acquired in a like-kind exchange under Section 1031 of the IRC.

These changes may affect taxpayers who made additions or claim related subtractions for Section 179 expensing.

## **TAX RATES**

Individual income tax rates are 5.35%, 6.80%, 7.85% and 9.85%. The AMT rate is 6.75%.

## **EDUCATION TAX CREDIT**

Families with children in grades K-12 may qualify for a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,000 per child for educational expenses paid during the year. The income and credit limits are based on the number of qualifying children. For families with 1 or 2 children, household income must be below \$37,500. For families with more than 2 children, the income limit increases by \$2,000 per child.

## **SUBTRACTION FOR SCHOOL EXPENSES**

You may subtract a maximum of \$1,625 per qualifying child (K-6) and \$2,500 (grades 7-12) for qualifying expenses. There is no family maximum deduction. The term “qualifying child” is the same as the federal definition of a qualifying child for Earned Income Credit purposes. This will allow a custodial parent who makes educational expenditures for his or her child to claim the subtraction even if the non-custodial parent claims the child as a dependent

## **MINNESOTA WORKING FAMILY CREDIT**

Families that qualify for the federal earned income credit also qualify for the Minnesota Working Family Credit. Schedule M1WFC needs to be completed to determine the amount of the credit.

## **MARRIAGE CREDIT**

The marriage credit for 2020 provides married taxpayers who each have at least \$25,000 of earned income, a credit against the Minnesota regular tax. The credit ranges from \$2 to a maximum of \$1,533.

## **CHARITABLE DEDUCTIONS**

Individuals who do not itemize on their federal income tax return are allowed to subtract contributions that would be charitable deductions under the IRS code. Up to 50% of the total contributions for the year in excess of \$500 can be subtracted.

## **SUBTRACTION FOR SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS**

The recently enacted legislation creates a personal income tax subtraction for an amount of certain Social Security benefits for tax years beginning after 2016. The maximum subtraction is \$5,150 for married couples filing joint returns, \$4,020 for single and head of household filers, and \$2,575 for married couples filing separate returns. The subtraction is reduced by 20% of provisional income over specified income thresholds.

## **SUBTRACTION FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO 529 PLANS**

Effective for tax years beginning after 2016, the legislation allows personal income taxpayers to subtract up to \$1,500 (\$3,000 for married joint filers) of contributions to any state’s Sec. 529 college savings plan or prepaid tuition plan. The subtraction excludes amounts that are rolled-over from other college savings plans and is limited to taxpayers who do not claim the new Sec. 529 savings plan credit.

## SECTION 529 COLLEGE SAVINGS PLAN CREDIT

Effective for tax years beginning after 2016, the legislation creates a non-refundable income tax credit for contributions to any state's Sec. 529 college savings plan, including prepaid tuition plans. For individual filers and married couples, the credit is available in an amount equal to 50% of contributions, up to a maximum of \$500. For individual filers, the maximum credit is phased out by two percent of adjusted gross income in excess of \$79,640. The credit is fully phased out for individual filers at \$104,640 of adjusted gross income. For married couples filing joint returns, the maximum credit is phased out in two stages, and is fully phased out when AGI reaches \$168,350.

## STUDENT LOAN CREDIT

The recently enacted legislation establishes credit for principal and interest payments on higher education loans, effective for tax years beginning after 2016. The maximum credit is \$500 each year (or \$1,000 for married couples who file a joint return if both spouses made payments on a qualified loan) In order to qualify for the credit, a taxpayer must have one or more qualified education loans. "Qualified education loan" is defined as any loan used to pay for the costs of attending an undergraduate or graduate degree program at an educational institution eligible for federal financial aid, including federal direct and Perkins loans, state loans, and private student loans.

## MILITARY PERSONNEL

Minnesota residents, on active duty, stationed outside of Minnesota are no longer considered nonresidents for income tax purposes. However, you are allowed a subtraction for military compensation, if included in federal taxable income, including Active Guard Reserve (AGR) Program compensation earned under U.S. Code Title 32 and income earned under U.S. Code Title 10.

Beginning with tax year 2016, Minnesota will allow taxpayers to subtract certain military retirement pay (including pensions) when calculating Minnesota taxable income and Minnesota alternative minimum taxable income. To qualify for this subtraction, the retirement pay must be taxable on the federal return, and for:

- Service in the active component of the military (U.S. Code Title 10, sections 1401 to 1414),
- Retirement pay for service in the reserve component (U.S. Code Title 10, section 12733), or
- Survivor benefit plan payments (U.S. Code Title 10, sections 1447 to 1455).

To claim the subtraction, you must file Schedule M1M, Income Additions and Subtractions. Taxpayers who claim this subtraction may not claim the nonrefundable credit for past military service

A Minnesota resident who served in a combat zone or qualifying hazardous duty area at any time from January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2020 may be eligible for a refundable credit. The credit for 2020 equals \$120 for each month or part month served in a combat zone for taxpayers whose military records indicate Minnesota as their home of record.

Effective January 1, 2013 – If you (and your spouse if filing a joint return) are a veteran of the military (including the National Guard and Reserves), you may qualify for a nonrefundable credit reducing your income tax by as much as \$750 for past service. You can qualify for this credit if you have been separated from service and meet one or more of the following conditions:

- You served in the military for at least 20 years;
- You have a service-related disability rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs as being 100 percent total and permanent; or
- You were honorably discharged and receive a pension or other retirement pay for service in the military.

Veterans with income of more than \$37,500 are not eligible for the credit.

