

Use Online Resources To Avoid Tax-Time Stress

Millions of taxpayers turn to the Internet for help with the tax filing process

(NAPSA)—For most taxpayers, filing taxes ranks high on the list of life's unpleasant experiences. Yet by waiting until the last minute to prepare to file their taxes, many Americans make filing more of a burdensome process than it needs to be. By planning ahead and getting a jumpstart on the tax filing process, taxpayers can avoid the stress and anxiety of last-minute tax filing.

The introduction of the Internet as a tax filing resource has helped millions of consumers significantly reduce the time spent on planning and filing. By tapping into helpful online resources like the IRS Web site (www.irs.gov) or the Yahoo! Finance Tax Center (<http://taxes.yahoo.com>) consumers can find a wealth of tax tools and services designed to make tax filing a breeze. "We started IRS e-file in 1986, but in recent years there's been a phenomenal growth in electronic filing. Millions of people recognize its convenience and security," said Bob Wenzel, Acting Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service.

As the April 15th deadline draws near, consider the following checklist to keep organized:

- **Choose the best way to file**—According to the IRS, more than 9.4 million taxpayers—an increase of 27.6 percent from 2001—e-filed their returns from a home computer in 2001. By using an online tax filing service, taxpayers can prepare and submit tax returns electronically to the IRS quickly and easily. Taxpayers answer a series of easy-to-understand questions and the program automatically completes required IRS tax forms, double checks for errors and missed deductions, and even guarantees accurate calculations. In 2003, at least 60 percent (78 million) of individual taxpayers will be eligible for free electronic filing services. Eligibility requirements are available at www.irs.gov beginning in mid-January 2003.

- **Watch for employer tax forms in the mail (W-2s)**—Keep an eye out for tax forms and information from employers for the previous calendar year. All of these forms are necessary to pre-



Tax time can be less taxing if you plan ahead and take advantage of resources on the Internet.

pare your taxes and should have arrived in the mail by the end of January.

- **Review the recent tax law changes**—Hundreds of new laws are passed every year, many of which directly benefit consumers. Read up on just how these new laws will affect your filing and refund or amount of taxes owed. Most updated tax information is available to consumers on the Internet, free of charge.

- **Know what you owe**—Online tax calculators offer easy-to-read tables and require no paper or guesswork. With just a few clicks, tax calculators accurately crunch numbers and provide you with an estimate of your refund or debt.

- **Ensure your payment arrives safely**—If you owe payment to the government, services like Link2Gov.com provide a safe, secure and convenient means of submitting payments over the phone or Internet directly to the IRS, whether you've filed online, by mail or by phone.

- **Keep accurate records**—It's never too early to start thinking about next year's return. Online tax filers can automatically store their returns on their personal computer for quick reference, but should always keep a hard copy on hand, just in case.

Stay ahead of tax deadlines by visiting resources like the IRS Web site or Yahoo! Finance Tax Center for detailed tips on filing procedures and e-filing options. And happy filing for 2003.