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LATEST LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER FOCUSES ON 2017 FEDERAL INCOME TAX RETURNS AND SOME KEY CHANGES FOR NEXT YEAR'S RETURNS

EDISON — Details for low- and moderate-income New Jerseyans about filing federal income tax returns for 2017, as well as some key changes in tax law that will take effect next year for the 2018 returns, are the focus of the latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ).

The bilingual publication, “[Looking Out For Your Legal Rights](#),” is accessible online at www.lsnjlaw.org/publications and is available at all New Jersey Legal Services offices.

The newsletter stresses that even though many people may have had incomes last year below the threshold required for filing a tax return, they still may want to do so by the April 18 deadline because they could still qualify for a refund or some other financial benefits, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Another point underscored in the newsletter is that people with incomes under \$54,000 should avoid going to paid tax preparers because they can get such help free from two sources: Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) by calling 1-800-906-9887 or going to www.irs.gov/individuals/irs-vita-grant-program.

The newsletter further notes people anticipating refunds should steer away from firms that offer instant cash in advance of the refunds — actual loans from which fees and interest are deducted.

The publication explains the meaning of such terms as filing status, standard deductions or itemized deductions, exemptions, tax credits and other key aspects of income tax returns, including the availability of six-month filing extensions if sought before the April 18 deadline.

There also is a section highlighting some of the major changes that will affect next year's filings under the new tax law recently enacted by Congress. That includes major changes affecting tax rates, personal exemptions, deductions and other matters.

Meanwhile, individuals who receive letters from the Internal Revenue Service challenging items on their tax returns or need help with collection and tax-related problems other than help preparing tax returns may financially qualify for help from LSNJ's Tax Legal Assistance Project (TLAP) at www.lsnjlawhotline.org or 1-888-576-5529.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state's Legal Services system, a network of five independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.

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