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**Free Tax Preparation Sites Help Taxpayers**

**Navigate Changes in Tax Law**

***Individuals who earned $54,000 or less qualify for free in-person assistance***

**Denver, Colo.** – Filing taxes may seem like a complicated and confusing process. This is especially true for Coloradans affected by provisions of the [Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act](https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-16-48.pdf) that go into effect this year. Thankfully, [Tax Help Colorado](http://www.piton.org/tax-help-colorado), a program that runs Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites across the state, offers free tax preparation assistance to individuals who earned $54,000 or less in 2016. Free tax preparation eases the burden of commercial tax preparation costs on low- to moderate-wage earners, and helps them navigate changes in IRS filing regulations.

Some of the changes taxpayers should pay attention to this year include:

* ***Individual Taxpayer ID Number (ITIN) Renewals Mandated by Congress:*** An Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) is a number issued by the IRS to help individuals who cannot obtain a social security number to file their taxes. In the past, a taxpayer applied for and received an ITIN only once. Recent changes to the ITIN program include a requirement that taxpayers renew their ITINs. There may be a delay in processing tax returns with an ITIN that is being renewed. The Child Tax Credit and the American Opportunity Tax Credit may also not be allowed unless the ITIN is already renewed. For some, this will result in a reduced refund. [Visit the IRS website](https://www.irs.gov/uac/newsroom/path-act-tax-related-provisions) to learn more about the PATH Act and how to renew.
* ***Tax Refund Delay***:Taxpayers that qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and/or Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC) will receive their refund at a later date this year. PATH requires that these refunds be delayed until at least February 15th, 2017. For those who qualify for these credits, their entire refund will not be received until after mid-February. Many eligible Coloradans file for taxes in early February to receive these tax credits as soon as possible, however, many families will not receive the nation’s largest anti-poverty tools until late February or early March in 2017.

* ***Health Insurance Penalties and Exemptions*** Many taxpayers may be wondering about how all of the talk about repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will affect their taxes. They should know that the penalty for not having insurance is still in place this year. The ACA requires that individuals have health coverage that meets certain minimum standards. The penalty for 2016 is 2.5% of your household income or $695 per adult, whichever is higher. The good news is that if you didn’t have health coverage for only one or two consecutive months of 2016, you may not have to pay the fee. All health coverage forms received should be brought to the tax site to confirm that the law requirements were met.

“Our volunteer tax preparers are certified by the IRS and ready to help taxpayers navigate any of their tax questions,” said Courtney O’Reilly, Tax Help Colorado program manager. “Each year we are meticulous in understanding what changes will affect taxpayers. It is our goal as tax preparers to communicate these changes and help our community members understand new processes when filing.”

Taxpayers with annual incomes under $54,000 qualify for free tax help and can call 2-1-1 to find a free tax site near them, or go to [www.piton.org/tax-help](http://www.piton.org/tax-help) to search online. Taxpayers with incomes under $64,000 can file online for free through myfreetaxes.com, which includes prompts to walk them through the process.

Learn more about the Tax Help Colorado program and The Piton Foundation’s EITC Outreach campaign at [www.piton.org/tax-help-colorado](http://www.piton.org/tax-help-colorado).

***About The Piton Foundation***

The Piton Foundation, which is part of Gary Community Investments, is a private, operating foundation established in 1976 by Denver oilman Sam Gary. It is committed to improving the lives of Colorado’s low-income children and their families by increasing access to quality early childhood and youth development opportunities and fostering healthy family and community environments. In addition to investing in creative solutions for Colorado’s low-income children and their families, Piton operates its own programs, including the Data Initiative, Tax Help Colorado, and the nation’s largest and longest-running Earned Income Tax Credit public information campaign.

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