

# **2014 Income Tax Change Summary**

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## 2014 Tax Change Summary

In the past, our firm has attempted to provide our clients with the most current and relevant information regarding the newest and latest tax laws that might affect them. Whether you have paid attention to our prior tax change summaries or not, this year could be more important than ever to take time to learn about what's new in the tax world. It will definitely be worth your while! This is just a summary of what I believe to be the more significant changes for this tax season, as well as the next few years, that I feel may affect our clients.

As most of you are aware, Congress has continued to do very little to enact new legislation of any type this past year. Most "new" tax law is a carryover of legislative changes made sometime in the past few years. This doesn't mean, however, that there aren't significant changes to deal with for 2014. With the Republican Party having recently recaptured both sides of Congress, it will be interesting to see what they can get done, and moreover what the President will sign into legislation (or veto instead).

As you may recall, Congress made some wholesale changes to the 2013 tax package; especially for the higher income earners among us. Despite a new, higher tax rate for taxable income over \$400-450k, the new Tax Package passed by Congress last year remains quite taxpayer friendly for middle and lower income taxpayers. As always, there are many things to consider and take advantage of before the end of the year.

Although it is still an issue for most highly compensated taxpayers, Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) laws have been resolved for most of the American taxpaying public for this year and beyond. Congress permanently installed a "fix" to the AMT exemptions last year. Even with Congress's extending the increased exemptions for 2014 and beyond, many of our clients will continue to be directly affected by AMT; especially those taxpayers who live in a State that taxes income. And if the AMT taxes don't get you, the new, higher tax rates will!

There are many items that Congress failed to renew (or let lapse) for 2014. Included in these items are the Sales tax deduction option, Educator expense deduction, and the above-the-line College Tuition expense, although we may see all or some of these items eventually brought back. Capital Gains rates (15% tax rate on capital gains and qualified dividends) were extended through year 2014; however capital gains rates have been increased to 20% for taxpayers with an AGI greater than \$200-250k. The expanded Roth Conversion rules were continued for 2014 and beyond, which allow anyone the option to convert their IRA into a "tax free" Roth IRA. The Estate Tax laws increasing the Death Tax Credit to \$5.34 million remain in place for 2014, and are scheduled to increase in future years via CPI (\$5.43m in 2015). And the Health Saving Account (HSA) plans continue to grow in popularity, both with the public and our government (see below for more details).

There do remain a few favorable taxpayer friendly rules for 2014, and beyond. But it seems that the higher income earners in our country will continue to feel the pinch of the “new” tax code for future years to come.

Nevertheless, imbedded within both new and prior legislation there remain many items that do not favor the taxpaying public as a whole. As stated before, AMT Taxes remain a constant problem for many well compensated taxpayers living in an income taxable State. Kiddie Tax rules subjecting children under the age of 18, and full-time students age 19-23, to their parents tax rates for unearned income greater than \$2,000 per year remain in place. Limitations on deductions for out of pocket Medical expenses were increased from 7.5% to 10% for taxpayers under age 65. There is also a new 3.8% Net Investment Income Tax (NIIT) for taxpayers with an AGI great than \$200-250k. And the dreaded Marriage Penalty has once again returned for many medium and high income taxpayers.

Probably the most dramatic change coming to the tax code for 2014 is the Affordable Care Act (ACA) laws regarding Health Care coverage and the taxes levied against taxpayers for failing to obtain coverage. The law now mandates all taxpayers to obtain health care insurance or be subject to penalties that will be levied in the form of taxes (on form 1040). Penalties in 2015 will be minimal; however, these penalties will increase substantially over the next few years. Due to the complexity of the law, we are all still learning the “in’s and out’s” of rules, so there will be more to come regarding the government’s new mandate. So stay tuned; there will be more to come.

Although it seems like there is less and less information the IRS doesn’t already have on us, higher scrutiny and accountability by the Service continues to increase regarding information they do not already collect by direct means, such as charitable donations, cost basis info of real estate transactions and business expenses. Especially in areas like non-cash donations (an area considered abused over the past). Tax returns claiming Earned Income Credits (EIC), Rental property activities (Sch. E), and Schedule “C” (self-employed taxpayers) income and expenses are also being scrutinized more closely than ever. Therefore, your attention to proper record keeping in these areas is now more important than ever!

In the past I have included a Retirement Worksheet with this information summary package. If you are considering retirement sometime in the near future, please call my office (or visit the *Popkinandassociates.com* web-site) and we can forward you a Worksheet and retirement package for your assistance in making the decision to do so!

Of course, the information provided within this material is only a brief overview of the changes made for 2014 and future years. It is for informational purposes only and is not intended for your use without the consultation of a tax professional. If you have further questions or concerns regarding these or any other issues and how they may affect your particular situation, please contact our office at your convenience and we will be happy to assist you further in your quest for understanding and knowledge.

Prepared by Mark J. Popkin for the firm.

## Changes Effective for Tax Year 2014 & 2015

- **Social Security Tax on Base Wages Increases for 2014 & 2015:**

- Tax rate of 6.2% of employee wages for 2014 (6.2% in 2015).
- Maximum income subject to SS taxation for **2014** is **\$117,000**.
- Maximum Social Security tax paid from wages in **2014** is **\$7,254.00**.
- Maximum income subject to SS taxation for **2015** is **\$118,500**.
- Medicare Tax (1.45%) remains on **all** wages/self-employed earnings.
- For **2014 and beyond**, a **Medicare Tax Surcharge** of **0.9%** will be levied on all wages over \$200k (Single/MFS), and \$250k (MFJ).

- **Extended Legislation in 2014:**

- Above-the-line Educator Expense Deduction
- Mortgage Insurance Premium Deduction
- Sales Tax Deduction
- Cancellation of Debt for Principle Residence exclusion
- IRA Charitable gifting
- First Year (50%) Bonus Depreciation
- Residential Energy Credits
- \$200,000 limit on Sec. 179 expense deduction

- **Affordable Care Act (ACA):**

- **Obama Care:** Health Insurance coverage mandate!
- All US citizens regardless of age are required to obtain Minimal Essential Coverage (MEC) in 2014.
- Or make a shared responsibility payment (SRP).
- Employers with more than 50 employees required to offer coverage.
- For others, Marketplace option is available.
- Can also continue with “private” insurance.
- Individuals must estimate income when registering thru marketplace.
- Cost of insurance based on your Modified Adjusted Gross Income.
- MAGI may include non-taxable Social Security income.
- Bronze / Silver / Gold / Platinum Coverage (60/70/80/90% coverage).
- Individuals under 30 can opt for Major Med. coverage.
- Exemption from MEC based on household income, hardship and unaffordable coverage.
- Much more info to come in the future!

- **Alternative Minimum Tax for 2013 and Beyond:**
  - AMT Exemptions for **2013** and beyond have been permanently fixed by Congress as part of the last years' "new" tax package.
  - The "new" exemption amounts will reduce AMT exposure for an estimated 20 million taxpayers.
  - All future adjustments will be indexed to CPI.
  - **Exemptions increasing** from \$52,800 (2013) to \$53,600 (2014) for Single, and from \$82,100 (2013) to \$83,400 (2014) for MFJ.
  - AMT Credit rules accelerate the use of certain AMT Credits generated from the exercise of Qualified Stock Options (ISO).
  - **Observation:** Congress's permanent fix to this annual problem will protect most middle and a few higher income taxpayers between the \$120-245k income levels from incurring AMT.
  
- **New Cancellation of Debt Rules:**
  - CODI – Cancellation of debt income (1099-C).
  - CODI is generally equal to the difference between the principal balance owed on the debt and the amount accepted in satisfaction to the debt.
  - Includible to gross income in the year occurred.
  - Repossessed property is equal to FMV at the time of repossession.
  - Exceptions to CODI are Bankruptcy and Insolvency.
  - Insolvent taxpayers should not include CODI in gross income.
  - Discharge of an obligation of an interest payment would not be income because the interest would have been deductible either way.
  
- **Qualified Principal Residence Debt Discharge:**
  - For mortgage debts discharged thru December 31, 2013, CODI is excluded from a homeowner's gross income if the debt is *qualified principal residence indebtedness*.
  - Qualified Principal Residence Indebtedness is acquisition indebtedness (under home mortgage interest deduct. rules, but with a \$2 m. limit).
  - Also includes refinanced indebtedness, but excludes amounts borrowed for other purposes.
  - Does not apply to taxpayers in Bankruptcy. Instead, the Bankruptcy exclusion applies.
  - Taxpayer may choose to apply insolvency exclusion, if it applies.
  - Rules apply to foreclosure, abandonment and deed transfers in lieu of foreclosure.
  - Other rules may apply.
  - This important tax legislation **expired** at the end of 2013.

- **Contributions (Non-Cash) for 2014:**

- Clothing/other goods donated must be in a “**Good or better**” used condition.
- IRS has the authority to deny deduction for items with minimal value.
- Donor is required to maintain written records of the donation regardless of the value of the donated property.
- Donations of \$250 or more must have a contemporaneous written acknowledgment by the donee.
- IRS will continue high level of scrutiny regarding non-cash area due to abuse in the area over the recent past.

- **Contributions (Cash) for 2014:**

- All cash contribution of \$250 or more **MUST** have a written acknowledgement from the charity in order to be eligible for a deduction in 2014.
- Taxpayers are required to substantiate their deduction and supply appraisals when necessary.

- **Vehicle Donation Rules: (Same as prior year)**

- The amount of the deduction will depend on how the donee organization uses the vehicle.
- If the charity sells the vehicle without using or improving the vehicle in any significant way, the amount of the charitable deduction is limited to the gross proceeds of the sale by the charity.
- If the charity keeps the vehicle for its own use, the taxpayers must be provided with an acknowledgement from the organization as to the value of the vehicle
- Stiff penalties will be imposed on charities that don’t approach the valuation obligation honestly.
- Acknowledgement rules begin on contributions made after Dec. 31, 2004.

- **Capital Gains Rates Extended thru 2014 and Beyond:**

- 15% Capital gains taxes rates, for both **Qualifying Dividends** and **Long-Term capital** gains rated on the sale of property held greater than one (1) year, has been extended permanently for all taxpayers under \$200k AGI (Single) and \$250k (MFJ) .
- Tax rates for taxpayers with AGI’s greater than above will pay at a rate of Twenty (20%) Percent for both Qual. Div. and LTCG.

- **Zero Percent Capital Gains Rates:**

- TIPR Act of 2005 extended the reduced capital gains rate to 0% for tax year 2013 for certain taxpayers.
- Applies to all taxpayers whose total taxable income did not exceed the upper limit of the 15% ordinary income tax bracket for the applicable filing status.
- Therefore, lower-income taxpayers can realize long-term capital gains (and qualified dividends) in 2014 and pay no income tax on the gains to the extent that their total taxable income does not exceed the upper limit of the applicable 15% bracket.

- **Health Saving Accounts:**

- Permits eligible individuals to establish a Health Saving Account (HSA) for tax years beginning after Dec. 31, 2003.
- The account was designed to assist individuals with saving for qualified medical and retiree health expenses on a pre-tax basis.
- Contributions into an HSA account are tax deductible (above the AGI line like IRA's).
- Maximum contribution for **2014** is **\$3,300** (\$3,300/2015) for individuals, and **\$6,550** (\$6,550/2015) for families.
- Additional "catch-up" contributions of \$1000 available for individuals age 55-65 in 2013 & 2014.
- Taxpayers must have a High-Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) with a minimum of \$1,250 (\$1,250/2014) annual deductible for individuals, and \$2,500 (\$2,500/2014) for families, in 2014.
- No earned income required for qualifying contributions.
- Funds grow tax free and Qualified distributions are tax-free!
- HDHP annual out-of-pocket expenses paid under the taxpayers' insurance plan must be limited to \$6,350 for ind.(\$6,450/2015), \$12,700 (\$12,800/2015) for families.
- HSA funds can only be used to pay or reimburse qualified medical expenses of the account owner, spouse and/or dependents.
- Qualified expenses include health insurance deductibles, co-payments for medical services, prescription drugs, and many other medically related expenses.
- Distributions not used for qualified expenses will be taxable to the individual, in addition to incurring a ten (10%) percent penalty.
- Can withdraw funds like an IRA after age 65, taxed with no penalties.
- Funds not spent in one year can be rolled over to the next.
- Employer's can contribute to individual's HSA. Employer contributions are not subject to FICA taxes.
- An individual ceases to be eligible for contributions starting the month he or she is entitled to receive benefits under Medicare.
- Contributions for tax year 2014 must be made prior to the earlier of your filing date of your 2014 return or April 15, 2015.
- One-time transfer from IRA to HSA (limited to annual dep. limits).



- **Kiddie Taxes:**

- No change to rules from prior year.
- Kiddie Taxes apply to **all children under the age of 18**, and **full-time students age 19-23**, applying to all years after December 31, 2007.
- Unearned income limits remains \$2,000.00 for 2014. (Adj. for inflation in future years)
- Children 18 and older are subject to Kidde Tax only if their earned income does not **exceed ½ of their support** from other sources.
- Support test calculated under dependency exemption deduction rules.
- Income amounts over limit taxed a parent's tax rate.
- Full-time student defined as individual enrolled at a qualified school for any part of 5 calendar months in the year.

- **Child Credits for 2014:**

- The child tax credit is **\$1,000** per child thru year **2014**.
- Phase-out rules apply; for joint filers (AGI above \$110K), single filers (AGI above \$75K) and MFS (AGI above \$55K).
- No credit is allow for a child for a year unless the taxpayer includes the child's name and TIN on the return.
- Child Credits have been extended for the near future.

- **Dependent Care Credit for 2014:**

- Credits are the same as allowed in prior years (2011).
- 35% of Child care Exp. for AGI (0-15k).
- 21-34% of Child care Exp. for AGI (15-43k).
- 20% of Child care Exp. For AGI above 43k.
- Max. credit per child is 1,050/ for multiple children \$2,100.
- Max. credit for AGI over \$43k is \$600/child, max. \$1,200.

- **Sec. 179 for Vehicles:**

- Weight limits for vehicles that qualify for \$25K max. Sec. 179 deduction has been changed to 14,000 lbs. gross weight, from 6000 lbs. gross weight.
- All vehicles weighing greater than 6000 lbs., will qualify for up to \$25K deduction allowable.
- Annual depreciation dollar caps apply to all other vehicles.

- **Sec. 179 Limits Increased (other than Vehicles):**
  - Maximum deduction for **2014** is **\$25,000**.
  - Maximum purchase limitation for 2014 is \$200,000 (see below).
  - The total cost of property expensed may not exceed the total taxable income for year. May include officer's salaries in some cases.
  - Qualifying property must have minimum 50% business usage.
  - Any deduction limited by income test may be carried forward.
  
- **Accelerated (50% Bonus) Depreciation for 2013:**
  - First year depreciation deduction equal to **50%** of the adjusted cost basis of qualified property purchased after 12/31/11 and before 1/1/14.
  - Must elect out if not desired.
  - No AMT Adjustment for deduction.
  - Deduction not limited by income like Sec. 179 deduction.
  - Can create NOL with election of the deduction.
  - Increased auto deduction limits (\$2,960 to \$11,060).
  - Increase truck/van deduction limits (\$3,160 to 11,160).
  - **Legislation expired as of Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013.**
  
- **Deduction for Higher Education Expenses:**
  - New legislation called the "American Opportunity Credit"
  - Replaces the "Hope" Credit from prior years' legislation.
  - Covers the first 4 years of post-secondary education.
  - Taxpayers who claimed the "Hope" credit in the previous 2 years can claim the AOC for 2013, if they meet the other requirements.
  - Max. credit is \$2,500 (100% of first \$2000, plus 25% of next \$2000) in qualified expenses.
  - AGI Phase out range is higher for most taxpayers (\$160-180k MFJ, \$80-90k Single).
  - Up to \$1000 of the AOC is refundable, unless child is subject to Kiddie Tax
  - Eligible expenses include not only tuition and fees, but also course materials (books, supplies, and equip.)
  - AOC Credits have been extended for **2014** and beyond.
  - All other "Hope" credit eligibility rules apply.
  - Lifetime Learned Credits are still available as well.
  - **Above-the-line Tuition Deduction not available for 2014.**

- **Qualifying Child (Exemption Status) Redefined:**

- Beginning with tax year 2005 and thereafter, a child will be considered a qualifying child of a taxpayer for dependency purposes if the child has:
  - The same principle abode as the taxpayer for more than one-half of the taxable year;
  - Has a specific relationship to the taxpayer (close family member), and;
  - Under the age of 19 (under age 24 for a full-time student).
- No age limit for permanently disabled individuals.
- Child must be under age 13 for dependent care credit, unless disabled.
- Child must be under age 17 for child credit, whether disabled or not.
- The new “qualifying child” rules are very different from the prior rules. Harder to qualify under certain circumstances.

- **Medical Assistance Needs Defined:**

- 6 basic Activities of Daily Living (ADL).
- Tasks to accomplish each day to live independently.
- Eating / Bathing / Toileting / Getting in and out of bed / Getting around the house / Taking required medication
- Considered disabled if unable to perform 2 of 6 or more tasks.
- Standard for moving individual to assisted living facility (Insurance).
- Most, if not all of the cost of assisted living /nursing home facility expenses are tax deductible as medical expenses.
- Most, if not all of the cost of in home care, including a day-nurse, is deductible as a medical expense, if unable to perform 2 of 6 ADL’s.
- Long-term Health Care Insurance (LTHC) policies also tax deductible.

- **Increase in Standard Deductions for 2014 & 2015:**

Single:.....	\$ 6,200 / 2014	\$ 6,300 / 2015
Married Filing Joint:	\$12,400 / 2014	\$12,600 / 2015
Head of Household:	\$ 9,100 / 2014	\$ 9,250 / 2015
Married Filing Sep.:	\$ 6,200 / 2014	\$ 6,300 / 2015
Dependent:	\$ 1,000 / 2014	\$ 1,050 / 2015

- **Personal Exemptions for 2014:**

- The deductible amount per personal exemption has been increased for tax year 2014 to **\$3,950**, per dependent claimed on form 1040.
- The personal exemption amounts are anticipated to be **\$4,000** for 2015.

- **Conversion rules for Rental to Principal Residence:**
  - Sec. 121 does not exclude gain from the sale of a principal residence from gross income, for periods of nonqualified use.
  - Gain must be allocated between periods of qualified and nonqualified use by applying a ratio of the aggregate periods.
  - Period of nonqualified use is any period beginning on or after Jan. 1, 2009, when the property is not used as a principal residence.
  - Nonqualified use does not include any part of the 5-year period that is after the last date the taxpayer(s) used it as a principal residence, or any period (not to exceed 2 years) that the taxpayer is temporarily absent by reason of a change in employment, health, or unforeseen circumstances. Actual use of the property during these periods does not matter.
  - Therefore, a taxpayer can no longer turn a rental property into a principal residence for at least 2 years and exclude all of the gain on a subsequent sale.
  - However, a taxpayer can rent a principal residence for up to 3 years and still exclude all gains except the portion allocable to depreciation.
  
- **Georgia Retirement Exclusion for 2013 and thereafter:**
  - The retirement exclusion allowed by Georgia for taxpayers 62 years of age or permanently disabled, remains at **\$35,000** for year **2014**.
  - New Retirement Exclusion for taxpayers **over 65**, starting in **2012**.
  - For Ga. residents 65 and older, credit will increase:
    - **2012 & beyond...\$65k** retirement income exclusion.
  
- **Standard Mileage Rates for 2014:**
  - Standard mileage rate for business in effect for **2014** is \$ **.56** per mile.
  - Standard mileage rate for moving and medical transportation for **2014** is \$ **.23** per mile.
  - Standard mileage rate for charitable services for **2014** is \$ **.14** per mile.
  - Standard mileage rate for business for **2015** is anticipated to be \$ **.57 ½** per mile.
  
- **Self-Employed Health Insurance Deduction:**
  - Income adjustment for Self-Employed Health Insurance deduction remains at **100%** for tax year **2005** and thereafter.
  - For 2010, self-employed taxpayers filing a Schedule “C” may deduct SE Health Insurance as a business expense.

- **Student Loan Interest Deduction:**
  - Individuals with less than \$65K AGI, and joint filers with less than \$130K AGI will be able to deduct up to **\$2,500 per year** in education loan interest payments, for tax years 2014.
  - Phase-out of deduction begins for taxpayers with AGI of \$60-75k for single filers, and \$120-150k for MFJ.
  - No requirement to itemize (above-the-line adjustment to income).
  
- **Adoption Credits:**
  - Refundable credit for **2014** of up to **\$13,190** per child.
  - Phase out of credit begins at \$197,880 AGI.
  - No credit for 2014 if income (AGI) is over \$237,880
  - The refundable credit was not renewed for 2013, and beyond.
  - Non-refundable credit can be carried forward for up to 5 yrs.
  - Other limitations may apply.
  
- **Increase in EIC Tax Credits for 2014:**
  - Maximum Earned Income Credits available for 2014:
    - Taxpayer w/ no qual. child - \$ 487
    - Taxpayer w/ 1 qual. Child - \$ 3,250
    - Taxpayer w/ 2 qual. Children - \$ 5,372
    - Taxpayer w/ 3 or more Child - \$ 6,044
  
- **Roth Conversions:**
  - Beginning in year **2010**, there is no longer an adjusted gross income cap limitation on individual's ability to convert a traditional IRA to a "tax free" Roth IRA.
  - Conversions remain available for tax year 2014, and beyond.
  - MFS taxpayers will be able to convert in 2014 if they lived apart all year.
  
- **Simplified Employee Pensions (SEP Plans):**
  - Maximum Contribution for **2014** is limited to **25% annual compensation**, or a max. of **\$52,000**.

- **Traditional and Roth IRAs:**

- For tax year **2014**, the maximum amount that can be contributed to a Traditional IRA or Roth IRA is **\$5,500** (\$6,500 max for catch up)(See below).
- Income limits making individuals ineligible to contribute to a **Traditional IRA in 2014** (MFJ=\$95-115k / S=\$59-69k / MFS=\$0-10k), if one or both spouses are participants in an Emp. based retirement plan (401K, 403B, 457).
- Income limits making individuals ineligible to contribute to a **Roth IRA in 2014** (MFJ=\$178-188k / S=\$112-127k / MFS=\$0-10k).
- Individuals over the age of 50 are allowed to make additional contributions of up to \$1,000 to either IRA.
- **Direct Deposit of Tax Refunds** now available for funding IRA deposit for the tax year.
- **Tax-Free Distribution** from IRA for Charitable Contributions allowable under new law (**not renewed for 2014**).
- **IRA Rollovers** (60 day time limit) are limited to once per calendar year.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Contribution Limit if Under Age 50</u>	<u>Contribution Limit if Age 50 or Older</u>
<b>2014</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>	<b>\$6,500</b> (Adj. for inflation)
<b>2015</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>	<b>\$6,500</b>

- **Employer Sponsored Retirement Plans (401k, 403b, 457):**

- Effective deferral limits on 401(k), 403(b) and 457 retirement plans (see chart below).
- For individuals over the age of 50, a catch-up provision will allow an additional contribution.
- Self-employed 401(k) is now available, with a substantial increase in deferred compensation possible..

<u>Year</u>	<u>Deferral Limits</u>	<u>Extra Catch-up Contribution Limits</u>
<b>2014</b>	<b>\$17,500</b>	<b>\$5,500</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>	<b>\$6,000</b>

- **SIMPLE IRA Plans:**

- The **2014** deferral limits of the SIMPLE IRA 408(p) plans have been increased to \$12,000.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Deferral Limits</u>	<u>Extra Catch-up Contribution Limits</u>
<b>2014</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>\$12,500</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>

- **Tax Credit for Elective Deferrals and IRA Contributions:**
  - **Lower income taxpayers** may receive a **non-refundable credit of up to \$1,000** for contributions made to a qualified retirement plan.
  - Qualified plans include SIMPLE IRA, Traditional and Roth IRAs, SEPs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, and 457 plans.
  - Phase-out of credit begins for MFJ at \$35,501 AGI, HH at \$26,626 AGI, and all others at \$17,751 AGI.
  - Credits reduced by taxable distributions received by either taxpayer from a qualified deferred saving plan, during the taxable year for which the credit is claimed, the two (2) years prior to that year, and/or during the period ending the taxable year but prior to the filing of the taxpayer's return.
  - Credit available to individuals who are at least eighteen (18) or over, other than individuals who are full-time students or claimed as a dependent on another's tax return.
  
- **Annual Gift Exclusion for 2014:**
  - The Annual Gift Tax Exclusion has increased to **\$14,000** for year **2014**.
  - Anticipated that the exclusion will remain at **\$14,000** for **2015**.
  - **Observation:** Annual contribution limits to 529 (College saving) plans are \$14,000!
  
- **Five-Year Carry-back of NOL's:**
  - Generally, NOL's (Net Operating Loss) may be carried back for two (2) years.
  - Beginning in 2008, Corporations, Partnerships and Sole-proprietorships can elect to carry back three (3), four (4) or five (5) tax years.
  - Applies only to businesses that meet the \$15 million or less gross receipts test.
  - Carry back only 50% for first year beyond the original two (2) years.
  - Other significant rules and AMT issues may apply.
  
- **2014 Tax Tables (Tax Rates):**
  - There have been significant changes made to the Personal Income Tax rates for tax years **2014, and beyond**.
  - The lower income brackets are substantially the same as prior year, having been increased slightly for inflation.
  - For **2013 and beyond**, the top tax bracket will include a **rate of 39.6%** (a 4.6% increase) for all taxpayers having taxable income greater than \$450k (MFJ), \$425k (HH), \$400k (Single) and \$225k (MFS).

- **2014 Medicare Surcharge Tax (3.8%) NIIT Tax:**
  - Beginning in **2013 and beyond**, unearned income (Interest, Dividends, Capital Gains, etc.) of individuals, trusts and estates is subject to a surtax of **3.8%** on “net investment income”.
  - The surtax, also called the “unearned income Medicare contribution tax”, is 3.8% of the lesser of (1) net investment income or (2) the excess of modified AGI over the threshold amount (\$250k for MFJ, \$200k for single, and \$125k for MFS) for individuals.
  - Example: Single individual with net investment income of \$100k and an MAGI of \$220k would pay 3.8% on \$20k or \$760 surtax.
  - For Estates and Trusts, the surtax is the lesser of (1) the undistributed net investment income or (2) the excess of adjusted gross income over highest tax brackets for estates and trusts.
  - Investment income includes interest, dividends, capital gains, annuities, royalties, rents (unless derived in the ordinary course of business), and passive income from S-Corp distributions.
  - **Rules remain unchanged for 2014 & 2015.**
  
- **2014 Medical Itemized Deduction Limitation Increase:**
  - Starting in 2013, for taxpayers under the age of 65, the percentage of AGI must exceed **10%**. For taxpayers **65 and older**, the percentage remains at **7.5%** of AGI thru 2016.
  - The 10% limitation will apply to **all taxpayers** in tax year **2017 & beyond**.
  - Deductions include all unreimbursed medical and dental expenses paid for yourself, your spouse and your dependents, for the year.
  - Deductible medical expenses include the diagnosis, mitigation and treatment, prevention of disease or for the purpose of affecting the body structure or function, as well as nursing services, insurance payments and transportation for services.
  - Deductible amount, “the out of pocket expenses”, is net of any insurance reimbursement received.
  
- **Same Sex Marriages recognized by the Treasury Dept.:**
  - Under a new Treasury ruling released August 29, 2013, all legal same-sex marriages will be recognized for federal tax purposes.
  - Therefore, taxpayers who enter into a marriage in a jurisdiction whose laws authorize such marriages will be treated as married for tax filing purposes.
  - These rules shall apply regardless of whether the couple lives in a jurisdiction that recognizes or does not recognize such marriages.
  - Observation: A couple can be forced to file as Single taxpayers should they live in a jurisdiction that does not recognize their status, and still be required to file as MFJ/MFS for Federal purposes.



- **New Office In Home (Safe Harbor) Rules:**

- New rules permitting taxpayers that regularly use a portion of their home exclusively for trade or business to deduct a maximum of \$5 multiply by the qualified square footage, however limited to 300 sq ft.
- Therefore, the maximum deduction under the “new” Safe Harbor” method is \$1,500.00.
- Beginning January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, qualified taxpayers may choose to deduction OIH expenses under the new “Safe Harbor” method or continue to use the “actual” method on form 8829, as they have in the past.
- Year by year election by taxpayer as to which to take advantage of.
- Taxpayer using Safe Harbor method may deduct all allowable itemized deduction (mortgage interest, property taxes, etc.) w/o reduction.

- **New Estate Tax Law & Tax Rates:**

- Prior legislation gradually reduced the estate tax rates and increased the amount of non-taxable transfers (\$3.5 million in 2009), until 2010 when the Federal Estate tax was eliminated for all estates.
- New legislation revives the estate taxes for decedents dying after December 31, 2010.
- **The 2014 exclusion amount is increased to \$5.34 million**, with a maximum tax rate of forty (40%) percent.
- Anticipated that the exclusion will be **\$5.43m in 2015**, with a maximum tax rate will increase to forty (40%) percent.
- If decedent died in 2010, on estates of \$5 million value or greater, the estate may choose to pay tax with full step up in basis of assets, or pay no tax and receive modified step up in basis.
- New law allows for “**portability**” between spouses of the maximum death exclusion (\$5mil.+). Surviving spouse may elect (on a timely basis) to take advantage of the unused portion of his/her spouses exclusion.
- **Observation:** With careful planning, a married couple can effectively shield up to \$10+ million in assets from estate tax.
- Generation Skipping Tax (GST Tax) has been increased to the \$5m+ exemption as well.

- **Phase-Out of Itemized Deductions and Personal Exemptions:**

- For **2013 and beyond**, taxpayers with AGI above \$309k (MFJ), \$282k (HH), \$154k (MFS) and \$258k (Single), itemized deductions and personal exemptions will be phased-out.
- Deductions are reduced by the lesser of 3% of AGI exceeding the amounts shown above or 80% of the allowable deduction.
- **Maximum reduction** of itemized deductions is twenty (20%) percent.

- **2014 Obama Care Wage/ Income Medicare Tax:**
  - Beginning in 2013, additional Medicare Tax of **0.09%** will be charged to all individuals **earning in excess of \$200k** (\$250k for two wage earners).
  - Required by IRS to be withheld by individual's employer.
  - Self-employed taxpayers will pay the additional tax via form 1040.
  
- **Owing \$ to the IRS:**
  - **Partial Payment Agreements:** Taxpayer may request the IRS to enter into an installment agreement that result in full or partial payment of the tax liability. Maximum three (3) year payment agreement available. Subject to financial review every two (2) years.
  - **Offer in Compromise:** Taxpayer may request the IRS to take a payment of less than the total tax liability for reason including doubt as to liability and doubt as to collectability of the tax. Many rules apply in order to qualify. New streamline process of taxpayers owing less than \$50k.
  - **Installment Agreements:** File request for installment agreement (form 9465). Balance must be less than **\$50,000**. Must agree to pay within five (5) years. For amount over \$25K, form 433-A must be filed with the request. Must remain current on all future returns while under agreement. Request automatic if less than \$10K. IRS may issue a tax lien under certain circumstances.
  
- **Tax Scams and other related items:**
  - **Phone calls from the IRS:** I have received a lot of contact from clients over the past few months that have been receiving what they believe are phone calls from the IRS. The person on the call usually makes a statement that you have **“failed to file and/or pay all of your taxes”** and unless you are willing to make payment today (over the phone), they will bring a warrant for your arrest.
  - **IRS NEVER calls:** Should you receive a call as described above, it is a **SCAM!** The IRS will only contact taxpayers by letter or direct contact (ie. showing up at your doorstep and presenting a badge). The only time you may get a call from the IRS is once you have established a line of communication with an IRS agent, you can give them permission to call you directly.
  - **Never give your Social Security Number to anyone you don't know:** Especially over the phone!

This review of the changes for 2014, 2015 and future years is simply a highlight of the changes made by Congress in the Tax Acts of 2014 and prior years. **It is not intended to be used as a source of tax information to rely upon when making decisions about your income taxes.** Rather, it has been prepared to offer an overview of the changes in question and to make you aware of those changes which may affect your taxes in the future.

There are other, numerous changes to the tax code that have not been listed herein. If you feel that your tax situation may be impacted by these or any other changes to the tax code, please contact your tax professional for further discussion and understanding of the changes, as you feel necessary.

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