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New for your

2018 taxes

Rules for taxes are constantly changing. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was approved on Dec. 22, 2017, and will be effective for your 2018 filing. The reform is considered the largest overhaul to the American tax code since 1986. Do you know what it means for you?

In previous years, many individuals benefited from itemizing their deductions. This is the process of including expenses like sales tax, property tax and medical or dental costs you accrued. Under the new reform, many people will find advantages when taking a standard deduction, making the filing process much simpler.

Here are some of the changes you should know about before preparing your taxes for 2018.

A NEED FOR SIMPLICITY

Previous tax laws were costing the nation both time and money. In fact, the Tax Foundation, a think tank, reports that in 2016, people spent 2.6 billion hours complying with IRS requirements. The new bill makes a simple standard deduction more attractive to filers.

Here are the new standard deduction amounts for 2018, according to the Internal Revenue Service:

- Individuals: \$12,000
- Married filing jointly or qualifying widow(er): \$24,000
- Married filing separately: \$12,000
- Head of household: \$18,000

Each category received an increase for this year — for most, an itemized deduction is no longer the most beneficial option. The new reform nearly doubled the standard deduc-



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tion from previous years — it is up from \$6,500 for individuals and \$13,000 for families.

DEDUCTION CHANGES

For those who are required to perform an itemized deduction, there are several changes to know about. Here are a few

of the highlights from the TCJA.

- Interest paid toward home equity debt may only be included if money is spent on acquiring, updating or constructing a primary or secondary structure.
- Alimony payments, business entertainment expenses

and losses from theft are no longer deductible.

- Medical expenses may be deducted if they exceed 7.5 percent of your AGI.

CHILD TAX CREDIT INCREASE

Parents and legal guardians

will also receive an additional bonus during tax time as the Child Tax Credit has been increased to \$2,000 this year. The age cut-off for the credit is the same as in years pas. Children under 17 at the end of the year qualify for the credit.

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