



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

# NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Gov. Blagojevich announces free tax preparation counseling and services for low-income families**

*Officials urge Illinois workers to apply for the expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and new homeownership opportunities*

CHICAGO – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today encouraged working families to use free tax counseling services to maximize their tax refunds and apply for the recently expanded Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). This year’s tax counseling plan marks the first time that low income families are encouraged to connect tax refunds and credits to matched savings accounts for homeownership. Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Secretary Carol L. Adams, PhD., and Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) Director Brian Hamer today joined with the Center for Economic Progress and the Tax Assistance Program to announce the innovative plan and urged more people to take advantage of free tax preparation services, and the newly expanded Illinois EITC. This year, Governor Blagojevich signed legislation which made 100,000 more Illinoisans eligible for the Illinois EITC.

“Our goal is simple. We want to help families apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit and use their tax returns to help buy a new home.” said Gov. Blagojevich “We are offering low-income families the tax counseling and opportunity to take the cash from their tax to pursue the dream of homeownership.”

At the tax counseling sites, families throughout the state of Illinois will be invited to participate in the Asset\$Illinois Homeownership Initiative, which provides a \$1 for \$1 match on savings up to \$2000 towards the purchase of a first home. Other families will be offered access to student financial aid along with tax counseling services, a benefit that can yield more than \$10,000 in federal and state student assistance. IDHS hopes to provide more than 1000 Illinois families with access to both of these programs this tax season.

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*Income tax return assistance/page two*

As workers prepare to file their income returns, Illinois Department of Revenue Director Brian Hamer is reminding workers to see if they qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which can help boost their take-home pay, and to take advantage of newly-expanded tax preparation services being offered for free through the state.

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich signed legislation in August expanding eligibility for the Illinois EITC refund to an additional 100,000 hard-working Illinoisans. The new law ended the provision that required individuals to qualify for federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) money in order to receive an Illinois EITC refund.

"Every dollar counts when you are living on a modest income; that's why the free tax counseling and assistance programs are so important to families," Director Hamer said. "This year we are encouraging taxpayers to avoid high interest refund anticipation loans which can siphon off a large portion of their refund. Taxpayers should file electronically either at home or with a tax professional in order to get their Illinois tax refund in about a week."

The Earned Income Tax Credit, the major federal benefit for low and moderate-income families, can be worth as much as \$4,716 to a family with two or more children. In addition, the state EITC can provide up to \$235 in state income tax relief. Together, these benefits put money back into the pockets of Illinois' working families.

Secretary Adams said IDHS is reaching out to the people it serves, as well as those who have left IDHS programs for jobs. IDHS is encouraging these individuals to take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and free tax counseling provided by the Tax Counseling Project and the Tax Assistance Program. Most sites will open on January 26 and provide services through April 12.

IDHS provides funding to the Tax Assistance Program and the Tax Counseling Project, which is administered by the Center for Economic Progress. This year the state will support free tax counseling at 64 locations across the state, the most ever. These programs offer free tax assistance and promote the EITC to low-income workers. The services are provided free of charge to families with incomes less than \$40,000 and to individuals with incomes under \$15,000. Last year, nearly 30,000 Illinoisans received free income tax preparation assistance worth \$43 million in refunds.

"The tax refund is the largest single payment of any kind that working families receive all year. And with the right help, families can use the tax refund as a stepping stone from falling behind to getting ahead," said David Marzahl, Executive Director of the Center for Economic Progress. "For more than a decade, the Center for Economic Progress has helped 175,000 low-income families get the max from tax time. We offer free tax help in 40 communities throughout Illinois. We make sure families claim all the benefits and credits they are entitled to and we have financial coaches at our tax sites to teach families how to use that refund wisely."

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*Income tax return assistance/page three*

Low-income working families, many of whom may be new to the workforce, often do not have access to affordable, professional tax preparation. Many taxpayers use tax preparation services that charge high fees. Some are also persuaded to apply for “rapid refund” loans with high interest rates and fees which can greatly reduce their actual benefits.

“For many households, these benefits are critical to rising out of poverty and making the transition from dependency to lasting self-sufficiency,” Secretary Adams said. “We are continuing to make as many Illinois workers as possible aware of the EITC and how to apply for it. Additionally, the EITC does not affect eligibility for IDHS benefits.”

The Tax Counseling Project trains volunteers to provide free tax services to families and individuals at 15 locations in Chicago and 19 other sites throughout Illinois. DHS also funds the Tax Assistance Program (TAP), which has 25 locations in Chicago and the suburbs. TAP recruits tax professionals to volunteer to assist low-income families.

Volunteers will prepare federal and state returns for the current year and, if necessary, for the past tax years. Volunteers also provide counseling and advise workers about withholding allowances, filing status, and other tax benefits (such as the Child Credit and the Child Care Credit) for which they may qualify.

For more information on the Tax Counseling Project, contact the Center for Economic Progress in Chicago at 312-630-0273 or call the toll free statewide number at 888-827-8511. For information on the Tax Assistance Program call 312-409-1555. Details are also available on the IDHS website at [www.dhs.state.il.us](http://www.dhs.state.il.us) and the Department of Revenue site at [www.revenue.state.il.us](http://www.revenue.state.il.us).

A complete listing of the tax help sites and their hours of operation follows. Electronic filing is available at many locations.

Tax Counseling Project

Chicago Sites:

AUBURN GRESHAM

Saturdays, 10am – 1pm

St. Sabina Employment Resource Center  
7909 S. Racine  
*Mon & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

CHINATOWN  
Only open Saturday, Feb. 2 & 9  
Cathay Bank  
222 W. Cermak Road  
*10am – 3pm*

BACK OF THE YARDS  
Immaculate Heart of Mary Hall  
4521 S. Ashland  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*

HUMBOLDT PARK  
Association House  
1116 N. Kedzie  
*Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

BRONZEVILLE  
Abraham Lincoln Centre  
3858 S. Cottage Grove  
*Mon, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*

LAWNDALE  
Homan Square Community Center

3517 W. Arthington Street  
*Mon & Wed, 6pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

LOOP  
Harold Washington College  
30 E. Lake  
*Mon – Thurs, 10am – 1pm*  
*Mon – Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

PILSEN  
Instituto del Progreso Latino  
2570 S. Blue Island Avenue  
*Mon, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

ROGERS PARK  
Loyola Park Fieldhouse  
1230 W. Greenleaf  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

SOUTH CHICAGO  
Olive Harvey College  
South Chicago Campus  
3055 E. 92nd Street  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

UPTOWN  
Truman College  
1145 W. Wilson  
*Mon – Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*  
North Side Credit Union  
1011 W. Lawrence Avenue  
*Tuesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm*

WEST GARFIELD PARK  
Bethel New Life Center  
4006 W. Lake  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

WEST HAVEN  
Malcolm X College  
1900 W. Van Buren  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

WOODLAWN  
Woodlawn Preservation & Investment Corp.  
6101 S. Evans Avenue  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays 10am – 1pm*

CHICAGO SUBURBS & NORTHERN IL  
AURORA  
Waubonsee Community College  
5 East Galena Blvd.  
*Wednesdays 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

CRYSTAL LAKE  
McHenry Community College  
8900 U.S. Highway 14, Building A  
Crystal Lake, IL 60012  
*Wednesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays: 10am – 1pm*

ELGIN  
Gail Borden Library  
270 N. Grove Ave.  
*Mon & Tues, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 1pm – 4 pm*

HARVEY  
Harvey Public Library District  
15441 Turlington Avenue  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

JOLIET  
University of St. Francis  
College of Nursing Bldg.  
605 Taylor Street  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

ROCKFORD  
Northwest Community Center  
1325 N. Johnston Avenue  
*Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

WAUKEGAN  
*Only open Saturday, Feb. 23, Mar. 1, & Mar. 15*  
YWCA – Lake County  
2133 Belvedere Rd  
*10am – 3pm*

DOWNSTATE

ALTON  
Service begins January 19  
Illinois Employment Training Ctr.  
90 N. Port Drive  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

## BLOOMINGTON

*Closed Mon, Wed after Feb. 27*  
*Site closed after April 12*  
Bloomington Housing Authority  
104 E. Wood Street  
*Mon- Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 9:30am – 12pm*

Miller Park Pavillion  
1020 South Morris Ave  
*Mondays, 9am – 2pm*

## CHAMPAIGN

Service begins February 2  
Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation  
302 N. 1st Street  
*Wed & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 9am – 3pm*

## DECATUR

Site open only on Saturdays after March 8  
Decatur Public Library  
130 North Franklin Street  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 9:30am – 2:30pm*  
*\*Site Closed February 12*

## EAST ST. LOUIS

*Site open only on Tuesdays and Saturdays after*  
*March 15*  
New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church  
5803 Belmont Avenue  
*Tues, Wed, & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

## MARION

Man-Tra-Con Corp.  
3000 W. Deyoung, Ste. 800-B  
*Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

## MOLINE

Site open Jan. 29 – Feb. 16  
Illinois Employment Training Ctr.  
4703 16th Street, Ste. H  
*Tues & Thurs, 5:30pm – 8pm\**  
*Saturdays, 9am – 2pm*  
*\*Appointment only on weekdays, call 309-793-6391*

## NORMAL

Site open Jan. 25 – Apr. 11  
Normal Senior Center  
1 Normal Plaza – 1110 Douglas  
*Fridays, 9:30am – 2:30pm\**

*\*Appointments served first,*  
*Walk-ins welcome.*  
Call 309-888-9099

*Site open Jan. 28 – Apr. 7*  
Normal Public Library  
206 W. College Avenue  
*Mondays, 5:30 – 8pm*

## PEORIA

Carver Community Center  
710 W. 3rd Avenue  
*Tuesdays, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 9am – 3pm*

## Friendship House

800 NE Madison  
*Mon & Thurs, 5pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

## ROCK ISLAND

Martin Luther King Center  
630 Martin Luther King Drive  
*Mon & Tues, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 10am – 1pm*

## SPRINGFIELD

Service begins January 23  
Springfield Learning Center  
1507 E. Cook  
*Mon & Wed, 5:30pm – 8pm*  
*Saturdays, 9am – 2pm*  
*\*Site Closed Mar. 8, 10, & 12*  
*One-Day Only Tax Help Available In:*

## CARMI

Southeastern Illinois College  
1700 College Avenue  
Carmi, IL 68281  
Saturday, February 2  
*9:00am - 4:00pm*

## DANVILLE

Danville Area Community College  
2000 E. Main Street  
Lincoln Hall Rooms 219 & 220  
Danville, IL 61832  
Sunday, February 10  
*9:00am - 4:00pm*

## JACKSONVILLE

Jacksonville Public Library  
201 West College Ave

Lower Level Meeting Room  
Jacksonville, IL 62650  
Sunday, January 27  
12:00pm - 5:00pm

KARNAK  
Shawnee Development Council  
530 W. Washington Street  
(State Route 169)  
Karnak, IL 62956  
Sunday, February 3  
8:30am - 3:00pm

MACOMB  
Macomb Jr.-Sr. High School

### Tax Assistance Program

#### Chicago

(TAP programs open Saturdays January 26 – April 12 8:30 to 11:30 am. Closed March 10)

City Hall  
121 N. LaSalle St., Room 100  
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. from Jan. 22 - Feb.  
28 & Tues. from Mar. 4 - Apr. 8, 5:30 - 8:30 PM*

McCormick Boys & Girls Club  
4835 N. Sheridan Rd.  
(Lawrence & Sheridan)

Roberto Clemente Community Academy  
1147 N. Western Avenue  
(Division and Western)  
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. in Feb, 5:30 –  
8:30pm*

WIC Food Center - Armitage  
3110 W. Armitage Ave.  
(Armitage & Kedzie)

WIC Food Center - Diversey  
4624 W. Diversey Ave.  
(Cicero & Diversey)

Reilly Elementary School  
3650 W. School St.  
(Belmont & Central Park)  
*Only open Jan. 26 - Mar. 1*

5th Congressional District  
3742 W. Irving Park Rd.  
(Irving Park & Hamlin)

1525 S. Johnson Street  
Entrance K  
(Commons entrance off Circle Drive)  
Macomb, IL 61455  
Saturday, February 9  
8:00am - 3:00pm

SPARTA  
Sparta Public Library  
211 W. Broadway Street  
Sparta, IL 62286  
Sunday, February 10  
10:00am - 5:00pm

Wilbur Wright College  
4300 N. Narragansett Ave., Room L 127  
(Montrose & Narragansett)  
*Closed Mar. 22*

Holy Angels Church  
607 E. Oakwood Blvd., Basement  
(40th & Oakwood)  
*Closed Jan. 26*

WIC Food Center - Western  
5332 S. Western Ave.  
(53rd & Western)

Kennedy-King College  
6401 S. Halsted St., Building Y, Room Y 109  
(63rd & Halsted)

St. Columbanus Church  
331 E. 71st St., The Glass House  
(71st & King)  
*Only open Jan. 26 - Mar. 1*

Paul Revere Community School  
1010 E. 72nd St.  
(72nd & Ellis)  
*Only open Feb. 2, 9, 16*

Chicago Vocational Career Academy  
2100 E. 87th St.  
(87th & Jeffery)

Olive-Harvey College  
10001 S. Woodlawn Ave.  
(103rd & Woodlawn)

Benito Juarez Community Academy  
2150 S. Laflin Ave.  
(Cermak & Ashland)  
*Also open Tues. and Thurs. in Feb., 5:30 - 8:30  
PM*  
*Closed Feb. 16, Mar. 1, Mar. 22*

West Side Technical Institute  
2800 S. Western Ave.  
(28th & Western)

WIC Food Center - Kedzie  
2400 S. Kedzie Ave.  
(24th & Kedzie)

Piotrowski Park  
4247 W. 31st St.  
(31st & Pulaski)

Austin Town Hall  
5610 W. Lake St.  
(Lake & Central)

AURORA  
Cowherd Middle School  
441 N. Farnsworth Ave.

VILLA PARK  
Illinois Dept. of Human Services  
146 W. Roosevelt Rd.  
*Also open on Mar. 8*

PLAINFIELD  
Office of House Minority Leader Tom Cross  
530 W. Lockport St., Suite 204

WAUKEGAN  
Park Place Senior Center  
414 S. Lewis Ave.  
*Site open 9 AM - 12 PM*

MAYWOOD  
Maywood Public Library  
121 S. 5th Ave.  
*Site open 9 AM - 12 PM*

CICERO  
Unity Junior High School  
2100 S. Laramie Ave.