



## **IRS tax credit not being used**

By NICOLE ORNE, Reformer Staff

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BRATTLEBORO -- Qualifying taxpayers who don't claim the Earned Income Tax Credit could be missing out on an average refund of \$1,589, the Office of the State Treasurer has said.

In Vermont, residents can also receive an additional tax credit of 32 percent of the federal EITC. Two years ago in Windham County, IRS senior tax consultant Christine Curtis said, the average low-income taxpayer got a refund of about \$1,300, indicating that the EITC can mean a substantially larger refund.

"Many Vermonters are just trying to put food on the table," State Treasurer Jeb Spaulding said.

"EITC represents a significant boost to the income of families who could most use the extra funds."

Qualifying taxpayers, generally, are those with two or more children earning less than \$37,783 (or \$39,783 if married and filing jointly); or those with one child who earn less than \$33,241 (or \$35,241 if married and filing jointly) or single taxpayers making less than \$12,590 (or couples filing jointly with no qualifying children making less than \$14,590).

National numbers show, though, that roughly a quarter of eligible taxpayers still don't file.

The tax credit, created in 1975, is available for low- to moderate-income taxpayers, but many aren't aware that they qualify, Spaulding said.

"If you're busy trying to make ends meet and raise a family, you're often not aware of what's available out there," he said. "I want to urge everyone to check their eligibility and make sure they do not miss claiming this tax credit."

Curtis, who works in the state to get low-income taxpayers to the resources, said there are a number of reasons people may not know about tax credits.

"A lot of times people don't realize they're there. They could be a new worker, they could be someone who was a higher income worker who was laid off. We find some are immigrants coming into the community who, because of the tax structure in their own country, are a little afraid of the government."

Some are self-employed, some are single mothers or newly divorced people, she said.

The state has been trying to get this information out to those who need it, Spaulding said, including radio and television public service announcements this week. He encourages people who believe they may qualify for EITC or for free tax services to go to the Web site ([www.moneyed.vermont.gov](http://www.moneyed.vermont.gov)) for a list of locations.

In Windham County, there is a service at the Marlboro College Technology Center in Brattleboro by appointment only.

These services can help taxpayers determine what credits they qualify for. "Our certified tax preparers make a point of checking a client's EITC eligibility," Hal Cohen, executive director of the Central Vermont Community Action Council said. "We've seen repeatedly what a difference this tax credit can make for income-sensitive families."

State Treasurers across the country are working to provide more help with "financial literacy," Spaulding said, a term associated with everyday financial tasks such as checkbook management and saving for retirement.

This assistance is the state's "moral obligation" to those Vermonters who can't afford to live a "lifestyle we think working Vermonters should be able to lead," Spaulding said. "It's something they're owed."

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