



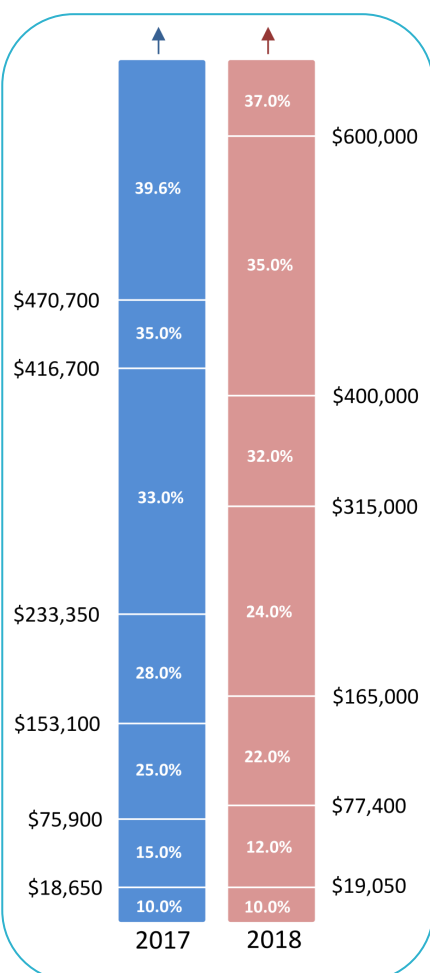
# Tax Cuts & Jobs Act

## Implications for Individual Taxpayers

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### Tax Bracket Comparison (Married Filing Jointly)



### Introduction:

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was passed by Congress and signed by the President on 12/22/17. The stated objectives of the legislation are to reduce taxes for individuals and businesses while simplifying the tax code. This letter outlines the major changes for individuals beginning in tax year 2018 (or other years where indicated). Many of the provisions are scheduled to expire in 2025. Details about the expiration dates of each provision are beyond the scope of this letter. Lastly, the rules will not be final until the IRS interprets the new law.

### List of Changes for Individuals:

**Tax brackets/rates** shift downward, resulting in lower taxes for most taxpayers.

The **Standard Deduction** increases from \$6,500 to \$12,000 (single) and \$13,000 to \$24,000 (married).

**Personal and Dependent Exemptions** (\$4,150 per person) are eliminated.

**Deductions** for state/local and property taxes are capped at \$10,000.

**Interest deductions** are capped for new mortgages with more than \$750,000 in acquisition debt.

**Home equity debt deduction** is eliminated.

**Miscellaneous Itemized Deductions** are eliminated. This includes deductions for unreimbursed employee expenses, tax preparation, investment advisory expenses and certain legal fees (among others).

The **medical deduction** income threshold decreases from 10% to 7.5% (for 2017 and 2018 only, then it goes back to 10%).

**Itemized deductions** no longer phase-out. This helps taxpayers with adjusted gross incomes greater than \$313,800 (married) and \$261,500 (single).

The **moving expense deduction** is eliminated.

The **Child Tax Credit** increases from \$1,000

to \$2,000 per child under 17 years of age.

The refundable portion of the **Child Tax Credit** increases from \$1,000 to \$1,400. The income phase-out for the **Child Tax Credit** more than doubles to \$200,000 (single) and \$400,000 (married).

**A new \$500 credit** is available for non-child dependents (such as elderly parents).

**Alimony** will no longer be taxable income for the recipient and deductible for the payer (for divorces finalized after 12/31/18).

The **Estate Tax** exemption is doubled to \$11 million (\$22 million for married couples).

The **Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT)** thresholds and exemption amounts were increased. Fewer taxpayers will pay AMT.

Re-characterizing (un-doing) a **transfer of funds from a Traditional IRA to a Roth IRA** is no longer allowed.

The **penalty for not having health insurance** is eliminated effective 1/1/19.

**Notes for business owners:** The details of the changes affecting business owners are beyond the scope of this letter. We will, however, briefly outline some major changes affecting businesses as follows:

The top **tax rate for corporations** drops from 35% to 21%.

Other business owners (sole proprietors, s-corporations, and/or partnerships) may be entitled to a **20% deduction** of their share of business income. There are limitations. For example, most service businesses are completely phased-out of the deduction if their taxable income is above \$207,500 (single) or \$415,000 (married).

Businesses and landlords will be able to **write-off more asset purchases** (including 100% of certain assets that previously had to be expensed over several years).

The **Domestic Production deduction** (for businesses with employees that produce goods in the USA) will be eliminated.

**Key Implications:**

**Most taxpayers will get a break** under the new plan. Page 3 of this newsletter quantifies how much some may save. Let's first take a broader look at some of the winners & losers:

**Winners:**

**High income taxpayers** benefit because their itemized deductions don't phase-out. Their upper bracket also reduces to 37% (from 39.6%). The threshold for the upper bracket was also raised to \$500,000 (single) and \$600,000 (married).

**Middle income taxpayers** benefit from raising the upper income limits for both the Child Tax Credit and the AMT.

**Low income taxpayers** benefit from the increased Standard Deduction and refundable Child Tax Credit.

**Taxpayers with very low itemized deductions.** For example, renters, home owners without a mortgage, residents of low/no tax states will benefit.

**Students** benefit because none of the education deductions or credits were reduced or eliminated.

**Recipients of alimony** from a divorce finalized AFTER 12/31/18 benefit because they don't have to pay tax on the income.

**Payers of alimony** from a divorce finalized BEFORE 1/1/19 benefit because they finalized the divorce before the rules changed and they can deduct the payments.

**Large estates** benefit from the doubling of the Estate Tax threshold.

**Business owners** benefit from the lower tax rates (for corporations) and deductions (for sole proprietors, s corporations, and partnerships). Business owners and landlords will also be able to write-off greater amounts (and more types) of asset purchases.

**Taxpayers with very high medical bills** will likely get a deduction (depending on their income levels) for 2017 /2018.

**Taxpayers without health insurance** benefit because they won't have to pay the penalty for not having insurance (beginning in 2019).

**Losers:**

**Home owners** in high property tax areas will lose-out due to the \$10,000 cap on state/local/property tax deductions. **Taxpayers in high tax states** will lose-out for the same reason.

**Home owners in expensive real estate markets** will not be able to deduct all of their interest if they take on greater than \$750,000 in mortgage debt.

**Taxpayers that donate to charity** may no longer benefit (tax wise) due to the increased standard deduction. See page 4 for ideas to help charitable givers.

Most **service business owners** with taxable income greater than \$157,500 (single) or \$315,000 (married) will lose-out on the 20% business income deduction.

**Large families** will lose out on \$4,150 in exemptions for each dependent. The increase in the Standard Deduction will not be enough to make up the difference for families with 3+ dependents.

**People with home equity line(s) of credit** will lose-out on the interest deduction.

**Employees that are not reimbursed** for business related expenses will not be able to deduct their out of pocket costs. This includes a variety of qualifying expenses such as; professional union dues, equipment, continuing education, personal vehicle mileage, travel, meals & entertainment. See page 4 for ideas to help employees with unreimbursed expenses.

**Employers that make goods here in the USA** lose-out because the Domestic Production Deduction was eliminated.

**Bicycle commuters** lose the \$20/month pre-tax bicycle expense reimbursement fringe benefit.

**Taxpayers WITH health insurance** will likely have to pay higher premiums due to healthy people leaving the insurance pool (due to the elimination of the penalty).

Taxpayers that are **not reimbursed for moving expenses** lose a deduction.

**Investors that convert funds from a Traditional IRA to a Roth IRA** lose a safety net. They can no longer put the money back.



**Future taxpayers** will lose-out because they will have to foot the bill for the \$1.5 trillion increase in the federal deficit/debt. Adding insult to injury, many of the tax cuts expire in 2025.

**All taxpayers** (present & future) that were hoping that the tax code would be simplified to the point where a return could be filed on a postcard did not get their wish. Rather, the tax code was made more complicated due to new rules for individuals and business entities. Tax matters are complicated further by the fact that few of the provisions were made permanent.

Most taxpayers were given a nice break with the new tax laws.

A few groups of taxpayers lost-out due to eliminated or capped exemptions and/or deductions.

The non-partisan Tax Policy Center estimates that 80% of taxpayers will get a tax break, and the average taxpayer will save about \$1,600 under the new plan. Let's look at a wide variety of different taxpayers and see how they compare.

The following scenarios are intentionally over-simplified and the reported tax savings are approximated (and rounded to the closest \$100). Even if your situation seems similar you will get different results to what is reported here.

Married filing jointly  
2 dependents under 17  
Income (AGI) = \$150,000  
California residents  
Property taxes = \$5,000  
Mortgage interest = \$12,000  
Charitable contributions = \$2,500  
**Approx. Change: save \$3,000**

Filing status: Married filing jointly  
2 dependents under 17  
Income (AGI) = \$150,000  
Texas residents  
Property taxes = \$5,200  
Mortgage interest = \$10,000  
Charitable contributions = \$3,500  
**Approx. Change: save \$3,400**

Filing status: Single  
No dependents  
Income (AGI) = \$80,000  
Georgia resident  
Takes the Standard Deduction  
**Approx. Change: save \$2,100**

Filing status: Head of household  
1 dependent under 17  
Income (AGI) = \$100,000  
Ohio resident  
Takes the Standard Deduction  
**Approx. Change: save \$4,100**

Filing status: Head of household  
2 dependents under 17  
Income (AGI) = \$35,000  
Florida resident  
Takes the Standard Deduction  
**Approx. Change: save \$2,000**

Filing status: Single  
Sole proprietor/self employed  
Income (AGI) = \$150,000  
California resident  
Property taxes = \$5,000  
Mortgage interest = \$12,000  
Charitable contributions = \$0  
**Approx. Change: save \$8,500**

Filing status: Single  
Retired, no dependents  
Income (AGI) = \$40,000  
Maine resident  
Property taxes = \$5,000  
No mortgage  
Charitable contributions = \$5,100  
**Approx. Change: No change**



Filing status: Head of Household  
1 dependent age 17+  
Income (AGI) = \$135,000  
Illinois resident  
Property taxes = \$7,000  
Mortgage interest = \$11,000  
Charitable contributions = \$2,000  
Unreimbursed employee business expenses = \$9,800  
**Approx. Change: lose \$1,900**

Filing status: Married filing jointly  
3 dependents 17+  
Income (AGI) = \$135,000  
Minnesota resident  
Property taxes = \$6,500  
Mortgage interest = \$7,500  
Charitable contributions = \$5,000  
**Approx. Change: lose \$1,100**

Filing status: Single  
No dependents  
Income (AGI) = \$400,000  
New York City resident  
Property taxes = \$5,000  
Mortgage interest = \$22,500  
Charitable contributions = \$4,500  
**Approx. Change: lose \$2,100**



### **Tax Planning & Tips:**

Let's start with the **folks that will not be itemizing** due to the new rules. Given that state/local/property taxes are capped at \$10,000 and other miscellaneous deductions have been eliminated, that leaves only charitable contributions, mortgage interest, and out-of-pocket medical to play with. Let's first look at charity because you have more control over it.

**A new game plan for charity:** Due to the increased Standard Deduction, fewer taxpayers will benefit (tax wise) from their generous giving to 501(c)(3) groups. Here are some moves you can consider:

- If you are greater than age 70<sup>1/2</sup> you can donate up to \$100,000 directly to charity from an IRA. This is a win-win because the income is excluded and you still get to keep the increased Standard Deduction.
- Skip a year of giving. Then double-up the next year. If that doesn't work, then skip two years and triple the third.
- Consider giving gifts to loved ones in lieu of charities. Such gifts were never deductible, so you are not missing out on any tax breaks. Plus, the recipient doesn't pay any tax, so it's another win-win. This same rule applies for contributions to most crowd-funding (e.g. GoFundMe) campaigns.

For **taxpayers that continue to itemize**, your situation stays the same. However, if you are **close to the Standard Deduction** you may want to consider DECREASING deductions (e.g. by paying down your mortgage) and bank the increased Standard Deduction. On the flip-side, you may

want to remain above the Standard Deduction by INCREASING your deductions (e.g. by paying major medical bills in 2018 before the deductibility threshold goes back up, buying a more expensive home, or giving more to charity).

### **Other situations & tips:**

**Ask your employer to pay for your out-of-pocket business expenses** because they are no longer deductible. Tell them you would prefer to be reimbursed as part of an Accountable Plan. If they refuse then look for ways to reduce expenses, such as not upgrading equipment.

**Consider property taxes** when shopping for a new home. Some low/middle income taxpayers may be able to optimize the \$10,000 cap in state/local/property tax (if you itemize).

**It won't pay to have another kid** if you make more than \$200,000 (single) or \$400,000 (married). That's because dependent exemptions were eliminated AND you are phased-out (partially or fully) of the increased Child Tax Credit.

**Home equity lines of credit are no longer deductible** so you may want to pay-it-off.

If you have **very high medical bills** there may be a tax advantage from paying them all in 2018.

The penalty for not having health insurance doesn't go away until 2019 so **don't drop your health insurance in 2018** (if the only reason you are dropping is to avoid the penalty).

If you are going to be **paying alimony** then it benefits you to finalize the divorce before the end of 2018.

If you are going to be **receiving alimony** then it benefits you to finalize the divorce after the end of 2018.

If you are **shopping for a home in an expensive real estate market** consider taking on less than \$750,000 in mortgage debt. However, don't worry if you go over by a little because you still get to deduct most of the interest.



### **Tips for Business Owners**

The new 20% pass-through income deduction is a game changer for those that qualify. That's because it gives you 'something for nothing'. Formerly, the only way to get a business deduction was to spend money. Now you can get a deduction and keep your money. Let's take an oversimplified look at the rules & strategies:

**Rule: Service business owners** don't get the deduction if their taxable income is above \$415,000 (married) and \$207,500 (single).

**Strategy: Service business owners** above those thresholds may need careful year-end planning. Increasing deductions for the current year and channeling income into next year might get you the deduction.

**Rule: Non-service businesses owners** can still get the deduction if their taxable income is above those thresholds. However, the deduction is limited by multiple factors including business income, wages paid, and certain business assets.

**Strategy: Non-service business owners** should meet with their tax preparer to analyze their specific situation.

**Beyond this**, there are many more strategies for business owners made possible by the new tax laws. These details are beyond the scope of this letter, so meet with your tax preparer to take full advantage.

**Lastly:** It is worth repeating that ALL taxpayers must wait for the IRS to interpret the new law before the rules are finalized.

