

Part IV. Items of General Interest

Notice of Proposed Rulemaking Notice of Public Hearing

Preparer Due Diligence Requirements for Determining Earned Income Credit Eligibility

REG-120168-97

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking by cross-reference to temporary regulations and notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: In T.D. 8798, page 16, the IRS is issuing temporary regulations relating to the due diligence requirements in determining eligibility for the earned income credit for paid preparers of federal income tax returns or claims for refund. The text of those regulations also serves as the text of these proposed regulations. This document also provides notice of a public hearing on these proposed regulations.

DATES: Written comments must be received by, March 22, 1999. Outlines of topics to be discussed at the public hearing scheduled for Thursday, May 20, 1999, at 10 a.m. must be received by Thursday, April 29, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Send submissions to: CC:DOM:CORP:R (REG-120168-97), room 5226, Internal Revenue Service, POB 7604, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, DC 20044. Submissions may be hand delivered Monday through Friday between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to: CC:DOM:CORP:R (REG-120168-97), Courier's Desk, Internal Revenue Service, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC. Alternatively, taxpayers may submit comments electronically via the Internet by selecting the "Tax Regs" option on the IRS Home Page, or by submitting comments directly to the IRS Internet site at http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/tax_regs/comments.html. The public hearing will be held in room 2615 of the Internal Revenue Building, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Concerning submissions, LaNita Van Dyke, (202) 622-7190; concerning the regulations, Marc C. Porter, (202) 622-4940 (not toll-free numbers).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Paperwork Reduction Act

The collection of information contained in this notice of proposed rulemaking has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget for review in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3507(d)). Comments on the collection of information should be sent to the **Office of Management and Budget**, Attn: Desk Officer for the Department of Treasury, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Washington, DC 20503, with copies to the **Internal Revenue Service**, Attn: IRS Reports Clearance Officer, OP:FS:FP, Washington, DC 20224. Comments on the collection of information should be received by, February 19, 1998. Comments are specifically requested concerning:

Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the **Internal Revenue Service**, including whether the information will have practical utility;

The accuracy of the estimated burden associated with the proposed collection of information (see below);

How the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected may be enhanced;

How the burden of complying with the proposed collection of information may be minimized, including through the application of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and

Estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of service to provide information.

The collection of information in this proposed regulation is in §1.6695-2T. This information is required by the IRS to determine preparer due diligence compliance. This information will be used to avoid the imposition of the penalty imposed by section 6695(g) of the Internal

Revenue Code. The collection of information is mandatory. The likely recordkeepers are individuals, business or other for profit institutions, and small businesses or organizations.

The collection of information in §1.6695-2T is generally satisfied by completing: 1) the required information on the Checklist published in Notice 97-65 or the Form 8867, *Paid Preparer's Earned Income Credit Checklist* and 2) the required Worksheet information on the *Earned Income Credit Worksheet* contained in the instructions to the Form 1040. The burden for the Checklist requirement is reflected in the burden estimate for Form 8867. The burden for the Worksheet requirement is reflected in the burden estimate for the *Earned Income Credit Worksheet* contained in the instructions to the Form 1040. Preparers may also choose to record the information necessary to complete the Checklist and Worksheet in their paper or electronic files (alternative method).

The information collections in this regulation were originally included in Notice 97-65 and have been approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1545-1570.

The collection of information for preparers who choose to record the information required by the regulations in alternative paper or electronic form is as follows:

Estimated total annual recordkeeping burden: 507,136 hours.

Estimated average annual burden hours per recordkeeper: 5 hours 4 minutes (40 minutes per return or claim for refund, 7.6 returns per preparer).

Estimated number of recordkeepers: 100,000.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid control number assigned by the Office of Management and Budget.

Books and records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

Background and Explanation of Provisions

Temporary regulations in T.D. 8798 amend the Income Tax Regulations (26 CFR part 1) relating to section 6695. The temporary regulations set forth due diligence requirements that paid preparers of federal income tax returns or claims for refund involving the Earned Income Credit (EIC) must meet to avoid imposition of the penalty under section 6695(g) for taxable years beginning after December 31, 1996. The text of those regulations also serves as the text of these proposed regulations. The preamble to the temporary regulations explains the amendments.

Special Analyses

It has been determined that this notice of proposed rulemaking is not a significant regulatory action as defined in EO 12866. Therefore, a regulatory assessment is not required. It also has been determined that section 553(b) of the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. chapter 5) does not apply to these regulations. Further, it is hereby certified, pursuant to sections 603(a) and 605(b) of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, that the collection of information in these regulations will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. This certification is based upon the fact that the amount of time necessary to record and retain the required information will be minimal for those income tax return preparers that choose to use the Alternative Eligibility Record and Alternative Computation Record. Therefore, a Regulatory Flexibility Analysis under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. chapter 6) is not required. Pursuant to section 7805(f) of the Internal Revenue Code, this notice of proposed rulemaking will be submitted to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration for comment on their impact.

Comments and Requests for a Public Hearing

Before these proposed regulations are adopted as final regulations, consideration will be given to any comments (a signed original and eight (8) copies) that are submitted timely to the IRS. The IRS

and Treasury specifically request comments on the clarity of the proposed rule and how it may be made easier to understand. All comments will be available for public inspection and copying.

A public hearing has been scheduled for May 20, 1999, beginning at 10 a.m. in room 2615 of the Internal Revenue Building, 1111 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Due to building security procedures, visitors must enter at the 10th Street entrance, located between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues, NW. In addition, all visitors must present photo identification to enter the building. Because of access restrictions, visitors will not be admitted beyond the immediate entrance area more than 15 minutes before the hearing starts. For information about having your name placed on the building access list to attend the hearing, see the "FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT" section of this preamble.

The rules of 26 CFR 601.601(a)(3) apply to the hearing. Persons who wish to present oral comments at the hearing must submit written comments and an outline of the topics to be discussed and the time to be devoted to each topic (signed original and eight (8) copies) by (April 29, 1999). A period of 10 minutes will be allotted to each person for making comments. An agenda showing the scheduling of the speakers will be prepared after the deadline for receiving outlines has passed. Copies of the agenda will be available free of charge at the hearing.

Drafting Information

The principal author of these regulations is Marc C. Porter, Office of Assistant Chief Counsel (Income Tax & Accounting). However, other personnel from the IRS and Treasury Department participated in their development.

* * * * *

Proposed Amendments to the Regulations

Accordingly, 26 CFR part 1 is proposed to be amended as follows:

PART 1 — INCOME TAXES

Paragraph 1. The authority citation for part 1 is amended by adding an entry in numerical order to read as follows:

Authority: 26 U.S.C. 7805 * * *

Section 1.6695-2 also issued under 26 U.S.C. 6695(g). * * *

Par. 2. Section 1.6695-2 is added to read as follows:

§1.6695-2 Preparer due diligence requirements for determining earned income tax credit eligibility.

[The text of proposed §1.6695-2 is the same as the text of §1.6695-2T published in T.D. 8798.]

David S. Mader,
*Acting Deputy Commissioner
of Internal Revenue.*

(Filed by the Office of the Federal Register on December 18, 1998, 8:45 a.m., and published in the issue of the Federal Register for December 21, 1998, 63 FR. 70357)