



Common Sense on:

Free Online Tax Preparation & Filing

by Senator Tom Harkin

With spring just around the corner, it also means that April 15 – Tax Day – will soon be upon us. Many options are available to file your taxes, but many eligible Iowans may also be able to take advantage of free tax preparation services available through the IRS Free File program. Since its inception in 2003, IRS Free File has offered low-to-moderate income taxpayers free access to leading commercial tax preparation software.

What are the advantages of the IRS Free File Program?

In addition to the cost savings, the online program walks taxpayers through the filing process to make filing your taxes simple and fast. According to the Free File Alliance, Free File software not only increases accuracy, but delivers a quick turn-around on tax refunds, getting it to consumers in as little as 10 days. Free File Alliance member companies have continually worked with the IRS to strengthen IRS Free File and ensure that it remains both accurate and secure.

Who is eligible?

This year, every taxpayer with a 2010 Adjusted Gross Income of \$58,000 or less may visit www.irs.gov/efile to prepare, complete and e-file their federal tax returns at no cost.

How do I use the Free File Program?

To begin, you must visit the IRS website, www.irs.gov, and click on the “Free File” icon. Users will find a list of free file alliance member companies and may either choose the one that fits their needs or utilize the “help me find a company” tool. After selecting a company, taxpayers will be transferred to the company's website to prepare, complete and electronically file their federal income tax returns. Three of the 19 participating software companies also offer services in Spanish.

Where can I find more information on the Free File Alliance?

For more information, please visit www.freefilealliance.org or feel free to contact any of my Iowa or Washington, D.C. offices.