

## Compliance and Collection

### **“Check-Off” for a Good Cause**

As you complete your 2004 individual income tax return, please remember the “check-off” programs. You can contribute to the designated program(s) of your choice, in any amount. Of course, a contribution will increase your existing tax liability.

#### Nongame Wildlife Program

Contributions are used to ensure the well-being of Montana’s watchable wildlife species, such as eagles, herons, bluebirds, great horned owls, loons, chipmunks, pikas, flying squirrels and painted turtles.

#### Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Program

Contributions fund services and activities related to the prevention of child abuse and neglect. *Note: If you enclose a separate check with your timely filed return you are allowed to take an itemized deduction for the amount of the contribution on the return you are filing with the contribution.*

#### Agriculture in Montana Schools Program

Contributions fund the development and presentation of educational programs. This program ensures Montana’s young people have a better understanding of agriculture in our state and how it relates to the rest of the world.

## Customer Service

### **Update on Legislative Bill Targeting Tax Evasion**

Earlier this week, the Montana Senate approved the bill enacting Governor Brian Schweitzer’s proposal to reward honest Montana taxpayers by closing tax loopholes used by some out-of-state companies and nonresidents to avoid their fair share of taxes. The Senate passed Senate Bill 513 on a vote of 27-23 and sent the bill to the House.

SB513 would give the Montana Department of Revenue tools to go curb abusive income-tax shelters and require nonresidents to pay taxes on profits from selling Montana property.

“The wage, salary, interest and dividend income earned by ordinary Montanans is already disclosed and reported to federal and state taxing authorities,” said revenue director Dan Bucks.

“It is only fair to require those who choose to abuse our tax system to be subject to similar disclosure and reporting requirements.”

Sen. Jim Elliot, D-Trout Creek, is sponsoring the bill. It is projected to raise \$10 million a year.

### **Withholding Tax Tables Updated for Most Employers**

The Montana Department of Revenue revised the 2005 state withholding tax tables, effective January 10, 2005. The revised 2005 state withholding tax tables replaced the tables mailed to Montana businesses in November of 2004.

Revised withholding tax booklets were mailed to Montana employers in January of 2005. Notices regarding the revisions were included in various publications and on the department’s website.

The department had asked employers to begin using these revised withholding tax tables by February 1—or sooner if possible—and it is our understanding that most employers have done so. We checked with the following payroll service providers and payroll software vendors. All have made the necessary changes.

Paychex, Ceridian, ADP, Intuit (QuickBooks/Quicken), Best Software, Inc. (Peachtree)

We believe that most other payroll service providers and payroll software vendors have made the changes. Employers who are uncertain whether the revised tables have been implemented for their businesses should contact their payroll service providers or payroll software vendors to determine if the withholding tax tables have been updated. If a payroll service provider or payroll software vendor has not made the updates, please contact the provider or vendor directly or let the department know.

Please note that it is not necessary to revise any tax withheld from employees for paychecks issued before switching to the revised tables.

The department understands the commitment this has required from Montana employers, and we sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

### **Looking for Last-Minute State Income Tax Assistance?**

If you have an income tax question or need tax forms, the Montana Department of Revenue is ready to assist you.

"As the April 15 income tax deadline nears, we want to help Montana taxpayers in every way we can," said Dan Bucks, Director of the Department of Revenue. "We'll provide assistance on a variety of individual income tax matters through our Customer Service Center, statewide local offices and Internet website."

#### Customer Service Center

The Customer Service Center assists both callers and walk-ins Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Customer service consultants and income tax specialists are available to assist taxpayers on individual income tax matters. The walk-in assistance is located in the Sam W. Mitchell Building, 125 North Roberts, in Helena (just east of the State Capitol Building). The telephone number is (406) 444-6900.

The Customer Service Center will offer extended hours on Thursday, April 14 and Friday, April 15. Hours will be extended to 8 p.m. both days.

#### Local Offices

Taxpayers also are invited to visit the department's local offices during normal business hours. Offices are located in Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Glasgow, Helena, Kalispell and Missoula. The offices stock the most commonly used state tax forms, schedules and instructions. In addition, a trained staff is available to provide general information on a variety of income tax issues.

For your reference, here are the office locations:

Billings - 175 North 27th, Suite 1400  
Bozeman - 2273 Boot Hill Court, Suite 100  
Great Falls - 300 Central Avenue, Suite 520  
Glasgow - 501 Court Square #7  
Helena - Sam W. Mitchell Building, 125 North Roberts  
Kalispell - 100 Financial Drive, Suite 210  
Missoula - 2681 Palmer Street, Suite 1

#### Website

Taxpayers preferring to get information through the Internet may visit the Department of Revenue's website at [www.mt.gov/revenue](http://www.mt.gov/revenue). The site contains basic income tax information, downloadable

forms/instructions, and filing tips. Online payment of current and back-year taxes is available through Income Tax Express.

The department reminds taxpayers that electronic filing is a great option, and can be accomplished through a tax practitioner who is authorized for IRS e-file or on a personal computer using off-the-shelf income tax software.

"Taxpayers who file their tax return electronically and also request direct deposit are in the best possible situation," said Bucks. "That combination can get your refund to you in as few as four days."

## About the Agency

### **New "Real & Personal Property Valuation and Assessment System" for PAD**

The Property Assessment Division has put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new computer system. The RFP has a response due date of April 26, with the contract being awarded by June 24. This new system will replace or integrate six computer systems currently used in property valuation and assessment. This will make the process of taxation and assessment of real and personal property more streamlined and efficient.

The current systems that would be replaced are: MODS (Montana Ownership Database System) which stores ownership, legal descriptions and assessment information; BEVS (Business Equipment Valuation System) which stores and values personal property; CAMAS (Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal System) which stores and values real property; UAS (Utility Assessment System) which stores, assesses and allocates centrally assessed information for BITD (Business and Income Tax Division); and LANDISC which stores photos for use in the appraisal process.

The system will also integrate with GIS (Geographic Information System). This system provides a variety of property information and is available on the Internet. Also, the current CAMAS information is available on the Cadastral Website and this would continue with the purchase of a new Property Assessment Division system.

### **Career Opportunities**

The Department of Revenue posts new job opportunities on Wednesday and Friday each week. Visit our website [www.discoveringmontana.com/revenue](http://www.discoveringmontana.com/revenue) and go to About the Agency for current job opportunities.