

April 17 tax deadline is approaching

By JMTC Office of the
Staff Judge Advocate

News Release

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Tax centers in each U.S. Army community in Bavaria are staying busy helping taxpayers to file their taxes as the April 17 deadline quickly approaches. This free service is available to all Soldiers, spouses, DOD civilians and authorized I.D. cardholders. Americans living in Germany can file their tax returns until June 15. Individuals owing money or penalties, however, must file a return and pay any penalties by April 17. Soldiers serving in a combat zone, and their spouses, have at least 180 days upon return from combat to file and pay.

The Grafenwoehr Tax Assistance Center will extend its hours to 8 p.m. on Monday, April 16, to prepare last-minute returns. Check with your local tax center to see if they will stay open late prior to April 17 to assist procrastinators. Many postal service centers will not stay open beyond 5:30 p.m., April 17, so please visit your tax center before that date so we can promptly file your taxes.

As the tax payment deadline approaches, many taxpayers are interested in how they can increase their refunds. Taxpayers, their spouses or dependents who are enrolled in certain postsecondary colleges and universities may be eligible for the American Opportunity Credit or the Lifetime Learning Credit. Both of these credits reduce a person's taxes and the American Opportunity Credit is partially refundable. Taxpayers should keep records of their tuition paid, or the 1098-T, and receipts from books and supplies purchased.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of taxes owed. Some tax credits are refundable, meaning if a person is eligible and claim one, they can get the rest of it in the form of a tax refund even after their tax liability has been reduced to zero. Here are four refundable tax credits taxpayers should consider:

Earned Income Tax. This credit is for people earning less than \$49,078 from wages or self-employment. Income, marital status, age and the number of qualifying children determine the amount of the credit, which can be up to \$5,751. Workers without children also may qualify.

Child and Dependent Care Tax. This refers to expenses paid for the care of qualifying children under age 13, or for a disabled spouse or dependent, while that person works or looks for work.

Child Tax. The child credit is for people who have a qualifying child. The maximum credit is \$1,000 for each qualifying child.

Retirement Savings Contributions. This credit, also known as the Saver's Credit, is designed to help low-to-moderate income workers save for retirement. A person may qualify if his or her income is below a certain limit and he or she contributes to an IRA or workplace retirement plan, such as a 401(k) plan.

Retiree tax update

Some retirees and widows of retirees living permanently in Germany (those not protected under SOFA) may not have taken or been given established Tax Treaty Credit for their claims if their taxes were prepared by on post tax assistance other than the SJA over the past several years. Specifically, this is related to SBP payments to widows and paid Social Security. Current IRS policy only allows adjusted returns to go back three years, although SJA will attempt to amend beyond three years if affected filers had tax liability to the U.S in the past two years. Should this situation apply, visit the Grafenwoehr Tax Office prior to April 17 to amend returns from 2008, or call CIV 09641-83-9094 for more information.