



Florida's Financial Fitness Friday Volunteer Guide November 5, 2010

Logistic Information

Responding to Questions

Sample Phone Script

Financial Fitness Checklist

E-Mail Guidance

Questions, Answers & Financial Advice

Resources and Referrals

Committee Contacts



Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants

Thank you!
Florida's Financial Fitness Friday Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering your time and expertise in support of Florida's Financial Fitness Friday – November 5 – and we are glad that you are part of it! 2010 marks the 6th year of this unique outreach program. We are grateful for your assistance in making this event a success. It is measured in part by our collective ability to make a positive difference in people's lives by helping them with their financial struggles and day-to-day questions.

Program Expectations

Florida's Financial Fitness Friday is foremost a public-service event to provide Florida residents with basic financial information, best practices for managing their finances, and guidance on conducting an annual financial checkup. It has been promoted to the public and the media as such. None of the promotional materials or publicity indicates that CPA volunteers will provide extensive services.

As a practicing CPA, you undoubtedly have broad-based experience in handling many types of questions that come into your office or firm. This event is no different. Your role as a volunteer simply will be to cover the basics and provide referral information. If you receive questions that go beyond the scope of basic guidance, you can simply explain that this is a volunteer effort to serve as many people as possible. Due to the limited time, you cannot go as in depth as the question warrants, but you are happy to refer them to a CPA in their area.

Your Role as a Volunteer

Basically, each interaction has three facets:

- ① Answer their financial question;
- ② Conduct a "financial fitness" checkup (as desired by caller); and,
- ③ Provide resources for additional information and life-long fitness.

FICPA Support

(800) 342-3197 (in Florida) or (850) 224-2727

Brenda Hubbard, Director of Academic Relations & Student Initiatives

Hubbardb@ficpa.org

Ext. 419

Vicky Wade, Student & Educator Outreach Assistant

Wadev@ficpa.org

Ext. 220

Volunteer Training

You are invited to participate in a voluntary training session by conference call.

There are two opportunities:

Tuesday	Thursday
October 26	October 28
3 to 4 pm	Noon to 1 pm
Dial In:	(877) 326-0011
Access Code:	*8961150*

Volunteer Scheduling

Volunteers will be assigned to a 2-hour shift between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. during the event.

9:00 a.m. – 11 a.m.
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Typically, there are more calls and emails early in the morning than the rest of the day. The volume of calls and emails we'll receive is unknown. If we experience heavy volume, we may contact you to see if you can provide support in addition to your scheduled shift.

Phone Call and Email Transfers

Volunteers statewide will be sent both phone calls and emails.

Incoming calls received on the toll-free Financial Fitness Hotline and questions received by e-mail from the FICPA Web site, will go to the “command center” in Tallahassee. FICPA staff will answer the phone and transfer the call to a volunteer on duty. E-mails are handled the same way. They come to the FICPA and staff will forward them to volunteers.

Please try to respond to questions as they come to you. Take phone calls first and respond to e-mails in-between calls. Remember that we need to try to have all e-mail questions answered by 3 p.m.

When we transfer calls to you, the FICPA staff will connect to you and ask if you are ready and available. We will not send calls “blindly”. If you agree to take the call, we’ll release the caller to you.

This will help us avoid sending a call to you if you are on the phone with a previous caller or are away from your desk. If the call volume is heavy and we need to do so, we’ll take the caller information and phone numbers for volunteers to respond to later.

Responding to Questions

If you receive more questions than you are comfortable handling, or if you have questions or need assistance during the day, please contact Brenda Hubbard at the FICPA, (800) 342-3197, Ext. 419, or hubbardb@ficpa.org.

The best way to reach me during the event is by email.

Pointers for Communicating with the Public

- It is very important to listen and ask clarifying questions so that you can understand exactly what the caller is asking. Refrain from giving answers too quickly.
- If a question is complex, outside of your comfort level or requires a different type of professional assistance, such as situations that might need or include legal advice, you can refer the person to sources provided in this document. It is perfectly acceptable to suggest that the caller might want to consult a CPA or financial advisor for more specific and/or in-depth information. The FICPA’s online consultation directory is a source for the public to locate a CPA by area of practice and location

- If you get a question you can't answer, there are several ways to resolve it.
 1. Offer to get back with the person. Is there someone else in your firm or company that knows the answer? Make sure the caller is okay with you getting back and providing their phone number, etc.
 2. Send an email to Brenda Hubbard with the caller's name, phone number, best time to reach them, and the essence of the question. Brenda will get the call to another volunteer on duty.
Hubbardb@ficpa.org
 3. Ask them to call the Financial Fitness Hotline again (especially if the caller is reluctant to give a name or receive a callback) and be routed to another volunteer. It will be very helpful if you ask the caller to let Tallahassee know what just occurred and that they need to speak to a person with knowledge of ABC.
- Should you receive additional requests for assistance either later that day or after the event from someone you feel you have helped sufficiently, you can politely refer them to the FICPA Member Service Center for further assistance at that point (800) 342-3197.

Types of Questions to Expect and Suggested Responses

We anticipate the majority of questions will be related to credit card debt, home mortgages, retirement accounts (401k, IRA, ROTH, etc.), investing, estate planning, annuities and taxes. There may also be specific questions this year about the RMD suspension for 2009, the ROTH conversion rules that change in 2010 and obtaining health insurance for laid off workers.

Also, please familiarize yourself with items on the Annual Financial Fitness Check List. This list, developed by the FICPA Financial Literacy Committee, was the primary component of promotional materials and it is likely people will use it to formulate questions. Each item on the list is accompanied by a general response developed by the Committee to assist you in answering questions.

The Committee advises that it is acceptable to qualify your responses by acknowledging that while you have general knowledge of the topic/question, you are not the final authority and the caller may need/want to seek additional information. Depending on the nature of the question, please indicate that the information you impart is not a legal opinion, but your opinion as a professional volunteer.

Suggested References

Please have references ready at your fingertips to help you respond to questions. Many of you have online references or files – have them open and ready.

Many of the questions we receive are tax oriented and you may want to have a copy of the *Master Tax Guide* available.

Review the list of resources at the end of this guide and have this information ready to pass along as needed.

Tracking Data

To better understand the types of questions we respond to each event, we're asking volunteers to keep a simple log of the number of questions received (phone and email) using the eight categories below.

1. Income tax
2. Retirement Planning (includes SS, IRA, 401k, etc.)
3. Insurance
4. Annuities
5. Investing
6. Estate Planning
7. College Planning
8. Credit

Also, please make note of any unusual/ touching situations from callers. We write a post event recap and it is helpful to be able to include human interest stories about the consumers you helped. This is a good balance to the usual post-event stats. This also gives us anecdotal information for media promotion for next year, too.

Evaluation

We will request your stats (above) after the event as well as an electronic evaluation to get your feedback regarding the experience. We are always looking for ways to improve the event and get the word out to consumers!

Sample Phone Script



Good morning/afternoon.

Thank you for calling the Florida Institute of CPAs on Financial Fitness Friday. What can I help you with today?

It is okay for both you and the caller to be anonymous. If you like, you can introduce yourself using your first name or your full name.

Listen to the question. Jot down notes if that helps you.

If they present a situation, rather than a clear question, ask questions as necessary to clarify the facts so you can get to their root question.

--ANSWER THEIR QUESTION(S) --

Use information on the following pages to guide you.

- *Questions, Answers, and Financial Advice*
- *Resources and Referrals*

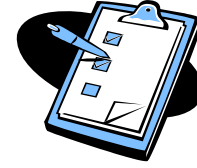
--SEGWAY TO THEIR FINANCIAL HEALTH--

Just like you have an annual physical at your doctor's office, it is important that you do a financial check-up each year. May I ask you some questions regarding your financial fitness?

--CONDUCT FINANCIAL FITNESS CHECKUP HERE--

Use the Financial Fitness Checklist on the next page.

Financial Fitness Checklist



Top Ways to Stay Financially Fit

- Do you have a budget?
- Do you have a short-term savings plan for large purchases and emergencies?
- Do you have a long-term savings plan for retirement?
- Do you have a will and living will?
- If you have any investments, have you reviewed them with an investment advisor to make sure they best suit your situation?
- Do you have all the necessary insurance policies?
- Have you reviewed your free credit report for accuracy?
- Have you visited your primary care doctor for your annual physical? (Staying healthy reduces the high costs of health care).

Listen and jot down notes as necessary.

-- MAKE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THEIR ANSWERS HERE -- (i.e. you should start putting money in your 401k, etc.)

Do you have any other questions today?

For other tips on staying financially fit, visit:

www.360financialliteracy.org

www.feedthepig.org (savings tips)

www.ficpa.org (personal finance news)

Thank you again for calling. Please tell your friends about this service, and have a great day!

E-mail Guidance

Please respond to e-mails on a timely basis. We will monitor how many calls and e-mails we send to you, but if you receive more e-mails than you can answer during your shift, please let us know. It is important that all e-mails get answered. We can easily send it to another volunteer.

Reply using your standard e-mail signature. It is important that you include the IRS 230 Disclaimer if you already do so. If you do not use this disclaimer because of your area of practice, please add it to your e-mail responses for Financial Fitness Friday, especially if you are responding to a tax-related question.

Here is a sample disclaimer:

In accordance with Internal Revenue Service Circular 230, any advice contained in this document was not intended or written to be used, and it cannot be used, for the purpose of avoiding tax penalties that may be imposed on the taxpayer.

You also have the option of sending emails anonymously. Please email me your response along with the original question submitted by email to Brenda Hubbard. She will “cut and paste” your answer and respond to the person from the FICPA.

Questions, Answers & Financial Advice

The following section has information to get you started on answering questions on a variety of topics. Most, but not all of the information is provided by the AICPA.

Savings

It isn't easy, but substantial savings is the key to financial security and achieving your goals. The best way to save is to "Pay Yourself First" by having your employer transfer money each paycheck to one or more savings accounts (including an employer-sponsored retirement plan such as a 401k, 403b, etc.)

Savings should generally occur in the following order of priority:

1. Emergency Fund (6 months of spending)
2. Retirement
3. College
4. Major Purchases (home, auto, etc.)

Taxes

Taxes:

Tax planning is a year-round event, and there is no better time to start working on your tax strategy than right now. Advanced planning helps to ensure that you take maximum advantage of opportunities to reduce your taxes, particularly those strategies that may take a few months to implement. There will likely be substantial increases in capital gains rates in 2011 and possibly as early as 2010 so be sure to consider this in planning for 2009. You may want to take capital gains in 2009 while the rates are still relatively low, however other considerations need to be addressed. Contact a CPA or financial advisor now for advice. This will help you to take charge of your tax situation.

Take Advantage of all Available "Credits":

The tax code contains a number of credits such as Child and Dependent Care, Elderly and Disabled, Child Tax Credit, Education, Earned Income Credit (for low income) and more. IRS Publication 17 has a complete list.

Plan to Make Retirement Plan Contributions:

Pre-tax contributions to an employer-sponsored retirement savings plan reduces the amount of taxable wages you report on your return, making qualified retirement plans an excellent way to cut your tax bill.

Plan to Improve Your Recordkeeping:

Many people miss valuable deductions because they don't keep records of deductible expenses. Start now by setting up a system for tracking deductible expenses and storing receipts. If you just can't do it, you can

get part way there by ordering copies of cancelled checks from your bank at the end of the year, but that's a more expensive option.

Plan Your Investment Gains:

While you should never make investment decisions based solely on tax considerations, proper planning can reduce your tax bill significantly. For example, if it makes sense from an investment standpoint, wait to sell appreciated assets until you have met the one-year holding period to qualify for long-term capital gains treatment. Timing losses to offset your gains is another tax-reducing strategy. Capital losses can be used to offset any capital gains, plus up to \$3,000 of other income, such as salary. Any excess loss can be carried forward to future years.

Use Your Vacation Home Wisely:

If you own a second or vacation home, determine whether you get a better tax break by treating the property as a second residence or as a rental property. You will need to carefully work out a plan, since the number of days you personally use the home is critical to its tax treatment.

Risk Management

Risk Management:

There are always risks associated with both spending and saving money but there are ways to mitigate these risks (risk avoidance, risk control and risk transfer through insurance). Insurance protects against major losses incurred through disaster or unexpected life crises such as death or medical emergency. You can never be too careful — protect yourself from identity theft and privacy infringement.

Insurance Check-up:

1. Life Insurance (adequate amount?, term versus cash value)
2. Medical
3. Disability (often overlooked, wait period, % of salary replaced, etc)
4. Auto
5. Home
6. Umbrella Liability

Identity Protection Check-up

1. Do you carry your or any family member's SS# in your wallet/purse?
2. Do you have adequate software protections installed on your computer? (virus, malware, firewall, etc.)
3. Do you refuse to respond to spam and phishing emails?
4. Do you refuse to give out personal information in response to a telephone contact?
5. Incoming mail: Do you have a locked mailbox?

6. Outgoing mail: Do you place all outgoing mail in a secure USPS mailbox?
7. Trash: Do you shred all documents that have your personal information before discarding in the trash?

Financial and Retirement Planning

Creating Your First Long-Term Financial Plan:

- Determine what is important to you and define your goals.
- Assess your current financial situation.
- Evaluate the alternatives to meet your goals.
- Develop and implement a sound financial plan.
- Monitor and update your plan as necessary.

Planning for Retirement:

The first step in planning for retirement is to determine your goals.

The second step is to determine how much money you will need. A ballpark figure is that in order to retire with financial security, you typically need 70% to 100% of your pre-retirement income. Determine where your retirement income will come from, such as Social Security, employer pension plans, personal retirement savings accounts, personal investments, part-time work or consulting. Planning for retirement requires setting concrete goals. Devise a budget (including long term cash flow projections) and investment strategy to help you meet those goals.

Estate Planning

The Need for Estate Planning:

Estate Planning is not just for wealthy people. Most adults need an estate plan to insure their assets will be distributed in accordance with their wishes. Also, people with children/dependents need to designate a guardian.

Preparing a Will and Protecting Your Assets for Your Heirs:

- Properly designate beneficiaries.
- Determine the distribution of assets upon your death.
- Identify funding sources to cover funeral costs and family needs.
- Name a guardian for your minor children.
- Create medical and financial powers of attorney in the event you become incapacitated.
- Prepare letters of instruction to identify wishes upon your death.
- Consider creating a trust to address special issues not addressable in a Will (special needs children, spendthrift spouse, etc).

Credit Card Advice

Be Aware Of Teaser Rates:

Credit card companies sometimes offer low introductory interest rates to attract new customers. These rates typically last for only a few months and then jump as high as 20 percent. It's important that you carefully compare offers from several different issuers before selecting a card.

Stick With One Credit Card:

Just because it's easy to apply for multiple cards doesn't mean you should. This is especially tempting when department stores offer discounts on purchases if you apply for a credit card. It's easier to manage one credit card and pay off only one bill at the end of the month. Besides, applying for multiple credit cards can hurt your credit rating. Also, using one credit card to pay off another is a dangerous practice that should be avoided.

Pay In Full Every Month:

Get in the habit of paying the balance in full each month, which means not charging more than you can pay off at the end of the month.

Pay On Time:

Send the credit card payment several days in advance of the due date to allow for mailing time. Late penalties are costly and some companies will increase the interest rate after one or two overdue payments.

Avoid Cash Advances:

Be aware that the interest rate on cash advances can be much higher than the rates charged on purchases.

Protect Your Credit History:

As soon as you start using a card, the payments, whether paid on time, late or not at all, become part of your credit history. A poor credit history can affect your ability to rent an apartment, get a job, or buy a car or house. What's more, the mark stays on your credit record even if the bill is later paid.

Review all 3 Credit Reports Annually:

You can receive a free credit report annually from each of the three credit reporting agencies. www.AnnualCreditReport.com

Don't Exceed The Credit Limit:

This helps avoid penalties and ensures that you will have credit available in the event of a true emergency. A \$2,000 credit limit doesn't mean you can afford to carry a \$2,000 balance. Limiting your average monthly

charges to ½ or less of your available credit line will improve your credit score.

Review Statements Carefully:

Immediately inform the credit card company of any discrepancies or errors on your monthly statement.

Report A Lost Or Stolen Card Immediately:

Keep a copy of your credit card account number and the financial institution's name and customer service telephone number in a convenient place in case your card is lost or stolen.

Protect Personal Information:

Never provide your credit card number unless making a telephone, mail order or online purchase. Also, don't let anyone else use your credit card and don't charge purchases for other people.

Managing Debt – 5 Strategies

If you are unable to make even the minimum monthly payments on credit cards or you are more than 60 days late on paying your home mortgage.

1. Don't panic

It is possible to correct the problem. However, it will likely be slow and unpleasant. There are no legitimate, easy fixes and anyone who tells you otherwise is attempting to scam you.

2. Fix the problem yourself

- a. Stop using credit cards and going deeper in debt. Put your credit cards in a safe place and leave them alone (but don't cancel them because that will hurt your credit score).
- b. Reduce your spending. Unless you can reduce your spending to substantially less than your income, you will never have the funds to pay off debts.
- c. Prioritize your loan payments. "Secured" loans should be paid first. Secured loans are any loans secured by assets such as your home mortgage and car loan. Default on these loans is much worse than default on unsecured credit card loans since it results in the loss of critical assets (foreclosure). Next, rank order your credit card debts based on interest rates charged. Pay off the highest interest rate cards first while paying the minimum on all the others.

3. Seek help from a credit counseling agency

Utilize only the services of an agency that is a member of the National Foundation for Credit Counselors. To find a credit counseling agency near you go to www.nfcc.org or call 1-800-388-2227. Counseling

agencies charge fees and you should obtain a good understanding of the fee schedule before proceeding.

The Agency should first attempt to assist you through individual counseling. This counseling will generally include the steps outlined in item 2 above. If that is not successful, the next step is to develop a Debt Management Plan. This involves the Agency collecting a certain payment from you each month and then using that money to pay off your creditors.

4. Bankruptcy

This should be the last resort. If you determine there is no other way, seek the services of a reputable bankruptcy attorney. In Florida, there are two types of bankruptcy. Chapter 7 eliminates all but a few types of your debts (e.g. child support and tax liens) but you must be able to prove that you cannot pay anything and must undergo mandatory financial counseling. Chapter 13 does not erase your debts but gives you court protection while you follow a payment plan approved by the court.

5. Companies advertising “**Debt Settlement Plans**” should be avoided.

Saving and Investing — 10 Simple Strategies

Start Small:

Try saving 10 percent of your monthly income, but don't let that amount scare you away. If 10 percent is not doable, figure out how much you can afford to save each month and regularly put away that amount. Consistency counts.

Contribute to your Retirement Plan:

If you have a 401(k) plan at work, contribute at least as much as your company matches—and more if you can. Not taking advantage of this opportunity is equivalent to passing up free money. If your company doesn't offer a 401(k) plan or if you've maxed-out on your annual contribution, open an individual retirement account (IRA) or a Roth IRA and contribute to it regularly.

Save Through Payroll Deduction Plans:

A great way to save is to have your company deduct money from your paycheck to go directly to a savings account or into U.S. Savings Bonds. Remember, what you don't see, you can't spend. While you're at it, see if you can get your employer to electronically deposit your paycheck to your bank account. This can help you avoid the temptation to deposit only part of your check—and succumb to impulse buying with the rest of it.

Set Up an Automatic Investment Plan:

Many mutual fund companies will arrange to deduct \$50 or more from your bank account each month and deposit it into a mutual fund account.

With this systematic approach, sometimes called dollar cost averaging, you buy more shares when prices are low and fewer shares when prices rise. The net result is that your total investment cost is averaged over time.

'Round Up Your Mortgage Payment:

You can build up equity in your home faster and save thousands of dollars in interest simply by “rounding” up your mortgage payment. Consider increasing what you pay to the nearest hundred or just send an extra \$50 or \$100 each month. Your lender applies the extra payment directly to your principal. There is no need to contact your lender or to commit to a specific amount.

Bank Your Raises:

When you get a raise, continue to live on your previous salary. Deposit the additional funds into a savings or investment account and you'll be surprised how quickly your balance grows. Do the same with your income tax refund check and any unexpected windfalls.

Keep Paying Off a Loan:

When you finish paying off a car or personal loan, continue to make the same monthly payment—but to yourself instead. Put the money in a savings or investment account and when the time comes to buy a new car, you may find you have enough to pay for the car in cash or, at least, make a substantial down payment.

Pay off Your Credit Cards:

Consolidate all your credit card debt on one or two cards with the lowest interest rate. Start paying as much as you can each month to get rid of your credit card debt. Keep in mind that when you tack on interest rates of up to 18 percent to your purchases, “sale” items are far less of a bargain.

Reinvest Dividends:

By arranging to reinvest dividends from stocks and mutual funds, you can purchase additional shares of stock or mutual funds with no commission cost. If you have a certificate of deposit (CD), have interest credited back to your account, rather than sent to you monthly, and you'll earn interest on your interest.

Keep Track of Where Your Money Goes:

Understanding how you spend your money is key to determining how you can cut back. Carry a small notebook with you and keep track of every dime you spend for a month or two. Review your credit card statements monthly to see where you are spending. You're sure to come up with ways to spend less and save more.

Resources and Referrals

360 Degrees of Financial Literacy Web site

<http://360financialliteracy.org>

The AICPA's 360 Degrees of Financial Literacy Web site has information on a number of life stages and topics (see below).

Topics

- Recent Legislation
- Credit and Debt
- In the Workplace
- Paying for Education
- Budgeting & Spending
- Family Financial Planning
- Home Ownership
- Insurance
- In Crisis
- Retirement Planning
- Investment Planning
- Owning a Business
- Taxes

Tools

- Calculators
- Polls
- Advanced Search

Life Stages

- Tweens & Teens
- College Students
- Employed
- Military and Reserves
- Small Business Owners
- Couples
- Parents & Children
- Home Owners
- In Crisis
- Retirees

Ask the Money Doctor

- Read Past Q&As
- Submit a Question
- Meet the Money Doctors
- Pending Questions

My 360

- Dashboard
- My Profile
- Email Subscriptions
- RSS Feeds
- In My State

FICPA MEMBER SERVICE CENTER

Phone: (800) 342-3197 (within Florida) or (850) 224-2727

E-mail: msc@ficpa.org

FREE CREDIT REPORT (Through the Federal Trade Commission)

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) requires each of the nationwide consumer reporting companies — Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion — to provide a free credit report once every 12 months.

Order free annual credit report online at annualcreditreport.com, or

Call: (877) 322-8228, or

www.ftc.gov

NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR CREDIT COUNSELORS

To find a credit counseling agency near you,

www.nfcc.org

Phone: 1-800-388-2227

FIND A CREDIT CARD

1. Go to your local credit union

www.credit.com

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

Information on a wide variety of financial services provided in Florida

www.myfloridacfo.com

Email: cfo@fldfs.com

Phone: (850) 413-3100 or (877) My-FL-CFO, (877) 693-5236

Fax: (850) 413-4993

Funeral and Cemetery Hotline

1-800-323-2627 answers questions and complaints about regulation of cemeteries in the state and "pre-need" requirements (also, www.funerals.org).

FORECLOSURE AVOIDANCE

1. Contact your lender and try to work out a plan

2. Two federal government programs:

a. Refinance the loan

b. Modify the loan

See www.makinghomeaffordable.gov

3. Free Counseling from a HUD-Approved Counselor

www.hud.gov

1-888-995-4673

GET LEAN LINE

1-800-GET LEAN (438-5326) answers calls, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., about waste, fraud and abuse in state government, and accepts

suggestions on how the state can save money. You can leave a message during non-working hours. Callers can remain anonymous. Names are kept confidential, when given.

INJURED WORKER HOTLINE

1-800-342-1741 If you have been injured on the job, an Employee Assistance Specialist will assist you with the benefits to which you may be entitled.

INSURANCE-HEALTH

1. Individuals with pre-existing conditions: "Cover Florida", 877-872-6580, www.coverfloridahealthcare.com
2. Low Income: Medicaid, 850-488-3560, www.fdhc.state.fl.us/Medicaid
3. Children: "Florida KidCare", 888-540-5437, www.floridakidcare.org
4. Women: Breast and Cervical Cancer Prevention, 800-227-2345
5. Private Health Insurance: 800-234-1317, also www.ehealthinsurance.com
6. COBRA: www.dol.gov

INSURANCE-LIFE

www.term4sale.com

MY SAFE FLORIDA HOME HELPLINE

1-866-513-MSFH (6734) answers questions about the My Safe Florida Home program including how to apply for a free wind inspection, apply for a grant, and track your steps in the process.

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL REGULATION HOTLINE

1-800-848-3792 answers calls from 8:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday on businesses regulated by the Office of Financial Regulation (Banking, Finance and Securities) and on matters of investigatory interest to the Office of Financial Regulation.

REPORTING INSURANCE FRAUD HOTLINE

1-800-378-0445 Anyone with information about suspected insurance fraud is asked to call or log on to www.MyFloridaCFO.com/fraud

UNCLAIMED PROPERTY (THE GREAT FLORIDA TREASURE HUNT)

Call toll-free in Florida to see if the state is holding money in your name.

Phone: 1-888-258-2253

Phone, out-of state: (850) 413-5555

Email: Funclaim@fldfs.com

Web Site: see the Unclaimed Property Link

Workers' Compensation Coverage Concerns?

1-800-742-2214 answers questions about coverage requirements and fraud

FLORIDA – ELDER ASSISTANCE

State of Florida's website for information about Medicare, Medicaid and long-term care for the elderly.

Web site: www.FloridaShine.org

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

Provides assistance to taxpayers and child support clients

Web site: www.myflorida.com/dor/

Phone: (800) 352-3671 or (850) 488-6800 Monday through Friday

Resource information such as the Tax Law Library, DOR TIPS (Taxpayer Information Publications) and more:

<http://dor.myflorida.com/dor>

THE FLORIDA BAR

Web site: www.flabar.org

Phone: (850) 561-5600

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Web site: www.irs.gov

Daytona Beach/Holly Hill
(386) 258-4105

Fort Myers
(239) 938-7601

Gainesville
(352) 395-6197

Jacksonville
(904) 665-1040

Lakeland
(863) 688-2066

Maitland/Orlando
(407) 660-5830

Melbourne
(321) 674-0047

Miami
(305) 982-5077

Ocala
(352) 401-0010

Panama City
(850) 769-1684

Pensacola
(850) 435-8468

Plantation/Fort Lauderdale
(954) 423-7300

Port St. Lucie
(772) 340-5606

Sarasota
(941) 378-6448

St. Petersburg
(727) 570-5552

Tallahassee
(850) 942-8995

Tampa
(813) 348-1831

West Palm Beach
(561) 616-2002

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Web site: www.ssa.gov

Phone: 1- 800-772-1213 - Operates from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Web site: www.sba.gov

North Florida District Office - Jacksonville

Phone: (904) 443-1900

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Potential Question Topics for 2011

Below are several questions and answers that could come up this year.

Question 1

I don't currently have a will and was wondering if it would be wise to wait until Congress finally enacts new estate tax legislation?

I don't recommend waiting for congress to act. First, many important aspects of an "Estate Plan" have nothing to do with estate taxes, such as guardianship for minor children, health care power of attorney, financial power of attorney and advanced directives (living will). Finally, a good attorney can craft the will so that it can accommodate future changes to the estate tax law.

Question 2

Should I convert my IRA to a ROTH?

Beginning in 2010, Congress removed the income limitation that formerly prevented taxpayers (with income over \$100,000) from converting an IRA to a ROTH. However, the decision to convert is not as straight forward as many in the financial services industry might imply. Conversion requires that you pay taxes on the converted amount now in exchange for not paying taxes on any future gains. Generally, a conversion can be advantageous if: 1. You can pay the current taxes from funds outside of the IRA, 2. You expect to leave the account to your heirs and you desire that they not have to pay taxes and 3. You want to avoid the IRA's required minimum distributions

Question 3

I'm a conservative investor and have a sizeable portion of my portfolio invested in bonds and cash. However, I'm worried about the continuing devaluation of the dollar and impact it could have on my future purchasing power. What should I do?

Dollar devaluation and the potential for high inflation in the future is one of the risks all investors share. Generally, the defense against inflation is to own "natural resource" assets that will increase with inflation such as precious metals, industrial materials, agriculture and energy. These assets can be conveniently and inexpensively purchased through the use of Exchange Traded Funds. However, prices are volatile and you should not make large purchases all at once, rather, either buy when prices have declined or dollar cost average until you reach your targeted investment amount. How much of your portfolio to allocate to natural resources will vary between investors but 10% is a common recommendation. You may wish to have a higher allocation but I recommend consulting a competent CPA/investment advisor before making any investment decisions.

Question 4

Congress suspended the Required Minimum Distribution rule for 2009. Has it been re-instituted for 2010?

Yes. RMDs must be taken by 12/31/2010 for the 2010 calendar year. RMDs apply to IRAs and employer retirement plans (401k, 403b, etc) but not to ROTH accounts.

Question 5

I turned 70.5 in 2009, the year when RMDs were temporarily suspended. Do I have until April 1, 2011 to take the first RMD?

No, you must take the 2010 RMD by 12/31/2010. Normally, you have until April 1 of the year following the year in which you turn 70.5 to take your first RMD. However, if you turned 70.5 in 2009 (the year RMDs were temporarily suspended) you must take your first RMD by Dec 31 of 2010 (i.e. you don't get the extra 3 months into the following year).

The above questions and answers were provided as a courtesy of Terry Seaton, Seaton Financial Advisors, LLC