



RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION PLANNING:

- **IRA:** Remember to plan your cash flow to make an IRA contribution by April 15, 2022. The maximum 2021 IRA contribution is \$6,000 (\$6,000 in 2022). If you are age 50 or older by December 31, 2021, the maximum amount is \$7,000. Roth IRA contributions are restricted to adjusted gross income phaseout amounts, with complete phaseout at \$140,000 for single taxpayers and \$208,000 for married taxpayers. IRA plans can be set up as late as April 15, 2022. If you are not eligible for a deductible IRA or Roth contribution due to income limitation, you can make a non-deductible IRA contribution and then (ideally) an immediate Roth conversion. Depending on the other IRA's you own, there may be reduced or no tax consequences. Contact us for specific details.
- **NEW(ish) Contributions after age 70 ½:** Beginning in 2020, the SECURE Act removed the age restriction for taxpayers to contribute to a traditional IRA. Roth IRA contributions had no age limit prior to the SECURE Act and this remains the same. *Note: California does not conform to this provision. No deduction is allowed for California if you over age 70 ½.*
- **401K:** The maximum 2021 contribution to your 401K is \$19,500 (\$20,500 in 2022). If you are age 50 or older by December 31, 2021 and your plan has been amended to allow it, the maximum amount is \$26,000 (\$27,000 in 2022).
- **SEP:** The maximum 2021 SEP contribution is \$58,000 (\$61,000 in 2022). You have until the due date of your tax returns, including extensions, in which to make the 2021 contribution and to set up the plan.
- **All retirement plan contributions:** Due to the complexity on limitations for contributions, we recommend that you consider waiting to make contributions until we have determined the allowable amount based on your actual tax return OR contact us to discuss an appropriate amount before you make the contribution. [You must have “earned income” to qualify for any type of IRA contribution.]
- **Roth IRA rollover:** There is no adjusted gross income limitation that restricts the rollover of a regular IRA into a Roth IRA. Funds rolled over from a regular IRA to a Roth IRA will be taxed under the regular IRA distribution rules, but no penalties will apply. A Roth conversion can no longer be recharacterized (enacted with the TCJA). This means that any type of plan converted to a Roth IRA (including a traditional IRA, SEP, SIMPLE, 401(k) or 403(b)) cannot be undone.
- **IRA One-Rollover-Per-Year Rule:** You are allowed only one rollover from an IRA to another (or the same) IRA in any 12-month period, regardless of the number of IRAs you own. This applies to all IRAs including SEP and SIMPLE IRAs and traditional or Roth IRAs. Transfers that are not limited include trustee-to-trustee transfers between IRAs and rollovers from traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs.
- **Required minimum distribution (RMD):** : The SECURE Act increased the age at which taxpayers must begin taking RMD's from age 70 ½ to age 72, but only for taxpayers who turned age 70 ½ after 12/31/19. California conformed to this age increase. **RMD's were waived for 2020 only.** For 2021, required minimum distributions are again required. As was allowed under previous law, taxpayers that turn age 72 in the current year are allowed to delay their first RMD until April 1 of the following year. However, two distributions will be required in the second year if this option is chosen. There are pros and cons to delaying the first-year distribution. Please contact us if you are considering this.

- **Tax-free distributions for charity:** Taxpayers over age 70 ½ are allowed to exclude IRA distributions from their gross income if they are donated to a qualified charity (up to \$100,000 per year) as a direct transfer from an IRA account. This is now a permanent provision of the law. Even though the SECURE Act increased the RMD age to 72, qualified charitable distributions are allowed starting at age 70 ½.

Standard deduction

The standard deduction remains high compared to the past (\$25,100 in 2021). Additionally, the \$10,000 SALT (state/local/property taxes) cap remains under current law (although this might be repealed or increased...see separate info on the Build Back Better bill). The combination of these two factors has resulted in substantially more taxpayers claiming the higher standard deduction. Deductible expenses such as medical expenses or charitable contributions may not have an impact on your federal tax returns for 2021 and beyond. Many states, including California, did not conform to these changes which resulted in itemizing for state only, however, the record keeping involved may not be worth itemizing for your state alone. Reach out if you want our advice!

DEDUCTION AND CREDIT PLANNING:

- **Medical expenses:** The 7.5% medical expense threshold has been made permanent for all taxpayers by the TCDTRA. Expenses must be paid or charged on a credit card by December 31, 2021 to be eligible.

- **NEW(ish) Charitable contributions:** **The \$300 charitable contribution deduction for non-itemizers was extended for 2021 under the TCDTRA.** If you do not normally itemize, be sure to include your charitable contributions for 2021 (however, you do not need to provide more than \$300). Be sure to ask for receipts to substantiate all amounts for both non-cash donations and cash donations. Cash donations can also be substantiated by canceled checks or bank statements that verify the charity's name, date and amount. Donations charged on a credit card by December 31, 2021 are

eligible as a deduction for 2021, even if you don't pay the credit card balance until 2022. Charitable contributions have varied limitations based on your adjusted gross income (temporarily suspended for cash contributions by the CARES Act/TCDTRA for 2021). Any amounts not eligible due to these limitations can be carried forward for five years. Any donation deduction amount for cars, boats and airplanes of more than \$500 requires your tax return to include a statement from the charity identifying the vehicle and stating the amount for which it was sold. Be sure to obtain these statements from the charity and include them with your organizer package.

- **Health savings accounts:** Health Savings Account (HSA) contribution limits for 2021 are \$3,600 if single (\$3,650 in 2022) or \$7,200 for a family (\$7,300 in 2022). For taxpayers aged 55 or older, the limits are \$4,600 if single and \$8,200 for a family.
- **Taxes:** State taxes are deductible on your federal tax return. State estimated income tax payments and property taxes that are due in 2022 can be paid in 2021. **CAUTION:** If you are subject to AMT (alternative minimum tax), there is no tax benefit by prepaying these taxes in 2021. Additionally, TCJA limits the total deduction of state and local income taxes, property taxes and personal property taxes to a combined total of \$10,000 (this may be repealed or increased; see separate sheet on the Build Back Better bill). For many taxpayers, there is no longer an advantage to pre-paying your state or property taxes. **NOTE -** For rental property owners, there is **NO** limit to the amount of property taxes that can be deducted as a rental expense (however, overall rental losses could still be limited based on passive loss rules).

Deduction "bunching"

By applying a "bunching strategy", taxpayers can accelerate or defer their discretionary medical expenses and/or charitable contributions into the tax year where it might actually create a tax benefit. For example, if you know that you will be able to itemize in 2021 but not in 2022, it would be more beneficial to do two years' worth of charitable contributions in 2021, instead of spreading out the donations over the two years.

- **Mortgage interest:** Mortgage interest is deductible to the extent the proceeds were used to acquire, construct or improve your personal residence(s) to a maximum principal amount of \$750,000 (\$1,000,000 for California and for debts acquired prior to December 15, 2017). Interest paid on home equity loans for which the proceeds were **not** used to acquire, construct or improve your personal residence is no longer deductible after the passage of the TCJA, even if the loan was acquired prior to December 15, 2017. Previously, you were allowed to deduct interest on a home equity loan up to \$100,000 regardless of what the proceeds were used for (this is still allowed for California). Refinancing a mortgage and taking cash proceeds may impact the amount of interest that is deductible. The itemized deduction for mortgage insurance premiums was extended through 2021 by the TCDTRA (however, this deduction is limited by adjusted gross income).
- **Miscellaneous itemized deductions:** From the passage of the TCJA, there is no longer a deduction for miscellaneous itemized deductions which were formerly deductible to the extent they exceeded 2% of your adjusted gross income. This category included tax preparation costs, investment/broker fees, union dues, unreimbursed employee expenses and safety deposit boxes. For taxpayers that incur high broker fees, consider discussing alternative options with your broker. For taxpayers with unreimbursed employee business expenses, consider discussing reimbursement options with your employer.
- **Residential Energy Efficient (Solar) Property Credit:** 2019 was the final year to receive the 30% credit for installing property such as solar electric panels or solar water heaters to your primary residence (excluding solar heaters installed for heating a swimming pool or hot tub). This credit is available through 12/31/2023, but is reduced to 26% in 2021 and 2022 and 22% in 2023. To receive the credit in 2021, the solar property must be placed in service before 1/1/22 (even if the project is financed or paid in future years).
- **Nonbusiness Energy Property Credit:** The TCDTRA extended this credit through 2021, which provides a credit of 10% of qualifying energy efficient improvements to your principal residence. This includes energy efficient windows, doors, skylights and other items. The credit has a lifetime cap of \$500 or \$200 depending on the property type.
- **Plug-in vehicle credit:** The maximum federal credit for buying a plug-in vehicle is \$7,500, with phaseout beginning once the automaker sells 200,000 qualifying vehicles. An updated list of vehicles that qualify for the credit and the actual amount of the credit can be found at <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/irc-30d-new-qualified-plug-in-electric-drive-motor-vehicle-credit>. Several automakers have met this limit and the credits have been reduced as follows:
 - ❖ There is no credit for Tesla vehicles delivered after 12/31/19.
 - ❖ There is no credit for GM electric vehicles (including the Chevrolet Bolt and Volt) delivered after March 2020.
 California offers a rebate that is applied for online at <https://cleanvehiclerebate.org>.

BUSINESS EXPENSE PLANNING:

- **Health insurance premiums:** As a self-employed person, you are able to deduct 100% of health insurance premiums paid for yourself, your spouse, and your dependents to the extent of your earned income. This also includes dental and vision insurance, plus limited amounts for long-term care insurance. It does not include disability or life insurance. **Health insurance paid for shareholders of an S-corporation must be reported on the shareholder's W-2 to be deductible.**
- **Depreciation:**
 - **"Section 179 deduction"** Equipment purchases are eligible for a "Section 179 deduction" of up to \$1,080,000 for 2021. The equipment must be "placed in service" by December 31, 2021.

Note that purchasing too much equipment (over \$2,700,000) will restrict your total “Section 179 deduction”.

- **Bonus depreciation** The TCJA increased bonus depreciation to a 100% first-year deduction for qualified new and used property placed in service after September 27, 2017 and before 2023. Qualified improvement property is now eligible for bonus depreciation.

2021 Standard Mileage Rates

- Business: 56 cents/mile
- Charitable: 14 cents/mile
- Medical: 16 cents/mile

INVESTMENT PLANNING:

- **Capital gains and losses:** Income that results from the sales of stock, investment property, and rental property (above depreciation recapture) is considered capital. Long-term gains result from sales that have been held over one year. The federal income tax rate on long-term capital gains is limited to 20% in 2021. The Medicare surtax of 3.8% on investment income for taxpayers with income exceeding certain thresholds is also still in effect. Losses are deductible to the extent of gains plus \$3,000. Any excess loss is carried over to subsequent years for an unlimited amount of time. **CAUTION:** If you are subject to AMT (alternative minimum tax), the capital gains tax rate benefit may be partially offset by an increased AMT liability amount.
- **Sale of home:** When selling your principal residence, you may exclude up to \$500,000 of capital gain if married or \$250,000 of capital gain if single. A sale of a home in 2021 (and beyond) could trigger the increased capital gain rate and the 3.8% Medicare surtax if there is a taxable gain. Since there is no exclusion for the sale of a second home, vacation home, or rental property, the entire capital gain could be subject to these higher rates for sales in 2021 and beyond.
- **Gifts:** Amounts transferred up to \$15,000 per person per year in 2021 are considered exempt from gift reporting and taxation. Amounts given above this amount require the “giver” to file a gift tax return and either elect to use part of their “life-time exclusion” or to pay a gift tax. This tax return is due April 15, 2022 or October 17, 2022 if an extension is filed. There are no requirements for the recipient of the gift. The 2022 limit is \$16,000.
- **Social security:** Up to 85% of social security benefits may be taxable depending on your modified adjusted gross income. For one-time events you should give consideration to the year of receipt. Please call us for an individualized analysis.
- **Net operating loss (NOL):** A net operating loss occurs if certain non-personal income and expenses create a negative amount. The TCJA repealed the net operating loss carryback (with limited exceptions), but it is still allowed to be carried forward indefinitely (there is no longer a 20-year expiration). The TCJA also limited the amount of the NOL that is available for use to 80% of the taxpayer’s taxable income. The CARES Act temporarily suspended these TCJA provisions in order to help taxpayers get more money back in their pockets, but this was for 2018-2020 tax years only.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX:

- Some of the standard year-end planning ideas will not reduce tax liability if you are subject to the alternative minimum tax (AMT) because different rules apply. Because of the complexity of the AMT, we recommend a personalized analysis (tax projection) of your AMT exposure.

HEALTHCARE MANDATE:

- California continues to impose a health care mandate. Penalties generally equal to \$750 per adult against California residents who do not have minimum essential health coverage for the entire year. The penalties will be calculated and reported on your 2021 California tax return. There is no such mandate or penalties on your federal return.