

Tax reform means bigger paychecks for most

(AP) -- The contentious tax overhaul is beginning to deliver a change many will welcome — bigger paychecks.

Workers are starting to see more take-home pay as employers implement the new withholding guidelines from the IRS, which dictate how much employers withhold from pay for federal taxes. Those whose checks have remained the same shouldn't fret — employers have until Feb. 15 to make the changes.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has estimated the new rules will mean more take-home pay for about 90 percent of American workers.

How much extra cash? It depends on several factors, such as income, how often they are paid, and the number of withholdings allowances they claim on their IRS Form W-4 with their employer.

Those whose employers were quick to make the change welcomed the extra money — anywhere from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars.

Wayne Love, who works in managed care in Spring Hill, Fla., got an extra \$200 in his paycheck last week, which he said will help offset a \$300 increase in the cost of his health insurance.

"I have heard time and again that the middle class is getting crumbs, but I'll take it!" Love said by email.

Julia Ketchum, a secretary at a public high school in Lancaster, Penn., said she was pleasantly surprised her pay went up \$1.50 a week. She didn't think her pay would go up at all, let alone this soon. That adds up to \$78 a year, which she said will more than cover her Costco membership for the year.

And Todd Anderson of Texas and his fiancée, who are both educators, got an extra \$200 in their paychecks combined they plan to use to cover the costs of a second baby on its way.

According to the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, a middle-income household would on average get a tax cut of \$930 this year, lifting their after-tax income by about 1.6 percent. That increase won't be perfectly reflected in their paycheck though.

That's because lower tax withholding on paychecks is just a piece of a complicated set of changes to tax law the GOP pushed through in December. And what your employer withholds is based on an estimate of your tax obligation that includes many complex factors, but it's not a perfect measure.

As a result, taxpayers may find they are unintentionally over- or under withholding for their taxes if they don't do some legwork.

Experts suggest all taxpayers take a look the new IRS calculator when it becomes available later in February to ensure they are having the correct amount withheld. And they should update the information on their W-4 after the IRS releases a revised version later this year.

For most people though, no change will be needed.

Highway Patrol wants you

Are you are looking for a career that affords opportunities to achieve your goals? Look no further, than the Tennessee Highway Patrol.

The Highway Patrol is now accepting applications for a July 2018 trooper cadet class. Men and women interested in becoming a Tennessee state trooper must apply online at <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/tennessee/default.cfm>.

The deadline is Tuesday, Feb. 20 at 11:59 p.m.

Applicants must be at least 21 years old, a U.S. citizen and have a high school diploma or higher education. Those with felony convictions will not be considered.

Once the application has been submitted online, candidates will be notified of their qualification status via email. Agility testing and interviews will take place the week of March 19 at the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security Training Center.

If hired, individuals must obtain a valid Tennessee driver license prior to the class graduation in December 2018.

Candidates are required to successfully complete a level II background investigation which includes a credit check and polygraph test. Recruits must pass a psychological and medical examination, including a drug screening.

Highway Patrol officials say this is an extremely positive and exciting time to be a member of an elite law enforcement agency. The THP continues to grow in size and prides itself on professionalism and respect within the law enforcement community.

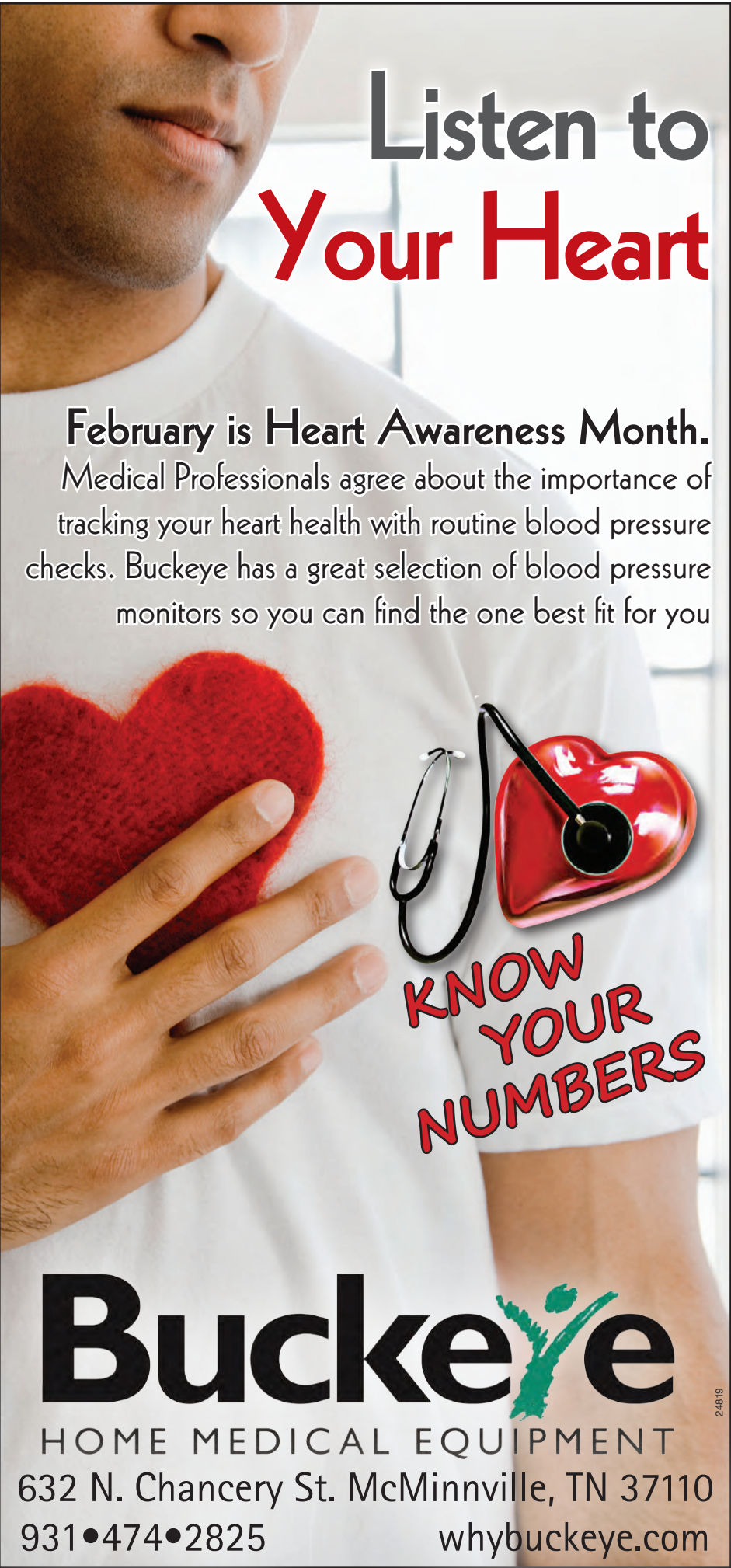
Daily services performed by a Tennessee state trooper include, assisting the public, enforcement of criminal and traffic laws, saving lives, traffic enforcement, motorcycle traffic patrol, crash investigation, crash reconstruction, criminal interdiction, criminal investigations, identity crimes investigations, special operations and tactical duties, K-9 handling, diving, aviation, executive protective services, bomb squad, and much more.

"I am more excited today about the opportunities our troopers have to succeed compared to those when I joined the THP," said Col. Tracy Trott. "It is not a secret that law enforcement has been faced with difficult challenges. However, we train and prepare our troopers to do their job professionally and ethically. Our troopers make Tennessee a safe state to work and live in by putting highly trained personnel on Tennessee roadways."

For information about applications, please contact the Tennessee Department of Human Resources Applicant Services Division at (615) 741-4841.

Applications for the Tennessee Highway Patrol are being accepted now through Feb. 20. Pictured is state trooper Rodney Whiles working the scene of a two-vehicle crash in this file photo.






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