Tax filing season progressing smoothly with timely refund processing and a high use of electronic filing

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service continues to deliver excellent service to taxpayers during the 2026 filing season with the rise in tax refunds, the smooth pace at which taxpayers are getting their refunds and the high use of electronic filing.

"With less than two weeks left in the filing season, the IRS continues to provide historically outstanding service to taxpayers," said IRS Chief Executive Officer Frank J. Bisignano. "Tens of millions of Americans are getting their refunds direct deposited in their bank accounts and their returns processed promptly without error or delay."

Highlights from the 2026 filing season, through March 20:

Over 80 percent of refunds were issued in less than 21 days with an average refund amount of $3,571.

Over 98 percent of tax refunds have been issued electronically via direct deposit, out of a total of 57 million refunds issued.

Over 98 percent of returns were filed electronically, out of a total of more than 78 million individual federal income tax returns.

The average refund is up by more than 10 percent with total refunds now at more than $202 billion.

Get refunds faster by providing banking information

The IRS encourages all taxpayers who are expecting a refund to include banking information when they file. Taxpayers who did not provide valid bank information when they filed can use online tools on IRS.gov to provide the necessary information to get their refund faster.

Only about one percent of taxpayers received a CP53E notice informing them that their banking information on the return is missing or invalid. Taxpayers do not have to wait to receive the notice to act. They can check the Where's My Refund? tool for next steps and if this situation applies to them, they can use their IRS Individual Online Account to resolve the issue quickly by providing accurate banking information or the reason they cannot. Once updated, the IRS will issue their refund, usually within seven days. For security purposes, IRS employees cannot update bank account information over the phone or in person.

What taxpayers need to do

After receiving the CP53E notice, they should:

Access or create their IRS Individual Online Account.

Navigate to:

"Profile"

"Banking information"

"Add bank account"

Enter and submit their direct deposit information.

If taxpayers already took action through Where's My Refund or IRS Individual Online Account before they received the notice, they can disregard it.

After updating their information, taxpayers can check the status on IRS.gov, with or without signing into their IRS Individual Online Account. Updates typically appear within a few days.

What happens if no action is taken

Taxpayers who receive a CP53E notice generally have 30 days from the date on the notice to act. If a taxpayer does not act within the 30-day window, the IRS will issue a paper check six weeks after the date the notice was issued.

Direct deposit remains the fastest and most secure way to receive a refund, helping reduce the risk of lost or stolen payments. Across government, paper instruments (e.g., checks and money orders) are far more likely than electronic payments to be lost, stolen, altered, or delayed.

What the CP53E notice means

Taxpayers may receive a CP53E notice if:

No direct deposit information was included on the tax return, or

The bank account information provided was incorrect or rejected by the bank.

The notice does not mean the refund is denied. Instead, it means the refund is on hold until the taxpayer acts.

What happens if a taxpayer does not have a bank account?

Taxpayers who have filed their return without their direct deposit information and qualify for an exception to the direct deposit requirement may review and select the appropriate exception in their IRS Individual Online Account. Limited exceptions to electronic methods are available for specific situations such as those involving hardships, or legal and procedural requirements. Providing exception eligibility information will allow the release of a paper check within one to two weeks.

If the taxpayer can't access their IRS Individual Online Account, they can call the toll-free line for assistance with entering an exception to receive a paper check. Consistent with prior years, a paper check generally takes one to three weeks longer to process than a direct deposit. The telephone representative cannot input or update a taxpayer's banking information.

More information

In response to the executive order, Modernizing Payments To and From America's Bank Account, the IRS announced that paper refund checks began phasing out on Sept. 30, 2025.

Taxpayers can learn more about this notice, including frequently asked questions and step-by-step instructions, by visiting Understanding Your CP53E Notice on IRS.gov.

Young Americans launch "Letters to America"

— A Nationwide Call for the Next Generation to Define the Country's Future Ahead of the 250th Anniversary

Washington, DC – As the United States approaches its 250th anniversary, Made By Us, a national coalition of hundreds of museums, historic sites, and cultural institutions, is launching a new youth-driven civic initiative inviting the next generation to define what America should become.

Through "Letters to America," young people ages 14 to 30 are being called on to share their vision for the country's future through essays, videos, speeches, and art — putting forward their own declarations at a pivotal moment in the nation's history.

Through this initiative, young people are putting forward their own declarations, reflecting on the country's past, responding to the present moment, and imagining what the next 250 years should look like.

Selected letters will be elevated by media partners, museums, and civic organizations nationwide as part of National Youth Takeover Day on June 27, 2026, when youth voices will take center stage across platforms, public spaces, and cultural institutions.

Organizers say the initiative is designed to shift how the 250th anniversary is shaped — moving beyond official commemorations and toward a more participatory, youth-driven vision of the country's future.

"Young people are not just inheriting the future — they are actively defining it," said Alex Edgar, Youth Engagement Manager at Made By Us and Co-Founder of Youth250. "Letters to America is about creating space for this generation to speak for itself, in its own words, and to be heard at a national level."

The launch builds on a growing national effort to engage young people in shaping the story of the United States at a historic milestone. Through related activations like Wish Walls, town halls, and civic programming across the country, thousands of young people are already contributing their perspectives on issues including affordability, identity, safety, climate, and belonging.

In addition to submitting letters, young people can:

Participate in local activations and Wish Wall installations

Share their work with media outlets, schools, and community platforms

Partner with organizations to amplify youth voices locally

Join the Youth250 Content Corps, a national network of 300+ young creators producing stories, videos, and commentary about the country's past, present, and future

Organizers say the goal is about participation and visibility, ensuring that youth perspectives are reflected in the national conversation as the 250th anniversary approaches.

Youth250 is led by Made By Us and made possible through generous support from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, PolicyLink, the Hearthland Foundation, and the Bezos Family Foundation. The February 17 gathering was hosted at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, steps from where the Constitution was adopted.

About Youth 250: Youth250 is a first-of-its-kind national effort placing young people at the center of America's 250th anniversary. Through a Bureau of 100 paid, trained youth advisors, a science-backed Gen Z Scorecard adopted by more than 400 organizations, and nationwide creative activations, young leaders are advising institutions and co-creating how the Semiquincentennial is commemorated. At a moment of deep polarization, Youth250 offers a forward-looking counterpoint, with a youth-written Declaration that reframes what the next 250 years should stand for and will travel to museums and institutions nationwide ahead of July 4, 2026.

Local Farm Credit family scholarship named

Twelve students were named recipients of the 2026 Tom Tracy Memorial Farm Credit Illinois Family Scholarship, administered by the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois (CFECI). Each scholar receives $3,000 towards their college education. The selection criteria includes scholastic achievement, leadership and community contributions, career vision and goals, and financial need.

Scholars are 26 years of age or younger, the children or grandchildren of Farm Credit Illinois employees, and will be enrolled as full-time college students in the fall of 2026.

The following students are recipients of the 2026 Tom Tracy Memorial FCI Family Scholarship.

• Grace Cain, of Mahomet, is pursuing a degree in clinical mental health counseling at the University of the Cumberlands. She graduated from Mahomet-Seymour High School and is the daughter of Darcy Allen, event & initiatives coordinator in Mahomet.

• Matt Canning, of Marissa, is majoring in mechanical engineering at Southern Illinois College Edwardsville. He graduated from Marissa Jr./Sr. High School and is the son of Kelli and Andy Canning, vice president of crop insurance in Red Bud.

• Marissa Fraley, of Kampsville, is seeking a degree in child development at Lewis & Clark Community College. She will graduate from Calhoun High School in May and is the daughter of Kari and Luke Fraley, Rural 1st consumer loan officer based in Jerseyville.

• Elise Hortin, of Norris City, is studying exercise science at the University of Evansville. She graduated from Norris City-Omaha-Enfield Community High School and is the daughter of Alexa and Todd Hortin, vice president of lending in Marion.

• Isaiah Lintker, of New Athens, is pursuing a degree in mathematics with a concentration in secondary education at the University of St. Francis. He graduated from New Athens High School and is the son of Laura and Ron Lintker, vice president of lending in Red Bud.

• Claire Meharry, of Tolono, plans to major in medical laboratory science at Illinois State University. She will graduate from Unity High School in May and is the daughter of Amy Meharry and Paul Meharry, certified appraiser and valuation services manager in Mahomet.

• Mason Orton, of Mahomet, is studying business at Northern Illinois University. He graduated from Mahomet-Seymour High School and is the son of Darlia and Mike Orton, digital engagement specialist in Mahomet.

• Cole Paulek, of Stonington, is pursuing a degree in animal science at Kansas State University. He graduated from Taylorville High School and is the son of Craig and Katie Paulek, member service specialist in Taylorville.

• Austin Ritter, of Savoy, is seeking a degree in integrated business and engineering at Purdue University. He will graduate from Champaign Central High School in May and is the son of Chad and Karen Ritter, vice president of loan accounting operations in Mahomet.

• Chase Sweeden, of Bloomington, will major in accountancy at the University of Missouri. He will graduate from Normal Community High School in May and is the son of Tonya Dingledine, vice president of treasury and finance operations in Mahomet.

• Braxton Tharp, of Ivesdale, is studying agribusiness at Illinois State University. He graduated from Monticello High School and is the son of Clint and Kaitlin Tharp, marketplace learning specialist in Mahomet.

• Brett Young, of Clinton, is studying agribusiness markets and management at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He graduated from Clinton Community High School and is the son of Sherry and Jack Young, vice president of crop insurance in Decatur.

The financial cooperative's family scholarship was renamed in 2020 to permanently memorialize the late Tom Tracy. Early in his FCI president and CEO career, Tracy launched a family scholarship program that demonstrated his values of lifelong learning and employee support. His legacy of passionate advocacy for those seeking to better themselves through education continues through a named scholarship endowment at the CFECI. Tracy served as FCI's president and CEO from 2015 until his passing in September 2019.

"This scholarship pays tribute to the late Tom Tracy who established a family scholarship for children and grandchildren of FCI employees early in his CEO tenure," says Adam Brown, FCI board chair and Macon County farmer. "The cooperative is proud to empower the next generation of our employees in pursuing continued education and preparing them to be a positive contribution in their communities."

About the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois:

The Community Foundation of East Central Illinois is a publicly-supported 501(c)(3) tax-exempt philanthropic organization created in 1972 to encourage and receive contributions establishing endowments for the long-term benefit of east central Illinois. Because the funds are endowed, they are permanently invested to produce income that is used to meet charitable needs of the community. The Community Foundation is independently governed by 15 Trustees serving without compensation and chosen for their knowledge of the community and their expertise in the areas of management necessary to carry out the functions of the Foundation. For more information, visit www.cfeci.org.

About Farm Credit Illinois:

Farm Credit Illinois (FCI) is an agricultural financial cooperative owned by more than 17,100 farmer, rural landowner, and agribusiness voting stockholders in the southern 60 counties of Illinois. Dedicated to Helping Farm Families Succeed, FCI provides competitive and flexible financing, crop insurance expertise, and Rural 1st® country life lending. FCI manages an $8 billion loan portfolio, sells 1.5 million acres of crop insurance coverage, and employs approximately 300 staff in the Mahomet headquarters and 14 regional offices. The Association will return $30 million of 2025 earnings as cash patronage to member-borrowers in June. The U.S. Farm Credit System is a network of locally owned cooperatives supporting rural communities, farm families, and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services today and tomorrow.