

# The Earned Income Tax Credit and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program

## HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS CAN GET INVOLVED IN OUTREACH



Connecting Nonprofit Organizations  
to Policymakers and the Media



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Dear Elected Official,

Thank you for taking the time to explore how you can work with your constituents to help them build economic security for their families and in their community. The federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is also available as a state tax credit in 24 states, helps low and middle income working families keep more of the money they earn so they can afford needed food and other necessities. Unfortunately, many eligible families aren't aware of the EITC and aren't receiving the credit. As an elected official, you can help raise awareness of the program and connect with your constituents – a win-win situation.

The National Community Tax Coalition (NCTC), a nationwide network of community tax preparation programs and The Hatcher Group, a public affairs and communications firm that connects nonprofits and foundations to policymakers and the media, have come together with the generous support of the Kellogg Foundation to raise awareness of the EITC, the importance of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites, and the need to build support for EITC benefit expansions and program funding increases.

One of the most effective ways to achieve these goals is for local, state, and federal elected officials to help educate their constituents about the availability of the EITC, free tax assistance sites, and to work in support of the program. You have a valuable “bully pulpit” that allows you to reach more people in your community and educate them about building economic security. In this troubling economy filled with news of job layoffs, rising gas and food prices, and home foreclosures, it's more important than ever that families in need know about the programs that exist to help.

Many members of Congress, governors and state legislators are already conducting EITC outreach, as you'll see in the Examples of Outreach Chapter. We're proud of the EITC's long history of bipartisan support. We encourage you to take a look at what others are doing and see how you can get involved. While an average of 75 percent of eligible people receive the EITC, there are many families in your state that are missing out on benefits that could help them climb the economic ladder.

We've put together this toolkit, and an accompanying version specifically for EITC advocates, to help make your job easier. Included in the guide, you'll find new and unique EITC outreach ideas for working with your constituents, and template materials such as press releases, newsletter

articles and opinion-editorials. We've also packed it full of EITC data and resource materials so you have all the facts at your fingertips on how important the EITC is to America's families and why it should be supported and expanded.

Thank you for your interest in this guide and support for this valuable program. If you have any questions or would like any assistance in conducting a site visit to a VITA site or being connected with EITC advocates in your state, please contact:

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An electronic version of this toolkit can be found at  
<http://www.thehatchergroup.com/EITCoutreach.html>

Sincerely,



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Center for Economic Progress



Ed Hatcher  
President  
The Hatcher Group

# THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT AND THE VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: HOW ELECTED OFFICIALS CAN GET INVOLVED IN OUTREACH

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To find a VITA site near you, call 1-800-829-1040 or visit the National Community Tax Coalition’s website at <http://www.tax-coalition.org/programs.cfm>