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BERGEN BAR TAX BULLETIN

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Tax Law Committee
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***E-mail:* Current Items:**

1)No Influence, Please
2)Ode to the Tax Professional

1) You may think this bar bulletin is late. The calendar suggests you're right, and for once the calendar has the stronger case. I've just returned from Sicily, where I devoted several days to important research: roads, food, fruit and pastry. The roads were in excellent condition, the food was locally grown and well prepared, the fruit was impressively large, and the pastry was not sugar-soaked. All in all, a demanding field assignment.

Sicily also has a well-earned reputation for taking food seriously. If you see Pasta Norma on a menu, give it a try: it's made with eggplant and ricotta salata and originated in Sicily. Some of the better Italian restaurants in New Jersey serve it, too. No special password is required.

But this is, after all, a bar bulletin devoted to tax information. On October 29, the IRS issued announcement IR 2026-129, reporting on the results of the 2026 filing season. The announcement says the IRS collected $5.6 trillion in taxes, nearly 5% more than the previous year, while the average federal income tax rate declined across all income categories on returns filed through mid-July. It puts the overall average rate at 12.6% for tax year 2025, a 4% decrease from the prior year.

The IRS also reported that the total dollar amount of refunds claimed rose 17%, the average refund rose 11%, and about 90% of taxpayers who filed electronically received their refunds within 21 days. The total amount of refunds distributed increased by more than 20% over 2025. The agency described the results as a "historic performance for American taxpayers."

That's the IRS's summary. The numbers are worth reviewing; the adjectives are optional. Government reports do occasionally arrive wearing a party hat. I prefer to take mine off and look at the tables.

2) I bet you didn't know it was Tax Professional Awareness Week, observed October 19 through October 23. The IRS used the week to highlight the role tax professionals play in the tax system.

Tax professionals help clients prepare accurate returns, resolve issues with the IRS, and keep up with agency announcements and changes in tax law. Their work can make a complicated filing season a little less complicated—which is no small feat, given that the forms rarely make an effort to be charming.

And some tax professionals do all of this with humor and sarcasm. I added that part.