

2018 Year-End Financial Checklist

As we approach the end of the year, it may be an opportune time to review your investments and year-end tax situation with your Davenport Investment Executive. It is also an excellent time to begin a broader discussion of your financial goals for 2019 and beyond. The following is a checklist to help you focus on important strategies and opportunities.

TAX RATES AND ADDITIONAL TAXES

There are seven federal marginal income tax rates for 2018: 10%, 12%, 22%, 24%, 32%, 35%, 37%. The 37% rate applies at Net Taxable Income levels of \$500,000 Single, \$500,000 Head-of-Household, \$600,000 Married Filing Jointly, and \$300,000 Married Filing Separately. Taxpayers with Modified Adjusted Gross Income in excess of \$200,000 Single and Head-of-Household, \$250,000 Married Filing Jointly, and \$125,000 Married Filing Separately will pay an additional 3.8% tax on “excess” investment income. Taxpayers with earned income in excess of \$200,000 Single and Head-of-Household, \$250,000 Married Filing Jointly, and \$125,000 Married Filing Separately will pay an additional 0.9% Hospital Insurance Tax (Medicare) on earned income above the applicable limit.

SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT AND STATEMENT

We suggest that clients go to the Social Security Administration website (www.SSA.gov or www.socialsecurity.gov), click on the My Social Security (Create an Account) tab and complete the process to create an online Social Security account. Once an account is created, the individual’s Social Security statement is available online. Currently, the Social Security Administration only mails statements to workers age 60 and over who aren’t yet receiving Social Security benefits and have not signed up for online statements.

RETIREMENT PLAN CONTRIBUTIONS

The maximum salary elective deferral limit for 401(k), 403(b), and 457 plans in 2018 is \$18,500. Individuals who are 50 and over may contribute an additional \$6,000 per year “catch-up contribution.” In 2019, the contribution limit is expected to increase to \$19,000 with a \$6,000 catch-up limit.

CAPITAL GAINS/LOSSES

The sale of a security held for one year or less results in a short-term capital gain or loss. Short-term capital gains are taxed at an individual's federal marginal income tax rate. The sale of a security held more than one year results in a long-term capital gain or loss. Long-term capital gains are generally taxed at 15%, but may vary based upon taxable income. The rate is 0% for single taxpayers with taxable income of up to \$38,600 (\$77,200 for Married Filing Jointly and \$51,700 for Head-of-Household). A 20% rate applies for single taxpayers with taxable income above \$425,800 (\$479,000 for Married Filing Jointly and \$452,400 for Head-of-Household). The 0% rate may only apply to a portion of the gains recognized. Because capital gains and losses during the tax year are netted against one another for income tax purposes, it may be beneficial to make adjustments to a portfolio by December 31. Additionally, the 3.8% Medicare surtax on unearned income, including investment income, for high-income taxpayers may increase the tax rate. Consult with a tax advisor if considering realizing long-term capital gains for this year.

WASH SALES

Securities sold at a loss before the end of the year may be subject to wash sale rules. The IRS states that taxpayers may not take a deduction for a loss if they purchased the same security (or a "substantially identical" security) 30 days before or 30 days after the sale. Please note: if a loss is incurred on December 31, 2018, then November 30, 2018 would be the last day to "double up" on the security to avoid a wash sale, and January 31, 2019 would be the first day to repurchase the same security subsequent to the sale.

MUTUAL FUNDS

Be cautious about buying mutual fund shares in a taxable account toward the end of the year. Many funds distribute taxable gains for the year in December. It is important to avoid creating a tax liability for a year's worth of gains on an investment held for only a few days. Please consult your Investment Executive regarding the capital gains distribution status on any mutual fund considered for purchase between now and December 31, 2018.

TAXATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Under current law, Social Security recipients may be subject to federal (and possibly state) income tax on up to 85% of their annual Social Security benefits. For single taxpayers with "provisional" income (Adjusted Gross Income, excluding Social Security benefits, plus tax-exempt interest, plus 50% of Social Security benefits) less than \$25,000 (\$32,000 for Married Filing Jointly), Social Security benefits are income tax-free. For provisional income between \$25,000 and \$34,000 (\$32,000 and \$44,000 for married filing jointly), up to 50% of Social Security benefits may be subject to income tax. Up to 85% of benefits may be subject to income tax for provisional income in excess of \$34,000 (\$44,000 for Married Filing Jointly).

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REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTIONS (RMD)

IRA account owners who turned 70 1/2 prior to 2018 must take their annual RMD by December 31, 2018. IRA owners who turn 70 1/2 during 2018 have until April 1, 2019 to take their first minimum distribution. If the initial 2018 RMD is deferred into 2019, the taxpayer will have to take two distributions during 2019 (one for 2018 and one for 2019).

IRA CONTRIBUTIONS

The maximum contribution amount for both Traditional IRAs and Roth IRAs is \$5,500 for 2018 (subject to eligibility requirements). Contributions may be made until April 15, 2019 and still be counted for the 2018 tax year. Please note that individuals age 50 and over are eligible to make an additional \$1,000 “catch-up” contribution. The IRA contribution limit is projected to increase to \$6,000 in 2019.

BENEFICIARY DESIGNATIONS

Now is an excellent time to review beneficiary designations for IRAs, qualified plans, and life insurance policies. For example, the beneficiary designations on these accounts should generally be living people (not an estate or trust) and should include primary and successor beneficiaries. It should also be noted that the distribution of these accounts is determined by the beneficiary form, not by the individual’s will. Additionally, life changes such as birth, divorce, and death may require modifications to beneficiary designations.

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

529 College Savings Plans have limits set by individual states, and federal gift rules apply to contributions. Contributions made by December 31, 2018 to 529 Plans sponsored by the donor’s state of residence may be eligible for a state income tax deduction or credit for 2018.

CHARITABLE GIVING

Specific record-keeping requirements must be satisfied to deduct any cash donations made to a charity. A bank record or written communication from the charity must be kept as documentation regardless of the size of the donation. Donations to charities must be received by the charity by year-end in order to secure a 2018 deduction. **Note: the provision that allows IRA account owners over age 70 1/2 to make direct transfers of up to \$100,000 to qualified charities (often called Qualified Charitable Distributions, or QCDs) from their IRA accounts has been made permanent. These transfers can satisfy Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).**

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE AND MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN OPEN ENROLLMENT

The open enrollment period to join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan, change Medicare Prescription Drug Plans, switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage Plan, or switch from one Medicare Advantage Plan to a different Medicare Advantage Plan runs from October 15 to December 7, 2018. It is important to review your prescription drug plan annually to ensure that you have the plan that best fits your needs at the most reasonable cost.

GIFT AND ESTATE TAXES

In 2018, up to \$15,000 in cash or securities can be given to any other individual free of federal gift tax; however, the gift must be completed (i.e., deposited) by December 31, 2018 in order to count for the 2018 tax year. Direct payments of tuition or medical expenses are not included in the \$15,000 limit. In addition to the annual exclusion, gifts totaling \$11.2 million during one's lifetime will be free from gift tax. During 2018, gifts in excess of the \$11.2 million limit are taxable at a rate of 40%. Estates of decedents dying during 2018 will be taxed at 40% on all assets exceeding the \$11.2 million exclusion.

ROTH IRA CONVERSIONS

Beginning in 2010, the Tax Increase Prevention & Reconciliation Act of 2005 (TIPRA) eliminated the \$100,000 Modified Adjusted Gross Income limit previously in place to qualify for a Roth IRA conversion, making anyone eligible to convert a Traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. Taxpayers considering a Roth conversion in 2018 or 2019 should consider the potential impact of the 3.8% Medicare Surtax on unearned income in 2018. For some taxpayers, a conversion may result in a higher tax rate on their investment income (which includes interest, dividends, and capital gains) in 2018. There are many factors that must be considered before making the decision to convert to a Roth IRA. Consult with a professional tax advisor before taking any action.

IMPACT OF ONE TIME OR "EXTRAORDINARY" TRANSACTIONS

Certain large transactions that may occur infrequently can have unexpected tax impacts in the year of the transaction or in subsequent years. These transactions include gains from the sale of securities, property, or businesses, income recognized on Roth IRA conversions, and distributions from non-qualified deferred compensation plans, etc. The gain or income recognized on these transactions can result in the loss of itemized deductions and personal exemptions, the application of higher income tax or capital gains tax rates, trigger the additional 3.8% tax on unearned income, cause additional Social Security benefits to become taxable, and result in higher part B Medicare premiums. These issues should be addressed with a professional tax advisor.

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