

Public service announcement for United States taxpayers: In tax year 2006, you can claim a \$30 refund if you owned a telephone

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The United States government authorized a one-time refund of long-distance excise taxes paid between March 2003 and July 2006, but early returns suggest that many taxpayers are unaware of this refund. (Here's the IRS press release that goes into more detail and includes a list of most common mistakes people have been making.) The easy way to claim this is merely to take the standard deduction of \$refund; the hard way is to collect all your telephone bills from that period and compute how much long distance excise tax you actually paid. This entry also illustrates how all the nitpicking from commenters over the years has altered the way I write, forcing me to put all sorts of clarifying information into the subject line—making it rather unwieldy—so that people won't carp about how the entry applies only to United States income taxes. Remember when blogs were an informal communication mechanism? Where you could leave mathematical precision behind, relying on your readers to fill in the gaps? When you could toss together a sample program without people obsessing over the grayscale algorithm you used? Or use phrases like “regular people like you and me” without being taken to task for implying that other people aren't regular? I miss those days. Blogging isn't all that much fun now; it's more of a chore.

(And I predict that somebody is going to nitpick my article and lambaste me for missing the fact that the exact amount of the refund varies depending on how many exemptions you claim. So here's the disclaimer: This entry is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as providing tax advice. Consult with an attorney or tax professional regarding any specific legal or tax situation.)

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