

The Maryland Comptroller's Tax BULLETIN

August Edition



TAX-FREE WEEK
SHOP MARYLAND
AUGUST 8-14, 2021



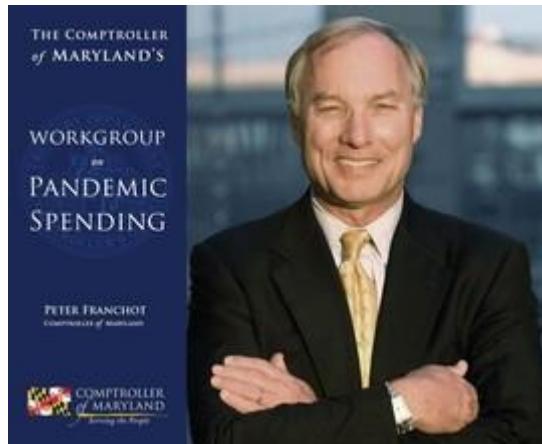
Pay no sales tax on qualifying clothing or footwear priced at \$100 or less. Also, pay no sales tax on the first \$40 of a backpack.

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MARYLAND COMPTROLLER PETER FRANCHOT

Look for Savings During Annual Shop Maryland Tax-Free Week August 8-14

Shop Maryland Tax-Free Week returns August 8-14 with significant savings for consumers, scholarship opportunities for college and trade school students, and a much-needed sales boost for retailers.

During the week, any single qualifying article of clothing or footwear priced **\$100** or less – regardless of how many items are purchased in the same transaction – will be exempt from the state's six percent sales tax. The first \$40 of any



Pandemic Workgroup Probes Unemployment Insurance Delays, Customer Service Failures and Fraud

At the third meeting of the Comptroller's Workgroup on Pandemic Spending July 29, Comptroller Franchot demanded answers about the state's troubled unemployment insurance system that has prevented tens of thousands of Marylanders from getting the financial assistance they are owed.

David McGlone, deputy secretary for the state Department of Labor, said the agency has paid out almost \$13.2 billion in state and federal claims to more than 675,000 Marylanders since March 2020. More than 20,000 claims currently

backpack purchase is also tax free.

The Comptroller's Office is partnering with the Maryland Retailers Association (MRA) to again offer scholarships to two students attending a Maryland university, college or trade school, with a \$1,000 award for first place and a \$500 prize for second place.

To enter, students must email a creative photo or video (less than 60 seconds) promoting tax-free week, showcasing their purchases and their support of Maryland retailers to SHOPMDTAXFREE@marylandtaxes.gov. Entries also should be posted on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or TikTok using the hashtag **#shopmdtaxfree**. For best consideration, submissions should display and tag the name of the retailer and explain why it's their favorite place to shop tax free. Submissions are due by August 15.



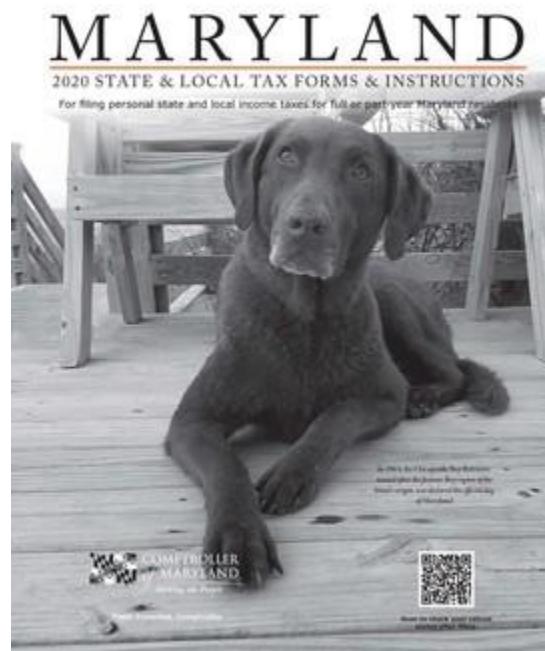
Western Maryland Recipients Round Out William Donald Schaefer Award Winners

Comptroller Peter Franchot virtually presented the final round of 2020 William Donald Schaefer Helping People Awards to recipients in Western Maryland. Recipients

are pending and there are reports of unexplained disruptions or delays in payouts, problems with the agency's online BEACON system, underperforming customer service, inadequate training of claims agents and a torrent of fraudulent filing stymying the system.

Despite spending tens of millions of dollars in emergency contracts to hire more call center operators and claims agents, customer service woes continue.

Comptroller Franchot also expressed frustration that the Department has not done enough to prevent fraudulent claims, which may have led to millions in taxpayer dollars, or more, being distributed to criminals during the pandemic.



More Than 3 Million Returns Processed; \$2.3 Billion in Refunds Sent to Taxpayers

The Maryland Comptroller's Office has processed more than three million state tax returns for the 2020 tax year, with 90 percent of returns filed electronically. More than \$2.3 billion in refunds has been returned to 2.3 million Maryland taxpayers, with the average

included:

- Garrett County – HART for Animals
- Allegany County – Mindy Wilkinson, owner of She's So Pretty in Lonaconing
- Washington County – Rick Wilson, founder of Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry
- Frederick County – Hayden's Heroes

"These recipients stepped up to provide critical resources and created pathways for vulnerable neighbors, friends and families facing life-or-death struggles," Comptroller Franchot said. "They recognized the needs of their communities, took action and continue to inspire the rest of us to do what is needed and what is right. It is a privilege to honor their service."

refund check totaling \$1,000.

"We know families rely on those refunds as a lifeline, to pay credit card bills and to do small projects around their house," Comptroller Franchot said. "We try to get refunds back into the pockets of hard-working taxpayers as soon as possible, typically in less than three business days and deposited directly into their bank accounts."

Taxpayers who have questions about the status of their return or have other tax-related inquiries can contact Taxpayer Services at **410-260-7980** from Central Maryland, **1-800-MD-TAXES** (1-800-638-2937) from elsewhere or email taxhelp@comp.state.md.us. Assistance is available 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Taxpayers can also schedule a virtual or in-person appointment at one of **12 branch offices** throughout the state.

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