

New tax laws for 2026 that you should know



Financial Focus

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The new year brings more than resolutions and fresh starts; it also ushers in several tax changes that could affect your wallet. Whether you're saving for retirement, funding your child's education or supporting your favorite charity, here's are a few things you need to know about the tax landscape in 2026.

More room to save for retirement and healthcare.

There's good news for savers: Contribution limits for retirement accounts are going up. If you're under 50, you can now contribute up to \$7,500 to an IRA, which is up from \$7,000 in 2025. Those 50 and older can contribute an additional \$1,100, for a total of \$8,600.

The limits for 401(k), 403(b) and governmental 457(b) plans are also increasing, with workers younger than 50 able to defer up to \$24,500. Visit IRS.gov and search "401k limit increases" for an article outlining the details.

Health savings account limits are rising too. In 2026, individual coverage increased to \$4,400 and family coverage to \$8,750. If you are age 55 or older and are not enrolled in Medicare, you can contribute an additional \$1,000 as a catch-up contribution.

The start of the year is an ideal time to review your

contributions and consider increasing them, even by small amounts which can add up over time.

A catch-up rule for high earners. If you're 50 or older and earned more than \$150,000 last year, there's a new wrinkle in your retirement planning. You can still make catch-up contributions to your workplace retirement plan, but they must now be Roth contributions rather than traditional pre-tax contributions. This includes 401(k), 403(b) and 457(b) plans.

While you won't get an immediate tax break, Roth contributions offer tax-free income in retirement and can provide a tax-free legacy for your heirs.

Expanded benefits for 529 education plans. Families using 529 plans to cover K-12 expenses will see the annual federal distribution limit double from \$10,000 to \$20,000

per student. The definition of qualifying expenses has also expanded to include curriculum, books, certain tutoring expenses and testing fees.

This change provides more flexibility for families with overfunded plans and increases options for managing education costs across multiple children or beneficiaries.

New charitable giving provisions. The rules around charitable deductions are shifting in two directions. Taxpayers who take the standard deduction can now deduct up to \$1,000 in cash donations (\$2,000 for joint filers) to qualified organizations.

However, those who itemize deductions face a new threshold: only charitable contributions exceeding 0.5% of adjusted gross income are now deductible. Donors may want to consider bunching strategies or using donor-advised

funds to maximize their tax benefits.

Getting help. Navigating these tax changes can be challenging, but you don't have to go it them alone. A qualified financial advisor and tax professional can help you understand how these and other changes affect your specific

situation. Together, you can develop strategies to make the most of new opportunities while minimizing your tax burden.

(Editors Note: This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor.)

Thank you to all the cold weather workers



Chamber Chat

Jill Cutler
Executive Director
Mercer Chamber of
Commerce

Mercer has been in a refrigerator, and we have many people to thank for helping during this cold period.

Outside workers like linemen and road workers, thank you so much. I, for one, am

grateful to those who brave the elements to serve us. Our members with Inter County Energy, Bluegrass Energy and Kentucky Utilities have had challenges during this cold snap and ice event. County and city workers have also had to endure the cold.

Thank you to those who opened the warming shelter, those who donated items to sustain it, and the volunteer crew.

Lastly, thank you to the many citizens and businesses that rose to the occasion and helped, served and provided for their fellows. It is a warming experience to see these and that in turn breeds hope. It also encourages us that the very best of human behavior can be found right here at home. Team Mercer!

Essity Harrodsburg hosts careers in manufacturing day event

Essity, a global hygiene and health company, hosted a Careers in Manufacturing Day at its manufacturing site in Harrodsburg. Several local students from Safe Harbor Academy were joined by Essity leadership to experience firsthand the innovations in modern manufacturing and how these advancements work. The students also explored the many opportunities a career in manufacturing can offer.

The Essity Harrodsburg paper mill is part of Essity's strong presence in Kentucky, employing more than 300 people across Harrodsburg mill and the distribution center in Danville.

"Our team members shared their inspirational stories during the tour and lunch," said Jose Hernandez, site manager, Essity Harrodsburg. "The students had great questions, and the entire afternoon was very engaging. We look forward to more opportunities such as this to connect with our community, and to continue building relationships with local schools to open the minds of students on career possibilities."

"We thank Essity for a wonderful and impactful day. In my 21 years of education,



Photo Submitted

Essity hosted a Careers in Manufacturing Day at their manufacturing site in Harrodsburg. Several local students from Safe Harbor Academy were joined by Essity leadership to explore the many opportunities a career in manufacturing can offer.

this field trip is in the top 5 for sure," said Kristen Wilson, Safe Harbor Academy School Counselor.

Essity is a leading global hygiene and health company. Every day, our products, solutions and services are used by a billion people around the world. Our purpose is to break barriers to well-being for the benefit of consumers, patients, caregivers, customers and society. Sales are conducted in approximately 150 countries under the lead-

ing global brands TENA and Tork, and other strong brands such as Actimove, Cutimed, JOBST, Knix, Leukoplast, Libero, Libresse, Lotus, Modibodi, Nosotras, Saba, Tempo, TOM Organic and Zewa. In 2024, Essity had net sales of approximately \$14B and employed 36,000 people. The company's headquarters is located in Stockholm, Sweden, and Essity is listed on Nasdaq Stockholm.

Essity employs more than 375 people at its Danville

distribution center and Harrodsburg paper mill. Essity also has approximately 160 employees at its manufacturing facility in Bowling Green, which makes the TENA® brand of personal care products. In addition to Kentucky, Essity has U.S. operations in Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin. Learn more at essityusa.com.

Sullivan and McDowell partner to expand healthcare education

Sullivan University has entered a partnership with Ephraim McDowell Health. The collaboration creates affordable pathways for healthcare employees to pursue career-focused education while supporting Ephraim McDowell's commitment to workforce advancement.

Through this partnership, eligible Ephraim McDowell Health employees and their immediate family members will receive a 15 percent tuition discount on undergraduate programs and certificates at Sullivan University. In addition, Ephraim McDowell offers tuition reimbursement for qualifying positions, making continuing education more accessible and affordable.

"I am very excited that Sullivan University is partnering with Ephraim McDowell to provide educational opportunities for all of their employees," said Mason Sullivan, vice president of Business and Community Engagement. "Both organizations have been staples in their respective communities for decades, and I believe this partnership offers tremendous opportunities for collaboration and achievement. What makes this even more special is that the benefits extend beyond employees to include their immediate family members. Together, we are opening doors to stronger healthcare and education."

Ephraim McDowell Health is deeply committed to hiring students and fostering professional growth, aligning perfectly with Sullivan University's mission to provide hands-on, career-centric education. Sullivan offers flexible learning options—including hybrid and fully online programs—along with direct entry opportunities, classes every five weeks, and free 24/7 tutoring services.

Programs available through Sullivan University:

- College of Allied Health.
- College of Business and Technology.
- College of Hospitality Studies.
- College of Nursing.
- College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

For more information about this partnership and available programs, visit SullivanUniversity.org or Ephraim McDowell Health.

Sullivan University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctorate degrees. Sullivan University also offers credentials such as certificates and diplomas at approved degree levels. Questions about the accreditation of Sullivan University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or their website.

The university offers numerous certificates, diplomas, and degrees in career-oriented programs, including Hospitality Studies, Allied Health, Business and Technology, Nursing, Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and more. Sullivan University has campuses in Louisville and Lexington, an extension in Fort Knox on the U.S. Army Post, and a Learning Center in Louisville. Many programs are partially or entirely online. For more information, visit sullivan.edu.

The Ephraim McDowell Health system is a comprehensive, integrated healthcare delivery system that serves more than 150,000 residents from seven counties in central Kentucky. Ephraim McDowell Regional Medical Center is at the core of the system, a non-profit, 197-bed licensed hospital. Other hospitals in the system are Ephraim McDowell Fort Logan Hospital, a 25-bed critical access hospital located in neighboring Lincoln County (Stanford), and Ephraim McDowell James B. Haggin Hospital, a 25-bed critical access hospital located in Harrodsburg. For more information, visit emhealth.org.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

A Special Called Meeting will be held Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in "The Stable" at the Mercer County Fairgrounds – 560 Linden Ave. in Harrodsburg, KY.

This hearing is being conducted by the Mercer County Joint Planning & Zoning Commission. The meeting agenda includes the following items:

1. Call to order:
Roll Call of Members
2. Old Business: NONE
3. New Business:
 1. Work Session on Data Centers
 - a. Introduction to Topic – Chairman Bobby Upchurch
 - b. Introduction of Parkway Strategies/Curry Roberts – Chairman Bobby Upchurch
 - c. Consultant Presentation – Data Centers 101
 - d. Questions from Planning Commissioners
 - e. Public Comment
4. Chair Business: NONE
5. Executive Session
6. Adjournment

Visit the Planning & Zoning Office, 109 Short Street, Harrodsburg, KY 40330 or call 859-734-6066 if you have any questions.

Bobby Upchurch, Chair
Mercer County Joint
Planning and Zoning Commission

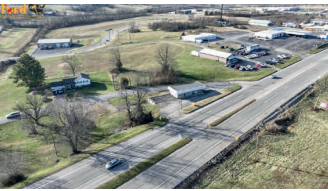
ABSOLUTE ONLINE AUCTION

Auction

Commercial Building and Lot in Harrodsburg, Ky

TUESDAY, FEB. 17TH, 2026, AT 6:00 PM
1100 DANVILLE RD HARRODSBURG, KY 40330

PREVIEW DATES: TUESDAY, FEB. 10TH, 3 TO 5 P.M.
TUESDAY - FEB. 17TH, 4 TO 6 P.M.



This commercial building and lot offer a prime opportunity along a high-traffic corridor, providing excellent visibility and easy access. Formerly utilized as an educational center, the property features multiple offices and rooms that can be adapted for a wide range of business uses. The layout lends itself well to professional services, administrative offices, or small retail operations seeking a convenient and recognizable location.

A sizable basement area adds valuable functionality, offering ample storage space and housing the building's utilities. This lower level is accessible by both a garage door and an interior stairway, making it practical for storage, equipment, or operational needs. The building includes two-bathroom areas

that are not currently connected and would require connection to city sewer, subject to confirmation and approval.

With its strong highway presence and flexible interior layout, this property is well suited for uses such as a car lot, professional office, or boutique-style retail business. The location just off a major route enhances exposure and accessibility, making it an appealing option for investors or owner-operators looking for a solid commercial footprint with room to customize and add value

NOTE: Online bidding will be available.

TERMS: 20% deposit with the balance due in 45 days

NOTE: There will be a 10% auction premium added to the last bid to determine the final sales price.

AUCTIONEER/BROKER/SELLER DISCLAIMER: The information contained herein is believed to be correct to the best of the auctioneer's knowledge. The information is being provided for the bidder's convenience, and it is the bidder's responsibility to determine the information contained herein is accurate and complete. The property is selling in its as-is condition with no warranties expressed or implied.

For additional information contact the auctioneers at 606-679-2212.
Matt Ford, Auctioneer



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