



A Surprise Winter Storm That Brings the Southeast to a Standstill



More Tax Insight That Can Help You

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And I Thought That My Shoveling Days Were Over!...



Interest & Dividends

By David Hedges, CWS

Is there a lesson in the last snow storm somewhere?...

Of course there is. And by the way, I referred to the latest winter storm to hit our area as a “surprise winter storm” which is hardly the case. With radar that’s able to tell us what’s going on halfway around the world at any given point in time with regard to weather patterns, storms are pretty much anything but *surprising*.

Given the scope of the storm and the amount of snow that came down, it was actually fairly reminiscent of my days living in upstate New York with just one minor difference; it seems like the once in 5 or 7 years storm that we get here in the southeast happens about once every three weeks in the wintertime up north! You’ll hear no complaining from me about a little snow storm



once every several years. As far as I’m concerned, it’s pretty :).

Okay, let’s get to that lesson. It’s real simple, ready? It’s called being prepared. Especially if you know that trouble is on the way. I’m sure that you did a few of the same things that we did which were the trip to the grocery store, put some gas in the cars, etc, etc. It makes sense to do it right? Of course it does.



And here’s the lesson: Being prepared for a winter storm is not that much different than being prepared for a financial storm of sorts. Now just to be clear, I’m

not predicting a financial storm in the markets right now. I’m referring to challenging personal circumstances that could include a person not being able to work and earn a living (think disability insurance) or maybe a retired person’s inability to do for themselves (think long term care insurance), getting sick and needing hospital care (think health insurance), having a large expense come at you from out of nowhere and having the ready cash to pay for it (think slush fund and liquidity), etc. The biggest difference is, you usually can’t see it coming like a winter storm on the radar.

Managing risk involves a lot more than just buying insurance coverage for any given risk. It’s about being on a financial path that allows you the ability to better cope with unforeseen circumstances when they happen.

The main idea here is just to have a plan in place and be prepared. If you’re uncertain if you’re in a position of preparedness, give me a call and I’ll help you.

Enjoy your February edition of Interest & Dividends!

- David

It's Not What You Make, It's What You Keep!

Truer words have never been spoken. It matters not what you make. What really matters is what you keep. What am I referring to? Paying taxes of course.

The Internal Revenue Code is 73,954 pages thick. It was 504 pages in 1939. Needless to say, it's complicated. If you don't use a professional tax preparer, you probably should. A good preparer will be able to help you with minimizing your tax bite going forward and if you're tax situation is fairly simple, I know several tax accountants that will complete a return for \$100 or less.

The IRS actually encourages tax avoidance by individuals and businesses by utilizing all legal means necessary to reduce your tax liability. What they do not advocate is tax evasion which is punishable by fine, imprisonment or both!

You may not be aware of this but I had the pleasure of spending 5 days with the IRS several years ago while I was being audited due to a large spike in my income that was the result of selling a piece of real estate. That large spike apparently "hit the radar". Fortunately for me, I was complimented on my record keeping skills by the examiner but I can tell you that it was a small consolation compared to the hassle that an audit can bring. I gained a lot of valuable insight as to how the IRS looks at things and how they operate. I can also tell you that it always pays to keep good records.



Back to my point of keeping more of what you make. There are various types of retirement accounts, insurance contracts, etc. that can offer you the advantage of keeping more of what you make. Some of those strategies defer taxes, others eliminate them altogether. I'm not a tax accountant but I do interact with them a lot in my line of work so I know the ropes pretty well. I've learned by not only observing, but also utilizing tax reduction and avoidance strategies on my own.

If you have any questions about wealth accumulation and keeping more of what you make, give me a call. If I can't help you, I'll put you in touch with someone that can.



Special Event Notice!

On **Tuesday, March 11th from 6:00pm - 6:45pm in the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce Meeting Room**, I will be holding a special class entitled: **Know Your Social Security**. This class is appropriate for you if you are **age 58 - 66** have any questions about how to correctly file for your Social Security Retirement Benefits and receive the maximum amount of income. Call or email me with questions or if you'd like to reserve a spot. This event is sponsored and provided by Bookman Bright Insurance Solutions. There will be light refreshments provided.



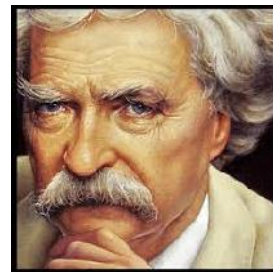
I'm a big fan of banana pudding so please accept this recipe with my compliments :)!

- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese
- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 (5 ounce) package instant vanilla pudding mix
- 3 cups cold milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 (8 ounce) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 4 bananas, sliced
- 1/2 (12 ounce) package vanilla wafers

Directions

1. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Beat in condensed milk, pudding mix, cold milk and vanilla until smooth. Fold in 1/2 of the whipped topping.
2. Line the bottom of a 9x13 inch dish with vanilla wafers. Arrange sliced bananas evenly over wafers. Spread with pudding mixture. Top with remaining whipped topping. Chill.

I love this one...



"Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect."

Mark Twain



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