

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL SERVICES
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SERVING THE PUBLIC AND DELIVERING ESSENTIAL SERVICES TO STATE GOVERNMENT

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

KIRSTEN LC FIGUEROA
COMMISSIONER

Maine Taxpayer Advocate Annual Report FY22

Introduction

The Taxpayer Advocate (Advocate) who held the Advocate position for over twenty years retired in June 2021. The Director of the Compliance Division at Maine Revenue Services (MRS) fulfilled the duties in an acting capacity from July 2021 through mid-December 2021, and the Deputy Director of the Compliance Division fulfilled the duties from mid-December 2021 through June 2022. This was done to evaluate call volume, response effort, and options for consolidation. However, this was in addition to regular responsibilities of these MRS employees, thus lacking the independence desired of an Advocate.

Pursuant to 36 M.R.S. § 151-C (3), the Advocate must prepare an annual report of activities by August 1st. Inquiries for assistance come in by email, phone, fax, mail and in-person contact.

The primary duty and responsibility of the Advocate is to assist taxpayers in resolving state tax issues. Other duties include identifying areas where taxpayers are having difficulties in dealing with MRS and proposing changes in the administrative practices to mitigate any potential areas of confusion. See 36 M.R.S. § 151-C (2).

Transition

During the transition from the prior Advocate to the current acting capacity role, a group mailbox was set up in Outlook to ensure emails were addressed timely.

The Advocate's telephone greeting was also updated to give callers information on how to reach the Federal Taxpayer Advocate. Taxpayers had historically called the Advocate when trying to reach the Federal Taxpayer Advocate.

FY2022

Fiscal year 2022 included two pandemic relief checks mailed to taxpayers. This generated calls about taxpayer qualifications and the status of refunds.

During FY22, one hundred ninety initial inquiries were logged. The inquiries averaged about fifteen contacts per month either from the taxpayer, through a representative, or other parties. The months with the largest number of inquiries were July 2021 and March 2022. The length of time spent on an inquiry ranged from thirty minutes to two days.

Some required additional research. Follow-up contacts were made by the Acting Advocate and division staff to taxpayers and their representatives. In turn, some of the taxpayers and their representatives had follow-up questions.

Inquiries included the following topics: tax forms, filing, payment plans, liens, pandemic relief checks, property tax, stale pandemic relief checks and stale refund checks, offers in compromise, professional licenses, and a few payroll related questions. There were also several calls and emails that were directed to other Maine state agencies or other states.

FY 22 Inquiries by Month



FY22 Source of Inquiries



Kirsten LC Figueroa
Commissioner

August 30, 2022