

421.60 Tax procedures and practices.

1. *Short title.* This section shall be known and may be cited as the "*Tax Procedures and Practices Act*".

2. *Procedures and practices.*

a. The department shall prepare a statement which sets forth in simple and nontechnical terms all of the following:

(1) The rights of a taxpayer and the obligations of the department during an audit.

(2) The procedures by which a taxpayer may appeal an adverse decision of the department, including administrative and judicial appeals.

(3) The procedures which the department may use in enforcing the tax laws, including notices of assessment and jeopardy assessment and the filing and enforcement of liens.

The statement prepared in accordance with this paragraph shall be distributed by the department to all taxpayers at the first contact by the department with respect to the determination or collection of any tax, except in the case of simply providing tax forms.

b. The department shall furnish to the taxpayer, before or at the time of issuing a notice of assessment or denial of a refund claim, an explanation of the reasons for the assessment or refund denial. An inadequate explanation shall not invalidate the notice. For purposes of this section, an explanation by the department shall be sufficient where the amount of tax, interest, and penalty is stated together with an attachment setting forth the computation of the tax by the department.

c. If the notice of assessment or denial of a claim for refund relates to a tax return filed pursuant to section 422.14 or chapter 450, 450A, or 451, by the taxpayer which designates an individual as an authorized representative of the taxpayer with respect to that return, or if a power of attorney has been filed with the department by the taxpayer which designates an individual as an authorized representative of the taxpayer with respect to any tax that is included in the notice of assessment or denial of a claim for refund, a copy of the notice together with any additional information required to be sent to the taxpayer shall be sent to the authorized representative as well.

If the department fails to mail a notice of assessment to the last known address of a taxpayer or fails to personally deliver such notice to a taxpayer, interest for the month such mailing or personal delivery fails to occur through the month of the correct mailing or personal delivery is waived.

If the department fails to mail a notice of assessment or denial of a claim for refund to the taxpayer's last known address or fails to personally deliver such notice to a taxpayer and, if applicable, to the taxpayer's authorized representative, the time period to appeal the notice of assessment or a denial of a claim for refund is suspended until the notice or claim denial is correctly mailed or personally delivered, or in any event, for a period not to exceed one year, whichever is the lesser period.

Collection activities, except where a jeopardy situation exists, shall be suspended and the statute of limitations for assessment or collection of the tax shall be tolled during the period in which interest is waived.

d. A taxpayer is permitted to designate in writing the type of tax and tax periods to which any voluntary payment relates, provided that separate written instructions accompany the payment. This paragraph does not apply to jeopardy assessments and does not apply if the department has to enforce collection of the payment.

e. Unless otherwise provided by law, all Iowa taxes which are administered by the department and which

result in a refund shall accrue interest at the rate in effect under section 421.7 from the first day of the second calendar month following the date of payment or the date the return was due to be filed or was filed, whichever is the latest.

f. A taxpayer may appeal a refund claim to the director if a claim for refund has been filed and not denied by the department within six months of the filing of the claim. The filing of an appeal by a taxpayer shall not affect the ability of the department to examine and inspect a taxpayer's records.

g. A taxpayer may request in writing that a contested case proceeding be commenced by the department after a period of six months from the filing of a proper appeal by the taxpayer. The department shall file an answer within thirty days of receipt of the request and a contested case proceeding shall be commenced. In the case of an appeal of an assessment, failure to answer within the thirty-day time period and after a request has been made shall result in the suspension of interest from the time that the department was required to answer until the date that the department files its answer. In the case of an appeal of a denial of a refund, failure to answer within the thirty-day time period, and after a request has been made, shall result in the accrual of interest payable to the taxpayer at double the rate in effect under section 421.7 from the time the department was required to answer until the date that the department files its answer.

h. A taxpayer who has failed to appeal a notice of assessment to the department within the time provided by law may contest the assessment by paying the tax, interest, and penalty, which in the case of divisible taxes might not be the entire liability and by filing a refund claim within the time period provided for filing such claim. The filing of a refund claim allows the time period for which the refund is claimed to be open to examination and to be open to offset, to zero, based upon any issue associated with the type of tax for which the refund is claimed and which has not up to that time been resolved between the taxpayer and the department, irrespective of whether the period of limitations to issue a notice of assessment has expired. The department may make this offset at any time until the department grants or denies the refund.

i. The director may, at any time, abate any unpaid portion of assessed tax, interest, or penalties which the director determines is erroneous, illegal, or excessive. The director shall prepare quarterly reports summarizing each case in which abatement of tax, interest, or penalties was made. However, the report shall not disclose the identity of the taxpayer.

j. The director shall adopt rules for setting times and places for taxpayer interviews and to permit any taxpayer to record the interviews.

k. If the determination that a return is incorrect is the result of an audit of the books and records of the taxpayer, the tax or additional tax, if any, shall be assessed and the notice of assessment to the taxpayer shall be given by the department within one year after the completion of the examination of the books and records.

l. The department shall annually report to the general assembly all areas of recurrent taxpayer noncompliance with rules or guidelines issued by the department and shall make recommendations concerning the noncompliance in the report.

m. (1) The director may abate unpaid state sales and use taxes and local sales and services taxes owed by a retailer in the event that the retailer failed to collect tax from the purchaser as a result of erroneous written advice issued by the department that was specially directed to the retailer by the department and the retailer is unable to collect the tax, interest, or penalties from the purchaser. Before the tax, interest, and penalties shall be abated on the basis of erroneous written advice, the retailer must present a copy of the retailer's request for written advice to the department and a copy of the department's reply. The department shall not maintain a position against the retailer that is inconsistent with the erroneous written advice, except on the basis of subsequent written advice sent by the department to that retailer, or a change in state or federal law, a

reported court case to the contrary, a contrary rule adopted by the department, a change in material facts or circumstances relating to the retailer, or the retailer's misrepresentation or incomplete or inadequate representation of material facts and circumstances in requesting the written advice.

(2) The director shall abate the unpaid state sales and use taxes and any local sales and services taxes owed by a retailer where the retailer failed to collect the tax from the purchaser on the charges paid for access to on-line computer services as a result of erroneous written advice issued by the department regarding the taxability of charges paid for access to on-line computer services. To qualify for the abatement under this subparagraph, the erroneous written advice shall have been issued by the department prior to July 1, 1999, and shall have been specially directed to the retailer by the department.

If an abatement of unpaid state sales and use taxes and any local sales and services taxes is granted to the retailer by the director pursuant to this subparagraph, the department is precluded from collecting from the purchaser any unpaid state sales and use taxes and any local sales and services taxes which were abated.

(3) The director shall prepare quarterly reports summarizing each case in which abatement of tax, interest, or penalties was made. However, the report shall not disclose the identity of the taxpayer. An abatement authorized by this paragraph to a retailer shall not preclude the department from proceeding to collect the liability from a purchaser, except as provided in subparagraph (2).

3. *Installment payments.* The department may permit the payment of a delinquent tax on a deferred basis where the equities indicate that a deferred payment agreement would be in the interest of the state and that without a deferred payment agreement the taxpayer would experience extreme financial hardship. A deferred payment agreement shall include applicable penalty and interest at the rate in effect under section 421.7 on the unpaid balance of the liability.

4. *Costs.*

a. A prevailing taxpayer in an administrative hearing or a court proceeding related to the determination, collection, or refund of a tax, penalty, or interest may be awarded reasonable litigation costs by the department, state board of tax review, or a court, incurred subsequent to the issuance of the notice of assessment or denial of claim for refund in the proceeding, based upon the following:

(1) The reasonable expenses of expert witnesses.

(2) The reasonable costs of studies, reports, and tests.

(3) The reasonable fees of independent attorneys or independent accountants retained by the taxpayer.

(4) An award for reasonable litigation costs shall not exceed twenty-five thousand dollars per case.

b. An award under paragraph "a" shall not be made with respect to a portion of the proceedings during which the prevailing taxpayer has unreasonably protracted the proceedings.

c. For purposes of this section, "*prevailing taxpayer*" means a taxpayer who establishes that the position of the state was not substantially justified and who has substantially prevailed with respect to the amount in controversy or has substantially prevailed with respect to the most significant issue or set of issues presented. The determination of whether a taxpayer is a prevailing taxpayer is to be determined in accordance with chapter 17A.

d. An award for reasonable litigation costs shall be paid to the taxpayer from the general fund of the state. For purposes of this subsection, there is appropriated from the general fund of the state an amount sufficient to pay each taxpayer entitled to an award under this subsection.

e. This subsection does not apply to the tax imposed by chapter 453B if the department relied upon information provided or action conducted by federal, state, or local officials or law enforcement agencies.

5. *Damages.* Notwithstanding section 669.14, subsection 2, if the director or an employee of the department recklessly or intentionally disregards any tax law or rule in the collection of any tax, or if the director or an employee of the department knowingly or negligently fails to release a lien against or bond on a taxpayer's property, the taxpayer may file a claim in accordance with the Iowa tort claims Act, chapter 669, for damages against the state. However, the damages shall be limited to the actual direct economic damages suffered by the taxpayer as a proximate result of the actions of the director or employee, plus costs, reduced by the amount of such damages and costs as could reasonably have been mitigated by the taxpayer. The Iowa tort claims Act shall be the exclusive remedy for recovering damages resulting from such actions. This subsection does not apply to the tax imposed by chapter 453B.

6. *Burden of proof.* The burden of proof with respect to assessments or denial of refunds in contested case proceedings shall be allocated as follows:

a. With respect to the issue of fraud with intent to evade tax, the burden of proof is upon the department. The burden of proof must be carried by clear and convincing evidence.

b. In a case where the assessment was not made within six years after the return became due, excluding any extension of time for filing, the burden of proof shall be upon the department. However, the burden of proof shall be upon the taxpayer where the determination of the department is the result of the final disposition of a matter between the taxpayer and the internal revenue service or where the taxpayer and the department have signed a waiver of the statute of limitations.

c. In all other cases, the burden of proof shall be upon the taxpayer who challenges the assessment or refund denial, except that, with respect to any new matter or affirmative defense, the burden of proof shall be upon the department. For purposes of this provision, "*new matter*" means an adjustment not set forth in the computation of the tax in the assessment or refund denial as distinguished from a new reason for the assessment or refund denial. "*Affirmative defense*" is one resting on facts not necessary to support the taxpayer's case.

7. *Employee evaluations.* It is unlawful to base a performance evaluation for an employee of the department on the total amount of assessments issued by that employee.

8. *Refund of untimely assessed taxes.* Notwithstanding any other refund statute, if it appears that an amount of tax, penalty, or interest has been paid to the department after the expiration of the statute of limitations for the department to determine and assess or collect the amount of such tax due, then the amount paid shall be credited against another tax liability of the taxpayer which is outstanding, if the statute of limitations for assessment or collection of that other tax has not expired or the amount paid shall be refunded to the person or, with the person's approval, credited to tax to become due. An application for refund or credit under this subsection must be filed within one year of payment. This subsection shall not be construed to prohibit the department from offsetting the refund claim against any tax due, if the statute of limitations for that other tax has not expired.

9. *No applicability to real property.* The provisions of this section do not apply to the assessment and taxation of real property.

10. *Illegal tax.* A tax shall not be collected by the department if it is prohibited under the Constitution of the United States or laws of the United States, or under the Constitution of the State of Iowa.

2002 amendments to subsection 2, paragraph m, subparagraphs (2) and (3) are effective April 22, 2002, and apply to taxes due on or after January 1, 1996, which were abated for a retailer pursuant to subsection 2, paragraph m, subparagraph (2); no filing requirement for refunds; refunds to be paid by October 1, 2002; 2002 Acts, ch 1122, §3, 4