

701—19.2(421) Amounts qualifying for settlement. To be eligible for settlement under Iowa Code section 421.5, the amount must be of doubtful liability or doubtful collectability or must cause severe economic hardship, or the settlement of the amount must promote effective tax administration. The decision whether to accept a settlement amount will be based on a taxpayer's facts and circumstances; verifiable documentation is required for all grounds.

19.2(1) *Doubtful collectability.* Doubt as to collectability may exist in any case where the taxpayer's assets and discretionary income may not satisfy the full amount of the liability after satisfying senior priority liabilities. An offer to settle based on doubt as to collectability may be considered acceptable if it is unlikely that the tax, penalty, and interest can be collected in full and the offer reasonably reflects the amount the department could collect through other means, including administrative and judicial collection remedies. This amount is the reasonable collection potential of a case. In determining the reasonable collection potential of a case, the department will take into account the taxpayer's verifiable reasonable basic living expenses. In some cases, the department may accept an offer of less than the reasonable collection potential of a case if there are special circumstances.

19.2(2) *Severe economic hardship.* The department may settle where it determines that, although collection in full could be achieved, collection of the full amount would cause the taxpayer severe economic hardship. Severe economic hardship is defined as the inability to pay reasonable basic living expenses. An offer to settle based on economic hardship may be considered acceptable when, even though the tax, penalty, and interest could be collected in full, the amount offered reflects the amount the department can collect without causing the taxpayer severe economic hardship.

19.2(3) *Doubtful liability.* A doubtful liability may exist where there is a significant doubt as to the existence or amount of the correct tax liability under the law. A doubtful liability does not exist where the liability has been established by a final court judgment or administrative ruling or final order of the department concerning the existence or amount of the liability. An offer to settle a doubtful liability may be considered acceptable if it reasonably reflects the likelihood the department could expect to collect through litigation. This analysis may include consideration of the hazards and costs of litigation that would be involved if the liability were litigated. The evaluation of the hazards and costs of litigation is not an exact science and is within the discretion of the department.

19.2(4) *Promote effective tax administration.* The department may settle to promote effective tax administration where compelling public policy or equity considerations identified by the taxpayer provide a sufficient basis for settling the liability that is equitable under the particular facts and circumstances of the case. Settlements pursuant to this subrule may be justified only where, due to exceptional circumstances, collection of the full liability may undermine public confidence that the tax laws are being administered in a fair and equitable manner. The taxpayer will be expected to demonstrate circumstances that justify settlement even though a similarly situated taxpayer may have paid the liability in full. The department may settle cases where doing so will promote voluntary compliance with the law. The department may decline a settlement for reasons promoting effective tax administration if the settlement of the liability would undermine compliance by taxpayers with the tax laws.

[ARC 7192C, IAB 12/13/23, effective 1/17/24]