

# LITTLEJOHN LAW, LLC

**“BUILD IT, PROTECT IT, AND PRESERVE IT”**

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR AWESOME CLIENTS LIKE YOU!

May 2017 Volume 2 Issue 12



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*Our Goal is to Help Everyone Make Great Decisions about their Legal Issues.*

Visit [www.elittlejohnlaw.com](http://www.elittlejohnlaw.com) for our Free E-books and Free Resources addressing your Real Estate, Business, and Estate Planning concerns.

**8 Real Estate Pitfalls to avoid with a Realtor**



Get your Guide Today!

## HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!

It's hard to believe that it May is here already. That means Summer is almost here and before you know it, we'll be doing Christmas Shopping again. As I'm writing this Newsletter, I realized that we've been writing and mailing these newsletters since May of 2015... wow time sure does fly. So I want to say Thank You to all of our awesome clients, who trust us to help them in their time of need.

### **THANK YOU!**

I also want to say Happy Mother's Day to all the Mother's out there. I know my mom has played an important part in my life, she's always been there to support me and to pick me up when I am down. Happy Mother's Day!

Happy Memorial Day! Thank you to all the Service Men & Women who have given their lives so that we can enjoy all of the Freedoms we have. This Memorial Day be sure to remember that without their sacrifice we wouldn't be able to enjoy this great county.

We sure do have a lot of things to be Thankful this month and every month for that matter. Be sure to take some time to remember what you are Thankful for and give it your ALL.



*“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”  
 – Benjamin Franklin*

## Tip of the Month – How to get a BIGGER Refund Next Year

This month’s Tip comes from Attorney Jeff Menoski. In addition to being an attorney, he has taken and passed the H&R Block Tax Exam. Every tax season, most people prepare their own taxes with online software or go to their accountant or another paid tax professional. While these professionals and services are good at finding every possible deduction and getting you the largest possible refund, the best way to reduce tax liability is by planning ahead throughout the prior year. While everyone else crunches numbers and agonizes over whether to itemize their deductions, we’re going to look at the Adjusted Gross Income section of the 1040 Form. These adjustments directly bring down your taxable income AND still allow you to take the standard deduction (no calculator required!). We’re going to look at some easy ways for the average person to plan ahead and utilize these deductions.

<b>Adjusted Gross Income</b>	23	Educator expenses	23			
	24	Certain business expenses of reservists, performing artists, and fee-basis government officials. Attach Form 2106 or 2106-EZ	24			
	25	Health savings account deduction. Attach Form 8889	25			
	26	Moving expenses. Attach Form 3903	26			
	27	Deductible part of self-employment tax. Attach Schedule SE	27			
	28	Self-employed SEP, SIMPLE, and qualified plans	28			
	29	Self-employed health insurance deduction	29			
	30	Penalty on early withdrawal of savings	30			
	31a	Alimony paid b Recipient's SSN ▶	31a			
	32	IRA deduction	32			
	33	Student loan interest deduction	33			
	34	Tuition and fees. Attach Form 8917	34			
	35	Domestic production activities deduction. Attach Form 8903	35			
	36	Add lines 23 through 35	36			
37	Subtract line 36 from line 22. This is your <b>adjusted gross income</b> ▶	37				

**Line 25: Health Savings Accounts** - Potentially reduce gross income by: up to \$2,600

Health savings accounts (HSA) can only be used by people who have certain high-deductible health plans (HDHP), so not everyone is eligible for this. But if you have a qualifying plan, open an HSA and use it to pay for prescriptions, medical and dental co-payments, medical supplies, and even contact lenses. There is a long list of qualifying expenses that can be found at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov). Bear in mind that you lose what you don’t spend at the end of the year.

**Line 26: Moving Expenses** - Potentially reduce gross income by: the cost of transporting/storing goods and travel expenses.

If you moved during the tax year, you may be able to deduct the moving expenses. Your new job location must be at least 50 miles farther from your old home than your old job location was from your old home. As you can see, this isn’t for someone who buys a new house in town. This is for someone who relocates and incurs expenses. But if that is you, save the receipts and take advantage of this deduction.

**Line 32: Traditional IRA Deduction** - Potentially reduce gross income by: up to \$5,500-\$6,500

You can contribute up to \$5,500 every year to individual retirement accounts (IRAs). If you made contributions to a traditional IRA during the tax year, you can deduct the full or a partial amount of the contributions depending on the amount of your income and your filing status. Note that contributions to a Roth IRA are not deductible. However, with a Roth IRA, you will not pay taxes on its distributions when you retire, as opposed to a traditional

IRA where you take the tax break now, but pay the taxes later on the distributions. You will have to ask yourself if you expect your effective tax rate to be higher now, or higher when you retire. You can always make contributions to both and deduct only the contributions to the traditional IRA.

**Line 33: Student Loan Interest Deduction** - Potentially reduce gross income by: up to \$2,500

Like the IRA deduction, this can be limited by your income (i.e., you cannot claim this deduction if your modified adjusted gross income is more than \$80,000 if filing single, or \$160,000 if married and filing jointly). But if you are in the process of repaying student loans, watch for a statement in the mail around tax time, or log into you account and search for “tax statements” where you can get the documentation of how much interest you paid.

**Line 34: Tuition and Fees** - Potentially reduce gross income by: up to \$4,000

You cannot claim this deduction if you are married and filing separately, or if someone else can claim you as a dependent, or if your modified adjusted gross income is over \$80,000. However, if you are paying education expenses for yourself, your spouse, or a dependent which you claim as an exemption on your tax return, you can take this deduction up to \$4,000, even if you paid for it with a student loan. The catch, if there is a catch, is this: You cannot deduct these expenses if you or someone else claims the American Opportunity or Lifetime Learning credit for the same student. Also, you cannot deduct these expenses if your tuition was paid for by scholarship, grant, i.e., assistance that is already being provided tax-free.

**BONUS Tip** - If you are doing your own taxes and you notice this line on Form 1040:

39a	Check if:	<input type="checkbox"/> You were born before January 2, 1952,	<input type="checkbox"/> Blind.	Total boxes checked ▶ 39a	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/> Spouse was born before January 2, 1952,	<input type="checkbox"/> Blind.		

See the instructions! The IRS isn't just curious about your birthdate or if you are blind. You will get a larger standard deduction depending on how many boxes you can check!

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH - JALAPENO BURGERS (MAKES 3 BURGERS)

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 package of McCormick Steakhouse Burger Seasoning Mix
- 2 jalapeno chilies (sliced thin crosswise)
- 9 tbsps. finely shredded cheddar cheese
- 3 Buns

Mix ground beef and seasoning mix until well blended. Divide ground beef mixture evenly in 6 balls for a thin patty. For each burger, sprinkle 1 tablespoon of the shredded cheese on 1 patty. Top with about 4 chilie slices and additional 2 tablespoons of chees. Top with the second patty, pressing edges to seal. Continue until you have 3 total burgers. Grill burgers over medium heat 5 to 6 minutes per side. **Oh, and don't forget the Fries. And enjoy!**



## WHAT'S NEW WITH ME AND MY OWN

Planning, Testing, and Perfecting. I've been moving things around and helping my wife get the house in order for the baby's arrival. Jeff's been trying on suits and tuxes for his big day. And David's been meeting with members of his community to make this world a better place.

Since March, I've been working with the students in the Criminal Justice Department at JVS for Law Day. Each year the Jefferson County Bar Associations holds "Law Day," where students from some of the local schools participate in a Mock Trial and get to meet lawyers & Judges and take a tour of the county Jail. This year the competition is about Defamation and Social Media and how virtual messages & words have an impact in the "real world."



In the next few month's we'll be hosting Real Estate, Business, and Estate Planning Seminars. Some of the seminars will be in-person, while others will be available as online seminars or teleconferences. These seminars are completely FREE to you as a member of our Littlejoh Law Extended Family.

In the Real Estate Seminar, we will be discussing exactly what landlords need to look out for when dealing with tenants and some tricks of the trade to help landlords stay several steps ahead of their competition. *If you're a Tenant be sure to ask us about our Tenant's Rights Guide to keep you protected.*

In the Business Seminar, we'll be helping small business owners put together a Business Plan so that they can confidently move their business into the second half of 2017 and plan their 2018.

In the Estate Planning Seminar, we'll be discussing in-expensive strategies and tips to pass on your priceless possessions and keep your current quality of life.

### ***So here's how it will work...***

In the next few newsletters, we'll include instructions so that you can pre-register for the seminar. Once you are pre-registered, you will receive a packet in the "snail mail" or email with additional information about the seminar as well as a way to submit a few questions beforehand so that they can be answered at the seminar.

*What about friends and family who want to attend the seminar?... Well for non-members there will be a small fee, but if someone you know is interested then be sure to have them give us a call and ask about how they can get their fee waived.*



## CONTACT INFO & ADMINISTRATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

#1 If you would like to learn more about a specific topic of interest feel free submit your request to [office@elittlejohnlaw.com](mailto:office@elittlejohnlaw.com) or send your request in by mail to 352 Main Street, Wintersville, Ohio 43953.

#2 Our promise to you is that while we are working on your case, we don't take inbound phone calls or emails. **Edward takes no inbound unscheduled phone calls, unless it's an emergency.** It makes him much more productive and helps get your case resolved faster. You can always call the office at 740.346.2899 and schedule an in-person or phone appointment, usually within 24-48 hours. This is a lot better than the endless game of "phone tag" played by most businesses today. Remember, too, that email is "quick," but is checked no more than twice a day. Replies are then scheduled into the calendar. So if it's really important, don't email – call the office instead.

#3 Referrals are much appreciated and welcomed. If you know anyone who might benefit from our services, please pass along their name and we'll get our Free Resources out to them immediately. We would be grateful for the opportunity to work with some of your friends, co-workers, colleagues, and associates. And we promise to give them the special care and attention they deserve.

#4 This newsletter is for informational purposes only and no legal advice is intended. Be sure to consult with this law firm if you have a specific question about your situation.

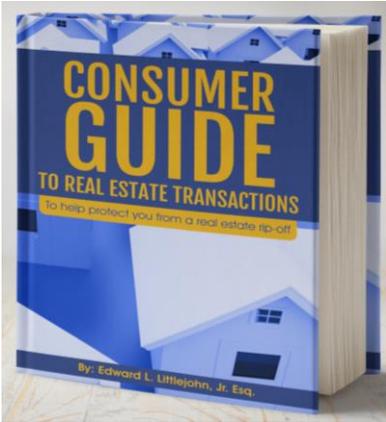
I sincerely hope that you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Yours Truly,

*Edward L. Littlejohn, Jr.*

Edward L. Littlejohn, Jr.

P.S. The Littlejohn Law VIP is coming soon with special contents and events. Keep an eye out!



## *Inside this Issue ...*

- *How to get a Bigger Tax Refund next Year.*
- *Jalapeno Burger Recipe*
- *And more ...*

Check us out at [www.elittlejohnlaw.com](http://www.elittlejohnlaw.com). If you know anyone who may be in need of legal advice feel free to give them our telephone number or visit our website to get their legal questions answered.

*Happy Birthday to all the May Birthdays!*

*Enjoy your special day!*

740.346.2899

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