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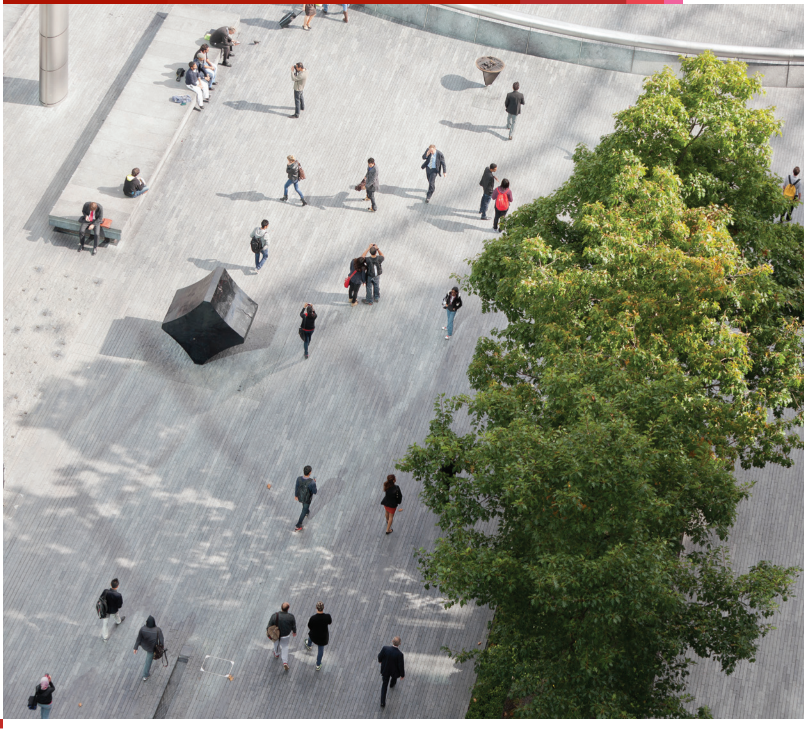

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All information in this book, unless otherwise stated, is up to date as of 1 June 2014.

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United States

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Significant developments

Numerous temporary tax provisions that expired on 31 December 2013 have not yet been renewed. Both the United States (US) House and Senate have taken steps to extend these provisions beyond that date, but, as of this writing, none have been extended. The general business incentives that expired on 31 December 2013 and have not yet been renewed include the following provisions:

- 50% bonus depreciation.
- Increased Section 179 expensing limit of 500,000 United States dollars (USD) with USD 2 million phaseout threshold and expanded definition of Section 179 property (*see the Deductions section for a description of the Section 179 deduction*).
- Research credit.
- Subpart F exception for active financing income (*see the Income determination section for a description of Subpart F income*).
- Look-through treatment of payments between related controlled foreign companies (CFCs) under the foreign personal holding company rules.
- 15-year straight-line cost recovery for qualified leasehold improvements, restaurant buildings and improvements, and retail improvements.
- Seven-year recovery period for motor sports entertainment complexes.
- Work opportunity tax credit.
- Wage credit for employers of active-duty military members.
- Railroad track maintenance credit.
- Special expensing rules for qualified film and television productions.
- New markets tax credit.
- Mine rescue team training credit.
- Expensing of advanced mine safety equipment.
- Enhanced charitable deduction for contributions of food property.
- Treatment of some dividends of regulated investment companies (RICs).
- RICs considered qualified investment entities under the 1980 Foreign Investment in Real Property Tax Act.
- Special rules for qualified small business stock.
- Reduction in S corporation recognition period for built-in gains tax (*see the Taxes on corporate income section for a description of S corporations*).

Taxes on corporate income

In the United States, resident corporations are taxed based on worldwide income. Generally, a foreign corporation engaged in a US trade or business is taxed at regular US corporate tax rates on income from US sources that is effectively connected with that business and at 30% on US-source income not effectively connected with that business.

United States

The US corporate income tax (CIT) rate is based on a progressive rate schedule; however, an alternative minimum tax (AMT) provides for a flat rate with fewer deductions.

2014 taxable income		CIT		
Over (USD)	But not over (USD)	Pay (USD) +	% on excess	of the amount over (USD)
0	50,000	0	15	0
50,000	75,000	7,500	25	50,000
75,000	100,000	13,750	34	75,000
100,000	335,000	22,250	39	100,000
335,000	10,000,000	113,900	34	335,000
10,000,000	15,000,000	3,400,000	35	10,000,000
15,000,000	18,333,333	5,150,000	38	15,000,000
18,333,333			35	0

The 39% tax rate applies to taxable income between USD 100,000 and USD 335,000 to eliminate the benefit of the 15% and 25% rates, and the 38% tax rate applies to taxable income between USD 15,000,000 and USD 18,333,333 to eliminate the benefit of the 34% rate. Special rules apply to personal service corporations and personal holding companies.

Alternative minimum tax (AMT)
An AMT is imposed on corporations other than S corporations (*see below*) and small C corporations (generally those with no three year average annual gross receipts exceeding USD 7.5 million). The tax is 20% of alternative minimum taxable income (AMTI) in excess of a USD 40,000 exemption amount (subject to a phase out). AMTI is computed by adjusting the corporation's regular taxable income by specified adjustments and 'tax preference' items. Tax preference or adjustment items could arise, for example, if a corporation has substantial accelerated depreciation, percentage depletion, intangible drilling costs, or non-taxable income.

S corporations
Corporations with 100 or fewer shareholders, none of whom may be corporations, that meet certain other requirements may elect to be taxed under Subchapter S of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC or 'the Code') and are thus known as S corporations. S corporations are taxed in a manner similar, but not identical, to partnerships (i.e. all tax items [e.g. income, deductions] flow through to the owners of the entity). Thus, S corporations generally are not subject to US federal income tax.

Gross transportation income taxes
Foreign corporations and non-resident alien individuals are subject to a yearly 4% tax on their US-source gross transportation income (USSGTI) that is not effectively connected with a US trade or business. Transportation income is any income derived from, or in connection with, (i) the use (or hiring or leasing) of any vessel or aircraft, or (ii) the performance of services directly related to the use of any vessel or aircraft.

Local income taxes
CIT rates vary from state to state and generally range from 1% to 12% (although some states impose no income tax). The most common taxable base is federal taxable income, which is modified by state provisions and generally is allocated to a state on the basis of a three-factor formula: tangible assets and rental expense, sales and other receipts, and payroll. State and municipal taxes are deductible expenses for federal income tax purposes.

Corporate residence

A corporation organised or created in the United States under the law of the United States or of any state is a domestic corporation. A domestic corporation is a resident corporation even though it does no business or owns no property in the United States.

Permanent establishment (PE)

A PE generally is defined as a fixed place of business.

Other taxes

Sales taxes

No provisions exist for a sales tax or value-added tax (VAT) at the federal level. However, sales and use taxes constitute a major revenue source for the 45 states that impose such taxes and the District of Columbia. Sales and use tax rates vary from state to state and generally range from 2.9% to 7.25% at the state level. Most states also allow a ‘local option’ that permits local jurisdictions such as cities and counties to impose an additional percentage on top of the state-level tax and to keep the related revenues.

In general, a sales tax is a tax applied to the retail sale of tangible personal property and certain services. Although the form of the tax may vary, it is usually imposed either directly upon the retail sale of the taxable item, on the gross receipts from the sales of taxable items, or on the person engaged in the business of making retail sales of taxable items. The use tax compliments the sales tax and is usually assessed on purchases made out of state and brought into the jurisdiction for use, storage, or consumption. Typically, either a sales tax or a use tax can be assessed on a transaction, but not both.

Customs duties and import tariffs

All goods imported into the United States are subject to entry and are dutiable or duty-free in accordance with their classification under the applicable items in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States. The classification also identifies eligibility for special programs and free trade agreement preferential duty rates.

When goods are dutiable, *ad valorem*, specific, or compound duty rates may be assessed. An *ad valorem* rate, which is the type of rate most often applied, is a percentage of the value of the merchandise, such as 7% *ad valorem*. A specific rate is a specified amount per unit of weight or other quantity, such as 6.8 cents per dozen. A compound rate is a combination of both an *ad valorem* rate and a specific rate, such as 0.8 cents per kilo plus 8% *ad valorem*. Customs requires that the value of the goods be properly declared regardless of the dutiable status of the merchandise.

Liability for the payment of duty becomes fixed at the time an entry is filed with US Customs and Border Protection (CBP). The obligation for payment is upon the person or firm in whose name the entry is filed, the importer of record.

Excise taxes

Excise taxes are generally imposed by the federal and state governments on a wide range of goods and activities, including gasoline and diesel fuel used for transportation, air travel, manufacturing of specified goods, and indoor tanning services.

The excise tax rates are as varied as the goods and activities upon which they are levied. For example, the excise imposed on indoor tanning services is 10% of the amount paid for the services while the excise imposed on the sale of coal mined in the United States is the lower of USD 1.10 per ton or 4.4% of the sale price.

Property taxes
Most states, and some cities, impose a variety of property taxes on both real and personal property.

Stamp taxes
No provisions exist for a stamp tax at the federal level. However, state and local governments frequently impose stamp taxes at the time of officially recording a transaction based upon the value of real estate. The sales tax on real estate may be a stamp tax on the documents recording the transfer of the real estate.

Capital gain taxes
On current transactions, the long-term capital gains tax rate is the same as the tax rates applicable to ordinary income. Thus, the maximum rate is 35%, excluding the additional phase out rates. However, differences may arise where AMT is imposed.

Accumulated earnings tax
Corporations (other than S corporations, domestic and foreign personal holding companies, corporations exempt from tax under Subchapter F of the Code, and passive foreign investment companies) accumulating earnings and profits for the purpose of avoiding shareholder personal income tax are subject to a penalty tax in addition to any other tax that may be applicable. The accumulated earnings tax is equal to 15% of 'accumulated taxable income'. Generally, accumulated taxable income is the excess of taxable income with certain adjustments, including a deduction for regular income taxes, over the dividends paid deduction and the accumulated earnings credit. Note that a corporation can justify the accumulation of income, and avoid tax, based on its reasonable business needs.

Personal holding company tax
US corporations and certain foreign corporations that receive substantial 'passive income' and are 'closely held' may be subject to personal holding company tax. The personal holding company tax is 15% of undistributed personal holding company income and is levied in addition to the regular tax.

Payroll taxes
Employers are subject to federal unemployment insurance tax (FUTA) of 6.2% on the first USD 7,000 of wages paid to employees meeting certain criteria. In addition, states impose workers' compensation insurance tax at varying rates depending on state law and the nature of employees' activities. For 2014, employers also are subject to social security contributions tax of 7.65% (including 1.45% Medicare tax) on the first USD 117,000 (up from USD 113,700 for 2013) of wages paid to employees and 1.45% of Medicare tax on any wages in excess of USD 117,000 (up from USD 113,700 for 2013).

Environmental tax
Importers, manufacturers, and sellers of petroleum or other ozone-depleting chemicals (ODC) are subject to an environmental tax calculated per weight of the ODC used in the manufacture of the product. The tax is determined under an exact or table method provided in the instructions to Form 6667. If the weight cannot be determined, the tax is 1% of the entry value of the product.

Other state and municipal taxes
Other taxes that states may impose, in lieu of or in addition to taxes based on income, include franchise taxes and taxes on the capital of a corporation. State and municipal taxes are deductible expenses for federal income tax purposes.

Branch income

Tax rates on branch profits are the same as on corporate profits. The law also imposes a 30% branch profits tax in addition to US corporate level income taxes on a foreign corporation's US branch earnings and profits for the year that are effectively connected with a US business. The taxable base for the branch profits tax is increased (decreased) by any decrease (increase) in the US net equity of the branch. The branch profits tax on profits may be reduced or eliminated entirely if a relevant treaty so provides (subject to strict 'treaty shopping' rules). The purpose of the branch profits tax is to treat US operations of foreign corporations in much the same manner as US corporations owned by foreign persons.

With certain exceptions, a 30% (or lower treaty rate) branch profits tax also will be imposed on interest payments by the US branch to foreign lenders. In addition, the tax will apply if the amount of interest deducted by the branch on its US tax return exceeds the amount of interest actually paid during the year.

Income determination

Inventory valuation

Inventories generally are stated at the lower of cost or market on a first in first out (FIFO) basis. Last in first out (LIFO) may be elected for tax purposes on a cost basis only and generally requires book and tax conformity.

The tax law requires capitalisation for tax purposes of several costs allocable to the manufacturing process that frequently are expensed as current operating costs for financial reporting (e.g. the excess of tax depreciation over financial statement depreciation).

Capital gains

Gains or losses on the sale or exchange of capital assets held for more than 12 months are treated as long-term capital gains or losses. Gains or losses on the sale or exchange of capital assets held for 12 months or less are treated as short-term capital gains or losses. The excess of net long-term capital gain over net short-term capital loss is considered net capital gain. Capital losses are allowed only as an offset to capital gains. An excess of capital losses over capital gains in a taxable year may be carried back three years and carried forward five years to be used against (offset) capital gains.

For dispositions of personal property and certain non-residential real property used in a trade or business, net gains are first taxable as ordinary income to the extent of the depreciation/cost recovery, with any remainder generally treated as capital gain. For other trade or business real property, net gains generally are taxed as ordinary income to the extent that the depreciation or cost recovery claimed exceeds the straight-line amount, with any remainder treated as capital gain.

An exception to capital gain treatment exists to the extent that losses on business assets were recognised in prior years. A net loss from the sale of business assets is treated as an ordinary loss. Future gains, however, will be treated as ordinary income to the extent of such losses recognised in the five immediately preceding years.

Dividend income

A US corporation generally may deduct 70% of dividends received from other US corporations in determining taxable income. The dividends received deduction is increased from 70% to 80% if the recipient of the dividend distribution owns at least 20% but less than 80% of the distributing corporation. Generally, dividend payments between US corporations that are members of the same affiliated group (*see the Group* *taxation section*) are deferred or eliminated until a transaction with a third party occurs. With minor exceptions, a US corporation may not deduct dividends it receives from a foreign corporation.

Stock dividends
A US corporation can distribute a tax-free dividend of common stock proportionately to all common stock shareholders. If the right to elect cash is given, all distributions to all shareholders are taxable as dividend income whether cash or stock is taken. There are exceptions to these rules, and extreme caution must be observed before making such distributions.

Interest income
Interest income is generally includible in the determination of taxable income.

Rental income
Rental income is generally includible in the determination of taxable income.

Royalty income
Royalty income is generally includible in the determination of taxable income.

Partnership income
The income (loss) of a partnership passes through to its partners so that the partnership itself is not subject to tax. Thus, each partner generally accounts for their distributive share of the partnership's taxable income.

Foreign income (Subpart F income) of US taxpayers
Generally, a US corporation is taxed on its worldwide income, including foreign branch income earned and foreign dividends when received. Double taxation is avoided by means of foreign tax credits. Alternatively, a deduction may be claimed for actual foreign taxes that are paid. In the case of foreign subsidiaries that are more than 50% owned (by vote or value) by US shareholders (commonly known as controlled foreign companies or CFCs), certain types of undistributed income will be taxed currently to the US shareholders (Subpart F income). Generally, Subpart F income includes income that is easily transferred to a low-tax jurisdiction.

Income from certain passive foreign investment companies (where 75% or more of the income is passive or at least 50% of the assets held produce passive income) also is subject to current taxation. Current taxation occurs if the corporation elects to be a qualified electing fund (QEF) or there are actual distributions. If a QEF election is not made and the corporation makes an actual distribution, the distribution will be treated as an excess distribution to the extent it exceeds 125% of the average of the distributions made with respect to the stock over the three immediately preceding years. The excess distribution is spread over the taxpayer's holding period, and the amount allocated to each year in the holding period is subject to tax at the highest marginal tax rate in effect for that year. This deferred tax amount also is subject to an interest charge. The interest charge is designed to pay the benefit of the tax deferral that arises out of having an overseas investment that pays no US income taxes.

Deductions

Depreciation and amortisation
Depreciation deductions are allowances that may be taken for capital outlays for tangible property. For property placed in service after 1986, capital costs must be recovered by using the modified accelerated cost recovery system (MACRS) method. Depending on the type of tangible property, the general cost recovery periods are three, five, seven, ten, 15, 20, 27.5, and 39 years (31.5 years for property placed in service

before 13 May 1993). The cost recovery methods and periods are the same for both new and used property. Most tangible personal property is in the three, five, or seven year class. Property placed in the three, five, seven, or ten year class is depreciated by first applying the 200% declining-balance method and then switching to the straight-line method at such a time as when use of the straight-line method maximises the depreciation deduction. Property in the 15 or 20 year class is depreciated by using the 150% declining-balance method and later switching to the straight-line method. An election may be made to use the alternative depreciation system (basically, the straight-line method over prescribed lives). Residential rental property generally is depreciated by the straight-line method over 27.5 years. Non-residential real property is depreciated by the straight-line method over 39 years (31.5 years for property placed in service before 13 May 1993).

An election to use the straight-line method over the regular recovery period or a longer recovery period also is available. Alternatively, taxpayers may elect to use the 150% declining-balance method over the regular recovery period for all property other than real property. This method is required for AMT purposes.

For most tangible personal and real property placed in service in the United States after 1980 but before 1 January 1987, capital costs were recovered using the accelerated cost recovery system (ACRS), which applied accelerated methods of cost recovery over periods specified by statute. The general ACRS recovery periods were three, five, ten, 15, 18, and 19 years.

Special rules apply to automobiles and certain other 'listed' property. Accelerated depreciation deductions can be claimed only if the automobile is used 50% or more for qualified business use as defined in related regulations. Further, for automobiles placed in service after 1986, the allowable yearly depreciation deduction cannot exceed specific dollar limitations.

Separate methods and periods of cost recovery are specified by statute for certain tangible personal and real property used outside the United States.

Rapid amortisation may be allowable for certain pollution control facilities.

Tax depreciation is not required to conform to book depreciation. Tax depreciation generally is subject to recapture on the sale or disposition of certain property, to the extent of gain, which is subject to tax as ordinary income.

The cost of most intangible assets is generally capitalised and amortisable rateably over 15 years.

Section 179 deduction

Corporations can elect to expense, up to a statutory amount per year, the cost of certain eligible property used in the active conduct of a trade or business. This is commonly referred to as the Section 179 deduction.

The 2003 tax cuts temporarily increased the maximum dollar amount that may be deducted under Section 179 from USD 25,000 to USD 100,000. The 2003 tax cuts also increased the phase-out amount from USD 200,000 to USD 400,000. These amounts have been further modified and extended several times on a temporary basis, increasing up to a high of USD 500,000 and USD 2 million, respectively, for tax years beginning in 2010 and 2011, and then to USD 125,000 and USD 500,000, respectively, for tax years beginning in 2012, before reverting to the permanent amounts of USD 25,000 and USD 200,000, respectively, for tax years beginning in 2013 and thereafter. The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, signed into law on 2 January 2013, increases the maximum amount and phase-out threshold in 2012 and 2013 to the levels in effect in 2010 and

2011 (USD 500,000 and USD 2 million, respectively). For tax years beginning in 2014, the amounts reverted to USD 25,000 and USD 200,000, respectively.

In addition, the deduction under this election is limited to the taxable income of the business.

Bonus depreciation

A 50% special first year depreciation allowance (i.e. bonus depreciation) applies (unless an election out is made) for new MACRS property with a recovery period of 20 years or less, certain computer software, water utility property, and certain leasehold improvements acquired after 31 December 2007. The special allowance applies for regular income tax and AMT purposes. No AMT adjustment is made if the special allowance is used. The special allowance does not apply to property that must be depreciated using the alternative depreciation system or to 'listed property' not used predominantly for business. The special allowance reduces basis before regular depreciation is figured. Additionally, claiming bonus depreciation on automobiles may affect the first year depreciation limits on such automobiles.

The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, signed into law on 2 January 2013, extended 50% bonus depreciation through 31 December 2013 (31 December 2014 for long-production-period property [LPPP] and certain aircraft).

- The Act did not extend 100% bonus depreciation, which expired at the end of 2011.
- The Act extended for one year, to tax years beginning in 2013, the provision allowing a corporation to elect to accelerate AMT credits in lieu of bonus depreciation.

Congress has not yet acted to extend 50% bonus depreciation beyond 31 December 2013 (31 December 2014 for LPPP and certain aircraft).

Depletion

For natural resource properties other than timber and certain oil and gas properties, depletion may be computed on a cost or a percentage basis.

Cost depletion is a method of depletion applied to exhaustible natural resources, including timber, which is based on the adjusted basis of the property. Each year, the adjusted basis of the property is reduced, but not below zero, by the amount of depletion calculated for that year. The current year cost depletion deduction is based on an estimate of the number of units that make up the deposit and the number of units extracted and sold during the year.

Percentage depletion is a method of depletion applied to most minerals and geothermal deposits, and, to a more limited extent, oil and gas. Percentage depletion is deductible at rates varying from 5% to 25% of gross income, depending on the mineral and certain other conditions. Percentage depletion may be deducted even after the total depletion deductions have exceeded the cost basis. However, percentage depletion is limited to 50% (100% for oil and gas properties) of taxable income from the property (computed without allowance for depletion). Generally, percentage depletion is not available for oil or gas wells. However, exceptions exist for natural gas from geopressurised brine and for independent producers of oil and gas.

Goodwill

The cost of goodwill generally is capitalised and amortisable rateably over 15 years.

Start-up expenses

Generally, start-up expenditures must be amortised over a 15-year period; however, certain taxpayers may elect to deduct some expenses in the tax year in which the trade or business begins.

US manufacturing deduction
Over the last several decades, various tax incentive systems have been enacted in the United States to encourage exports and were later repealed, including the extraterritorial income (ETI) regime, which was repealed as a result of a World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling that the ETI regime favoured US goods and violated the national treatment provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In response, the United States enacted the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004, which introduced a phase-out repeal of ETI and introduced the domestic production activities deduction under Section 199, seeking to compensate US manufacturers for the loss of ETI benefits.

Under Section 199, taxpayers are allowed a 9% deduction for qualified production activities (QPA) income (subject to a taxable income limitation). The deduction is available to all taxpayers actively engaged in QPA. For corporate taxpayers, the deduction generally will mean a federal income tax rate of 31.85% on QPA income. Importantly, the deduction also applies in calculating the AMT. There is a limit on the amount of the deduction equal to 50% of W-2 wages allocable to QPA (subject to a specific effective date), and the deduction is not allowed for taxpayers that incur a loss from their production activities or have an overall loss (including a carryover loss) from all activities.

A taxpayer's QPA income is calculated using the following formula: domestic production gross receipts less the sum of cost of goods sold allocable to such receipts and other expenses, losses, or deduction that are properly allocable to such receipts.

Interest expenses
Interest expenses generally are deductible but may be limited by thin capitalisation rules (*see Thin capitalisation in the Group taxation section*).

Bad debt
Bad debt resulting from a trade or business may be deducted in the year the debt becomes worthless. Determining the date the debt becomes worthless may present difficulty.

Charitable contributions
Deductions for allowable charitable contributions may not exceed 10% of taxable income computed without regard to certain deductions, including charitable contributions themselves. Deductions for contributions so limited may be carried over to the five succeeding years, subject to the 10% limitation annually.

Employee benefit plans (pension plans and expenses)
Through the Code, the government provides incentives for employers to provide retirement benefits to workers, including employee benefit, qualifying profit-sharing, or stock bonus plans. Usually, the employer will be allowed a current deduction for any contributions made to the fund, and the employee's tax liability will be deferred until the benefit is paid. For-profit, non-government employers generally have two types of available plans, which generally are subject to the reporting and disclosure requirements set forth under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

The first category of employee benefit plans is the defined benefit plan, or more commonly known as a pension plan, to which an employer contributes money, on an ongoing basis, to cover the amount of retirement income owed to retired employees under the plan (which will vary based on years of service, average salary, and/or other factors). Any investment gains or losses will not affect the amount of benefits paid to participants but will affect the amount an employer needs to contribute in order to cover its obligation.

The second category of employee benefit plans is the defined contribution plan, or more commonly known in the United States as a '401(k) plan', to which an employer's contributions (if any) are allocated amongst the separate accounts of participating employees, who also may contribute to their respective accounts. Investment gains or losses and the history of contributions will affect the value of a participant's account at retirement but will not affect an employer's contributions since the employer is not obligated to ensure any specified level of benefit in the plan.

Non-profits, including churches and government entities, have similar employee benefit plans, except different requirements apply. Small employers and self-employed individuals also have similar options available but are subject to different requirements.

Fines and penalties
No deduction generally is allowed for fines or penalties paid to the government for violation of any law.

Bribes, kickbacks, and illegal payments
An amount paid, directly or indirectly, to any person that is a bribe, kickback, or other illegal payment is not deductible.

Taxes
State and municipal taxes are deductible expenses for federal income tax purposes.

Other significant items

- No deduction generally is allowed for a contingent liability until such liability is fixed and determinable.
- Costs incurred for entertainment must meet strict tests in order to be deductible. The deduction for business meal and entertainment expenses is 50% of the expenses incurred. There are also limitations on the deductibility of international and domestic business travel expenses.
- Royalty payments, circulation costs, mine exploration and development costs, and other miscellaneous costs of carrying on a business are deductible, subject to certain conditions and limits.
- Depending on the taxpayer's tax accounting method, research and experimental (R&E) expenditures may be deducted as incurred or treated as deferred expenses and amortised over a period of not less than 60 months; however, in general, the method used must be consistently applied.

Net operating losses (NOLs)
An NOL is generated when business deductions exceed gross income in a particular tax year. Depending on current tax law, an NOL may be carried back to offset past income and possibly obtain a refund or carried forward to offset future income. Generally, a loss may be carried back two years and, if not fully used, carried forward 20 years. For state tax purposes, carryback and carryforward provisions are often similar to the federal provisions, except that several states do not permit any carrybacks or carryforwards.

Special rules surrounding NOLs may apply if a taxpayer is located in a qualified disaster area.

Special rules also apply relating to specified liability losses.

Complex rules may limit the use of NOLs after a reorganisation or other change in corporate ownership. Generally, if the ownership of more than 50% in value of the stock of a loss corporation changes, a limit is placed on the amount of future income that may be offset by losses carried forward.

Payments to foreign affiliates

A US corporation generally may claim a deduction for royalties, management service fees, and interest charges paid to foreign affiliates to the extent the amounts are actually paid and are not in excess of what it would pay an unrelated entity (i.e. are at arm's length). In addition, US withholding on these payments may be required.

Group taxation

An affiliated group of US 'includible' corporations, consisting of a parent and subsidiaries directly or indirectly 80% owned, generally may offset the profits of one affiliate against the losses of another affiliate within the group by electing to file a consolidated federal income tax return. A foreign incorporated subsidiary may not be consolidated into the US group, except for certain Mexican and Canadian incorporated entities. A partnership may not be included in a consolidated return, even if it is 100% owned by members of an affiliated group, since a partnership is not a corporation. However, a member's earnings that flow through from a partnership are included as part of the consolidated group's taxable income or loss. Filing on a consolidated (combined) basis is also allowed (or may be required or prohibited) in certain states.

Sales, dividends, and other transactions between corporations that are members of the same group generally are deferred or eliminated until such time as a transaction occurs with a non-member of the group. Losses incurred on the sale of members of the group are disallowed under certain circumstances.

Transfer pricing

Transfer pricing regulations govern how related entities set internal prices for the transfers of goods, intangible assets, services, and loans in both domestic and international contexts. The regulations are designed to prevent tax avoidance among related entities and place a controlled party on par with an uncontrolled taxpayer by requiring an arm's-length standard. The arm's-length standard generally is met if the results of a controlled transaction are consistent with results that would have been realised if uncontrolled taxpayers had engaged in a similar transaction under similar circumstances. If a company is not in compliance with the arm's-length standard, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) may raise taxable income and tax payable in the United States. After a transfer pricing adjustment, a multinational company may face double tax, paying tax twice on the same income in two countries. Multinational companies may request competent authority relief from double taxation through a tax treaty.

In order to avoid potential transfer pricing penalties, one avenue available to companies may be to obtain an advance pricing agreement (APA) with the IRS, unilaterally, or with the IRS and another tax authority, bilaterally, covering inter-company pricing.

Thin capitalisation

Thin capitalisation rules may apply to disallow interest payments related to excess debt and to re-characterise such payments as dividends. The interest expense deduction can be limited and suspended if more than 50% of the adjusted taxable income of a thinly-capitalised corporation (with similar rules for a corporate partner in a partnership) is sheltered by interest paid to a related party (or paid to a third-party but guaranteed by the related party) who is not subject to US tax on the income.

Controlled foreign companies (CFCs)

Under the Subpart F regime, a CFC is any foreign corporation with respect to which more than 50% of either the voting power of all classes of stock entitled to vote or the total value of all classes of the corporation's stock is owned by US shareholders on any day during the foreign corporation's taxable year.

Tax credits and incentives

Foreign tax credit (FTC)

Generally, in any year, a taxpayer can choose whether to take as a credit (subject to limitation) or as a deduction foreign income, war profits, and excess profit taxes paid or accrued during the tax year to any foreign country or US possession. An FTC reduces US income tax liability dollar for dollar, while a deduction reduces the US income tax liability at the marginal rate of the taxpayer. For taxpayers with NOLs, the FTC is of no value in such year. However, a benefit might be received either in an earlier year (through a refund of previously paid taxes) or a later year (through a reduction of future taxes). It also should be noted that a taxpayer has an ability to switch from credit to deduction (or from deduction to credit) at any time in a ten-year period commencing when the foreign taxes were paid or accrued. Generally, an FTC may be carried back one year and, if not fully used, carried forward ten years.

In addition, the FTC goes beyond direct taxes to include foreign taxes paid 'in lieu of' a tax upon income, war profits, or excess profits, which would otherwise generally be imposed. It also includes deemed-paid (indirect) taxes paid for certain US corporate shareholders of non-portfolio foreign corporations when actual or deemed dividends are received. Furthermore, the FTC system has numerous limitations to mitigate the potential abuses of the credit by the taxpayer.

General business credit

Various business credits are available to provide special incentives for the achievement of certain economic objectives. In general, these credits are combined into one 'general business credit' for purposes of determining each credit's allowance limitation for the tax year. The general business credit that may be used for a tax year is limited to a tax-based amount. In general, the current year's credit that cannot be used in a given year because of the credit's allowance limitation may be carried back to the tax year preceding the current year and carried forward to each of the 20 years following the current year.

In general, the current year business credit is a combination of the following credits (as of this writing, some of these credits have expired, but may be renewed retroactively by Congress):

- Investment credit.
- Work opportunity credit.
- Alcohol fuels credit.
- Research credit.
- Low-income housing credit.
- Enhanced oil recovery credit.
- Disabled access credit for certain eligible small businesses.
- Renewable electricity production credit.
- Empowerment zone employment credit.
- Indian employment credit.
- Employer social security credit.
- Orphan drug credit.
- New markets tax credit.
- Small employer pension plan start-up cost credit for eligible employers.
- Employer-provided child care credit.
- Railroad track maintenance credit.
- Biodiesel fuels credit.
- Low sulphur diesel fuel production credit.
- Marginal oil and gas well production credit.
- Distilled spirits credit.
- Advanced nuclear power facility production credit.
- Non-conventional source production credit.

- New energy efficient home credit.
- Energy efficient appliance credit.
- A portion of the alternative motor vehicle credit.
- A portion of the alternative fuel vehicle refuelling property credit.
- Hurricane Katrina housing credit.
- Hurricane Katrina employee retention credit.
- Hurricane Rita employee retention credit.
- Hurricane Wilma employee retention credit.
- Mine rescue team training credit.
- Agricultural chemicals security credit for eligible businesses.
- Differential wage payment credit.
- Carbon dioxide sequestration credit.
- A portion of the new qualified plug-in electric drive motor vehicle credit for vehicles that will vary based on the date of purchase.

Employment credits
A 'work opportunity tax credit' was available through 2013 for employment of certain types of workers. 'Creditable' wages generally were the first USD 6,000 of wages paid to each qualified employee for the year. The credit was 40% of creditable wages, for a maximum credit of USD 2,400.

Congress has not yet acted to extend this credit beyond 2013.

Research credit
The research credit under Section 41 is available for companies that make qualified research expenditures (QREs) to develop new or improved products, manufacturing processes, or software in the United States. The credit was enacted in 1981 on a temporary basis to help increase R&E spending in the United States. Since then, the research credit has been extended about 15 times, most recently as part of the American Tax Relief Act, retroactive to 1 January 2012, and is available with respect to QREs incurred before 1 January 2014.

The research credit generally is computed by calculating current-year QRE over a base. The base is calculated using either the regular research credit (RRC) method or the alternative simplified credit (ASC) method. Under the RRC method, the credit equals 20% of QREs for the tax year over a base amount established by the taxpayer in 1984 to 1988 or by another method for companies that began operations after that period.

The ASC equals 14% (for the 2009 tax year and thereafter) of QREs over 50% of the average annual QREs in the three immediately preceding tax years. If the taxpayer has no QREs in any of the three preceding tax years, the ASC may be 6% of the tax year's QREs. The taxpayer must make a timely ASC election on Form 6765 attached to an originally filed return filed by the due date for that return (including extensions).

Taxpayers using the RRC also may take a 20% credit for incremental payments made to qualified organizations for basic research. For tax years ending after 8 August 2005, taxpayers also may take the Energy Research Consortium Credit, which provides a 20% credit for expenditures on qualified energy research undertaken by an energy research consortium.

The deduction for R&E expenditures under Section 174 must be reduced by the entire amount of the credit unless an election is made to reduce the amount of the credit.

Both the US House and Senate have taken steps to extend the credit beyond 31 December 2013, but, as of this writing, an extension has not been enacted.

Inbound investment incentives
There generally are no specific incentives related to inbound investment at the federal level, other than certain portfolio debt and bank deposit exceptions. The portfolio debt exception enables non-residents and foreign corporations to invest in certain obligations (which must meet certain statutory requirements to qualify as 'portfolio debt') in the United States without being subject to US income (or withholding) tax on the interest income. Certain state and local benefits may also be available.

Qualified private activity bonds
Interest income received on certain qualified private activity bonds generally is exempt from federal income tax. This enables a business enterprise to issue the bonds at a lower interest rate.

Other tax incentives
State and local governments provide numerous incentives to encourage business and, thus, employment in their jurisdictions.

Withholding taxes

Under US domestic tax laws, a foreign person generally is subject to 30% US tax on its US-source income. US persons making payments ('withholding agents') to foreign persons generally must withhold 30% of the payment amount as tax withheld at source on payments, such as dividends and royalties, made to foreign persons. In other situations, withholding agents may apply reduced rates or be exempted from withholding tax (WHT) at source when there is a tax treaty between the foreign person's country of residence and the United States.

The United States has entered into various income tax treaties with countries in order to avoid double taxation of the same income and to prevent tax evasion. The table below, from IRS Publication 901 (April 2013), summarises the benefits resulting from these treaties.

Recipient	Dividends paid by US corporations in general (%) (1)	Dividends qualifying for direct dividend rate (%) (1, 2)	Interest paid by US obligors in general (%)	Royalties* (%)
Non-treaty	30	30	30	30/30/30
Treaty rates:				
Australia (3)	15 (22)	5 (22, 24)	10 (5, 21)	5/5/5
Austria (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	0 (19)	0/10/0
Bangladesh (3)	15 (22)	15 (22)	10 (11, 19)	10/10/10
Barbados (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	5	5/5/5
Belgium (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (24, 27, 28)	0 (19)	0/0/0
Bulgaria (3)	10 (27, 28)	5 (27, 28)	5 (19, 21, 27)	5/5/5
Canada (3)	15 (22)	5 (22)	0 (19)	0/10/0
China, People's Republic of (3)	10	10	10	10/10/10
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (8)	30	30	0 (7)	0/0/0
Cyprus (3)	15	5	10	0/0/0
Czech Republic (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	0	10/0/0
Denmark (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (24, 27, 28)	0 (20)	0/0/0
Egypt	15 (4)	5 (4)	15 (4)	30/0/15 (3)
Estonia (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	10 (20)	10/10/10
Finland (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (24, 27, 28)	0 (20)	0/0/0

Recipient	Dividends paid by US corporations in general (%) (1)	Dividends qualifying for direct dividend rate (%) (1, 2)	Interest paid by US obligors in general (%)	Royalties* (%)
France (3)	15 (22)	5 (22, 24)	0	0/0/0
Germany (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (24, 27, 28)	0 (19)	0/0/0
Greece (4)	30	30	0	0/30/0
Hungary (3)	15	5	0	0/0/0
Iceland (3)	15 (15, 22)	5 (15, 22)	0 (20)	5/5/0
India (3)	25 (9)	15 (9)	15 (12)	15/15/15
Indonesia (3)	15	10	10	10/10/10
Ireland (3)	15 (22)	5 (22)	0	0/0/0
Israel (3)	25 (9)	12.5 (9)	17.5 (12, 17)	15/10/10
Italy (3)	15 (22)	5 (22)	10 (23)	8/8/0
Jamaica (3)	15	10	12.5	10/10/10
Japan (3, 25)	10 (27, 28)	5 (27, 28)	10 (26, 27)	0/0/0
Kazakhstan (3)	15 (16)	5 (16)	10	10/10/10
Korea, South (3)	15	10	12	15/10/10
Latvia (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	10 (20)	10/10/10
Lithuania (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	10 (20)	10/10/10
Luxembourg (3)	15 (29)	5 (9)	0 (4)	0/0/0
Malta (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (27, 28)	10 (19)	10/10/10
Mexico (3)	10 (22)	5 (22, 24)	15 (18)	10/10/10
Morocco	15 (3)	10 (3)	15 (3)	10/10/10
Netherlands (3)	15 (24)	5	0	0/0/0
New Zealand (3)	15	5 (22, 24)	10	5/5/5
Norway (3)	15	15	10	0/0/0
Pakistan (4)	30	15	30	0/30/0
Philippines (3)	25	20	15	15/15/15
Poland (3)	15	5	0	10/10/10
Portugal (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	10	10/10/10
Romania (3)	10	10	10	15/10/10
Russia (3)	10 (16)	5 (16)	0	0/0/0
Slovak Republic (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	0	10/0/0
Slovenia (3)	15 (22)	5 (22)	5	5/5/5
South Africa (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	0 (19)	0/0/0
Spain (3)	15 (9)	10 (9)	10	10/8/5 (10)
Sri Lanka (3)	15 (30)	15 (30)	10 (19)	10/10/10
Sweden (3)	15 (27, 28)	5 (24, 27, 28)	0	0/0/0
Switzerland (3)	15 (9)	5 (9)	0 (19)	0/30/0
Thailand (3)	15 (9)	10 (9)	15 (12)	15/5/5
Trinidad & Tobago (3)	30	30	30	15/30/0 (14)
Tunisia (3)	20 (9)	14 (9)	15	15/15/15
Turkey (3)	20 (9)	15 (9)	15 (6, 12)	10/10/10
Ukraine (3)	15 (16)	5 (16)	0	10/10/10
United Kingdom (3, 25)	15 (22)	5 (22, 24)	0 (20)	0/0/0
Venezuela (3)	15 (22)	5 (22)	10 (20, 21)	10/10/10

Notes

* Please note the tax rates and associated footnotes appearing in the 'Royalties' column in the table address three types of royalties, as denoted in the most recent IRS publication. These three are industrial royalties, motion picture and television copyright royalties, and 'other' copyright royalties. The slashes '/'

between each figure and associated footnote(s) are meant to demarcate these three types of royalties, respectively.

1. No US tax is imposed on a dividend paid by a US corporation that received at least 80% of its gross income from an active foreign business for the three-year period before the dividend is declared.
2. The reduced rate applies to dividends paid by a subsidiary to a foreign parent corporation that has the required percentage of stock ownership. In some cases, the income of the subsidiary must meet certain requirements (e.g. a certain percentage of its total income must consist of income other than dividends and interest). For Italy, the reduced rate is 10% if the foreign corporation owns 10% to 50% of the voting stock (for a 12-month period) of the company paying the dividends. For Japan, dividends received from a more than 50% owned corporate subsidiary are exempt if certain conditions are met.
3. The exemption or reduction in rate does not apply if the recipient has a PE in the United States and the property giving rise to the income is effectively connected with this PE. Under certain treaties, the exemption or reduction in rate also does not apply if the property producing the income is effectively connected with a fixed base in the United States from which the recipient performs independent personal services. Even with the treaty, if the income is not effectively connected with a trade or business in the United States by the recipient, the recipient will be considered as not having a PE in the United States under IRC Section 894(b).
4. The exemption or reduction in rate does not apply if the recipient is engaged in a trade or business in the United States through a PE that is in the United States. However, if the income is not effectively connected with a trade or business in the United States by the recipient, the recipient will be considered as not having a PE in the United States to apply the reduced treaty rate to that item of income.
5. Interest determined with reference to the profits of the issuer or one of its associated enterprises is taxed at 15%.
6. Contingent interest that does not qualify as portfolio interest is treated as a dividend and is subject to the rates under those columns, as appropriate.
7. The exemption applies only to interest on credits, loans, and other indebtedness connected with the financing of trade between the United States and the CIS member. It does not include interest from the conduct of a general banking business.
8. The tax rates in the US treaty with the former USSR still apply to the following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
9. The rate in column 2 applies to dividends paid by a regulated investment company (RIC) or a real estate investment trust (REIT). However, that rate applies to dividends paid by a REIT only if the beneficial owner of the dividends is an individual holding less than a 10% interest (25% in the case of Portugal, Spain, and Tunisia) in the REIT.
10. The rate is 8% for copyrights of scientific work.
11. The rate is 5% for interest (i) beneficially owned by a bank or other financial institution (including an insurance company) or (ii) paid due to a sale on credit of any industrial, commercial, or scientific equipment, or of any merchandise to an enterprise.
12. The rate is 10% if the interest is paid on a loan granted by a bank or similar financial institution. For Thailand, the 10% rate also applies to interest from an arm's-length sale on credit of equipment, merchandise, or services.
13. This is the rate for royalties for the use of, or the right to use, industrial, commercial, and scientific equipment. The rate for royalties for information concerning industrial, commercial, and scientific know-how is subject to the rate in column 5 ('other royalties').
14. The rate is 15% for copyrights of scientific work.
15. Amounts paid to a pension fund or employee benefit organisation that are not derived from the carrying on of a business, directly or indirectly, by the fund or organisation are exempt.
16. The rate in column 2 applies to dividends paid by a RIC. Dividends paid by a REIT are subject to a 30% rate.
17. An election can be made to treat this interest income as if it were industrial and commercial profits taxable under article 8 of this treaty.
18. The rate is 4.9% for interest derived from (i) loans granted by banks and insurance companies and (ii) bonds or securities that are regularly and substantially traded on a recognised securities market. The rate is 10% for interest not described in the preceding sentence and paid (i) by banks or (ii) by the buyer of machinery and equipment to the seller due to a sale on credit.
19. The rate is 15% (10% for Bulgaria; 30% for Germany and Switzerland) for contingent interest that does not qualify as portfolio interest.
20. The rate is 15% for interest determined with reference to (i) receipts, sales, income, profits, or other cash flow of the debtor or a related person, (ii) any change in the value of any property of the debtor or a related person, or (iii) any dividend, partnership distribution, or similar payment made by the debtor to a related person.
21. Interest received by a financial institution is tax exempt. For Venezuela, the rate is 4.95% if the interest is beneficially owned by a financial institution (including an insurance company).
22. The rate in column 2 applies to dividends paid by a RIC or REIT. However, that rate applies to dividends paid by a REIT only if the beneficial owner of the dividends is (i) an individual (or pension fund, in the case of France or New Zealand) holding not more than a 10% interest in the REIT, (ii) a person holding not more than 5% of any class of the REIT's stock and the dividends are paid on stock that is publicly traded, or (iii) a person holding not more than a 10% interest in the REIT and the REIT is diversified.
23. Interest paid or accrued on the sale of goods, merchandise, or services between enterprises is exempt. Interest paid or accrued on the sale on credit of industrial, commercial, or scientific equipment is exempt.

24. Dividends received from an 80%-owned corporate subsidiary are exempt if certain conditions are met.
25. Exemption does not apply to amount paid under, or as part of, a conduit arrangement.
26. Interest is exempt if (i) paid to certain financial institutions, or (ii) paid on indebtedness from the sale on credit of equipment or merchandise.
27. Amounts paid to a pension fund that are not derived from the carrying on of a business, directly or indirectly, by the fund are exempt. This includes amounts paid by a REIT only if the conditions in footnote 31 are met. For Sweden, to be entitled to the exemption, the pension fund must not sell or make a contract to sell the holding from which the dividend is derived within two months of the date the pension fund acquired the holding.
28. The rate in column 2 applies to dividends paid by a RIC or REIT. However, that rate applies to dividends paid by a REIT only if the beneficial owner of the dividends is (i) an individual or a pension fund holding not more than a 10% interest in the REIT, (ii) a person holding not more than 5% of any class of the REIT's stock and the dividends are paid on stock that is publicly traded, or (iii) a person holding not more than a 10% interest in the REIT and the REIT is diversified. Dividends paid to a pension fund from a RIC, or a REIT that meets the above conditions, are exempt. For Sweden, the pension fund must also satisfy the requirements in footnote 30.
29. The exemption does not apply if the recipient of the gain is an individual who is present in the United States for more than 119 days during the year.
30. The rate applies to dividends paid by a REIT only if the beneficial owner of the dividends is (i) an individual holding less than a 10% interest in the REIT, (ii) a person holding not more than 5% of any class of the REIT's stock and the dividends are paid on stock that is publicly traded, or (iii) a person holding not more than a 10% interest in the REIT and the REIT is diversified.

Tax administration

Taxable period

US corporate taxpayers are taxed on an annual basis. Corporate taxpayers may choose a tax year that is different from the calendar year. New corporations may use a short tax year for their first tax period, and corporations may also use a short tax year when changing tax years.

Tax returns

The US tax system is based on the principle of self-assessment. A corporate taxpayer is required to file an annual tax return (generally Form 1120) by the 15th day of the third month following the close of its tax year. A taxpayer can obtain an additional six month extension of time to file its tax return. Failure to timely file may result in penalties.

Important tax return due dates

Form No.	Title	Purpose	Due date
W-2	Wage and Tax Statement	Employers must provide employees with statements regarding total compensation and amounts withheld during year.	Must be sent to employees on or before 31 January.
1099 series	Various	Information returns to be provided to recipients of dividends and distributions, interest income, miscellaneous income, etc.	Must be sent on or before 31 January.
1120 series, including 1120S (for S Corps)	US Corporation Income Tax Return	Income tax returns for domestic corporations or foreign corporations with US offices.	15 March (Form 7004 may be filed to obtain an automatic six-month extension)
Schedule K-1	Partner's Share of Income (Loss) from an Electing Large Partnership	Information returns to be provided to partners by large partnerships.	15 March

Form No.	Title	Purpose	Due date
1065	US Return of Partnership Income	Information returns to be filed by large partnerships.	15 April (Form 7004 may be filed to obtain an automatic six-month extension)
State tax returns	Various	Income tax returns for states where corporation carries on trade/business.	Varies, often 15 April

Payment of tax

A taxpayer's tax liability generally is required to be prepaid throughout the year in four equal estimated payments and fully paid by the date the tax return is initially due for that year. However, because a corporation that expects its tax liability for the tax year to exceed the small sum of USD 500 (based on its tax liability for the preceding year), almost all corporations are required to pay their full estimated tax liability for the year in their four estimated tax payments. For calendar year corporations, the four estimated payments are due by the 15th day of April, June, September, and December. For fiscal year corporations, the four estimated payments are due by the 15th day of the fourth, sixth, ninth, and 12th month of the tax year. Generally, no extensions to pay are allowed. Failure to pay the tax by the due dates as indicated above can result in estimated tax and late payment penalties and interest charges.

The instalment payments must include estimates of regular CIT, AMT, environmental tax, and, for foreign corporations, the tax on gross transportation income. To avoid a penalty, corporations must calculate the instalment payments based on at least 25% of the lesser of (i) the tax shown on the current tax return or (ii) the prior year's tax liability, provided that the tax liability was a positive amount in the prior year and that such year consisted of 12 months. However, corporations with taxable income of at least USD 1 million (before use of NOLs or capital loss carryforwards) in any of the three preceding years are not permitted to calculate the instalment based payment on the prior year's tax liability, except in determining the first instalment payment. Instead, such corporations must calculate the instalment payments based on the tax shown on the current tax return.

Corporations with more than USD 1 billion in assets will be required to make estimated tax payments that are 100.25% of the amount otherwise due in July, August, or September of 2014. Such overpayments will be balanced out in October, November, or December of 2014 when payments of 99.75% of the amount otherwise due will be paid by corporations with more than USD 1 billion in assets.

Penalties

Civil and criminal penalties may be imposed for failing to follow the Code when paying US taxes. The civil penalty provisions may be divided into four categories: delinquency penalties; accuracy-related penalties; information reporting penalties; and preparer, promoter, and protester penalties. Many, but not all, have exception provisions to cover reasonable cause. In addition, many have provisions directing how the penalties interact with the other penalties.

These four main civil penalty categories may further be divided. First, the delinquency penalties may be divided into failure to file, failure to pay, and failure to make timely deposits of tax. Failure to make timely deposits of tax applies to taxpayers required to make instalment payments and WHT payments.

Second, the penalties relating to the accuracy of tax returns are divided into the negligence penalty, the substantial understatement penalty, substantial overstatement of pension liabilities, substantial estate or gift tax valuation underestimate, and the valuation penalties. These penalties are also coordinated with the fraud penalty to eliminate any stacking of the penalties. Again, like other provisions, the fraud penalty is not intended to be imposed as a stacked penalty.

The third category of penalties is the information reporting penalties. These penalties may be imposed upon those who only have a duty to report information to the IRS.

The fourth and final major categories of civil penalties are the preparer, promoter, and protester penalties. Currently, the most notable of these is the return preparer penalty for which there is a penalty for a position on a return for which the preparer did not have substantial authority. Also included in this provision is a penalty for wilful or reckless attempt to understate the tax liability of another person. Additionally, return preparer penalties may be imposed for failure to furnish a copy of a return or claim for refund to the taxpayer, sign the return or claim for refund, furnish his or her identifying number, or file a correct information return.

Other promoter and protestor penalties include a penalty for promoting abusive tax shelters, aiding and abetting the understatement of tax liability, and filing frivolous income tax returns. Additionally, a court may award sanctions and costs if a person institutes or maintains a proceeding primarily for delay, takes a position that is frivolous, or unreasonably fails to pursue available administrative remedies.

In addition to these major civil penalties, international tax related penalties for failures other than timely and accurate filing (e.g. wilful failure to report international boycott activity, failure of an agent to furnish a notice of a false affidavit relating to the WHT on dispositions of US real property interests, failure of a US person to furnish information relating to CFCs and controlled foreign partnerships, failure of a US person to report foreign bank accounts) exist. Pension and employee benefit related tax penalties exist that protect the policy reasons for the tax incentives, including, most notably, early withdrawal of pension funds. Another group of specialised penalties apply to exempt organisations.

Criminal penalties exist for situations when the failures to stay within the tax system are more egregious. Although applicable to corporate taxpayers, they are applied more frequently to individuals.

In addition to the penalty provisions, interest at statutory rates generally applies to underpayments of tax.

Tax audit process
Generally, the US tax system is based on self-assessment; however, many large and mid-size businesses are under continuous audit by the IRS and state tax authorities. The audits may include the entire list of taxes for which the business is liable. Smaller business and persons with lower incomes are generally subject to audit on a random basis.

Statute of limitations
The IRS generally has three years after an original return is filed to assess income taxes. A return will be deemed to have been filed on its due date, even if the return is actually filed on an earlier date.

Topics of focus for tax authorities
Currently, the IRS is focused on abusive payments related to contribution to capital of a corporation, domestic manufacturing deduction, foreign earnings repatriation, FTC generators, repairs vs. capitalisation change in accounting method, research credit claims, transfer of intangibles/offshore cost sharing, WHTs, and employee classification.

Tax shelter
Treasury regulations require taxpayers to disclose transactions determined to be abusive or possibly abusive. Current information on these transactions, known as listed and reportable transactions, is available from the IRS website (*www.irs.gov*).

Accounting for income taxes
For US federal tax purposes, the two most important characteristics of a tax method of accounting are (i) timing and (ii) consistency. If the method does not affect the timing for including items of income or claiming deductions, it is not an accounting method and generally IRS approval is not needed to change it. In order to affect timing, the accounting method must determine the year in which an income or expense item is to be reported.

In general, in order to establish an accounting method, the method must be consistently applied. Once an accounting method has been adopted for federal tax purposes, any change must be requested by the taxpayer and approved by the IRS. Changes in accounting methods cannot be made through amending returns. The two most common methods of accounting are the accrual basis and cash basis methods.

Other issues

Tax accounting and internal controls
Accounting Standards Codification (ASC) 740, Income Taxes (formerly known as Financial Accounting Standards Board [FASB] Statement No. 109, Accounting for Income Taxes) addresses how companies should account for and report the effects of taxes based on income. ASC 740's principles and requirements apply to domestic and foreign entities in preparing financial statements in accordance with US generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), including not-for-profit entities with activities that are subject to income taxes. This scope includes: (i) domestic federal (national) income taxes (US federal income taxes for US enterprises) and foreign, state, and local (including franchise) taxes based on income; and (ii) an enterprise's domestic and foreign operations that are consolidated, combined, or accounted for by the equity method.

In recent years, controls around the accounting for income taxes have been a critical source of material weaknesses in companies' internal controls over financial reporting. Accounting for income taxes also has been a primary reason for restating financial statements. Management should ensure that its judgments and estimates are reasonable (e.g. assessing the need for a valuation allowance on deferred taxes) and that the underlying internal control processes are reliable.

The adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in the United States is set by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The timeline included in the SEC's roadmap provides for adoption of IFRS in the United States between 2014 and 2016.

Corporate reorganisations
In general, a corporate reorganisation involving a merger, acquisition, or consolidation is a taxable event under the general recognition provisions of the Code. However, a corporate reorganisation that meets certain statutory and judicial requirements may qualify as a tax-free transaction, with gain or loss generally not recognised or deferred to a later date.

Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA)
FATCA was enacted in 2010 to prevent and detect offshore tax evasion. While the name may imply that FATCA is directed at financial institutions, many global companies

outside the financial services industry may be affected if they have entities in their worldwide network falling under the purview of FATCA, or have operational areas that make or receive payments subject to FATCA.

Multinational enterprises that are withholding agents are already currently obligated to report, withhold on payments, and document payees, but FATCA requires changes to these activities. FATCA mandates that multinational businesses evaluate entity payees differently, engage in withholding on certain gross proceeds transactions (a change from historic processes), as well as report different information to the IRS.

The withholding provisions of FATCA are scheduled to begin 1 July 2014. Compliance with FATCA may require changes to existing systems and processes across business units and regions, the renewal of policies and day-to-day practices, and new tasks, such as registering with the IRS.

To mitigate certain foreign legal impediments to FATCA compliance, intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) also have been negotiated (with more to come) between the US Treasury and foreign governments. Under certain IGAs, including most of the IGAs signed thus far, information will be exchanged directly between the IRS and local governments. This obligates entities in IGA jurisdictions to report information to their government that may not have been required or permitted in the past.

Assessing FATCA's impact will require identifying whether an IGA may apply to the entity or payment stream at issue. Provisions in the final FATCA regulations or, if applicable, an IGA that provides more favourable results may be utilised. This likely will increase the complexity of the process, due in part to the multiple paths to compliance (e.g. regulations or an IGA). The regulators have focused on having consistent requirements in each IGA, but there are noticeable differences in the agreements signed to date.

US possessions
Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands have their own independent tax departments. Accordingly, they have their own rules. *See the Puerto Rico summary for more information about Puerto Rico taxation*.

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Written by local PwC[1] tax specialists in each country, this guide covers recent changes in tax legislation as well as key information about income taxes, residency, income determination, deductions, group taxation, credits and incentives, withholding taxes, indirect taxes, and tax administration, up to date (unless otherwise stated) as of 1 June 2014. Also included is a global directory of PwC contacts organised by their tax speciality area.

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