

FINANCIAL FITNESS

Tips For Increasing Your Financial Security

(NAPSA)—If you're not sure how you are going to reach your financial goals, there's helpful news. Here are four tips to navigate the changing economic conditions and keep your finances under control.

1. Lower your tax burden by saving as much as you can in your 401(k). No matter what your tax rate is, saving for retirement in a 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan can help reduce your taxes and boost retirement security. Contributions to a traditional 401(k) aren't subject to income tax withholding and aren't included in your taxable wages. While you pay taxes on contributions to a Roth 401(k), your earnings are tax-free. To see if you're doing all you can to reduce your tax burden while saving for retirement, you can use the online 401(k) "Save the Max" calculator from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA), a securities regulator.

2. Start a rainy-day fund. Building a rainy-day fund is one of the most important things you can do to maintain financial security. The savings will give you a cushion to handle a short-term job loss, a surprise car repair or some other emergency. Begin by saving at least one month of your current salary in a federally insured savings account. If you can, save up to three months of your salary. If saving is hard for you, then start small. If you start saving \$10 a week right now, by this time next year, you'd have a rainy-day fund of over \$500.

3. Avoid credit card debt. In difficult economic times, it can be easy to rack up debt. Make it a goal to use credit sparingly, and try to pay all your credit bills in full and on time. If you can't pay



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your whole bill, every dollar you pay above the minimum payment can lower your interest payments.

4. Do a yearly background check on your investment professional. Investing a few minutes to take this free and easy step could save you money and trouble down the road. You can use FINRA's online tool, BrokerCheck, to research the background of investment professionals and firms. Make it a habit to do a yearly check to see if there's any new information you should know about.

FINRA is the largest independent regulator for all securities firms doing business in the United States. Its mission is to protect America's investors by making sure the securities industry operates fairly and honestly.

To learn more, visit www.finra.org/investors.