

Software specialist helps find tax money

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Municipal officials trying to balance budgets with limited funds may find more money is available without raising taxes.

That money could be hiding in property, earned income and business taxes that go unpaid and unclaimed because of paper processes, manual bookkeeping and labor shortages, said Mark Schuster, president and founder of TurnKey Taxes.

Schuster's Oakland-based software firm has developed computer software that he says will help communities recoup money owed to them in unpaid taxes.

Schuster, a software specialist who addressed the Lawrence County Regional Council of Governments on Wednesday, offers his service as a business and claims he can sometimes find thousands of dollars that municipalities were not aware of.

He said his web application enables local governments to increase tax revenues without raising taxes.

He claims that using his software, he found \$30,000 in unclaimed taxes for the city of Jeannette, Pa., in his first 15 minutes there.

Schuster pointed out that communities need a way to track who moves into and out of apartments in order to claim taxes from those landlords. He added that small separate businesses pop up in kiosks in places such as Wal-Mart and grocery stores which have "no clue about Act 32."

Act 32 requires uniform withholding of earned income taxes and remittance to a single local collector or tax officer. The act applies to the earned income taxes levied and collected after December 31, 2011, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development website.

Employers who maintain work sites in Pennsylvania or who employ people who work from their homes are required to withhold applicable earned income tax from those employees, the site says.

Under Act 32, employers are required to withhold the higher of the employee's resident earned income tax amount (the rate of total resident earned income tax where they reside) vs. the employee's municipal non-resident earned income tax amount. Employers are required to obtain information in a residency certification form for every employee.

Schuster's pay for providing the software service depends on whether he finds money for a community. He assured the municipal officials that "if we find money for you, we'll square off later. If you have all of this information online, it's easy."

Schuster pointed out that the city of McKeesport in 2014 saw a \$346,000 increase in revenue from tracking unclaimed taxes through the computer program. As a result, the community avoided raising taxes, he said.

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