FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  CONTACT: Lisa Hall
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Taxpayer Independence Day Arrives Early
Floridians Start Working For Themselves On May 3rd

TALLAHASSEE – Floridians are throwing off the yoke of government four days earlier this year, Florida TaxWatch announced today. May 3rd marks Taxpayer Independence Day – the day average taxpayers will have logged enough hours to pay federal, state and local taxes.

Florida Taxpayer Independence Day 2002 arrives four days earlier than it did last year, and eight days earlier than 2000. Generally Floridians work more than one-third of the year, or 122 out of 365 days, to pay their taxes.

“Because growth in personal income has exceeded taxes, and because of our continued low inflation, taxpayers can expect their paychecks to go a little farther than last year,” said Dominic M. Calabro, CEO Florida TaxWatch.

Fiscal Year 2002 marks the first time in at least 25 years that the total amount of taxes paid by Floridians decreased. This is the second straight year that Floridians’ personal income has grown faster than they taxes they pay. However, this good news is tempered by the fact that this is largely due to an under-performing economy and slowed tax collections, not a big increase in personal income.

TaxWatch analysts predict that the average Florida household will have approximately $989 more to spend in 2002 than in 2001. While total taxes paid by Floridians have more than doubled since 1990, 2002 marks the first time the index has fallen. On a per household basis, taxes fell .7 percent in 2002.

“When you couple the modest income growth with continued low inflation, the average Florida household enjoyed an increase in buying power,” said Calabro.

Taxpayer Independence Day is a symbolic date that assumes every dollar earned since January 1 goes to pay federal, state and local taxes. In an average eight-hour day, Floridians will work 2 hours and 40 minutes in 2002 to pay their taxes, down a full seven minutes from 2001. That means in an average 9:00 to 5:00 workday, Floridians start working for themselves at 11:40 a.m.

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“Taxes still consume the biggest chunk of the average worker’s paycheck,” Calabro said. “Most Floridians can cover their housing and utility costs by working just one hour and 20 minutes.”

Among the study’s findings:

- Floridians must work 122 out of 365 days to pay their tax bills
- The total federal, state and local taxes paid by Floridians have more than doubled since FY 1990, however 2002 marks the first time total taxes paid by Floridians has fallen
- Total per capita taxation is down in FY 2002, yet is has still increased 63.7 percent since 1990
- Floridians Effective Buying Power, the amount of income left after taxes and inflation, should rise 2.1 percent in 2002, the second largest increase since 1990.

For more information about Florida Taxpayer Independence Day, check out the Florida TaxWatch website at: [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org).

Florida TaxWatch is a 22-year-old statewide, non-partisan, non-profit research institution supported by homeowners, small businesses, corporations, labor, individuals and philanthropic foundations. Florida TaxWatch is a public interest group dedicated to improving citizen understanding and government accountability.

### ADVISORY

Kurt Wenner, Florida TaxWatch Senior Analyst, will be available at the TaxWatch office from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. today for interviews regarding Taxpayer Independence Day. For telephone interviews or to schedule an on-camera interview, please call Kurt at 222-5052.