



Stocking Stuffers

December 2009

Money making (saving) ideas

Santa, like most of us, has been forced to tighten his belt and reduce his overhead (rumors persist he refused TARP). No confirmation if any of the 9 reindeer were laid off but odds are pretty certain Santa is likely gifting from 2008 inventories. With that in mind, we should all be prepared for a downsized Christmas. But downsizing doesn't have to mean down and out – at least that's what I tell my wife.

While unpleasant, recessionary periods are good times to revisit financial fundamentals that will inevitably pay dividends in future expansionary cycles. In no certain order, we have highlighted some suggestions and web links that may prove helpful in your quest for the Fiscal Fitness Holy Grail.

- Review your credit report for free: [annual credit report](#)
- Review terms of your credit cards – they have undoubtedly changed in favor of the issuer.
- Harvest any portfolio losses which can be used against future gains (taxed at inevitably higher rates)
- Got an old stock certificate? Find out if it's worth anything: [stock search intl](#)
- Review your insurance coverage. Raise your deductible and lower your premiums.
- Review the State of Indiana 529 college savings plan. Annual tax credits are available. [Indiana 529](#)
- Sick of junk mail? Opt out for free: [Stop junk mail](#)
- Have a bunch of books to sell? This site works: [Cash 4 Books](#)
- Replace your lost social security card: [SSA](#)
- Renovating your home? Conduct a background check on potential contractors: [NARI.org](#)
- Go Green – energy tax credits available for qualified home upgrades: [Energy Credits](#)
- Review your 2010 marginal income tax rates: [2010 income tax rates](#)
- Review your Will and have it updated if it's been more than 3-5 years.
- Considering a charitable contribution? Research the charity: [Charity Watch](#)
- Haven't refinanced your mortgage? Consider it now.ⁱ
- Perhaps you are entitled to unclaimed money & assets? Search for free: [Missing \\$\\$\\$](#)
- Enjoy reading magazines? How about for free? [Free Magazines](#)
- Comparison shopping? [Cheap](#)
- Looking for a good, comprehensive financial news link? [Seeking Alpha](#)
- Maintain a master financial information document for your family. List all pertinent account numbers, custodians, assets & liabilities, copy of will, insurance etc. Make sure everyone has access to a copy.

Certainly this list is a bit eclectic but it should yield more benefit & staying power than a holiday fruitcake. Hopefully it's given you an idea or two. While we can't do much about interest rate levels, monetary policy nor partisan politics; we can apply some basic improvements to our personal balance sheets. Most importantly, value your health. Wealth is nothing if it can't be enjoyed. We sincerely wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous 2010.

Fiscal Fitness is a publication of Houlihan Asset Management, LLC for the benefit of its clients and friends. Houlihan Asset Management. Practical Advice. Prudent Investments.

ⁱ Disclosed conflict of interest: my wife, Michelle, works for Wells Fargo. # 490-3117