

Department of Legislative Services
 Maryland General Assembly
 2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 716 (Senator Greenip)
 Budget and Taxation

Income Tax - Expensing of Section 179 Property

This bill allows certain businesses increased expensing by conforming State law to the maximum aggregate costs of expensing currently allowed under Section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2007 and applies to property placed in service after December 31, 2006.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund revenues could decrease by approximately \$20.3 million in FY 2008 and by \$4.4 million in FY 2010 due to decreases in personal and corporate income tax revenues. Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues decrease by \$1.6 million in FY 2008 and by \$0.4 million in FY 2010 due to decreased corporate income tax revenues. Expiration of the increased expensing allowed under federal law will cause revenue decreases to turn positive beginning in FY 2011. Administrative expenses to implement the bill could be handled within existing budgeted resources.

(\$ in millions)	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
GF Revenue	(\$20.3)	(\$9.8)	(\$4.4)	\$4.9	\$3.2
SF Revenue	(1.6)	(.8)	(.4)	.4	.3
Expenditure	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net Effect	(\$21.9)	(\$10.6)	(\$4.8)	\$5.3	\$3.4

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: Local income tax revenues would decrease by approximately \$0.5 million in FY 2008 and by \$0.1 million in FY 2010. Local highway user revenues from the TTF could decrease by \$0.5 million in FY 2008 and by \$0.1 million in FY 2010.

Small Business Effect: Meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: The State is “decoupled” from increased Section 179 expensing allowed by the federal Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003 (JGTRRA) and the American Jobs Creation Act (AJCA) of 2004. Taxpayers are required to make an adjustment to Maryland adjusted gross income to reflect the changes made to the maximum aggregate costs of expensing enacted by JGTRRA and AJCA.

Background: In general, depreciable tangible personal property or certain computer software purchased for use in the active conduct of a trade or business can qualify for expensing under Section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). In essence, expensing is the treatment for tax purposes of a cost of doing business as an ordinary and necessary expense rather than a capital expenditure. Ordinary and necessary costs are deducted in the year in which they are incurred, whereas capital costs typically are recovered over longer periods according to depreciation methods and schedules specified in the federal tax code. Due to phase-out rules, most of the businesses able to take advantage of Section 179 expensing are likely to be relatively small. Recent federal laws, beginning with JGTRRA, have provided for increased expensing under Section 179 of the IRC that can provide tax benefits to these businesses.

Prior to JGTRRA, businesses could expense up to \$25,000 under Section 179. The amount that could be expensed was reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the amount by which the cost of qualifying property exceeded \$200,000. Therefore, capital investments over \$225,000 did not qualify. JGTRRA increased the maximum amount of expensing to \$100,000 and the phase-out to \$400,000, allowing purchases of qualifying property up to \$500,000 in cost to qualify. JGTRRA also added off-the-shelf computer software to the list of qualifying property and provided that the limits were adjusted by an inflation factor. JGTRRA applied to tax years 2003 through 2005. AJCA extended JGTRRA’s provisions to tax years 2006 and 2007 while the Tax Increase Prevention and Reconciliation Act extended increased expensing for small businesses to tax years 2008 and 2009.

Increased expensing acts to reduce the federal taxable income of a business, potentially flowing through directly to Maryland income tax computation. The Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) of 2002 (Chapter 440) included a general one-year “decoupling” provision. If the Comptroller determines that the impact of a federal tax change will be at least \$5 million in the next fiscal year, the provision does not apply for Maryland income tax purposes for any taxable year that begins in the calendar

year in which the amendment is enacted. As a result of the Comptroller's determination that increased expensing allowed under JGTRRA would decrease State revenues by at least \$5 million in fiscal 2004, the State automatically decoupled from the JGTRRA provision allowing for increased expensing in tax year 2003. The 2004 BRFA (Chapter 430) provided for decoupling from JGTRRA for tax years 2003 and beyond. It was estimated, under the scheduled expiration of JGTRRA, that this decoupling increased State revenues by approximately \$23 million in fiscal 2005 and \$6.0 million in fiscal 2006 and decreased State revenues in the out-years. The 2005 BRFA (Chapter 444) clarified that decoupling applies to the extension of Section 179 expensing enacted by AJCA.

Proponents of increased Section 179 expensing argue that by lowering the cost of capital, increased expensing allows small businesses to invest in more capital, which is likely to spur economic and job growth. Proponents also argue that prior to JGTRRA, the limits had not been adjusted since 1986 and were commonly exceeded. Opponents argue that the revenue costs, estimated at \$5 billion annually in federal revenue in the near-term, outweigh the benefits, if any, of increased expensing. Opponents also state that increased expensing lessens the progressivity of the income tax system and harms the economy in the long run by acting as a subsidy and leading to an inefficient allocation of capital.

State Revenues: Exhibit 1 illustrates the fiscal impact of conforming State law to the higher federal allowances for expensing under Section 179 beginning with tax year 2007.

Exhibit 1
Estimated State Fiscal Impact from SB 716
(\$ in Millions)

	<u>FY 2008</u>	<u>FY 2009</u>	<u>FY 2010</u>	<u>FY 2011</u>	<u>FY 2012</u>
Total State Revenues	(\$21.9)	(\$10.6)	(\$4.8)	\$5.3	\$3.4
General Fund Revenues	(20.2)	(9.8)	(4.4)	4.9	3.2
TTF Revenues	(1.6)	(0.8)	(0.4)	0.4	0.3
MDOT (70% of TTF)	(1.1)	(0.6)	(0.2)	0.3	0.2
Local (30% of TTF)	(0.5)	(0.2)	(0.1)	0.1	0.1
Local Income Tax Revenues	(\$0.5)	(\$0.2)	(\$0.1)	\$0.1	\$0.1

Numbers may not total due to rounding.

The estimated State fiscal impact is based on Joint Committee on Taxation estimates for the federal tax effect of JGTRRA and AJCA, adjusted for estimated federal effective tax rates, Maryland's estimated share of the national economy, and State tax rates.

Local Revenues: Local income tax revenues would decrease in fiscal 2008 through 2010 before turning positive in fiscal 2011 and beyond as illustrated in Exhibit 1. In addition, local governments receive, as highway user revenues, a share of the TTF share of corporate income taxes as illustrated in Exhibit 1.

Small Business Effect: It is likely that most of the businesses that benefit from Section 179 expenses are relatively small. Small businesses that have qualifying property will benefit by the increased expensing allowances provided by conforming State law to the Internal Revenue Code.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: This bill was introduced in the 2006 and 2005 sessions. HB 142 of 2006 was not reported from the House Ways and Means Committee. SB 100 of 2005 was not reported from the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee and HB 322 received an unfavorable report from Ways and Means.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Comptroller's Office, Congressional Research Service, Joint Committee on Taxation, Ernst & Young, Department of Legislative Services

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