

Estate Planning

Many individuals will avoid paying federal estate taxes because the amount that can be passed to the next generation increased to over \$10.65 million per couple in 2014, and that amount is being indexed for inflation. However, too many people avoid the subject of estate planning altogether, and neglect even to have a basic Will drafted by a competent attorney.

Some people may conclude that because their net worth is below the unified exemption level that they don't need anything more than a Will and they conclude that a Living Trust is overkill. This could become a costly error especially if real estate in other states is owned, a closely held business is involved, a second marriage situation exists, you're a resident of a state that has lower taxable thresholds like Illinois or you're concerned about disability issues, especially if you're single.

RAM's primary role in estate planning is as watchdog and facilitator. We discuss the basic issues of estate planning with you and prepare you to have a conversation with an experienced attorney. We offer attorney referrals and also work with you to ensure that you title your assets in a way that is consistent with your executed estate planning documents.

Banking and Insurance

As your financial partner we will help you evaluate services from other providers. We can assist you with securing favorable terms for a home mortgage, home equity loan or vehicle financing. As part of the financial planning process we uncover your appropriate need for life insurance. We'll help steer you toward policies that offer good value for the period of your life you need to insure.

Employee Retirement Plans/Pensions

If you participate in your employer's sponsored plan, we'd like to help you make best use of your employee benefit. If you're an active participant in a 401(k), you need to make the correct investment selections from the options available to you. We'll ensure that the choices you make help to complement the assets we manage for you or help to manage on your behalf. If you have assets held in plans from previous employers we'll assist in IRA Rollovers if it advantageous for you. In case you have a pension benefit we will work with you to maximize that benefit whether it is to take the annuity payment or to take a lump sum and invest it.

See our [July 2014 Newsletter](#) on this subject.

Social Security Optimization

Social Security benefits are a central part of many people's retirement planning. Some of the most attractive claiming techniques were eliminated by the government to help support the Social Security program. There still remain some important choices especially for married couples, that can have a material impact upon their total realized benefits. We want to ensure that our surviving spouses have secure financial futures and optimizing Social Security benefits through delayed filing can offer a significant boost to survivor benefits. RAM is able to perform some benefit maximization calculations that can help people make informed decisions about how to get the highest payout from this integral retirement benefit.

Transitioning from a Payroll Check to Paying Yourself

This can be a stressful and confusing time period. When money stops coming in from your employer and you need to begin to draw from your savings and investments it can create confusion about which accounts are best to use first and will you be forced to sell investments to raise cash to meet your spending needs. Through a detailed cash flow analysis we can establish a system that will make the best tax sense and simplify the methods of easily getting the appropriate levels of cash into your checking account.