



## Your Taxes and Financial Matters

By: **Richard P. Król**

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## Get ready for next year's tax filing

There are no official statistics, but it's likely the number of financial resolutions made on April 15 is second only to those made on New Year's. When you're in the midst of tax time, trying to get the most benefit from allowable deductions, you can easily see how adjustments to your recordkeeping can save you time and money and, you promise yourself you'll make those changes.

Guess what? Now's the time to follow up on your promises. Here are two tips that can help ease next year's burden:

**1. Write it down.** You know the general rule: IRS regulations require documentation for most deductions, including automobile mileage, charitable contributions, and business travel and entertainment expenses. You can keep logs, account books, or other expense records manually or electronically, in whatever system works for you. For instance, you could store a note on your cell phone after a lunch-time business meeting, and transfer the information to a more permanent format later. The key is making a habit of recording your deductible expenses and the supporting facts.

**2. Set it aside.** Did you scramble to get enough money together so you could make a contribution to your IRA? Put your contributions on autopilot by establishing an automatic monthly transfer from your checking to your retirement account.

For 2008, you can contribute a maximum of \$5,000 to your IRA. Add another \$1,000 for a total of \$6,000 if you're over age 50.

### Long-term disability insurance: How important is it?

You have probably purchased life insurance or at least considered buying it, especially if you have dependents. But statistically speaking, you are less likely to die during your working years than to suffer some sort of long-term disability. In fact, some studies show that one in five people will be disabled for at least 90 days or longer before they reach age 65.

For most people the ability to earn a living is their greatest asset, and losing that ability can have a devastating impact. In fact, one survey of bankruptcy filers found that one in four attributed their dire circumstances to a disability.

So it makes sense to consider long-term disability insurance. Here are three questions to ask when shopping for this type of policy:

**1. What coverage do I already have?** Many companies provide their employees with some type of sick leave benefits, short-term disability coverage, or both. Get a handle on your current coverage so you do not end up paying for more insurance than you need. Also, if you have accumulated several weeks or months of sick leave, a policy with a longer waiting period and generally cheaper premiums may make sense.

### 2. How strong is the insurer?

Only a handful of major insurers provide individual long-term disability policies. To

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## Music News

By: **Marek Żebrowski and Krysta Close**

## Review: Polish Music Spring

By: **Barbara Kraft**

The Polish Music Center's annual spring concert at the USC Thornton School of Music was a *tour de force* of compositional and performance virtuosity, featuring Lutoslawski's *Partita for Violin and Piano* and Penderecki's *Second Sonata for Violin and Piano*. The Penderecki was performed by internationally-celebrated violinist Midori Goto who also wrote the program notes for that work and the Lutoslawski. Ms. Goto, a renowned interpreter of modern music, joined the Thornton faculty in 2006 where she holds the Jascha Heifetz Chair in Violin.

Juxtaposed with these towering 20<sup>th</sup> century masterpieces were short solo piano works by two of Poland's most celebrated nineteenth century composers, Frederic Chopin and Ignacy Jan Paderewski. These piano works were arranged for strings and piano by Marek Żebrowski, program director of the Polish Music Center (PMC).

"I thought these two hugely dramatic, late 20<sup>th</sup> century pieces would be well served by surrounding them with shorter pieces from a different era," Mr. Żebrowski stated. "Beautiful and charming, the smaller chamber works provide contrast and reprieve from the intense concentration demanded of the listener by the Lutoslawski and the Penderecki."

The concert opened with Chopin's *Nocturne in C-sharp minor, Opus posthumous* and Paderewski's *Nocturne, Op. 16 no. 4*, arranged for cello and piano, and eloquently performed by Lars Hoefs and Mr. Żebrowski.

Witold Lutoslawski's *Partita for Violin and Piano* (1984) completed the first half of the program. Lutoslawski considered the *Partita* one of his most important compositions. Commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra for Pinchas Zukerman and Marc Neikrug, the work was subsequently made into a version for violin and orchestra at the request of Anne-Sophie Mutter in 1988.

In her program notes Midori describes the *Partita* as a masterpiece for violin and piano. "It contains everything one can imagine in a deeply-moving musical work: the life within this music is so powerful that both to play it and to listen to it is an overwhelming experience." The bravura performance of Jason Issokson, violin, and Jiayi Shi, piano, bore testament to Midori's words.

The lives of both Lutoslawski and Penderecki were deeply affected by World War II and the German occupation, which resulted in the devastation of Poland's cultural heritage. This tragic time was evocatively captured in the film *The Rape of Europa* which shows the leveling of every Polish library floor by floor and the destruction of Warsaw on Hitler's orders. The aftermath for Poles was half a century of Communist government and their heavy-handed cultural policies, culminating in the declaration of martial law in 1981. If the use of a world of pain and troubles is to school the intelligence and make it a soul - as the 19<sup>th</sup> century English poet John Keats believed - this sentiment finds its ultimate expression in the music of Lutoslawski and Penderecki.

Evoking a simpler and more elegant time, the second half of the concert opened with the "beautiful and charming smaller

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## Investments

By: **Joanna Brost**

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## Unleash the Power of Your Portfolio – With a Securities-Based Loan

Constructing and maintaining a diversified investment portfolio takes time and effort, and investors often hesitate to disrupt carefully constructed portfolios – even if they are in need of cash. For many investors, a securities-based loan provides a solution. With this type of loan, eligible securities are pledged as collateral. This allows investors to access cash while keeping the investment portfolio intact, allowing securities to be sold strategically and at a time that may be more advantageous.

### Benefits of Securities-Based Loans

Securities-based loans are an attractive option for investors who, along with their advisors, determine that liquidating securities would not be the best course of action for a variety of reasons, including:

The portfolio has been constructed to meet longer-range financial goals and the investor does not want to disrupt this careful balance.

The investor and his or her advisor feels that it is not an advantageous time to sell because of current market conditions.

The investor does not want to trigger a taxable event.

### Uses for Securities-Based Loans

In most cases, loan proceeds can be used for almost any purpose, except to purchase, carry, or trade securities, or to repay margin debt. Investors use these loans for a variety of reasons, including:

**Financing real estate.** Investors often have real-estate investment opportunities they would like to pursue, home renovations they would like to tackle, or they are relocating and need a bridge loan. A securities-based loan can provide funds quickly and usually with little documentation.

**Pursuing business opportunities and meeting business expenses.** Business owners may encounter cash flow needs – such as purchasing equipment or covering inventory expenses – that could be addressed by borrowing against existing securities.

**Life expenditures.** Whether it's a necessity, such as managing an unforeseen personal or business emergency, or it's purchasing a luxury item, such as a car, boat, or airplane, a securities-based loan can provide the financial flexibility to handle it without changing exposure to the market.

### Choosing a Loan Type:

#### Flexibility versus Predictability

Portfolio-based loans are available as variable-rate revolving lines of credit and as fixed-rate loans. A line of credit offers an easy way to harness a portfolio's purchasing power, as well as convenience and the security of knowing that unexpected expenses can be met as they arise. With a line of credit, accessing funds is usually as simple as writing a check. The balance does not need to be paid back on a set time table, but rather the loan can be repaid in flexible payments over time.

A fixed rate loan offers the predictability of a set interest rate. It is often used to satisfy an immediate one-time need and cannot be drawn upon over time. Interest rates can be locked so even if market rates rise significantly loan payments remain constant.

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## Legal

By: **Christopher**

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## Can I get a Gren Card if I've been more than 10 years in the U.S.?

**Q:** My husband and I have been here in the United States eleven years. We are from Poland originally, but we have one son born here who is a U.S. citizen. We ourselves have never had any legal status here. Unfortunately, my husband was just caught and the government started deportation proceedings against him. Is there anything we can do? I heard there is a way to apply to get a green card based upon the fact I've been here so long. Is this a good idea for him? Or should he just hide and ignore the immigration court proceeding?

**A:** There is something called Cancellation of removal which applies to people who have been in the country for more than 10 years. A person like you can apply for this status, even while not in custody, but I don't usually recommend it. Most people are denied and the result is the person gets an order of deportation. If you are not known to the immigration service, I usually advise my clients not to apply for this.

On the other hand, persons *who have been arrested and are in custody of the immigration service* or those who *are already in deportation proceedings* should consider this as a possibility of staying here. Your husband should certainly go to the court and participate in the process; to ignore it will only make things worse. With the possibility of a legalization program in the near future, there may be many things an immigration lawyer can do to help him stay long enough to qualify for such legalization.

One of those things may be applying for "cancellation of removal". Those who have been here more than 10 years with a U.S. citizen or permanent resident relative can apply for this status and this would at least keep them here legally while their case goes forward. With appeals, one can often stay here legally up to 5 years while an application is considered by the courts. If the relative (in this case, your son) who has citizenship has special needs or problems, the chances of success may be greater. If your husband ignores his deportation case and an order for his deportation is issued, then he will lose all his rights for the future and will probably never get legal status.

### The eligibility for Cancellation of Removal is as follows:

First, a person must prove "continuous presence in the United States for 10 years"; this means that you must prove that your husband came to the U.S. over 10 years ago and never left. This can be done with various documents from your past which show your entry to the U.S. and your life here. For example, you need to gather things like medical records of you and your children, wage and employment records, pay stubs, tax records, school records for your children, rent receipts or leases, cancelled checks, other banking records, even traffic violations. These are then presented to an immigration judge to show you have been here more than 10 years.

The 10 year period must be without break and must start before the immigration proceedings started.

Second, a person must prove that they have "good moral character". What this means is that, according to the standards of the government, the person would make a good citizen. Most importantly, a person needs to show that he has not committed any crimes or if so, they were of a minor nature. If he does volunteer work or other community service, you need to tell the judge about this. You also can submit statements from your priest or minister, friends and family members about his character.

The third and most difficult thing is that you need to prove that he has a parent, spouse or child who is a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident and that being removed

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## Polish Women's Alliance

*Out of state members*

## WE NEED YOU

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