

## **National Student Voices: Summer Jobs**

### **RIA MISRA, *the.News* Correspondent:**

Ever wonder how all the services you use each day get paid for? It starts with the work you do and taxes on the money and property you earn.

14-year-old Jordan Washington is starting her first job.

### **JORDAN WASHINGTON, Counselor at the Olympic Boys and Girls Club:**

*You have to shoot it right here.*

### **RIA MISRA:**

She's working as a counselor at the Olympic Boys and Girls club in Alexandria, Virginia, just outside of Washington D.C.

### **JORDAN WASHINGTON:**

I help take out lunch, I help... I play with the kids, like if they want to get on the computer, clean up, wash the dishes. When we go on a field trip you hold their hand to make sure they're safe.

### **RIA MISRA:**

Jordan is among millions of middle and high school students working summer jobs. Like many, she'll be getting her first paycheck and her first experience with payroll deductions.

### **LAURA LEVINE, Jump\$tart Coalition:**

I think that many young people think that – not only their first job – but many of their jobs as they go throughout their career, will yield them a lot more money than they actually will.

A significant amount of money is going to be taken from you before you even get your check. I assure you that's normal. It does happen to all of us.

### **RIA MISRA:**

Deductions are money that is withheld automatically by the employer. They include federal income tax, state income tax, and in some places, even local income tax. The amount of tax is based on income. At the federal level the current rate is 10 percent for the lowest, up to 35 percent for the wealthiest. These tax rates are set by Congress and the Executive branch, and are often the source of much debate during national elections.

Another deduction is for FICA – money withheld to help pay for social security and Medicare.

### **LAURA LEVINE:**

We all pay taxes. This is something not only that is... that will come out of your paycheck, and not only something that will come out of your first paycheck or your first job, but something that you're going to do throughout your working life. Taxes are a cost that we all share. It is part of what we do as citizens.

### **RIA MISRA:**

Where does the money go? It helps pay for all the services provided by federal, state and local governments. Some expenses you can see, like roads, parks, schools, and transportation. But it also pays for courts, legislatures, and services for the disadvantaged.

The federal government gets most of its money from income taxes. State governments usually rely on income tax and sales tax, as well as the money from the federal government for special programs. Local jurisdictions often get money from the state and federal government, but most income comes from property taxes, which are based on the value of land and buildings.

In Pittsburgh, the city's transit authority has hired high school students to paint outdoor murals along motorways. The five week jobs will pay one thousand dollars. Most of these high school students have worked before.

**RYAN LAIB, Pittsburgh High School for the Performing and Creative Arts:**

All jobs are experience, and getting experience in the job market is really good. Because you know how to deal with people, you know what you're dealing with and you get money as well.

**RIA MISRA:**

Ryan also makes money as a photographer. Most of the time, he's paid in cash. That means he is responsible for keeping track of what he makes, reporting it to the government, and paying his own taxes.

**SHARON STREET, Wachovia:**

Keep records of everything because you're going to need that when tax season does roll around because you're going to need that for your taxes, and you're going to have to supply that information over to your accountant or your tax advisor who processes those for you.

**RIA MISRA:**

And it's not just keeping track of how much you make. Paying taxes also requires decisions on whether to file separately, or with parents. It can be very confusing, even to long time workers.

**LAURA LEVINE:**

Probably the most important thing that a young person and, in fact, anyone can do with their paycheck is to have a plan. How much they're going to spend, how much they're going to save, what they're going to do with that and then try to stick to that plan.

**RIA MISRA:**

There's no rule on how much to save. But even a little can come in handy.

**SHARON STREET:**

Well, it's a good idea to always save. There isn't a particular percentage or an amount. It's what you can realistically afford.

**RIA MISRA:**

Finding a summer job can be difficult. But there are resources. Check with your local government to see if there is a program in your area and explore online.

Summer jobs are a valuable way to get experience and to gain new skills. And paying taxes means that you are helping your community.

**LOUIS LISS, Pittsburgh High School for the Performing and Creative Arts:**

It's a fact of life. Everyone has to do it. I guess it's fair.

**JORDAN WASHINGTON:**

If we didn't have taxes, I don't think they... we'd have anything really.

**RIA MISRA:**

Ria Misra for Student Voices and *the.News*.