



## CARES Act: Employee Retention Credit

**After days of furious negotiations**, Congress has passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The \$2.2 trillion price tag for tax relief and incentives for individuals and businesses makes it the most expensive piece of legislation ever passed. It includes a provision for a refundable payroll tax credit for 50 percent of wages paid by employers to employees during the COVID-19 crisis.

**The CARES Act** grants eligible employers a credit against employment taxes equal to 50 percent of qualified wages paid to employees who are not working due to the employer's full or partial suspension of business or a significant decline in gross receipts. The credit can be claimed on a quarterly basis, but the amount of wages, including health benefits, for which the credit can be claimed is limited to \$10,000 in aggregate per employee for all quarters.

### **An eligible employer is defined as:**

An employer whose trade or business is fully or partially suspended during the calendar quarter due to orders from an appropriate governmental authority limiting commerce, travel, or group meetings (for commercial, social, religious, or other purposes) due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19); *or*

An employer that experiences a 50% decline in gross receipts for the calendar quarter compared to the same quarter in the prior year.

**Qualified Wages.** The credit applies to qualified wages paid after March 12, 2020 and before January 1, 2021. If the employer has more than 100 full-time employees, qualified wages are wages paid to employees who cannot work during the COVID-19-related circumstances described above. If the employer has 100 or fewer full-time employees, all employee wages qualify for the credit, whether the employer is open for business or subject to a shut-down order.

### **Comment**

This is very similar to the paid leave credits granted to employers under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act signed into law on March 18, 2020, with some changes to the requirements. Most significantly, neither the employee nor the employer has to be directly impacted by the infection.

*We are here to assist you during these difficult economic times. Please call our office if you have any questions related to the employee retention credit or any other provisions of the CARES Act.*