

Why Retirees Are Paying More in Taxes in 2026 — Even Without a Tax Hike

Even without a tax hike, retirees face higher taxes from forced withdrawals, Medicare penalties, and taxable Social Security.

BENTONVILLE, AR, UNITED STATES, January 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As retirees enter 2026, many are focused on market headlines—but a quieter issue is driving real financial damage: taxes tied to retirement income. According to retirement tax strategist Tony Hansmann, founder of Guardian Financial, the biggest surprise for many households isn't their portfolio—it's how quickly withdrawals can trigger higher lifetime taxes, Medicare surcharges, and more taxable Social Security.

"Most people think taxes stop being a problem once they retire," Hansmann said. "But retirement can actually be when taxes get more complicated—and more expensive."



RETIREMENT TAXES OFTEN RISE FOR THREE REASONS

REQUIRED WITHDRAWALS CAN FORCE TAXABLE INCOME

The IRS explains that required minimum distributions (RMDs) can require withdrawals from traditional IRAs and many retirement plans once a person reaches the applicable age—often creating taxable income whether the retiree needs it or not.

MEDICARE PREMIUMS CAN JUMP BASED ON INCOME

For 2026, Medicare Part B premiums and higher-income IRMAA amounts have been updated, and IRMAA is generally determined using income from two years prior (for 2026, that's typically 2024 tax returns). Even retirees who feel "middle-income" can stumble into higher Medicare costs if withdrawals or other income push them over a threshold.

SOCIAL SECURITY CAN BECOME A “STEALTH TAX”

Under current law, up to 85% of Social Security benefits can be included in taxable income once “provisional income” crosses certain thresholds. Policy analysts note this structure causes more retirees to pay tax on benefits as other income rises.

WHAT CHANGED RECENTLY—AND WHY 2026 STILL MATTERS

Recent tax updates include inflation-adjusted bracket thresholds and standard deduction amounts for tax year 2026 (returns typically filed in 2027). Major reporting on the IRS adjustments also notes that the tax rates that were expected to expire have been made permanent, changing the retirement tax conversation from “sunset panic” to “income planning discipline.”

“Even without a rate increase headline, retirees can still get hit hard,” Hansmann said. “Because it’s not just the bracket—it’s the chain reaction: RMDs, Medicare surcharges, and Social Security taxation all stacking together.”

A PRACTICAL MESSAGE FOR RETIREES: FOCUS ON INCOME DESIGN, NOT JUST INVESTMENTS

Hansmann encourages retirees and pre-retirees to review how their retirement paychecks will be created—especially how much is expected to come from taxable sources like traditional IRAs and 401(k)s versus tax-free or tax-advantaged sources.

“People don’t fail retirement because they didn’t save,” he said. “They fail because they didn’t plan how to pull the money out—without triggering extra taxes and Medicare penalties.”

ABOUT GUARDIAN FINANCIAL

Guardian Financial is a retirement planning firm specializing in coordinating income planning, investment planning, tax planning, and Social Security strategies for individuals nearing or in retirement.

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