Get an Estate Plan. They will love you for it.

<u>**By Tim C. Lee**</u>

If you are 18 years of age or older, married, and/or have children, then an estate plan is essential and definitely a must-have. Properly planning for the inevitable can save money, time, and will spare a lot of confusion among your family and friends.

When creating your estate plan, I recommend that you have three legal documents in place:

1) Living Will (Healthcare Directive) allows you, the principal, to detail your preferences about medical treatment in the event you become incapacitated due to a terminal illness. Having this document in place ensures that your loved ones will not face the burden of making medical decisions on their own, or through the courts. If you are still not convinced of the importance of this document, review the nationally headlined case of Terri Schiavo, which lasted from 1998 to 2005 because this legal document was not part of her estate plan.

2) Power of Attorney allows you, the principal, to name a trusted individual to act on your behalf when you are unable to do so. Being out of town, incapacitated due to a terminal illness, incarcerated, and military deployment, are just a few reasons why individuals need to have a Power of Attorney in place. Also, not having this document in place before you are considered too ill, will force the court to appoint someone as your Power of Attorney; which could cost thousands of dollars in legal fees. Keep in mind, a Power of Attorney is voided upon the death of the principal.

3) Last Will and Testament allows you, the principal, to detail to whom, or to which beneficiaries you want your assets distributed to. This document can also express your wishes in regards to burial, cremation, and/or funeral instructions, as well as, the authorization of guardianship for your minor children. In the Last Will and Testament, you will appoint an Executor, whose primary purpose is to make sure that all of the details in the document are carried out effectively. Never place checking or savings accounts, investment accounts, life insurance proceeds, or retirement benefits inside your Last Will and Testament. On these particular items, you can list your beneficiaries directly; which will save time and money on legal fees when the time comes to execute the Last Will and Testament upon the death of the principal.

Creating an estate plan for the average person is quite simple. You can do it yourself by visiting *www.rocketlawyer.com* or *www.uslegalforms.com*. These websites will walk you step-by-step through the process.

If you feel you need professional assistance, make sure you hire a reputable estate attorney.

Either way, show your loved ones you truly care about them and get your estate plan done immediately. Trust me, they will love you for it.

Tim C. Lee is the CEO and Founder of TCL Financial & Tax Services and the host of "The TCL Show" that airs every Monday from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. CST on WMPR 90.1 FM in Jackson, MS. This is a show that is about "You, Life, and Money". E-mail Tim at timclee@TCLFinancialTaxServices.com.