



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ILLINOIS SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION ALERTS RESIDENTS TO COMMON TAX SEASON SCAMS — OFFERS TIPS TO PROTECT AGAINST FRAUD

SPRINGFIELD, IL — As the 2026 tax filing season gets underway, the Illinois Sheriffs' Association (ISA) is urging residents across the state to stay alert for a range of common tax-related scams and fraud schemes that frequently target taxpayers at this time of year. With millions of people preparing to file federal and state tax returns, scammers often exploit the season to trick individuals into divulging personal information or handing over money.

“Tax season isn’t just about forms and deadlines, it’s also a prime opportunity for criminals to prey on hardworking Illinois residents,” said Executive Director Jim Kaitschuk for the Illinois Sheriffs’ Association. “We want taxpayers to be informed, vigilant, and equipped with the knowledge to recognize the red flags of tax fraud.”

Common Scams to Watch For

Scammers employ a variety of tactics to deceive taxpayers. Some of the most prevalent schemes law enforcement and tax officials have seen include:

- **Impersonation Scams** – Fraudsters pose as IRS, Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR), or other officials via phone calls, emails, text messages, or social media, often claiming a tax debt, penalty, or bogus refund. These communications may use threatening language or urgent demands for payment. The IRS and IDOR generally initiate official contact through physical mail, so be skeptical if contacted electronically or by phone.
- **Phishing Emails & Texts** – Scammers send messages that appear legitimate but contain malicious links or requests for sensitive data like Social Security numbers, bank account details, or login credentials. Clicking on these links can compromise personal information.
- **Fraudulent Tax Preparers** – Unscrupulous tax preparers may encourage you to sign documents without reviewing them, charge excessive fees, or even file false returns to inflate refunds. Legitimate preparers always sign returns and include an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number.
- **Tax Identity Theft** – Criminals can use stolen personal information to file a return in your name and steal your refund. Filing early and monitoring accounts can help prevent this type of fraud.

Tips to Protect Yourself

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association recommends the following steps to safeguard your personal and financial information during tax season:

- **Know official communication channels.** The IRS and Illinois Department of Revenue will not demand immediate payment by phone, gift card, or wire transfer. Verify contacts and look up official contact information independently before responding.
- **Don't click suspicious links.** Avoid clicking on links or downloading attachments from unsolicited or unexpected messages. Forward suspicious tax-related emails to phishing@irs.gov.
- **Choose your preparer carefully.** Work with trusted, credentialed professionals. Review all documents before signing and keep records of your filings and communications.
- **File early and monitor accounts.** Filing your return early in the season can reduce the window for scammers to file fraudulent returns in your name. Keep an eye on your financial accounts for unexpected activity.
- **Consider an Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN).** Taxpayers can request an IRS IP PIN to add an extra layer of security, which helps verify identities and prevent unauthorized returns.

If you believe you have been contacted by a scammer or have been a victim of tax-related fraud, report it immediately to local law enforcement, the IRS, and the Illinois Department of Revenue.

About the Illinois Sheriffs' Association:

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association represents law enforcement leaders across the state, dedicated to protecting lives, property, and enhancing community safety. For more information about ISA and resources for Illinois residents, visit <https://www.ilsheriff.org>